



Honoring What They Say *Part IV: Sharing the Research* *Project/Process Model*

It will be recalled that the original research proposal included provision for a daylong workshop/symposium, which would allow the sharing of the research process and its findings with any interested representatives of British Columbia postsecondary institutions. This workshop/symposium was held on June 29, 1993: about 35 people attended, in addition to the research team and a representative of the Ministry for Advanced Education, Training and Technology. In addition, a number of First Nations graduate students from UBC attended for at least part of the day.

The day was structured as follows: after an opening prayer and circle, which included introductions and any comments that any participant felt he or she wished to make, the morning session began. It consisted of the presentation by various team members of the research process and findings. After lunching together, the team members presented summary statements of various issues (e.g., First Nations research, uses of the information). Finally, questions and discussion were followed by a closing circle and prayer.

This report of the sharing day includes a summary of the proceedings, followed by a summary of the evaluative comments by the participants. Because virtually all of the materials that were shared may be found in other sections of this report, they are only briefly presented here. Participants' comments during the workshop and their evaluative statements are described in more detail.

The Day's Proceedings

Opening

The opening included a prayer circle and sharing, smudging with sweet-grass for those who wished to participate, and introductions.

Morning Session

This session consisted of presentations on the background of the project, the general methodology, the review of literature, the findings from the UBC experience, and, finally, the involvement of the Native Education

Centre and the findings from that part of the project. Questions and comments by the participants were addressed through the session, but are grouped at the end of this section of the report for convenience.

The background to the project included a description of the original proposal by the Ministry of Advanced Education, and the changes in it that were negotiated by the UBC research team to develop a research and evaluative model/process for use by any postsecondary institution with First Nations students. The people in the team, and the general approaches they took to the project were described, as were the important aspects of the project's orientation: to be aware not only of the goals of the project and both present and past research, but also to be constantly aware of the need to honor and respect the people we are researching and those whom we serve. The team also felt strongly about the need for a flexible process in keeping with the principle of honoring not only the individual, but also the varying needs and questions of the different postsecondary institutions and their First Nations students.

The project took just over 12 months; at each step the team tried to do things in a way consistent with First Nations principles, including the formulation of the research process model itself—a guide, flexible and responsive to institutional needs, rather than being rigid in scope or form.

The methodology selected for trial consisted of an extensive literature review, both substantive and methodological; a survey of postsecondary institutions about their evaluative or research activities with First Nations graduates; a survey of First Nations graduates at the University of British Columbia, and focus groups or telephone interviews of some of those graduates; and testing the research process on a second postsecondary institution (i.e., the Native Education Centre, Vancouver).

Reviewing the literature was, in the words of one member of the research team, "like digging up bones," reports that give hints and clues about First Nations postsecondary students but that do not reveal anything like a comprehensive picture. The intent of the very extensive literature review was to look for consistencies and changing trends in the research, and to give guidance in planning the research process model. It included North American literature in the areas of First Nations education, survey methodology with First Nations samples and populations, and use of focus groups in the First Nations context.

The UBC experience consisted of constructing, piloting, and sending a comprehensive questionnaire to all identified First Nations graduates, forming and holding two focus groups (one in Vancouver, the other outside the Lower Mainland), and conducting a number of telephone interviews with graduates who lived in the more remote areas of the province and who were unable to attend a focus group (even though they wished to). Issues in the survey administration and analysis, such as attempts to increase the return rates and need for personal reassurance or contact with the graduates, were shared with the participants at the sym-

posium/workshop, as were some of the results discussed in earlier sections of the report. Issues about formulating focus group questions and structure were described, as were some of the results. Analytic issues and strategies were described.

The administrators of the Native Education Centre then described their experiences as part of the research project. Their discussion included the factors considered when deciding to participate; their decision making process about the questions on which to focus; the process of constructing, piloting, and administering a survey to graduates of a number of the skills programs offered by the Native Education Centre; deciding on the format, number, and content of the focus groups; analytic and reporting decisions; and thoughts on the use of the results of the project (both in-house and in a broader context).

The comments and discussion during the morning session focused for the most part on the process and results of the study, and a few general comments on the methodologies selected. They are given in some detail below. Comments and questions are prefaced by C, responses by R.

Questions or comments about the findings

C: With regard to the literature review, some have found differences between Canada and the United States, also in writings by First Nations and non-First Nations peoples.

R: The review we conducted indicated that it is a continental literature with many commonalities across the borders. Some of the common issues include the slow rate of change in First Nations education. There are certainly some differences, including the different demographic pictures in the two countries and the tribal colleges in the United States and their successes.

C: Were responses by the males different from those of the females?

R: There were 29% males in the UBC group (i.e., 20 people); there were no differences between genders, perhaps because of low numbers. Incidentally, there were no differences on a number of other variables, including time of graduation and program.

C: What did graduates report about employment?

R: Only one of the 67 reported that UBC did not prepare them for employment, that is, that they did not get a job in the area they were trained for. In general, there seems to be a recognition of their ability to work and serve in First Nations communities. In addition, people seemed to feel very free to express their opinions about this—much work they were doing in the area was extra, unpaid, but still in their areas of training.

R: The graduates' comments tended to be on personally relevant issues and clearly had reflected on their responses. They tended to focus on course requirements, practica in education, the academic requirements, etc.

C: Were the graduates' experiences generally positive?

R: UBC experiences generally were proactive. The participants generally expressed an appreciation for the learning opportunities and the preparation they received, for example, they felt comfortable at work, in doing their job as a result of the preparation. They generally felt that UBC experiences had raised their self-esteem, not so much in particular knowledge or skills but in the areas of greater confidence in their abilities overall, and in the areas of increasing their opportunities to work in First Nations communities, serving their own people. They did, however, acknowledge their academic struggles as well.

C: Did their feeling about their academic preparation change over time?

R: No, it didn't appear to.

C: How well were the students prepared for UBC and how did they handle the competitiveness?

R: They commented on the degree to which they suffered from poor preparation, especially at residential schools, and from the effects of racism both before UBC and during their time here.

Questions or comments about the methodology

C: Some of the questions were hard to answer, not because they were unclear but because they were difficult. For example, the changes the person saw in themselves and in the institution over time made responding to some questions hard, as do the multiple issues involved with changes in self-esteem every time.

C: What about the differential return rate?

R: It would be interesting to find out respondents were mainly from education. The most likely reason was that the House of Learning was doing the study and many graduates knew at least one team member, or had personal contacts with other students, graduates, and so forth.

C: There was a lack of involvement by Law graduates.

R: Yes. We met and got further information from the faculty. In general, the lack of response appears not to be attributable to any one factor.

C: With regard to question about First Nations ancestry, there are many possibilities.

R: Yes. There are many different ways of phrasing questions, with different implications. We tried to give a general question, and to look at the responses in terms of what was said and what was not said.

Other questions or comments

C: The results are rather provocative and bring other questions to light, for instance, how much impact does the residual effect of racism have. Some believe that it accounts for at least 10% of the variance in grades in postsecondary students.

C: As a philosophical issue, number crunching is not useful or sensitive and can be misused by readers, taken out of context.

R: There is a blending of quantitative and qualitative information in the final report, and in addition, during each stage of the research there was a serious attempt not to go beyond our knowledge in quantifying. Both numbers and words can be misinterpreted and used out of context. Numbers imply different things—for instance, a single person reporting a problem may imply a need for counseling services; if many do, some structural change in the program may be indicated.

C: There are a number of constraints on the study, including time and resources, but also the need to respond to a problem that was defined outside the larger First Nations community. The work by the team to redefine the research question was in part a response to perceived community needs. There is always a question of what goes in a report, who will benefit, who can use it, and so forth: these issues must always be kept in mind.

Afternoon Session

The afternoon session consisted of a number of presentations of issues arising from the research project, followed by participants' comments and questions. The topics discussed included First Nations research methodology, the analytic process, the focus groups, and constraining factors in First Nations research. The session was concluded with the research team's thanks to the participants for attending, and a closing prayer.

The four issue presentations are summarized below, followed by a description of the participants' comments and questions.

First Nations methodology

A basic question, which is more complex than it appears to be on the surface, is *What is First Nations research, and what should it look like?* This question arises from a fundamental belief that research should come from the culture, like all cultural activities. Culture should not be added to some generic research activity. First Nations research is an important factor in validating traditional ways of knowing.

Important words and concepts to reflect on and to take into consideration when planning and conducting First Nations research include: community, spirituality, respect, honoring, healing through participation and sharing, context, negotiation, and consensus. Some possible problems that may arise when planning and conducting First Nations research include conflicts and disagreements with funding agencies, inappropriate institutional demands (e.g., ethical requirements of the institution that contravene First Nations traditions or standards), confidentiality issues and ownership of data and reports, and use and misuse of reports (e.g., for political purposes).

A few specific examples from the current research project include the issue of sampling. We decided to try to survey the population, but if we had not, snowball sampling would have been a better strategy than random procedures. Personal knowledge and contact with participants' re-

sults may be necessary in a First Nations context to ensure acceptable return rates. It appears, then, that sampling to ensure a full range of responses is more feasible in the First Nations context than is sampling to estimate proportions of incidence in the population.

A second example is concerned with the interpretation and the methods used to express the findings and issues of research. For instance, in the focus groups the time taken with each question may be longer as First Nations ways encourage each person to give his or her personal interpretation of each topic. The result is a much fuller picture of the topic discussed—a picture that is not summarized at the end by any of the participants, but is allowed to stand by itself.

A final example concerns the applicability of any findings to other First Nations peoples and places. In keeping with First Nations ways, others will take ideas and adapt them to their own context—just as today participants will adapt this project to their own institutions, their own goals, their own specific cultural contexts. It is part of an ongoing dialogue among research, peoples, and institutions—a long-term process.

During the discussion, we were reminded of a story told by Elder Vi Hilbert of the Skagit Nation about Lady Louse. She was going to host a gathering at the Longhouse, so she cleaned and cleaned. The dust built up in front of her broom as she went toward the middle of the room, until she disappeared in the middle of the dust cloud. Some thoughts that this story might encourage include: “dust” appears when we fail to follow our ways, our traditions; we can work together, we don’t have to do everything alone, so we aren’t in danger of disappearing; what we do influences our setting and the people in it; but she and we are responding to the tradition of taking care of ourselves and keeping our places clean; we must make sure we and our work won’t disappear in the dust.

Analytic approaches

Some of the issues involved in doing an analysis of this sort of data include the problems of being both an insider and the need for putting yourself outside the data at the same time—the need to be simultaneously subjective and objective. This general issue apart, some of the specific considerations that came up during the analysis were: issues of transportability of the methodology and the findings; the issue of possible gender differences; and the process of reflection on the graduates’ responses to the questionnaire. A couple of methodological issues were the question of whether focus groups should be held before surveying the graduates as well as, or instead of, holding them after the survey; and the value of the survey when compared with the return rate and the cost of ensuring those returns.

Focus groups

The purpose of the focus group is to find out information that was not accessible or covered in the questionnaire, to take advantage of group

dynamics and thoughts provoked by other group members' comments; not to direct to make decisions or to come to consensus in the usual sense of the term. People who lived too far away for one of the focus groups were interviewed by telephone—one issue arising from this methodological decision is the equivalence of the results of the two processes. A second issue is the effect of the setting: the two UBC focus groups were very different, possibly because one was held in the First Nations House of Learning, the second in a former residential school. Time of day could also be an important factor: of the two Native Education Centre groups, the one held in the evening was much shorter than the morning one—could the participants have been inhibiting their comments because of fatigue, the need to get home, and so forth?

The objective/subjective issue in analysis mentioned above arises here as well; in addition, it also arises when the role of the moderator is considered. The moderator for the first UBC group was well known to the participants, unlike the second UBC group, where the moderator was a relative stranger. Did this make a difference? In the Native Education Centre groups, a senior administrator was the moderator—did this inhibit responses, or, on the contrary, did her knowledge of the Centre and its programs encourage responses from the graduates and thereby enhance the results? A related issue is that of confidentiality—the graduates were promised anonymity, yet in order to respect their responses quotes from their statements are necessary (rather than using generalizations created or imposed by the researchers). Where are the limits of confidentiality and anonymity? It is easy to talk about respect, less easy to do it.

Finally, of course, there are the many issues that arise in the process of analysis of verbal statements, including type of analysis, reporting decisions, and amount of generalization across statements by the researchers.

Constraining factors

A primary issue is that of First Nations control of, and support for, education and educational research. Because of control by most funding agencies, the results give little advice to those most concerned with this issue. In general, however, research shows the need for Indian Control of Indian Education (the policy first put forward in 1972). The demands for First Nations education by the First Nations community are sometimes at odds with those imposed by funding sources and the larger society. Yet First Nations concerns must take precedence.

The involvement of the Native Education Centre was a unique experience for the Centre itself. We were interested in two main questions: how well are we doing; and how can we meet the demands of the mandate given to us by the First Nations community? One example, which is itself quite complex, is the role of the Native Education Centre in the area of self-government and the process of decolonization. Research indicates that First Nations educational institutions prepare First Nations people better, both educationally and for living successfully in society. Some

related issues are: whose action and agenda are being served by doing any research, including this project? to what extent are we (First Nations peoples) responding to someone else's research needs? and substantive issues of how to address the basic question of how to enhance First Nations education, how to optimize the effects of the various success factors and eradicate or minimize those of barriers. In general, these questions become: as educators of First Nations peoples, how do we best recognize and deal with the unique pressures and challenges that face First Nations peoples today?

Questions and comments

Questions and comments during the afternoon session fell generally into one of two areas: questions or comments on the methodology and context of the research project, and general statements about the project as a whole.

Questions or comments on the methodology or context

C: Were there questions you should have asked, and didn't?

R: Some people commented that we should have asked if they were better prepared for specific programs. Other things we thought about were that we should have asked specifically about NITEP. A few people felt that it was hard to criticize the program.

C: Another issue is whether the respondents were clear about the questions. What people say to one another is different from what they say in questionnaires often. Where does this consideration fit in with your understanding of what's going on, ethical considerations, and the completeness of responses?

R: You acknowledge them. We also had the focus groups, and for UBC the telephone interviews. But validity is always an issue.

C: In the Native Education Centre, the focus group facilitator was an administrator. Did this affect participant response?

R: As we said, with any facilitator you have to help the participants feel comfortable and to feel that any comments won't affect them. It helped that UBC had someone there, it offered variety and was reassuring.

C: Were the focus group questions made up from the questionnaire?

R: No, we had a long discussion about the questions—they were completely different. The order we collected information from the participants was questionnaire first, then focus group. But the focus group could have been before; then it would have had a different function. We ended up with five questions, piloted them on a small group, and changed the order of the questions.

C: How were the focus groups different?

R: One big difference was that in the focus groups, people took turns talking, as we said above, so that the information about a topic was more complete. People collaborated and augmented each other's words, in a way. Topics also arose in the group. For instance, racism and discrimina-

tion were not focus group questions, but they were very much the concern of one group and to a lesser degree of the second UBC group as well.

Questions or comments on the project as a whole

C: I want to commend those who did the research and the participants: the UBC and NEC staff and students, the researchers. The support as a success factor or friends and family of the students in helping prepare them for challenges of the future is important too. There are unique pressures or issues and challenges: how can we make the success factors stronger?

C: This seems to be a successful working model for First Nations research. It will be given more effective access to First Nations communities for their own work, their own purposes.

C: I am concerned with many of the issues raised above—there is the need to contextualize everything for your own setting; this has to be made clear because readers won't always know this. They won't always understand, either, that research should also reflect the spiritual basis of First Nations traditions and life. If they don't understand that, they are really missing something.

C: For many First Nations peoples, as educators we have the responsibility to teach proper overt behavior, and to learn it ourselves where it is lacking.

C: People do not usually base their decisions on existing research. Rather, they pick and choose from the literature.

R: That is often so. In our case, however, we had First Nations participants and First Nations team members, and we do not make a particular argument or come to a particular conclusion. This is exploratory research, which in many ways raises more questions than it answers.

Evaluative Comments

Following the workshop, a questionnaire was sent to each participant, inquiring about their opinions of the sharing day and of the project in general. Eleven institutions had replied by the end of July; their responses are reported here in the order of the questions asked on the form.

1. How did you feel about the structure/format of the symposium in general?

The participants generally felt positively about the workshop:

Very positive—it was well-organized and informative.

Very good format and excellent mix of more formal presentations and informal discussion.

Effective format—good interaction and plenty of opportunities to ask questions and discuss research.

I was pleased with it and found the format comfortable.

A respectful and harmonious environment.

I felt that people had the opportunity to share ideas.

However, some would have liked more time or more content, or came with somewhat unclear expectations:

Collaboration critical in the research—extended invitation to First Nations educators and those gathered are interested—of course more from them would have been interesting.

I wasn't quite sure what to expect, so I went with no expectations. Enjoyed the conversations and the company.

Very conducive to information sharing, but not enough time for the group to comment on the issues. It feels like there is a need to reconvene on the research project for more discussion by small groups, etc. It was a relaxing atmosphere.

I feel the discussion and feedback was very important. However, I was the wrong person to ask to attend (I have passed the information along).

In general, the symposium was very interesting, although there should have been more discussion on results rather than research. I enjoyed it, also enjoyed the lunch ... I was looking at this symposium through a student's eyes, and this is how I reacted.

One participant would have liked to receive more information before the symposium:

I thought the research was well explained. The process of doing your research as well as the results was complex and they were very clear by the end of the day. An advance organizer might have helped save time, so there may have been more time for responses from the participants who were not part of the research team. Responses might have been more considered and possibly more helpful if the participants had paper before the event.

2. How did you feel about the content of the symposium?

Several participants felt generally positively:

I felt the content was well presented.

It was well organized and very informative.

Many fine insights into the data and the methodology

I feel the content was very important ... even though I know very little about the research process.

Others commented on different aspects of the sharing day:

I was particularly pleased with the circle prayer group—set the pace! The real challenge is to find some way to honor Musqueam ancestors as a matter of course.

It was exceptional to have the researchers right there at the preliminary stage of their findings.

Still others would have preferred a different focus, or more information about the results of the study:

I found it very interesting, although I would have preferred hearing more about the results of the research and a little less about the methodology and literature review.

Would have liked all the data in and analyzed. Partial analysis was a bit of a limitation.

a. About the research process itself?

Once again, participants commented positively:

Interesting and ground breaking.

Thorough.

The research process was very thorough and should provide a good basis for other postsecondary institutions [such as NEC] to conduct similar research.

For some of the participants, the workshop/symposium seemed to make the research methods and results more accessible:

It was nice to hear about the practical problems encountered and how you handled them ... clearly presented ... useful to have copies of questionnaires ... focus group was an interesting adaptation of the focus group although process seemed more like a group interview.

I believe it was stated that the follow-up for the students would happen [students or alumni]. For me personally, having been part of the symposium, it backs up my work in development. I was so thrilled with the results. Collaboration with other institutes a plus. I wanted to know if it added confusion at all to the results.

Admirable model—presenting research to people involved in First Nations education for feedback—instructive for both researchers and participants—it was honest, rigorous, respectful. These qualities were demonstrated during the presentations.

Participants expressed interest or approval of specific aspects of the study:

I will be very interested to see the lit. review in particular.

I think the questionnaire is as complete as possible, and can't think of any additional questions.

[The questionnaire was] very respectful. I really thought the thank you's throughout the questionnaire were an added touch. Somehow it felt their input was extremely important. You let them know. Of course people who are educated would seemingly not mind questionnaires. But Native people in our community do not like them.

I think that the combination of the more quantitative questionnaire research and the more qualitative focus group research is valuable and will give more richness to the research results.

The focus group methodology in particular attracted a number of positive responses:

[Regarding focus groups]: appreciated learning about this type of research method—seems most appropriate to the First Nations context—diversity apparent depending on location, etc.

I understand [the focus groups] are a very successful method of research, one that I plan on using in the fall with senior high school students. One of the concerns that comes up for me was environment—where focus groups would do their work after Floy discussed her group in the interior seemingly struck a residential school topic. This proves environment is so important.

[Focus groups were] very interesting, clever, and useful. Really appeared to amplify understandings of findings.

These [focus] groups add an additional perspective to the process and allow for first-person reactions and additions to the study.

I really like the idea of the focus groups—mutualistic thinking!

Two negative comments were noted:

Excessive ... it seemed more of an evaluation of UBC than a research questionnaire on First Nation graduates.

Again informative but I thought there was a little too much in the explanation of research ... focus group, interview.

Finally, some commented on specific problems or issues of the research project:

It covered most areas ... but one of the instructors gave questionnaires to the students so they may not have answered truthfully ... there could have been one more focus group.

I really think the research process is appropriate. However I am concerned about the lack of response among the law students.

Not sure how questionnaire and focus group discussions were [could be] connected and related.

b. About the discussion of research related issues?

In response to this question, several comments were generally positive:

Useful.

OK.

Important

Detailed ... substantial ... interesting and impressive, considerable amount of findings.

One participant noted:

That racism is a major issue in postsecondary education doesn't surprise me. However, given the content of the questionnaire, I am amazed that racism surfaced so frequently.

Several participants felt that the atmosphere encouraged discussion of the project and related issues:

Good discussion.

The free flow of information, dialogue allowed us to examine related items.

Honest ... perhaps more discussion would have come forward if all participants were clear about their mandate at the session.

However, one participant appears to have felt somewhat alienated from the proceedings: "I felt that some people missed some issues ... something missing."

3. How do you feel about the applicability of the research process/model?

The general comments about applicability were very positive:

Excellent. You seem to cover all ground by utilizing different methods.

I find the model has absolute relevance and while still in progress, suggests changes in attitude and funding as important factors for retention.

The First Nations House of Learning is a unique resource in that you have available an organized group of First Nations researchers familiar with how research should be conducted and be conducted in First Nations communities because of participation in those communities.

a. To your institution?

Most comments to this question were general and positive:

Very applicable (2 respondents).

Very important, satisfied.

To our program ... very useful.

It can be effective.

Two respondents commented somewhat more specifically:

Will use the focus groups.

We have been involved in a study of minority students and their career aspirations. I would have welcomed the opportunity to discuss and compare processes and results.

b. To First Nations postsecondary education in general?

Most people who commented generally felt that the research was in fact applicable:

Very applicable (3 respondents).

Assume they would be very helpful.

Covered the issues.

My hope is that the information will be shared at all levels of government, boards, etc. including other universities, colleges.

It would be beneficial for other institutions to learn from your research project and adapt the research design and questionnaire to suit their own needs, as NEC has done.

Effective ... research on graduating students is necessary because of all the stumbling blocks that have been crossed.

Two comments were made on the research format, one positive and the other uncertain:

The interview and focus group format seems an effective way of conducting ethnographic research in this area.

Not sure—due to lack of experience with the particular problems of doing participant empirical research with First Nations people.

One participant applied research findings to current operating policy in the federal government:

Admission criteria data sheds particular light on current Indian Affairs policy requiring bands to place a priority on grade 12 entry when the majority of applicants may come from the pool of mature students.

4. Would you be interested in taking part in other workshops/symposiums in the areas of First Nations research and postsecondary education?

The majority of the respondents felt that they would like to take part in other workshops:

Yes (7 respondents).

Yes, but not at this time ... I will be returning to university in Sept.

Someone at my institution should be involved.

The areas of interest ranged widely, from the very general to the very particular, from the focus of the present research project to First Nations studies in general: "in general, I'd like to see more sessions in which the

‘cultures’ of Native students are discussed and their implications for program design and delivery are explored.”

Some focused on First Nations teacher education:

All ... NITEP ... need to review report and questionnaire to be more specific.

Training and education of teachers of First Nations languages.

Areas that have impact on what is taught. First Nations studies.

Other comments reflected the participant’s concern with other course areas:

Decolonization courses are taking place in the province. It would be interesting to start research on those students.

Science and technology education of First Nations students ... postsecondary education and development of First Nations communities ... case studies of First Nations graduates.

Two participants spoke of taking the present research project further:

How the results and process could be further used with currently enrolled students in an action research project both to amplify findings and to develop an historical and contemporary understanding of First Nations peoples and postsecondary education in Canada. I think the possibilities in this area are pretty exciting.

Research ethics ... First Nations methodology.

Most areas of interest, however, seemed to be those participants had wondered about, either as a result of that day’s workshop or as a result of some other experiences:

How mainstream curricula in postsecondary education can/should be modified to better accommodate a wider variety of perspectives (e.g., First Nations students, women).

Where are Native graduates employed—First Nations or cities, towns, universities, schools.

Interviews, focus groups ... how their education relates to their current jobs ... degrees/diplomas/certificates.

How about finding out how many single vs. married students complete postsecondary education?

First Nations studies ... science/gender issues, particularly men in postsecondary education.

What are the major obstacles students face in postsecondary schools, that is, financial, loneliness?

Stumbling blocks—what are they and why do they happen? ... research on midterm blues ... how did the students survive and graduate and get their current job/career?

Success factors ... whether survey responses suggest any improvement in institutional climate over time, results of survey of postsecondary institutions in Canada regarding needs of First Nations students.

Two others emphasized racism or discrimination:

Racism.

Discrimination, funding, Floy Pepper’s treatment of the subject [racism].

Finally, one participant noted an interest in “letting the students know it is OK to fail, that it sometimes happens, and that they have to keep trying to succeed.”

Other comments

Most comments in this category were expressions of thanks.

Many thanks.

Thanks for a useful day.

Thank you for inviting me to your symposium.

Hope the writing goes smoothly. All the best. Thank you for inviting me.

One person noted he or she was looking forward to seeing the bibliography.

Finally, one participant had some difficulty during the symposium: “I found some speakers hard to hear ... in addition to speaking louder could perhaps sit together as a panel.”

Summary

The contents of the sessions are described at length in the body of this report, so they are not summarized here. The comments by the workshop participants during the morning session focused on a number of specific details of the research process, limitations and aspects of the research methodology and the process model, and the redefinition of the research process to fit community needs. Issues discussed during the afternoon session included the question and definition of First Nations research methodology, issues involved in analysis of the resulting data, discussion of focus groups, and a number of constraining factors. Comments by participants during the afternoon fell into one of two areas—details of the research process and comments on the enterprise as a whole.

Comments made after the workshop/symposium by the 11 respondents to the evaluative questionnaire were generally positive. They felt that the structure was comfortable and that the research team helped to make the specific research and the research process in general accessible and adaptable to their various needs; they tended to feel that the process model was applicable. Some participants also felt that the day provided a demonstration of First Nations values of honesty, respect, and sharing, and another commented on the prayer circle, which honored First Nations ways and set the pace. Interest was expressed in specific aspects of the study and the process model as a whole, whereas the few negative comments tended to focus on details of arrangements or the process and its findings. Interest in future workshops was high, with a number of topics being suggested.