New Aboriginal Teachers' Experiences: An Undiscovered Landscape

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Although teacher preparation, induction, and new teachers' beliefs in mainstream education have been the subject of much scholarly investigation, little of this research has focused on Aboriginal educators. The preparation and induction of Aboriginal educators is critical to educational achievement among Aboriginal peoples in Canada. Aboriginal children deserve exemplary and skilled teachers who are responsive to their individual learning needs and sensitive to the cultural communities to which they belong. However, few initiatives address new teachers' experiences that are targeted at the challenges of being a novice Aboriginal educator. Inadequate attention has been given to Aboriginal teachers' perspectives on the educational landscape.

Introduction

All children deserve teachers who are positive role models and responsive to their individual learning and cultural needs. Aboriginal peoples in Canada are particularly in need of qualified teachers. The level of educational achievement for Aboriginal peoples is alarming. In 2001 over 42% of 15- to 29-year-olds in Ontario left school with less than a high school education (Aboriginal Peoples Survey, 2001). Associated with this reality is the continued decline of a number of key indicators that point to the health of a culture. A recent Statistics Canada report suggests that "the proportion of North American Indian children with an Aboriginal mother tongue fell from 9% in 1996 to 7% in 2001" (Aboriginal Peoples Survey). Although teacher preparation, induction, and new teachers' beliefs in mainstream education have been the subject of much scholarly investigation, little of this research has focused on Aboriginal educators.

The preparation and induction of Aboriginal educators is critical to educational achievement among Aboriginal peoples in Canada. Current trends strongly suggest that Aboriginal educators will play an increasing role in preserving Aboriginal languages and cultures. Particularly noteworthy are the declining rates of Aboriginal languages in the nation. Aboriginal children deserve exemplary and skilled teachers who are responsive to their individual learning needs and sensitive to the cultural communities to which they belong. For Aboriginal students to succeed academically, maintain their Aboriginal heritage, and become contributing members of their communities, their teachers need to understand that simply infusing Aboriginal culture and language competences into the educational curriculum may not necessarily result in an Aboriginal-responsive curriculum (Witt, 2006). Educational decision-makers who are

responsible for educational policy on reserve schools can, then, address the needs of new teachers and consider ways of supporting them.

Aboriginal Educational Needs

The existing policy in provincial legislation in Ontario, the New Teacher Induction Program (NTIP), mandates that all school boards deliver comprehensive orientation and mentoring to new teachers. In addition, the Aboriginal Education Office's (2007) *Policy Framework* document encourages all faculties of education in the province to "attract, retain, and train more First Nation, Métis, and Inuit students to become teachers and educational assistants who are knowledgeable about their own cultures and traditions" (p. 11). There is a need for certified Aboriginal educators committed to teaching academic skills in their specific cultural context who are competent in traditional practices and language. Education itself from an Aboriginal perspective is considered holistic and embedded in traditional language and culture. The various recommendations suggested by Aboriginal communities in a move toward self-determination (particularly in the last three decades) have included language and culture as the primary means for the cross-generational transference of knowledge to communicate Aboriginal peoples' collective experiences (Burnaby, 1996; Elijah, 2002; Ermine, 1995; Fishman, 2001).

Education is essential to the future success of Aboriginal students and communities. Because effective teachers are central to students' learning, it is critical to understand the experiences of new Aboriginal teachers as they attempt to support their students' cultural, linguistic, and learning needs. Aboriginal populations are experiencing significant growth particularly among school-aged children. One third of this group is aged 14 or under, far higher than the 19% in the non-Aboriginal population (Statistics Canada, 2003a). Aboriginal children and youth continue to leave the school system early. In 1996 only 12% of Aboriginal youth completed high school. In the United States, Aboriginal students comprise the highest dropout rates and the lowest percentage of college admissions (American Council on Education, 2002; Beaulieu, 2000; Butterfield, 1994). The most common reason given by Aboriginal youth (and interestingly enough, mainstream youth as well) aged 15-24 (24%) for leaving elementary or secondary school was that they were bored (Statistics Canada, 2003b).

For the last 30 years Aboriginal leaders across North America have worked tirelessly to reclaim responsibility for their systems of education, acknowledging that education is a determining factor in the future of Aboriginal peoples in Canada (Szask, 1999). These efforts have resulted in the creation of Aboriginal funding agreements, programming, and curricula. In the light of chronic shortages and difficulties in retaining teachers for Aboriginal language instruction and Native studies (Canada's Aboriginal Action Plan, 1997; Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples [RCAP], 1996), a significant achievement has been collaboration with uni-

versities on Native Teacher Education Programs (NTEPs) that provide certification for Aboriginal teachers. These programs are responsive to Aboriginal perspectives, which are holistic and embedded in respective languages, cultures, and value systems (Kavanaugh, 2005; Elijah, 2002; Cohen, 2001; Corbiere, 2000; Kirkness, 1999; National Indian Brotherhood, 1988; RCAP, 1996). They also recognize the centrality of language and culture (Elijah) as conduits for the cross-generational transference of knowledge to communicate a sense of Aboriginal peoples' collective experiences (Edwards, 2005; RCAP, 1995). On completing NTEP, Ontario Aboriginal teacher candidates are qualified at the elementary level. Because an undergraduate degree is required for provincial certification, there is a pressing need to certify new elementary teachers to meet the needs of a growing population of Aboriginal children.

Due to the concerning levels of educational achievement among Aboriginal Canadians cited above, it is critical that Aboriginal teachers be well educated and effectively supported as they face the twin challenges of perpetuating Aboriginal language and culture and preparing students for success. More than 12% of Aboriginal Canadians between the ages of 15 and 29 drop out before grade 9 (vs. 1.9% of non-Aboriginal); almost 50% between the ages of 18 and 24 lack a secondary school diploma (vs. 20% of non-Aboriginal); and 37.5% of 15-24-year-olds are neither in formal schooling nor employed in the work force (Robertson, 2003). Studies have made clear that teachers and parents have a profound influence on students' dispositions to education (Brittan & Maynard, 1985). The positive influence of Aboriginal teachers is critical given their understanding of the intricacies of balancing Euro-Canadian curriculum with Aboriginal language and culture (Archibald, Pidgeon, Janvier, Commodore, & McCormick, 2002; Departmental Audit and Evaluation Branch, 2005; Battiste, 1998; Duquette, 2000). Their knowledge and linguistic cultural competence are critical to Aboriginal students' educational accomplishment (MCEETYA, 2001; Moyle, 2005) and for sustaining Aboriginal world views (Battiste, 1997; Fishman, 2001; Lafrance, 2000; Neegan, 2005).

The Impending Challenges
Meeting the educational needs of their children is a major challenge for Aboriginal communities. There is a profound need to support Aboriginal languages through resource development, teaching materials, and teacher preparation programs (Burnaby, 1996). The challenges in addressing the various shortcomings for Aboriginal communities are not limited to the hiring of teachers, but also in how these teachers address the cultural, linguistic, and learning uniqueness that are crucial to the academic success of Aboriginal children (Sawyer, 1991). Currently the situation is such that Aboriginal elementary teachers in Ontario who are employed in the profession do not meet the revised certification criteria of the Ontario College of Teachers (OCT), the regulatory body responsible for certifica-

tion. At the same time, the unprecedented increase in the numbers of Aboriginal children means that there is an extreme shortage of Aboriginal elementary teachers in the province, especially in remote communities such as those that are part of the Nishnawbe-Aski First Nations in northwestern Ontario. First Nations communities have explicitly identified the obstacles in hiring and retaining Aboriginal teachers to transfer traditional language and knowledge to Aboriginal students (Morgan, 2002). Despite the Auditor General's Report (2000) that underscored the need to improve teacher preparation programs and account for maintaining and revitalizing Aboriginal languages, there seems to be little evidence that such recommendations have been implemented (Ministry of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, 2000; Littlebear, 1999). To compound the issue, despairingly few initiatives address new teacher induction and mentoring targeted at the distinct challenges of being a novice Aboriginal educator.

Teacher Preparation, Induction, and Aboriginal Educators
A Review and Pilot Study
It is clear that beginning teachers' day-to-day activity is essentially determined by its functionality (Mandel, 2006). Contemporary research identifies various components of successful induction programs, and equally noteworthy, distinguishes the imperativeness of tailoring services to suit the distinct cultural needs of both teachers and students (Cherubini, 2007). Olebe (2005) suggested that induction programs be responsive to the backgrounds of teachers and students and respect teachers' eclectic understandings of what it means to teach (Smith & Ingersoll, 2004; Tickle, 2000; Williams, 2003). Bartell (2005) concluded that induction programs should be attentive to beginning teachers' "instructional, professional, cultural, and political needs" (p. 116) and be aligned with professional standards in a framework of critically reflective practice (Mitchell & Laidlaw, 1999; Portner, 2002). Tushnet et al. (2002) identified "intensive content-based opportunities [to encourage] in-depth understanding of content and new teaching methods" (p. 33) to prevent beginning teachers from becoming dispirited (Berry, Hopkins-Thompson, & Hoke, 2002). Yet the literature is sparse in terms of identifying how first to prepare and then support beginning Aboriginal teachers in creating invitational and participatory educational settings that directly connect to Aboriginal epistemology (Battiste, 2002; *Country Roads*, 2000).

From a mainstream perspective, teacher induction is generally understood as the support and guidance provided to teachers during the beginning years of their teaching careers (Bartlett, Johnson, Lopez, Sugarman, & Wilson, 2005; Duncan-Poitier, 2005; Renard, 2003; Tickle, 2000). The plight of new mainstream teachers has been extensively documented over the 20 years since Veenman's (1984) landmark study of the predominant concerns of new teachers. Putz's (1992) intensive literature review categorized

new teachers' concerns into various classifications including teaching and planning and documented their main concerns as protocols for managing students, motivation, evaluation, time management, and availability of resources (Covert, Williams, & Kennedy, 1991; Cruikshank & Callahan, 1983; Odell, 1996; Stern & Shepherd, 1986).

Further, and despite the numerous journal articles that discuss teacher preparation (Avila de Lima, 2003; Hobson, Malderez, Tracey, & Kerr, 2005), induction (Darling-Hammond, 1997; Guarino, Santibanez, & Daley, 2006; Phillips, 2002; Rippon & Martin, 2006), and beginning teachers' beliefs in mainstream education (Luft, 2005; Younger, Brindley, Peddar, & Hagger, 2004), little scholarship exists about Aboriginal attitudes and perceptions of their professional education preparation and induction. In fact Aboriginal paradigms are rarely discussed in scholarly texts (Cajete, 1994; Castellano, 1997; Dei, James, Karumanchery, James-Wilson, & Zine, 2000). Although research suggests that Aboriginal teachers are motivated by a sense of purpose and idealism to facilitate student success, the literature is relatively void of Aboriginal beginning teachers' successes, problems, and the effect of their teacher education preparation programs on their practice (Archibald et al., 2002; Goldsmith, 1993).

The above-mentioned review of the literature served as an impetus for a federally funded study that examined the experiences of six new Aboriginal teachers across Ontario and included Anishinabe, Hotinonsho:in, Nishnawbe-Aski, and Métis teachers. A Wildfire Research Method (Hodson, 2000) was employed as a focus-group interview technique to understand the experiences, concerns, successes, and challenges of these novice teachers. The Wildfire Research Method facilitates a communal and sacred research environment and is based on some traditional beliefs of Aboriginal people. The perspectives of the various participants are infused in the literature review to ground the research in the contextual realities facing new Aboriginal teachers in Ontario.

Inadequate attention has been given to Aboriginal education and Aboriginal teachers' perspective on the educational landscape (Moyle, 2005; Orr & Friesen, 1999). This is so despite the existence of a glaring need to prepare Aboriginal educators to teach and further Aboriginal student learning and language in Aboriginal communities to preserve their distinct culture (Neegan, 2005). Because Aboriginal people filter Western educational paradigms through the lenses of their distinct world views, the mandate is to prepare and subsequently employ Aboriginal teachers who are culturally receptive to Aboriginal language heritage and these world views. As one participant in the study indicated, "I thought I would be a role model in the school board because all of our [Aboriginal] students go into the school boards in town." Another new teacher participant admitted, "I found out that it is a very different world when you are trying to fit in with the mainstream school system … I keep trying to introduce

[the circle] to heal us." As Nicholls (2005) suggests, "There needs to be systematic liaison on this matter with universities currently involved in delivering teacher education programmes, particularly those specializing in Aboriginal education" (p. 171) to prepare academically competent teachers who have a contextual understanding of the culturally linguistic knowledge and traditions that shape Aboriginal students' identity throughout the process of their schooling (Friesen & Orr, 1988; Kavanaugh, 1998). On many occasions the new teacher participants reiterated their dedication, as this individual stated, to "trying to find a system that works with the culture and not against it."

As novice educators, however, new Aboriginal teachers have even fewer systemic supports to develop students' linguistic and cultural awareness and function in particularly difficult situations that contribute to a high rate of attrition from the profession (Battists, 2002). Participants in the pilot study recalled their first impressions of the profession. One new teacher remembers thinking, "Oh my goodness, what have I got myself into?" and another recalls being "without a room … I didn't even have a desk. They took my desk away." Consider too the following recollection by some of the other participants who stated, "I got really nervous, really scared. What am I going to teach these kids?" and

There are a lot of obstacles for Aboriginal students' learning and some, a lot of them, are the environment in their homes. So my belief is that when they come to class if they can share a little bit about what is happening in their lives … then it can go up in smoke to the Creator and then they can have a real good and open day into learning.

Although "comprehension of the inherent structure of the language as a model for understanding how Aboriginal consciousness and rationality" is a "fundamental prerequisite for educating Aboriginal peoples" (Assembly of First Nations, 1990), there is little research literature on how effective new Aboriginal teachers are at facilitating learning consistent with an Aboriginal paradigm of lifelong learning. The research literature is significantly lacking in terms of how Aboriginal beginning teachers negotiate Aboriginal students' diverse learning styles, the transmission of information, and the implementation of teaching methods based on Aboriginal students' capabilities and cultural uniqueness (Battiste, 2002). The voices of the participants supported the literature. As one new teacher stated, "I've been taking back my language…. I started to learn the language. I developed a philosophy that I bring with me every day now when I teach … remember who you are [and] remember where you come from." Equally unclear is how Aboriginal beginning teachers are prepared and then inducted to facilitate pedagogical opportunities that meaningfully relate to the Aboriginal paradigms of active and lifelong learning. Participants readily shared their experiences by relating how their own personal past life experiences facilitated their professional transitions as teachers.

When [I] get into a classroom the things that really upset the mainstream that are out of the ordinary we face stuff like this every single day of our life ... our life experience ... that's a preparedness for the classroom because you get to see that [goodness] in the children and you do not look at it as, oh, he's just a brat. You look at him [and think] oh, wow, he must have had a really bad night.

Further, the "fundamental prerequisite for educating Aboriginal peoples is comprehension of the inherent structure of the language as a model for understanding how Aboriginal consciousness and rationality function" (Assembly of First Nations, 1990, n.p.; Battiste, 2002). Representative of others, one participant candidly stated, "Native languages [is] who and what we are." Another said, "This is my passion to teach [students] the language ... we've got to preserve it. It has been passed down to me and I have to pass it on to you," and another new teacher questioned, "But what if we lose our language? That's what makes us a unique society."

Informal and haphazard induction practices in mainstream education have contributed to increased attrition and reduced teacher effectiveness (National Commission on Teaching and America's Future, 1996). It is estimated that more than 20% of public school teachers abandon the profession within three years and 9.3% leave teaching before completing their first year. To compound the issue, new teachers receive equally difficult or more strenuous teaching assignments than their more experienced colleagues, and as a result attrition is highest within the first five years (McIntyre, 2002; Moskowitz & Stephens, 1997). The Ontario Ministry of Education (2006), recognizing these problems, established the New Teacher Induction Program. Although there is little doubt that Aboriginal teachers are in even greater need of support (Archibald et al., 2002; Cotton, 1987), research is essential for identifying specific needs and developing appropriate induction support to, as one new teacher said, "keeping who and what we are alive." Teacher induction adapted to the needs of Aboriginal educators is critical to the preservation of Aboriginal languages and cultures and to the future success of Aboriginal students.

Leithwood, Fullan, and Watson's (2003) landmark report on education in Ontario recommended supporting teachers' professional development to enhance teaching as one of the most powerful means of improving student learning. The literature alludes to the fact that beginning teachers who are successfully acclimatized to and supported by professional school cultures create, quite presumably, a more conducive learning environment for their students (Darling-Hammond, 2000). Of particular significance, Rowen, Correnti, and Miller (2002) concluded that teachers' proficiency is directly correlated to students' learning (Armour-Thomas, Clay, Domanica, Bruno, & Allen, 1989; Ganser, Marchione, & Fleisehmann, 1999; Ontario Ministry of Education, 2005). Aboriginal educators recommend that professional development initiatives involve school and community support networks (*Country Roads*, 2000; Voices for Diversity,

1995). One participant asked a particularly pointed question as a caveat to this recommendation:

> What kind of message are the students getting? The parents of these students, who have already had bad experiences in the educational system, how do they feel walking into the school if our own teachers cannot even comfortably walk into the staff room and feel like part of the school.

Induction programs that heighten beginning teachers' sensitivity toward Aboriginal students' culture, language, and world view further professional competence (Boylan & Bandy, 1994; Battiste, 2000; McNinch, 1984; *Rural Policy Matters*, 2001).

Equally significant is the literature that attests to the emerging identity of novice mainstream educators. Ryan (1986) and Berliner (1987) describe beginning teachers' professional development in phases that entail an intense struggle whereby self-worth and identity are challenged during professional enculturation (Borich, 1996; Freshour & Hollmann, 1990; Lacey, 1977, Zeichner & Tabachnick, 1985). Glickman, Gordon, and Ross-Gordon (1998) determined that beginning teachers in mainstream Canadian schools faced significant difficulties when functioning in schools with inadequate resources, were assigned challenging teaching assignments, and were indoctrinated into unaccommodating school cultures. More recently there is evidence that beginning teachers continue to experience difficult initial circumstances (Huling-Austin, 1999; Montgomery Halford, 1998; Russell & McPherson, 2001), receive inadequate professional support during induction (Johnson & Kardos, 2002; Linton, Eberhard, Reinhardt-Mundragon, & Stottlemyer, 2000; OCT, 2003a, 2003b; Weiss & Weiss, 1999), are subject to inconsistent mentoring practices (Feiman-Nemser, 1996; Feiman-Nemser, Parker, & Zeichner, 1993; Hargreaves & Fullan, 2000), and have limited opportunities to exercise self-initiated change (Hargreaves, 2004). The predicament is no different for Aboriginal beginning teachers, who reportedly have great difficulty adjusting to and coping with a lack of substantial resources while practicing in relative isolation (Archibald et al., 2002; Cotton, 1987; McNinch, 1994). Some new teachers' first impressions have lasting implications. As one participant in the pilot study said, "I never go to our staff room because I feel very uncomfortable … there's no real healing." The condition is exacerbated when one considers that Aboriginal students across the continent "do not enter into a social space in which identities compete with equal power for legitimacy; rather, they are infused into a political terrain that presumes their inferiority" (Grande, 2004, p. 113; Alfred, 1999). As another new teacher participant reflected, "The stuff we dealt with and we thought is going on again … we are replicating a lot of the negative stuff and not changing." Another participant questioned, "So how do you pass along to the students the importance of education when the community, the social structure, is set up that it's irrelevant what kind of education you have?"

The lack of an understood professional identity also contributes to Aboriginal beginning teachers leaving the profession (McNinch, 1994). As one participant admitted, "I had to learn it myself. I have to know what it is before I can teach my students what a sense of identity really is and what culture is about."

School Culture in the Context of Aboriginal Education
The role of school culture in successfully inducting beginning teachers into collegial and supportive school communities is also well represented in mainstream education (Cherubini, in press; Duncan-Poitier, 2005; Feiman-Nemser, 2003; Olebe, 2005). Nurturing school cultures also positively correlates to improved retention rates (Daley, 2002; Tushnet et al., 2002; Zachary, 2005). As Glassford and Salinitri (2006) state, "not infrequently are [beginning teachers] socialized to a mediocrity that works in limited ways, [and] shuts the door to continuous learning" (p. 1; Darling Hammond, 1990). Blasé and Blasé (2002) note that school contexts with an embedded sense of trust and respect between experienced and beginning teachers share instructional responsibilities, effective pedagogical practices, reflective professional dialogue, while recognizing the stress of being a beginning teacher, and as a result are sensitive to clarifying expectations, offering support, and applying sensible standards to their practice. In turn, both teachers' expertise and students' achievement grow in cultures of continual inquiry (Darling-Hammond, 2005; Lieberman, 1996). Kardos, Moore-Johnson, Peske, Kauffman, and Liu (2001) state that the beginning teacher's work life is centered on their relationship with fellow teachers in terms of validating their membership in the school's culture: "Whether the novice can count on these colleagues will depend largely on the prevailing norms and patterns of interaction that exist within the school" (p. 251). Daley's rhetoric stresses the importance for beginning teachers genuinely engaging into an "occupational community" where social identity is described as being "central to the self-image of the individuals within that community" (p. 81; Zachary, 2005).

   Equally clear is the need for further examination of the systemic supports that exist during Aboriginal teachers' induction into Aboriginal school cultures. The matter is complicated when one considers that Ontario is dubiously distinguished as having the lowest Aboriginal population and teacher representation in Canada (3.6% of Aboriginal peoples between 1 and 14 years are represented by 0.5% of Aboriginal teachers' share of employment. The result is often an adverse positioning of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal teachers that function in school cultures on racist, discriminatory, and unwelcoming terms (Archibald et al., 2002; McNinch, 1994). Common to the experiences of the study participants were those as described by this individual:

Acceptance with [mainstream] colleagues … I did not really think that was going to be an issue, but holy is it an issue. A couple of weeks ago I had somebody say to me, "hey, I have a lot of Wahoo jokes. Want to hear them?"

In turn, the stresses of being a novice teacher are augmented by adverse professional relationships and stifling disconnections between new and experienced colleagues. The transition to being a classroom teacher is made more complex because the novice teachers' perceive shortcomings in their practice as threatening not only to their professional competence in the classroom, but to being exposed to public shame and to the rest of the teaching staff. As this new teacher admitted, "I am also worried that if [the students] get too involved in my classes and [others] find out that I am teaching culture and spirituality that I will be out in the streets in January." The means to address these transitions are not functional, and their absence contributes to a lower sense of self-efficacy among new teachers.

Recommendations

Aboriginal peoples in Canada recognize that education is critical to their future. They are aware that educational achievement is low. Aboriginal language and culture have been identified as crucial components of the curriculum in Aboriginal schools. At the same time, there is an awareness that Aboriginal youth need to be better prepared to succeed in both their communities and Canadian society.

Teachers, particularly Aboriginal teachers, are key to improving Aboriginal education and by extension the communities in which they live (Aboriginal Education Office, 2007; Van Ingen & Halas, 2006). A coterminous consideration to the induction of new teachers is their professional teacher education program of study. Much is to be learned from Native teacher education programs that provide specifically designed courses to equip prospective teachers to deliver bilingual and bicultural programs that address the needs of Aboriginal communities. Heimbecker, Minner, and Prater (2000) discuss a primary objective of Lakehead University's Native Teacher Education Program offered in conjunction with the Sioux Lookout District, to

instruct Native teacher candidates to develop and deliver high quality bilingual and bicultural programs in First Nations schools … Native teacher candidates were taught to implement a variety of teaching strategies required to meet the needs of multi-grade classrooms and classrooms with a wide range of student ability levels. (p. 40)

By extension, there needs to be a greater understanding of the personal and professional experiences of new Aboriginal teachers and of their perceptions of their needs as teachers working in Aboriginal communities. Teacher induction adapted to the self-identified needs of new Aboriginal teachers can have a tremendous influence on teachers' practice during the critical first years and establish the foundation for successful careers.

Various recommendations can be made based on the review and pilot study discussed above. These include:

1. Incorporating a mandatory Aboriginal culture, heritage, and epistemologies program of study in teacher education that enables all prospective teachers to engage Aboriginal students meaningfully in culturally sensitive learning paradigms.

2. Extending a similar Aboriginal culture, heritage, and epistemologies program of study into professional inservices for existing teachers and complementing such a program with support for teachers at the school and district levels.

3. Examining new Aboriginal teachers' perspectives on the effectiveness of their teacher education programs in terms of preparing them for their roles as teachers, particularly in relation to Aboriginal languages, cultures, and epistemologies.

4. Analyzing the perceptions and experiences of new Aboriginal elementary school teachers in terms of the level of support they anticipated receiving during their induction into teaching; their observations about school organizational culture; and their expectations of being a teacher.

5. Comprehensively investigating the type, frequency, and perceived value of school and district support in terms of Aboriginal language instruction.

6. Examining and applying other research methodologies that are compatible with Aboriginal epistemologies and traditions.

The literature is virtually silent about new Aboriginal teachers' successes, problems, and the effect of their teacher education programs on their practice. There is need to prepare Aboriginal educators to support student learning and language so as to preserve their distinct cultures. Establishing Aboriginal communities as research partners and Aboriginal postsecondary students as active participants represents both a relatively untapped potential and a source of tremendous benefit for the building of local capacity and familiarity with research (Freire, 1970; Tuhiwai Smith, 1999; Battiste & Henderson, 2000). Such a potential can be achieved through emerging understandings developed in partnership with Aboriginal communities to inform the development of culturally appropriate induction and mentoring processes adapted to the unique needs of Aboriginal educators and students in their local communities.

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