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The Effects Upon Students of Supplementing Aboriginal Post-Secondary Transition Programs With Traditional Cultural Activities

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates Aboriginal student experiences in an Aboriginal transition program that was co-developed by the student-participants. Data was collected from participants in the study through a focus group, journals, and surveys. The results show that adding Aboriginal cultural activities to the curriculum improved the experience of students in the transition program. Students felt that their contributions were important and valued, that they learned more about their traditional culture, and that their contributions enhanced their experience in the program. Allowing Aboriginal students to participate in their own education empowers them and improves their overall educational experience.

Keywords: transition programs, cultural activities, assimilation, traditional knowledge, curriculum development, cultural relevance, Aboriginal perspective, empowerment, social justice

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Aboriginal Post-Secondary Transition Programs

Post-secondary institutions have developed Aboriginal transition programs to meet the needs of Aboriginal[1] students who require further preparation before entering more advanced academic programs. In colleges, Aboriginal transition programs can lead to trades (Carpentry, Electrical, Welding), paraprofessional programs (Dental Assistant, Legal Assistant, Teacher Assistant), and diploma programs specific to Aboriginal people (Aboriginal Language Specialist, Aboriginal Self-Government Administration, Computer Applications for Business), and other programs such as ACCESS Nursing, Civil Engineering, and Aircraft Maintenance and Manufacturing. Many Aboriginal students have neither the required high school nor the required post-secondary courses for entrance into these professional programs (Hill, 2007; Hull, Philips, & Polyzoi, 1995; National Aboriginal Health Organization, 2003; Pijl-Zierber, 2008), and they therefore need to first complete a transition program in order to increase their chances of being academically successful in their professional programs.

Aboriginal students in post-secondary programs sometimes need to have an increased focus on academic preparation before entering these professional programs. A 2005 poll conducted by Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada (AANDC) found that most Aboriginal students believe that the education they receive on reserve is insufficient, and that when they complete their education on reserve they are about two grades behind students who attended public school, an opinion also shared by AANDC

[1] In this study, I use the word Aboriginal to identify Indigenous people of all First Nations represented in the course, in order to maintain participant confidentiality.

(Mendelson, 2006). However, a comparison between First Nations and public schools is not a straightforward juxtaposition. There are systemic inequities that privilege non-Aboriginal students over Aboriginal students, such as lack of Aboriginal cultural relevance in curriculum, marginalization of Aboriginal people in society and in curriculum, and failing to involve Aboriginal people in curriculum development, as well as education that still has an assimilationist agenda (Agbo, 2002; Cajete, 1994; Godlewska, Moore, & Bednasek, 2010; Goulet, 2001; Kirkness, 1998; Riecken et al., 2006**;** Sykes, 2008). According to Restoule (2008), although Aboriginal policy-makers have addressed issues such as these in Aboriginal education for years, there is still systemic discrimination for Aboriginal students in the Aboriginal education system, one example being the chronic underfunding of First Nation schools across Canada (Aboriginal University Education Roundtable, 2007; R.A. Malatest & Associates, 2005). For example, AANDC capped funding for both secondary and post-secondary Aboriginal education in 1996, allowing for only a 2% increase per year (First Nations Education Council, 2007). This is despite data from the 2006 Census, which states that 50% of the Aboriginal population in Canada is under the age of 25 (Statistics Canada, 2006). Government underfunding of programs impacts academic programming at the primary and secondary levels, and as a result, students who come to university or college from Aboriginal communities are not necessarily receiving the same level of academic preparation for post-secondary education as their non-Aboriginal counterparts (Hill, 2007; Hull et al., 1995; Pijl-Zierber, 2008). Aboriginal students can greatly benefit from taking transition programs that offer basic courses in Science, Math, and Academic Writing, which help to ensure that they have the necessary skills to succeed in college or

university. In addition to offering academic courses, Aboriginal transition programs are meant to provide supports to students, both academic and personal, as well as to create a safe, welcoming environment for students who are far from home and who have left home for the first time (R.A. Malatest & Associates, 2005; Richardson & Blanchet-Cohen, 2000). One of the ways to create this welcoming environment is to include Aboriginal cultural activities within academic programming (Battiste, Bell, & Findlay, 2002; Newton, 2007), something that has been shown to lead to improved academic performance by Aboriginal students (Bouvier & Karlenzig, 2006; Brade, Duncan, & Sokal, 2003; Evans, McDonald, & Nyce, 1999; Lee, 2007). The length of these transition programs ranges from six weeks to two years (Aboriginal University Education Roundtable, 2007; National Aboriginal Health Organization, 2003), and this poses a further problem when students in these programs apply for funding from AANDC, who are more likely to fund students in degree programs, rather than in transition programs (Aboriginal Education Roundtable, 2007). However, transition programs are important for the future success of Aboriginal students as they continue their education (Aboriginal Education Roundtable, 2007; Hull, Philips, & Polyzoi, 1995). According to Riecken et al. (2006), in addition to contributing to student success, education that includes aspects of Aboriginal culture in curriculum has the ability to provide a transformative experience for students. This transformation occurs when Aboriginal students feel pride in their own culture (Brade et al., 2003), which is one of the goals of infusing Aboriginal curriculum with cultural content (Goulet, 2001; VanEvery-Albert, 2008).

As an Ojibway instructor, I believed that it was important to increase Aboriginal cultural content in Aboriginal programming at our college. We began by offering an

Aboriginal Music course to students in the College Studies program, which is an Aboriginal transition program at the college. This study examines the experiences and impressions of Aboriginal students who have taken the Aboriginal Music course as part of the transition program.

Mainstream Aboriginal Education

One reason incorporating Aboriginal content and teaching methods into the curriculum has not happened is a lack of government funding, which makes it very difficult for instructors to manage the mainstream curriculum, much less to enhance Aboriginal education with culturally appropriate teaching methods and content (Aboriginal University Education Roundtable, 2007; First Nations Education Council, 2010; R.A. Malatest & Associates, 2005). Because Aboriginal people and academics often see Aboriginal culture from two very different perspectives, those who develop these transition programs do not always have the freedom to run these programs as they would prefer because some academic institutions are neither ready nor willing to allow for the inclusion of Aboriginal content to any great extent (Corbiere, 2000; Godlewska et al., 2010; Richardson & Blanchet-Cohen, 2000; Schick, 2010). These paradigm differences have proven problematic in the past when Aboriginal program areas have attempted to incorporate cultural activities into the curriculum and this has likely contributed to the lessening of cultural activities in the curriculum over time.

In addition, Aboriginal transitional programming in the past was meant to focus not just on academic courses, but also with difficulties many students face outside of school during the transition from high school to post-secondary education, which usually involves leaving home (Richardson & Blanchet-Cohen, 2000). Unfortunately, many

students drop out of college or university and return home before they really have a chance to succeed. This study is based on research that indicates that having Aboriginal cultural content in a transition program may lead to a more positive overall experience for Aboriginal students in these programs (Goulet, 2001; Riecken et al., 2006; VanEvery-Albert, 2008) because it would help students to make this cultural connection with their learning environment. It is important that Aboriginal people are included in the process of curriculum development of their own education, not only because of past and ongoing colonial practices in Aboriginal education, but because we need to change Aboriginal education for the future.

Aboriginal learners have a lengthy history of education policies being imposed and often without their participation in the decision-making process (Dickason, 2002; Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, 1996). The most commonly known example of this lack of consultation and unilateral imposition of educational policy was the residential school system, when the Canadian government attempted to eradicate traditional Aboriginal culture and language under the guise of civilizing Aboriginal people (Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, 1996). In 1920, Duncan Campbell Scott, then the Deputy Superintendent of Indian Affairs, summarized Canada's goal of assimilation in the following:

> "I want to get rid of the Indian problem….Our objective is to continue until there is not a single Indian in Canada that has not been absorbed into the body politic and there is no Indian question, and no Indian Department" (Milloy, 1999, p. 46).

In order to speed assimilation, residential schools' staff used punitive methods such as withholding food, ridicule, and physical punishment in order to ensure Aboriginal peoples stopped speaking their languages and stopped engaging in cultural practices (Milloy, 2006; Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, 1996). Unfortunately, the residential school experience led to significant lifelong psychological problems for many students who attended the schools, and the trauma had lasting impacts in the lives of their children (Hookimaw-Witt, 1998). However, the external control over all decisions regarding Aboriginal education did not end with the closing of residential schools.

The Aboriginal education system continued to be a tool of assimilation due to the continuing colonial relationship between Aboriginal people and the government (Corbiere, 2000). The current Aboriginal education system reflects this colonial relationship because it has failed to incorporate Aboriginal cultural beliefs and values to any meaningful extent (Battiste et al., 2002; Lavell, 2000; Newton, 2007; Richardson & Blanchet-Cohen, 2000). Sykes (2008) writes that Aboriginal education is marginalized in the current education system and remains on the outside borders of mainstream education. According to Godlewska et al. (2010), out of all courses at all grade levels, only 1.9% of curriculum includes Aboriginal content.

As a result of systematically experiencing non-inclusive education, Aboriginal students may feel that their culture has little value and they become demoralized, which results in their continuing to fail in mainstream education (Battiste, 2000). Further, because mainstream Aboriginal education remains under the control of government, which designs curriculum and determines content, the mainstream education system limits the power of Aboriginal educators to achieve greater Aboriginal presence in the

curriculum (Christensen, 2011; Hookimaw-Witt, 1998). Aboriginal educators have limited power despite the fact that achieving this greater Aboriginal presence has been a stated purpose of Aboriginal education since the early 1970s (National Indian Brotherhood, 1972). In fact, Aboriginal contributions to Canadian society are often not included in the mainstream curriculum, which continues to portray Aboriginals as if they existed only in the distant past, instead of teaching students about current issues and contemporary portrayals of Aboriginal people (Godlewska et al., 2010). In addition, federal and provincial governments have continued to impose a colonial model of education upon Aboriginal people that consistently positions Western values and history as being more truthful and valid than Aboriginal values and history (Battiste, 2000). Instead, Aboriginal education should be based on Aboriginal perspectives and should incorporate Aboriginal content and worldviews, which include their own history, as well as more holistic teaching and experiential learning (Battiste, 2000; Julien, Hansen, & Tourangeau, 2004; Newton, 2007).

Empowering Aboriginal Education

Hampton (1995) identifies five different meanings of the term "Aboriginal education", each of which has its primary use in North America at different times: traditional education (in ancestral culture), where the education of Aboriginal children was done in a traditional way; education for self-determination (which pre-dated residential schools and involved test schools in the southeastern United States); education for the purpose of assimilating Aboriginal students into mainstream society, education by Aboriginals (Aboriginal instructors, mainstream curriculum), and Aboriginal *sui generis* (unique, one-of-a-kind) education, in which Aboriginal content is taught using Aboriginal

teaching methods. At the time of publication, Hampton (1995) believed that Aboriginal education was currently in the "education by Aboriginals" phase of Aboriginal education because there was yet to be an Aboriginal education system in which Aboriginal people control both content and delivery methods. This is a difficult proposition because Aboriginal people in Canada remain under the influence of the Indian Act and therefore must still follow AANDC directives as well as provincial regulations that govern how education is delivered. Unfortunately, the mainstream education system, according to Godlewska et al. (2010), continues to imbed colonial values and beliefs into curriculum, and Aboriginal educators are obligated to use this curriculum to teach Aboriginal students. Hampton (1995) writes: "Because Western education seeks to indoctrinate Aboriginal children by substituting non-Aboriginal for Aboriginal knowledge, values, and identity, Western education is in content and structure antagonistic to Aboriginal people" (p. 2). Instead, Aboriginal education should be infused with Aboriginal content and Aboriginal students should be more directly involved with their own education.

In order to offer effective Aboriginal education, the current system would have to be completely overhauled: rather than mainstream education being based primarily in mainstream culture with some Aboriginal content added, Aboriginal education would be based in Aboriginal culture, with the inclusion of some mainstream content. Aboriginal students come into school with their own prior knowledge, skills, and interests, and these need to be accessed and utilized when developing or delivering curriculum (Cajete, 1994). If Aboriginal students were more involved in developing their own curriculum, they would have a deeper understanding and appreciation of their own education and have more ownership and control (Richardson & Blanchet-Cohen, 2000). Although

Aboriginal education remains under the control of government, Aboriginal people have been making attempts to change this relationship by making adaptations to the current education system so that it is more culturally relevant to Aboriginal students.

For example, Tatz (2009), in a study involving Aboriginal Australians, suggests that an effective Aboriginal education system would have to be completely different from the current system because it would stop attempting to teach Aboriginal students the same content using the same methods as used with non-Aboriginal students. Instead, an Aboriginal curriculum would reflect Aboriginal perspectives and focus on subject matter that is specific to Aboriginal people (Hookimaw-Witt, 1998; Zurzolo, 2010), not only in discrete units (treaties, land claims, and current Aboriginal experiences) or as Aboriginal Awareness Day events. Curriculum and delivery should involve Aboriginal people to ensure that the voices of Aboriginal people are present (Guenette & Marshall, 2008). It is expected that some instructors teaching Aboriginal students will be non-Aboriginal, but these teachers must also learn how to deliver the content using Aboriginal methods (Larson & Brown, 1997; Lee, 2007). Aboriginal methods and perspectives must be meaningfully incorporated and have equal value to other approaches and perspectives used in the classroom, particularly when discussing historical and contemporary events that involve Aboriginal people (Antone, 2000; Kennedy, 2009). Aboriginal communities must also be given the power to inform curriculum and pedagogy, instead of re-creating mainstream models of education and using these as the basis of Aboriginal education (Chadwick & Rrurrambu, 2004; Goulet, 2001; Niles, Byers, & Kruegar, 2007).

It is not only curriculum and delivery methods which must be adapted in order to facilitate Aboriginal education. The entire school system, in addition to curriculum and

delivery methods, should be based in Aboriginal culture (Hookimaw-Witt, 1998; Kirkness, 1998; LaFrance, 1994). Western skills such as Mathematics, Science, and Language Arts would still be taught, but in the context of Aboriginal culture and perspectives (Hookimaw-Witt, 1998). Curriculum development and delivery would be a collaborative effort involving educators, elders[2], and content experts from the community, with complete control over budget, teaching staff, and curriculum (Bouvier & Karlenzig, 2006; Evans et al., 1999; Lee, 2007). The goal of Aboriginal education, according to Riecken et al. (2006), would be to provide an exciting environment in which to learn by integrating Aboriginal culture and involving cultural instructors and elders. Providing an exciting learning environment would in turn lead to academic success for students, whose education would have far more cultural relevance than the current system provides.

Empowering Aboriginal Students

Student empowerment is transformative because it helps students to feel a sense of ownership and control over their own learning (Kunkel, 2002; Piper, 2006) by letting students know that their contributions have value (Curwen Doige, 2001). Aboriginal students, who have been disenfranchised by the education system for many generations, will feel empowered if their contributions are valued in the classroom. In addition, it makes sense that the more control students have, the more they will enjoy what they are learning and the greater chance that they will retain what they have learned (Kunkel, 2002), particularly if Aboriginal students are learning about their own cultures and history. Positive education about Aboriginal cultures and history leads to greater pride in

[2] Ellerby (2001) has defined an elder as a tribal person who has lived a long life, continues to have a healthy lifestyle, and has an abundance of cultural knowledge.

themselves, which has been tied to greater self-confidence and translates into higher achievement (Brade et al., 2003). Empowering students leads to greater participation by students in their own education because they become more motivated and engaged by what they are learning when they are active participants in their own education (Chan, 2001). Motivation and engagement are often major problems for Aboriginal students who are in the mainstream education system (Richardson & Blanchet-Cohen, 2000), but involving students in the planning process of their education demonstrates to them that their instructors value and respect the students' insight and perspective into their own education (Fielding, 2001; McCuddy, Pinar, & Gingerich, 2008; Rudduck, 2007).

Aboriginal-controlled curriculum would lead to independence of Aboriginal people by celebrating Aboriginal culture and freeing Aboriginals from the colonial system under which Aboriginal education currently operates (Kirkness, 1998), and it would also result in students learning the truth about their own history and culture. This type of education would focus on the real-life experiences of contemporary Aboriginal people, such as art, music, oral history, and learning about the land; it would include cultural activities such as feasts, traditional camps, healing circles, drumming, dancing, and ceremonies (Riecken et al., 2006). Music is a common theme that runs through all of these experiences and continues to be an essential aspect of Aboriginal culture that should be included in the development of new curriculum.

Aboriginal Music Programs

One of the purposes of Aboriginal education is to help Aboriginal people to be proud of who they are (Brade, et al., 2003 Corbiere, 2000; Riecken et al., 2006). Some Aboriginal people have lost touch with their own culture due to a variety of factors such

as parents being ashamed to pass on their cultural practices because of their residential school experience (Dickason, 2002; Dupuis, 2001; Hookimaw-Witt, 1998) or Aboriginal parents and community members who believe that Aboriginal cultural activities are immoral (Grant, 2004; Hanohano, 1999; Native Women's Association of Canada, 2002). One of the ways in which educators can instill feelings of pride in Aboriginal students is to include Aboriginal music and art in Aboriginal curriculum (Sinnema, 2004). Having Aboriginal music and art activities in the curriculum of Aboriginal students is an important contributor to helping students to feel more pride in their own identity as Aboriginal people (Agbo, 2002). Aboriginal students often have strong feelings of connection to traditional music, particularly upon hearing it for the first time (Chadwick & Rrurrambu, 2004). Regnier (1999) found that educational activities for Aboriginal students were most effective when focused upon Aboriginal crafts, songs, and dances. Aboriginal music and art helps Aboriginal students feel connected because these activities help Aboriginal people to feel cultural pride and then a greater connection to their own education (Agbo, 2002; Brade et al., 2003; Burnard, 2000; Riecken et al., 2006; Sinnema, 2004). Researchers have found that the most important factor in determining Aboriginal student success is ensuring that students have a strong sense of their heritage and their own cultural identity (Brade et al., 2003; Deyhle, 1989; Huffman, Sill, & Brokenleg, 1986). Having Aboriginal music in their program of study would also help Aboriginal students experience and understand the importance of their culture in a formal setting (Sinnema, 2004). An additional benefit is that music courses are enjoyable to most people, so students might feel comfortable and enthusiastic about having the opportunity to have a Music course in their program (Burnard, 2000). It is critical,

however, that Aboriginal music is represented in Aboriginal education by people who are knowledgeable about the subject, because many traditional (i.e. ancestral culture) forms of Aboriginal music are sacred and must be approached respectfully (Deer, 2009; Young & Brunk, 2012). Unfortunately, traditional forms of music are not always approached with respect, which leads to misrepresentation or cultural misappropriation (Barton, 2003). Researchers have also written about how Aboriginal culture has been appropriated by the mainstream and adapted for purposes for which it was never intended (Haig-Brown, 2010; Iseke-Barnes, 2009; Martin-Hill, 2003). In other instances, contemporary Aboriginal musicians have also been criticized for inappropriate use of traditional songs by recording and selling traditional songs, which is a violation of cultural protocol for many traditional Aboriginal people (Hemachandra, 2003). When necessary, it is important that Aboriginal music is presented in the classroom accompanied by traditional teachings, so that students understand the significance of the music in its proper context (Barton, 2003; Davis & Sumara, 2002). While Aboriginal music in education gives Aboriginal students the chance to connect with traditional knowledge, and may help students who may have lost this connection (Antone, 2000), it should also be included in Aboriginal education because learning about and creating Aboriginal music helps students to feel proud of their Aboriginal identity. Having Aboriginal arts in an Aboriginal program is also helpful to Aboriginal students because they may discover "empowerment through education through education, self-reflection, compassionate resistance, and ethics in a space where resistance has historically been silenced" (Denomme-Welch, 2008, pp. 62-63).

At the elementary school level, researchers have conducted studies in which they added Aboriginal music to mainstream curriculum in order to improve their instruction of Aboriginal children. The Iitaohkanao'ki (Meeting Place) project involved collaboration among non-Aboriginal university instructors, classical musicians, Aboriginal community members, and Aboriginal students (Wasiak, 2005). Professional musicians composed music to accompany dances that were choreographed and performed by Aboriginal students, with the assistance of non-Aboriginal professional artists. The subject matter of the dances was Blackfoot myth, so it had relevance to all of the students involved. Other students formed a choir and performed music which they had helped to compose. Blackfoot community members were present throughout the project as cultural advisors. At the end of the project, Aboriginal students performed these dances and sang their song in a concert, accompanied by chamber musicians the music that had been composed for the concert (Wasiak, 2005). In addition to the concert, educators developed instructional materials for grades 4-6 that related to the material performed in the concert. Students and instructors completed surveys after this project and most agreed that participating in the project was a positive experience and that the concert was enjoyable. The students also reported enjoying the instructional materials in the education unit. The researcher concluded that students appreciated having Blackfoot cultural content as part of their education, that involving students in curriculum development and the creative process was a positive experience, and that working in this project helped all participants, students and instructors, to have a deeper level of understanding and respect for each other (Wasiak, 2005). This study showed the effectiveness of adding Aboriginal cultural content to curriculum and involving students in the creative process in improving the

educational experience and level of engagement of Aboriginal students. Furthermore, this study provides evidence to support the involvement of Aboriginal students in their own education process at the elementary level.

Walton, Canaday, and Dixon (2010) also conducted a study using Aboriginal music in elementary school curriculum. In their study, the instructors used Aboriginal songs and dance to teach one group of Aboriginal kindergarten students in reserve schools how to read. The other kindergarten group in their study was taught without Aboriginal content. All of the songs were performed by Aboriginal musicians and contained Aboriginal elements such as group singing and drums, as well as songs that were about Aboriginal people. The researchers found that the reading ability of the group who had Aboriginal music and dance as part of their classroom activities did improve, compared to the group who did not. The researchers concluded that one of the reasons this method was effective was because of the Aboriginal teacher model of observation, modeling, and participation (Walton et al., 2010). It is also possible that students responded well to having Aboriginal songs and dance in their program because their program had been enhanced with Aboriginal content.

When Aboriginal students see other Aboriginal people expressing pride about their culture, speaking in their own language, and speaking about historical events from an Aboriginal perspective, it leads to increased self-image for Aboriginal students (Brade, et al., 2003; Corbiere, 2000; Riecken et al., 2006). This increased self-image would be an important feature of Aboriginal education because educators in an Aboriginal system who incorporate tradition into their teaching would be more holistic than mainstream education by involving not just the mind, but also the physical, spiritual, and emotional

dimensions of each student (Corbiere, 2000). One of the recommendations of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (1996) was to develop Aboriginal curriculum that would instill a feeling of positive identity and competence in Aboriginal students. The result of being educated in an Aboriginal-controlled education system would be that Aboriginal students would identify more strongly with their culture and their education. Greater student awareness of Aboriginal culture would in turn lead to an increased sense of pride about who they are and increased academic success (Iseke-Barnes, 2008; Preston, Cottrell, Pelletier, & Pierce, 2012). The purpose of Aboriginal education has always been to increase Aboriginal student success.

The Aboriginal Music Course

The purpose of this study is to examine the experiences and impressions of Aboriginal students who have taken the Aboriginal Music course as part of the College Studies program. As reported in this study, the five-month Aboriginal Music course was piloted in 2010 at the college level to increase the level of traditional cultural content in a10-month Aboriginal transition program. This study was conducted during the second offering of the Aboriginal Music course in 2011, which began in September 2011 and ended in January 2012.

As will be shown later in this thesis, the Aboriginal Music course did give Aboriginal students the opportunity to engage in traditional Aboriginal activities such as the making of Aboriginal instruments, to attend traditional cultural events, such as pow-wows and sweatlodges, and also the opportunity to assist in the curriculum planning of the course. The following questions provide the foundation for this study.

1. Does adding an Aboriginal music course to regular college courses improve the experience of the students while they are enrolled in Aboriginal transition programs?
2. Does involving students in the development of curriculum improve their educational experience?

Although transition programs for Aboriginal students have existed for many years, these programs have not necessarily included Aboriginal content in meaningful ways, nor have Aboriginal people always been involved to as great an extent as they could be. This under-involvement has often been due to governmental limitations of the power of Aboriginal educators to determine curriculum and methods of delivery. The power relationship that has always existed between the federal government and Aboriginal people has modernized over time, and there are examples of Aboriginal people being consulted about educational content and allowing teachers to involve Aboriginal students in curriculum development to a greater degree than in the past. Researchers have conducted studies about education programs that involved integrating Aboriginal content into mainstream curriculum for Aboriginal students and studies that included Aboriginal students in the curriculum design process and involved Aboriginal communities and students in curriculum to varying degrees. I will examine how these studies compare to my study, in which students related that having an Aboriginal music course as part of their regular curriculum was a very positive experience. The students in my study also related how contributing to the curriculum of their program improved their educational experience in the program. Students had many opportunities throughout the Aboriginal Music and Dance course, individually and within groups, to give their

opinions and suggestions to the researcher. Their reflections about their experiences in the course have formed the basis for making changes to our Aboriginal programs in the future.

This purpose of this thesis is to build upon existing research in the area of culturally relevant education by exploring student perceptions of adding an Aboriginal Music course to an existing Aboriginal transition program. The thesis consists of an overview of Aboriginal education as it has existed in the past and present and changes that could be made in the future. The next chapter focuses on past attempts by academics, classroom instructors, and Aboriginal communities to incorporate Aboriginal culture into the curriculum of Aboriginal education programs. Additionally, positive and negative aspects of these programs will be discussed. The third chapter will focus on the study I conducted, including the methodology I used (which is based in action research), the setting of the study, and qualitative methods of data collection and content analysis. In Chapter IV, I discuss the results of this study, including positive experiences students had in the course, what students learned about Aboriginal culture in the course, and how being involved in curriculum development improved their education experience overall. I analyzed the findings in the following chapter in order to determine why having Aboriginal content in their program and helping to develop curriculum in their course were such positive experiences for the students. In the final chapter, I summarize the findings of this study and provide conclusions, including limitations of the study and suggestions for future research in the area of Aboriginal education.

Chapter 2: Review of Related Literature

As noted in Chapter I, Aboriginal students have positive experiences when Aboriginal cultural content such as music is added to their programs because increasing the amount of Aboriginal content leads to higher student engagement with the curriculum (Brade et al., 2003; Bouvier & Karlenzig, 2006; Evans et al., 1999; Lee, 2007). It is also a positive experience for Aboriginal students when they are involved in developing curriculum because they enjoy their educational experience more (Hookimaw-Witt, 1998; Iseke-Barnes, 2008; Richardson & Blanchet-Cohen, 2000; Riecken et al., 2006). In this chapter, I examine research studies in which existing programs have been updated to include Aboriginal content and perspectives, often with the involvement of local Aboriginal communities and Aboriginal students. The studies highlight programs that had varying degrees of success in providing opportunities for Aboriginal collaboration and student involvement. Overall, these researchers have found that infusing Aboriginal programs with cultural content and having students participate in their own educational process both contribute to a more positive educational experience for the students, but not all of these projects were successful. I identify the ways in which the projects were successful and what could have been done differently to ensure that future projects are even more successful at integrating Aboriginal perspectives into curriculum and involving Aboriginal people in the process.

Aboriginal curriculum has been determined in the past by outsiders, particularly government. Although the last residential school in Canada closed in 1996 (AANDC, 2011), the Canadian government continued to have an assimilationist agenda for Aboriginal education (Battiste, 2000; Riecken et al., 2006). As a reaction to this outdated

and racist curriculum, Aboriginal educators have made efforts to make Aboriginal education culturally respectful and inclusive of Aboriginal perspectives (Godlewska et al., 2010; Kennedy, 2009; Schick, 2010; Sykes, 2008). Aboriginal culture must be included in Aboriginal education programs in order to respect and honour Aboriginal knowledge and culture (Antone, 2000; Hookimaw-Witt, 1998; Sykes, 2008). In order to achieve these goals of culturally relevant education and inclusiveness of Aboriginal perspectives, I constructed the Aboriginal Music course by using traditional and contemporary Aboriginal music as its foundation. The curriculum included a variety of styles of secular Aboriginal music, as well as spiritual uses of music such as sacred instruments used in ceremonies. I gave the students in this course the power to determine the styles of music they wanted to watch and learn about in the course and the choice of whether or not they would participate in spiritual activities. I developed the Aboriginal Music course because I wanted our program to include more Aboriginal culture and I ensured that Aboriginal students would have more control over their own education, which is the opposite of past policies in Aboriginal education (Godlewska et al., 2010; Lee, 2007). Although I did not specifically address issues of attendance and retention in this study, having more culturally relevant education and greater student participation in their own education has been proven to improve both of these (Antone, 2000; Lee, 2007; VanEvery-Albert, 2008). Aboriginal curriculum should include relevant cultural content and one of the ways to ensure curriculum is relevant to students is to involve local Aboriginal communities in curriculum development.

Studies have indicated that collaboration among Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal stakeholders is a key aspect when developing quality curriculum and programs (Goulet,

2001; Hookimaw-Witt, 1998; Richardson & Blanchet-Cohen, 2000). Working with Aboriginal people in the local community where the education took place was one of the main purposes of the Mohawk Education Curriculum Development Project. This project involved collaboration among administrators, public school teachers, and the local Mohawk community, as well as the State University of New York (SUNY) and a local Aboriginal school district (Agbo, 2002). The challenge was to re-develop existing curriculum so that it would be more relevant to Aboriginal students in the school district. As well, the goal of the project was to increase cultural awareness and encourage respectful behaviour in teachers of the students and administrators at the school. The school had been experiencing retention issues and student underachievement and school leaders wanted to find ways of dealing with these issues. Administrators, teachers, and community members met for a series of workshops and identified twenty topics that they felt should be taught across the curriculum. The working group emphasized that elders needed to be involved in activities at the school. In the end, the project identified the need for a bi-cultural education, where Aboriginal cultural education was taught alongside Western schooling. The intent of the programming was to ensure that students would succeed in a non-Aboriginal schooling environment and receive the traditional education required to retain a strong Aboriginal identity (Agbo, 2002). Unfortunately, the Aboriginal students who would benefit from increased Aboriginal content in their curriculum did not participate in the workshops and so were not directly involved with curriculum development. Rather than being based in Aboriginal culture, participants in this project determined that education should be segregated into two streams, Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal. This system failed to privilege Aboriginal education and did not

locate the educational system within the Aboriginal culture of the community. While the participants in this project believed that non-Aboriginal education was necessary to survive outside the community, they indicated that Aboriginal content was not needed. Although infusing mainstream curriculum with cultural content from the local Mohawk community was the intention of the program, this goal was never achieved by the community. Therefore, this study fails to demonstrate the impacts this curriculum change had on Aboriginal students. The project, had it run, would likely have been a positive experience for students, however, because involving the community in the education of their own people can be an effective method of increasing student participation in their own education (Chadwick & Rrurrambu, 2004; Demmert, 2004; Goulet, 2001; Lee, 2007; Preston et al., 2012; Yamauchi, 1998).

In a study involving sixteen Pueblo high school students, Lee (2007) investigated student perceptions of a community-based education model that was successfully implemented in New Mexico. The education they received was deemed extremely relevant to the students since they were studying the culture of their own community. Students learned that the local environmental issues in their community were connected with the community's past and worked with community members to study local issues in detail (Lee, 2007). The curriculum of the program was planned by local residents who were familiar with the environmental issues in their areas and students had hands-on experience taking water and soil samples and testing air quality. Students wrote journals about their experiences and the researcher used these to assess the students' impressions of the program. The students enjoyed participating in the program and they highlighted the learning gained about their community and the newly acquired communication skills.

Lee noted the students' improved communication skills and attributed the success to both participation in the program and interaction with community members outside of the school during the project. Other benefits for students included learning culturally relevant, local information, becoming inspired to make changes at the local level for the good of the environment, and being inspired to pursue higher education in order to be able to address environmental issues in their communities (Lee, 2007). The study also showed that traditional curricular subjects such as Language Arts, Math, and Social Studies could all be learned by students in the context of working with community members to better their own communities, which proponents of Aboriginal-controlled education have been advocating for years (Goulet, 2001; Hookimaw-Witt, 1998; LaFrance, 1994; Richardson & Blanchet-Cohen, 2000; VanEvery-Albert, 2008). Adding an Aboriginal cultural component to their program was a beneficial addition to curriculum for students and they enjoyed their experiences in the program. The cultural content of the students' program was limited to one course inserted into their mainstream curriculum, but even this limited cultural content greatly benefited the students. Unfortunately, the students were not involved in planning the curriculum of their courses, which was completed by school teachers and community members. However, it was a benefit to the educational program and to the students to involve community members because this was a positive method of developing culturally relevant curriculum for Aboriginal students (Bouvier & Karlenzig, 2006; Goulet, 2001; Hookimaw-Witt, 1998; Kirkness; 1998; LaFrance, 1994; Richardson & Blanchet-Cohen, 2000). It also gave students the opportunity to interact with their own community, which helps Aboriginal students to feel more comfortable in their own education process (Demmert, 2004;

Preston et al., 2012; VanEvery-Albert, 2008; Yamauchi, 1998). When the local community has a say in Aboriginal education, community members will often become more interested and involved in the project, which benefits not only the local community, but the students as well (Riecken et al., 2006).

Community members can become more directly involved in curriculum development and delivery when they engage in instructing the students themselves. The best sources of local Aboriginal knowledge are Aboriginal community members, and sometimes, due to their specialized knowledge, these community members are the most appropriate people to instruct students (Goulet, 2001; Lee, 2007; Lipka, 1991). At the University of Victoria, *Earthsongs: Indigenous ways of teaching and learning* was a course designed as part of a series of courses which gave undergraduate and graduate students the opportunity to participate in traditional Aboriginal cultural activities such as totem-pole making, textile creation, and traditional Aboriginal music (Kennedy, 2009). The course taken by Kennedy and the other students was Aboriginal Music and included learning traditional Salish (southwestern British Columbia) music and creating sacred drums and rattles. The program was intended to increase awareness about Aboriginal culture among Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students at the University of Victoria (Kennedy, 2009). The students, some of whom were non-Aboriginal, were taught how to participate in these cultural activities in a respectful and proper way by Aboriginal elders and teachers who were present during the entire 13-week course. The students developed a deeper appreciation and understanding of Aboriginal cultural activities such as the spirituality involved in hunting and harvesting game for cultural purposes such as making drums out of deer hide (Kennedy, 2009). Students were taught the spiritual and cultural

significance of everything they made and learned in the course, and this is significant because the spiritual dimension of Aboriginal culture is often excluded from Aboriginal education programs. This is despite the fact that spirituality is a fundamental aspect of Aboriginal culture and should be central to any instruction of Aboriginal people (Gamlin, 2003; Hanohano, 1999; Kirkness, 1998). In the past, curriculum developers have been resistant to the idea of having spirituality as part of mainstream education (Guenette & Marshall, 2008). This may be because spirituality in curriculum is potentially controversial in non-Aboriginal education, for example, teaching evolution instead of creationism in the classroom (Pennock, 2010; Shanks, 2004). Another reason for this exclusion may be that non-Aboriginal instructors would likely be uncomfortable speaking about Aboriginal spirituality with Aboriginal students (Godlewska et al., Lee, 2007; Schick, 2010; Sykes, 2008). Still, this could be addressed by having medicine people come into the class or having Aboriginal co-instructors, in the absence of Aboriginal instructors. The course did provide opportunities for students to participate in traditional Aboriginal activities as part of their university program, however, the course was not really designed for Aboriginal learners and most of the students who took the courses in the program were non-Aboriginal. It might have been preferable if the course were designed for Aboriginal learners so that they could learn more about their own culture, which is one of the reasons for developing Aboriginal curriculum (Antone, 2000; Cajete, 1994; Hookimaw-Witt, 1998; Kirkness, 1998; LaFrance, 1994; Richardson & Blanchet-Cohen, 2000). Aboriginal learners are more successful when Aboriginal cultural activities are added to their education program because the students feel more

comfortable in their learning environment. This is a major factor in helping Aboriginal students to succeed.

Another factor in the success of Aboriginal students is a strong Aboriginal presence in the program, including instructors, administrative staff, and elders (Bovill et al., 2011b; Corbiere, 2000; Kirkness, 1998; Richardson & Blanchet-Cohen, 2000; Riecken et al., 2006). Urban Circle is an Aboriginal training centre where the students, instructors, and cultural advisors are all Aboriginal and all programs offered at the training centre have an Aboriginal focus. Urban Circle offers programs for Aboriginal students who wish to upgrade their skills for the workplace, to gain volunteer experience, as well to take certificate programs such as Teacher Assistant, Counseling, Family Support Worker, and Life Skills. Koshyk (2012) conducted a study of Aboriginal students at Urban Circle in order to determine their perceptions about the integration of Aboriginal culture into their education. The researcher used phenomenological research as her method for collecting data from students, using interviews. The interview questions were about students' perceptions of their post-secondary program before they came to Urban Circle, their experiences of the program, the meaningfulness of the cultural components of their education at Urban Circle, and the impacts the program had on their personal lives (Koshyk, 2012). The researcher used an NVivo 8 program to organize the interview data from her study into themes, which were: students reported that the program had a positive effect on their own Aboriginal identities; that the Aboriginal staff, instructors, and counselors were important people for their success; that they experienced personal growth; and that the cultural learning they experienced in the program, including ceremonies and cultural activities, made their education into a

positive life experience (Koshyk, 2012). Students not only learned the skills they needed to work in their chosen field of education at Urban Circle, but also reported that their lives as Aboriginal people improved because of the cultural education they received there, which is a powerful testament to the effectiveness of enhancing Aboriginal education by adding traditional cultural activities. Urban Circle approaches the level of Aboriginal control over all aspects of content and delivery in education that Aboriginal people have been working toward for decades (Brade, et al., 2003; Corbiere, 2000; Richardson & Blanchet-Cohen, 2000; Riecken et al., 2006). The programs are also very successful: students have an 84 – 93% completion rate of programs at Urban Circle, which is likely due to its high level of traditional Aboriginal content and Aboriginal curriculum, which help to create a safe and comfortable learning environment for students (Koshyk, 2012). The success of this program proves that when Aboriginal education is adapted or created to be Aboriginal-focused, students enjoy their educational experience and are more likely to remain in the program. Improving retention and attendance are two major objectives of creating or changing Aboriginal education programs that is more culturally relevant to Aboriginal students (Antone, 2000; Lee, 2007; VanEvery-Albert, 2008). One criticism of the program is that the curriculum was developed without the participation of Aboriginal learners, which could have improved the student experiences (Guenette & Marshall, 2008; LaFrance, 1994; Lee, 2007; Riecken et al., 2006; Richardson & Blanchet-Cohen, 2000). Aboriginal students who participate in curriculum development know that their contributions have value and this enhances their educational process. Sometimes students have the ability to effect change within their own communities by making these contributions.

Aboriginal education has the capacity to create change in communities if the education program is designed to address social issues within communities. In a research project in British Columbia, urban Aboriginal students from nine different Aboriginal nations on the west coast of Canada learned about video production as part of their education program (Riecken et al., 2006). Researchers and Aboriginal instructors worked in collaboration with Aboriginal communities in order to develop, design, and implement the program. Traditional Pathways to Health (TPTH) was the result of this collaboration. The project centred on improving Aboriginal health, so the students researched and produced videos on topics such as smoking, drug use and addictions, healthy lifestyles, active lifestyles, traditional foods and medicines, and cultural teachings among Aboriginal people. The students developed a research question and compiled data using the Internet, interviews, and the library. The students investigated answers to their research questions, which they presented in a video that they designed and directed themselves. The researchers infused the curriculum with Aboriginal content and used the participatory nature of the project to help students to resist colonial styles of education and to find their own power (Riecken et al., 2006). Throughout the project, researchers, instructors, and students worked collaboratively with community members, including elders and cultural teachers. The researchers also tried to ensure that control over the project as a whole rested in the community and that the videos were made for the benefit of the community. This was an empowering experience for both the community and the students, who at the beginning of the project were hesitant about participating in the project because they had a low opinion about their own abilities (Riecken et al., 2006). The project exposed Aboriginal students to aspects of their own culture and empowered

the students to have greater self-worth and confidence in their capabilities. Creating the videos represented an act of resistance against the forces or behaviours in their communities that were making their communities unhealthy (Riecken et al., 2006). The project is now in its fourth year and has been very successful in infusing student curriculum with traditional and contemporary Aboriginal content. The Aboriginal students involved in the project developed skills in designing their own curriculum by conducting research and involving community members in the making of their videos for the project. Collaborative curriculum development ensures that all stakeholders involved in the education project have the opportunity to ensure their perspectives are included, particularly when attempting to give voice to groups who have been silenced in the past. This project is successful because the local Aboriginal community is in control and the students address issues that are important to community members and work toward improving their community (Lee, 2007; Riecken et al., 2006; VanEvery-Albert, 2008). The students are entrusted with developing and designing their own curriculum and this would have a positive impact upon their confidence. This raised self-image is an important by-product of their participation in the project because they would carry this confidence into other areas of their lives outside of school (Agbo, 2002; Bovill, Bully, & Morss, 2011a; Brade et al., 2003; Brinegar & Bishop, 2011). The researchers and instructors in the program were not all Aboriginal, but that is likely inevitable due to needing university-educated collaborators and not having enough Aboriginal people with this education (Bovill et al., 2011b; Evans et al., 1999). In projects where there are collaborations between academic institutions and Aboriginal communities, some of the people on the research team may be non-Aboriginal, and I sense that there is a difference

between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal instructors of Aboriginal students. Aboriginal content can be read about and learned by people of any ancestral background, but I do not believe that it is possible for a non-Aboriginal instructor to instruct students from an Aboriginal perspective, no matter how knowledgeable they are (Levin, 2009; Silver, Mallett, Greene, & Simard, 2002; Starnes, 2006). However, just as it is not always possible for all instructors of Aboriginal students to be Aboriginal (Larson & Brown, 2007; Lee, 2007), neither is it always possible for all researchers working with Aboriginal people to be Aboriginal.

Often university studies include researchers who are non-Aboriginal and they work in collaboration with Aboriginal people. In a study conducted in British Columbia, Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Nursing students, Aboriginal nurses, Faculty members at the Thompson Rivers University School of Nursing, Aboriginal elders, and nurse educators worked together to re-design curriculum for a nursing program (Mahara, Duncan, Whyte, & Brown, 2011), that would include more Aboriginal cultural content. They also wanted to involve local Aboriginal communities in the development of curriculum. The goal was to ensure that Faculty of Nursing graduates would have greater awareness and respect of Aboriginal history, issues, worldviews, and cultural perspectives in order to better serve their Aboriginal clients. Another goal of re-designing curriculum was to increase numbers of Aboriginal applicants to the program and successful Aboriginal graduates from the program. The students, nurses, Faculty members, nurse educators and elders gathered for a planning session in which they shared ideas in small groups and made suggestions about ways in which the program could be improved. The themes that emerged from the gathering were that Aboriginal history,

intergenerational trauma, Aboriginal treaties, self-determination, self-government, health issues, languages, and traditional practices should all be included in the curriculum of the nursing program (Mahara et al., 2011). The groups also made suggestions about how to integrate Aboriginal culture into existing courses throughout the Nursing program, how nursing students could conduct their practicums in Aboriginal communities, and how ongoing workshops and presentations would help students to develop a higher awareness of Aboriginal cultural issues. In addition, groups recommended that more academic support be made available for Aboriginal nursing students and that local Aboriginal realities should also be made part of the curriculum. The Aboriginal students who participated in this process felt that they were respected by health professionals and university Faculty members who participated in the process and felt that they made substantial contributions to the curriculum development process (Mahara et al., 2011). Unfortunately, this project has yet to be implemented, so it will be some time before the impacts of making these changes to the curriculum are known. The elders and some of the students who contributed to this project were Aboriginal, but the project was done to benefit future Aboriginal students and reflect local issues in the Aboriginal community. As mentioned above, it is not always possible for researchers to conduct studies that involve Aboriginal people exclusively. However, the students were not involved in determining how the curriculum would be delivered once they were in the program. The researchers did ensure that the local Aboriginal communities contributed to the project, which is an important aspect of research involving Aboriginal people (Curwen Doige, 2001; Riecken et al., 2006).

University researchers sometimes collaborate with other institutions and Aboriginal communities simultaneously. In a study in British Columbia, researchers from an Aboriginal college worked with Simon Fraser University and representatives from Aboriginal communities to create a new program. The courses in the program would be delivered on the reserve at the Nicola Valley Institute of Technology, which is run by Aboriginals. The program was accredited by Simon Fraser University so that Aboriginal students who completed the program would receive a university degree (Price & Burtch, 2010). The intent of the initiative was to increase numbers of Aboriginal graduates from the university by developing new programs and infusing existing programs with Aboriginal cultural content through collaboration between non-Aboriginals from the university and Aboriginals from the college, along with students and local Aboriginal communities. Local Aboriginal communities were involved in all stages of the development of the program, and students provided frequent evaluations of the program to the program developers. Students reported feeling empowered by their education and felt confident enough in their abilities to continue their education after graduation (Price & Burtch, 2010). Aboriginal community members involved in the curriculum and program development process also reported that their participation in the education of their young people made them feel more important. This was an innovative program involving a mainstream post-secondary institution and an Aboriginal college. There were many positive outcomes that resulted from this collaboration between a mainstream university and an Aboriginal college. Students were given the opportunity to give feedback to the researchers throughout their educational experience in the program, and most students had very positive feedback. One of the reasons for these positive

experiences was that the students were involved in the design of curriculum for the project. As a result, their perspectives were included in the design and students would likely have felt that their contributions were important, which is crucial to Aboriginal student success (Curwen Doige, 2001; Riecken et al., 2006). Members of the Aboriginal community who were involved in the project also reported having positive experiences (Price & Burtch, 2010). One negative aspect to the project is that the Aboriginal college withdrew from the project after involving only two cohorts, citing funding issues and political differences with the university, and as a result only 21 students graduated from the program (Price & Burtch, 2010). However, it was a successful program, and many graduates continued on to employment or continued their education. Although the termination of the program could be seen as a failure, the program led to future partnerships between the Aboriginal college and Simon Fraser University. Researchers identified lack of cultural awareness on the part of university researchers as a contributing factor to the withdrawal of the Nicola Valley Institute of Technology and suggested that in the future, cultural awareness would be critical in successful Aboriginal/non-Aboriginal collaborations (Price & Burtch, 2010). However, the partnership was an innovative approach to Aboriginal education and there were Aboriginal students who benefited from the program.

The ability to be innovative is often necessary when developing programs designed to engage Aboriginal students. A current innovation in education is the use of technology in the classroom in order to engage all students in the classroom (Collins, Deck, & McCrickard, 2008; Stockwell, 2012), while another innovation is the use of video games in Aboriginal education (Kawalilak, Wells, Connell, & Beamer, 2012;

Kirkness, 1999; Lewis & Fragnito, 2009). Aboriginal Territories in Cyberspace (AbTeC) created *Skins*, which was a training program designed to increase Aboriginal interest in the field of Computer Sciences (Lamerman, Lewis, & Fragnito, 2010). Computer Science is an extremely under-represented field of study for Aboriginal students. In 1985, the percentage of Aboriginal students who earned a degree in Computer Science was only 0.4%, and this percentage had increased only to 0.5% by 2005 (Varma, 2009). *Skins* was designed to expose Aboriginal students to this discipline so that they would continue on to degree programs in Computer Science. The program concentrated on the students "modding" or modifying existing digital role-playing games so that Aboriginal characters in these games more closely resembled Aboriginal people carrying out cultural activities that were indigenous to their area, which was the Kahnawake Mohawk First Nation in Quebec (Lamerman et al., 2010). Prior to this project Aboriginals were consistently misrepresented in computer games in terms of culture, behaviour, and language, for example, in *Age of Empires III: The War Chiefs,* there is an alliance between the Cherokee and the Russians, who fight as allies in a battle in Boston ("Age of Empires III", 2005; Dillon, 2008). In order to create historically accurate and culturally appropriate Aboriginal characters, the Aboriginal students who took part in the project conducted research and designed their characters and their behaviours according to their own interpretations. During their research process, Aboriginal students learned about local traditions and techniques of Aboriginal storytelling, which also helped students to engage with the curriculum and with their home community. Students also learned about video game creation and design, including story, design, code, architecture, art, animation, 3D modeling and animation, sound, and project management (Jenkins, 2004).

Aboriginal students had the opportunity to work independently while designing these programs and also relied on their own creativity and thinking skills (Lamerman et al., 2010), all within a participatory framework. The students worked in teams, with each student having their own responsibility within that team (design, programming, art, animation, writing, communication, and sound). As well, the students needed to be decision-makers throughout the entire process because they worked collaboratively to decide upon every aspect of the game production. The students were also given the opportunity to provide feedback to the program developers and to reflect upon their experiences about the program through an online blog (Lamerman et al., 2010). The program developers were also attempting to form a partnership with Concordia University so that students could receive university credit for participating in the project. In this project, Aboriginal students had the opportunity to create their own curriculum and to base this curriculum in their own culture (Lamerman et al., 2010). Aboriginal researchers agree that both of these are important determinants to Aboriginal students succeeding in education (Hookimaw-Witt, 1998; Iseke-Barnes, 2008; Richardson & Blanchet-Cohen, 2000; Riecken et al., 2006). Many of the students reported that they would continue their studies in computer science following their completion of the *Skins* program (Lamerman et al., 2010), which, as mentioned above, has very low Aboriginal representation. In this study, culturally relevant education was an important consideration as researchers and educators developed the program.

Although Aboriginal students benefit from having culturally relevant education, there are substantial challenges to developing a system in which this goal is achievable. One of these challenges is gaining support for the initiative from the educational

institution. Western education has been forced upon Aboriginal people for a long time, ignoring Aboriginal forms of education (Antone, 2000) and neither the federal nor the provincial governments appear to support Aboriginal initiatives to make Aboriginal education more culturally relevant across the board (Godlewska et al., 2010; Hampton, 1995). Conversely, there does appear to be government opposition to Aboriginal control of education. Some researchers believe that this is due to racism against Aboriginal people on the part of the government because it consistently privileges Western knowledge and dismisses Aboriginal knowledge (Cuthbert, Spark, Pritchard, & Lowish, 2002; Goulet, 2001; Hookimaw-Witt, 1998). One central obstacle exists that prevents Aboriginal people from implementing an education system that is designed and controlled by Aboriginal people and that incorporates culturally appropriate development, curriculum, and delivery throughout Aboriginal education programs. That obstacle is the lack of independence, and therefore control, of Aboriginal people over their own education systems, even though Aboriginal control over Aboriginal education has been a priority issue for Aboriginal people since the early 1970s (National Indian Brotherhood, 1972; Restoule, 2008). As long as Aboriginal people in communities remain dependent upon AANDC for their education funding, then they will continue to have little or no say in how that education system is run. There have been changes in this area, however, because more and more communities are either becoming financially independent of AANDC or negotiating Aboriginal control of education into their modern treaty agreements (Restoule, 2008).

In universities and colleges, lack of independence of Aboriginal program areas is also the central obstacle to Aboriginals having control over their own curriculum. One of

the difficulties of delivering Aboriginal cultural education to Aboriginal students is that so few instructors of Aboriginal students are themselves Aboriginal. Across Canada, the number of Aboriginal teachers is very low: only 2.7% of Aboriginal people are teachers in the entire school system (Statistics Canada, 2012), but 5.2 % of students across Canada are Aboriginal (Harvey & Houle, 2006). The instructors providing Aboriginal cultural education then, are for the most part non-Aboriginal, which is problematic because non-Aboriginal people do not necessarily know enough about Aboriginal culture is or how to include it in a mainstream program (Lee, 2007; Zurozolo, 2010). It is difficult to include Aboriginal perspectives in curriculum in this situation because the colonial framework of the university or college makes change, especially radical change such as indigenizing methods of content delivery and curriculum development, difficult to implement. Empowering Aboriginal people in the current education system is therefore difficult to achieve, but even when it is possible, challenges exist when implementing these changes.

Another potential barrier to allowing students to engage in curriculum development is that some of the power and control of the educational environment is taken away from administration and teaching staff, who may not be willing to give up this power (Bovill et al., 2011a; Bovill et al., 2011b). The top-down power structure has always been in place in the education system and so has administrative and instructor control over lesson planning. Involving students in curriculum development leads to giving some of this control to students and the process of involving students in curriculum development is also time-consuming. This process may also lead to instructors not being able to cover the entire curriculum of the course, but researchers believe the benefits of integrating student perspectives in the curriculum, such as depth of

knowledge of content, outweigh any negative aspects of involving students in this process (Brinegar & Bishop, 2011; Justice, Rice, Roy, Hudspith, & Jenkins, 2009). Conversely, students who have participated in curriculum development projects in the past have also reported being concerned about not covering enough of the curriculum (Brown, 2011), and being threatened by the idea of having control in a classroom as opposed to passively receiving their education from an instructor (Shor, 1992). A systemic problem with having students develop curriculum is that this form of inquiry-based learning is challenging to implement because it is such a different model of delivery than universities and colleges offered in the past (Justice et al., 2009). It is also a model toward which many instructors and administrators may be opposed (Justice et al., 2009). Another challenge for instructors in curriculum development is use of the same or similar course material, assignments, and activities each time a course is delivered. The course should be re-created each time in order to ensure instructors obtain student contributions from each cohort (Bovill et al., 2011b). This also means much more work for instructors, especially for those who are used to delivering content in much the same way every year. Those who design curriculum for Aboriginal students must also consult the Aboriginal community when they develop programs for Aboriginal students.

One of the ways to ensure that Aboriginal cultural content embeds Aboriginal programs is to involve the local Aboriginal community in this process (Battiste, 2000; Lee, 2007; Lipka, 1991). In instances of community consultation, community members report having a feeling of ownership toward and a desire to be involved in the educational program that they have helped to produce (Goulet, 2001; Hookimaw-Witt, 1998; LaFrance, 1994; Richardson & Blanchet-Cohen, 2000; VanEvery-Albert, 2008). In

Agbo's (2002) study of Mohawks, researchers involved the local community of Akwesasne in the series of workshops that determined which cultural topics should be part of the new curriculum. Involving local Aboriginal people in the curriculum development process would help to ensure that the curriculum is relevant not only to Aboriginal people, but to the specific Aboriginal community where the program is run. For example, students in New Mexico also participated in an education program that was community based (Lee, 2007). Because the environmental issues were identified by community members, their education, as in Agbo's (2002) study, was relevant to the students' own communities, which is of benefit to both the students and the communities. Traditional Pathways to Health (Riecken et al., 2006) was also a community-based program that involved nine Aboriginal communities in western British Columbia. The community members involved in this initiative had complete control over the project and helped to ensure both traditional and contemporary local Aboriginal content were represented. Also, because the local, community-designed content of the program centred on issues in the community, such as addictions, the program was an act of resistance against these negative forces or behaviours (Riecken et al., 2006). Students and community members therefore reported being empowered by their participation in the program. In the joint program between Simon Fraser University and the Nicola Valley Institute of Technology (Price & Burtch, 2010), both students and the local Aboriginal community were involved in all stages of curriculum development. Both academic institutions saw the need to involve Aboriginals in curriculum development so that local, relevant curriculum could be incorporated into a new joint program that would be delivered by Simon Fraser and delivered in students' home communities in order to

increase the number of students enrolled in the program. Including the Aboriginal community in curriculum development ensures that the people know that their input in the education of their own children is valued. This also implies that people in Aboriginal communities are themselves valued, and the importance of making Aboriginal people realize their worth is another benefit of involving Aboriginal people in the education of their children. Because involving Aboriginal communities in the design of their own education helps Aboriginal people to know they have valid contributions to make and might lead to greater support for the programs by the community, which in turn might lead to greater participation and enthusiasm on the part of the students. From a social justice perspective, it is important that Aboriginal people participate in their own education because they have had so little opportunity to be involved in education in the past (Bovill et al., 2011a; Brade et al., 2003; Curwen Doige, 2001; Fielding, 2001; Kunkel, 2002).

Most of these studies also involve programs that are the result of partnerships between academic institutions or between these institutions and local stakeholders, both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal. Often, program developers try to involve all stakeholders in the development process to ensure that everyone who would be involved in the program can contribute to the process, including students in their home communities (Preston et al., 2012); and others such as teaching staff, administration, and students are also included when possible. Public school teachers, school administrators, and university instructors were all included in a partnership with the State University of New York in order to develop the Mohawk Education Curriculum Development Project (Agbo, 2002). All of the stakeholders collaborated in order to re-design existing

curriculum so that it would be more relevant to Aboriginal students and to promote cultural awareness of Aboriginal issues and tradition among non-Aboriginal staff. The stakeholders worked together to design curriculum that would be more culturally relevant to students in order to improve student retention and achievement (Agbo, 2002). In Lee's study of Pueblo Indians (2007), the partnership was between the local Pueblo community and university researchers. The university researchers were trying to determine how the students would respond to community-based education and the Aboriginal community was trying to address local environmental issues. As much as this partnership between university researchers and the local Aboriginal community was beneficial to the stakeholders, it was of even greater benefit to the students, who enjoyed their experiences in the program and became more involved in their community as a result of the project (Lee, 2007). The University of Victoria also partnered with the local Aboriginal community in developing Earthsongs (Kennedy, 2009). The course was developed in order to give students an opportunity to participate in Aboriginal cultural activities which were developed and delivered with the participation of Salish traditional musicians and elders to ensure the authenticity of the content of the course. Aboriginal music and art have been appropriated and adapted for purposes for which they were certainly never intended for many years, which, according to Haig-Brown (2010), is "the equivalent of colonial occupation of Indigenous art and design" (p. 930). One way of reclaiming this traditional art and music for Aboriginal people is to instruct people using valid knowledge and Aboriginal teaching methods so that the students will know the real reasons music and art are created and how to construct art projects. Traditional Pathways to Health (Riecken et al., 2006) involved educators, students, and members of the nine

Aboriginal communities that provided most of the students in the program. The researchers ensured that control over the program rested not with themselves, but with the Aboriginal communities involved. The focus of the project was community health and giving Aboriginal people the opportunity to improve the health of community members, as well as to raise awareness in the communities about community health. Community issues were also a focus of the Thompson Rivers University School of Nursing program (Mahara et al., 2011), which was re-developed through a partnership among Aboriginal nurses, nursing students, university educators, nurse educators, and elders from the Aboriginal community in Kamloops. Again, the goal of this collaboration was to increase awareness about issues in the Aboriginal community which would lead to greater understanding of Aboriginal clients on the part of both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal nurses who graduated from the program. In addition, one of the goals of the program was to increase Aboriginal student applicants to and graduates of the nursing program. Similarly, the joint program offered by Simon Fraser University and the Nicola Valley Institute of Technology was re-developed in order to increase the number of Aboriginal graduates from the university (Price & Burtch, 2010). It was also designed so that university programs could be infused with Aboriginal cultural content, which was also seen as a method of increasing the number of Aboriginal graduates from the university, and is one of the ways in which educational programming for Aboriginal students typically differs from mainstream education (Battiste et al., 2002; Brade et al., 2003; Newton, 2007; Preston et al., 2012; Riecken et al, 2006).

All of the studies added Aboriginal cultural content to their programs as part of the curriculum development process in order to improve their programs or while

developing new programs. The Mohawk Education Curriculum Development Project further determined that although their curriculum would be based in traditional Aboriginal knowledge, the curriculum would also have Western content so that Aboriginal students could function well in both worlds (Agbo, 2002). The Pueblo Indians (Lee, 2007), conversely, adapted their curriculum to such a degree that even traditional curricular subjects such as Mathematics, Social Studies, and Language Arts were learned only as they related to the project on which the students worked. The students were not enrolled in discrete courses because all of the learning was done in situ, which is similar to the way some Aboriginal children were educated traditionally (Kirkness, 1998; LaFrance, 1994; Lipka, 1991). Earthsongs (Kennedy, 2009) was also a program that consisted entirely of Aboriginal content, specifically, Aboriginal music and Aboriginal art. The students were taught how to construct instruments, how to play these instruments properly, and how to sing by Aboriginal cultural specialists, using traditional methods of instruction, such as oral repetition and rote learning (Kennedy, 2009). Urban Circle is also deeply rooted in Aboriginal culture, although its curriculum is designed to train students to work in Western professions such as teacher assistants, counselors, and family support workers (Koshyk, 2012). In addition to Aboriginal content, the program also has Aboriginal cultural advisors and Aboriginal instructors, so the students would likely be keenly aware that they are in a mainly Aboriginal educational environment. This strong Aboriginal presence would be more likely to encourage students to remain in the program and eventually to graduate because the environment would be so different from the mainstream education system. The Traditional Pathways to Health program (Riecken et al., 2006) has curriculum which relates solely to Aboriginal people within

Aboriginal communities, since the program is completed with the involvement and assistance of Aboriginal community members. Students and community members work together to develop and adapt the curriculum of the program over time. For example, the curriculum of the Thompson Rivers University School of Nursing is culturally-based and involved Aboriginal health professionals and community members in its development (Mahara et al., 2011). The mandate at the University also includes a plan to incorporate ongoing community consultation in future development of the program. Because local Aboriginal communities were involved in the development of curriculum, this curriculum also includes issues within these communities, which would likely benefit future interactions between Aboriginal clients, non-Aboriginal nurses, and Aboriginal nurses. Simon Fraser University developed a new program with the Nicola Valley Institute of Technology, which is an educational college located in a Salish community in British Columbia (Price & Burtch, 2010). Community members and students enjoyed the experience of developing curriculum in conjunction with non-Aboriginal academics from the university and the students who attended the program were successful (Price & Burtch, 2010). Aboriginal Territories in Cyberspace (Lamerman et al., 2010) also incorporated Aboriginal content into its curriculum in an attempt to empower students by having them design or modify video games that more accurately reflected traditional Mohawk lifestyles. Students interacted with each other while designing the games but also engaged the Aboriginal community while conducting their research into how to represent the Mohawk characters in the game accurately. In this process of collaboration, students were able to learn more about their culture and history from community members, but perhaps just as importantly, community members were given the

opportunity to share this knowledge with young people who were eager to learn about their culture and history.

Students in the Aboriginal Territories in Cyberspace program were also given the opportunity to engage in curriculum development and, in addition, this curriculum was based in their own culture (Lamerman et al., 2010). Both of these activities have been shown to contribute to success of Aboriginal students and satisfaction with their educational experience (Battiste et al., 2002; Newton, 2007; Preston et al., 2012; Riecken et al., 2006). Another program in which Aboriginal students participated to a great extent in curriculum development was the Traditional Pathways to Health program (Riecken et al., 2006), in which Aboriginal students worked collaboratively with community members in order to raise awareness of health and unhealthy behaviours in their own communities. The program was deliberately designed as a project to enable students and their communities to confront issues in their communities which were leading to poor health (Riecken et al., 2006). Aboriginal students were involved in the re-development of the nursing program at Thompson Rivers University School of Nursing (Mahara et al., 2011). The students were able to determine the curriculum of the program by participating in planning sessions designed to improve the program by making it more culturally respectful of Aboriginal people. The program ensured that graduates would receive education that was based in accurate and contemporary portrayals of Aboriginal people and not stereotypes or misunderstandings of Aboriginal people that continue to exist in mainstream education (Godlewska et al., 2010; Schick, 2010; Sykes, 2008). However, although the students participated in curriculum development in these studies, most of the students were not then allowed to determine how they would be taught in

these educational programs that they helped to develop. If students had been allowed to participate in these discussions, the curriculum they helped to develop might better reflect individual learning styles of students and so further enhanced the positive experiences students had in these programs. Only two of these studies allowed students to determine how they would be taught. In Traditional Pathways to Health, students developed their own research questions and designed and directed their own videos (Riecken et al., 2006). Although the students in this study had some control over how they constructed their knowledge, they did not have complete control. In the Skins (Lamerman et al., 2010) project, students were able to work both independently and collaboratively, while being responsible for their input. Students also conducted independent research and based their character design and behaviour according to their own interpretations of their research findings. This project had the highest level of student-directed learning of all of the studies, but students in this program had only limited contributions to the curriculum of the project.

There are many challenges that exist for instructors who want to add Aboriginal cultural content to Aboriginal programming and who want to involve Aboriginal students in determining the content of this programming. However, it is clear from the literature that the benefits of making education culturally relevant for Aboriginal students and by allowing them to determine their own curriculum should be measured against the changes educators and administrators would have to make to the current system. In many ways, the current system is not working for Aboriginal students. During the period from 2007-2010, the percentage of Aboriginal students who dropped out of high school was 22.6%, compared with only 8.5% of non-Aboriginal students (Statistics Canada, 2012). At the

university level, only 8% of Aboriginal people have a university degree, compared with 23% of the non-Aboriginal population (Statistics Canada, 2006). If we are to increase numbers of Aboriginal participation in the education system, then Aboriginal people must be allowed to meaningfully participate by reclaiming the education process of their own people. Aboriginal education must be allowed to incorporate the perspectives of Aboriginal students, instructors, and community members in a process which allows for the incorporation of Aboriginal culture into curriculum. Not to do so continues the policies of cultural genocide begun by residential schools and perpetuated by colonial models of education which continue to assimilate Aboriginal people by privileging Western curriculum and delivery over Aboriginal curriculum and delivery (Battiste, 2000; Cuthbert et al., 2002; Goulet, 2001; Hookimaw-Witt, 1998; Richardson & Blanchet-Cohen, 2000). According to Christensen (2011), "if you kill the Indian culture, you might as well kill the Indian because nothing about him [or her] is really him [or her]" (p. 13). It is important that we work toward involving Aboriginal people in the process of their own education so that Aboriginal students can be educated in a system that respects who they are and the contributions they can make toward their own education. Current models of Aboriginal education both in communities and in academic institutions will need to change in order to pay respect to the contributions Aboriginal people can make to the education of their own people.

Because Aboriginal education has been characterized by government control and mainstream curriculum for so long, Aboriginal educators and students need to be allowed to make greater contributions to their own education. In the next chapter I describe a

study that was designed to give students greater opportunity to engage in cultural activities in positive ways.

Chapter 3: Research Design and Method

Methodology

Education has the potential to be emancipatory, particularly for groups who have been oppressed, such as Aboriginal people. Furthermore, a knowledge democracy, as described by Pine (2009), consists of teachers and students working together to learn about themselves and their place in the world so that they can use this knowledge to help to create meaningful social change. Students need to be allowed to make real contributions and recommendations that will be implemented by the instructor in order to construct this knowledge and effect this meaningful change. Students who are active participants in their own education, according to Pine (2009), "often have compelling and profound insights into research problems [and will] generate different research questions, perspectives, and concerns" (p. 146) than instructors. In addition, Aboriginal students would be likely to generate different questions and concerns because of their unique perspective of history and contemporary culture.

In this chapter I describe action research methodology and the specific methods of this study, based on my own premise that Aboriginal people should have greater involvement in their own education in order to address the historically unfair relationship Aboriginal people have had with their own education. All of the data in this study was generated by Aboriginal students themselves through surveys, journals, and a focus group. I collated this data into themes which represent the students' impressions of the Aboriginal Music course and I will use this data for the purpose of my professional development to make future improvements to the course.

Principles of Action Research in Aboriginal Education

Action researchers strive to use relevant theories "in the service of a practice focused on achieving positive social change" (Brydon-Miller, Greenwood, & Maguire, 2003, p. 15). There have been positive changes in the area of Aboriginal education as the result of action research, and as a result, Aboriginal people have had a greater role in determining their own education (AMC, 2006; Antone, 2000; Chadwick & Rrurrambu, 2004; Kanu, 2002; Regnier, 1995; Riecken et al., 2006). Carson and Sumara (1997) identify three characteristics that differentiate action research projects from other types of research: to try to learn about the complexities of students' life experiences; to ask questions specifically about how students learn, understand, and make sense of their world; and to transform the current situation. This study incorporated all three of these characteristics because learning about students' life experiences, consultation of students throughout the course, and using student input to develop our curriculum were all part of the data that I collected throughout the study. Students who participated in this study made direct contributions to curriculum design and delivery in Aboriginal educational programming at our college, which, according to Pine (2009), is also characteristic of action research.

Involving Aboriginal people in the design and delivery of curriculum has also been an area of activity among action researchers who see the need to reform the current education system. Specifically, researchers have recognized the importance of giving community members a say in the decision-making process (Goulet, 2001; LaFrance, 1994; Hookimaw-Witt, 1998; Richardson & Blanchet-Cohen, 2000; VanEvery-Albert, 2008). Only community members know which educational programs would be most

culturally suitable for their own communities (Preston et al., 2012) because they are immersed in the culture of these communities. It is not surprising that researchers in Aboriginal education have found that when Aboriginal people design and deliver their own curriculum, which is Aboriginal-focused and relevant to the local community, there is an increase in enrolment, graduation, and student satisfaction (Canada Millennium Scholarship Foundation, 2004; Chadwick & Rrurrambu, 2004; Holmes, 2006). While it is necessary to work with the Aboriginal community when developing Aboriginal curriculum, it is also important to involve Aboriginal students in the development of their educational programs.

Involving Students in Curriculum Development

According to Cook-Sather (2002), it is vitally important to involve students throughout the curriculum development process, including planning, teaching, and representation of what students have learned. Students then feel more in control of their own education because they are personally invested and interested in their own education (Lee, 2007; McCuddy et al., 2008). Giving students this control and ownership is transformative (Kunkel, 2002; Piper, 2006). In addition to increasing feelings of confidence and ability, students who participate more fully in their own education also enjoy their learning experiences more, while at the same time increasing their own learning and retention (Kunkel, 2002). Students who are in control of their own learning also have the opportunity to share their own experiences and ideas with instructors (Bovill et al., 2001b; Fielding, 2001; Rudduck, 2007), which leads to students feeling valued in their own education. It is important that all students feel valued, but given the history of Aboriginal education, it is particularly important for Aboriginal students

(Antone, 2000; Battiste, 2000; Curwen Doige, 2001; Godlewska et al., 2010; Guenette & Marshall, 2008; Preston et al., 2012; Richardson & Blanchet-Cohen, 2000; Sykes, 2008). Students who are involved in planning their own education report having mainly positive experiences, principally relating to feelings of empowerment and greater understanding of the educational process.

According to Brinegar and Bishop (2011), when students were involved in the design and delivery of their own programs, they reported that they had more fun, had feelings of real collaboration with their instructors, felt pride about their involvement, and felt that the experience prepared them for their future because they were so heavily involved in making decisions and planning their program. Brown (2011) also conducted a study in which students designed curriculum themselves. These students stated that if the curriculum consisted of material that the students wanted to learn, they were more motivated to come to school, in addition, they believed that their reading and writing improved because they were interested in what they were studying, and that their creative thinking and research skills also improved as a result of designing their own curriculum. Bovill et al. (2011b) found that students who were involved in their own curriculum design were more confident and eventually grew to be more independent in their own learning. When students designed their own curriculum, they had more positive feelings toward the subject area (Brinegar & Bishop, 2011; Oliver-Hoyo & Allen, 2005) and felt that their enjoyment and learning in the course increased (Gleixner, Douglas, & Graeve, 2007). Millar and Osborne (1998) found that students designed curriculum that was related to their own personal interests, which increased their engagement with the subject matter and was a contributing factor in some of the students' decisions to pursue their

subject area at the post-secondary level. When students are involved in designing their own curriculum, they become more diligent and organized in their study habits and have a more positive attitude toward their education (Schloemer & Brenan, 2006).

Overall, from the literature, students felt that being involved in curriculum development was a positive experience. The experience had long-lasting effects on some of the students, who were able to see education from the perspective of educators, instead of being only passive recipients of their knowledge, as they had been in the past (Bovill et al., 2011b; Brinegar & Bishop, 2011). Students who develop curriculum also tend to focus on their own areas of interest, which helps them to be engaged with their curriculum and to feel more positive and involved in their own educational experience (Chan, 2001; Kunkel, 2002; Kuntz, 2005; McCuddy et al., 2008). Students are empowered when they participate actively in their own education and this contributes to a more positive overall educational experience. However, conducting action research in order to effect change in the classroom can be problematic if the researcher is also the instructor in the classroom.

Mitigating Position Power

In addition to being the researcher for this study, I am the instructor for the course under study, which poses potential problems. There is a possible ethical conflict in conducting research while at the same time teaching the participants in my study, but the purpose of my study is to improve my own teaching practices and the curriculum of the program through research, which are goals I have as a researcher and as an instructor. However, the goals of conducting research and the goals of teaching are not necessarily the same: “the primary goal of research is to understand; the primary goal of teaching is

to help students learn" (Wong, 1996, p. 23). A researcher, therefore, is concerned only with observation of student behaviour, but a teacher tries to be an agent of change in the lives of those students (Agbo, 2002; Deer, 2009; Goulet, 2001; Lipka, 1991; Regnier, 1995). However, several researchers in the action research movement have stated that "only by doing, by trying to teach another person, can the practice of teaching be understood" (Wong, 1996, p. 25), so only a teacher can truly understand the profession of teaching or the activities of other teachers, and, by extension, conduct research about teaching.

Unfortunately, instructors who are also researchers might then have an ethical conflict when helping their students to learn while trying to observe them in the classroom setting and remaining detached (Czarnocha, 2008). An instructor may maintain this detachment when he or she should really be helping students to learn, for example, in one study, a teacher-researcher continued to question a student whose answer was not quite correct in an attempt to allow the learning "phenomenon" to take place organically while he ignored the other students in the class who wanted to answer (Wong, 1996). It is possible, however, for teacher-researchers to be in the classroom without dividing themselves so completely into teacher and researcher roles; in fact, a teacher can be "moved at once to help students learn and intensely curious about teaching and learning [while at the same time] collecting information that can be used in subsequent analyses" (Wilson, 1995, p. 20). Teacher-researchers do not need to divide themselves into two identities because human beings are composed of a multitude of dimensions: "I do not assume roles unless I become an actor. Mother is not a role; teacher is not a role….When I became a teacher I entered a very special - and specialized -…relation"

(Noddings & Shore, 1984, p. 174). This special and specialized relation means that teachers have the ability to observe students as a researcher while acting as an agent of change in the lives of their students as a teacher; however, the teacher is also in a position of power, which leads to further ethical concerns.

Position power, according to McCroskey and Richmond (1983), is the unequal power relationship that exists between instructors and students because of the classroom's inherently hierarchical nature. Such is the level of power possessed by instructors that Shindler (2010) describes it as *in loco parentis* ("in the place of a parent"), especially when instructing children and young adults. Unfortunately, if the students feel that the instructor is the ultimate authority in the classroom, they may feel disempowered, and this disempowerment will likely affect how students view the instructor and the class (Shindler, 2010). Disempowerment of students is the opposite of what Aboriginal education is trying to achieve, so instructors of Aboriginal students should strive to make the power relationship equitable, if Aboriginal students are going to succeed. One way to make this power structure more fair is for instructors to empower students by sharing control with them (Frymier, Shulman, & Houser, 1996). Instructors can share control with students by giving them more options and more input: "When teachers provide students with choices or allow them to have input into the content covered or other aspects of the class, the teacher is sharing control" (Dobransky & Frymier, 2004, p. 212). In this study, I tried to mitigate my own position of power by encouraging students to participate more fully in their own education and by incorporating my being in a position of power into the research design of this project. For example, two of the data collection methods I used were journals and surveys. I had

no access to any of the data generated by either until the course was completed and I had already assigned grades to the students. I did not know which students had and which students had not participated in the study until the study was completed.

The next section of this chapter describes the methods followed to gather and analyze data for this study.

Method

Setting: Aboriginal Music Course

The College Studies program is a ten-month program that is designed to give Aboriginal students the academic background necessary to succeed in a variety of academic programs at our College. As stated previously, programs at the college include the following: trades (Carpentry, Electrical, Welding), paraprofessional programs (Dental Assistant, Legal Assistant, Teacher Assistant), and diploma programs specific to Aboriginal people (Aboriginal Language Specialist, Aboriginal Self-Government Administration, Computer Applications for Business). Many Aboriginal students take the preparatory program as an entry requirement to the academic programs at the college because they require upgrading in basic mathematical, writing, and science skills. The Aboriginal Music course was piloted as a new course in the program in September 2010 in an effort to enhance the students' learning environment by increasing the amount of Aboriginal cultural content in the program.

This study is based on the second offering of the Aboriginal music course, which ran from September 2, 2011 to January 27, 2012. The course was held for three hours every Friday afternoon from 1:00 to 4:00 pm. in the Aboriginal Student Centre. The Centre is a large space designed to simultaneously accommodate students from all of the

programs in Aboriginal Education for cultural events such as feasts and pipe ceremonies. In addition to musical performances in the Aboriginal Student Centre, our class also attended public performances off-campus in various locations. For example, students attended a three-day pow-wow; students also attended musical performances in smaller venues around the city. When possible, we attended these events as a group, but we often had to meet at these events because they were held in the evenings or on the weekends. Most performances were held at the college.

I invited and received consent from 12 of the 15 students who were enrolled in the Aboriginal Music course. As part of their participation in this study, all of the students who consented to take part participated in focus groups, completed surveys and kept journals. I did not know which students had consented to participate in the study and which had not until the course was completed. I used data only from the students who had given their consent to participate in this study at the beginning of the course, but all students participated in all classroom activities whether they were participating in the study or not.

Participants.

The participants in this study were students in a transition program at a college and were all high school graduates and came to the program from Aboriginal communities all over the province. Pseudonyms were given to each of the students in this study to ensure anonymity. Ethical review procedures for both The University of

Western Ontario and the college were followed to ensure the safety of participants and that I met all ethical requirements of both of these institutions[3].

Procedure

During the first class, students were told about the study, including my research questions and how I would be collecting data. I also had students collaboratively determine what styles of music and even which specific performers they would like to see in the class. In addition, students identified which traditional musical instruments they would like to make in the class. I had the students make these decisions because I wanted to allow students to infuse their perspective into the curriculum of the course.

The students identified musical performers from a variety of genres as people they would like to see in the class, and I accommodated them where possible. Some of the performers in the course included Indian City, composed of members of Eagle & Hawk (country rock band), the Gaudry Boys (Metis fiddle music), and Wab Kinew (hip hop mixed with traditional hand drum singing). Students also had the opportunity to attend a pow-wow, which was a major cultural event held over three days. As well, students had the opportunity to participate in Aboriginal Music Week, which consisted of different concerts every night performed by innovative Aboriginal musicians such as Joey Stylez, an Aboriginal hip-hop artist, and the Electric Pow-Wow, which was traditional pow-wow music fused with hip hop music accompanied by a light show and held in a club. Students also participated in making hand drums and Aboriginal flutes in the course, both

[3] The ethical review approval can be found at Appendix A (University of Western Ontario). The ethical approval certificate for the college has not been appended to preserve anonymity.

of which were facilitated by elders who provided cultural teachings as well as technical expertise.

In addition to watching musical performances and reflecting upon these experiences though weekly journals, students prepared presentations about various aspects of Aboriginal Music and demonstrated their own expertise as musicians and artists through performances in class. One of the students demonstrated his skills as a pow-wow grass dancer and other students demonstrated skills at Metis jigging and traditional crafts. These experiences likely helped to increase the self-confidence in all of the students because they saw how talented their Aboriginal peers in the class were – something that has been shown to increase student pride in who they are as Aboriginal people (Brade et al., 2003; Corbiere, 2000; Riecken et al., 2006). The students also conducted research about various aspects of Aboriginal music and the information they found was supplemented by material I provided.

The students completed reflective journals about their experiences in the course each week and also participated in a focus group, where they reflected about their experiences, at the end of the course. The journals were collected and retained in a locked cabinet by the secretary in our program area so that I would not have access to the journal data until the study was completed. The journals were unsigned in order to protect student anonymity. In addition, students completed two anonymous surveys, one at the midpoint of the course and the other at the end of the course; these were also administered and retained in a locked cabinet by the secretary. Following the completion of the course, I used the written data from the journals and the surveys and transcribed data from the focus group as data sources for this study. When the course was completed

and marks were submitted, I had access to the data. I manually coded the data from the journals, the focus group, and the answers to the open-ended questions from the surveys into categories.

I developed the categories of coding as I went along; that is, the categories were determined by the data the students provided in the study, although I did have *a priori* codes because of the pre-existing questionnaire questions and focus group questions (Gibbs, 1988) in this study. I began coding by using these questions to help me to establish categories at the outset of my coding process and based these codes on themes or topics that emerged during my data analysis, as well as the repetition of terms, phrases, ideas, concepts, and keywords (Charmaz, 2006). Most of my coding was descriptive (deciding what the data is actually saying), but I also attempted to use theoretical coding to try to determine the reasons certain events happened; for example, when students reported not enjoying an aspect of the course, I tried to determine why (Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

In order to keep my coding organized, I kept a list of the codes that I developed as I went along, as well as a short definition of each code. This allowed me to compare new codes to the pre-existing codes to see if it could in fact fit in with a code I had already established (Gibbs, 1988). Eventually I developed a complete list of codes, which I then organized into groups, making the data easier to analyze (Charmaz, 2006). I also kept written notes as a running account of my ongoing data analysis and thoughts I had about how the codes were related to each other. Unlike grounded theory, however, of which Charmaz is a proponent, I did have pre-existing theories about the data, so I did not develop any hypotheses based on the data generated in the study alone.

Following the data analysis of the focus group, journals, and surveys, I organized the verbal data from this study into seven codes, which were: LIKE (enjoyed the activity), IMPB (Impact on Program), INPUT (student input into course, INT (interesting), LEARN (learned something), NONE (nothing negative to say), and ORG (course organization). I then organized the codes into three categories based on the focus group questions. The three categories were: Positive Experiences, Negative Experiences/ Improvements to Course, and Impact on Program.

The four sources of data by code were organized into in four categories, each identified by its data source: FG (Focus Group), J (Journal), SSM (Student Survey Midterm) and SSF (Student Survey Final). I further specified the data source by identifying which question students were responding to, for example, FG 1 refers to Focus Group Question 1 and SSM 1 refers to Student Survey Midterm Question 1. I numbered the journal respondents (Subjects 1 through 7) and specified the journal data source by identifying journal responses by Subject, so JS 1 is a response made in the journal by Subject 1. I also used abbreviations to identify which activity or performer the student was referring to when they made their comment. These are the abbreviations: GB (Gaudry Boys), PWD (Pow-wow demonstration), WK (Wab Kinew), TP (Tracy Parenteau), AMW (Aboriginal Music Week), MUS (Museum), APTN (Aboriginal Peoples Television Network), and TPW (3-Day Pow-wow).

A typical coded comment, then, would be represented in the following way: LIKE: “They were fun to see” (JS 1, WK), which is a comment under the code “LIKE” made in a Journal by Subject 1 about Wab Kinew. I used this system to classify every comment made by a student in the focus group, in the journals, or in the open-ended

responses from the first or second surveys. I also combined comments together under one comment and identified the multiple sources of the comment, for example, NONE: "Nothing!" (SSM 1; SSM 5; SSF 5): this comment was made by a student in Student Survey Midpoint Question 1, another student in Student Survey Midpoint Question 5, and another student in Student Survey Final Question 5. The complete list of coded student responses is in Appendix G.

Instruments

Surveys.

I designed one survey for the students which they completed twice, one at the midpoint of the course and the other at the end of the course. The survey was designed so that students would have an opportunity to relate their impressions about the course, the instructor, the musicians, and their educational process. In addition to trying to help students to know that I valued their input, I wanted them to be actively involved in developing and refining the course, toward the ultimate goal of improving their overall student experience in the course.

The surveys were divided into three sections: the first section consisted of seven Likert-type scale questions that related to student impressions of the content of the course, the second section consisted of seven more questions that related to student impressions of the musical performance, and the third section consisted of five open-ended questions covering areas such as teaching, content, delivery, likes, dislikes, and suggestions for future improvement, where the students answered questions in greater detail. The tabulated surveys are in Appendix D. In order to maintain student anonymity, I did not have access to the tabulated surveys until the end of the course.

Journals.

Journaling is an individual activity, and allowed students to provide feedback about the course while outside of the influence of other students in the cohort (Rubin & Babbie, 2008), and they may be more likely to express opinions that are contrary to the rest of the group (Elias, Ray, & Razin, 2005). Surveys, like journals, are also completed individually, but journal entries are typically longer than open-ended question responses in surveys and so have more potential for bringing out honest responses from people through the process of writing (Walker, 2006). Students wrote journal entries once per week about their classroom experiences for that week. I developed a list of guiding questions for students while writing their journals and this list of questions is in Appendix E. Once I had access to the journals, following the completion of the course, I collated the data within them with the data from the surveys and the focus group.

Focus Group.

I conducted a focus group with the students at the conclusion of the course in order to learn about the students' impressions of the course to inform future offerings of the course. I also wanted the students to know that their input was important to me as their instructor and important to the College and that their input would have impacts on future offerings of the course. I wanted to know what we had done well and any areas in which we could improve. The focus group was semi-structured so that, according to Rubin and Babbie (2008), participants would feel less restricted and might be more likely to offer more varied information.

I identified themes in the student responses data and prepared a summary of the focus group discussion that I made available to any students who wanted a copy. The

focus group was an attempt to ensure that the course as delivered was what the students actually wanted from the course. The focus group was important not only because it helped to determine the future content of the course, but also because it provided a way to involve students directly in the curriculum planning process. I also wanted to convey the message to students that their input in the course was valued. The list of questions for the focus group is in Appendix F.

I used content analysis to look for themes in the data generated by the students from the two surveys, the journals, and the focus group. In the next chapter, I identify the three major themes that I identified from this analysis and relate the findings from my study to findings of other researchers who have added cultural content to Aboriginal programs and allowed students to participate in curriculum development.

Chapter 4: Findings

Participants in this study had several opportunities to relate their experiences and impressions of the Aboriginal Music course to the researcher. The students provided written feedback to the researcher in two student surveys, one at the midpoint and the other at the end of the course. Students also provided written comments about the course in the form of journals that they maintained throughout the course and to which the researcher had access once the course was completed. Once the course was complete, students participated in a focus group. The researcher then used all four of these documents as data sources for the study, but not until the course was completed. The student comments from the journals, surveys, and focus group were coded into categories in order to organize and analyze the data.

Surveys

The students completed two identical surveys, one at the midpoint of the course and the other at the end of the course. Section 1 of the surveys related to the content of the Aboriginal Music course and consisted of seven questions; Section 2 related to the musical performances throughout the course. Students responded to the questions in Sections 1 and 2 of the surveys by choosing one of four choices organized using a Likert-type scale: Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, and Strongly Disagree. Section 3 consisted of five open-ended questions where students could elaborate upon their impressions of the course in some detail. Section 3 responses (open-ended questions) were verbal (written) and were grouped together with the journals and focus group responses and

coded into categories by the researcher. These are also discussed separately in this Survey Results section.

Section 1: Course Content

The student responses to Section 1 of the survey show that students responded very well to the content of the Aboriginal Music course, with the majority of student comments falling under the "Strongly Agree" (SA) or "Agree" (A) categories. Some responses fell under the "Disagree" (D) category, but students did not respond "Strongly Disagree" (SD) to any questions.

Students agreed that the course content was relevant to them as Aboriginal students (Question 1): 11 SA and 13 A. Students also overwhelmingly agreed that learning about their Aboriginal culture had been a good experience (Question 4): 18 SA and 6 A. One of the criticisms of Aboriginal education has been that Aboriginal students cannot relate to curriculum because it is often culturally irrelevant to, so students commenting that the content of the course was relevant to them is a positive step.

Students also felt that their personal input into the course was important and useful (Question 2): 6 SA and 18 A, and that they had a strong voice in determining curriculum (Question 3): 9 SA, 11 A, and 4 D, so most students felt that they provided useful input into the development of curriculum. As well, students responded positively to feeling involved in the planning process of their education (Question 6): 8 SA and 16 A. These mostly positive responses show that the students enjoyed the experience of being involved as Aboriginal students in curriculum development, which is another goal of Aboriginal-controlled education (Bovill et al., 2011b; Kirkness, 1998; Kunkel, 2002; Lee, 2007; McCuddy et al., 2008).

Students felt that the instructor could have been better at giving prompt feedback on assignments (Question 7): 8 SA, 13 A, and 3 D, which was definitely an issue because students also made reference to it in the surveys and focus groups. The Aboriginal Music course has now been made a permanent part of the transition program (Question 5), as students strongly felt it should: 8 SA and 16 A.

The students responded very positively to the content and their ability to make contributions in the Aboriginal Music course, as the research in the area of Aboriginal Education suggested; they felt empowered in the process of determining content, felt positively about learning more about their culture, and felt the content of the course was relevant to them, which are all goals that Aboriginal education should try to try to meet when educating Aboriginal students. The student responses to Section 1: Course Content are combined in Table 1 for a total of 24 responses, 12 from the first survey and 12 from the second survey.

Section 2: Musical Performances

Students in the Aboriginal Music course responded very positively to the musical performances. As in Section 1 (Course Content), student responses to the musical performances were mostly "Strongly Agree" (SA), or "Agree" (A). There were a few responses under "Disagree", but no responses under "Strongly Disagree" (SD). Students reported that the musical performances were enjoyable and interesting (Question 1): 16 SA and 8 A and that performers allowed students to interact with them in meaningful ways (Question 2). The students also reported feeling proud to be Aboriginal while watching Aboriginal musicians perform in the course (Question 3): 22 SA and 2 A, a comment supported by the literature. Aboriginal students feel empowered when they

Table 1

Student Responses to Section 1 of the Surveys

Survey Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1. The course content was relevant to me as an Aboriginal person	11	13	0	0
2. I felt that personal input was important and useful	6	18	0	0
3. I had a strong voice in determining classroom performances and other activities	9	11	4	0
4. Learning about my culture has been a good experience	18	6	0	0
5. The Aboriginal Music course should be a permanent part of the program	16	8	0	0
6. I feel involved in the planning process of my education	8	16	0	0
7. The instructor gives prompt feedback on assignments	8	13	3	0

Note. The student responses to Section 1: Course Content are the combined results from the first and second student surveys (24 total responses: 12 from each survey).

see other Aboriginal people succeeding at something, such as creating music, so this is a positive experience for students that contributes to a greater feeling of pride in their Aboriginal identity (Corbiere, 2000; Riecken et al., 2006; Sinnema, 2004). Most students also reported that they felt that they learned more about Aboriginal culture as a result of taking the course (Question 4): 7 SA and 15 A. One of the goals of infusing Aboriginal curriculum with cultural content is to increase student enjoyment of their education because if students enjoy their learning experience, they will be more likely to succeed (Bovill et al., 2011; Brinegar & Bishop, 2011).

The majority of students also reported that they enjoyed seeing the performers because they knew that they had helped to choose who would perform in the Aboriginal Music class (Question 5): 9 SA, 14 A, 1 D. Participating in curriculum development was a positive experience for students; in fact, participating in the Aboriginal Music class also improved the student experience in the program as a whole for most students (Question 6): 10 SA, 11 A, 3 D. There were, however, three students who felt that being in the Aboriginal Music class did not improve their experience in the program. Some students were not able to attend musical events such as pow-wows and concerts outside of class because of obligations such as daycare or employment. While I do not know for certain, I wonder if these are the students who responded negatively to this question because the great majority of the other student responses are so positive. It is also possible that these students did not correlate their experiences in the Aboriginal Music class with their overall experiences of the program.

Students agreed that they would recommend the course to other students (Question 7): 14 SA and 10 A. Empowering the students in their own education

improved the educational experience for the majority of the students, as did involving students in the development of curriculum by having the students play a part in deciding who would perform for them in the course. The student responses to Section 2: Musical Performances are combined in Table 2 for a total of 24 responses, 12 from the first survey and 12 from the second survey.

Section 3: Open-Ended Questions

I combined the student responses to the open-ended questions of the survey with the written responses to the journals and the oral responses to the focus group and coded these responses into categories using the coding technique developed by Charmaz (2006) in her book, *Constructing grounded theory: A practical guide through qualitative analysis*. These will be described in greater detail below in the section entitled "Coded Responses" which will follow the Journal Results and Focus Group Results sections, but are described here individually. Not all students responded to all open-ended questions in the surveys.

The responses to Section 3 of the surveys were very positive, although mostly brief. Students reported having positive experiences in the Aboriginal Music course and made suggestions about how the course could be improved in the future. The responses to Section 3 of the surveys are combined in this section, as were the responses to Section 1 and to Section 2. In Question 1, I asked students what they would change about the course and what they would keep the same. Most students responded that they would change nothing about the course, would keep everything about the course the same, and generally made positive comments about the course, such as "it's awesome!", "it's fun" and "it is fine". Some students suggested to "make assignments on Music", "maybe

Table 2

Student Responses to Section 2 of the Surveys

Survey Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1. The musical performances are enjoyable and interesting	16	8	0	0
2. The performers allow students to interact with them in a meaningful way	8	16	0	0
3. I feel proud to be Aboriginal when I see so many diverse Aboriginal performers	22	2	0	0
4. I have learned more about my culture as a result of taking this course	7	15	2	0
5. I enjoyed seeing the performers because I know I helped to choose who would perform in the class	9	14	1	0
6. My experience in the program has been improved because of the Aboriginal Music class	10	11	3	0
7. I would recommend this course to other students	14	10	0	0

Note. The student responses to Section 2: Musical Performances are the combined results from the first and second student surveys (24 total responses: 12 from each survey).

more assignments!" and to have "maybe more performers". Students reported that the course was "fun and learn [sic] us our culture" and referring to making hand drums and flutes: "it gets exciting when making new things". All of the student comments under Question 1 were positive.

In Question 2, I asked students if having input in the development of the course was a positive or negative experience. Other than one student who responded, "I don't know", all of the students reported that having input in the development of the course was a positive experience for them, including one who said the Aboriginal Music course was "so relaxing and something I need [for] a long week of getting screamed at", which is not the best comment to hear. One student also commented that it was a positive experience "because it gave everyone's input. And also helped people talk amongst each other". One student reported that having input into the class "made the class more interactive", and another reported that the course "brought the students closer, as in talking to each other". For these students, participating in the Aboriginal Music course helped them to feel a sense of community in the course, which is one of the benefits of including Aboriginal cultural content in curriculum (Battiste, 2000; Lee, 2007; Lipka, 1991). One student reported that taking the course was a positive experience because the content offered him the change to "learn something [that's] what I wanted to know" and another student reported that Aboriginal music was "something interesting we don't have [that] in our community", so for at least two of the students, the course helped them to gain knowledge about Aboriginal culture and this course was a new opportunity for them to do that.

In Question 3, I asked students if taking the Aboriginal Music course improved their experience in the program, and, if so, how this had improved their experience. All of the students responded that taking the Aboriginal Music course did improve their experience in the program, for a variety of reasons, ranging from feelings of enjoyment to feelings of pride and empowerment as Aboriginal people. They made such comments as "because I can enjoy seeing new things at the end of the week", "it has introduced me to many types of music, I enjoyed listening to different types of performers", and "it has made me get more experienced in more culture things". As well, the students enjoyed the crafts and cultural events, such as pow-wows and Aboriginal crafts: "because we got to make cultural stuff and learn the meaning of them at the same time", "it has made me get more experienced in more culture things", and "a lot of Aboriginal student [sic] don't know about that and it keep [sic] the culture life in every one of us". Students also enjoyed going off-campus to take part in cultural events: "because we go places. We learn about our culture and went to the pow-wow". Students also reported that taking part in the course made them feel better about themselves as Aboriginal people: "because I was proud of who we are" and "it made me feel like this is how this feels to be doing this. It made to feel better about yourself". Two other students commented that the course was a relaxing experience: "this is like relax and chill out, listen to music or watch performers" and "after tough courses from Monday-Thursday, it gave me a class to look forward to". The students had positive experiences in the course, and some of these experiences impacted them on deeper levels such as feeling pride in their own culture, which researchers have identified as leading to higher academic achievement (Brade et

al., 2003) and higher levels of self-esteem, which is empowering for Aboriginal students (Brade et al., 2003; Corbiere, 2000; Riecken et al., 2006).

In Question 4, I asked students what they liked the most about the course and what they liked the least. One student reported enjoying "seeing new things" in the course. Many of these students were from the north and had not had the same opportunities as other students to go to concerts and other cultural events. Another student enjoyed "doing work about my culture", which he or she may not have had opportunities to do before. Another student enjoyed "the musicians who came in", and several students liked that so many of the concerts and other events took place outside of the school: receiving "tickets to go to small concerts", "being able to get out of the school" to "different places each class", and going on "trips to go see something". Another student reported that he or she "like the trips". One of the students also liked "going to APTN (Aboriginal Peoples Television Network) and seeing what goes on in there". One student reported "feeling how people feel", which may refer to the musical performances. Other students enjoyed making the instruments: "making projects", "doing art and making stuff I never made" and "making new things". Students disliked "the waiting to see new things" (some of the performers were late and students had to wait for one or two hours on more than one occasion) and "presenting in front of the class" (students had to do two PowerPoint presentations in front of the class, which was a new experience for many of them, and one that not all students enjoyed). Another student "didn't like it when my black clothes got messy. We need aprons!" because some of the crafts we made, such as drums and masks, were quite messy.

In Question 5, I asked students what they would suggest to improve the Aboriginal Music course for the future. Some students responded "Nothing", but others had suggestions such as "instruments in class", "more trips toward the cultural areas", "more learning about Aboriginal activities", and "more arts and crafts". This year's offering of the Aboriginal Music course is now called "Aboriginal Music and Art" and mixes Music and Art together so that students are playing or listening to live music some weeks and creating art projects on other weeks. Students also asked for more written assignments: "More written work", "maybe more assignments", "Do more assignments on Music on the Internet", and "More reading, writing". Students requesting more assignments may seem unusual, but in my estimation it is due to students having trouble adjusting to a less structured academic environment such as the Aboriginal Music class. Students may not have had many prior formal learning experiences that were so experiential. However, I missed the opportunity to follow up with students and establish any direct links so it remains undetermined in this study. The tabulated surveys, including the answers to open-ended questions, are in Appendix D.

Journals

Students completed journal entries at the end of every week, which the researcher collected following the completion of the study. The students wrote about their impressions of the musical performances in the classroom as well as other activities, such as attending concerts and other cultural events. The researcher was unaware which students were participating in the study and which did not until the study was completed. Moreover, I remained unaware of who wrote the journals and who did not, since there was no identifying information on the journals (e.g. names).

Only seven of the 12 participants in the study completed journal entries, although the students were given class time to write them. As well, not all of the students who did complete journals were present in class for every event, so there are some performances or cultural activities that no students wrote about in their journals. Students also wrote about non-musical activities such as trips to the zoo and to the museum, but the students did enjoy these experiences. I have organized the data for this section by performer or event and combined student responses together under these categories.

Journal Entries: Gaudry Boys

The Gaudry Boys are a three-piece group of two Metis brothers and one cousin who play fiddle music and encourage audience members to learn to jig and to square dance.

Julie[4] found the music interesting "because I don't hear this kind of music being played every day" and Shannon enjoyed the performance because she "enjoyed listening to the fiddle and listening to their stories. I would have danced if I knew how to jig". Elizabeth found the performance interesting because "they were interactive with the students, got the groove going and got people to dance". Connor enjoyed the Gaudry Boys the most, "just because they had my sister jigging around, which was pretty fun. Overall it was a great performance". The students enjoyed this performance because it was high-energy and involved the audience in the performance, even offering an autographed CD to the best jigger among the students.

[4] Because the journal reports were anonymously submitted to protect the students' identities, I have assigned each a pseudonym and a gender to each for ease of reporting.

Journal Entries: Pow-wow Demonstration

The students had the opportunity to watch pow-wow in the class, many of them for the first time. Julie wrote about finding "the suits and bright colours" interesting and being "surprised that one of our classmates joined in". The student who joined in was a former member of the pow-wow group (Summer Bear Dance Troupe) who came to our class. Brent wrote about his experience of dancing with the pow-wow group: "I enjoyed dancing with them but every time I dance with them I'm the first to dance but it's still awesome [be]cause I'm wearing my brother['s] outfit who passed away two years ago", which is one of the admissions that people are more likely to make in journals rather than in public events such as focus groups (Elias et al., 2005).

Journal Entries: 3-Day Pow-wow

In addition to the pow-wow troupe who came to our classroom to perform for us, students also have the opportunity to attend a three-day pow-wow, which is a major cultural celebration that takes place over three days in a large arena which can accommodate thousands of spectators.

Walter said this: "my first time going to a big event". He reported that the pow-wow was "awesome" and that he "stayed there for a long time". Walter learned that "there are so many different dancers, traditional dancers, sundancers, and hoop dancers" and he "liked the outfits". As mentioned above, not all Aboriginal people are familiar with all aspects of Aboriginal culture, so the Aboriginal Music course provided an opportunity for some students to experience some cultural activities for the first time. Shannon also does not attend pow-wows often: "I don't usually go to pow-wows and I enjoyed watching all the drum groups and all types of dancers". Unfortunately, the

students who wanted to attend the pow-wow received only one ticket each, so Shannon remarked that she "just didn't like the fact that I went by myself". Due to limited funds, it was not possible to give more than one ticket to students for most events.

Journal Entries: Wab Kinew

Wab Kinew is an Ojibway rapper and singer/songwriter and on-air broadcaster on CBC Radio and CBC Television. He performs using a guitar and a hand drum and fuses pow-wow music with rap. For this performance, Wab brought Lorenzo, who is his musical collaborator.

Julie enjoyed Wab and Lorenzo because "they were fun to see". Julie enjoyed the fusion of pow-wow and rap: "The most interesting thing about them is the way they sing and mix music. I learned that mixing different kinds of music can be awesome". Elizabeth also enjoyed Wab and Lorenzo because of their "unique style of hip-hop and rap music". In fact, Elizabeth wrote that "this is one of the best performers I believe we had. Their music was very relaxing and the words were very real". People in the audience did appear genuinely to enjoy this performance.

Journal Entries: Tracy Parenteau and J. J. Lavallee

Tracy Parenteau is an Ojibway country singer who performs her own songs and often collaborates with J.J. Lavallee, who is a local Metis fiddle player. The two of them performed together for the students.

Shannon thought that "she's very talented" and she "enjoyed listening to her [Tracy] and her friend J. J. Lavallee". Shannon was the only student who wrote about them in her journal.

Journal Entries: Aboriginal Music Week

Aboriginal Music Week is held every year and showcases Aboriginal talent in a variety of genres, including traditional music such as fiddling, Inuit throat singing, and pow-wow music, but usually in fusion with more modern styles of music such as rap and hip hop. The students received free tickets to the concerts they wanted to attend.

Shannon identified Aboriginal Music Week as "my favorite, we got to see Joey Stylez (hip hop) and many other performers. Every one of them gave me the chills (which is a good thing). The throat singer was awesome". The throat singer was Tagaq, who fuses traditional Inuit throat singing with hip hop. Monique "had a great time listening to them sing, fiddle, and throat sing". Monique was also excited to see Joey Stylez and Aly Fontaine, "that is from my reserve". One of the positive aspects of the Aboriginal Music Week festival is that many of the performers are local artists. Brent characterized Aboriginal Music Week as "the best week…where all Aboriginal[s] are recognized". Brent regretted not seeing more Oji-Cree entertainers because "we need more Oji-Cree stars too". Attending Aboriginal Music Week is a great benefit for students because the performers are very well-known and we would likely never be able to afford to have them perform in our classroom setting.

Journal Entries: Manitoba Museum

Our class went to the Manitoba Museum in order to see the Aboriginal artifacts and cultural displays there, including sacred ceremonial objects and instruments.

Shannon "had fun there, getting lost but learning interesting things about our history. I enjoy going on trips like that". Monique "enjoyed going to the museum because it was interesting". Monique thought "it was interesting to see how things were

being used back then". Connor also enjoyed the museum, because "I liked seeing all the old artifacts". The museum gave students an opportunity to see Aboriginal artifacts, and some students had never seen these because it was their first trip to a museum.

Journal Entries: APTN (Aboriginal Peoples Television Network)

APTN is a national television network that produces and televises programs that are specifically made by and for Aboriginal people, and we had a guided tour of the studio, including the set where the national news program is produced. The students sat in the news anchors' chairs while other students had the opportunity to operate the camera while learning about the processes of television production.

Monique "enjoyed the APTN and seeing how they broadcast". Monique also "got to see where they go on TV. We got to see how they put on commercials and [sic] another studio, in Alberta I think". Connor also enjoyed APTN because "it was fun, the most interesting part would probably be when we went to the newsroom and seen [sic] where they filmed it". Our visit to the television studio was a unique opportunity to see Aboriginal people working in the television industry, producing Aboriginal programs for Aboriginal audiences.

In summary, the journals yielded good data, but likely would have yielded richer data if I had had access to them before the end of the course because I would have known how brief the entries were and how many students were not actually completing them. Still, it was an opportunity for students to reflect individually on their experiences in the Aboriginal Music course.

Focus Group

Ten of the 12 participants in the study participated in the focus group, which I conducted after the course was completed. I have a sense that because the pizzas I ordered arrived early, this might have had a negative effect upon the depth of student responses. The focus group consisted of six questions, which the students answered in small groups and then made more contributions when we all come together in a big group. I collated the answers from the focus group and produced a short report for the students to review following the completion of the focus group. I have also coded the data from the focus group, the open-ended answers from the surveys, and the journals and created themes from the study, which I have described below. The following is the focus group answers grouped by questions.

In Question 1, I asked students to describe any positive experiences they had in the Aboriginal Music course and why these experiences were positive. By extension, I also asked what we could do in the future to ensure that students continue to have these positive experiences. The students identified field trips, performers, and bands as their most positive experiences in the course. One student responded that the performances were "the most positive because it allowed us to interact with others in a positive way". Another student reported that positive interaction with the other students was a positive experience: "We learned about our history a lot, and communicated a lot with others. Because it was a good experience". This positive interaction with their peers was a healthy outcome of the course, and researchers have found that this positive peer interaction also leads to increases in self-esteem for peers (Battiste, 2000; Lee, 2007; Lipka, 1991). In order to ensure students continue to have positive experiences in the

course, one student suggested that students could "do more activities that involve learning about our culture". By this, the student may have meant increasing the amount of traditional Aboriginal spirituality in the course, which has always proven to be somewhat difficult because so many of the students in all of our programs, not just the transition program, are Christian. This issue will likely always pose somewhat of a challenge to instructors trying to incorporate cultural activities into curriculum, but this does not mean that it is an impossible task.

In Question 2, I asked students about negative experiences they had in the course and why these experiences were negative, as well as what we could do in the future to have fewer of these negative experiences. Most of the responses to this question indicated that the students had no negative experiences in the course, other than not meeting often enough: "Negative because we only have it once a week. Have it more than once a week", which is actually a positive comment about the course. The only negative experience one student reported was "last-minute 30% assignments, it would be nice to have more notice", but this did not happen in this course, and I never did find out to what this student was referring.

In Question 3, I asked students what changes could be made to the course in order to improve it, why these changes would be necessary, and how making these changes would improve the program. Students suggested planning to go to concerts and other events away from the campus "together in a group, not separate. This will improve the program because it encourages everyone to come to events". It would have been even better if we could have travelled together, but the college has no vehicles large enough to accommodate everyone. Also, many of the events took place in the evenings or on

weekends. One student also suggested "more assignments, just to make the class more structured". This has been implemented in the current offering of the Aboriginal Music course.

In Question 4, I asked students if taking the Aboriginal Music course had an impact on their overall experience of the program and what these positive and negative impacts were. One student responded that "this course made the program more fun". Another student responded that "it gave me a class to look forward to on a Friday". Another student responded that "it made time fly because it's fun. It hasn't had a negative impact on us, what's negative about music?". The students who responded to this question all reported positive experiences with the Aboriginal Music course. The students had fun in this course, which is an important element in students' decisions to stay enrolled in a program (Brinegar & Bishop, 2011).

In Question 5, I asked students if there were styles of music they would have liked to have seen in the course but had not. Students identified heavy metal, hip-hop, throat singing, and drummers as styles of music they had not seen. Students had the opportunity to see these styles, but only if they had chosen to attend Aboriginal Music Week events or the 3-day pow-wow. The problem was that both of these events took place in the evening and/or on the weekend, and not all students were able to attend these due to child care concerns.

In Question 6, I asked students for any further comments. The students did not have any further suggestions for the course, but they did take the opportunity to express their enjoyment of the course: "This is the bomb", "This was an awesome class", and "This course was very well organized". I believe one of the reasons students enjoyed the

Aboriginal Music course, besides being involved in curriculum development and having Aboriginal culture added to their program, is that the course was very different from any course the students would have taken in the past. There have always been opportunities for students to participate in traditional cultural activities here at the college, but this is probably the first time students have been able to receive credit for a course that provides these opportunities. There is no doubt that the Aboriginal Music course has been a very innovative and popular elective for students in the program.

Themes Within Student Responses

I used coding to analyze the verbal data generated by the written answers students provided from journals and questionnaires and the verbal answers students provided in the focus group. I used a method of coding developed by Charmaz (2006), in which I used the data itself to find out what the themes from the data were, as opposed to pre-determining categories and trying to make the data fit into these categories.

Coded Student Responses

Theme 1: Positive Experiences

Code: LIKE

Many students reported having fun during this course. The students enjoyed going on field trips, watching the performers, and in the course in general. The comments in this category were very similar: "They were fun to see" (JS 1; WK), "I had fun there" (JS 3, MUS), "It was fun and funny" (JS 4), and "it was fun" (JS 6, APTN). It was an innovative course in that students had the opportunity to leave the campus and to watch concerts at night and on the weekends. Many of the students also used the word "awesome" to describe the Aboriginal Music course: "It was an awesome class" (FG 6),

"It was awesome" (JS 2, TPW; SSM 1), and "throat singer was awesome" (JS 3, AMW). Watching many Aboriginal performers in a short period of time is an uncommon experience for Aboriginal students and it was an enjoyable experience for them.

The students enjoyed the performances most of all: "I enjoyed the performances that was the most positive" (FG 1), "All the styles of music were great choices and caught my attention" (FG 5), "I enjoyed watching drum groups and all types of dancers" (JS 3; TPW), "I enjoyed it and all the talented people" (JS 4, AMW), "We got to see Joey Stylez perform and other great performances" (JS 4, AMW), "I liked how they were interactive with the students, got the groove going and got people to dance in other words, jigging" (JS 5, GB), and "I liked all the musicians that came in". The musical genres the students experienced in this course were widely varied, but all of the performers were certainly entertaining for the students.

Code: INT (interesting)

The students reported that the music was interesting in the course because students listened to music that they did not hear that often: "The music was interesting because I don't hear this kind of music being played every day" and "I found it interesting because I don't usually go to pow-wows". The course was good for students because it re-introduced some of them to music from their own culture, which some of them had not engaged with for some time.

One of the musical genres students found the most interesting was the pow-wow: "Most interesting is when other dancers had to compete with each other" (JS 2, TPW); "the interesting part was all the suits and bright colours the people were wearing" (JS 1, PWD), and "my experience in Music class [it] is very interesting" (JS2, PWD). I was

surprised by how little exposure the students had to pow-wow in their past because many of them were fluent speakers and some seemed to be quite traditional.

The other experience that interested students the most was our trip to APTN, the Aboriginal Peoples Television Network: "interesting because got to see where they go on TV" (JS 4, APTN), "the most interesting part would probably be when we went to newsroom and seen where they filmed it" (JS 6, APTN). One of the reasons the students enjoyed the trip to the television studio is that many of the students actually watched that television station, so it was interesting to actually be in the same place where the shows they watch were made.

Code: LEARN

The students learned about their own Aboriginal culture and history in the Aboriginal Music course, which was one of the goals of developing the course. One of the comments from the focus group was "we learned about our history a lot" (FG 1). Another student reported "learning interest things about our history" (JS 3, MUS). One of the other students also made a comment that is poignantly true for many of the students in the Aboriginal Music class, but also for Aboriginal people everywhere who are losing touch with their culture: "a lot of Aboriginal student don't know about that and it keeps the culture life in every one of us" (SSM 3). I believe that the Aboriginal Music course is important in the program because it re-connected Aboriginal people to cultural practices many of us have stopped practicing over the years. It provided the students the opportunity to explore their culture and heritage again after what for some of them was a lengthy absence.

Theme 2: Negative Experiences/Improvements to Course

Code: NONE

I created this code from the data because so many students responded that they could think of no negative experiences they had in the course, which speaks to how successfully the Aboriginal Music course met our objectives to add traditional culture back into Aboriginal education in order to improve the experiences of students. Many students suggested that we make no changes to the course and leave it as it is: "I believe no changes that should be made, because I enjoyed this course really well. There was no disappointments" (FG 3). Another student wrote: "I enjoyed my time in this course and I wouldn't change it [be]cause everything in this course was great" (SSM 1), and another student wrote: "I would keep it the same because it's fun and learn [sic] us our culture" (SSF 1). Students enjoyed the experience of having Aboriginal cultural activities as part of their program and many students had no suggestions to make about how to improve the course, but even though they enjoyed the course, students did have suggestions for improving the course.

Code: ORG (organization)

One of the persistent problems in the Aboriginal Music course was performers who were late, some of whom were one to two hours late, so the students had to wait until they arrived, which sometimes meant the class went overtime. This was problematic because the course took place on Friday afternoons, when students were anxious to go home for the weekend, for example: "I don't like the waiting" (SSM 4), "I don't like the waiting to see new things but it's all good" (SSF 4). Some of the students had other obligations and were not able to see some of the performances if they took

place off-campus and in the evenings: “I least liked that I wasn’t here for the performances” (SSM 4), and “sometimes I had to be back at the school at a certain time, and wouldn’t be able to attend class trips” (SSM 4). It is difficult to accommodate all students when so many cultural events take place in the evening and it was not possible to have all of our performances in the classroom, due to financial constraints. Most students were able to attend evening or weekend events, but not all. A common suggestion students made was to have more assignments in the course, and this is something that changed for the next offering of the course. Some of the student comments were: “Maybe more assignments” (SSM 1; SSF 5), “More reading, writing” (SSM 5; SSF 5), and “more assignments, just to make the class more structured” (FG 3). It speaks to the candor of the students in their feedback that they would ask for more assignments, and this was a good suggestion from students. Another suggestion from students was to have fewer presentations, but this is likely due to student anxiety over public speaking: “It was kind of embarrassing because I was shy to get up in front of the class” (JS 4) and “The least was presenting in front of the class” (SSF 4). Presentations were the least popular of any of the coursework students did for the Aboriginal Music class, but I did not involve students in determining the types of assignments we would do in class.

Theme 3: Impact on Program Experience

Code: IMPB

The students were asked in the surveys and in the focus group if taking the Aboriginal Music course had a positive impact on their experiences in the program. The students were unanimous in their opinion that taking the Aboriginal Music did improve their experiences in the program, for a variety of reasons: “it was fun doing different

things every class" (SSM 4), "made me aware of all the different genres of music" (SSM 3), "because I can enjoy seeing new things at the end of every week" (SSF 3), and "it gave me a class to look forward to on a Friday" (FG 4). One of the ways in which the course improved the students' experience is that it gave them the opportunity to engage with traditional Aboriginal culture, which is an important attribute of the course: "it has made me get more experienced in more culture things" (SSF 3), "Yes, because we got to make cultural stuff and learn the meaning of them at the same time" (SSF 3), "We learn about our culture and went to the [3-day] pow-wow" (SSF 3) and "I was proud of who we are" (SSF 3). Students learning about their own culture and enjoying that experience is a powerful attribute of the Aboriginal Music course.

Code: INPUT

The responses in this category are concerned with student reflections about having a voice in determining curriculum in the Aboriginal Music course. Many students felt that this was a positive experience: "Of course it was a positive experience because it actually makes you feel involved" (SSM 2), "Positive, because it made me feel a part of a group" (SSM 2), "Positive, brought the students closer, as in talking to each other" (SSM2), "it gave everyone's input. And also helped people talk amongst each other" (SSF 2), and "Positive, because it made the class more interactive" (SSF 2). Research has shown that involving Aboriginal students in the development of their own curriculum is a positive experience for students (Battiste, 2000; Cuthbert et al., 2002; Goulet, 2001; Hookimaw-Witt, 1998; Richardson & Blanchet-Cohen, 2000), and this appears to have been true for the students in the Aboriginal Music course.

The majority of students in the Aboriginal Music course enjoyed their experiences in the course because it was relevant to them, they felt their contributions were valued, and they felt that they were involved in planning their own education. They also enjoyed the musical performances and the field trips outside of the college, and most students felt that their experience of their academic program was improved because of the Aboriginal Music course. The students enjoyed listening to styles of music with which they were unfamiliar and the musicians who fused traditional forms of Aboriginal music with modern forms of mainstream music. They also appreciated learning about Aboriginal history and spirituality, and many stated that they had little or no knowledge of either. Some of the students requested that there be more Aboriginal spirituality in the curriculum of the course, which speaks to the value the students derived from these teachings. The negative experiences students had in the course were valid problems that need to be addressed and students also suggested ways in which the instructor could improve the course. Most importantly, the students reported feeling empowered as students because of the opportunities they had during the course, as well as feeling proud to be Aboriginal, which are the most positive outcomes of the Aboriginal Music course.

Aboriginal students who have culturally relevant curriculum in their educational program have heightened self-esteem and pride in their culture and an improved educational experience. Students who are given the opportunity to participate in the curriculum development of their educational program find the experience to be positive and this leads to positive experiences as a student in the program. Participating in curriculum development can also lead to increased learning during the program. When students work collaboratively with instructors and others, students feel a sense of

community and increased engagement with the course material and this leads to increased success in the program.

The students had very positive experiences in the Aboriginal Music course such as enjoying their classes, becoming more interested in their education, and feeling proud to be Aboriginal as a result of taking the course. The results of this study show that including culturally relevant curriculum and involving Aboriginal students in the process of developing curriculum did improve their educational experience. Past researchers have also had positive outcomes for students when they adapted the curriculum to be more culturally relevant and involved students in this process. In the next chapter, I will discuss the relationship between culturally relevant, empowering Aboriginal education and positive student experiences.

Chapter 5: Analysis

There is no doubt that the overwhelming majority of students in the Aboriginal Music course had positive experiences while taking the course. These included enjoying the course, being interested in their education, learning about their culture, and feeling empowered by the experience. Students also reported that taking the course had a positive effect on their experience of their academic program as a whole. Aboriginal students have had such negative educational experiences in the past that improving Aboriginal education by creating more positive experiences for Aboriginal learners should be a priority in Aboriginal education. One of the ways to make Aboriginal education more relevant for Aboriginal students is to involve them in developing curriculum and planning.

The evidence of student success in this course supports work by other researchers who have found that students who are involved in developing curriculum for their own education programs have enjoyed the experience for a number of reasons, including the ability to determine the content and teaching methods of their course. According to Kunkel (2002), one way of increasing student engagement with their own learning is to make their educational experience as enjoyable as possible. Brinegar & Bishop (2011) found that students had more fun in classes in which they had been involved in developing student curriculum. Oliver-Hoyo and Allen (2005) also report that students have more positive attitudes toward the curriculum they have helped to develop, and Mehrubeoglu and McLaughlan (2007) also write that students have positive experiences when developing curriculum. Gleixner, Douglas, & Graeve (2007) found that

participating in curriculum development increases students' enjoyment of the course and also enhances student learning. According to Cook-Sather (2008), one of the aspects of being involved in curriculum development that is most enjoyable is being able to see education from the perspective of the educator, and having such a high level of involvement in their own education. Similarly, the findings in this study indicate a link between enjoyment of a course and being involved in decision making surrounding their own learning. For example, one student in the Aboriginal Music course reported enjoying the curriculum development process because "it actually makes you feel involved". Other students enjoyed the experience because "it made me feel a part of a group". Students in the Aboriginal Music course found the process of determining curriculum a "positive experience", because it "brought the students closer", "helped people talk amongst each other", and "it gave everyone's input". Having the ability to contribute to the curriculum development of the course "made the class more interactive". The students in the Aboriginal Music course may have enjoyed the experience of contributing to curriculum development for the same reasons as other students who have participated in previous studies (fun, increased learning), but in addition, the student responses from the Aboriginal Music course indicate that their participation made them feel that they were collaboratively working toward a goal, in this case, determining curriculum in their own program. It is possible that the students needed to feel a sense of community with each other, and working together on curriculum development may have added to a sense of community within the course. These findings support past research which has shown that Aboriginal people prefer to work collaboratively than individually (Battiste, 2000; Battiste et al., 2002; Gutierrez &

Rogoff, 2003; Julien, Hansen, & Tourangeau, 2004; Richardson & Blanchet-Cohen, 2000). Also, one of the goals of Aboriginal transition programs is to create a sense of community for Aboriginal students (Battiste et al., 2002; Newton, 2007; R.A. Malatest & Associates, 2005; Richardson & Blanchet-Cohen, 2000). Working collaboratively to determine the curriculum of the course might have helped to create this sense of community for the students, many of whom had to leave their home communities in order to attend college. The results of this study show that being in the Aboriginal Music course proved to be an enjoyable experience. The students became more interested in their education because they played such a large role in determining what their education would be; this ranged from selecting the musicians and artists they wanted to see to determining which cultural events they would attend. By working together, the students co-created their own community in the course which was reinforced by experiencing Aboriginal music together.

Being part of a community of learners helps students to feel more engaged in their education (Bovill et al., 2011b; Lamerman et al., 2010; Lee, 2007) because past research has shown that when students were more involved with developing curriculum, they also felt more engaged with their own learning process. In Brinegar & Bishop's study (2011), a student who participated in curriculum development described the experience as being collaborative: "So there's a partnership – teachers are doing some, you're doing some" (p. 215). The process of working with instructors to develop curriculum leads to a greater understanding of what teachers in the classroom are trying to accomplish, and this understanding leads to a heightened appreciation of the educational process: "you don't understand the way you learn and how others learn until you can step back from it…and

what is going through people's minds as they relate with that material" (Cook-Sather, 2008, p. 41). Students who engage in developing curriculum understand more about the educational process because they have been involved in it, rather than just being recipients of knowledge from instructors. In the Aboriginal Music course, students were also engaged with the course because they participated in curriculum development: "it actually makes you feel involved", but mostly, students felt engaged with the course material because they were introduced to new music genres that they had not seen before: "it has introduced me to many types of music" and "I can enjoy seeing new things". Students in the Aboriginal Music course did not report being more engaged with their own learning processes, but they did have a high level of interest in the course. This may have been due to the high level of relevant Aboriginal cultural content and the fact that all of the performers were Aboriginal, as were all of the artists who taught students to build their own instruments. Past research has shown that Aboriginal students feel a sense of pride when they are exposed to successful Aboriginal people as part of their education (Brade et al., 2003; Corbiere, 2000; Iseke-Barnes, 2008; Preston et al., 2012; Riecken et al., 2006). Students who feel involved in their own education have a very different experience that Aboriginal students who were not allowed to make contributions to their own education in the past and a foreign, culturally irrelevant education system was imposed upon them (Corbiere, 2000; Dickason, 2002; Hookimaw-Witt, 1998; Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, 1996). We need to ensure that Aboriginal education continues to involve Aboriginal students and that it is culturally appropriate for Aboriginal students.

Students in the Aboriginal Music course reported that learning about their culture was a positive experience, which was an unexpected result due to the high number of Christians in the course. Many of the students in the Aboriginal course come from communities where few people continue to live traditionally. There is little hunting, fishing, and trapping, and there are even fewer who continue to live a spiritual life according to Aboriginal spiritual traditions due to a second wave of evangelism that passed through many northern communities in the 1960s and resulted in some communities becoming mostly Christian and turning away from Aboriginal tradition (Dickason, 2002). As a result, some young Aboriginal people have rarely encountered aspects of Aboriginal culture such as pow-wows, including some of the students in the Aboriginal Music class: "I found it interesting because I don't usually go to pow-wows" and "I learned that there are so many different dancers". The cultural teachings the students received from Aboriginal musicians as well as the exposure to pow-wow singing and dancing were important for the students to experience. One student commented, "A lot of Aboriginal students don't know about that and it keeps the culture [alive] in every one of us". Other students, reflecting upon the cultural teachings they received in the course, responded, "[I enjoyed] doing work about my culture", and "it has made me get more experienced in more culture things". Also, seeing other Aboriginal people engaged in and educating students in these cultural practices is sometimes very beneficial in making Aboriginal students feel good about themselves as Aboriginal people (Brade et al., 2003; Corbiere, 2000; Riecken et al., 2006). One of the most important goals of Aboriginal education, and of this particular course, was to help students to understand who they are as Aboriginal people. This knowledge will help students to feel positively

about themselves as Aboriginal people, which is another of the most important goals of Aboriginal education.

Students in the Aboriginal Music course reported feeling proud to be Aboriginal because of their participation in the course. One student responded that being in the course improved her experience in the program "because I was proud of who we are" and another stated, "it made you feel better about yourself". Another student commented on making musical instruments: "we got to make cultural stuff and learn the meaning of them at the same time". It is important for students to learn about traditional cultural activities because Aboriginal students must have this critical knowledge, particularly those who might have come into the class with negative impressions about Aboriginal people. The students were empowered by the course because they felt better about who they were as Aboriginal people, which is one of the goals of Aboriginal education (Bovill et al., 2011b; Brade et al., 2003; Corbiere, 2000; Hookimaw-Witt, 1998; Kirkness, 1998; Kunkel, 2002; Lee, 2007; McCuddy et al., 2008; Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, 1996; Riecken et al., 2006).

The experiences of the students in the Aboriginal Music program were positive because working together to develop curriculum built a sense of community among the students, many of whom may have been searching for community since leaving home to attend school. Because the students were more actively involved in their own education, their sense of ownership in the course increased. Participating in the Aboriginal Music course gave the students the opportunity to re-connect with traditional culture. The students in the Aboriginal Music course also reported having positive feelings about being Aboriginal because of their experiences in the program.

Many of the students in the Aboriginal Music course looked forward to the class every week, "because it gave me a class to look forward to on a Friday" and because it was "a great way to start the weekend". One of the reasons students may have looked forward to the Aboriginal Music class is because based on the data students provided in this study, participating in the development of curriculum was a unanimously positive experience for them. The enjoyment students had in the course was obvious while we were in the class and the atmosphere in the class was positive. Even when things went wrong in the class, such as performers being late or having difficulty with their equipment, students' moods remained mostly positive. Research has found that student participation in curriculum development is a positive experience for students and particularly for Aboriginal students (Hookimaw-Witt, 1998; Iseke-Barnes, 2008; Richardson & Blanchet-Cohen, 2000; Riecken et al., 2006). One of the students commented that participating in curriculum development "made you feel better about yourself" and researchers have found that one of the benefits of involving students in curriculum development is that participating in the process increases the self-esteem of the students (Bovill, 2011b; Kirkness, 1998; Kunkel, 2002; Preston et al., 2012).

The Aboriginal Music course has become an important part of the curriculum after only two years because it has helped Aboriginal students learn more about positive aspects of traditional and contemporary Aboriginal culture. The students learn about their culture while feeling part of an Aboriginal community of learners, which also helps them to feel more positively about themselves. If these students successfully retain these feelings of positivity, pride, and community membership throughout the program and in their future endeavors, then they will likely have more chances for success in the future.

Chapter 6: Summary and Conclusions

The colonial and assimilationist education policies of the Canadian government in the past ensured that Aboriginal people had no control over the education of their own people. Unfortunately, this colonial mentality toward Aboriginal education persisted for decades following the residential school era. Now there are Aboriginal education programs that have attempted to re-instate a measure of Aboriginal control over Aboriginal education, even though an Aboriginal education system that is completely controlled by Aboriginal people, from curriculum design to delivery and evaluation, has proven difficult to achieve (Bouvier & Karlenzig, 2010; Cajete, 1994; Corbiere, 2000; Evans et al., 1999; Goulet, 2001; Hookimaw-Witt, 1998; Richardson & Blanchet-Cohen, 2000). However, as shown in this study, Aboriginal people can achieve greater control over education, with positive results for Aboriginal students.

One of the benefits of greater control over education is that there is often more cultural content in these programs, which is beneficial for Aboriginal students, who have had little culturally relevant education in the past (Bouvier & Karlenzig, 2006; Goulet, 2001; Hookimaw-Witt, 1998; Kirkness; 1998; LaFrance, 1994; Richardson & Blanchet-Cohen, 2000). Ensuring cultural relevance is the primary concern of these programs, so it is not surprising that all of the Aboriginal education projects mentioned in this study incorporated Aboriginal culture into their curricula (Agbo, 2002; Kennedy, 2009; Koshyk, 2012; Lamerman et al., 2010; Lee, 2007; Mahara et al., 2011; Price & Burtch, 2010; Riecken et al., 2006). Building on the existing literature, my research study shows that having Aboriginal music included in post-secondary educational programming

improves the experience of the Aboriginal learners. Specifically, students described learning about their culture as a positive experience that made them feel proud to be Aboriginal. One of the reasons culturally relevant curriculum is so important for Aboriginal learners is that mainstream curriculum does not always focus on Aboriginal issues to the extent that it should (Bouvier & Karlenzig, 2006; Godlewska et al., 2010; Robertson, 2003; Schick, 2010). In the absence of complete Aboriginal people control over the education of Aboriginal students, mainstream education system must focus more on integrating Aboriginal culture into curriculum. Otherwise, Aboriginal learners do not have the same access to culturally relevant education as others do in Canada.

In order to have culturally relevant education, curriculum developers must involve the local Aboriginal community. This can be done through partnerships among academic institutions, instructors of Aboriginal students, and Aboriginal communities, such as the Mohawk Education Curriculum Development Project (Agbo, 2002), *Earthsongs* (Kennedy, 2009), the Thompson Rivers University School of Nursing (Mahara et al., and the Nicola Valley Institute of Technology (Price & Burtch, 2010). One of the benefits of partnering with an academic institution such as a university or college is that the students receive credit from the mainstream institutions. However, barriers such as granting credit for traditional practices and ensuring that the mainstream institutions have an adequate understanding of Aboriginal issues are problems that researchers have identified in the past (Antone, 2000; Mahara et al., 2011; Price & Burtch, 2010; Riecken et al., 2006; Zurzolo, 2010). My study did not involve a partnership with the local Aboriginal community, however, all of the performers and artists were Aboriginal and from the local community. An unintended result of this study was that it raised our college's profile

within the Aboriginal community, which may lead to future benefits to the college such as increases in Aboriginal student enrolment. Participating in the Aboriginal Music course was a universally positive experience for the local Aboriginal musicians and artists who participated in the course. Most of the musicians who performed for the students in the first offering of the course have returned to perform for students in subsequent offerings.

One of the ways to ensure students have positive educational experiences in their program is to involve them in the development of curriculum (Brinegar & Bishop, 2011; Cook-Sather, 2008; Gleixner & al., 2007; Mehrubeoglu & McLaughlan, 2007; Oliver-Hoyo & Allen, 2005). While all of the programs I studied involved Aboriginal staff and community members in curriculum development, not all involved Aboriginal students in this process. One of the programs that did was Traditional Pathways to Health (Riecken et al., 2006), in which students designed their own curriculum by conducting research into local health problems in the community and producing videos about these problems. Similarly, students in the *Skins* program (Lamerman et al., 2010), in which Aboriginal students interviewed elders in their communities in order to design Aboriginal characters in video games to be more historically accurate. The Thompson Rivers Nursing program (Mahara et al., 2011) also had students participate in curriculum design for the program, but this program did not pass the planning stages. Students in my study assisted in the curriculum development of their program by determining which musicians they would like to see, musical events in which they would like to participate, and which instruments they would like to construct. Students reported that participating in curriculum development was a positive experience for them because it made the class more

interactive, they felt more involved, and they felt that they were part of a community. The experiences of the students in the Aboriginal Music course were overwhelmingly positive.

The purpose of this study was to determine Aboriginal student experiences when Aboriginal cultural content is added to their transition program and to determine how assisting in curriculum development affects Aboriginal students. There is no doubt that this particular Aboriginal Music course improved the experience of the Aboriginal students who were in the course. Listening to and learning from Aboriginal performers made the students feel proud to be Aboriginal themselves. In addition, making contributions to the curriculum of the course was a positive experience for the students. The Aboriginal Music course has similarities with other Aboriginal education programs in that it infuses the program with Aboriginal content and does involve students in making decisions about curriculum. As well, the Aboriginal community is involved in the program through the Aboriginal musicians and cultural teachers who came to the class during the course. The students also receive credit for the course, which they can use toward attaining their College Studies certificate, which can lead to other diplomas and degrees at the college.

Aboriginal researchers have known for years that having culturally relevant curriculum and involving Aboriginal students in development of this curriculum are beneficial for these students. However, none of the programs described here goes far enough in terms of delivering culturally appropriate Aboriginal education to Aboriginal students, because Aboriginal people are still not in control over our own education. As it is, these programs have been developed in partnership with Aboriginal communities, but

not under the control of Aboriginal people themselves, because this system of Aboriginal-directed education does not yet exist. There are post-secondary institutions who deliver Aboriginal education, but these Aboriginal program areas need to make compromises because they are situated within larger academic institutions, who dictate their own standards of curriculum development and program content.

Although Aboriginal educators have been trying to change the education system to make it more culturally relevant for Aboriginal students for decades, little has changed (Godlewska et al., 2010; Schick, 2010; Sykes, 2008). While it is true that the federal government continues to exert control over the Aboriginal education system through the Indian Act (Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, 1996) and over the mainstream education system through determining curriculum and teaching methods, there may be another reason for the scarcity of Aboriginal control over Aboriginal education, and this is the government's lack of trust of Aboriginal people. The government may not trust Aboriginal people to deliver culturally appropriate education to Aboriginal students that also meets Western curriculum standards (Aboriginal Education Roundtable, 2007; Hookimaw-Witt, 1998, Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, 1996), and until this mindset changes, Aboriginal education that is designed, controlled, and delivered by Aboriginal people will continue to be very difficult to achieve. This is despite research that proves that programs that are designed by Aboriginal people with the involvement of the Aboriginal community are of great benefit to Aboriginal students (Goulet, 2001; Hookimaw-Witt, 1998; LaFrance, 1994; Richardson & Blanchet-Cohen, 2000; VanEvery-Albert, 2008). Furthermore, one of the only ways Aboriginal people can gain control over their own education system is if they have signed a modern treaty or self-

government agreement with the government, such as the Inuit in Nunavut or the Nisga'a in British Columbia (Henderson, 2008). Even then, because education is a provincial (or territorial) responsibility, the government still plays a role in determining the content of the curriculum (Restoule, 2008). As a result, although Aboriginal people have more control over their own education now than ever before, few communities have complete control over the education of their own children and this lack of control is also evident at the post-secondary level.

In post-secondary institutions, Aboriginal program areas are required to meet the academic standards of the university or college. These standards were created for mainstream education delivery and curriculum and have been in existence for many years, although institutions are beginning to be flexible enough to allow for alternate forms of delivery, such as student-determined curriculum (Bovill et al., 2011a; Justice et al., 2009). It may be possible in the future for post-secondary institutions to allow Aboriginal educators to use more traditional methods of educating students because of this increase in institutional flexibility. However, as the integration of Aboriginal culture into Aboriginal programming increases, instructors and administrators will have to work together to determine how to do this in a way that is acceptable to both. Researchers have proven that integrating Aboriginal culture into curriculum is of great benefit to Aboriginal students (Battiste, 2000; Brade et al., 2003; Julien, Hansen, & Tourangeau, 2004; Newton, 2007; Preston et al., 2012), so post-secondary institutions should become more open to incorporating Aboriginal content and methods of delivery into future programming.

In the current system, however, Aboriginal cultural programming is most often added to existing programs (Richardson & Blanchet-Cohen, 2000; Robertson, 2003), because in the absence of complete control over Aboriginal education by Aboriginal people, this is a workable, if not ideal, solution to the problem of incorporating Aboriginal cultural content into post-secondary curriculum while working within the institution. Despite these institutional barriers, it is important that Aboriginal educational programs do strive to include Aboriginal cultural content such as music in their curriculum and that Aboriginal students are involved in the development of this curriculum because it empowers the students and improves their overall educational experience. Until Aboriginal people control their own education, from curriculum development to methods of delivery and self-determination of content, Aboriginal education will not meet the goals of Aboriginal curriculum not the needs of students.

Limitations of the Study

In completing this research project, I acknowledge that there are a number of limitations to consider when drawing conclusions:

1. This is a case study of one example only and cannot be generalized. However, there are significant findings from this study that resonate with the literature and should prove useful to others in developing appropriate curriculum and involving students in that development,
2. The students' enjoyment (or lack of enjoyment) of the course may be because of individual attributes of the performers, not any inherent qualities of the type of music they are performing, so this might impact my results. I may think that the student's experience is because of the course and not because of a personal like or dislike,

3. I delivered this course myself and I am aware that I may be biased because I want the results to lead to improvements in our programming at the college. Student feedback and suggestions are a major component of this study which I did not have access to until after the course completion, so this might serve to mitigate my power as their instructor in this course,
4. The students may become more reluctant to give so much feedback (focus group, journals, surveys) as the course goes on, so this may impact the results of this study if they provide less detailed contributions at the end of the study than they did at the beginning.

Directions for the Future

Most of the projects I have referred to in this study, including my own, are limited in scope. Most of the time, Aboriginal content is added to existing programming by inserting one Aboriginal-focused course into mainstream curriculum (Bouvier & Karlenzig, 2006; Richardson & Blanchet-Cohen, 2000; & Robertson, 2003). The Aboriginal Music course is an example of this method of incorporating Aboriginal curriculum into existing programming, which is not ideal.

Adding one course to an existing program in an attempt to increase the Aboriginal cultural content of a program is called the "additive approach" by Robertson (2003), who adds that inserting such cultural courses into existing programs could be considered "tokenism" and is the least effective approach to increasing Aboriginal content in a program. Also, according to Richardson and Blanchet-Cohen (2000), the method of adding a course to an existing program in order to increase the level of Aboriginal content "requires the least amount of effort and resources to implement" (p. 171).

Unfortunately, this method of supplementing the program with Aboriginal cultural content was the only option available for our program, due to funding and scheduling constraints in our academic institution. In addition to limited funding, another constraint to infusing our programs with traditional Aboriginal curriculum and using traditional teaching methods is the institution itself, which offers mainstream curriculum with only a small amount of Aboriginal programming. It would be difficult, if not impossible, to offer a completely traditional Aboriginal program with its own curriculum and traditional teaching methods, although students in our programs do have opportunities to engage in traditional cultural activities such as sweatlodges, making traditional crafts, and medicine picking. We have two Aboriginal elders as staff members who create opportunities for students to engage in traditional cultural activities and also act as spiritual and personal advisors for our students. We also host major cultural events such as pow-wows, in which our Aboriginal students receive special honours from the elders and student events such as feasts and other ceremonies, during which Aboriginal students meet and interact outside of class and learn about the meaning behind some of these events and cultural practices. Although our program area offers many opportunities for students to participate in traditional cultural activities, the education we offer is still very mainstream and not delivered using Aboriginal methods of delivery or culturally based. However, the Aboriginal Music course is a positive step in this direction and the entire Aboriginal Education program area does strive to provide students with a safe, welcoming, and culturally responsive setting in which Aboriginal students can learn about the curriculum in their program and about themselves as Aboriginal people.

Aboriginal education should strive to be based more in Aboriginal culture, such as the Urban Circle program (Koshyk, 2012). One of the reasons that the program is able to be so immersed in Aboriginal culture is that they do not have to work within an academic bureaucracy such as universities and colleges, which are slow to change. Academic planners at universities and colleges will need to become more flexible in order for Aboriginal education areas to have this amount of power. The college is moving toward having all academic programming in our Aboriginal Education program area based in Aboriginal culture, but this has not yet happened. In addition to being based in Aboriginal culture, including teaching methods and content, Aboriginal education should allow students to participate in curriculum development. Currently, the students' transition program is the only one in our program area that allows students this level of participation. Students need to know that we value their contributions to their own education.

If Aboriginal culture were more highly valued in mainstream education, Aboriginal students would have higher success rates because they would know that they have value (Agbo, 2002; Bovill et al., 2011a; Riecken et al., 2006; Schick, 2010; VanEvery-Albert, 2008). When Aboriginal students fail to see themselves represented in mainstream curriculum, they may feel that they have contributed nothing worth learning in school (Agbo, 2002; Godlewska et al., 2010; Hagay & Baram-Tsabari, 2010). The education system needs to reflect the major role that Aboriginals have played and continue to play in Canada so that Aboriginal learners can feel proud of their contributions.

On the surface, the Aboriginal Music course gives students the opportunity to listen to Aboriginal music played by Aboriginal musicians, to construct and play their own instruments, and to learn more about Aboriginal culture. However, the effects of the course upon students may be more powerful and future research should investigate the deeper meaning it may have for some. For example, some Aboriginal music is sacred and is played not for entertainment, but for spiritual purposes. In the past, music was an integral aspect of Aboriginal people just as spirituality was (and still is, for some). One of the reasons the course was so enjoyable for students is that music has the ability to reach people on levels other than the intellectual. Although music is a part of spiritual activities of Aboriginal people such as ceremonies, Aboriginal people also play music for social gatherings such as pow-wows and feasts, which are times of celebration. There is an inherent joy in the activity of creating, performing, and listening to music and the students had the opportunity to participate in these activities in the course. I believe this is one of the reasons so many of the students and performers had such enthusiasm about the course and what led to the course being enjoyable for nearly everyone involved. However, there is spirituality inherent in much of Aboriginal music and it is important for Aboriginal students to be introduced to it, whether or not they believe in traditional spirituality. Learning about spirituality helps to connect Aboriginal students with their history and their identity, which is something many Aboriginal people have been missing in the post-residential school era (Antone, 2000; Battiste, 2000; Godlewska et al., 2010; Hanohano, 1999; Hookimaw-Witt, 1998; Schick, 2010; Sykes, 2008; VanEvery-Albert, 2008). Aboriginal spirituality should be integrated into Aboriginal education, and, some believe, should form the basis of Aboriginal education (Gamlin, 2003; Hanohano, 1999;

Kirkness, 1998). Some of the students may have enjoyed the course because listening to the music might have given them glimpses into our past as Aboriginal people, but also hope for what Aboriginal people can become now and in the future. Aboriginal music is an important element in Aboriginal education because it helps students to connect to and understand more about Aboriginal culture. Including Aboriginal music in the curriculum and allowing students to participate in developing their own curriculum helps students to feel proud of who they are as Aboriginal people.

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Appendix A

Ethics Approval: University of Western Ontario

THE UNIVERSITY OF WESTERN ONTARIO
FACULTY OF EDUCATION

USE OF HUMAN SUBJECTS - ETHICS APPROVAL NOTICE

Review Number:	1106-5
Principal Investigator:	Carol Beynon
Student Name:	Karen Favell
Title:	*The effects of supplementing aboriginal post-secondary transition programs with traditional cultural activities.*
Expiry Date:	January 31, 2012
Type:	M. Ed. Thesis
Ethics Approval Date:	September 8, 2011
Revision #:	
Documents Reviewed & Approved:	UWO Protocol, Letter of Information & Consent

This is to notify you that the Faculty of Education Sub-Research Ethics Board (REB), which operates under the authority of The University of Western Ontario Research Ethics Board for Non-Medical Research Involving Human Subjects, according to the Tri-Council Policy Statement and the applicable laws and regulations of Ontario has granted approval to the above named research study on the date noted above. The approval shall remain valid until the expiry date noted above assuming timely and acceptable responses to the REB's periodic requests for surveillance and monitoring information.

During the course of the research, no deviations from, or changes to, the study or information/consent documents may be initiated without prior written approval from the REB, except for minor administrative aspects. Participants must receive a copy of the signed information/consent documentation. Investigators must promptly report to the Chair of the Faculty Sub-REB any adverse or unexpected experiences or events that are both serious and unexpected, and any new information which may adversely affect the safety of the subjects or the conduct of the study. In the event that any changes require a change in the information/consent documentation and/or recruitment advertisement, newly revised documents must be submitted to the Sub-REB for approval.

[redacted]

2011-2012 Faculty of Education Sub-Research Ethics Board

Dr. Alan Edmunds	**Faculty of Education (Chair)**
Dr. John Barnett	**Faculty of Education**
Dr. Jason Brown	**Faculty of Education**
Dr. Farahnaz Faez	**Faculty of Education**
Dr. Wayne Martino	**Faculty of Education**
Dr. George Gadanidis	**Faculty of Education**
Dr. Elizabeth Nowicki	**Faculty of Education**
Dr. Immaculate Namukasa	**Faculty of Education**
Dr. Kari Veblen	**Faculty of Music**
Dr. Ruth Wright	**Faculty of Music**
	Faculty of Music
	Faculty of Education, Associate Dean, Graduate Programs & Research *(ex officio)*
Dr. Susan Rodger	**Faculty of Education, UWO Non-Medical Research Ethics Board *(ex officio)***

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Appendix B

Letter of Information

THE EFFECTS UPON STUDENTS OF SUPPLEMENTING ABORIGINAL POST-SECONDARY TRANSITION PROGRAMS WITH TRADITIONAL CULTURAL ACTIVITIES

LETTER OF INFORMATION

Introduction

I am a graduate student at the Faculty of Education at The University of Western Ontario. I am currently conducting research into how to improve the experience of Aboriginal students in post-secondary transition programs and would like to invite you to participate in this study.

Purpose of the study

The aims of this study are to find out whether enhancing Aboriginal programs with traditional cultural activities will improve the educational experience of Aboriginal students.

If you agree to participate

If you agree to participate in this study you will be asked to provide feedback about your experiences in the program by participating in focus groups, filling out questionnaires, and keeping journals. The researcher will not have access to any of the information you provide until after the study is completed and your final grades have been assigned. The researcher will not be able to identify individual students by looking at the feedback you provide.

Confidentiality

The information collected will be used for research purposes only, and neither your name nor information which could identify you will be used in

any publication or presentation of the study results. All information collected for the study will be kept confidential. The data generated from the study will be kept in a locked cabinet in an office for five years, at which point it will be destroyed.

Risks & Benefits

There are no known risks to participating in this study.

Voluntary Participation

Participation in this study is voluntary. You may refuse to participate, refuse to answer any questions or withdraw from the study at any time with no effect on your academic status. The researcher will not know which students agreed to participate in this study and which did not.

Questions

If you have any questions about the conduct of this study or your rights as a research participant you may contact the Office of Research Ethics, The University of Western Ontario at 519-661-3036 or ethics@uwo.ca.

This letter is yours to keep for future reference.

Appendix C

Student Consent Form

THE EFFECTS OF SUPPLEMENTING ABORIGINAL POST-SECONDARY TRANSITION PROGRAMS WITH TRADITIONAL CULTURAL ACTIVITIES

CONSENT FORM

I have read the Letter of Information, have had the nature of the study explained to me and I agree to participate. All questions have been answered to my satisfaction.

Name (please print):

Signature: Date:

Appendix D

Survey Data

Student Survey Form Tabulated Results
First Evaluation

Section I: Course Content

1. The course content is relevant to me as an Aboriginal student.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
7	5		

2. I felt that my personal input into the course was important and useful.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
3	9		

3. I had a strong voice in determining classroom performances and other activities.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
6	4	2	

4. Learning about my culture has been a good experience.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
10	2		

5. The Aboriginal Music course should be made a permanent part of the program.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
9	3		

6. I feel involved in the planning process of my education.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
4	8		

7. The instructor gives prompt feedback on assignments.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
4	7	1	

Section II
Musical Performances

1. The musical performances are enjoyable and interesting.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
9	3		

2. The performers allow the students to interact with them in a meaningful way.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
4	8		

3. I feel proud to be Aboriginal when I see so many diverse Aboriginal performers.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
11	1		

4. I have learned more about my culture as a result of taking this course.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
4	7	1	

5. I enjoyed seeing the performers because I know I helped to choose who would perform in the class.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
5	7		

6. My experience in the program has been improved because of the Aboriginal Music class.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
7	4	1	

7. I would recommend this course to other students.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
9	3		

Section IV: Open-Ended Questions

1. What would you change about the course? What would you keep the same?
    - More activities at the school. Karen giving us free tickets to concerts and stuff was awesome.
    - Nothing, it's awesome! Maybe more assignments!
    - I think it should stay the same.
    - I enjoyed my time in this course and I wouldn't change it.
    - I would change nothing.
    - I wouldn't change (be)cause everything in this course is great
    - Nothing.
    - I would keep it the same.
    - Nothing. It is fine.
    - Leave everything the way they are. It's fun.

2. Did you feel that having input in development of the course was a positive or negative experience?
    - Of course it was a positive experience because it actually makes you feel involved.
    - Positive, because it made me feel a part of a group
    - I enjoyed the music class: something interesting we don't have that in our community

- To me it was a positive experience
- It's positive.
- Yes
- Positive, brought the students closer, as in talking to each other
- Positive.
- Both.
- That class is so relaxing and something I need for a long week of getting screamed at.
- Positive experience.
- I don't know.

3. Has the Aboriginal Music course improved your experience in the program? If so, why? If not, why not?
    - It has introduced me to many types of music, I enjoyed listening to different types of performers.
    - Yes, because after tough courses from Monday-Thursday, it gave me a class to look forward to
    - Aboriginal Music course is fun, you get to go out on a field trip and go (to) a small concert
    - Yes, it made my program fun and enjoyable.
    - Yes, because it's fun
    - Yes it has
    - Yes, made me interact with other peers.
    - Yes it has, not as dry as some courses.
    - A lot of Aboriginal student don't know about that and it keep the culture life in every one of us.
    - Made me aware of all the different genres of music.
    - Everything still feels the same but it's a class to relax.

4. What did you like the most about this course? What did you like the least?
    - I like that there was barely any paperwork. The least was sometimes I had to be back at the school (at) a certain time, and wouldn't be able to attend class trips
    - The discussions and personal input we got to express
    - Field trips, I got to go see pow-wow dancers, music performers.
    - I enjoyed going on trips because it taught me stuff and I also had fun. I least liked that I wasn't here for the performances.
    - I like the trips, and I don't like the waiting.
    - What I liked about this course (is) going to APTN (Aboriginal Peoples Television Network) (and) seeing what goes on in there. What I didn't like is nothing about this course (be)cause everything in this is great
    - The performers.

- Being chill and doing stuff with my eyes. I didn't like it when my black clothes got messy. We need aprons!
- Beading.
- All the laughing and getting to know the others.
- It was fun doing different things every class.
- Doing art and making stuff I never made.

5. What suggestions would you make to improve the course for the future?
    - Personally I think it's fine the way it is
    - Nothing!
    - I would like to do more learning (about) Aboriginal activities
    - More trips.
    - Nothing, (be)cause everything in this is great
    - More reading, writing.
    - Aprons!
    - I don't know.
    - I think this class needs a radio playing. It's too quiet.
    - More classes.
    - More arts and crafts. No projects.

Student Survey Form Tabulated Results
Second Evaluation

Section I: Course Content

8. The course content is relevant to me as an Aboriginal student.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
4	8		

9. I felt that my personal input into the course was important and useful.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
3	9		

10. I had a strong voice in determining classroom performances and other activities.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
3	7	2	

11. Learning about my culture has been a good experience.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
8	4		

12. The Aboriginal Music course should be made a permanent part of the program.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
7	5		

13. I feel involved in the planning process of my education.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
4	8		

14. The instructor gives prompt feedback on assignments.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
4	6	2	

Section II
Musical Performances

8. The musical performances are enjoyable and interesting.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
7	5		

9. The performers allow the students to interact with them in a meaningful way.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
4	8		

10. I feel proud to be Aboriginal when I see so many diverse Aboriginal performers.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
11	1		

11. I have learned more about my culture as a result of taking this course.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
3	8	1	

12. I enjoyed seeing the performers because I know I helped to choose who would perform in the class.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
4	7	1	

13. My experience in the program has been improved because of the Aboriginal Music class.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
3	7	2	

14. I would recommend this course to other students.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
5	7		

Section IV: Open-Ended Questions

6. What would you change about the course? What would you keep the same?
    - Same amount of field trips.
    - Go(ing) places, the presentations
    - Same
    - I wouldn't change anything (be)cause in my opinion everything in the program is great
    - More presentations
    - Nothing. I liked it just the way it was
    - Nothing. This course is great.

- Nothing, I would keep it the same.
- Keep everything the same, doing a good job. Maybe more performers.
- Make assignments on Music is what I would change. Keep the performances and activities.
- I would keep it the same because it's fun and learn us our culture.
- I wouldn't change a thing about this course because it gets exciting when making new things.

7. Did you feel that having input in development of the course was a positive or negative experience?
    - I don't know
    - Yes
    - Positive, because it gave everyone's input. And also helped people talk amongst each other
    - I think (it) is positive (be)cause trying to learn something [that's] what I wanted to know
    - Positive, getting involved in presentations brought me good communication skills.
    - Positive
    - Positive, because it made the class more interactive.
    - Positive experience.
    - It was a positive, it was like how people put them out.
    - Positive.
    - A positive experience.
    - It was a positive experience

8. Has the Aboriginal Music course improved your experience in the program? If so, why? If not, why not?
    - Yes, because I can enjoy seeing new things at the end of the week.
    - Yes, because we go places. We learn about our culture and went to the [3-day] (pow-wow)
    - Yes, because it was a great way to start the weekend.
    - I strongly agree
    - It would have been cool to listen to a drummer in class, although I guess it (going to [3-day] pow-wow) has improved my experience
    - Yes, (be)cause I was proud of who we are
    - Yes, it gave me a course to look forward to on a Friday.
    - Yes, knowing more about Aboriginal music.
    - Yeah, it did it made me feel like this is how this feels to be doing this. It made you feel better about yourself.
    - Yes, it helps me relax about school because we have 4 days of work and this is like relax and chill out, listen to music or watch performers. And catch up on work.

- Yes, because we got to make cultural stuff and learn the meaning of them at the same time.
- It has made me get more experienced in more culture things.

9. What did you like the most about this course? What did you like the least?
    - I like seeing new things, I don't like the waiting to see new things but it's all good
    - Doing work about my culture
    - The performances I loved. There is nothing I did not like.
    - I liked everything about this course
    - I liked all the musicians that came in. I liked that she gave us tickets to go to small concerts.
    - The performers
    - The trips to the zoo and the museum, it was nice being able to get out of the school
    - I like that we do or go different places each class.
    - Going out and experience(ing) new things, feeling how people feel
    - Trips to go see something. Nothing.
    - I liked making projects the least was presenting in front of the class.
    - I liked making new things. I didn't have the feeling of not liking anything.

10. What suggestions would you make to improve the course for the future?
    - Instruments in class
    - More trips towards the cultural areas
    - More written work.
    - Everything is improve(d) already
    - Nothing.
    - Nothing, maybe more assignments.
    - Nothing
    - Do more assignments on Music on the Internet.
    - More classes.
    - It's OK just the way it is. It's a fun course.

Appendix E

Journal Instructions

Students will complete journal entries once per week to reflect on the experience they have had that day in the classroom. Some of these experiences will be passive (taking notes, listening to a musical performer) and some will be more active (making a presentation, construction of musical instruments such as drums and flutes). They will be given time at the end of each class to work on or complete these journal entries. The entries will be collected each day by one of the instructors here at the college and the researcher will not have access to the data until the student marks have been assigned at the end of the course.

Journal Instructions for Students

1. You may use a notebook as your journal and write your journal entries by hand. You may also email your journal entries to the secretary in the Aboriginal Education office.
2. I will assign marks for journals at the end of the course, but these marks will not be based on the content or presentation of the journals. Grammar, style, or complaints about the course or the instructor will not have negative impacts upon the marks you receive. However, if you do not complete journal entries, you will lose marks.
3. Although each of you will have a different method for completing journal entries and each class will be different, here are some suggestions about you may want to include:

- Your name
- Date of journal entry
- Today's Musician or Project
- What was most interesting today? Why?
- What were three things you learned today?
- Did you learn anything new or surprising?
- What did you like the most?
- What did you like the least?
- What went well today?
- What did not go well?
- What did you find easy?
- What did you find difficult?
- Do you have any questions about what you saw or what you did?

Appendix F

Focus Group Questions

The students will participate in focus groups twice during the course, one near the midpoint of the course and the other at the end of the course.

Focus Group Questions

1. What are some positive experiences you have had in the course? Why were they positive? What can we do to ensure students continue to have positive experiences?
2. What are some negative experiences you have had in the course? Why were these experiences negative? What can we do in the future to ensure students do not have more negative experiences?
3. What changes could be made to the course in order to improve it? Why are these changes necessary? How would these changes improve the program?
4. Has this course had an impact on your overall experience of the program? What are the positive impacts this course has had on you as a student in the program? What are some negative impacts?
5. Are there styles of music you would like to see but have not? What are these?
6. Do you have any other comments that you would like to add?

Appendix G

Coded Themes Data

Abbreviations

Activities

- J: Journals
- GB: Gaudry Boys
- PWD: Pow-wow Demonstration
- WK: Wab Kinew
- TP: Tracy Parenteau
- AMW: Aboriginal Music Week
- MUS: Museum
- APTN: TV network
- TPW: 3-Day Pow-wow

Data Sources

- FG 1: Focus Group, Question 1
- JS 1: Journal, Subject 1
- SSM 1: Student Survey Midterm Evaluation, Open-ended question 1
- SSF 1: Student Survey Final Evaluation, Open-ended question 1

Codes

- IMPB: impact on program experience
- INPUT: student input into course
- INT: interesting
- LEARN: learn
- LIKE: like
- NONE: nothing negative to say
- ORG: course organization

FG 1: Positive experiences

INT: The music was interesting because I don't hear this kind of music being played every day (JS 1; GB)

INT: The interesting part was all the suits and bright colours the people were wearing (JS 1; PWD)

INT: The most interesting about them is the way they sing and mix music (rap and pow-wow) (JS 1; WK)

INT:	My experience is Music class (it) is very interesting (JS 2; PWD)
INT:	Most interesting is when other dancers had to compete with each other (JS2; TPW)
INT:	I found it interesting because I don't usually go to pow-wows (JS3; TPW)
INT:	I enjoyed going to the museum because it was interesting (JS 4; MUS)
INT:	Seen interesting stuff (JS 4; MUS)
INT:	Interesting to see how things were being used back then (JS 4; MUS)
INT:	interesting because got to see where they go on TV (JS 4; APTN)
INT:	Very, very interesting (JS 5; GB)
INT:	They caught my attention with their fiddling music (JS 5; GB)
INT:	It was really interesting (JS 6; MUS)
INT:	The most interesting part would probably be when we went to newsroom and seen where they filmed it (JS 6; APTN)
LEARN:	We learned about our history a lot (FG 1)
LEARN:	I learned that there are so many different dancers, traditional dancers, sundancers, and hoop dancers (JS 2: TPW)
LEARN:	Learning interesting things about our history (JS 3; MUS)
LEARN:	learned different types of genres (JS 3)
LEARN:	learned different way people play guitar (JS 3)
LEARN:	I liked learning new things (JS 3)
LEARN:	A lot of Aboriginal student don't know about that and it keeps the culture life in every one of us (SSM 3)
LIKE:	It was an awesome class and I'll look forward to Art! (FG 6)
LIKE:	I learned that mixing different kinds of music can be awesome (JS 1; WK)
LIKE:	It was awesome (JS 2; TPW; SSM 1)
LIKE:	throat singer was awesome (JS 3; AMW)
LIKE:	Presentations were awesome, I was pretty proud of the majority of people who did it and they all looked great too (JS 6)
LIKE:	Karen giving us free tickets to concerts and stuff was awesome (SSM 1)
LIKE:	it's awesome! (SSM 1)
LIKE:	Performances (FG 1; SSF 4)
LIKE:	I enjoyed the performances that was the most positive (FG 1)
LIKE:	The course was great. (FG 1)
LIKE:	Because it was a good experience (FG 1)
LIKE:	All the styles of music were great choices and caught my attention (FG 5)
LIKE:	This is the bomb. More pizzas (FG 6)
LIKE:	I really enjoyed being taught by you. This course was very well organized (FG 6)
LIKE:	It allowed us to interact with others in a positive way (FG 1)
LIKE:	and communicated a lot with others (FG 1)
LIKE:	What surprised me that class was I heard "The Devil Went Down to Georgia". I liked that part (JS 1; GB)
LIKE:	I liked the suits (JS 1; PWD)
LIKE:	What I like about the pow-wow is they all go on the floor dancing and I liked the outfits (JS 2; TPW)

LIKE: We went on a lot of field trips and (saw) a lot of performers (JS 2; PWD; FG 1)
LIKE: I enjoy going on trips like that (JS 3; MUS)
LIKE: and I enjoyed watching drum groups (and) all types of dancers (JS 3: TPW)
LIKE: I enjoyed listening to the fiddle and listening to their stories (JS 3; GB)
LIKE: I enjoyed listening to her and her friend, J.J. Lavallee (JS 3; TP)
LIKE: Every one of them gave me the chills (which is a good thing)(their brackets) (JS 3; AMW)
LIKE: I enjoyed it and all the talented people (JS 4; AMW)
LIKE: enjoyed seeing how APTN broadcasts (JS 4; APTN)
LIKE: We got to see Joey Stylez perform and other great performances (JS 4; AMW)
LIKE: I liked how they were interactive with the students, got the groove going and got people to dance in other words, jigging (JS 5; GB)
LIKE: liked way and style of music (JS 5; WK)
LIKE: one of the best performances I believe we had (JS 5; WK)
LIKE: drum was the best part of the performance (JS 5; WK)
LIKE: it was pretty cool (JS 6; MUS)
LIKE: Overall it was a great performance (JS 6; GB)
LIKE: Which performers did I enjoy the most? Would be the Gaudry Boys, just because they had my sister jigging around, which was pretty fun (JS 6; GB)
LIKE: I enjoyed dancing with them (JS 7; PWD)
LIKE: AMW was the best week where all Aboriginals (were) recognized from the past (through) residential school and music and pow-wow (JS 7; AMW)
LIKE: Positive (SSM 2; SSM 2)
LIKE: That class is so relaxing and something I need for a long week of getting screamed at (SSM 2)
LIKE: I enjoyed the music class: something interesting we don't have in our community (SSM 2)
LIKE: Field trips, I got to go see pow-wow dancers, music performers (SSM 4)
LIKE: I like that there was barely any paperwork (SSM 4)
LIKE: The discussions and personal input we got to express (SSM 4)
LIKE: What I didn't like is nothing about this course (be)cause in this is great (SSM 4)
LIKE: Beading (SSM 4)
LIKE: All the laughing and getting to know the others (SSM 4)
LIKE: I enjoyed going on trips because it taught me stuff and I also had fun (SSM 4)
LIKE: Being chill and doing stuff with my eyes. I didn't like it when my black clothes got messy (SSM 4)
LIKE: What I liked about this course (is) going to APTN (and) seeing what goes on in there (SSM 4)

LIKE: I like the trips (SSM 4)
LIKE: Doing art and making stuff I never made (SSM 4)
LIKE: The performers (SSM 4; SSF 4)
LIKE: Same amount of field trips (SSF 1)
LIKE: Going places (SSF 1)
LIKE: The presentations (SSF 1)
LIKE: A positive experience (SSF 2; SSF 2)
LIKE: I like seeing new things (SSF 4)
LIKE: I liked making projects (SSF 4)
LIKE: Doing work about my culture (SSF 4)
LIKE: I liked everything about this course (SSF 4)
LIKE: I liked making new things. I didn't have the feeling of not liking anything (SSF 4)
LIKE: I liked all the musicians that came in. I liked that she gave us tickets to go to small concerts (SSF 4)
LIKE: I like that we do or go different places each class (SSF 4)
LIKE: Going out and experience new things, feeling how people feel (SSF 4)
LIKE: Going on field trips was fun because it gave me something to look forward to. Keep on with the field trips! (FG 1)
LIKE: They were fun to see (JS 1; WK)
LIKE: I had fun there, getting lost but learning interesting things about our history (JS 3; MUS)
LIKE: It was fun and funny (JS 4)
LIKE: I had a great time listening to them sing, fiddle, and throat sing (JS 4; AMW)
LIKE: I had fun even though I got left behind from my friends and almost got lost (JS 4; MUS)
LIKE: It was fun (JS 6; APTN)
LIKE: It's a fun course (SSF 5)

FG 2: Negative experiences/ FG 3: Improvements to course

NONE: Nothing (FG 2; SSF 4)
NONE: I had no negative experiences in this course (FG 2)
NONE: Negative because we have it once a week. Have it more than once a week (FG 2)
NONE: I believe there is no changes that should be made, because I enjoyed this course really well. There was no disappointments (FG 3)
NONE: I enjoyed my time in this course and I wouldn't change it (be)cause everything in this course is great (SSM 1)
NONE: I would keep it the same (SSM 1)
NONE: Leave everything the way they are, it's fun (SSM 1)
NONE: Personally I think it's fine the way it is (SSM 5)
NONE: Nothing! (SSM 1; SSM 5; SSF 5; SSF 5)

NONE: Nothing, (be)cause everything in this is great (SSM 5)
NONE: Nothing, it is fine (SSM 1)
NONE: Same (SSF 1)
NONE: I wouldn't change anything (be)cause in my opinion everything in the program is great
NONE: Nothing. I liked it just the way it was (SSF 1)
NONE: Nothing. This course is great (SSF 1)
NONE: Nothing. I would keep it the same (SSF 1)
NONE: Keep everything the same, doing a good job (SSF 1)
NONE: I wouldn't change a thing about this course because it gets exciting when making new things (SSF 1)
NONE: I would keep it the same because it's fun and learn us our culture (SSF 1)
NONE: There is nothing I did not like (SSF 4)
NONE: Everything is improved already (SSF 5)
NONE: It's okay just the way it is (SSF 5)
ORG: Last-minute 30% assignments, it would be nice to have more notice (FG 2)
ORG: I just didn't like the fact that I went by myself (JS 3; PWD)
ORG: I didn't like some of the technical difficulties (JS 3)
ORG: It was kind of embarrassing because I was shy to get up in front of the class (JS 4)
ORG: What least thing I don't like is Oji-Cree we need more Oji-Cree stars too (JS 7; AMW)
ORG: The least was sometimes I had to be back at the school (at) a certain time, and wouldn't be able to attend class trips (SSM 4)
ORG: I least liked that I wasn't here for the performances (SSM 4)
ORG: I don't like the waiting (SSM 4)
ORG: The least was presenting in front of the class (SSF 4)
ORG: More field trips – Guitar Hero 3 game (FG 3)
ORG: More pizzas (FG 3)
ORG: Better bands (FG 3)
ORG: More assignments, just to make the class more structured (FG 3)
ORG: Planning to go to concerts together in a group, not separate. This will improve the program because it encourages everyone to come to events (FG 3)
ORG: More activities at the school (SSM 1)
ORG: I would change the pace of the course (SSM 1)
ORG: Maybe more assignments! (SSM 1; SSF 5; SSF 5)
ORG: I think it should stay the same (SSM 1)
ORG: I would change nothing (SSM 1)
ORG: More arts and crafts, no projects (SSM 5)
ORG: We need aprons! (SSM 5)
ORG: I think this class need a radio playing. It's too quiet (SSM 5)
ORG: I would like to do more learning (about) Aboriginal activities (SSM 5)
ORG: More trips (SSM 5; SSF 5)

ORG: More classes (SSM 5)
ORG: More reading, writing (SSM 5; SSF 5)
ORG: More presentations (SSF 1)
ORG: Maybe more performers (SSF 1)
ORG: It would have been cool to listen to a drummer in class (SSF 3)
ORG: I don't like the waiting to see new things but it's all good (SSF 4)
ORG: Instruments in class (SSF 5)
ORG: More trips toward the cultural areas (SSF 5)
ORG: I liked the suits and disliked how slow it was (JS 1; PWD)

FG 4: Impact on program experience

LIKE: This course made the program more fun (FG 4)
LIKE: Yes, it has made time fly because it's fun. It hasn't had a negative impact on us, what's negative about music? (FG 4)
LIKE: Aboriginal Music course is fun, you get to go out on a field trip and go (to) a small concert (SSM 3)
LIKE: Yes, it made my program fun and enjoyable (SSM 3)
LIKE: Yes, because it's fun (SSM 3)
LIKE: It was fun doing different things every class (SSM 4)
IMPB: Yes it has, not as dry as some courses (SSM 3)
IMPB: Yes, made me interact with other peers (SSM 3)
IMPB: Yes, because it gave me a class to look forward to on a Friday (FG 4)
IMPB: Yes, it has (FG 4: SSM 3)
IMPB: It has introduced me to many types of music, I enjoyed listening to different types of performers (SSM 3)
IMPB: Everything still feels the same but it's a class to relax (SSM 3)
IMPB: Yes, because after tough courses from Monday-Thursday, it gave me a class to look forward to (SSM 3)
IMPB: Made me aware of all the different genres of music (SSM 3)
IMPB: Yes, because I can enjoy seeing new things at the end of the week (SSF 3)
IMPB: Yes, because we go places. We learn about our culture and went to the [3-day] (pow-wow) (SSF 3)
IMPB: Yes, because it was a great way to start the weekend (SSF 3)
IMPB: I strongly agree (SSF 3)
IMPB: I guess it (going to TPW) has improved my experience
IMPB: Yes, (be)cause I was proud of who we are (SSF 3)
IMPB: Yes, it gave me a course to look forward to on a Friday (SSF 3)
IMPB: Yes, knowing more about Aboriginal music (SSF 3)
IMPB: Yes, because we got to make cultural stuff and learn the meaning of them at the same time (SSF 3)
IMPB: It has made me get more experienced in more culture things (SSF 3)
IMPB: Yeah, it did it made me feel like this is how this feels to be doing this. It made you feel better about yourself (SSF 3)

IMPB: Yes, it helps me relax about school because we have 4 days of work and this is like relax and chill out, listen to music or watch performers. And catch up on work (SSF 3)

INPUT: Of course it was a positive experience because it actually makes you feel involved (SSM 2)

INPUT: Positive, because it made me feel a part of a group (SSM 2)

INPUT: Both experiences (positive and negative) (SSM 2)

INPUT: To me it was a positive experience (SSM 2)

INPUT: It's positive (SSM 2; SSF 2; SSF 2; SSF 2)

INPUT: Yes (SSM 2; SSF 2)

INPUT: Positive, brought the students closer, as in talking to each other (SSM 2)

INPUT: I don't know (SSF 2)

INPUT: Positive, because it gave everyone's input. And also helped people talk amongst each other (SSF 2)

INPUT: I think is positive (be)cause trying to learn something what I wanted to know (SSF 2)

INPUT: Positive, getting involved in presentations brought me good communication skills (SSF 2)

INPUT: Positive, because it made the class more interactive (SSF 2)

INPUT: It was a positive, it was like how people put them out (SSF 2)

Vita

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