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Report by CHERYLL KOOP 2007 Churchill Fellow

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Indigenous community education and inclusive curriculum –
Saskatchewan Canada, New Zealand

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INTRODUCTION

One of the most significant questions educators are asking today is how to effectively address Indigenous education in the 21st century.

The experiences of Indigenous peoples in Australia, Canada and New Zealand share many common impacts of colonisation on their culture. Western education came to Indigenous people in the form of residential schools and missions and represented the complete denial of culture and Indigenous knowledge. Government policies of assimilation forced Indigenous people to transform themselves into a completely different society and education became the vehicle for this transformation.

However, while education systems continue to reproduce dominant cultural views, Indigenous students remain the most educationally disadvantaged group in these three countries. There is an urgent need to challenge prevailing views that this disparity in the educational outcomes of Indigenous and non-Indigenous students is somehow “normal” and that incremental gains are acceptable.

The situation will only improve when educational structures are changed and Indigenous perspectives are valued.

This study examined how Community Schools in Saskatchewan, Canada and the Te Kotahitanga Research Project in New Zealand are working towards establishing a more inclusive and culturally responsive pedagogy for Indigenous students within mainstream classrooms. It is a critical issue facing educators world-wide as Indigenous students represent an increasing proportion of the student population overall and more and more of these students live in modern urban environments where traditional practices have been eroded.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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The fellowship travel was undertaken between March 19 and April 24, 2008. The aim was to investigate the ways that educational systems in Canada and New Zealand are providing an inclusive curriculum to improve educational outcomes for Indigenous students in urban mainstream schools.

Visits to various Community Schools in Saskatchewan, Canada demonstrated that Aboriginal knowledges can be successfully included in mainstream classes.

The Te Kotahitanga Project in New Zealand demonstrated culturally responsive relationships within classrooms.

Recommendations

To close the gap in educational outcomes for Indigenous and non-Indigenous students it is necessary to:

- provide learning experiences for students which include Indigenous knowledges in the mainstream curriculum;
- include local community Elders and leaders in the planning and delivery of educational activities, where language and culture are the foundations of education;
- integrate community cultural practices into schools;
- provide culturally responsive educational experiences that reflect the diversity of urban Indigenous culture;
- include local histories in mainstream educational experiences;
- maintain high expectations of achievement for all students, particularly Indigenous students;
- provide training for pre-service teachers which includes an understanding of Indigenous world views;
- develop and deliver ongoing professional development for teachers to maximise the effectiveness of the delivery of Indigenous content and perspectives;
- conduct further research into the introduction of Indigenous knowledges into mainstream curriculum.

Implementation and Dissemination

These findings directly inform the current *Reading to Learn* in Murdi Paaki Literacy Project, funded by Department of Education and Work Relations (DEEWR) and administered by NSW Department of Education and Training (DET) across 20 schools in Western NSW Region. Commenced in mid-2006, this project is implementing a systematic scaffolded approach to literacy across K-12. While the *Reading to Learn* project has supported teachers to make significant changes to the ways they deliver the mainstream curriculum, this is only the first step in closing the educational gap. The study of Community Schools in Canada and Te Kotahitanga in New Zealand demonstrates the importance of also

implementing a culturally responsive pedagogy in order to bring about sustainable changes to the outcomes of Indigenous students.

Findings will be / have been disseminated through:

- linking Grade 3 / 4 students at Thomson Community School, Regina with year 5 students at Bourke Public School through letters and emails;
- *Reading to Learn* teacher workshops across Western NSW Region;
- Western NSW Region principals' conferences;
- Formal reporting to NSW DET;
- Workshop for 4th year university students, Charles Sturt University, Dubbo;
- Workshop at World Indigenous Peoples Conference: Education, Melbourne December 2008;
- Articles submitted to educational journals.

PROGRAM

1. SASKATCHEWAN, CANADA SASKATOON

- Saskatoon Catholic Schools Board
- St Mary Community School
- St Michael Community School
- Muskoday First Nation Community School
- Oskayak High School
- Saskatoon Public Schools Board
- First Nations University of Canada
- University of Saskatchewan

REGINA

- Regina Public Schools Board
- Herchmer Community School
- Thomson Community School
- McDermid Community School
- Regina Catholic Schools Board
- Sacred Heart School
- Scott Collegiate High School
- First Nations University of Canada

2. NEW ZEALAND TE KOTAHITANGA PROJECT

- School of Education, University of Waikato, Hamilton
- Bay of Islands College, Kawakawa
- Te Awamutu College, Te Awamutu
- Phase 4 Teacher Conference, HapoHapo

COMMUNITY SCHOOLS IN SASKATCHEWAN, CANADA: SASKATOON and REGINA

Elementary Schools - Kindergarten to Grade 8

In Saskatchewan Canada, about 15% of the population identify as Aboriginal - including those of First Nations (Indian) heritage, Inuit people from the northern and Metis (mixed heritage of First Nations and French Canadian). According to their Treaties, all First Nations people have a right to education provided by federal government. Community Schools in disadvantaged areas of the city also gain further provincial funding, often used to employ more teachers so that class sizes are kept small and to employ community aides and support staff.

All of the Community Schools visited were highly successful in implementing the principles of Indian, Metis and Inuit Education set by the Saskatchewan Department of Education K-12. These schools recognised that Indian and Metis students are the children of peoples whose cultures are, in many ways, very different from those of the people who established the school system. These differences (such as learning styles, language and world view), were accounted for in curriculum, programs and teaching methods.

95% of the 280 students attending **St Mary Community School** in Saskatoon are of Aboriginal heritage, mostly plains Cree. Their school systems, daily routines and learning experiences affirm Aboriginal ways of knowing, cultural traditions and values while integrating Catholic religious practices within a mainstream curriculum. For example, a smudging (smoking) ceremony is conducted on the first day of each school week. During this cleansing ritual, senior male students burn sweetgrass to honour their Creator, followed by Christian prayers. Students then sing the Canadian national anthem in Cree.

Indian and Metis community Elders in Residence are highly visible in the school and actively encouraged to participate fully in the education system at all levels. The Elders Room features a visual focus on First Nations culture, supported in classrooms by displaying posters depicting traditional Indian culture and modern urban Aboriginal culture.

The school has developed a culturally responsive curriculum, including a language immersion program, where students from K-Year 2 start their schooling learning Cree, only starting to learn to read and write English in Year 3.



In the Elders Room at St Mary Community School Saskatoon, Donna holds up the Cree jingle dresses that her students wear proudly at local powwows.

Also in Saskatoon, 90% of the 200 students who attend **St Michael Community School** are Aboriginal. The school has developed strong partnerships with corporations and community in order to integrate the school and community and focus on practical implementation of learning.

The school is developing a culturally responsive curriculum, including employing local Elders to teach students the Hoop Dance, a Cree plains traditional dance.

They are also addressing wider critical issues affecting Aboriginal youth living in disadvantaged households, such as poor health and nutrition. Responding to this, the Year 7 science class developed a unit of work around growing vegetables hydroponically. While students learn about the life cycle and growing conditions of plants and take on the responsibility for providing the right amounts of water, light and nutrients to grow and maintain healthy plants, they are also learning about the importance of human nutrition.

At harvest, students pick and prepare their fresh salad vegetables to eat together with their teacher in the school nutrition room.



Year 7 science students at St Michael Community School, Saskatoon.

250km further to the north of Saskatoon, **Muskoday First Nation Community School** is lead by Principal Sharon Laflamme who defines education as an inherent and Treaty right. She emphasises the importance of using the school system to teach her students about cultural practices that are relevant to their community, like smudging ceremonies and traditional feasts, where students are taught cultural protocols.

Cultural programming within the school incorporates a view of the world based on the traditional Medicine Wheel. At the centre is volition, the understanding that every person is responsible for their own actions and responses. Around this are the four other elements: the soul in the east, taking care of spiritual wellbeing; heart in the south for emotional wellbeing; mind in the north for mental wellbeing and body in the west to maintain physical wellbeing. This holistic model helps builds pride in her students' identity as First Nations students.

Elders, parents and community are an integral part of the school, employed to oversee feasts and other ceremonies, and pass on traditional knowledges.

Like many First Nations people in Saskatchewan, Sharon's own experiences of education were very negative. She didn't have a positive role model until university when a First Nations professor instilled a sense of power and confidence. Passing this onto her students, she emphasises the importance of strong role models in the classroom, and sets the expectation that students need to attend school regularly and achieve success so they can go onto post-secondary education.



Muskoday First Nation Community School – minus 20 degrees!

Regina, the provincial capital, lies 250 km south of Saskatoon. Here, the main Aboriginal language groups include Cree, Dakota, Dene, Lakota, Nakota and Saulteaux. In Treaty 6 area, about 10% of the Regina student population is Aboriginal, with the highest percentage of the Aboriginal population under the age of 15.

In order to achieve equitable opportunities, Aboriginal Education Coordinators support each school to develop and reach one Aboriginal education goal with assessment, such as integrating Aboriginal content into mainstream curriculum.

In the inner city of Regina, **Herchmer Community School** has 98% Aboriginal student population. They are addressing poor attendance by including the local community in the formal curriculum. An Elders' Room, the Hawk's Nest, was set up with a paid Elder in Residence to support cultural literacy initiatives. It reinforces and complements the beliefs and values of First Nations peoples by immersing students in activities using materials used in their culture. For example, the maths wall pictured below teaches students about counting, shapes, fractions and area. Accompanying maths games are hand-made from materials that are culturally important to students, like leather, local river stones, feathers and bones.



Hawk's Nest provides a space for Elders to tell their stories through art and regalia. In the photo above, Regina Public Schools Board First Nations and Metis Coordinator Sarah Longman displays her daughter's powwow dress. Sarah's family tell their story of the grey buffalo through the beading, colours and pictures on the jingle dress. Students engage in literacy activities around reading the labels that identify these familiar objects and placing these key words into their own stories.

Year 3 / 4 at **Thomson Community School** in Regina worked on the topic of bison in an integrated unit that combined maths and language arts, immersing students in historical and contemporary issues surrounding bison. It has even been stated that “education is the new bison” – whereas everything that was needed in the past came from the bison, education can offer this to modern Aboriginal youth today.

At **McDermid Community School** in Regina, Grade 2 has adopted the Picture Word Instruction Model to improve student literacy outcomes. Incorporating aspects of community place-based education, students start their exploration of language from pictures that have a local focus.

Sacred Heart School in inner city Regina have trialled alternative vertical curriculum structures to address disruptive Grade 5 behaviours. Their solution was to group students vertically across other grades, so students re-learn more effective classroom behaviours. Their “unique splits” had Grade 3 and Grade 6 together, Grade 4 with Grade 7, and the troublesome Grade 5 with Grade 8. Not only did this eliminate off-task behaviours in the classroom, it also successfully cut down incidents of bullying in the playground.

Secondary schools - Grade 9-12

With 140 students, **Oskayak High School** in Saskatoon draws most of its students from plains Cree background. Many families move back and forth from First Nations Reservations to the city, making it a transient student population.

In order to meet the needs of urban Aboriginal teenagers, the school employs a range of support staff, including full-time salaried Elders in Residence as cultural advisers, a clinical psychologist, nurse, student counsellor, careers counsellor, nutritionist and a social worker. The school provides day care so that young mothers can continue their schooling while their babies are cared for on campus. Students have access to a health clinic and dental clinic.

School starts with a smudging ceremony each morning and offers Cree language programs in Native Studies and language classes.

It has developed partnerships with community organisations like Saskatchewan Native Theatre Company in Saskatoon so that students engage with the wider community in curriculum-based activities.



Cheryll in the foyer of Oskayak High School, Saskatoon.

Scott Collegiate High School in central Regina incorporates aspects of modern First Nations culture that includes traditional, urban Aboriginal, hiphop and gangs.

For many teenage urban Aboriginal boys in particular, urban gang culture has provided them with a sense of belonging, often replacing families. In response to this, teachers at Scott Collegiate emphasise the importance of building relationships with students by being strong role models and developing proactive programs. As Volition is at the centre of the Medicine Wheel, teachers help their students to become more self-reliant and resilient, making positive decisions and choices. Rather than looking outwards at their social circumstances, they are encouraged to ask themselves, “What do I have to do today in order to keep working towards achieving what I set out to do?”

The school is used before and after school hours to provide sporting and cultural activities. The Kokum’s (Grandmother’s) Club was established to connect young people with women from the local community. In First Nations culture, a Kokum is a highly valued and respected leader and keeper of traditions and beliefs. The club gives students the opportunity to learn several First Nations and Metis traditions through oral teachings and handcrafts taught by the Kokums. It operates during lunch and after school, acknowledging the important role that grandmothers play in the developing of the minds, bodies and spirits of their young people.

With the understanding that the learner and the teacher are one and the same, the Kokum's Club connects students with their community: talking circles, storytelling and conversation are used to discuss life issues such as racism, relationships, bullying, self esteem and grief and loss.

Responding to the Maclean's magazine article *Maclean's exclusive rankings of the country's most crime-ridden, and safest, cities* (March 24, 2008), Scott Collegiate Grade 10 drama wrote their script *Looking in, Looking out*. It reflected on their community, in response to what the magazine called "the worst neighbourhood in Canada". Students used quotes from local media to show how their lives are depicted. After eight weeks of intensive drama work, they presented their play to an audience that included their peers, the local community and students from schools throughout Regina.

All of these Aboriginal communities demand a level of education that will equip their children with the knowledges and skills they need to participate in mainstream Canadian society. These schools value and accept a range of urban and traditional Aboriginal cultures within the classroom.

When an Aboriginal world view is included across mainstream classes, it legitimises cultures for all students through the inclusion, recognition and transmission of cultural knowledges which are valued equally to dominant culture.

By encouraging both First Nations and mainstream curriculum, "two ways of knowing" supports these schools to build healthy, sustainable urban communities. This recognition of cultural diversity in Aboriginal education will lead the way to educational reform and improved outcomes for Aboriginal students.

Post secondary education

First Nations University of Canada has campuses in both Saskatoon and Regina. The University opened in 1976 as the Saskatchewan Indian Federated College through a federated partnership with University of Regina. It is independently administered, offering post-secondary education in a culturally supportive First Nations environment. In 1982, it began working internationally in the areas of academic exchange and political and human rights advocacy. This initiative was founded on the principle that Indigenous peoples share a belief in the spiritual relationship among humanity, the creator and the environment. This philosophy is extended in the sharing of knowledge and experiences between Indigenous peoples and Indigenous academia, both in Canada and internationally.

It is interesting to note that 40% non-Indigenous students are studying Indigenous Studies.

University of Saskatchewan – Saskatoon Campus

Dr Marie Battiste, Academic Director of the Aboriginal Education Research Centre at U of S, develops and coordinates research activity concerning Aboriginal education. AERC focuses on improving educational successes of Aboriginal learners in multiple learning environments.

Students undertaking her course *Aboriginal Epistemology and Pedagogy* are encouraged to decolonise education by challenging dominant values and incorporating different Aboriginal ways of knowing into mainstream education.

Dr Gregory Cajete, in his Earth Day Conference address in Regina, talked about integrating Indigenous knowledges into the mainstream Science curriculum. According to Dr Cajete, Indigenous knowledge keepers have a challenge to build sustainable communities through relationships with earth and each other, teaching the whole child by integrating local skills and culture.

In order for this to occur, educators need to overview the key cultural assumptions underlying Indigenous ways of teaching, where life-centred education organically integrates the individual person within larger contexts of community, nature, and spirituality.

***Reading to Learn* demonstration with U of S Education Faculty**

A meeting with the Education Faculty provided an opportunity to explain the *Reading to Learn* methodology and to demonstrate how the teaching cycle works. Using a biographical recount based on the life of Aboriginal activist Mum Shirl revealed that there were many similarities of experience for Aboriginal people in Australia and Canada.

The methodology itself provoked lively discussion around alternative approaches to teaching literacy.



U of S Education Faculty: Margaret Kovach, Dr Marie Battiste, Cheryll Koop, Linda Wason-Ellam, Mary Jeanne Barrett and Tim Claypool.

University of Regina: Saskatchewan Urban Native Teacher Education Program SUNTEP (Gabriel Dumont Institute of Native Studies and Applied Research) offers a 4 year Bachelor of Education, responsible for the design, development and delivery of specific educational and cultural programs and services with a focus on First Nations and Metis history and culture.

It offers pre-service teacher training incorporating Aboriginal knowledges which aims to ensure that people of Metis ancestry are adequately represented in the teaching profession and that SUNTEP graduates are educated to be sensitive to the individual needs of all students, and those of Aboriginal ancestry in particular.

Other cultural experiences that enhanced an understanding of Aboriginal ways of knowing

The **Sweatlodge** is a purification ceremony common to all North American tribal groups, where participants strive for harmony, balance and spiritual growth. The Sweatlodge represents Mother Earth, shaped like the belly of a pregnant woman, while the darkness within suggests the ignorance of our minds. Steam released by pouring water onto heated rocks symbolise the creative force and renewed links to our environment, other people and the Creator.

Wanuskewin Heritage Centre Saskatoon

Wanuskewin, meaning 'seeking peace of mind', has been a sacred place for the First Nations Peoples for thousands of years. It is a place where the descendants of the Northern Plains Indians have established a park revolving around the buffalo.

Perched on a valley edge overlooking Opimihaw Creek, the building's four tepee-like peaks represent the four seasons, the four directions, the four stages of human life and the four elements of the cycle of life. The reproductions of bison in front of the entrance and inside the doors brings alive the age of when 70 million buffalo roamed the North American western plains. The Northern Plains Indians, consisting of the Blackfoot, Cree, Dene, Lakotah, Nakoda and Saulteaux, for many centuries, camped on this site to escape the winter winds, meet each other in worship and celebrations, gather food and herbs but, above all, to hunt the bison - the basis of their lives and culture.



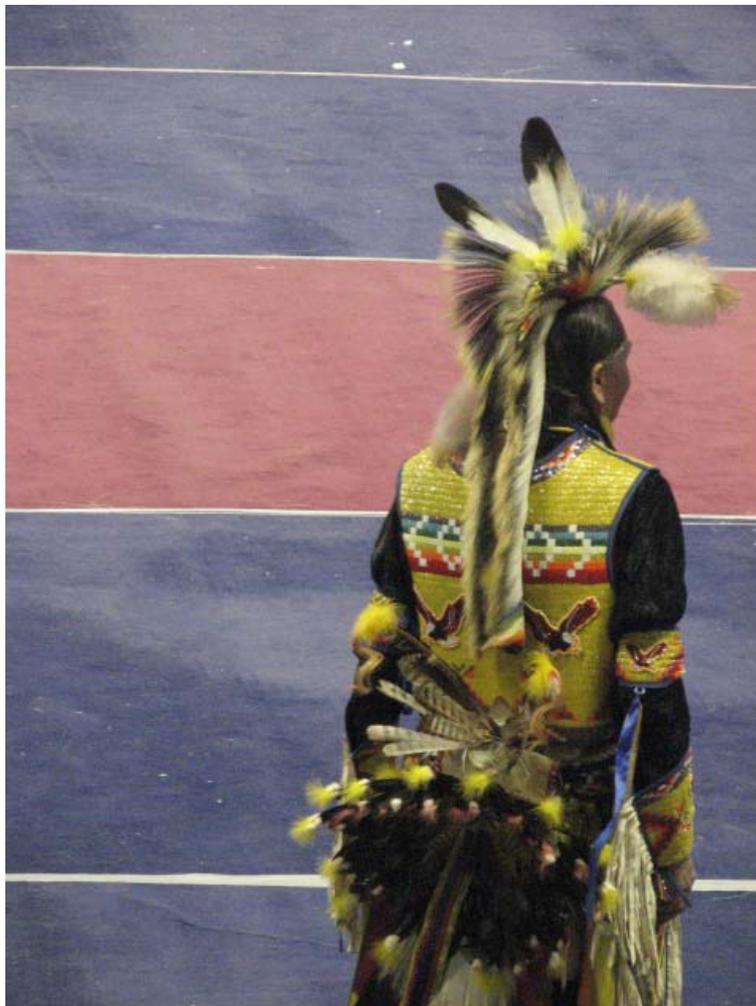
Cheryll at Wanuskewin Heritage Centre entrance.

The 30th Annual First Nations University **Powwow** held in Regina was the first powwow of spring, attracting 6000 people, including 700 singers and dancers of all ages. The powwow celebrates an ancient tradition of dance on the plains where dances were performed before warriors left the tribe to hunt, raid or do battle and to celebrate success on their return.

The modern day powwow has come to mean the celebration of traditional customs that were vanishing with the arrival of Europeans and the changes to life they brought to the First Nations in Canada. People come together to share in the gifts and generosity of these festivities, to visit, eat, sing and dance.

In the Grand Entry, Eagle staffs and flags represent nations, families and communities. The dancers' regalia represent the family's story, often featuring feathers that are sacred and highly cared for.

Music comes from drum groups and sung in traditional languages to keep them alive, the drums carrying the heartbeat of the First Nations people and Mother Earth, calling the spirits and nations together.



An Elder in regalia at Regina powwow.

TE KOTAHITANGA RESEARCH PROJECT, SCHOOL of EDUCATION UNIVERSITY OF WAIKATO: HAMILTON NEW ZEALAND

Te Kotahitanga began in 2001 to improve the educational achievement of Maori students in mainstream classrooms. It began by asking a large number of Maori students about their schooling experiences, what they saw as good teaching and what made an ideal teacher. Along with these student voices, researchers interviewed their families, teachers and school principals in order to improve policy, teaching and learning practices.

From these interviews, the researchers concluded that effective teachers of Maori students create a culturally appropriate and responsive context for learning in their classroom. In doing so, these teachers rejected deficit theorising as a means of explaining Maori students' educational achievements, and knew how to bring about change in their students' outcomes. The observable evidence of these understandings was termed the Effective Teaching Profile, which includes: caring for students as culturally-located individuals; caring for the performance of their students; engaging in effective teaching interactions with Maori students by providing secure and well-managed learning environments; using a range of strategies that promote effective teaching interactions and relationships with their learners; holding high expectations for all students; promoting, monitoring and reflecting on outcomes that lead to improvements in educational achievements for Maori students.

These teachers demonstrate teaching students for responsible self-direction, and in doing so implement a decolonising approach in their classrooms. Their students experience autonomy and success while using their own languages, learning their own histories and retaining their own cultures with pride. In addition to cultural affirmation in the curriculum, these teachers deal with the results of colonisation.

Te Kotahitanga Professional Development has enabled educators to reflect on their understandings of Maori students' experiences, their own theorising and explanations about these experiences and their consequent classroom practice. From this culturally responsive pedagogy of relations, educators are creating learning contexts within their classrooms based on close personal relationships with their students.



Bay of Islands College marae.

85% of the 420 students at **Bay of Islands College** at Kawakawa are Maori. The school wanted to participate in the Te Kotahitanga Project in order find ways of improving attendance and engaging their students in mainstream education.

22 out of their 35 teachers in core subjects across the school are now involved with the project. They are focusing on action research analysing teaching behaviours in Year 9 and 10 classrooms (equivalent to NSW Year 8 and 9) in order to document best practice for Maori students. In lesson observations, facilitators count the number of teacher interactions with students every 10 seconds to document student engagement. They note how the lesson is structured, how much explicit instruction is given and the number of questions teachers ask that require application of knowledge in subject area.

In regular surveys, students are also asked to articulate changes in teaching practice and its effectiveness for their learning.

In a team approach, teachers co-construct their goals each term to maintain high expectations of their students and build relationship with them. They are aiming to structure lessons made up of 50% traditional teaching practice and 50% “discursive” practice (innovative, experimental, and culturally responsive).

It was obvious that culture mattered in a Year 10 English class visited, where written and spoken Maori language was prominent. Explicit outcomes were listed on board stating the

explicit learning intention of that lesson, along with success criteria. There was evidence of reciprocal teaching (“ako”), where teachers are learners and students are teachers, and where learning comes from talking.

University of Waikato arranged a tour of **Te Awamutu College** in Te Awamutu with members of USA’s Phi Delta Kappa, an international association for professional educators.

Where 28% of the 1100 students are Maori, the school incorporates traditional practices and marae protocols in welcoming ceremonies to teach core values and integrate traditional and Maori history so that their students are aware of the past but look toward a shared future.

The school’s holistic approach to teaching the whole child includes critical and creative thinking and an analysis of self through art and identity.

33 schools attended the **Phase 4 Te Kotahitanga Conference** at Tainui Centre, owned and operated by Maoris on their tribal land.

Teachers discussed the core business of Te Kotahitanga in their schools: training, observations, shadow coaching, keeping up to date with professional readings, analysing and reflecting on pedagogy, conducting action research to inform teaching practice, explicit teaching and making best practice explicit and publish findings about what happens in the classroom.

Central to these discussions was the importance of educators analysing their own cultural expectations and teaching practices in order to reform outcomes for Maori students. Teachers talked about becoming more aware of Maori cultural practices and their meaning and how they were more comfortable with incorporating Maori perspectives into their lessons, using Maori language in class, using place-based learning in class and using visual displays that demonstrate Maori world views.

They discussed the importance of maintaining the integrity of the process across schools and providing inter-school support through the project e-community where they could access the participant notice board, professional readings and data analysis.

CONCLUSIONS

Indigenous people across Canada and New Zealand have begun to reclaim their identity and cultural traditions, evidenced through many inclusive and culturally responsive educational practices.

This study concludes that:

- successful Indigenous education practices take into account a holistic model of teaching and learning as a lifelong process that requires both formal and informal opportunities for learning for all ages;
- learning development must focus on Indigenous individuals in a holistic manner based on their spiritual, intellectual, emotional and physical selves;
- knowledge and skills derived from the local community, its language and culture are integral parts of the learning and educational processes among Indigenous people;
- Indigenous learning must be integrally linked with to Elders and community and opportunities realised to build on these connections and their language, knowledge and culture;
- the participation and involvement of parents and community is essential to building a successful learning continuum and healthy resilient communities;
- when educators reject deficit theorising as a means of explaining Indigenous students' educational achievements and put into place culturally responsive pedagogy, they can start to bring about change in their students' outcomes;
- Indigenous students respond to a secure and well-managed learning environments where their teachers use a range of strategies that promote effective teaching interactions and relationships with their learners;
- Indigenous students learn best when their teachers hold high expectations for all students;
- effective teachers of Indigenous students continually engage in professional development activities that lead to improvements in educational achievements for their Indigenous students;
- the right of Indigenous peoples to develop and control their own education must be recognised, resources and realised;
- inequalities in educational funding create uneven capacities for Indigenous people and require immediate solutions.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. *What could you do to bring about improvements in Australia?*

To close the gap in educational outcomes for Indigenous and non-Indigenous students it is necessary to:

- provide learning experiences for students which include Indigenous knowledges in the mainstream curriculum;
- include local community Elders and leaders in the planning and delivery of educational activities, where language and culture are the foundations of education;
- integrate community cultural practices into schools;
- provide culturally responsive educational experiences that reflect the diversity of urban Indigenous culture;
- include local histories in mainstream educational experiences;
- maintain high expectations of achievement for all students, particularly Indigenous students;
- conduct further research into the introduction of Indigenous knowledges into mainstream curriculum;
- provide training for pre-service teachers which includes an understanding of Indigenous world views.

The four year *Reading to Learn* in Murdi Paaki literacy project is jointly funded by NSW DET and DEEWR. The project is addressing the unacceptable disparity between Indigenous and non-Indigenous students' educational outcomes by training teachers, Indigenous tutors and workers to deliver the *Learning to Read...Reading to Learn* methodology, developed by Dr David Rose, University of Sydney. This methodology trains teachers to support all students to read and write texts across the curriculum at age and stage appropriate levels.

While the *Reading to Learn* project is starting to show improvements in the academic progress of Indigenous students, this study tour has highlighted the need to understand and include Indigenous ways of knowing in the mainstream curriculum.

Like the Te Kotahitanga project, we need to look at how we can build in *Reading to Learn plus* – not just changing teaching practice in the classroom, but changing the way that teachers view their Indigenous students as learners by making every lesson culturally responsive.

Ongoing action research in schools means that teachers keep reflecting on best practice and documenting evidence that demonstrates changes and improvements to Indigenous learning outcomes. For example, it would be useful to conduct student surveys (similar to those featured in *Culture Speaks*) to document Indigenous students' experiences in the mainstream education system.

2. *What other improvements should be made in Australia?*

- **Anti-racist education, reconciliation and Treaties**

Australia faces a critical need to further the reconciliation process. While our federal government has recently publicly apologised to the Stolen Generation for the injustices of the past, both Canada and New Zealand have formal treaties which recognise Indigenous sovereignty. These Treaties provide an independent economic base on which to build self-sustaining Indigenous communities.

- **Indigenous Knowledge Centres**

Australia needs to further the current worldwide research into Aboriginal ways of knowing, which take a holistic view of learning. One recommendation coming out of from the 2020 Summit Options for the Future of Indigenous Australia stream was for a national Indigenous Knowledge Centre network to be established to provide support to regional knowledge centres. These regional centres would reflect that each Indigenous group is different and has different knowledge to preserve and to develop.

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