This volume is a collection of research cases illustrating the interrelationships among education, dominance and identity in historical- and contemporary contexts. The cases reflect particular ways in which local-, group, and indigenous identities have been affected by a dominant discourse, how education can support or undermine identity, and how languages (including dominant and sub-dominant languages) and the language of instruction in schools are at the centre of challenges to hegemony and domination in many situations. Examining the issues in their research, the contributors reveal how members of minority-, disadvantaged-, or dominated groups (and the teachers and parents of children in their schools) struggle for recognition, for education in their own language, for acceptance within larger society, or for recognition of the validity of their responses to reform initiatives and policies that address a wider agenda but that fail to take into account key factors such as perceptions and subaltern status.

Collectively, the chapters document research employing a variety of methodological approaches and theoretical perspectives, illustrating an array of universal and global issues in the field of comparative and international education. However, each of the cases its own unique character, as research findings and as personal reflections based on the authors’ experiential knowledge in particular social, cultural and political contexts. The contexts and regional settings include Chile, Canada, the United States, Hungary and elsewhere in East-Central Europe, France, Germany, Spain, Malaysia, Tanzania, South Africa, Cyprus, Tunisia, Egypt, Iran and elsewhere in the Middle East.

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EDUCATION, DOMINANCE AND IDENTITY
COMPARATIVE AND INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION:
A Diversity of Voices

Volume 20

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Comparative and International Education: A Diversity of Voices aims to provide a comprehensive range of titles, making available to readers work from across the comparative and international education research community. Authors will represent as broad a range of voices as possible, from geographic, cultural and ideological standpoints. The editors are making a conscious effort to disseminate the work of newer scholars as well as that of well-established writers.

The series includes authored books and edited works focusing upon current issues and controversies in a field that is undergoing changes as profound as the geopolitical and economic forces that are reshaping our worlds.

The series aims to provide books which present new work, in which the range of methodologies associated with comparative education and inter-national education are both exemplified and opened up for debate. As the series develops, it is intended that new writers from settings and locations not frequently part of the English language discourse will find a place in the list.
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The WCCES is an international organization of comparative education societies worldwide and is an NGO in consultative partnership with UNESCO. The WCCES was created in 1970 to advance the field of comparative education. Members usually meet every three years for a World Congress in which scholars, researchers, and administrators interact with colleagues and counterparts from around the globe on international issues of education.

The WCCES also promotes research in various countries. Foci include theory and methods in comparative education, gender discourses in education, teacher education, education for peace and justice, education in post-conflict countries, language of instruction issues, Education for All. Such topics are usually represented in thematic groups organized for the World Congresses.

Besides organizing the World Congresses, the WCCES has a section in CERCular, the newsletter of the Comparative Education Research Centre at the University of Hong Kong, to keep individual societies and their members abreast of activities around the world. The WCCES comprehensive web site is http://www.wcces.com.

As a result of these efforts under the auspices of the global organization, WCCES and its member societies have become better organized and identified in terms of research and other scholarly activities. They are also more effective in viewing problems and applying skills from different perspectives, and in disseminating information. A major objective is advancement of education for international understanding in the interests of peace, intercultural cooperation, observance of human rights and mutual respect among peoples.
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The WCCES Series was established to provide for the broader dissemination of discourses between scholars in its member societies. Representing as it does Societies and their members from all continents, the organization provides a special forum for the discussion of issues of interest and concern among comparativists and those working in international education.

The first series of volumes was produced from the proceedings of the World Council of Comparative Education Societies XIII World Congress, which met in Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina, 3-7 September, 2007 with the theme of Living Together: Education and Intercultural Dialogue. The series included the following titles:

Volume I: Tatro, M. & Mincu, M. (Eds.), Reforming Teaching and Learning
Volume 2: Geo JaJa, M. A. & Majhanovich, S. (Eds.), Education, Language and Economics: Growing National and Global Dilemmas
Volume 3: Pampanini, G., Adly, F., & Napier, D. (Eds.), Interculturalism, Society and Education

The second series of volumes has been developed from the proceedings of the World Council of Comparative Education Societies XIV World Congress, which met in Istanbul, Turkey, 14-18 June, 2010 with the theme of Bordering, Re-Bordering and new Possibilities in Education and Society. This series includes the following titles, with further volumes under preparation:

Volume 1: Napier, D. B. & Majhanovich, S. (Eds.) Education, Dominance and Identity
Volume 3: Ginsburg, M. (Ed.), Preparation, Practice & and Politics of Teachers
Education, Dominance and Identity

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The editors would like to express their appreciation to many people for their roles in bringing this volume to completion. The chapters in this collection each originated as paper presentations at the XIV World Congress of Comparative Education Societies held in Istanbul, Turkey on June 14-18, 2010 hosted by the World Council of Comparative Education Societies and by the local organizers TÜKED (Turkish Comparative Education Society) and Boğaziçi University. We would like to thank all parties involved in the XIV World Congress, and in particular the Congress Convenor, Professor Fatma Gök, and the other members of the Local Organizing Committee, Meral Apak and Soner Şimşek, for their assistance to us in reconnecting with presenters to develop their papers into essays for the volume.

We would like to thank all of the contributors to this volume for their dedication and scholarly passion. They each worked closely with us to refine and articulate in depth their respective contributions. They enabled us to bring together a variety of theoretical, methodological and conceptual perspectives in cases that offer rich insights into the complex issues underlying the volume theme of Education, Dominance and Identity as well as the broader Congress Theme of Bordering, Re-Bordering and New Possibilities in Education and Society. We believe that these contributions offer the scholarly field of comparative and international education new and significant insights from cases in several world regions. Collectively, the questions that the chapter authors raise, and the studies and perspectives they report, enrich our understanding of the importance of doing systematic research, of respecting local contextual factors and minority voices, and of recognizing trends, events, and influences that impact education and societies worldwide.

We owe a debt of gratitude to the manuscript reviewers who offered careful critique and constructive feedback to the chapter authors and to us: Jason Brown, Ashley Carr, Dawn Fyn, Daniel Gakunga, Joanna Greer, Kelly McFaden, Allyson Larkin, John Napier, Mary Michael Pontzer, and Aniko Varpalotai. We are particularly grateful to the main editors and their staff at Sense Publishers, Michel Lokhorst and Peter de Liefde, who took responsibility for the book production process. Finally, as lead editor of this volume, I would like to express my appreciation to Allan Pitman and Suzanne Majhanovich (my co-editor on this volume) who are the senior editors for the volume series emanating from the World Congresses: I appreciated the opportunity to work with you on this volume in the series.
INTRODUCTION: GLOBAL ISSUES: REGIONAL, NATIONAL AND LOCAL CULTURE CASE STUDIES

The twelve chapters in this volume are organized into five loosely geographic sections, each reflecting particular ways in which local, group, and indigenous identities have been affected by a dominant discourse. The chapters show how education can act as an agent to support or undermine identity, how languages (including dominant and sub-dominant languages) and the language of instruction in schools are at the centre of challenges to hegemony and domination in many societal and cultural environments. In those contexts, minority or dominated groups – and teachers and parents of children in schools – struggle for recognition, or education in their own language, for acceptance within larger society, or for recognition of the validity of their responses to reform initiatives and policies that address a wider agenda but that often fail to take into account key factors such as perceptions and subaltern status.

Collectively, the chapters illustrate a variety of methodological approaches and theoretical perspectives. They illustrate an array of universal and global issues in the field of comparative and international education research. However, each of the cases has its own unique character, conceptualized and presented as research findings and as personal reflections based on the authors’ experiential knowledge, and focused on research in particular social, cultural and political contexts. The universal issues related to the triad of education, dominance and identity that underlie the papers in this collection include – but are not limited to – the use of education as an instrument of domination employed in policies at national- and lower levels within countries, and also across entire colonial empires; and the use of education as a vehicle for transformation and empowerment in independence struggles, post-colonial development, and minority rights movements within societies. Among foundational theoretical underpinnings of the works in this volume are Freire’s (1970) notions of emancipatory pedagogy and banking education; Bourdieu’s (1986) concept of cultural capital manifested in educational practices, language usage and expectations for status and success; Foucault’s (1988) notion of belief systems that gain momentum and power when facets of the belief system become accepted as common knowledge; and aspects of globalization theory focusing on the general features of globalization, including an emerging global education system of global reform priorities, standards, and practices, (see for instance Zajda & Rust, 2009; and Baker & Wiseman, 2005). Another dimension illustrated in several chapters of the volume pertains to
universal linguistic rights, linked to issues of metropolitan language dominance – particularly the hegemony of English – the struggle for recognition of sub-dominant languages, and the rights of minority/indigenous language speakers and language-dominance issues regarding language use in schools (see Skuttnab-Kangas & Philippson, 1995; Brook Napier, 2011). In addition, applying the work of Arnove & Torres (2007) the cases in these chapters can be viewed as illustrations of the “dialectic of the global and the local” or the manner in which universal, global issues manifest themselves in particular local contexts or within particular groups. The cases also conform to the principles contained within global culture theory wherein a global culture of schooling plays out within societies at various levels of implementation, in which resistance to imposed educational and language-related mandates results in creolization (mediation or modification) or even outright rejection of the reform mandates (see Anderson-Levitt, 2003, for the full conceptualization and cases illustrating). Some of the chapters in this volume are powerful illustrations of such processes that run counter to the dominant discourse and to the prevailing patterns of one-size-fits-all education.

The chapters in this volume were originally presented as papers in the XIV World Congress of Comparative Education Societies held in June 2010 in Istanbul, Turkey under the Congress theme of Borders, Bordering and New Possibilities for Education. Addressing this broad theme of the Congress as well as three of the Congress sub-themes (TG 3: Education, Conflict and Transitions within and between Societies; TG 7: Identity, Space and Diversity in Education; TG 11: Education, Politics of Dominance, the Suppressed and Disappearing Languages) the chapters reveal ways in which borders and barriers are transcended through struggles for identity, empowerment, and equal access in education. Furthermore, there are many comparative insights in many of the pairings or groupings of the chapters: they illustrate issues across countries or on different levels; most of them offer valuable historical context for the research and situations under examination, leading to a more thorough understanding of contemporary challenges and dilemmas.

INDIGENOUS IDENTITY AND DEVELOPMENT

The first section focusing on indigenous identity and development includes two cases from North America. In Decolonizing Indigenous Education in Canada, KP Binda and Mel Lall outline policy changes demanded by Canadian aboriginal authorities to undo the damage inflicted upon generations of indigenous people through the government and church controlled residential school system that focused on systematic eradication of aboriginal identity, language and culture, while forcibly assimilating them to the European way. Through a decentralization process that has allowed Aboriginal communities to take charge of their own education systems and to reintroduce elements of their languages and culture, restorative justice is sought. Progress has been slow but as the National Chief of the Assembly of First Nations has proclaimed, in order to realize the necessary
changes, reconciliation of ‘rights’, fiscal responsibility, sustainability, a relevant education system, public support and partnerships must be put into effect.

In the second chapter, Discovering the Past, Uncovering Diversity: The Reclamation of Indigenous Identity through a Community Education Project, Lesley Graybeal presents a practical example of identity recovery in a Southeastern American State by the Occaneechi Band of the Saponi Nation. Members of the band felt an acute need to learn about their ancestors as official discourse seemed to imply that their group was extinct or had been totally assimilated into the majority population. The Occaneechi Homeland Preservation Project included the establishment of a museum and cultural centre in their ancestral region to educate their own people as well as their non-aboriginal neighbours about their history and life styles. Through this particular representation (the museum) the indigenous group has been able to redefine their space and recreate authentic identities and structures.

INTEGRATION AND DOMINATION OF ETHNIC MINORITY GROUPS

The next section deals with the integration and domination of ethnic minority groups, in four case studies from Europe. In the first paper, Critical Analysis of School Integration of Roma Children in Nyíregyháza, Hungary, Eva Földesi examines the issue of integrating Roma children into a majority school in a rural area of Hungary. The benefits and challenges of the integration program are discussed. Whereas educating Roma children separate from the majority in a ghetto school may allow them to retain connection to their language and culture, integration, although met with fear and mistrust on both sides may, as the author argues, lead to a de-ethnicized discourse and more benevolent relations between Roma and non-Roma. No final decision has been made whether to continue the experiment in integration of the Roma children. As Földesi reports, the educational authority is currently debating the possibility of re-opening the segregated Roma-only school. Földesi, however, sees merit in the integrated model.

In their chapter entitled Social Equity versus Cultural Identity: Government Policies and Roma Education in East Central Europe Katalin Forray and Tamas Kozma address Roma education in a broader context than in the previous paper by reporting on nine countries/regions in East-Central Europe with regard to the education for the Roma population according to one of two policies, the first designed to promote and protect the Roma culture and heritage, and the second intended to promote socio-economic equality. The second policy views the Roma as socially handicapped and tries to provide them with skills that will enable them to participate in the majority society and economy. The authors contend that choice of one or the other policy is connected to political ideologies, and that the prevalence of the second policy since the dissolution of the Soviet Bloc in the early 90s is related to influence from EU countries. They query whether the EU countries may be imposing their Western perspectives on the realities of the Roma minority in Eastern Europe.
The third paper in this section *Children’s Home Languages in Early Childhood Education Systems: Handicap or Asset? A Comparative Study of Parents’ and Teachers’ Attitudes* by Nathalie Thomauske considers the issue of integration of minority children in France and Germany. Despite research stressing the importance of competence in the mother tongue for future school success, popular wisdom in both France and German promotes learning the national languages even if it means that children will never master their mother tongue. Both minority parents and child care workers interviewed in the study believe that it is key for minority children to learn French or German as early as possible mainly in order to succeed at school and integrate into their new country.

The fourth paper, *Constructing Spanish Discourses of Language Hegemony in Spain* by Renée de Palma and Cathryn Teasley is concerned with the relative importance accorded to the various regional official languages of Spain. The authors focus on the status of Català (Catalan), Euskera (Basque) and Galego (Galician) in relationship to Castilian which has come to be viewed as the dominant language of Spain. De Palma and Teasley argue that Castilian has assumed a hegemonic position thanks to neo-liberal discourses of educational choice, flexibility and competition in the marketplace. They juxtapose the favoured position of Castilian in Spain vis-à-vis other local languages with the situation in the US where English enjoys clear dominance while Spanish spoken by a sizable population has been denied status. Their study outlines the efforts of minority groups in Spain to preserve their local language and identity with varying degrees of success.

**LANGUAGE, EDUCATION, LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION AND IDENTITY**

In post-colonial states, the language of instruction is a major issue. The third section in this volume focuses on issues of language, education, language of instruction and identity. Cases from Africa and Africa/Asia illustrate the complexities of language choice, specifically in the language of instruction (or LoI) in schools. The research reported in these chapters details the domination of powerful European languages in educational contexts and the specifics of just how use of mother tongue versus a non-native language can be a powerful determinant of success or failure for students.

Zehlia Babaci-Wilhite, in *A Study of Escalating Debates on the Use of a Global or Local Language in Education*, focuses on language issues in Tanzania and Malaysia. She notes the tendency in previously colonized countries to use powerful European languages such as English, French or Portuguese as the Language of Instruction (LoI) in schooling. Since independence, many former colonies promoted local languages to replace a dominant European language as the LoI. However, pressures of globalization and internationalization have persuaded many educational authorities to continue the use of the colonial language for schooling, especially at the secondary and tertiary levels. Babaci-Whillhite uses the examples of Tanzania and Malaysia to illustrate the language debates. Malaysia after gaining independence had opted for Bahasa Malaysia as the LoI, but in the 90s reversed
that policy with regard to instruction in Mathematics and Science which were henceforth to be taught beginning in elementary school in English. However, public opposition as well as disappointing results on international tests convinced authorities to return to Bahasa-Malaysia as the LoI for all subjects.

In Tanzania, which had adopted Kiswahili as its official language after independence, English as LoI has proven more difficult to dislodge. Although children receive primary education in their native tongue, plans to replace English as the language of instruction in higher grades have never been implemented. As in the Thomauske article in the previous section, parents seem to prefer education in a dominant language like English. Language continues to be a tool of neo-colonialism.

In their chapter entitled *Voices from the Classroom: Teacher and Learner Perceptions on the Use of the Learners’ Home Language in the Teaching of School Mathematics and Science* Monde Mbekwa and Vuyokazi Nomlomo provide a companion piece to the previous paper, this time focusing on LoI policies in South Africa. Under the new democratic government installed in South Africa in 1994, nine African languages in addition to English and Afrikaans were recognized as official languages and work began to develop curriculum in the African languages. Mbekwa and Nomlomo’s study considers the perceptions of teachers and students in grade 4 classes in the Western Cape regarding the use of isiKhosa as the LoI for Mathematics and Science. Teachers and students were generally very positive, even proud, to be using a home language in instruction. However, pedagogical, linguistic and structural challenges were noted. Dialectical variations, lack of scientific terminology in isiKhosa and lack of resources were cited as challenges. While the teachers confirm that students learn better and more easily when taught in their mother tongue, the challenges are formidable. This is especially the case for classes in the higher grades. As seems to be the case everywhere in our globalized world, parents and even teachers seem to be convinced that education, particularly higher education should be offered in a “universal” language such as English, as knowledge of English is seen as the key to admission to the world economy.

TEACHER IDENTITY, REFORM, DOMINATION AND TRANSFORMATION

In the next section that highlights issues of teacher identity, reform, and domination/transformation, the papers focus on the effect of government policies on teacher identity and attitudes. In the first case, *Reform Environment and Teacher Identity in Chile*, Beatrice Avalos and Danæ de los Rios report on a massive study in Chile to ascertain how recent policy reforms affected teachers’ working lives and how they navigated between demands of the reforms and their own notions of their identity as teachers. Avalos and de los Rios carried out a very comprehensive study in which the quantitative part involved over 1800 teachers from all areas of Chile, at all school levels in public, subsidized private and private schools. They investigated such areas as motivation and commitment, work demands and satisfaction, self-efficacy, and teachers in the public eye, considering
those factors to be major components of teacher identity. Based on survey results, they then developed case studies with eleven elementary and secondary teachers from their survey population. They conclude that teacher identity is connected to broad education aims and that policy makers when developing policies aimed at change and reform need to take into consideration the wider sense of teacher identity or risk facing resistance to reform by the very actors charged with carrying it out.

In Researching an Initiative on Peaceful Coexistence in Greek-Cypriot Schools: A Mixed-Methods Study on Teachers’ Perceptions and Emotions, Michalinos Zembylas, Constandina Charalambous, Panayiota Charalambous and Panayiota Kendeou explore perceptions and emotions of Greek Cypriot teachers toward a government initiative to develop a culture of peaceful co-existence between Greek-Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots. Given the history of the area and past conflicts, it is not surprising that teachers were leery of the policy. To gain understanding of the teachers’ standpoints, the authors carried out a mixed-methods study involving both quantitative and qualitative methods. With some similarities to findings in the previous study in Chile, their study shows, that in order for reform initiatives in politicized contexts to have any chance of successful implementation, policy makers must recognize emotional aspects of those expected to adopt the policy.

IDENTITY, DOMINATION AND REVOLUTION

The final part of this volume focuses on identity, domination and revolution in two papers from the Middle East and North African region that deal with the way in which the political context impacts on education and the identity of the populace. Nagwa Megahed and Stephen Lack in Women’s Rights and Gender-Educational Inequality in Egypt and Tunisia: From Colonialism to Contemporary Revolution provide a timely study on recent political upheaval in Egypt and Tunisia in the context of gender policies. By reviewing the situation in the two countries in the colonial period and since independence, they show the influence of the colonial legacy on gender-related education, current gender practices in social spheres and women’s participation in pre-university and higher education. They highlight conservative versus liberal ideologies in both countries as concerns gender-related reform policies. They close with the question of how and what kind of democracy will be achieved in the new order and what the political developments will mean for gender equity and women’s education.

The final paper by Amir Sabzavar Qahfarkhi, Abbas Madandar Arani and Lida Kakia, The Impact of Educational Systems on Political Violence in the Middle East Region confronts the issue of how young people are being inculcated into violence. The authors contend that although families, political parties and mass media, government and education systems play a role in this undesirable indoctrination, it is not at all clear the extent to which each factor plays a role in encouraging violent behavior. The authors examine the place of formal and informal education arguing that for the most part, parents in the Middle East region just seek an education for their children that will lead to skills necessary for participating in the modern
global world; if they cannot procure places for their children in government schools, they will turn to informal education possibilities that may provide agendas beyond basic education. The authors also note the role comparative education can play in understanding the complex messages that the various forms of education are delivering, and they endeavour to point out stereotypical thinking about Islam, education, and culture in the Middle East region. This chapter offers readers a set of emic reflections from the authors’ own lived experience in Iran, and from their interpretations of the historic shifts across the wider region and developments in education recorded in the literature.

In all, the papers in this volume provide cases from around the world that deal with identity construction in the face of the dominant discourses that globalization and internationalization have forged. The articles reflect different ways in which minority and disadvantaged groups engage in the struggle to affirm their identity—through the adaptation of, or resistance to policies affecting identity and/or reflecting power and dominance of majority groups to analyses of reaction to policies affecting identity, or, in the case of the final two papers, taking recourse in violent upheavals to address tyranny and inequality.

REFERENCES


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PART I

INDIGENOUS IDENTITY AND DEVELOPMENT
INTRODUCTION, METHODOLOGY AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Like so many minority groups around the world the Aboriginal population in Canadian society occupies the lowest rungs of the socioeconomic and political ladder, notwithstanding the fact that Canada is rated by the United Nations as one of the best countries in the world in which to live. In the case of the Aboriginal population, the record is not a proud one but rather one that demands change. The Federal government recognized this dilemma and is adopting policies that devolve more control to the Aboriginal population. The Aboriginal peoples themselves view the changes as a decolonizing process. In this chapter the term Aboriginal peoples refer to the indigenous population for whom the Federal government has a legal and fiduciary responsibility. It should be noted that there are other indigenous groups such as the Inuit, Metis and non-status First Nations that are outside the scope of this study.

The chapter’s focus is on changes to a developed, centralized controlled system of education and its impacts upon First Nations communities living on reserves. Reserves are enclaves set aside as part of the treaty making process between the Crown (Federal Government) and the First Nations communities. Using the conceptual framework of devolution and decolonization, the paper reviews the changes taking place in Aboriginal education. The description of the changes outlined in this paper involved the analysis of a variety of documents, position papers, published and unpublished papers by various researchers and organizations, conferences and personal observations while working in the field over a period of thirty-five years. As well, both authors have been participant observers in a variety of settings at the local, national and international levels. The narrative in this chapter follows a conversational pattern and viewpoints as analyzed from the documents and personal experiences.

In a context where community values are pitted against the competitiveness characteristic of the western world, such changes, as noted above, include increased community participation, increased level of political control, development of new education systems, new and relevant curricula, culturally appropriate instructional and measurement methods focusing on Aboriginal perspectives, increased attendance, participation and graduation rates. These developments are taking place in communities that are not homogenous. They vary in size, culture (language, beliefs and traditions), tribal groupings, location and
socio-economic conditions. These variations add to the complexity of the context in which changes are to take place. Notwithstanding these differences, the common goal is the improvement of community wellbeing through holistic processes.

Community control, in the context of Aboriginal education discussed in this chapter, is an ecological process; it is sort of a symbiosis that recognizes the interdependence of the home, the school and community. It is a holistic enterprise. In this sense the symbiotic linkage and shift in the political framework from a centralized to a decentralized system can have a positive impact on educational development that is more related, not only to economic health, but as well, to cultural, personal and social developments. Aboriginal peoples view this change process of devolution within a larger framework of decolonization. Wesley (1993). Etzioni (1993) and Sergiovanni (1994) viewed this sense of community from a moral and ecological perspective. The decolonizing process, as visioned by Chief Ernest Wesley (1993) is the cornerstone for ‘rebuilding self-determination and community wellness’.

For First Nations, community control of education is a “visioning process” for “seeing” and “influencing” their own futures and for leading the change process so necessary if socio-economic progress is to be accomplished. This visioning process is not the sacred “vision quest” practiced in traditional Aboriginal communities but rather it is a form of collaborative planning put into action. It includes going “beyond narrow educational goals” and “looks toward a collective future with hope” (Manitoba Education, Citizenship and Youth, 2007). It is an empowering, encompassing framework that gives structure, pattern and meaning to the process and fabric of change. It incorporates the values, hopes and dreams of the community. This structural change process is the very essence of decolonizing their colonial heritage. In an address to his fellow First Nations Chiefs at their General Assembly meeting in Calgary in 1993, Chief Wesley of the Wesley First Nations Band near Calgary, Alberta, stated that their renewed “education is the very essence of decolonization” (p. 10) and that “the overall goal of decolonization is to build a proud people who hold healthy values and beliefs … a people who have hope, and who are self-sufficient in their livelihoods” (p. 6).

This inculcative function of First Nations traditional education, so brutally suppressed by Canadian colonial policy, is extremely valuable since no human society can continue to exist if it fails to maintain a system by which its common values and beliefs are transferred from one generation to the next. This theoretical framework, found expression in the various position papers (so-called Red Papers) put forward by the First Nations over the last few decades. Pre-eminent among these papers was Indian Control of Indian Education (1972).

The principles of community control have been advocated in the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), which states that parents have a right to choose the kind of education that shall be given to their children. The U.N. Working Group on Indigenous Populations stated that:

Indigenous populations should enjoy the right to structure, conduct and control their own educational system with complete autonomy, so that
education could be a way of developing indigenous culture and traditions ….
(Morse, 1991, p. 762)

The concept of decentralized control was described by McGinn and Street (1986) “as a process of transferring or ‘devolving’ power and authority from large to small units of governance” (p. 471). They also viewed the centralization – decentralization process as a dyadic relation where the locus of power of individuals, groups or organizations vis-à-vis the state can be described and located in a continuum. In a centralized political system most authority and power are held at the centre; in a decentralized system, power and authority are devolved or shifted to the local level such as the community or individual school (Brown, 1994).

Figure 1. Centralized structure. Source: Binda and Calliou (2001, p. 41)

Figure 1 illustrates the centralized process as it operated from the central government in Ottawa down to the community schools in one of the regions of Manitoba. The figure shows direct interaction between Ottawa and the regional provincial office in Winnipeg, Manitoba. Communication between the First Nations Bands and the federal government takes place through the Winnipeg office. Inter-tribal band communications and cooperation also take place within the
region as shown by the broken lines. The regional office is now closed but inter-band activities are now carried on informally.

Figure 2 conceptualizes the devolution process that reflects a paradigm shift which incorporates a decolonization philosophy whereby education is viewed as emanating from the wisdom of community elders who provide guidance and suggestions in all aspects of education development, particularly in the area of culturally appropriate curricula.

Decentralization as a process is energized by two main factors, socio-political and administrative (Chapman, 1973; Walker, 1972). McGinn (1996) and Putnam (1993) stressed the importance of political factors such as political equality and civic engagement. Kaufman (1969) noted that the demand for decentralization results from social and political unrest, certainly, conditions that are identifiable in Aboriginal communities and discussed further on in this chapter. The administrative argument for decentralization focuses upon the improvement of efficiency and system effectiveness, factors sorely lacking in Aboriginal communities (Binda, 2001, 1998, 1995). This presumes that the central bureaucracy operated inefficiently, ostensibly through poor central planning. In fact, numerous reports of the Auditor General of Canada have criticized several federal government departments for their shortcomings in the administration of Aboriginal education. Correspondence theory suggests that increased devolution and local participation would resolve the two thorny problems identified above –
both political and administrative. Certainly the inequitable state of affairs in the Aboriginal communities supported the argument for decentralized community control. This argument for more local control through the principle of sovereign self-government is even more vociferous today as is evident in the print, radio and television media.

HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

Traditional Education

Aboriginal education in Canada may be divided into various periods with well-demarcated and identifiable characteristics. Dickason (2002) described the many developments such as industrial schools, compulsory school attendance, residential schools and local control schools, which took place in the post-European period. The traditional period prior to European contact with the Indigenous people of Canada, espoused a functional system of education rooted in oral tradition with observation and practical application being the main techniques for teaching and learning (Leavitt, 1991). Kirkness (1992) pointed out that in the pre-European contact period “Indians had evolved their own forms of education. It was an education in which the community and the natural environment were the classroom, and the land was seen as the mother of people” (p. 5). The lessons to be learned in that environment were to master the skills needed for daily survival and failure to master such skills often had exacting penalties.

The oral tradition and Native ways of knowing and interacting espoused an education philosophy that viewed Mother Earth as the supreme teacher and giver of life and law. “Central to that teaching was the belief in the sacred, the Great Spirit” (Kirkness, 1992, p. 5). Through several modes of teaching, such as storytelling, emphasis was placed on developing the whole person with reference to such values as humility, kindness, courage, honesty and respect. Traditional education was not a formal process as exists today but had a direct link to a way of life. Kirkness aptly described this link in this way:

Learning was for living – for survival. Boys and girls were taught at an early age to observe and to utilize, to cope with and respect, their environment. Independence and self-reliance were valued concepts within the culture. Through observation and practice, young children learned the art of hunting, trapping, fishing, food gathering and preparation, child rearing, farming and building shelters. They learned whatever livelihood their particular environment offered, through experiential learning. (1992, p. 6)

This system of education sustained the Aboriginal communities for thousands of years until the arrival of the Europeans, and the imposition of a colonialist system of schooling that was initiated with the passing of the Indian Act (1876).
Colonial Period

The colonial period under British administration was an era of hegemonic imposition and institutionalization, particularly with the establishment of Indian Reservations and the signing of Treaties with the nomadic bands. The treaties allowed a legal framework of control and responsibility to be developed. As the churches were already operating in the territory, their assistance was sought in formally setting up and operating schools in Native (First Nations) communities. The churches were willing to comply as they could now shift the cost of Christianizing the Aboriginal people to the Federal government. Over the next century various institutional arrangements for educating Native children were tried, ranging from local day schools to area or regional residential schools. The residential schools have been described as the most horrible institutions encountered by Natives and perhaps represented the darkest chapter in their association with Euro-Canadians. Some Native scholars now believe that the system advocated cultural genocide (Bear Nicholas, 2001; Binda & Calliou, 2001; Mercredi, 1998; Chrisjohn & Young, 1997).

In the residential school system which began in the 1880s and continued until 1996, young children were taken away from their homes legally through an amendment to the Indian Act, and sometimes forcibly, and placed in these schools far away from their families in order to assimilate and enculturate them as Euro-Canadians. The last federally operated residential school in Canada closed in the province of Saskatchewan in 1996 (Alberta Education, 2005). The damage from this system as identified in numerous reports, (Aboriginal Healing Foundation (AHF), 2009; Canadian Council on Learning (CCL), 2007; Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP), 1996; Assembly of First Nations (AFN) 1994), included loss of language, grade retardation, high dropout rates, rampant physical, sexual and emotional abuse, alienation and intergenerational communication breakdown. As of July 2009 the Indian Residential Schools Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), established by the federal government in 2006, is in the process over a five year period of preparing a history of the policies and practices of the residential system including a report with recommendations to the Government of Canada. Interim reports with evidence given by residence school survivors across Canada are being published by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) and the Aboriginal Healing Foundation (AHF) (2009). These hearings give evidence to the horrible treatments and subsequent dysfunctional effects that continue today as a result of the residential school system.

The symbiotic linkages of colonial politics and education in support of prevailing ideologies, socio-economic and political order, have had dysfunctional effects on First Nations. The psychological harm of alien curricula in an alien education system that devalued the Indigenous culture has proven to be persistent and problematic not only for the First Nations but also for all of Canadian society in this postmodern age. It is believed by numerous Aboriginal researchers that this external centralized control of Aboriginal affairs has been the cause of serious underdevelopment, dualisms and inequalities in Aboriginal communities.
The Aboriginal population constitutes a small minority, approximately 3.8% of Canada’s total population. This population has increased by 45% since 1996 compared to an 8% increase in the non-Aboriginal population (Canadian Council of Learning, 2009). Figures shown in Table 1 would indicate that most Aboriginal people live off-reserve and in rural areas. However those living off-reserve are concentrated in larger urban centres or Census Metropolitan Areas (Table 2). Large concentrations are found in the western provinces in Canada where they make up over 15% of the total provincial inhabitants (Table 1). In the northern Territories more than half of the population is Aboriginal. Notwithstanding their minority status, the Aboriginals are severely disadvantaged in all spheres of life in Canada.

**Table 1. Aboriginal population by province, 2006.**
*Source: Statistics Canada: 2006 Census Statistics*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Province</th>
<th>Aboriginal population</th>
<th>On-Reserve</th>
<th>Urban</th>
<th>Rural</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Newfoundland &amp; Labrador</td>
<td>23,455</td>
<td>1,435</td>
<td>8,920</td>
<td>13,095</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prince Edward Island</td>
<td>1,730</td>
<td>400</td>
<td>740</td>
<td>590</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nova Scotia</td>
<td>24,175</td>
<td>7,980</td>
<td>7,400</td>
<td>8,790</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Brunswick</td>
<td>17,650</td>
<td>7,005</td>
<td>4,500</td>
<td>6,095</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quebec</td>
<td>108,425</td>
<td>33,180</td>
<td>45,005</td>
<td>29,620</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ontario</td>
<td>242,495</td>
<td>47,515</td>
<td>150,570</td>
<td>44,410</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manitoba</td>
<td>175,395</td>
<td>56,765</td>
<td>87,780</td>
<td>30,855</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saskatchewan</td>
<td>141,890</td>
<td>49,015</td>
<td>66,520</td>
<td>26,355</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alberta</td>
<td>188,365</td>
<td>41,275</td>
<td>114,535</td>
<td>32,560</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>British Columbia</td>
<td>196,075</td>
<td>51,055</td>
<td>117,070</td>
<td>27,945</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yukon</td>
<td>7,580</td>
<td>1,970</td>
<td>3,585</td>
<td>2,025</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North West Territories</td>
<td>20,635</td>
<td>10,260</td>
<td>7,310</td>
<td>3,060</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nunavut</td>
<td>24,915</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>9,490</td>
<td>15,425</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CANADA</td>
<td>1,172,790</td>
<td>308,490</td>
<td>623,470</td>
<td>240,825</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 2: Population by Aboriginal ancestry* for selected CMAs, 2006.**
*Source: Statistics Canada, 2006 Census Statistics*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CMA’s</th>
<th>Population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Montreal</td>
<td>17,865</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toronto</td>
<td>26,575</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Winnipeg</td>
<td>68,385</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regina</td>
<td>17,105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saskatoon</td>
<td>21,535</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Calgary</td>
<td>26,575</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Edmonton</td>
<td>52,100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vancouver</td>
<td>40,310</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* persons who have declared such ancestry
The inequalities facing First Nations are obvious in the examination of several socio-economic indicators such as child welfare, juvenile delinquents, death rates, incarcerations, suicide rates and hospital admissions as well as employment and income. Education data reveal that the vast majority of Native students withdraw from school before Grade 9, the cut-off point for literacy. The low level of completion of high school in the Aboriginal population is demonstrated by the fact that in 2006, 40 percent of those in the 20-24 age group did not complete high school compared to 13 percent in the non-Aboriginal population. The rates for non-completion were much higher for those living on reserve (61%) and in remote northern Inuit communities (68%), (Canadian Council on Learning, 2009).

A World Health Organization report in 1999 “painted a grim picture of the situation of Native peoples in Canada … who continue to occupy a very marginal position in the overall political, economic, social and cultural institutions of the country …” (Schlein, 1999, p. 12). Recent news headlines (November/December, 2011) keep pointing out the problems related to education, housing, water quality, child and family services and land claim agreements. These problem areas were also identified in the Auditor General’s Report of June 2011 (Government of Canada).

SEARCH FOR EQUALITY AND JUSTICE THROUGH DEVOLUTION

It was this type of inequality and social injustice that led to the Aboriginal demand for **Indian Control of Indian Education** (Assembly of First Nations, 1972) as advocated by the Aboriginal population. Concerns about equality, justice and fairness have confronted mankind for thousands of years and continue to be a topic for discussion. In his treatise on distributive justice, John Rawls (1971) discussed the focal role education plays in allowing each individual “to enjoy the culture of his society and to take part in its affairs, and in this way to provide each individual a secure sense of his own worth” (p. 101). Chief Ernest Wesley in his address to the Assembly of First Nations (1993) emphasized the role that education can play in improving life conditions. The World Bank and The Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) have consistently pointed to this relationship between education and socio-economic development.

The movement for Indian Control became a watershed in the history of education policy making. It was part of a political firestorm that began in 1969 when the federal government’s White Paper proposed abolishing the Indian Act and integrating the Indians into the larger Canadian society. The Native organizations would have none of it and argued emphatically in their position papers on questions of equality and social justice. They emphasized that without community control by First Nations themselves, no education system can be truly successful, if those most directly concerned have no input into the system. After all, the principle of equality is a long-standing and very important part of the Canadian tradition. Why, then deny that right to the First Nations?

While the political firestorm was still raging, the Federal government, looking for a way out of its dilemma, accepted the policy papers on local control in 1973
and began to vacate the education field turning over control to the Aboriginal Bands across Canada, band by band. This process of decentralization or community control was being implemented across the country but not without difficulty. First Nations complained that the federal conception of community control is limited, restrictive, and did not reflect their notion of local control which subsumes “political equality” as a major characteristic of the “civic society” (McGinn, 1996). The Aboriginal population complained that the Federal government in many instances simply turned over the schools without any training or preparation of local authorities. This was not unlike the withdrawal of some European powers from their African colonies in the 1960s. A First Nations education director in Ontario compared the handover of power in his region to that of a driver and passenger in a car. The driver suddenly collapses and the passenger, who has never driven in his life but only saw people driving, is left with steering the vehicle. This metaphor perhaps accounts for the management problems now encountered in many First Nations schools.

However, MacPherson (1991), a jurist appointed by the Federal government to examine such complaints, commented in his report “that at least some success flows from the education policies put in place and pursued by the Federal government in recent years” (p.3). Some of that success can be measured by the increased number of schools under Band jurisdiction and where more appropriate culturally sensitive curricula are being implemented. From our own observations these improvements are indeed taking place. In 1976, Indian Bands controlled less than 5% of the student enrolment; the federal schools had 42%, and the provincial schools had 53% of the status students. Currently the Native Bands control all their status student enrollment.

Since the advent of local control, progress in First Nations education has been made in a number of areas: in the development of new systems of schooling, in the devolution process itself, in management, finance, staffing, instruction and curriculum, and in community participation at the local level. The latter has played a significant role in determining the structure and government of systems that have been put in place. For example, some communities have established local school boards or education authorities to manage their school system, while others have entered into agreements with public school boards with the goal of enhancing efficiencies by providing their students with access to a full range of instructional resources.

A process of decolonization includes cultural rejuvenation and renewal through holistic education and an inclusive system which promotes community values. As Kumar (2009) noted, “the decolonization process serves as a redemptive ideological strategy to the colonization of Aboriginal education” (p. 49). In this context, as Chief Atleo noted, education is seen not as a “tool of oppression” (the past), but as a “tool of freedom and liberty” (the present), (Canadian Federation for the Humanities and Social Sciences, Congress, 2011).
FIRST NATIONS EDUCATION SYSTEMS

Band- and Tribal Council-operated schools are rather complex systems. These schools are becoming the major institutions in the decolonizing process and the education of on-reserve First Nations students. Various models of band-operated schools are developing on the basis of geography, regional interest or community wishes. The rationale for the variations is simple. Aboriginal control of education is a relatively new phenomenon for First Nations who do not have the experience of participation in the Euro-Canadian system and are, therefore, developing various systems that suit their individual and cultural needs. Whatever model is developed, the system operates at the pleasure of the Chief and Council and owes responsibility to them, firstly, as the government of the community, and ultimately to the Federal government. Regardless, parents and community members are committed and involved in developing culturally appropriate educational systems that benefit their children (CCL, 2009).

In some cases on-reserve schools are controlled directly by the Band council, with the Chief exerting almost despotic power, and a propensity for poor management particularly where requisite management training and skills may be lacking. In November 2011 the Federal government revoked the local management of a First Nations band placing it under federal control through a system referred to as “third party management”. Under this process the government appoints a manager from the private sector to manage the Band’s financial affairs until solvency is restored. In this case the Globe and Mail, a national newspaper in Canada, reported on December 15, 2011, that the Prime Minister “has bluntly accused the Band of mismanagement”. The issue of mismanagement often results from endemic problems within the communities, problems that the federal government failed to correct—poor infrastructure, high unemployment, poorly trained personnel, among others. The band co-manager, who returned to his position after a period of absence, commented that the mismanagement was not the result of people “pocketing money”, but resulted from Band officials taking too many trips outside of the community, hiring “too many staff” – young and inexperienced, “occupying positions, even when they were not capable of doing the job” (The Globe and Mail, December 15, 2011).

In most communities, schools are run conscientiously and diligently by elected or nominated community members, somewhat analogous to a board of education as exists in the public provincial system; others are operated as incorporated bodies; yet others, send their children to provincial schools under special arrangements with the local provincial school boards. In the latter systems, particularly in smaller communities (Fig.3), some form of trustee representation in the provincial school board is provided by special arrangement with these Boards, but the powers of these trustees are limited and so is their degree of control. However in one particular northern reserve where this model is in place some changes have taken place; a governing system has been arranged with a school division with strong management input from the local school board in such areas as the hiring of administrators and teaching staff, as well as in policy development. As Nicol
(2006) pointed out, this type of development can act as a change agent in the devolution process.

It should be noted that Aboriginal school systems are actively engaged in developing programs that are holistic and culturally appropriate. However, limited funding by the Federal government, whose fiduciary responsibility is to finance these schools, sometimes lead to financial deficits which the Federal government often interprets as mismanagement, notwithstanding the fact that Band operated schools have less per capita funding when compared with the mainstream education systems. As well, the infrastructure of band-operated schools have been found to be substandard in many cases, and overcrowded, thus necessitating repairs not allocated in current budgets. This was certainly the case in the Band that was recently placed under third party management (as reported in The Globe and Mail, December 15, 2011).

In addition to K-12 schools at the community level, First Nations are developing regional systems for the delivery of higher-level services that the community schools cannot individually provide. Various systems are now in place across the country. These regional organizations are helping to provide the services formerly carried out by the Federal government. For example, in Manitoba, the Manitoba First Nations Education Resource Centre (MFNERC), with qualified staff, performs such a function.
In two Prairie provinces, Saskatchewan (First Nations University) and Manitoba (University College of the North), post-secondary programs focusing heavily on Aboriginal issues have been established. Since the 1970s Teacher Education Programs (TEPs) have been developed with a focus on the training of Aboriginal teachers and these are now being morphed into universities and colleges in other western provinces. In Manitoba an access mandate program for First Nations post-secondary students was transferred from one southern institution to a northern institution (Government of Manitoba, June 2011). The Brandon University Northern Teacher Education Program (BUNTEP) mandate was transferred, along with its budget, to the University College of the North, effective July 1, 2012. Recently steps have been initiated for the lateral transfer of course credit between institutions as per an agreement that was worked out between university presidents in concert with the province of Manitoba.

CURRICULUM, INSTRUCTION AND RESOURCES

The provincial curriculum in use in First Nations schools has been and continues to be a major problem as these do not adequately reflect Aboriginal perspectives. However, new curricula that are being developed in all the provinces now strongly emphasize Aboriginal issues. In First Nations schools Aboriginal history and language as well as new instructional and assessment strategies, more reflective of Aboriginal ways of learning, are emphasized and encouraged. These newer instructional strategies are being implemented by graduates of community based teacher education programs. Recently, the western provinces have issued many guidelines and documents with Aboriginal perspectives that guide instruction in all schools in those provinces. In 2008 the Government of Manitoba mandated that all teachers graduating from its teacher training programs in its universities, must have at least one course in “Aboriginal Perspectives”. The authors of this chapter have acted in different capacities in the development of such a mandatory course at their post secondary institution.

The need for a philosophical basis in the development of conceptual models to address educational needs has been emphasized by First Nations educators. In attempting to integrate the traditional with the contemporary, the traditional medicine wheel (see Figure 4) is one of the models utilized in developing conceptual frameworks by many tribal councils. The medicine wheel model identifies the four quadrants of physical, intellectual, emotional and spiritual against which background, current educational developments are taking place. Similarly, holistic lifelong learning models have been developed in partnership with the Canadian Council on Learning for First Nations, Inuit and Metis people and which emphasize the importance of values, cultural traditions and ways of knowing (CCL, 2009; 2007). With respect to the First Nations model the CCL report states that this model
is premised on the understanding that the First nation learner dwells in a World of continual reformation, where interactive cycles, rather than disconnected events, occur. In this world, nothing is simply a cause or an effect, but is instead the expression of the interconnectedness of life. These relationships are circular, rather than linear, holistic and cumulative, instead of compartmentalized. The mode of learning for First Nations people reflects and honours this awareness. (2007, p. 19)

The First Nations Holistic Lifelong Learning Model is represented by a stylistic design of a living tree which depicts learning as a lifelong integrated process. The tree roots represent the various sources of knowledge; the tree rings represent the students ‘learning cycle’; the branches represent ‘personal development’ and the leaves represent community well-being (CCL, 2007, p. 18). A full description of this model can be found on the CCL website (http://www.ccl-cca.ca). As advocated by Chief Wesley and other Aboriginals, these holistic models inform and define the decolonization process.
In this holistic approach, all factors are presumed to be intricately woven and purport to be congruent with Aboriginal philosophies and epistemologies. In a discussion on postmodernism, Doll (1989) pointed out that this type of postmodern curriculum will accept the student’s ability to organize, construct and structure, and will emphasize this ability as a focal point in the curriculum. The development of this organizational ability is as much a key to postmodern curriculum as passive receptivity or shaping is to the modern curriculum. (p. 250)

For the majority of First Nations however, modified provincial curricula, with specific learning outcomes (SLOs) and authentic assessment protocols, are used with the rationale that First Nations students will have to live and work in the larger Canadian society and so must be prepared for future gainful employment. Similar to education changes and developments in Canada for Aboriginal Peoples, the State of Alaska (1995) in cooperation with the Alaska Native Knowledge Network, developed and adopted the Cultural Standards for Alaska Students, as part of the Alaska Content Standards. These standards represent what Alaskans want students to know and be able to do as a result of their schooling experience. These curricula developments are being utilized by many First Nations communities in Canada in developing their culturally appropriate content material. The introduction of Aboriginal content helps provide some balance in enhancing Aboriginal perspectives and culture, thus correcting the incongruities of the past. 

Prior to these new developments, First Nations complained bitterly that devolution merely meant delegated authority. The new arrangements provide for increased local authority and flexibility to manage and implement programs, hire staff as needed and move funds between programs without hindrance from government officials. From a positive perspective, new decentralized funding arrangements can be regarded as a policy for self-determination, a long sought goal by First Nations. However, as Chief Atleo indicated, there is a need for sustainable funding and a fiscal guarantee to provide educational opportunities for Aboriginal children at a level commensurate to that of the mainstream society in Canada. Currently there is a substantial gap in funding of Aboriginal students under the jurisdiction of Native Bands vis-à-vis the funding levels for students in mainstream provincial jurisdictions.

CONCLUSION

In assuming the responsibility for the administration of their education system, as opposed to having it under the control of the Federal government through the Department of Indian Affairs, the First Nations communities through local control took a major step forward in bringing together traditional and contemporary values in education with the dual aims of decentralization and decolonization. In this context a partnership evolved between the community, and the various governments and institutions committed to providing for the educational needs of the First Nations. Further proof of this is manifested in the recent Joint Action Plan
which was announced by the Federal Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development and the National Chief of the Assembly of First Nations which identified “four shared priority areas for action: education; accountability, transparency, capacity and good governance; economic development; and negotiation and implementation” (Grassroots News, June 14/2011, p.11). With regards to education, the Action Plan calls for a “joint engagement process to make recommendations on a framework to strengthen and improve the delivery of K-12 education to First Nation children living on reserve” (Grassroots News, June 14/2011, p.11).

In February 2012 several reports highlighted the need for immediate action to bridge the gap that exists in the education of Aboriginal children. A National Panel appointed by the Federal Aboriginal Affairs Minister and the First Nations National Chief identified serious gaps in First Nations education systems when compared to public systems of education. The Panel recommended that immediate action be taken including increased funding to match that of non-reserve schools (Winnipeg Free Press, February 9, 2012, p. A9). In the province of Ontario (The Toronto Star, February 15, 2012), the Drummond Report on cost cutting measures for the province also recommended increased funding for aboriginal education in order to rectify the inadequate schooling of Aboriginal students. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission in its recently released Interim Report (2012, p. 7) recommended that all Canadian schools place an emphasis on creating public awareness and understanding of the history of residential schools; the TRC also called for increased funding to facilitate this venture. On February 27, 2012 the Canadian House of Commons gave all party support (non binding) for an Opposition motion for equal funding for First Nations education (Toronto Sun, February 27, 2012).

The devolution/decolonization element of change is one of the most important factors acting as a catalyst in the development of a responsive system of education for community development and wellbeing. Positive aspects of the devolution process are increasingly evident today. For example in Manitoba and Saskatchewan, the provincial governments have signed “reversed tuition agreements” with some Aboriginal bands whereby non-Aboriginal students, living in the general area, are enrolled in the Aboriginal schools, with the provinces paying the associated education costs for these students. In Peguis, Manitoba, the First Nations School has consistently performed at or above the provincial average in the standardized provincial examinations. Such good case studies from this and other community schools in other provinces in western Canada, prove that Aboriginal-run schools can match their mainstream counterparts.

Community leaders have therefore recognized the importance and relevance of education in the devolution towards self-government, and in the realization of a better social and economic future for First Nations communities. The objective of the First Nations is increased attendance, participation, graduation and support for expanding the school system, as well as modifying the curriculum to reflect the local environment, and promoting post-secondary education. Through these initiatives the personnel needed in education, health, social services and economic
development can be realized and can be achieved from within the communities themselves. In this way the decentralization and indigenization of education, qua decolonization, in First Nations communities will not only provide benefits for them but also for a better Canada.

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