

Identity, Community and Resilience: The Transmission of Values Project

Cultural Identity

Understanding of Aboriginal History

Elders

Ceremonies

Integrity

Language

Care For One Another

KINSHIP

Cooperate

Honesty

Cultural Practices

Discipline

Family

Self Control

TAKING
RESPONSIBILITY

Education

*Share With
The Less Fortunate*

Community

Help One Another

FINAL REPORT

INDIVIDUAL PRIDE
AND SELF ESTEEM.

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INTRODUCTION

"Identity, community, and resilience: The transmission of values research project" emerged from conversations with representatives of key agencies serving vulnerable children, youth and families in four First Nations communities in Saskatchewan. Included in this group were three Elders recommended by the agencies for their wisdom and guidance respecting child, youth, family, and community well-being. Early in these conversations, the group emphasized the importance of a value-based community approach to child and youth development. Given this emphasis, the group worked with the co-investigators to design a research project dedicated to identifying the values and teachings, programs, services and practices that First Nations communities believe essential for supporting child and family well-being and preventing child maltreatment. Existing services and programs that reflect First Nations values and community practices are of special interest. The information gathered will assist in envisioning how gaps in programs and services might be overcome. Articulating policy implications of the findings is therefore integral to the research.

The research could not have been carried out without the generous funding of the Public Health Agency of Canada directed to the project through the Centre of Excellence for Child Welfare (CECW), which is located in the University of Toronto Faculty of Social Work. The project has been generously supported by the Faculty of Social Work, University of Regina and the School of Indian Social Work, First Nations University of Canada. Further to this, the project is conducted under the auspices of the Prairie Child Welfare Consortium, a tri-provincial and northern network of educators and government, Aboriginal and mainstream policy-makers and service delivery agents.

This final report speaks to the various phases of the project, beginning with a description of the research problem and followed by initial conversations between the two co-investigators and the agency representatives and Elders who formed the research advisory committee. Background information relevant to understanding the dire situation facing many First Nations communities is presented along with concerns of Aboriginal peoples about research conducted by 'outsiders'. The research project is squarely placed in the context of this information. Goals and objectives jointly agreed to by the Advisory committee and the co-investigators are presented, along with descriptions of the four participant communities, and the composition of the four 'gatherings' that occurred in each community (Elders, Service Providers, Interested Community Members, and Youth). Guiding principles, methodology, ethics approval and the research process are included.

Data was collected from sixteen 'gatherings', four in each community. This data is analyzed in four ways: an 'all gatherings' analysis which identifies the key findings that emerge when the data collected from all sixteen gatherings is put together; a 'participant gatherings' analysis which compares the key findings that emerge when the data collected is organized by participant group (all Elders, all service providers, all interested community members, all youth); a 'traditional values' analysis which puts together the data that appears to speak specifically to traditional values, and; an analysis of concerns expressed and ideas put forward for improvement. This latter analysis deals with the limited number of responses that dealt with concerns expressed about the well-being of children and youth as well as the more frequent comments expressing participants thoughts about ways and means for the

community to advance and strengthen current efforts supporting children, youth and their families.

Descriptions of two projects emerging from the research are included. Final sections of the report discuss the meaning of the findings from the perspective of the goals and objectives of the project as well as relevant literature; policy implications distilled from this discussion; and evaluation of the research process by members of the advisory group.

Limitations to the research should be noted. First, the findings are limited to the four First Nations communities that participated in the research. Secondly, although all groups dealt with the same questions, the format for doing so varied in accordance with cultural protocol specific to the community, and the wishes of participants. Some groups chose to address all questions at once whereas other groups (the majority), dealt with the research questions one at a time. This may have influenced responses to the questions. Third, interpreters assisted the researchers in all gatherings with Elders. The interpretation process may have occasionally led to unclear or inadequate communication. Fourth, the findings may in some way be influenced by the research assistants recording the data and/or by impressions of the two co-investigators, one of whom was not present during most of the data gathering sessions (McKay) and used a computer based program to identify predominant themes.

Finally, it is important to note that the views expressed in the report that follows do not necessarily represent the official policy of the project funder, the Public Health Agency of Canada.

RESEARCH PROBLEM

First Nations Child and Family Services agencies were established in the prairie provinces more than a decade ago in response to the closure of residential schools and the recognition of the need to provide community-based, culturally appropriate programs delivered by First Nations people. This shift in service delivery from government intervention to First Nations intervention has proved positive in many ways. However, there are systemic barriers that continue to exist such as policies that are not culturally aligned and designated funding that does not allow flexibility to develop preventive community programs and services that reflect the needs of each particular community. These systemic barriers are imposed on communities already fractured by First Nations history as colonized peoples; the devastation created by the residential school system which separated children and families from their personal histories, traditional parenting practices and family and community values; and the current socioeconomic conditions of First Nations communities. These barriers contribute significantly to the rising number of First Nations children in care in government and Indian Child and Family Service (ICFS) agencies. Today, more First Nations children are in the care of the state or of ICFS agencies than at any time during the period that residential schools were operating (Blackstock 2001).

The situation in Saskatchewan reflects that of other provinces in Canada. To date, seventeen ICFS agencies have been established in the province yet this initiative has not stemmed the numbers of Aboriginal children coming into care. Deborah Parker-Loewen, Saskatchewan's first Children's Advocate, has expressed her outrage that the greater percentage of children in

care in Saskatchewan are Aboriginal children. Statistics available to her when she wrote her final report to the legislature (March, 2005) indicated that during the ten years that she had been in office, the numbers of Aboriginal children in care continued to increase.

“The number of First Nations on-reserve children in Canada, who are placed in out-of-home care, increased by 71.5 percent between 1995 and 2001 (McKenzie 2002 (February)). In Saskatchewan the increase in the number of First Nations children on-reserve placed in out-of-home care has been more modest, but equally alarming. The number of Métis, Non-Status, Status and children of Aboriginal origin where the status was unknown was 65 percent in 1999; in 2004 the percentage had risen to 69 percent ... While this increase may seem slight, these figures do not take into account the children in care of the 17 FNCFS agencies which were created over the past ten years and are now serving children not traditionally served by the provincial government. In 1995, there were 370 children in care of three FNCFS agencies. As of March 31, 2004, Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC) reported there were a total of 1133 children in care of an FNCFS agency in Saskatchewan, representing a 206 percent increase over ten years”(Parker-Loewen 2005, p.21).

Several First Nations leaders, child welfare advocates, researchers and scholars have written about this devastating situation for First Nations children, their families and communities (Timpson 1994; Timpson 1994; Timpson 1995; Fournier and Crey, E. 1997; Blackstock 2001; Bennett and Blackstock 2005). These scholars, and others like them, speak fervently about the urgent need for First Nations control of their own child welfare delivery systems. The Transmission of Values project seeks to identify and articulate the programs and activities that First Nations communities believe necessary to support children and family well-being and preventing child maltreatment. The project seeks to identify the teachings (values) emphasized in the communities as integral to the growth and development of children and youth and the health and prosperity of the community. The findings are intended to assist in the ongoing task of developing and strengthening programs and policies in support of a community approach to Aboriginal child welfare.

THE PRAIRIE CHILD WELFARE CONSORTIUM

The Transmission of Values research project has its origins in collaborative work undertaken by several prairie based constituencies to advance, strengthen and improve child welfare education and training, research, practice and service delivery, and policy in this part of Canada. The Prairie Child Welfare Consortium (PCWC) is an informal, non-funded network of university, government, and Aboriginal partners: the University of Regina Faculty of Social Work, First Nations University of Canada School of Indian Social Work, University of Manitoba Faculty of Social Work, and University of Calgary Faculty of Social Work; the Saskatchewan Department of Community Resources, Manitoba Department of Family Services and Housing, Alberta Children’s Services, and Government of the Northwest Territories Department of Health and Social Services; the Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations and the Metis Association of Alberta. One of the compelling issues that drew

together the partners of the Prairie Child Welfare Consortium (PCWC) has been the urgent need to address the issue of high numbers of Aboriginal children in care. The issue has received prominent attention in the three invitational Symposiums (2001, 2003, 2005) organized by the PCWC since the idea of the Consortium was initially discussed in late 1999.

In the fall of 2004, members of the Consortium were invited to join with the Centre of Excellence for Child Welfare (CECW), located in the Faculty of Social Work, University of Toronto, in carrying out research projects of importance to the prairie region. The Centre of Excellence had procured funds for this purpose from Health Canada. Identity, Community, Resilience: the Transmission of Values project, is one of three PCWC projects funded by Health Canada through the CECW.

THE INITIAL PHASE: LAYING THE GROUND FOR RESPECTFUL, PRINCIPLED RESEARCH

Aboriginal peoples have justifiably raised many concerns about research conducted by 'outsiders' (non-Aboriginal university or government-based researchers) that has, from the perspective of the population 'researched', been of more benefit to the researcher than to the communities involved. Heightened sensitivity to these concerns has led to establishment of guidelines such as the Tri-Council Policy Statement respecting research involving Aboriginal people (Tri-Council, 1998). Such guidelines are intended to ensure that research conducted with Aboriginal peoples is respectful, is guided by principles developed by Aboriginal peoples, and is of benefit to the communities involved.

Respecting these concerns, the transmission of values project has been developed and guided 'from the ground up'. On receipt of the invitation from the Centre of Excellence for Child Welfare, the two principal investigators sought interest from the Directors groups, Saskatchewan Indian Child and Services agencies (ICFS). The potential for undertaking a project of interest to the agencies was presented at meetings attended by the Directors. Five agencies responded to this discussion and came on board to design a research project. Early on in the consultation process one of the agencies left the project due to time and resource commitments. Four agencies remained with the project and worked diligently towards design and implementation of the project.

Each agency chose a representative who met regularly with the principal investigators to discuss and decide on details of the research project. The agency representatives also recommended that three Elders sit on the committee for guidance. Added to this group was a representative from a privately funded youth facility with a high number of First Nations clients.

The principal investigators worked closely with the advisory committee to develop the research problem statement, articulate the goals and objectives of the project, determine the methodology to be used and the questions to be asked, and decide on the format and structure of the research. Together, the co-investigators and the advisory committee completed the required university ethics application. Four research assistants joined the advisory committee discussions once the research had commenced. As the project progressed,

advisory committee members made themselves constantly available to facilitate access to key community groups, to advise on local community protocol, to comment on progress made, and to support the project in a variety of ways. This involvement enriched the project enormously.

MANY CONVERSATIONS

A key question posed by one of the ICFS Directors serving on the advisory committee led to many conversations that ultimately determined the project goal, objectives, and choice of methodology. The question, “what did we do when we were Indians?”, reflected the Director’s frustration that ICFS agencies had been established in order to deliver culturally appropriate services to First Nations communities, but the legislation, methodologies and approaches are effectively based on the mainstream system, thereby resulting in an incongruence of philosophy for those who deliver the services. From the ICFS Directors perspective, this created barriers that limited their abilities to effect change in a significant way. The agencies had not stemmed the rise of children in care, nor had they prevented the increased number of First Nations youth entering the criminal justice system. Would knowledge of traditional (ie. pre-contact) ways and means of child-rearing point to a better way to approach today’s problems?

An Elder on the steering committee presented the view that historical events had led ultimately to a ‘lost’ population, without benefit of language nor of the values and cultural practices essential to the development of positive identities as individuals, families and communities (Musqua, 2005). This view resonated with Advisory committee members. Further discussion led to a strong consensus that all services and programs and all members in the communities must play a stronger role if children and families are to receive necessary support and guidance, and communities are to thrive. A consensus emerged about the need for a community-wide approach to child and family well-being. Questions were asked such as: how does the community work alongside of the formal child welfare system (ICFS agencies); what is done currently that supports children? What does a strong and healthy identity look like for Aboriginal children? What is the benefit of living by values? How does one transmit the right values? How do traditional values become transferred into contemporary society? What will make a difference?

The group concluded that all of these questions are important. However, within the scope and time available for the research, parameters needed to be set. A goal statement and objectives was developed and agreed to by the advisory committee:

GOAL

Identify the values and practices that communities believe necessary to support and strengthen child, youth and family well-being and prevent child maltreatment, resulting in strengthening collaborative efforts among child welfare stakeholders and First Nations communities.

OBJECTIVES

- Engage communities in examining/rediscovering/ articulating FN values and community practices that promote child, youth and family well-being and prevent child maltreatment.
- Identify and promote existing programs and services that reflect FN values and community practices.
- Utilize identified values and practices to envision how gaps in programs and services might be overcome.

PARTICIPANT COMMUNITIES

Four Saskatchewan First Nations communities agreed to participate in the research. The communities (Stanley Mission First Nation, Gordon First Nation, Whitebear First Nation and Little Pine First Nation) are geographically dispersed (North, South, East and West) and demographically diverse (size, tribal allegiance, language, culture and religion). Within each community four groups were sought that the advisory group felt represented the community as a whole. Over 300 people participated in the study. These included: Elders (141), service providers and general community (94), Youth (89).

Whitebear First Nation is located in the Treaty Four area in the Southeast corner of Saskatchewan. Currently their population is 750 people on reserve and of those 400 are under 18 years of age. A budding population of youth in a community of four First Nations culture and language groups including: Cree, Nakota, Sioux, and Saulteaux. Whitebear First Nation is an independent First Nation.

Lac La Ronge First Nation is a multi-community band and the largest First Nation in Saskatchewan. One of the five communities participated in the research project, Stanley Mission. Stanley Mission is located in the Treaty Six area of the province, approximately 500 k.m. North of Saskatoon, 100 k.m. North of Lac La Ronge. At this time Stanley Mission has 2300 people living on reserve with approximately 708 being under 18 years of age. Lac La Ronge First Nation is a member of the Prince Albert Grand Council (PAGC).

Little Pine First Nation is a Cree community located approximately 80 k.m. North West of North Battleford in the Treaty Six area. Little Pine First Nation is one of five First Nations within the Battlefords Tribal Council (BTC). Littlepine has approximately 717 people living on reserve. The approximate number of residents on reserve under 18 was not available at the time of preparing this report.

Gordon First Nation is located 240 k.m. south east of Saskatoon. The Cree & Saulteaux community has 1268 people living on reserve with approximately 451 under 18 years of age. The Gordon's First Nation is located in Treaty Four territory and is affiliated with the Touch Wood Tribal Council.

PRINCIPLES AND METHODOLOGY

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

When the advisory committee discussed different ways to conduct research with First Nations people and their communities, guiding principles and a philosophy of research were identified. The group wanted to ensure that research was carried out for the benefit of the participating communities and the PCWC. The guiding principles assisted the advisory committee in searching for and locating a methodology that promoted positive thinking and visioning.

The guiding principles are inter-related and were meant to provide guidance to the advisory committee, researchers and community.

Inclusiveness - refers to actively involving all those concerned within the participating communities. Inclusiveness marked the project from the beginning by involving active community members to serve on the research advisory committee. The advisory committee included Elders from the communities who were able to provide continual guidance to the research team. Two of the project research assistants were community-based, contributing to the questions, format, and dissemination of findings and overall research experience. The two community based researchers were able to lead the research project in their own communities by speaking with people about the project and issuing invitations to attend the focus groups. In other communities, the research team sought a community leader who could carry out this role. These activities helped the team to be inclusive with those in the community who chose to participate in the project.

Respect -given the past research experiences and history of many Aboriginal people, the advisory committee was very sensitive to developing and initiating research that would respect the traditions, protocols and cultures of each particular community and encourage ownership and participation in the project. This work included a first meeting with Elders in each community to ask permission to conduct the research and to learn about local traditions and appropriate activities. For example, one community held a feast before the researchers started asking questions. The session ended with a giveaway by the research team as a way of thanking the participants for attending the session. Another community held opening prayers and blessings before the questions began. These activities proved fruitful as each community welcomed the researchers questions. These activities also helped the researchers and community members to feel ownership of the project. The information was discussed, collected, analyzed, affirmed and disseminated within each community. Access to the information collected was encouraged throughout the process. At the end of the project each community will receive copies of the final report in both print and cd format.

Capacity building – recent discussion in the literature suggests that this principle is currently in vogue yet there have been few attempts to define the term in the literature. (Smith, Baugh Littlejohns, & Thompson, 2001). In this sense, the advisory committee and the research team are guilty of adopting the concept without too much discussion or thought. This is because the term resonated with our discussions of the paramountcy of ensuring that the project be more than an academic exercise. In short, that it would contribute to the

communities involved by articulating community values and strengths, developing the research skills of the community-based researchers, and pointing to policy and practice implications for community leaders and agencies supporting the community. One major contribution was to build the research skills of the research assistants who were either from or were familiar with the participant communities. The research assistants received training in community based research methodologies, data collection, group work and preliminary data analysis that could be utilized again in future projects. The training and continual involvement of the community in the research project led to community control of the project. For example the researchers had a set of questions to ask. The intended methodology was the focus group. However, there are several ways to conduct a focus group, hence, the research assistants were trained to respond to the needs of the communities by asking the questions in a format that best suited the participants. This experiential training was valuable for understanding and developing flexibility within the focus group format so that the social/cultural requirements of each of the participant communities were met while remaining true to the intent of the research questions. This flexibility is further discussed in the methodology section.

The above three guiding principles led the advisory committee to choose Appreciative Inquiry as a methodology within the research project. The methodology proved to be effective as it was well received in the four communities.

METHODOLOGY

In response to the concerns noted and discussed, and to the focus of the research, the co-investigators and research advisory committee sought out an approach that would echo the many Aboriginal teachings that focus on assets rather than deficiencies. Discussions took place that considered these teachings and also sought out a methodology that would prompt meaningful thought, investment, and reciprocal value for both the researcher and the researched. A strength-based and spirited way of capturing the assets of the community was required. The intent was to stimulate discussion that builds on the positive, systematically directing participants attention to a greater understanding of the strengths of the community, while at the same time recognizing and appreciating diversity and building a momentum towards maintaining, enhancing and developing collaborative initiatives. It was essential that questions asked generate understanding and contribute to a developmental process as the community grows and moves forward.

The team chose appreciative inquiry as a methodology. This approach fundamentally extended an invitation to community people to share positive realities and futures. Cooperrider and Whitney (2005) explain Appreciative Inquiry (AI) as being about the search for the best in people, their community, programs, services and the relevant world around them. AI involves the ability and practice of asking questions that strengthen a structures capacity to focus on positive potential. It centrally involves the mobilization of inquiry through the crafting of the ‘unconditional positive question’, often involving many people. Questions posed through this methodology are intended to help shape and influence a community’s future programs, services, policies and practices.

Appreciative Inquiry is about the search for the best in people, their community, programs, services and the relevant world around them in their home community. In its simplicity, it involves the recognition of what gives “lifeblood” to an ever changing system when it is most alive, most successful, and most constructively capable. AI involves, the ability and practice of asking questions that strengthen a structures capacity to heighten positive potential. It centrally involves the mobilization of inquiry through the crafting of the “unconditional positive question” often-involving many people.

“In Appreciative Inquiry the difficult task of intervention gives way to the speed of imagination and innovation. Instead of criticism there is discovery and dreams. AI seeks, basically, to build a helpful union between people and what people talk about as past, present, and future capacities: achievements, assets, unexplored potentials, strengths, opportunities, lived values, traditions, stories, expressions of wisdom, insights into the deeper corporate spirit or soul-- and visions of valued and possible futures. AI intentionally seeks to work from accounts of this “positive change core” and it assumes that every living system has many untapped and rich and inspiring accounts of the positive. Link the energy of this core directly to any change agenda and changes never thought possible are suddenly and democratically mobilized “(Cooperrider and Whitney 2005, p. 14).

In summary, AI seeks to ignite community people to ask the questions that will help shape and influence their future programs, services, policies, and practices.

FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS

Drawing upon AI philosophy, the research team and the advisory committee agreed upon six questions that would be asked in each community through gatherings conducted with differing sectors of the community (Elders, service providers, youth, and interested community members):

Question	Expected Outcome
What positive programs, events and activities are happening in this community to help children and families in a healthy way?	This question starts the focus group using positive language and positive responses about the community. It is a question to which everyone could contribute. It will portray the diversity of programs in the community, giving the researchers and participants an opportunity to learn more about the community (reciprocal sharing). The question will evoke the beginning of a community profile.
What makes these programs and activities good for children and families?	Participants start to identify values and behaviors that contribute to healthy families.
What additional resources could be tapped to better these events and programs?	Participants identify resources that may be under utilized in the community.

(Elders, service providers and interested community members only)	
What teachings (values) are practiced in your community?	Participants identify values practiced in the community. May contain past, present, and values they want to see in the community. Creating a bank of values in the community.
Which do you think are important for all children and families in the community to learn and relearn? (Elders, service providers and general community only)	Participants identify the values most important for the community to invest in and continue to practice.
As a community, how do you think these teachings (values) can be strengthened? (Elders, service providers and general community only)	Participants identify resources that may contribute to continuing to invest in and practice these values.
Name the five top values taught in your community? (youth question) Who are the teachers? How are these teachings being taught?	Youth identify the most important values emphasized (taught) in the community. Youth indicate how and in what way they are being taught these values
My community helps me be a good person by..... (Youth question)	Youth identify how the community assists them to grow. Youth identify actions, people, resources that contribute to their personal growth.

These questions were asked of each group in each of the four First Nations. Questions for the Elders group were translated. For youth, service providers and community the questions were asked as they appear above.

ETHICS, PROCESS AND PROTOCOL

UNIVERSITY ETHICS APPROVAL

Completing the required application for university ethics approval took extensive time and effort, as well as personal investment on the part of the co-investigators and the members of the research advisory committee. Working through multiple perspectives, paradigms and expectations to complete a single document required by the university was an unforeseen challenge. The application could not be completed until the group had agreed upon a clear purpose, goals and objectives, and methodology. This took several months to complete, in part because of the challenges of bringing together on an ongoing basis such a diverse and geographically separated group of individuals. Critical to the process was the careful attention paid to understanding the ethical expectations of both the university and participating First Nations communities. In the first year of the project, over six months were spent in meetings which led ultimately to a successful ethics application. Although this time

was somewhat lengthy, it proved to be invaluable for discussing and clarifying an approach that led to a truly collaborative project.

Some answers required by the university ethics committee were difficult to explain to the advisory committee and in some cases what the university required was not something as a committee we were able to easily describe. For example, the ethics application involved describing methodology. As a committee it was decided to use a qualitative method of research, specifically a focus group. A focus group approach was chosen because it resembled a circle, a familiar structure to many First Nations people when discussing a particular topic. However, we anticipated that the focus group method would vary somewhat in form, depending upon the group participating. Some groups may wish to respond to each question in turn whereas others may wish to approach all questions at the same time. This flexibility was required but is difficult to describe as it may appear that we were either using several different methods, which could affect credibility and validity, or that we did not have a clear understanding of what we were going to do. Neither was the case. We were proposing research in a way that met the needs of the advisory committee and the communities they represented. This required flexibility and understanding of each community. In each community the same questions would be asked, however, we anticipated that how responses were garnered would differ from one community to another, all based on needs and preferences identified by the participants. Although the format for discussing the questions were varied, the questions remained consistent.

In addition to the above list of activities the research team conducted a pre-test of the focus group questions with a group of students at the First Nations University of Canada. This led to some refinement of the original questions posed by the steering committee.

RESEARCH PROCESS: PARTNERSHIPS AND PROTOCOL

Respectful research with Aboriginal peoples recognizes tribal, band, community and cultural protocol. The research team consisted of individuals who had experience and respect for the cultural protocols (First Nations co-investigator and research assistants). Through discussions with Elders in each community and advisory committee representatives known to each of the communities, the research team created a written “Partnership” agreement with the Tribal Council of each of the four First Nations (Appendix One). This agreement gave the team initial entry into the local community. The partnership was then approved by the local leadership, paving the way for speaking to the Elders group in each community. In the traditions of First Nations communities, a first meeting with local Elders is expected and welcomed. Initial discussions with Elders led ultimately to approval for questions to be asked of others in the community; youth, service providers, and interested community members. A flow chart of the research process is attached as Appendix Two

DATA GATHERING

LEVELS OF CONSENT: INDIVIDUAL CONSENT

A prepared consent form was used, where applicable, with participants of the four First Nations. The intent of the consent form is to ensure all those participating were aware of the purpose, goals and objectives of the research and had the opportunity to ask questions about the research and research team, before continuing with the research process. Along with the consent form, each participant received an information sheet explaining the project. Parents signed consent forms as well as youth, where youth were under sixteen years of age. Additionally, handouts were given to participant youth providing contact information should the youth wish to 'debrief' their experience with the research. All forms and information sheets used in the project may be found in Appendix Three.

COMMUNITY CONSENT

Community representatives on the advisory committee ensured that the task of developing a sensitive, ethical approach to the research was interlaced with interpretations of the correct protocol for conducting research in specific communities. This meant that alongside of the university ethics requirements, it was critical for the research team and advisory committee members to carefully consider the customs and expectations of each of the participating First Nations communities. The four communities each had their own traditions and protocols. Each differed in their adherence to cultural traditions and practices, and to First Nations and/or Christian religion and spirituality. Native languages spoken in the communities varied. Ensuring a culturally sensitive research approach was challenging and exciting to the researchers as they embarked on some familiar and unfamiliar territory

PARTICIPANT GROUPS

The advisory committee chose four groups representative of each of their communities. These included Elders, youth, service providers and general community. In total, 324 individuals participated in the research.

Elders comprised the largest group in the research (141). Given the topic of research, the Elders were recommended by the advisory group as an integral community resource. Their participation was invaluable and consistently the Elders provided comments that spoke to the importance of values in their current First Nations communities. Their knowledge of community history and their understanding of how things came to be was a rich resource that established a foundation for the project. The advisory committee did not define Elders, this was left to each individual community where an invitation to participate was extended to all those who were considered Elders in the community.

Youth, the second largest group, were recommended by the advisory committee for their current and future leadership in the community. A total of 89 youth in four communities participated in the meetings. Their excitement toward discussing values and positive activities in their communities was demonstrated by their overwhelming response to the discussions. For ethics purposes youth were 12-18 years old. Youth in the four communities ranged from 33-50% of the total on-reserve population.

Service providers, the third largest group, were recommended by the advisory committee for their involvement in their community. In total 79 service providers attended the discussions. Service providers included a range of individuals, including but not limited to: health-nurses, community health representatives, community health nurses, National Native Alcohol and Drug Abuse Program (NNDAP) workers, educators- principals, teachers, school councilors, Youth workers, First Nation leadership, and social workers.

General community, the fourth group, consisted of individuals who responding to a general invitation to all those who may not have yet attended a meeting or who were not part of the groups mentioned above. A total of fifteen people attended these groups. The general community meetings attracted a diverse group of people, including but not limited to: parents, youth, Elders, and labor workers. At these particular meetings the researchers did not ask people for their status in the community. If it was offered their status was recorded. This group was not very large mainly due to people participating in the other meetings provided by the research.

Utilizing the community based approach provided an opportunity for many people in the community to participate in the research. In some meetings there were more than the particular groups identified. For example at the Elders meetings there were elder helpers in attendance. These individuals were included in the Elder numbers. There also may have been general community members in meetings with the service providers. Again, if people provided some identification of their association with the community it was recorded. As researchers we did not find it appropriate to ask each person how they are associated with their communities. This may have caused some dissension or distrust issues towards the researchers.

LANGUAGE

Elders participating in the focus groups were encouraged to speak in the language that was most comfortable for them. In one community four language groups existed (Cree, Nakota, Sioux, and Saulteaux.) whereas in other communities Elders spoke primarily Cree. Consequently, interpreters were required to be present in focus groups with Elders. Interpreters were not required in the youth, service providers or community groups.

Choosing an interpreter is challenging. The individual needs to be familiar with the dialect and jargon of the participant community, and must be trusted, by community members and by the researchers, to provide an accurate reflection of an individual's words and not to summarize these. On this latter point, it is important that the interpreter not summarize and share with the researchers only what the interpreter believes is necessary for the researchers to know. Another factor in translation is that not all can be translated for the research project. Not all words can be translated into the English language in a way that is understandable to English speakers, hence, interpreters often adapt/alter what the participant is saying. For these reasons, interpreters were selected following consultation with advisory committee members, the community-based researchers, and community leaders about the hiring of someone residing in the community who could fulfill the interpreter role.

Keeping track of responses at times became difficult, especially when more than one interpreter was present. Most importantly, when utilizing an interpreter it is essential that the questions being asked can easily be translated from English to Cree, Sioux, and other languages. We are confident that the questions asked in the Transmission of Values project met this criteria.

DATA ANALYSIS

Following through with the principle of respectful research, team members (First Nations co-investigator and research assistants) collectively categorized the substantive information gathered from each community and listed this information on prepared handouts for dissemination in each of the four communities. The team returned to each community or the purpose of inviting participants to comment on the information gathered. Team members asked if community participants found the information to be a fair representation of their collective responses to the questions asked. Additional comments were recorded, and corrections made where need be. Once this ‘verification’ process had been completed, the two co-investigators conducted a more thorough analysis of the data gathered.

Two methods were used by the co-investigators for a more ‘in depth’ analysis of the data. a manual process and a software assisted process (Hyperresearch). Themes were developed from this analysis. A literature search conducted parallel to the data gathering process added richness to discussion of the themes that emerged.

Key findings were pulled from the data in four different ways: an ‘all gatherings’ analysis which identifies the key findings that emerge when the data collected from all sixteen gatherings is put together; a ‘participant gatherings’ analysis which compares the key findings that emerge when the data collected is organized by participant group (all Elders, all service providers, all interested community members, all youth); a ‘traditional values’ analysis which puts together the data that appears to speak specifically to traditional values, and; an analysis of concerns expressed and ideas put forward for improvement. This latter analysis deals with the limited number of responses that dealt with concerns expressed about the well-being of children and youth as well as the more frequent comments expressing participants thoughts about ways and means for the community to advance and strengthen current efforts supporting children, youth and their families

DATA ANALYSIS: ALL PARTICIPANT GROUPS

Data gathered from all participant groups was aggregated and separated by themes that appeared to emerge from the questions asked. This process led to the following observations, presented in the order that questions were asked. Boxed in and italicized responses express participants views in their own voice:

QUESTION ONE: WHAT POSITIVE PROGRAMS, EVENTS AND ACTIVITIES ARE HAPPENING IN THIS COMMUNITY TO HELP KIDS AND FAMILIES IN A HEALTHY WAY?

This question evoked a lengthy list of programs and activities in each community. For analysis purposes, programs that were specifically cultural were grouped together. Other programs and activities were grouped as community events; community resources;

community programs; adult education, and drug and alcohol prevention programs. A partial list follows:

- **Cultural Programs:** Ceremonies (Purification [Sweats], Sacred Pipe, Name-giving), Community Feasts, Traditional Dances (Round Dance, Sun Dance, Rain Dance), Cultural camps, Pow-wow singing and dancing, Traditional Crafts (Beading, Blanket-making), Language training, Traditional skills (Hunting, Trapping, Sage-picking, Sweet grass picking), Celebrations (Aboriginal Day, Treaty Day, Family Day).
- **Community Events:** Sports Tournaments, Winter Games, Community Dances, Talent Show, Annual Sobriety Run, Fish Derbies, Trail rides.....
- **Community Resources:** Fitness Centre, Youth Drop-in Centre, Recovery and Wellness Centre, Health Centre, Drop-in Centre, Schools, Churches.
- **Community programs:** organized sports, child and youth programs such as music and arts programs (band lessons, guitar club, painting classes), baby-sitting classes, Cadets, First Nations youth livestock program; Parent support programs, eg. Healthy Mother/Healthy Baby; Home Care.
- **Adult Education:** employment programs, life skills training, leadership courses, computer training, and firearms training.
- **Alcohol and Drug prevention::** A.A., NNADAP, FAS program, Gambling prevention program.

QUESTION TWO: WHAT MAKES THESE PROGRAMS AND ACTIVITIES GOOD FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

This question evoked a number of responses that spoke to the positive benefits of programs and activities that supported cultural identity, community togetherness, child, youth and family support, healthy life-styles, adult education and prevention of alcohol and drug addiction. A partial list of responses includes the following:

Cultural learning/cultural experiences: *provides a sense of belonging - teaches respect - - teaches children their culture and history - teaches you to respect others and Elders. Strengthens identity of self and the community, “reaffirms who the community is”.* Pow-wows were valued for the singing, and dancing and for ‘snagging’ (meeting boyfriends and girlfriends).

“The community focuses on their cultural values and restoring what values were lost - the community developed a history book/genealogy for children to learn who their relatives are in the community”

Community feasts promote identity, cultural and traditional practices, “transmit culture by doing”

While remarking on the great importance of cultural traditions and practices, participants also spoke of diversity within the community, remarking on the freedom of families and individuals to practice the way they believe.

“The traditional teachings promote healthier lifestyles and values, integration, a sense of belonging and a freedom of choosing any religion or spirituality”

“The community has a diversity of religion and spiritual practices and these are accepted and respected by the people of the community”.

“There is a sharing of cultures [the community] is multi-cultural.”

Community events were noted for strengthening social relationships and family bonds, for enhancing a sense of community togetherness, of belonging.

“They are fun – they include families, allows families to get together and have fun. Interaction with your peers, family and friends/opportunity to meet different people/makes you socialize”

Community programs: these were valued for helping to build relationships and social skills, for learning and participating, encouraging and supporting individual talents and skills. Here are some illustrative comments:

Painting classes - *develop talent - respect supplies - learn patience - creating own place of peace – expression*

Beading - *learn concentration - learn patience - learn new skills - helps with cultural identity*

Sports and recreation - *Keeps you healthy. Keeps you out of trouble*

Hockey - *physical fitness - adrenalin rush - life skills - teaches team work - teaches co-operation - builds confidence - teaches to respect rules - meet people*

Cadets – *self-discipline – learn about respect – learn about fighting for the country – learn about military life – balance –friendship – travel*

Alcohol and drug prevention programs/ Alternatives to Violence: *you get to manage anger - teaches right choices - builds self esteem*

Community Resources: *Fitness Center - builds confidence - learn to respect the body - healthy diet - body build. Health Centre: “The counsellors/therapists help you with your problems and make you feel better about yourself”.*

QUESTION THREE: WHAT ADDITIONAL RESOURCES COULD BE TAPPED TO BETTER THESE EVENTS AND PROGRAMS? (Elders, service providers and interested community members only)

Responses here emphasized a community approach to enhancing and strengthening the positive programs and activities that already exist.

- *Culture and traditional ceremonies - policies, practices, beliefs- put these into our policies and laws- they need to be incorporated*
- *Formalize a strategic plan - working towards one goal - a team approach- resources coming together- what do we want?*
- *Start training our own people*

“Long ago everyone came together- there was value in this”

QUESTION FOUR: WHAT TEACHINGS (VALUES) ARE TAUGHT IN YOUR COMMUNITY? This question evoked a list of values from each group. All groups emphasized the importance of cultural identity. Ceremonies, cultural practices, language, and family and kinship values were interconnected with one another. All groups listed the key value of respect which was articulated in the following ways:

Respect in ceremonies
Respect all religions/spiritual beliefs
Respect for Elders and the community
Respect nature
Respect yourself and respect others
Respect of belongings
Treat grandparents with respect
Learn to listen to elders, parents, teachers

Elders spoke specifically of traditional values and teachings whereas service providers, interested community members and youth all listed values common to the forging of positive, mutually beneficial, community-building relationships in Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal communities in Canada and elsewhere in the world. These included: Caring; sharing with the less fortunate; Helping one another, and Cooperation. Personal attributes were valued. Among those listed were compassion, honesty, discipline, integrity, taking responsibility, and self-control. In the words of a research participant:

Traditional values and the Christian values have merged together in this community, people who practice these values are working together, an example of this is a funeral, the Clergy and Elder from the community each have a role in the ritual, they walk side by side and respect each other. The rituals of the funeral is holistic - The core belief in the Creator/God/Higher Power is taught in the community - The core values are taught such as: respect, love, caring, sharing, compassion, forgiveness, tolerance and acceptance, the core belief in the Creator and these core values are threaded through the traditions and fabric of our community.

All groups mentioned knowing and/or learning one's native language as an important value. Language was especially emphasized by Elders and youth. Education was spoken of as a value, e.g. "stay in school and get educated.

One participant commented on more than one value set existing in the community:

"Western values, pop culture values, [are] predominant among young people, they are impacted by the media and music, it influences how they dress and behave"

Youth participants provided the most succinct list of value-based messages and teachings emphasized in the community:

- **Care for one another** (includes Compassion, Friends, Family, loving and caring, community togetherness)
- **Care for the self** (includes abstinence from alcohol and drugs, autonomy, role modeling, self-esteem, wellness-balance, responsibility)
- **Cultural identity** (includes language, history, spirituality, cultural and traditional ceremonies and practices)
- **Education** (includes the importance of finishing school, graduating)
- **Respect** (for Elders, parents, teachers, culture and traditions)

QUESTION FIVE: WHICH DO YOU THINK ARE IMPORTANT FOR ALL CHILDREN AND FAMILIES IN THE COMMUNITY TO LEARN AND RELEARN? (Elders, service providers and general community only)

Responses to this question emphasized cultural knowledge, traditions, language and history. Also emphasized was community relatedness and respect.

- **Community togetherness:** *we are individuals, part of family and community, all interrelated and gives a sense of pride, no matter what tribe your from, all respect each other*
- **Language:** *honor language in the community, speak the Native language in schools*
- **Traditional values:** *traditional protocol, appropriate behavior for example, leaving a circle, need to teach kinship values, family tree*
- **History:** *teaching community history passed on, teaching First Nations History - Treaty Rights*

QUESTION SIX: AS A COMMUNITY, HOW DO YOU THINK THESE TEACHINGS CAN BE STRENGTHENED? (Elders, service providers and general community only)

The importance of teaching children, Elder involvement, language education and collaborative efforts stood out in the responses to this question. Funding for prevention was emphasized along with involvement of elected leaders :

- **Teaching Children:** *be consistent when teaching young people, be patient when teaching young people, teach children about ceremony for example, pipe ceremony, sweet grass, why an eagle staff is used and to include all cultural teachings*
- **Respect:** *have respect and be good to each other, respect our Elders and know our values, need to have respect and acceptance for each other*
- **Language:** *to have Cree and Saulteaux curriculum in the schools, language "Cornerstone of Values"*
- **Elders:** *continue to utilize elders, more Elders involvement in the schools*
- **Leadership:** *involve Chief & Council in the Community gatherings, use leadership positively, have them offer input to all functions, need good leadership*
- **Collaborative efforts:** *cooperate by working together with everyone, to have more large gatherings, to get more people involved, have the community resources working together, if a program needs support, get them support.*
- **More funding:** *need to have sustainable and consistent funding, more dollars to expand our band schools, by being pro-active, need funding for prevention and intervention programs in the community rather than using the child-welfare funds to apprehend children*

QUESTION SEVEN: NAME THE FIVE TOP VALUES IN YOUR COMMUNITY (youth question)

Eleven values were listed across the three youth groups responding to this question (one youth group was not asked this question). These fell into four categories: Personal relationships/ self-esteem/ cultural identity/ personal conduct and care of oneself:

- **Personal relationships:** *Care for one another* (compassion, love and caring), *respect yourself and others, care for family, trust.*
- **Self-esteem:** *Stand up for yourself, believe in yourself, know your personal rights, balance and wellness*
- **Cultural identity:** importance of language, history, spirituality
- **Personal conduct:** *be a role model, be honest, be responsible*
- **Care of oneself:** “ *do not do drugs and alcohol*”, “ *get an education*”, “ *stay out of trouble*”, “*choose positive peers*”, “*balance spirit, mind and body*”

QUESTION SEVEN A: WHO ARE THE TEACHERS (YOUTH QUESTION)?

Youth most frequently identified Elders, parents and family members (sisters, brothers, aunts, uncles, cousins and grandparents) as the primary teachers of values. Outside of Elders and the family, friends and peers, boyfriends and girlfriends were mentioned. Beyond this close circle of relationships, teachers were most frequently mentioned, several being specifically named. Sports coaches, musicians, and motivational speakers were named. On the more formal service delivery level social workers, youth workers, counsellors, and therapists were identified as were 'bosses' and 'work experience'. One group of youth spoke about 'sincere caregivers' - " *Anyone who cares about you and what you do and in what you have to say* "

QUESTION SEVEN B: HOW ARE THESE TEACHINGS BEING TAUGHT (YOUTH QUESTION)?

Youth responses emphasized learning through parental and other family role models, family activities and personal contact with Elders, teachers, and others in the community:

"By people talking to you about the importance of these values and what they mean - By stories, personal life experiences - By people talking to you in a positive way - By people showing respect to you - By people teaching you these values in ways that you understand them and will enable you to pass on this knowledge."

Participating in cultural ceremonies such as sweat lodges and traditional dances and feasts were regarded as important learning experiences. **Teachers were mentioned as role models in school during the day, and after hours. Elders participating in the school received special mention for their teaching** - 'telling their stories' and 'talking to' students.. In this regard, learning also occurred through legends, myths, stories, and through participating in cultural activities and cultural camps. Youth also mentioned learning through going to school - listening participating, watching, reading and writing.

QUESTION EIGHT: MY COMMUNITY HELPS ME TO BE A GOOD PERSON BY..... (youth question – selected responses stand by themselves)

Caring

- *Being told I am loved and seeing people care for each other*

Cultural/Personal Identity

- *Teachers helping us kids to learn new things every day. Elders teaches me my cultural ways, and to respect them*
- *Elders coming into Native Studies class, telling their stories about things we didn't know*
- *Teaching me about my families past and present*
- *Spirituality*
- *Spirituality - Help each other - Sharing - Get love - Get kindness - Get respect - Get forgiveness*

Respect

- *By respecting my thoughts - By respecting my personal power, and what I can do in life Letting me make my own choices / decisions*
- *Guidance and Encouragement*
- *Teaches me to make an effort at the activities I set out to do - Offers a strong school where there are friendly staff involved that motivate me to do the best I can, and also that I can do it when I try to give up*
- *Encouraging me to finish school , so I could have a good career , and a good life. This is a lot to learn in my 17 years and I am glad to share with you and others*
- *Encouraging youth: stay in school, respect myself and others, make healthy choices*

Sports

- *providing sport activities, paying my sport fees, and helping me join extra activities*

Alcohol & drug prevention

- *Making programs so there is something to do besides doing drugs, drinking alcohol and playing video games*

“My community makes me my own person because it gives me a feeling of belonging and my traditions – This place gives me a place to call home, and I am proud of it – My community is my Native pride”

DATA ANALYSIS BY COMPARING PARTICIPANT GROUPS

Curious to know if the data gathered in the four participant groups would differ from one another, we separated the responses by question asked and by participant groups (Elders, Service Providers, Community, Youth), and analyzed these by themes. Questions One, Two, and Four were asked of all groups, so we begin this section by these questions.

QUESTION ONE: WHAT POSITIVE PROGRAMS, EVENTS AND ACTIVITIES ARE HAPPENING IN THIS COMMUNITY TO HELP CHILDREN AND FAMILIES IN A HEALTHY WAY?

All four groups emphasized cultural and community events as significant positive contributions to the community. Elders emphasized programs that had, from their perspective, ‘healing’ attributes. In addition to cultural and community events and activities, service providers emphasized sports and recreation, and listed a variety of resources available to the community such as youth programs and alcohol and drug prevention programs. Both service providers and interested community members emphasized employment training for adults and youth. Community members also emphasized adult education. Youth listed sports and recreational opportunities as chief amongst the positive programs and activities happening in the community. This was followed by cultural and community events and activities.

QUESTION TWO: WHAT MAKES THESE PROGRAMS AND ACTIVITIES GOOD FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES?

This question evoked different emphases among the four groups. Elders emphasized that the positive programs and activities identified contributed to strengthening of personal attributes (listed in question four below). Service providers and interested community members emphasized that programs and activities facilitated and strengthened a sense of community togetherness and belonging. Interested community members also spoke of the strengthening of personal attributes. Community members linked spirituality and spiritual practices as being part of what made the programs and activities identified ‘good’ for children and families. Youth listed as key elements of what they considered to be positive features of the activities and programs they had identified, the strengthening of cultural identity, celebration and support of family, opportunities to learn ‘new things’, strengthening of personal attributes, and the building of personal relationships.

QUESTION FOUR: WHAT TEACHINGS (VALUES) ARE PRACTICED IN YOUR COMMUNITY

As noted earlier in this report, question four evoked a list of values from each group. All groups emphasized the importance of cultural identity. Ceremonies, cultural practices, language, and family and kinship values were interconnected with one another and supported a positive sense of identity. All groups listed the key value of respect, which was articulated in a variety of ways.

Elders spoke specifically of traditional values and teachings whereas service providers, interested community members and youth all listed values common to the forging of positive, mutually beneficial, community-building relationships in Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal communities in Canada and elsewhere in the world. These included: Care for one another; share with the less fortunate; Help one another; Cooperate. Personal attributes were valued. Among those listed were compassion, honesty, discipline, integrity, taking responsibility, and self-control.

All groups mentioned knowing and/or learning one’s native language as an important value. Language and education were especially emphasized by Elders and youth.

DATA ANALYSIS: TRADITIONAL VALUES

Members of the research advisory committee were interested in learning more about traditional values held by Aboriginal peoples over the centuries. As noted, these were mentioned more frequently within the Elders gatherings:

- *The importance of the gift to bring a child into this world from conception to adulthood*
- *Importance of relationships and kinships*
- *Importance of keeping your Indian-given names*
- *[The importance of] Spiritual well-being/ Faith*
- *Have faith with the culture, the Creator*
- *Equality between men and women*

Elders frequently answered the question about values practiced in the community by advising parents and grandparents about valued child-rearing practices:

- *Teach your children about respect of God/Creator*
- *Teach your kids language and cultures - Learn the proper protocol of behavior, eg. giving tobacco*
- *Teach children their family history and kinship*
- *Parents need to be positive/healthy role models for their kids*
- *Be more involved with your children, [spend]quality time e.g. be at home with them and in the activities they're in. [The] personal relationship with children is very important”.*
- *Take kids all over the place (being and praying with parents, grandparents and kids)*
- *Learn to recognize your children's talents - Let your children go and be free to explore their talents*
- *Talk to your kids quietly and they will listen*
- *A grandmother raises her children and grandchildren and does not give up on them - being with grandchildren when they are being born and being there throughout their life*
- *Reclaim culture that was once lost and use it to teach children*
- *Go back to your Native ways - keeping traditional lifestyle and teachings*
- *A man should not take a wife until he is ready to raise that family*
- *Do not abuse alcohol and drugs*

“Things that our parents did were passed on to us and the teachings that we learned were very positive. We learned to sew and clean house. We were taught to love and challenge life and work and we were not dependent on the Government. We were taught to be workers and to feel good about life. Life can be good if you seek it”.

DATA ANALYSIS: CONCERNS AND IDEAS FOR IMPROVEMENT

As might be expected, participants in the gatherings occasionally digressed to mention concerns and issues that, from their perspective, needed to be addressed by the community. These remarks were few in number, but did serve as a subtle reminder that alongside of the many positive features of community activities, programs and events, there also existed ongoing and emerging challenges such as drug and alcohol addictions, teenage pregnancies, lack of discipline/respect on the part of some youth, and parenting problems. In the spirit of emphasizing the positive, these few remarks are noted but not dwelled upon. What is more important, are the many ideas participants put forward as to ways and means for strengthening what is good in the community, including new initiatives that would further enhance these directions. These are reported below:

STRENGTHENING CULTURAL IDENTITY

- *Draw upon the wisdom and cultural knowledge of Elders – several participants recommended hiring Elders in the schools and band offices. Greater use could also be made of Wascapios, or Elder's helpers*
- *Incorporate cultural policies, practices and beliefs into community policies and laws (lack of culturally appropriate policies was frequently mentioned as a serious obstacle for the communities).*
- *Hire community historians*
- *Hold more ceremonies (different kinds)*
- *Speak native languages more frequently in school, not only during school class (recommendation to school staff)*

STRENGTHENING COMMUNITY

- **Community spirit** – *[We need to have] more faith in ourselves and our community. People have wonderful ideas but nobody wants to put it into action. Ask yourself- what I want for the community-does it exist in my family? Greater involvement of parents recommended. Be a good leader.*
- **Community approach** - *Develop a community approach – establish a vision for the community (reference made here to the ancient teachings program sponsored by the Healing Foundation) Establish community rules and regulations for the children*
- **Establish community rules and regulations** *for children and youth*
- **Develop and formalize a Strategic Plan** - *work towards one goal - team approach- resources coming together- what do we want?*
- **Use the school as a central meeting place:** *One solution- all problems come to the school- the school needs everyone's help to assist the child- have one big meeting- everyone help out.*
- **Share resources with other agencies** *(eg. Build positive relationships with the Regina Indian Treaty Services [RITS], an agency that works with urban Indians in Regina).*
- *Acknowledge inequities and teach equality.*
- *In the community there is an unequal representation of family having their needs met- for example- a large family needs a house but nobody is speaking for them.- when*

people have their needs met it is because they demand it- some people have a louder voice than others.

- *To teach equality for example, everybody was poor however, everybody shared what they had, the gap between having and not having is getting larger, class gaps are emerging in the community, the Family Day event crossed the equality barriers of the community members who participated.*

STRENGTHENING COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP

- *Commit to focus on negative issues, understand causes and do something about this. Back up good strong ideas.*
- *Ensure transparency and accountability*
- *Teach Community to co-exist & get along with each other*

SUPPORTING/STRENGTHENING CHILDREN AND FAMILIES **Families**

- *Parents need to be more involved with their children, quality time e.g. be at home with them (eg. Curfew times) and in the activities they're in.*

Service delivery system

- **Strengthen/augment existing programs:** family violence programs, home care services, recreation services for children, organized community recreation, life skills programs, family support programs, parenting programs. *Have more education awareness workshops consistently for all ages, for the whole family as a unit, not just the parents*
- **Provide cross cultural training to non-native service providers**
- **'Train our own people':** *"we need Indian service providers need to practice Indian traditional values"*
- *Build research expertise*
- *Develop a cultural/spiritual resource center*
- *Have the RCMP develop relationships with the children in school such as the DARE program and to participate at the youth center.*
- *Hold interagency meetings*
- *Prioritize apprehension and check with our parents and grandparents before taking them off the reserve or out of the community*

Prevention

- **Be proactive** - *acquire funding for prevention and intervention programs in the community rather than using the child-welfare funds to apprehend children*
- **Teach kids the result of drugs and alcohol** *We can give the children the information about drugs and alcohol but they are still choosing to use What laws can protect the children against the negative impacts- children are buying and selling for their parents*
- **Spend more time with children/youth.** *[We] need more time/consistency in teaching the school kids; more 1-1 time with youth. Need more youth workers.*

- **Include children in the planning activities:** *their input is valuable - hear them and follow-up - be consistent with them*
- **Provide opportunities for youth:** *sports or work e.g. work to do, keeps them busy and out of mischief; [Community] summer resort - Kids could be trained as lifeguards, hired as summer workers, stock fish in the lake*

DISCUSSION

We credit the Centre of Excellence for Child Welfare for adding the words: Identity, Community, Resilience to the original title of our project (The Transmission of Values project). These words resonated with the conversations that we had with the project Advisory Committee respecting the urgent need for Aboriginal communities to work together to strengthen individual and collective identities as First Nations people in Saskatchewan, and, in this way, to lay the foundation for greater resilience among children and youth, their families, and the community.

We searched the literature for information about identity, community and resilience in First Nations communities. Briefly, the literature search affirmed that a positive sense of one's personal history and cultural identity and of hope for the future is integral to individual well-being and resilience. Children and youth are dependent in large part on family and community support as they wend their way through the many ordinary and extra-ordinary developmental challenges that will shape each individual's sense of identity and relatedness to the world about them. Resilience is similarly related to both individual coping capacity and the provision of needed psychological and social resources from family and community. Stated in another way, growth and well-being is dependent upon the provision of essential environmental nutrients – love, care, protection, guidance, knowledge and values transferred from generation to generation.

Aboriginal children and youth face extra-ordinary challenges of 'making sense' of and understanding familial, community and tribal history, especially so where this history has resulted in negative effects for the child and his or her family and community. Added to this are the negative effects of systemic barriers such as the socioeconomic conditions of First Nations communities, and racism; poor health and mental health stemming from these conditions; pressures to join deviant groups such as youth gangs; and the daily distractions of our technologically advanced and global society. Together, these factors leave no doubt that many First Nations young people remain at high risk of being drawn into activities that will limit their life paths and future life choices. The situation is equally urgent for First Nations communities, for cultural continuity will not occur if the young do not grow into adulthood with a sense of pride in themselves as First Nations people; with knowledge of cultural practices and traditions that have stood the test of time; with a firm grasp of the values and teachings that have guided their people over the centuries; and with a sense of hope for their future as individuals and as members of a significant and distinctive cultural grouping in Canada and the world. As one of our advisory group members eloquently stated:

“the need to preserve and sustain life is equally as urgent for our people today as it was historically. Historically, cultural practices, traditions and values

were based on the need to preserve and sustain life for a people living on the land. Today, the need is to preserve and sustain families and communities living in contemporary society.” (Kinequon, 2004)

By focusing on the positive, the Transmission of Values project reveals an extensive effort on the part of various sectors of the community to support positive child and youth activities; to educate children and youth about their history and culture; to include children and youth in cultural practice and ceremonies; to teach traditional life-styles, skills and language; and to encourage community ‘togetherness’ through a number of community-wide events. Alongside of these efforts, communities provide several formal programs of support such as Healthy Mother/Healthy Baby, Home Care, Life skills training, National Native Alcohol and Drug Abuse program (NNADAP) and Gambling Prevention.

We were struck, as we examined the data, by the sense of community as a fundamental aspect of individual identity – a place of belonging, recognition, emotional and social ties. Aboriginal members of our advisory committee affirmed that this is what they had experienced and known from early childhood on. Non-Aboriginal committee members found that the data ‘leaped out’ in a different way. We were intellectually acquainted with the importance of community to Aboriginal people through statements made in various forums and in the literature. The data evoked a stronger, more profound image of the importance of community: an image of a large extended family united with one another through a powerful sense of a shared social, geographical, and for many, a spiritual location where young and old belong, and where space will be made for members, even if returning from a very long absence.

We note that when we are among Aboriginal people, conversations almost always begin by individuals seeking to ‘place’ one another. That is, the conversation will be something like: “Oh yes, you are from(fill in name of community). My sister is married to, the brother-in-law of your uncle....., and my brother’s niece is the daughter of your mother’s sister’s nephew.....“, and so on. While non-Aboriginals often speak of individuals that may be known in common, it is rare for conversations to begin with a similar kind of ‘identity’ placing’, nor is there such a strong sense of social and geographical relatedness, or ancestral heritage. Most non-Aboriginal adults have long ago left their communities of origin, and often have very little connection to the physical location within which they were born and raised. Ironically, the connection to the land through a reserve system that has historically ‘quarantined’ and marginalized First Nations people in many diabolical ways, has also provided First Nations people of Canada with home bases that are truly unmatched by any other group in the country. Ancient teachings assert the responsibility of the present generation in assuring the health and well-being of the ‘seventh’ generation – the generation that cannot be known (Clarkson, Morrisette and Regallet, 1992). Although the conditions may in some communities be truly deplorable, the fact of a social and geographical home base does provide an opportunity for change that can be nurtured and made safe, not only for the current occupants but also for the ‘seventh generation’ to come.

This powerful sense of community will inevitably influence identity formation and capacity for resilience of the youngest members. For this reason, it is critically important that

attention be paid to the cultural and value-based messages that young people experience through their life in the community. Chandler (2000) studies how young persons develop a sense of self over time and differing experiences. Acknowledging that the notion of 'selfhood' is an ambiguous concept, Chandler asserts that "permanence is a necessary and constitutive feature of what it could possibly mean to have or be a self selves are obliged to both change and remain the same" (p.210), thus, self-continuity is a challenge for all young persons trying to manage their lives through many different experiences, relationships and contexts, physical change and personal thoughts and feelings that may be especially powerful. Chandler refers to this challenge as the 'self-continuity' problem.

Chandler and Lalonde (1998) go further than this, stating that, for some young people, community efforts to restore cultural practices and traditions may be a matter of life and death. They speak of personal and cultural continuity as critical factors in the lives of First Nations adolescents whom they believe to be "at special risk to suicide for the reason that they lose those future commitments that are necessary to guarantee appropriate care and concern for their own well-being...This generalized period of increased risk during adolescence can be made even more acute within communities that lack a concomitant sense of cultural continuity that might otherwise support the efforts of young persons to develop more adequate self-continuity warranting practices (p.2)." The researchers present data showing variable rates of suicide across aboriginal communities in British Columbia, ranging from nearly 800 times the average in Canada to virtual absence of incidents. The variable rates are "strongly associated with the degree to which BC's 196 bands are engaged in community practices that are interpreted here as markers of a collective effort to rehabilitate and vouchsafe the cultural continuity of these groups" (p.2).

Referring also to the significant importance of community, Blackstock and Trocmé (2005, p.14) speak of the '525' generations of Aboriginal children raised on the lands now known as Canada before the arrival of Europeans. Tracing the acknowledged tumultuous history Aboriginal children, their families and their communities have experienced since this time, the two researchers assert that the multi-generational trauma that has occurred can only be addressed by community-based systems of Aboriginal child welfare, supported by culturally responsive structures and adequate levels of funding. "Resilient Aboriginal communities provide the best chance for resilient, safe and well Aboriginal children, young people and families (p. 31)." Resilient communities are described as those communities equipped with the governance structure and the resources to address child poverty, inadequate housing and substance abuse. We would add to this description of community resilience the incorporation of a strong value base, supported by cultural traditions and practices that strengthen community identity and cohesiveness and that serve to facilitate and advance community-based approaches to known issues and concerns affecting child, youth and family well-being.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

Too often, the press and the general public and Aboriginal people themselves accept a negative view of First Nations communities, unaware of all of the work that is being done to

support children and youth and their families and to strengthen the community. The system of child welfare brings forth a rush of negative memories and experiences of unjust treatment and considerable loss for many Aboriginal people. These negative images and experiences can be conceived as a kind of mental "map" of the history that Aboriginal people have endured with child welfare throughout Canada. Their experiences often express part of the truth about the actual conditions of a troubled individual, family and community. Once accepted as the truth about Aboriginal communities, this "needs" map determines how problems are to be addressed, through deficiency-oriented policies and programs. Many research projects focus on these deficiencies. This translates into activities that teach people the nature and extent of their problems, and the value of services as the answer to their problems. As a result, many people and communities will see themselves with special needs that can only be met by people, services and programs outside the community.

This 'deficiency oriented' picture begs to be counter-balanced. The Values Transmission research has shown that there are many positive initiatives taking place in Aboriginal communities that have not been reported and that need to be recognized and supported. The premise underlying this research is that people and communities have many of the answers they require to solve their own problems, a message that has been resonated by Aboriginal leaders for decades (Miller 1990; Turpel-Lafond 2004). The power of solution, creation, and **authority** rest with those in the communities. The research project hoped to provide a methodology to make the potential for change more translucent and apparent.

The Appreciative Inquiry method used in the project was designed through carefully developed questions to assist communities not only to be internally focused by recognizing and discussing their assets, but also to mobilize them for development purposes. Within the community development process, it is important to place this discussion in its larger context. Two major realizations should be stated.

First, focusing on the assets of the Aboriginal people and community does not imply that these communities do not need additional resources from the outside.

Second, the asset-based discussions are intended to affirm, and to build upon the valuable work already going on in the communities.

These two realizations provide a sense of efficacy based on interdependence. Policy makers, practitioners, and service delivery administrators within the community and external to it can be guided by the community's own sense of the programs, events and activities that make a positive contribution to individual, family and community well-being. The research affirms the community's assertion that knowledge of traditional values and teachings and participation in cultural practices is fundamental for the development of a positive identity as an Aboriginal child or youth. A critical ingredient to raising healthy children and youth is the participation of family and community in emphasizing, supporting and reinforcing key values believed essential to well-being and to the health and vitality of the community. Celebrating cultural practices and history informs young people of the history and experiences of their tribes and communities. Native language instruction strengthens understanding of culture and history. It is upon these stepping stones that the young person

can find stability and a sense of ‘grounding’ as a First Nations individual and can move forward to adulthood in a positive way. Underscoring this point, Fulcher (2002) introduces the concept of ‘cultural safety’, asserting that the ‘duty of care’ undertaken by child care authorities needs to include the acknowledgement of and attendance to a child’s needs and cultural frames of reference, even if they are not fully understood (as cited in Bennett and Blackstock (2002)).

Further to this, the research affirms the strong value placed on family by the young. We were struck by the number of times that young persons mentioned the support of families, grandparents and kinship ties. Policy makers and service delivery agents are well advised to bear these strong connections in mind, and to do all that they can to support and strengthen these.

Similarly, the high value placed on education by Elders, family members, and the community was affirmed time and again by the young people who participated in this study. School teachers were frequently named as important support persons in the young person’s life. Parents, grandparents, Elders and school teachers were named as the primary transmitters of Aboriginal, family and communal values. Along with support of families, the research supports extensive investment in schools. Related to education, community based opportunities for employment training and employment opportunities were valued. These can enhance a young person’s sense of competence and efficacy, initially instilled through school-based learning. School and employment based initiatives need to be encouraged and strongly supported by policy-makers, practitioners and service delivery agents.

Of great importance to the young are opportunities to participate in sports and recreation. These help to build strong bodies, connect young people with one another in ways that serve to build positive relationships, can instill a sense of teamwork, and are experienced as ‘fun’. Investment in fitness centres, sports equipment, individual and team sports, indoor and outdoor games and recreational opportunities enhances individual sense of competence, self-awareness and self-esteem. Recognizing, supporting, and celebrating these activities helps to build individual and communal spirits, and contributes to the development of a positive attitude towards life and the community.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS CHART

Outcomes (Values)	Community Level/Practices	Government Level/policy
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<p><i>Strengthened sense of cultural identity and continuity as an Aboriginal child/youth</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Optimize opportunities for community-wide cultural events - eg. feasts, ceremonies, dances, celebrations. • Build a cultural/spiritual resource centre 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognize /respect the paramount importance of culturally-based practices and beliefs. Work with Aboriginal leadership to develop culturally appropriate policies. • Acknowledge and attend to the cultural identity and spiritual needs of children and youth in care as part of the state's 'duty of care'.
<p>Outcomes (Values)</p>	<p>Community Level/ Practice</p>	<p>Government Level/ Policy</p>
<p><i>Strengthened understanding of culture and history as Aboriginal peoples</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hire community historians • Make greater use of Elders in the schools and band offices • Speak/teach native languages more frequently in school • Incorporate tribal/band/ community history into education curriculum 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide cross-cultural training to non-native policy-makers and service providers • Work with Elders/ community leaders to ensure flexibility and adaptability of school curriculum
<p><i>Strengthened sense of community.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Optimize opportunities for organizing community-wide events and programs, eg. sporting events, 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support/resource the training of Aboriginal service providers • Hold inter-agency

<p>Outcomes (Values</p>	<p>seasonal camps, recreational events</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish a vision with the community. Develop and formalize a Strategic Plan. • Provide programs that encourage and reinforce key values identified by the community • Establish community rules and regulations for children and youth <p>Community Level/ Practices</p>	<p>meetings/ Consultations</p> <p>Government Level/Policy</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acknowledge inequities and teach equality • Establish a central meeting place for the community, eg. the school. • Ensure transparency and accountability in programs and services 	

<p><i>Heightened sense of the young person's individual competence and efficacy, self-awareness and self-esteem, health and physical well-being.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage, facilitate, and support the development and maintenance of child and youth sport and leisure programming within the community • Facilitate, develop and implement community-based employment/ Training opportunities for young people and adults. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acknowledge and attend to the physical, recreational and employment training needs of children and youth in care as part of the state's 'duty of care'
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Outcomes (Values)	Community Level/ Practices	Government Level/ Policy
<p><i>Prevention of maltreatment</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengthen/augment existing programs the community finds helpful in supporting and strengthening family relationships and good parenting practices, • Provide programs, events, and services that assist families in caring for children and youth within the community, eg. home care, respite care. • Include children and youth in planning programs and activities • Endorse and support alcohol and drug prevention programs and services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allocate funds and resources essential to ensure successful programs identified by the community continue in the community

EVALUATION OF RESEARCH PROCESS

As noted throughout this report, this project could not have been accomplished without the extensive involvement of the project advisory committee, made up of representatives from the four participating communities plus recommended Elders and a representative of a residential treatment agency serving the province. Following completion of the data gathering and dissemination phase, five members of this group, all Indian Child and Family Services agency representatives, were asked a series of questions to assist the co-investigators with their assessment of the research process. Distilling the responses, the co-investigators concluded the following (Questions listed in **Appendix Four**).

I. PROJECT ENTRY

Agencies and their representatives were initially drawn to the project through a combination of interest, natural curiosity (what were the university researchers up to?), and, for one agency, a past pattern of occasionally becoming involved in projects such as this- time permitting. Beyond this initial contact, agency representatives became particularly interested in the stimulus question posed by one of the members: “What did we do when we were Indians?”

“We are First Nations people – so I think we should use our values, our family systems to bring back concept of caring for our own, healing ourselves, taking responsibility for ourselves, but not using a transplanted, European model”.

“it connected with me- when we deal with our children I feel we have gotten away from transmitting our values- our kids aren’t in their homes so they do not see how values are transmitted. Maybe this is why there are some many children in care- very little transmission of values. It interested me how we can take these values and have them evolve in prevention programs”.

II. TEAM BUILDING

Participants were asked if they and their organization felt they were an integral part of the team. All five responded positively, indicating that they found common interests amongst the communities represented yet also that there was respect for diversity.

“it was a commonality to wonder what we were and are all about”

“[I] felt that we got a say in what we did in our communities – everybody was so different. Everybody respected each others differences. Flexibility important.

Positive aspects of being part of the team were “open, respectful communication”, being part of the decision-making process throughout, connectedness.

“Lots of positive aspects- I think because we could see the project at each stage- if we did not like the way things were going we could say so in each step and make changes- positive experience to sit with each agency , ...nice to see the pictures of each agency and then the whole picture”.

“Connectedness we were all on the same page even though we were in four corners of the province”

One member expressed appreciation for the participation of Elders:

“Talking with the Elders-confirmed that I am not crazy these concepts exist- concepts of sharing, child rearing. We have our own history but we get whitewashed in mainstream”.

III. WHAT COULD HAVE BEEN DONE DIFFERENTLY IN THE RESEARCH PROCESS?

Responses to this question led to recommendations that will be very helpful to other researchers planning similar projects:

i. Preparation phase:

“ Participation [in the project depended upon] identifying people within the community- there needed to be a stronger network. Project requires commitment from people in the community. Stronger connection in community upfront- could have had preparation meetings in the community- setting up networks.”

ii. Importance of principle investigator presence:

“ Having one researcher [was problematic] , researcher was late, not organized- did not look good in the community (note – co-investigator unable to attend meeting for health reasons)”.

iii. Timeliness:

“if we would have been more timely I think the event at the end could have gotten done [Community project]. Maybe this is part of doing a project- things evolved.” (see Endnote One)

iv. Honorariums:

“Should have had more communication on honorarium expectation”. (communication difficulties led to the project paying less for the honorarium than was expected -- see Endnote Two).

v. Reporting (requirement to access funds for the community project):
[“This was] difficult because of person wearing several hats and minimal time to fill out the report. Could have done: simpler or multiple choice, would have helped if someone on your end [university] help the agency do the report. Or to have university students willing to go out and help with the report”.

IV. PROJECT FINDINGS

Advisory committee members were asked if the findings of the project were what they had expected. Three of the five members indicated that the information gathered was what they had hoped would be found. A fifth member indicated that s/he had not had any expectations so was pleasantly surprised.

“I knew there were good things happening- I did not know how many good things were happening- working at the agency I do not see positive I see negative. The agency apprehends children, this is sometimes the only image the agency has in the community. It built a sense a pride for all the good things happening in our communities”.

V. PROGRAM/POLICY IMPLICATIONS

A clear objective of the research was to utilize values and practices to envision how gaps in programs and services might be overcome. Advisory committee members were asked about how the findings could be used. All of the respondents spoke of the value of building on the positive, both in terms of supporting programs that are going well and developing programs where gaps exist. Two members spoke about the value of the findings for agency and community workers.

“It is good to have workers who work in the communities, see the information, because people on the reserve only get to see the negative- we apprehend children-we try to work with parents. I hear teachers complain about the children, it is nice to hear the positive things happening in their community.... [The project can] lift their spirits- hold your head up high after listening to results.

“Put your money into good things, where good things are happening- [the project] challenges the social work profession to be creative and rediscover the things that are already in existence- value system and languages”.

“If you can see the positive then you have hope. It’s okay we are going to survive”.

Committee members expressed the belief that the findings would be helpful from a policy perspective at several levels: agency, community, Chief and Council, and Indian Affairs.

“I think by emphasizing and nurturing the positive we can convince the powers that be (Indian affairs) the way to go is to focus on positive-this is what’s working lets take it and move forward”.

VI. PRIMARY STRENGTHS OF THE PROJECT:

Asking advisory committee members what they saw as the primary strengths of the project led to a number of responses. The validation of the positive impact of programs and services that ‘are part of our culture and traditions’ was important to one member. Another member emphasized strengths from a community perspective:

“[The project] gave the community an opportunity to come together and work on common questions- start the dialogue of positive – start to effect change. When they leave that meeting they share what they did with other people and it snowballs- people at first talking to each other about the positive programs and services in the community. 2) Identified programs that are working and what is not working and gaps that exist 3) agency was more involved in the community by being part of the project. Good opportunity for the agency to

be part community and understand how our agency can help the community in ways other than apprehension”.

VII. VALUE OF THE PROJECT FOR THE COMMUNITIES INVOLVED:

Advisory committee members were asked what they see as the potential value of the project for the communities involved. Here the responders spoke to the value of acknowledging the many good programs that exist in the community. *“Community ownership of the findings is valuable – a snapshot in time that communities can use as an indicator for their programs. “ the community can appreciate where they are at and decide where they want to move from this time”.*

VIII. FRUSTRATIONS/IRRITANTS

Responses to questions about frustrations or irritants experienced during the project led to recommendations that future projects use on-site researchers; that one key person be located in each community to serve as liaison to the project; that the research be under the control of First Nations (rather than the universities); that conversations in the first phase be moved along a bit more quickly; and that funds for the community implementation projects implemented as part of the research be provided ‘up front’ (funding regulations required evidence that the event had occurred before dollars could be released).

ix. Finally, advisory committee members were asked if they would do the project again. The responses were uniformly yes.

PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION

It has been very important to the co-investigators and the project advisory committee that the research return something of value to each of the communities that participated. For this reason, participating communities were invited to submit proposals for projects that promoted and strengthened the values and practices the community believes are essential to the well-being of children and youth and their families and the prevention of child maltreatment. A small financial incentive was offered as encouragement. Due to the timing of the invitation, only one community was able to respond to the invitation. Stimulated initially by the data gathering process in Little Pine First Nations attended by members of the First Nations of Battlefords Tribal Council Child and Family Service Agency Inc., participants present at the research gathering, decided to organize a community round dance. Titled, ‘Honouring our Children’ the event was a huge success with over 1000 people in attendance.

The poster project was another initiative of the Transmission of Values project. The intent of this project was to extend the many conversations regarding values transmission and to honor all the beneficial services and programs throughout each community. Each community was invited to work with their youth to develop a poster reflecting their perception of values in the community. The intention of the principal investigators was to utilize the posters throughout all four communities and other child welfare organizations as a reminder of the

importance of values and traditions. Regrettably, again due to timing on the researchers end, only one poster was received. It is not clear that this poster can be used for the intended purpose.

To date, the project has led to four conference presentations, all with the same title (Identity, Community, Resilience: The Transmission of Values project) but different content, based on data available at the time: the National Indian Child and Family Services Conference, Victoria, B.C., June, 2005 (Prokop, Cuthand, Ledoux); 6th Child Welfare Symposium, Montreal, Que. May 26, 2005 (poster presentation prepared by McKay and Thomas Prokop); the 3rd Prairie Child Welfare Symposium, Edmonton, AB, November 25, 2005 (McKay, Thomas Prokop, Dubois); and the Prairie Child Welfare Consortium-Centre of Excellence for Child Welfare, Research and Policy Forum, Regina, SK, February 9 & 10, 2006 (McKay, Thomas Prokop). An animated power-point compact disc is under production. An article has been published in *Canada's Children* (McKay, Thomas-Prokop, Spring, 2006). A book chapter is in press as is an information sheet for the CECW web-site (Thomas-Prokop, McKay, Gough, 2007). At least two more articles will be prepared for submission to refereed journals. Anticipated also is the production of posters emphasizing key values for child and youth well-being. These will be distributed to the four communities that participated in the project.

CONCLUSION

Returning to the goal and objectives set out for this research, we have, we believe, successfully engaged interested members of the four communities that participated in the study in examining and articulating key values and practices that participants believe necessary to support and strengthen child, youth and family well-being and prevent child maltreatment. Numerous highly valued cultural and community practices and events have been recorded, along with well-regarded programs and services that are believed to be beneficial to children, youth, and families. We have identified some ideas respecting ways by means which current gaps in programs and service could be overcome. At the same time, we cannot say that this research 'examined, rediscovered or articulated 'First Nations values'. This is because the values identified by participants in the study are recognizably shared by most Canadians and indeed by people from around the world as being essential for the support and maintenance of child, family and community well-being: care for one another, be respectful, be honest, be responsible, share, and trust.

What the study has articulated is the significant importance of cultural traditions, practices, ceremonies, and language to instilling these universal values into the minds and psyche of children and youth. Through these cultural practices, young people learn of their shared history, including past harms. This knowledge helps to explain personal and family experiences in a more appreciative way. A very important aspect of the shared history is knowledge that Aboriginal people have survived for thousands of years, overcoming environmental and social hardships that can hardly be imagined. Today, this long history of survival; of safeguarding traditional stories, beliefs, ceremonies, language and skills throughout the centuries, can be acknowledged with pride and faith that the 'current and 'next generations' will thrive and flourish.

The study underscored the diversity existent in all Aboriginal communities including the four that participated in this study. Aboriginal spirituality and Christian beliefs co-exist in a variety of ways in each of the communities. Even so, participants in all communities spoke of the critical role played by Elders as cultural transmitters of traditional language, history, values, knowledge and skills. Many of the suggestions for strengthening the positive values and practices that communities believe all children and families should learn involve supporting and enhancing opportunities for Elders to become involved in school and community programs.

The study has also learned of the great importance of community social and sports events to the social and physical development of the young. Time and again, the data pointed to organized sports and recreation (eg. hockey, baseball, track and field, golf) and informal recreational opportunities (swimming, fishing, hunting) as extremely important to the young. More formal community programs, especially drug and alcohol prevention programs, and parenting programs were highly valued.

One of the characteristics of the Appreciative Inquiry method used in this research is that it strengthens the capacity of those answering the research questions to focus on positive potential. A tangible indicator of the method's success in this project was that, as a direct result of the interview sessions, one of the communities initiated a traditional round dance ceremony to honour their children, which was attended by over 1000 people. Community capacity was strengthened as a result of the research process, and this event reinforced the validity of the finding that traditional ceremonies were highly valued as a way of transmitting cultural continuity to the next generation.

The strengths-based approach taken by this research showed that there was a largely untapped capacity for resilience in these Aboriginal communities. The premise underlying this research was that the people in Aboriginal communities have many of the answers they require to solve their own problems, a message that has resonated with Aboriginal leaders for decades.^{3,4} The research project was able to provide a methodology that made the potential for positive change more apparent. The co-investigator's plan to return to each of the communities to discuss how the results might be used to further community goals and objectives in relation to their children, youth and families.

ENDNOTES

1. Factoring in a realistic sense of the time that different phases of the process would take was often problematic and stressful, especially as the project was bound by the deadlines of an external funding agency. In addition to the care and attention that needed to be paid to maintaining regular communication with the key individuals involved in the project (advisory committee members and research assistants), the project involved contacting numerous individuals in the four communities. Scheduling meetings within each community as well as those for the geographically separated advisory committee members was a considerable challenge. Ensuring participation of all within meetings necessitated a slower process than some members were accustomed to, especially those of non-Aboriginal ancestry. Contacting busy community leaders was often problematic due to immense workloads and competing priorities. Additionally, the two co-investigators were

geographically isolated from one another, dependent upon phone conversations and e-mail correspondence for much of their regular communication.

2. Payment of honorariums was problematic for the two co-investigators. Honorariums for participation in research projects is not normally part of mainstream university processes but is accepted by the First Nations University of Canada. This led to several conversations between the two co-investigators in order to resolve how this could be done. Secondly, there were no policy guidelines in existence for determining the amount of the honorarium. Decisions re payment were community specific. Funds for these were handled by First Nations University of Canada.

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Memorandum of Partnership

Identity, Community and Resilience in First Nations Child Welfare Project

Project Description:

Research is showing an increase in the development of Indian Child & family Services in Saskatchewan. Within this development there is a need for more collaboration among child welfare stakeholders and Aboriginal communities to create more effective and innovative program responses that lead to reconciliation, healing and increased community capacity. This research study seeks knowledge from First Nations Elders, community service providers, community leaders, youth, and interested community members about the teachings and practices that communities believe necessary to support and strengthen child, youth and family well-being. The results of this study will be used to identify and promote existing programs and services that reflect these teachings and practices and also, to envision how gaps in programs and services might be overcome

Activities

The project aims to engage _____ community members in a discussion about community values. There are no known risks involved in the study. The only cost to the participants will be the time required to participate in the focus group or interview. Participation in the project is completely voluntary. Participants may decline participation or withdraw at any time without penalty of services from University of Regina, First Nations University of Canada, and _____ First Nation, and _____ Indian & Child Family Services. If a participant chooses to withdraw from the study, the researchers will not include information provided by those who withdraw.

This research will help to understand how teachings important to the community are transmitted through generations and applied to practice for people working with children and families.

Research Personnel

The community based research study will be conducted by a team of researchers from University of Regina and First Nations University of Canada who are both members of the Prairie Child Welfare Consortium. The Principal investigators for the project are Sharon McKay (306) 585-4866 or Shelley Thomas Prokop (306) 931-1805, the research

assistants for the project are: Deanna Ledoux, May Tourangeau, Gavin Baptiste, and Eileen Cuthand.

Confidentiality

An important aspect of this research is to take whatever steps possible to ensure confidentiality, described by the University of Regina Ethics Board as follows: "No link can be established between the collected information and a participants identity who contributed a given piece of information." Any information derived from the study will be kept confidential by the researchers. The researchers will make every effort to preserve the anonymity of audio tape/transcribed information. The report will contain quotes from participants but will not identify them by name. Audio-tapes and transcripts will be kept under lock and key in a secure cabinet and destroyed after three years, as outlined by the University of Regina Research Ethics Board.

Ethics Approval

This project was approved by the University of Regina Research Ethics Board. If you have any questions or concerns about your rights or treatment as a research participant, you may contact the Chair of the University Research Ethics Board at (306) 585-4775 or by email at research.ethics@uregina.ca.

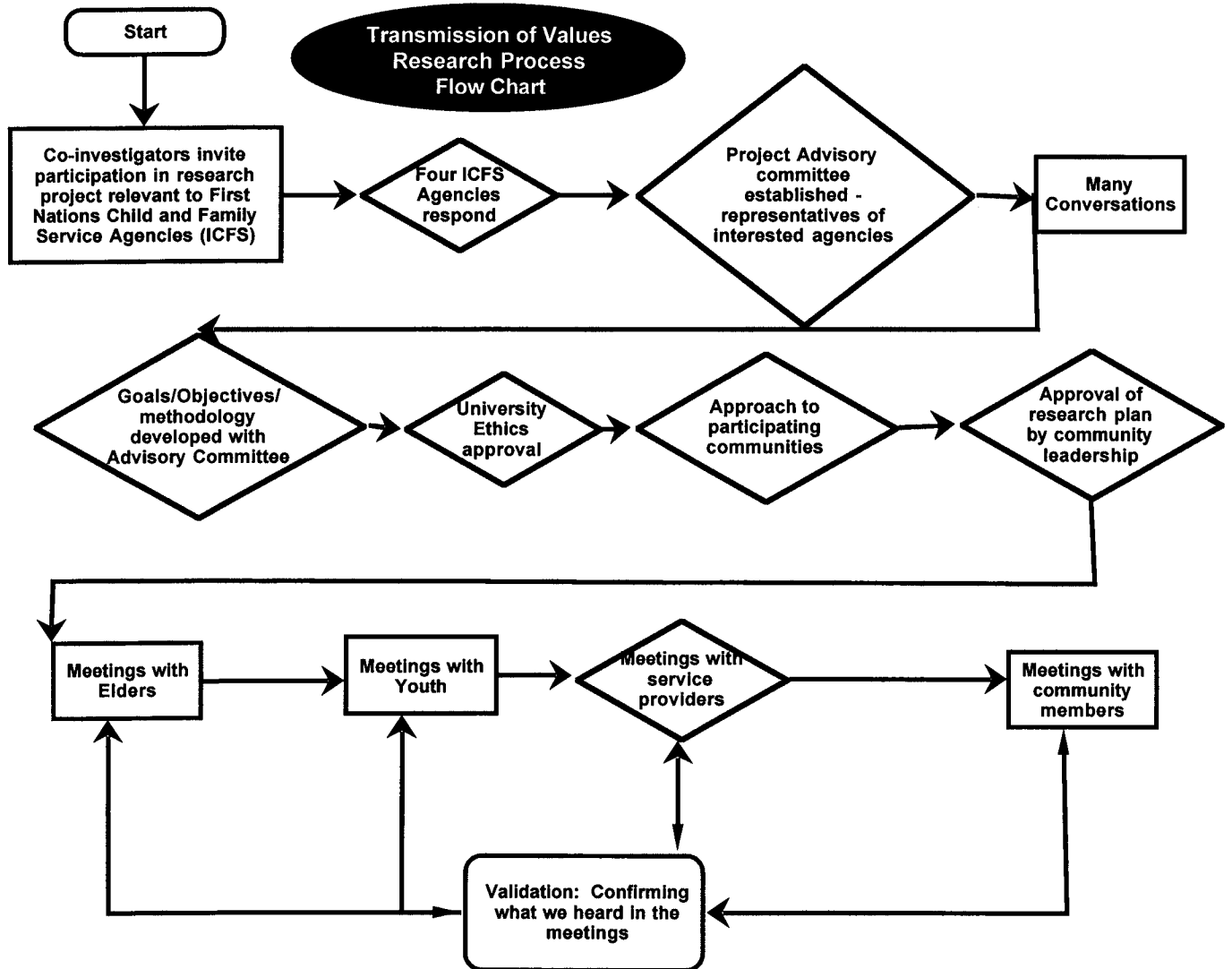
Having read the above, we, agree to work together on the said project.

Chief

University of Regina

First Nations University

APPENDIX TWO



APPENDIX THREE



UNIVERSITY OF
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SOCIAL POLICY RESEARCH (SPR)

Ph. (306) 585 4117

Fax: (306) 585 5408

e-mail: social.policy@uregina.ca

www.uregina.ca/spr

CONSENT FORM

Title: Identity, Community and Resilience in First Nations Child Welfare

Introduction: Research is showing an increase in the development of Indian Child & family Services in Saskatchewan. Within this development there is a need for more collaboration among child welfare stakeholders and Aboriginal communities to create more effective and innovative program responses that lead to reconciliation, healing and increased community capacity. This research study seeks knowledge from First Nations Elders, community service providers, community leaders, youth, and interested community members about the teachings and practices that communities believe necessary to support and strengthen child, youth and family well-being. The results of this study will be used to identify and promote existing programs and services that reflect these teachings and practices and also, to envision how gaps in programs and services might be overcome

Risks and Benefits: There are no known risks involved in the study. The only cost to you will be the time required to participate in the focus group or interview. This research will help to understand how teachings important to child, youth and family well-being are transmitted through generations and applied to practice for people working with children and families. If you feel that the issues discussed have affected you beyond this meeting, please contact Shelley Thomas Prokop (306 931 1805), Sharon McKay (306 585 4866) or (name of local Elder/ICFS representative on research advisory committee or local mental health counselor to be inserted).

Research Personnel: The community based research study will be conducted by a team of researchers from University of Regina and First Nations University of Canada. If you have any questions about the study or wish to obtain the final report, please feel free to contact: Sharon McKay (306) 585-4866 (e-mail: sharon.mckay@uregina.ca) or Shelley Thomas Prokop (306) 931-1805 (e-mail: SthomasProkop@firstnationsuniversity.ca).

A research advisory committee has worked with us to develop this study. Elders Danny Musqua, Thelma Musqua and Jean Desjarlais have provided guidance. The research advisory committee members are: Derald Dubois, Touchwood Files Child and Family Services; Melissa Lerat, Yorkton Tribal Council Child and Family Services, Denise Spyglass, Battleford Tribal Council Child and Family Services, Dexter Kinequon, Lac Laronge Child and Family Services and Karl Mack, Ranch Ehrlo Society.

Confidentiality: An important aspect of this research is to take whatever steps possible to ensure confidentiality, described by the University of Regina Ethics Board as follows: "No link can be established between the collected information and a participants identity who contributed a given piece of information." Any information derived from the study will be kept confidential by the researchers. The researchers will make every effort to preserve the anonymity of audio tape/transcribed information. The report will contain quotes from participants but will not identify them by name. Audio-tapes and transcripts will be kept under lock and key in a secure cabinet and destroyed after three years, as outlined by the University of Regina Research Ethics Board.

Voluntary Participation: Participation in the project is completely voluntary. You may decline participation or withdraw at any time without penalty of services from the University of Regina, First Nations University of Canada, and _____ First Nation, and _____ Indian & Child Family Services. If you choose to withdrawal from the study, the researchers will not include information provided by you up to the point of your withdrawal.

Ethics Approval: This project was approved by the Research Ethics Board, University of Regina. If you have any questions or concerns about your rights or treatment as a research participant, you may contact the Chair of the University Research Ethics Board at (306) 585-4775 or by email at research.ethics@uregina.ca.

Results of the study: we plan to discuss the results of the research project with the advisory committee for the project and the communities in which we gathered information. Once we receive approval for public release of the report(s) we expect to make the report(s) available to Health Canada, through the Centre of Excellence for Child Welfare (CECW). If you would like to receive a summary of the report(s) once the study is completed please contact Sharon McKay 306 585-4866 or Shelley Thomas Prokop 306-931-1805. In any publication, information will be provided in such a way that you cannot be identified.

Consent Statement

Having read the above, I agree to participate in this study and consent to the above. I also acknowledge that I have received a copy of this form.

Signature of Participant

Signature of Investigator

Date



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Identity, Community and Resilience in First Nations Child Welfare

Non-Disclosure Consent Form Focus Group/Circle

As a participant in this research project that focuses on values and transmission of values **in First Nations communities**, you have an opportunity to participate in a focus group/circle with the researchers and other participants. Your opinions and experiences will help to ensure that the report and any papers that are written about this project will clearly reflect the experiences of you and your community.

An important aspect of this research is to take whatever steps possible to ensure confidentiality, described by the University of Regina Ethics Board as follows: "No link can be established between the collected information and a participants identity who contributed a given piece of information." The focus group/circle will be a participatory activity, so participants who attend will become known to one another, and discussion of the topic will occur. You are expected to maintain confidentiality regarding **what individual participants** shared during this meeting, including who participated in the **meeting**.

The following non-disclosure statement must be signed by each participant in the focus group/circle that will analyze the research information.

I, _____, agree not to disclose any information that is shared in this focus group about the research project, **Identity, Community and Resilience in First Nations Child Welfare**. I further agree not to disclose any participants of the above named project.

Date: _____



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LETTER TO PARENTS

February, 2005

Dear Parents,

As researchers at First Nations University of Canada and University of Regina, we are currently involved in a project titled "Identity, Community and Resilience in First Nations Child Welfare." As part of this project, we are seeking permission for your child to participate in an activity during school hours with youth aged 12 years and older in _____ school. We have selected your school because _____ First Nations is involved in the research project.

In our study, we will ask youth over 12 years of age to participate in activities agreed upon by the school, parents and youth that discuss positive programs and activities within the community, what makes good programs for kids and families in your community and why. What do good programs teach young people that is important to youth both now and in the future. In the young persons' opinion what other kinds of programs would be of value to young people in your community.

A student will only be allowed to participate if a parent provides written consent, and if the principal, teacher, and student provide verbal consent. The student will also be asked to provide written consent but may choose not to participate at any time during the study. All results will be kept confidential, and names of particular students, school or classes will not be revealed in connection with specific results. All data will be stored at the University of Regina for a period of 3 years as required by the University of Regina Ethics Committee.

We are interested in working with you, the school liaison and staff to best carry out the project.

This study has been approved by, principal of _____ School, and by the _____ First Nation. To indicate whether you approve your child's participation in this study, please return the attached consent form to your child's teacher before _____ or as soon as possible. If your child decides not to participate, he or she can withdraw at any time.

Thank you for your cooperation. We are attaching a brief description of the project for your information. If you would like more information please call Shelley Thomas Prokop 306-931-1805 (e-mail: SThomasProkop@firstnationsuniversity.ca), Sharon McKay 306-585-4866 (e-mail: sharon.mckay@uregina.ca) or the community researcher, _____ 306-_____. You may also call the University of Regina Ethics Board, which has approved this study, at 306-585-4775 (email: researchethics@uregina.ca).

Sincerely,

Sharon McKay
University of Regina
Faculty of Social Work

Shelley Thomas Prokop
First Nations University of Canada
School of Indian Social Work



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PARTICIPANT INFORMATION STATEMENT (Youth)

Title: Identity, Community and Resilience in First Nations Child Welfare

Principle Investigator:

Sharon McKay, Faculty of Social Work, University of Regina (306 585 4866,
sharon.mckay@uregina.ca)

Co-investigator

Shelley Thomas Prokop, Faculty of Indian Social Work, First Nations University of Canada (306
931 1805, sthasprokop@firstnationsuniversity.ca)

Purpose You are invited to participate in this research study that seeks to learn from young people and others in the community the kinds of activities and programs that are good for kids and families in your community. What do good programs teach young people that is important? What other kinds of programs would you like to have in your community and why? You were selected as a possible participant in this study because of your involvement in community program(s) and your willingness to participate. We have attached a description of the research study for your information.

Procedure

If you decide to participate, we are asking you to attend a meeting with other youth to gather your ideas and involvement in the program(s) in your community. A meeting will be scheduled at your convenience and performed at a mutually acceptable location. The meeting will last about one hour and will consist of questions that will help us understand what you think about the activities and programs available to youth in the community.

Confidentiality

An important aspect of this research is to take whatever steps possible to ensure confidentiality, described by the University of Regina Ethics Board as follows: "No link can be established between the collected information and a participants identity who contributed a given piece of information."

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study will be kept confidential by the researchers. Information gathered from this study will not be traceable to a specific individual. All identifying markers on all documents will be removed, and participants will not be identifiable in any reports. The researchers will make every effort to preserve the anonymity of audio tape/transcribed information. The report will contain quotes from participants but will not identify them by name. All responses will be kept anonymous and confidential. Audio-tapes and transcripts will be kept under lock and key in a secure cabinet and destroyed after three years.

Consent

Your decision whether or not to participate will not effect your future relations with The University of Regina or First Nations University of Canada. If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw your consent and to discontinue participation at any time without prejudice. If you choose to withdraw from the study, the researchers will not include information provided by you up to the point of your withdrawal.

If you are under 16 years of age consent will be sought from your parent or guardian.

You will be given a copy of this form to keep.

Contact

If you have any questions about the study or wish to obtain the final report, please feel free to contact: Sharon McKay (306) 585-4866 (e-mail: sharon.mckay@uregina.ca) or Shelley Thomas Prokop (306) 931-1805 (e-mail: sthasprokop@firstnationsuniversity.ca)

This project was approved by the Research Ethics Board, University of Regina. If research participants have any questions or concerns about their rights or treatment as participants, they may contact the Chair of the Research Ethics Board at 306-585-4775 or by e-mail: research.ethics@uregina.ca.