UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

SCHOOL LEADERSHIP OF SEVEN NORTHWEST TERRITORIES PRINCIPALS

BY

ANNE-MIEKE CAMERON ©

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The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research for acceptance, a thesis entitled *School Leadership of Seven Northwest Territories Principals*, submitted by Anne-Mieke Cameron in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Education in Educational Administration.

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DEDICATION

This is dedicated to all school principals across the N.W.T.

for their commitment to creating schools

that are authentic, caring and joyful places of learning for all students.

It's the action, not the fruit of the action, that's important. You have to do the right thing. It may not be in your power, may not be in your time, that there'll be any fruit. But that doesn't mean you stop doing the right thing. You may never know what results may come from your action. But if you do nothing, there will be no result.

Gandhi

ABSTRACT

This qualitative study focused on how principals in the Northwest Territories understand and enact their responsibilities as educational leaders. Seven principals were selected by reputation, with consideration given to geographic location, gender, northern experience, and school size. The study began with principals' written responses to two general questions, followed by two semi-structured interviews each, document analysis, and informal communication over six months of data collection.

Major findings were categorized under: a) Belief in the Future, b) Challenges, c) Working between the Lines, d) Positioning in the Culture, and e) Unending Workdays. Principals identified various school sucesses over the past year. However, they also expressed concerns over countless behavioral problems, student wellness and self-esteem, enabling success and achievement while maintaining "standards", and ensuring access to learning for all students. Principals believed that culture-based schooling was essential to meaningful learning and required strong networks with community. Principals regularly worked between the lines of Department mandates, reframing/flexing rules and arriving at solutions reflective of student needs and community context . Positioning the school within the culture meant working actively with community towards a shared vision of education, and implied cultural sensitivity and readiness for change. The unending workday indicated levels of stress and exhaustion, and the danger of burnout for school principals.

Three major themes emerged around concepts of community, character and change. First, creating authentic learning within the community requires community involvement in education: the "school community" is no longer a self-contained entity identified with the school building, but a whole village ideally involved in the education of its children. Principals play a key role as their work is spurred from within, driven by student needs and community aspiration and support. Secondly, northern principals, cognizant of the changing conditions that shape students' lives today, identified the need to focus on caring and community health. Wellness and healing programs are critical to learning readiness and require a strong alliance between school and community agencies. Thirdly, empowering communities to make educational decisions critical to local schooling and school programs has changed the leadership role for principals and is currently redefining the principalship in the Northwest Territories.

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To the unnamed participants, my seven principals- I have appreciated your willingness to participate in this study in a thoroughly professional manner, and to trust in the process and in me. I deeply respect your vigilance in creating schools that provide a more meaningful education for all our northern students.

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Mahsi.

Qujannamiik!

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Chapter 1
INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

Northern education has seen powerful changes in the 90s, as reflected in recent documents published through the Department of Education, Culture and Employment (1991, 1993, 1994, 1995). The ongoing directive for relevant and culture-based schooling is currently directly affecting secondary school programs which are being offered in communities for the first time. As well, recent government mandates toward the decentralization of and expanded community involvement in northern education have placed new responsibilities on the school principal. Despite these changes, there have been almost no research studies that have examined the experiences of school principals. Now that high school programs are being offered in most community schools across the territories through the grade extensions program, it has become even more urgent to study the role of the school principal. This provides the reason for, and the substance of, my study.

EVOLUTION OF EDUCATION IN THE NORTHWEST TERRITORIES

The northern educational system, relative to others in Canada, is young. With an educational history whose missionary era spanned from 1860 to 1950, and where the federal government held jurisdiction in northern education until 1970, it has only been since that time that the Government of the Northwest Territories assumed control for education, establishing a Department of Education to look at developing programs more specifically relevant to the north. Hence, issues discussed by northern principals may in part be indicative of the "growing pains" experienced in education across the north. Staffs tend to be transient, and long-term principals are still a rarity, especially in isolated communities. Although a common vision has been articulated at this point through the Department of Education, Culture and Employment (1994), geographical distances exacerbate difficulties which prevent principals from communicating in a sustained and meaningful way, and establishing common links.

A Vast and Sparsely Peopled Land

The Northwest Territories (N.W.T.) comprises all of Canada north of the 60th parallel (excluding the Yukon and the northernmost tips of Quebec and Newfoundland) and spans 3,340,550 square kilometers. Currently, it has a population of almost 58,000 people, of whom the majority is aboriginal: about 37% of N.W.T. residents are Inuit; 17%

are Dene; 7% are Metis; and 39% are non-aboriginal (*People: Our Focus for the Future,* 1994).

Originally, the Northwest Territories comprised the land covering what is now known as Saskatchewan and Alberta, together with a vast region to the north, and was known as the "Northwest". The early history of education in the Northwest Territories therefore was closely aligned with that of Alberta and Saskatchewan. The boundaries of the N.W.T. as it is known today were carved out in 1905 when both Alberta and Saskatchewan were constituted as provinces. The history of education in the N.W.T. spans three periods: the missionary era (1860-1950) marks the impact of the clergy and residential schooling on northern schools; the federal government era (1944-1970) marks the time of federal jurisdiction in northern education; and the territorial era (1970-present) marks the time when the territorial government assumed control for education.

The Missionary Era (1860-1950)

Missionaries contributed to the early development of education in the north. The first record of a school "north of sixty" was the log school built in 1860-61 at Fort Simpson by Reverend William Kirby of the Anglican Church. In 1866, a school for orphans was organized by Bishop Bompas in Fort Norman and opened in a building owned by the Hudson's Bay Company. In 1867, the first residential school was opened in Fort Providence by the Grey Nuns of Montreal. In 1894, the Anglican church established two schools: St Peter's Mission Boarding school opened in Hay River, and a Teaching Mission was established near Pangnirtung on Baffin Island. In 1912, a Mission was established at Chesterfield Inlet, which was the centre of Catholic education in the Keewatin District. St Joseph's residential school in Fort Resolution came in 1902, and two other Catholic schools, in Fort Smith and Fort Simpson, were established in 1915 and 1918 by Bishop Breynat and remained open even after the federal government take-over in 1950. Many other schools were established in the small communities across the north by both churches; in general, the Anglican church settled largely in the Eastern Arctic, and the Roman Catholic church became more established in the west.

Numerous efforts were made to offer some form of education to the Inuit and Dene populations. Most of the schooling occurred around the trading post or the church, which were the most likely places for people to congregate, considering the nomadic lives of the people. Camp teaching was sometimes attempted. A school at Maguse River was started in the late 1940s by the northern Evangelical Mission; and a tent hostel, directed by the Anglican Church, was operated in Coppermine over the summer months in the mid-fifties for Inuit students. In these early years, the federal government contributed $250 per year

to missions engaged in teaching. However, some educational developments were moving towards non-denominational settings. In 1938-39, Yellowknife elected its first school board and opened a one-room school. Fort Smith organized a community school in 1939 supported only by grants and donations at the outset. Other schools opened in mining camps (Port Radium, Rayrock, Discovery) and were not subject to church influence.

Near the end of the "Mission Era" of schooling in the N.W.T., a struggle to maintain church control emerged between two eminent religious leaders, Joseph Trocellier, Roman Catholic Bishop of the MacKenzie, and Donald Marsh, Anglican Bishop of the Arctic. Each wanted "to ensure that their institutions, which had for so long kept alight the flickering torch of education . . . would not be stripped of all influence over the rising generations of children who would soon be flocking into government schools throughout the Territories" (Dreams and Visions, 1984).

The Federal Era (1944-1970): Move to Centralized Control

This short era of federal government control marked the transition between church-controlled schools and the current system under the jurisdiction of the Department of Education of the territorial government. The federal government had commissioned a series of reports to determine educational conditions in the N.W.T. and to give recommendations for future policies. The Moore Report of 1944 advocated non-denominational schools, and a highly centralized system of government control with all teachers as civil servants; it rejected state-supported separate schools and suggested inclusion of religious education as an appendage of the school day. All these recommendations, when implemented, effectively ended church domination of N.W.T. schools.

The first two government schools were built in Tuktoyaktuk and Fort McPherson in 1947 through the Department of Resources and Development (later known as Northern Affairs). A number of schools were completed by 1951 in Fort Smith, Aklavik, Fort Chimo, Cape Dorset, Coppermine, Coral Harbour, Fort Resolution, Port Harrison and Chesterfield Inlet; at the same time, the Department of Indian Affairs Branch of the Department of Citizenship and Immigration established schools for Indian students at Rae, Fort Norman, Rocher River, Arctic Red River, Fort Franklin, Fort Good Hope, and Jean Marie River.

In 1953, the federal government created the Department of Northern Affairs and National Resources (NANR). Their Northern Administration branch and Chief of Education Division of that branch were assigned the responsibility for setting up an education system in the N.W.T. The first District Convention and Summer School for teachers of the MacKenzie district was held in August of the same year, and witnessed the establishment of the Northwest Territories Teachers' Association. By 1953, the Yellowknife Public School

Board was operating a 14-room elementary-high school; a 4-classroom Catholic school was opened in this year, and eight years later, a Catholic high school was built.

Over the next years, the federal government set out to build larger, centralized schools with hostels to house students from outlying areas. The Yellowknife school was to be a vocational high school with a non-denominational hostel; in all other locations, hostels were built by the government but operated by either the Anglican or Roman Catholic Church. On April 1, 1955, the Department of Northern Affairs and National Resources assumed responsibility for the education of Indian children in the Northwest Territories, thereby bringing all schools under the jurisdiction of the Northern Administration Branch of that department. This marked the beginning of the school system in the Northwest Territories. In 1956, teachers of all mission schools became federal employees. School residences opened in 1958 in Fort Smith, Yellowknife and Fort MacPherson, and by 1960, there were two hostels in Inuvik and two others in Fort Simpson.

In this short time of federal control, existing school facilities were expanded and many new schools were built. State-of-the-art vocational schools and residences were built in Yellowknife and Churchill. In the Eastern Arctic, small hostels housing 6-8 students and supervised by Inuit house parents were introduced to encourage schooling while at the same time allowing students to pursue a traditional life style. An adult vocational training centre was established in Fort Smith, encouraging adult education. In 1958, steps were being taken towards involving aboriginal people in the teaching process. In 1968-69, sixteen young northerners enrolled in a one-year experimental teacher education program for native students with grade 11 standing.

Curriculum development proved to be a daunting task, given the various language groups and cultures, and the sheer distances separating people. After faltering beginnings, two district offices were established at Yellowknife and Fort Smith. Teachers-at-large and principals-at-large were subsequently added to District Office Staffs, with the express purpose of providing support to first-year teachers and administrators in remote settlements. The recruitment policy insisted on a personal interview before hiring a teacher for a northern school, a policy that resulted in "an extremely high percentage of competent people being employed" (Dreams and Visions, 1984).

Statistics for the 1954-55 school year showed 2,067 students enrolled in 76 classrooms supervised by 96 teachers. By 1970, the school population had risen to 10,291 students, with a total of 549 teachers and principals. "It was assumed that at the end of 1970 the goal of having every school-aged pupil in a classroom had finally been achieved" (Dreams and Visions, 1984).

The Territorial Years (1970-present): Devolution to Divisional Boards and Community Control

In 1970, the Government of the Northwest Territories assumed complete responsibility for education in the Eastern and Western Arctic. At this time the construction of the school buildings was not the only project being undertaken: the Department of Education was attempting to build a new system for its schools. Consideration of first language instruction for K-3, cultural inclusion programs for the intermediate grades and integration of subjects were being promoted by the new Department. 1970 marked the beginning of "culturally relevant" programming as seen in the focus of two curriculum handbooks: first, *Elementary Education in the Northwest Territories* and two years later, *Learning in the Middle Years.* These documents created a loud furor amongst educators in the territories and elicited impassioned argument for years, with strong sides taken and acrimonious letters written.

Although heavily debated and even resisted by some in northern education in the early 70s, this early curriculum forced a different look at northern education. Slowly the ideas gained strength and eventually evolved to current understandings. Northern education as we know it today has taken much of its direction, its spirit, from those early curriculum efforts. Known locally as "Paul Robinson's curriculum," or "the green book and the red book," these curricular documents took the view that northern education must reflect the needs and aspirations of all children and made explicit how that was to be interpreted in a "northernized curriculum." Three major thrusts of the curriculum were: building on the strengths the child brings into the school, learning in the mother tongue "in settlements wherein the mother tongue is the language of common currency," and placing equal emphasis on cultural learning because "there is no hierarchy of cultures to suggest that the non-native cultures are more important and therefore deserving of greater emphasis" (1970, p. 3-4).

The opening chapter of *Learning in the Middle Years* (1972) indicated a strong focus on young people, and set the tone: "'The best years of your life' doesn't accurately describe the position in which many Northern young people find themselves at this particular time." It continues, "Rather, the situation can more fairly and politely be referred to as being difficult. The reasons for this are not obscure" (p. 1). The book continued by giving five reasons, all beginning with "to be a young person is to be. . ." The first statement reflects its general flavour and focus:

> To be a young Indian, Eskimo or Metis person is to live in a society that is almost completely dominated by non-native people. Almost every position of influence, be it in government, private enterprise, the school, the church, etc. is in the control of the

> minority population. Your own people likely hold the non-responsible, even menial positions if they hold jobs at all. Moreover, in Canadian society as a whole, the example of Indian, Eskimo and Metis people who hold responsible positions, in whatever walk of life, are not really legion either.
>
> What this all means is that when you are young and are searching for models of identification, the facts of the matter are that if there are any at all, they are very few in numbers. All of which can imply to the individual that if he is "to make it" in middle class society, he's going to have to become assimilated into the dominant mainstream which in effect denies his self-worth, his pride in his own culture and, most serious of all, a turning aside from his own people.
>
> The alternative to the process of assimilation may well be the other extreme, the development of an attitude of "I can't make it on my terms, therefore I might just as well drop out." (1972, p. 1)

Northern Education in the 90s

A very young system indeed, education in the territories has seen tremendous growth in the past 25 years. As education "comes of age" in the territories, the broad question, "what should education offer its clients?" is being addressed with more refinement. The answer appears in many forms depending on the community and the values of its people. 1979 saw the first grade extensions program being introduced in Pangnirtung, a small community in the Baffin. The 1982 Special Committee Report on Education in the N.W.T. provided a blueprint for educational development in the 80s as articulated in *Learning, Tradition and Change in the Northwest Territories* (1982). By 1993, any community of 500 or more could offer senior high programs with support from the Department of Education, Culture and Employment. High school programming offered in regional schools across the territories in the 70s and 80s was quite clear, but in the 90s it began to face different pressures, as more and more community schools began to offer the high school curriculum, and a resurgence of "drop-in students" created enormous demands on the staffs of small schools.

Our Students, Our Future: An Educational Framework (1991) is not unlike Paul Robinson's earlier curriculum, in that it endorses schooling "that incorporates and reflects the child's cultural identity and builds on the child's previous experiences to ensure a solid foundation for learning" (p. 1). Giving more control of education to the local level facilitates the development of culture-based schooling, as does the development of partnerships. The framework articulates a strong vision:

> Where strong partnerships and community ownership are established, schooling can reflect what is relevant and appropriate for students. It can tailor the learning process to better meet student needs; it can ensure support services for students are available and appropriate; and it can create an environment that is conducive to learning. Together, the educational partners can offer relevant culture-based schooling which, although it may differ from community to community because of the diverse cultural and socio-economic make-up of the N.W.T., provides for effective schooling. (p. 15)

Currently, there are 37 communities offering grade extensions across the N.W.T. Most (93%) grade 10 students can now attend school in their own communities; 89% of grade 11 students, and 78% of grade 12 students currently access their high school courses in their home communities. Student residences are almost completely phased out across the territories, and the homeboarding program is nearly finished. Providing greater community access to K-12 schooling has resulted in rapid system growth. Whereas, in 1970, there were 10,000 students attending school in the N.W.T.; in October, 1995, this number had climbed to 16,000; by 2010 this number is expected to rise to over 25,000 students (Malcolm Farrow, A/ADM, Department of Education, Culture and Employment, Principals' Conference, April 1996).

N.W.T. legislation recognizes eight official languages: Inuktitut (Inuinnaqtun, Inuvialuktun), Slavey (North and South), Dogrib, Chipewyan, Gwich'in, Cree, English and French, but the use of each language varies considerably within communities. Whereas about forty per cent of all the people who live in the N.W.T. say they have an aboriginal language as their mother tongue, or can speak an aboriginal language, more than seventy per cent of aboriginal people in the N.W.T. speak an aboriginal language (*People, Our Focus for the Future,* 1994, p. 27). The schools presented in this study exist within a variety of language communities which range from those where over ninety per cent are aboriginal and the mother tongue is used in the homes, to those where only eleven percent are aboriginal, with an almost ninety percent non-aboriginal population, and English the predominant language. In other schools, both Inuit and Dene languages are prominent in the community, as well as English. Each school reflects the unique make-up of its community, and its diversities of language and culture.

As children stay in their home communities for their education as a result of the recent grade extensions program, there is a renewed focus on the role of parents in education, a role some will have to re-learn, given the past history of northern education:

> Ideally, parents are key players in formulating the vision of the future for their children within the overall society. In the early days of formal schooling in the N.W.T. when students moved away from their families to attend mission schools, parents were excluded from, and so had little control over, their children's education. Some parents who have not been part of a formal education process, or who were educated away from their families, do not always understand how important it is for them to become involved in their children's schooling now, what their role is or how to become involved. (Our Students, Our Future, 1991, p.13)

COMING TO THE QUESTION

People: Our Focus for the Future, a Strategy to 2010 (1994) presented a new vision for learning in the N.W.T. which translates into a model of program and service delivery at the community level. The document defined lifelong learning as a goal for all people, and community learning as one that takes place within different community locations (home, classroom, community and on-the-land experiences). The mandate is to develop "community schools" and provide "community education," new terms which are beginning to be understood by educators in the N.W.T.

Perceptions of the meaning of the terms "community schools" and "community education" extend from allowing the school to be used occasionally for evening activities, to a school organization where the local community has an integral role in setting school policy, to a community support centre for a network of agencies committed to meeting community needs and expanding learning opportunities. As defined in *People: Our Focus for the Future* (1994), a community learning network is a

> philosophy and an organization, linking together a network of programs and services at the community level. A local governing body, committed to community learning, owns and controls the network of learning programs and services. And the network is supported by a regional and territorial support system. (p. xi)

Given the above direction, educators in the North have been challenged to think differently about schooling in the N.W.T. The principal's challenge is to take what presently exists, restructure it and, in some cases, improve on it or add new elements in order to support the vision and concept of a community learning network. As a skilful change agent, the principal can consult and empower others in working towards a shared vision of continuous learning.

The document, *School Leadership in the NWT: A Profile for the 90s* (1993) identified the role of instructional leadership as one of four main roles of the principal, who "initiates and directs a growth-oriented process to maximize learning outcomes for staff, students and community" (p.15). With the recently mandated extension of grades to include high school in the communities, school boards must ensure that there is a continuum of learning. "The very nature of community learning means a changing role for teachers and principals" (*Strategy to 2010,* 1994, p. 50).

This move towards the decentralization and expanded community involvement in northern education is placing even greater responsibilities on principals. Dr Loretta Foley, in speaking to a group of principals recently, urged that

> we tend not to believe ourselves that we make a difference. I want to reassure you that you're in very key positions in your community and in your school, and that you have an opportunity to help children in a pretty fascinating way. Don't underestimate

> your power and the opportunity that you have in your schools and in your communities to make something really great for our students in the north. (Principals' Conference, April 1996, Yellowknife)

Given these changes towards high school programs in all community schools and greater community involvement, the principalship takes on new responsibilities that are crucial to the successful completion of these initiatives. It is the focus of this study.

RESEARCH FOCUS: THE QUESTION

The major purpose of this study was to explore how principals in the Northwest Territories understand what is expected of them, and how are they implementing their new mandate as identified in *People: Our Focus for the Future, a Strategy to 2010* (1994). What issues and concerns do they have to consider? What are the challenges of educational leadership in the north? And what are the key dimensions through which principals meet the needs of individual students? Improve the quality of teaching and learning? Support the aspirations of the community? Effect change within their schools?

Specifically, the study focused on one major research question: How do school principals in the N.W.T. understand and enact their responsibilities as educational leaders?

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Although principals bring with them a personal vision and style that is unique, there is some evidence in the literature that successful principals in the nineties hold common beliefs and practices that contribute to their success. However, the majority of studies on school leadership have been done on elementary and middle school administrations. There is less information on the leadership styles and activities of principals in high schools, and to my knowledge, no research related to educational leadership in N.W.T. schools. Hence, this study offers insights on leadership and its concerns in northern schools.

Findings reflect understandings that come from northern principals. They offer insights to educators in the north, and should bring greater awareness of and appreciation for the challenges facing northern principals particularly as they implement the new mandates of decentralization, grade extensions, and expanded community involvement. Principals in the N.W.T. work in notorious isolation and have limited time and opportunity to reflect on their changing practice. This research study may provide an opportunity for personal reflection not only for the participating principals, but for principals throughout the N.W.T.

The recent Western Arctic Principals' Conference gathered principals, at a shared cost to the individual boards and the Department of Education, to take a critical look at the nature of high school programming in the N.W.T. Issues under discussion were generated by those in attendance, and reflect the kinds of concerns that principals face today. I found these discussions highly significant to my research, and also timely, as I had completed interviews with five principals prior to attending the conference. Discussions confirmed some of what principals had been telling me individually, and added a dimension of concerns from Department of Education personnel. This study reflects the richness of those discussions, and may have significance for Department personnel as well.

Furthermore, both the Northwest Territories Teachers' Association (N.W.T.T.A.) and the Principals' Certification Program (P.C.P.) are keenly aware of the changing roles of northern principals.This study may inform areas of recruitment, educational leadership programs, and professional development and support for future principals.

BELIEFS, ASSUMPTIONS, DELIMITATIONS AND LIMITATIONS

Beliefs

I believe the role of principal is key to ensuring a continuum of learning for all. This includes the assurance that every learner will experience continued growth to maximize his or her learning, and requires that the principal makes provision for relevant program planning, appropriate resources, teacher inservice, student tracking and frequent monitoring of student progress.

In terms of professional growth, principals need support systems such as the one provided by the Principals' Certification Program, originally a coordinated effort through the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE) and the Government of the N.W.T. (G.N.W.T.) and now entirely under the auspices of the Department of Education, Culture and Employment. This two-phase program is mandatory for all principals, and offers a monitoring, networking and support system, as well as a means of updating principals with respect to current practice and policy.

Having worked with principals over the past two summers at the Principals' Certification Program (P.C.P.) in Yellowknife and Rankin Inlet, I know that *The Profile of the 90s* is a document principals are generally familiar with and encouraged to use in their daily practice. As stated in *People: Our Focus for the Future* (1994) and articulated in the curriculum of the Principals' Certification Program (1995), the primary purpose of school leadership is to initiate a growth-oriented process which maximizes learning outcomes for staff, students, and community within a community-based school.

The Principals' Certification Program deals with issues unique to the northern principal, such as the implementation of grade extensions into the communities. In order to graduate, high school students must write Alberta Diploma exams in grade 12. I believe that the principal has an enormous task as school leader to work with his or her teachers, students and community, in the delivery of new programs. Furthermore, working with community resource people to deliver culturally relevant programs would appear to be a more difficult task in the high schools, where an "outside" Alberta curriculum still drives most of the learning activity. Elementary schools have made greater inroads in this area since they follow the N.W.T. currriculum, and also have access to two aboriginal curricula, *Dene Kede* and *Inuuqatigiit.*

There are further considerations that influence the work of principals in this study. Size of community, isolation and transience are challenges that face the northern administrator. The size of the community can impact on the principal's duties, in that extracurricular responsibilities may limit the time for other leadership initiatives. Then again, principals in northern communities often "live the job" and may, in fact, be more effective and active in their school leadership as a result of their community involvement. Isolation is a very real problem in the N.W.T. There is limited personal contact with colleagues, other than through Internet, telephone and fax machines which are very expensive. Transience is also an issue in the north, as teachers and administrators do not usually stay in isolated communities for long periods of time. A transient staff also raises unique demands on the northern school administrator. The length of time the principal holds the position may be a reflection of the commitment extended to his or her various duties and diverse challenges as principal.

Finally, I am a northerner who has lived and taught school in the N.W.T. for over 20 years. I have been an assistant principal for the past two years as well. At the same time, I have not lived in small, isolated communities. However, I have kept in touch with northern colleagues by attending and presenting at northern Teachers' Conferences throughout the years. I have also worked with administrators at the Principals' Certification Workshops over the past two years, and have completed the Principals' Certification Program.

Assumptions

There are several assumptions implicit in this methodology. First, based on the literature as well as personal experience, one major assumption is that high school principals do adopt leadership roles in their schools, and that each of the participating administrators will understand and describe leadership experiences differently.

Secondly, it is assumed that the principal's role is based on the duties of the principal as outlined in the N.W.T. Education Act (1995), and on his or her ability to identify and act on specific needs and values of his or her school and community.

Thirdly, it is assumed that principals are willing to recall and reflect on their practices, thoughts and feelings about leadership, and are willing to share stories of the celebrations and challenges that are a reflection of their initiatives and beliefs within their schools; and that they share their stories with candour and honesty.

It is a fourth assumption that a descriptive and interpretive study is an appropriate design in which to share the participating principals' stories and perspectives.

This study is also based on my belief that leadership involves character and individual values that inform action- "philosophy-in-action" (Hodgkinson, 1991).

Delimitations

The study is delimited to the experiences of seven principals from six of ten Divisional Boards in the Northwest Territories. A further delimitation is that only currently practicing principals in schools offering some secondary programs are included.

The findings reported are delimited to the particular time the study was conducted (January-June, 1996), and the administrators speak to beliefs and practices given their particular time and setting.

Limitations

An interpretive study utilizing interviews has some particular limitations in the N.W.T., where distance can be prohibitive to affordable travel. The process of telephone interviews limited the number of conversations to two, and the time spent in conversation to approximately 11/2 hours for the first, and 1 hour for the second.

There was a potential limitation in the ability to establish a good rapport with respondents over long distance telephone as opposed to face-to-face interaction and in the extent of participants' willingness to talk freely. However, this proved not to be a limitation to the study, as participants were very willing to share their thoughts openly and beyond the time limits we had established at the beginning. A relationship was further developed as principals sent documentation from their schools. In the telephone interview there tended to be shared personal moments, favourite lines from poems or books, jokes and pleasantries that were picked up in follow-up conversations and through faxed messages. Several also managed face-to-face meetings when I attended Principals' meetings in Yellowknife, which added further to the rapport that was built by telephone.

As an N.W.T. administrator and colleague as well as a researcher, I am aware that my experiences and values will influence my understanding and my interpretations of these principals' accounts. An awareness of this bias as a limitation was kept in mind during the non-directive conversations, and in analyzing data. My own skills and abilities in gathering and analyzing data are a limitation that may have influenced the study findings.

OVERVIEW OF THE THESIS

This first chapter has introduced the nature of the study, including necessary background to education in the Northwest Territories and information leading to the question, and followed by a brief statement of beliefs, assumptions, delimitations and limitations.

The second chapter contains a review of the literature on educational leadership, and an explication of methodology is provided in chapter three. Chapter four presents in five categories, the major findings of the study through presentation of the participants and their experiences. Chapter five discusses three major themes on northern leadership, and chapter six provides an overview of the study through summary, reflections and implications.

Chapter 2
REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE ON EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP

Both within the N.W.T. and elsewhere, considerable emphasis is being placed on the school administrator as the driving force for acceptance and change at the school level as well as in the community, and as a result there are greater identified responsibilities given to administrators to manage wide-ranging curriculum reform. Given the emphasis on educational leadership in the north through the Principals' Certification Program and the recent document, *School Leadership in the N.W.T.* (1993) I have begun a review of the literature on leadership, including instructional leadership, to determine what has been studied in these areas as specifically related to schools and the role of the principal.

What are the key dimensions through which principals meet the needs of individual students; improve the quality of teaching and learning; support the aspirations of the community; and effect change within their schools? This chapter provides a brief overview of educational leadership focusing on the following topics: (a) Leadership Defined, (b) Community, Shared Leadership and Followership, (c) The Principalship, (d) Principals as Change Agents, (e) The Principal of the Nineties, (f) Towards Servant Leadership, and (g) Conclusions.

LEADERSHIP DEFINED

The study of leadership in educational administration is complex. It has been described as "an artistic endeavour to which intrinsic value should be attached" (Matsushita, 1988, p. 142). Blumberg (1989) identified such administrative artistry as one that goes beyond the craft and cannot be "learned." Owens (1991) defined leadership as "one of the most fascinating topics in organizational behavior and, at the same time, a potentially slippery concept that has produced literally hundreds of definitions in literature (p. 132). Hodgkinson (1991) suggested that leadership is a "vague term encompassing both administration and management" (p. 53). He made the generalization that leadership is a function of groups, not individuals; and that leadership involves intentionally exercising influence on the behavior of others (p. 132). Ackerman, Donaldson and Van der Bogert (1996) have "come to see leadership as a quest. . . . The leader in quest envisions purposes, asks questions, seeks answers, and enlists others in the quest. . . . Effective leadership has more to do with understanding and then harnessing the dynamics of an organization than it does with imposing answers and structures on it" (p. 2-3).

COMMUNITY, SHARED LEADERSHIP AND FOLLOWERSHIP

If the central task of education is "the accomplishment of learning, then the inculcation of motivation to learn must be very close to the heart of educational leadership" (Hodgkinson, 1991, p. 65). The work of the principal should ultimately be reflected in terms of students' achievement, and the administrator must reach out to all stakeholders to meet this goal. As such, "working with students, teachers, community, culture and organization is basically praxis-oriented towards sharing power, leadership and effecting change" (Foster, 1986, p. 200).

Towards the end of improved learning, Foster suggested that the principals' work with teacher supervision become a form of collaborative action, where personal attitudes and methodologies may be transformed through meaningful exchange; work with students would include creating a better understanding of the school community and the possibilities for students to take action towards their own learning. In working with the community, the principal should encourage parental involvement to provide a source of insight and change, "and bridge the we-they gap that currently divides much of administrative practice from community conflict" (p. 195).

Sergiovanni (1995) described schools where a culture of community exists and commitment to authentic learning has been created. Supervision is seen as facilitating both teacher and stude[illegible]ress in the learning tasks at hand. Through the acts of supervision, there arise expe[illegible]hat the school can be which move staff and students ever closer to that vision (1993). This is a part of what he referred to as "moral .eadership": to support and enhance the teachers' work with the youngsters, and to facilitate and enhance those institu[illegible]al supports for the community's task of learning (p. 317).

The concept of community, shared leadership, and followership can also be found in Hodgkinson (1991) who observed that leadership permeates the entire organization, from the highest levels of hierarchy (symbolic leadership) to the lowest levels (followership). However, he hastened to add that "every member of the organization has and ought to have some element of leadership responsibility" (p.159). Foster (1986) added that "leadership can spring from anywhere. It derives from the context and ideas of individuals who influence each other. Thus a principal may at times be a leader and at times, a follower . . . leadership is an art that enables others and allows them, in turn, to become enablers" (p.187). There exists a symbiotic relationship of sorts between leaders and followers, where leaders engage with followers in collaboratively seeking mutual goals.

Sergiovanni (1995) and Barth (1990) both described turning schools into communities of learning, with shared vision, empowerment, collaborative decision-making and collegiality ranking high in administrative action. Sergiovanni noted the current need for principals to understand leadership differently, a leadership that is aimed at building "substitutes for leadership" into schools. These substitutes "empower teachers and students to become self-managing, and principals aim at building followership in the school" (p. x). He suggested that the principal's direct leadership is only a part of a successful school, and that the amount of "quality leadership density" that the principal builds into the school as evidenced in the staff determines its success to a large extent.

The principal can be part of the followership, as are students, teachers, parents, and other community members who become committed to values of the school. People will become responsive to leaders because they have first proven to be trusted servants (Greenleaf, 1977). This "servant leadership" connects closely to the moral leadership discussed by Sergiovanni (1995) and others (Blumberg, 1989; Hodgkinson, 1991; Thom, 1993).

THE PRINCIPALSHIP

For Ackerman et al. (1996), the principalship can be seen as "a process, as learning to be a principal. It is a perpetual process that entails learning to think and act as a leader, in response to the ever-changing challenges of learning and dealing with growing children and the adults who care about them" (p. 2). As such, the principalship is a dynamic role, ever-changing its boundaries and understandings. There are many tensions inherent in principals' work, "tensions that are nested within the varied and sometimes competing interests and activities of schools" (p. 2).

In a study comparing successful principals and with principals chosen at random, Sergiovanni (1995) noted that principals in the latter category fell short in the areas of program development and professional development because they were spending more time than they wished addressing student behavior. Successful principals were able to devote more time and effort to carefully selected critical areas which included program and staff development. These principals also tended to hold staff in higher regard, and empower them significantly.

Smith (1989) conducted a study on what principals typically consider to be important and how they ideally should spend their time as they perform their role. She concluded that instructional leaders were able to organize their day so that most time and attention was given to instructional matters rather than routine matters of running a school. The issue for the average principal was not a matter of misplaced values but of "poor

allocation of discretionary time, or simply poor behavioral patterns" (p. 29). Interestingly, Smith's study suggested that high school principals spent less time on educational program improvement; as well, student achievement rose in schools where principals were strong instructional leaders. Average and strong instructional leader principals value the same things about their jobs, but strong instructional leaders are less distracted by routine tasks while they maintain a focus on tasks of curriculum and instruction (p. 135).

Moorthy (1992) suggested that with most principals, instructional leadership falls well behind the tasks of management, that most principals are preoccupied with running a smoothly functioning school, and that most are principals who "size up situations and people and provide the right blend of leadership to manipulate people to do what they want to do" (p. 9). He pointed out, however, that principals who merely manage cannot change their schools, and that the key to an effective school lies in the principal as an instructional leader.

Isherwood's (1992) findings on principals and conflict situations in Quebec English secondary schools pointed to an emerging definition of secondary school principalship as one of "public servant role" guided by a "service ethic" (p. 7), with principals expected to manage policy making - rather than set policy - and assure that staff, students, and parents were directly involved. This view of principals as managers suggests that no real opportunity to bring about change exists in schools. Instructional leadership should involve efficient management as well as effective beliefs and strategies that can be used to generate instructional effectiveness in the classroom.

PRINCIPALS AS CHANGE AGENTS

Exceptional principals are change agents. Hodgkinson (1991) stated that "leadership is a movement from the way things are to the way they ought to be. Then is created the possibility of excellence for both the leader and the led" (p.165). Renihan and Renihan (1992) described educational leadership as a "renaissance metaphor" wherein leadership can be "a truly synergistic phenomenon through proper empowerment"; where change comes "not from policy but from the hearts of people"; where natural leaders are "authentic and tend to accrue natural followers"; and where school leaders are "the resources, the facilitators, the instructional leaders coordinating the activities of an educational team in its pursuit of excellence" and that it is from such a "collaborative orientation that our best hope for effective school leadership will emerge" (p. 13).

Haughey and Rowley (1991), in describing the qualities of principals as agents of change, indicated the essence of change is caught within themes of power and empowerment, and that principals who are willing to involve all staff in school decision-

making are "more likely to consider change as an opportunity for empowerment, an investment in the skills and creativity of teachers through the provision of both freedom and support so that the learning environment in the school is enhanced" (p. 9). Holdaway and Ratsoy (1992) confirmed that the calibre of school leadership is crucial to the development of successful schools. Effective school principals appear to hold four characteristics in common: they emphasize goals and production, they are seen as more powerful in curriculum and instruction, they are more skilled in, and spend more time in management of instruction, and they have strong human relations skills (p. 3).

Bolman and Deal (1994) differentiated the concepts of management and leadership as follows: management provides consistency, control and efficiency, but leadership is needed to foster purpose, passion, and imagination. Particularly in time of crisis or rapid change, we look to leaders, not managers, for hope, inspiration, and a pathway to somewhere more desireable (p. 77). How do leaders become effective? They suggested that most learn mainly from experience, through personal reflection and dialogue with others, and by identifying and emulating exemplary leaders. In looking towards the future, they emphasized the need "to rethink and restructure school systems to encourage the kind of leadership that can transform schools from past practices to those that will be needed to shape a successful future" (p. 95).

THE PRINCIPAL OF THE NINETIES

Deal (1990) suggested that "in the wings" there awaits a view of leadership that presents a changed perspective, one that sees leadership as "a more ephemeral force" that "burrows beneath the surface of organizations -- individuals, structure or power-- in search of symbolic forms and primordial archetypes" (p. vi). He argued that the crucial task of improving schools is to rekindle spirit and heart, and that "the mystical and expressive side of leadership and the possibility that organizations are governed as much by belief and faith as by rationality and outcome" (p. vi) is a condition of the nineties. Deal made the point that "we need more leadership like theirs (Jesus Christ, Martin Luther King, Joan of Arc and Mahatma Ghandi) to improve America's schools" and that it " most definitely implies rethinking and reshaping our leadership premises and practices" (p. ix).

Sergiovanni (1992) also argued that traditional views of leadership should be challenged. Although his view does not ignore the realities of power, structure or motivation, he clearly noted the need for moral and spiritual revitalization of schools. Sergiovanni re-evaluates many of the assumptions about leadership, contending that followership provides the basis of leadership; that by substituting community as the

metaphor for schools, explicit leadership becomes less necessary; that empowerment assumes obligation, commitment and professional virtue; that motivation in the school community should be authentic; and that leadership is stewardship of a sacred covenant.

Similar themes were echoed in Thom's (1993) book on educational management and leadership, which he subtitled *"Word, Spirit and Deed for a Just Society."* There he noted that the effective leader considers the needs and requests of those he serves, and then uses conscience in making decisions. His conscience-based model recognized that effective leadership is culture-specific, and that leaders are recognized as spiritual in their relationship with followers. He argued that the "general flavour of the administrative literature in the past two decades has been of the humanistic approach" (p. 37), and noted that particularly Greenfield (1992) and Hodgkinson (1991), with their view of the discipline as a 'humane science' and a 'moral art' respectively are on a promising track" (p. 98).

Thom suggested that a "blend of democratic and directive leadership" (p. 158) is required of today's educational leaders, one of empowering others while reserving final ratification of decisions based on vested authority of the role. It requires a delicate balance and a continual regard for justice and fairness at every level. Thom summarized that a leader in education should be a spiritual, moral person with a strong personal belief system, and that the leader applies conscience to daily decision-making, but also recognizing that there is an authority to the role.

Bennis and Nanus (1985) made a clear differentiation between managers and leaders: "Managers are people who do things right, and leaders are people who do the right things. The difference may be summarized as activities of vision and judgement, effectiveness versus efficiency" (p. 21). They further differentiated that "leadership stands in the same relationship to empowerment that management does to compliance. The former encourages a 'culture of pride' while the latter suffers from the 'I only work here' syndrome" (p. 218). The roots of transformational leadership are in moral leadership, one that is based on the mutual goals of the leader and his followers, and emerges from their combined aspirations and values. Strongly committed to the transformational style of leadership, they argued compellingly that "the absence or ineffectiveness of leadership implies the absence of vision, a dreamless society, and this will result, at best, in the maintenance of the status quo" (p. 228).

TOWARDS SERVANT LEADERSHIP

Greenleaf (1977), in *Servant Leadership: A Journey into the Nature of Legitimate Power and Greatness*, described challenging the status quo and building a better society,

one that is more just and loving and provides greater opportunity for its people, noting that "caring of persons, the more able and less able serving each other, is the rock upon which a good society is built" (p. 49). He would agree with Bennis and Nanus that absence of vision is tantamount to a dreamless society, and urged that great achievements begin with great dreams.

The quest for caring leadership has become more pronounced in the nineties. Senge (1992) stated that Greenleaf's book has provided the singular and most definitive statement on leadership in the past twenty years, a statement that bears proof in the literature of educational administration of the nineties. Influenced by Greenleaf's work on "servant-leadership", writings on leadership have proposed a new model, one which puts serving others, including employees, customers and community as the first priority.

Greenleaf's notion of leadership raises the question whether, indeed, there is room for the word "leader" in a system of management that is predicated on interrelationship, a two-way exchange of ideas rather than the traditional one-way model. "Servant-leader" is an interesting juxtaposition, and it compels one to think differently, freshly. Greenleaf explains that servant-leaders always listen first. They work towards developing a shared vision with their people through dialogue, and help them form effective communities of action, moving ever-closer to their shared vision.

That Greenleaf's ideas have carried into the nineties is indisputable. Many concepts familiar today were first seeded by *Servant Leadership* and have been pollinated and cross-pollinated over the years to produce current models on management and leadership that extend beyond his original work. Certainly this is reflected in education today, with its mandate to prepare children for the twenty-first century by making them lifelong learners, intrinsically motivated to learn and able to reflect on their own assumptions, and to move all learners from competition to interdependency, towards global harmony and stewardship of our planet earth. Indeed, "the new story that is needed . . . must draw together all facets of the human community" (Senge, 1992, p. 240).

Educational leadership faces a multitude of challenges as we move towards the end of this millennium. Education is more sophisticated and more complex than ever before. The leader is responsible and accountable for what happens in the organization, and in this, he or she needs to empower others and build a collaborative community of learners. Sergiovanni (1995), speaking in Greenleaf's servant-leader metaphor, stated that one cannot become a leader without first becoming a follower, and that followers are typified by their commitment to ideas, not authority. Thus "principals, teachers, students, parents and others find themselves equally subordinate to a set of ideas and shared

conceptions to which they are committed" (p. 313) and leadership, "becomes based on a compact that binds those who lead and those who follow into the same moral, intellectual and emotional commitment" (p. 315).

CONCLUSIONS

There are key dimensions through which effective principals meet students' needs, improve the quality of teaching, support community aspirations, and effect change within their schools. Educational writers suggest that outstanding school leaders have a well-developed personal educational vision of what constitutes a good school that will to a large extent shape the culture of their school. Vision attains results, and as it does, teachers and students become aware of their accomplishments and experience a sense of pride in their involvement (Chance, 1992). The literature on school leadership makes a strong case for principals who are collaborative, see their schools as communities of learning, recognize the professional potential of their staffs and urge them to join in school decision-making. They recognize the importance of working within a culture, and of having a shared vision. Trust, collaboration, empowerment, student achievement, professional development and community involvement are stressed. Some principals are catalysts for change, others are implementers of change, and a few are gifted administrators who move beyond practice to artistry that inspires!

In the N.W.T., principals are being asked to develop "community schools" and "community education." To what extent their principal experiences will involve these aspects of leadership and whether dimensions unique to northern communities are paramount should be revealed through an exploration of the administrative experiences of the seven principals in this study.

Chapter 3
METHOD OF THE STUDY

PHILOSOPHICAL STANCE

> There are mulitple, intangible realities which can be studied only holistically (to dissociate the wholes is to alter them radically); inquiry into these multiple realities will inevitably diverge (each inquiry raises more questions than it answers) so that prediction and control are unlikely outcomes, although some level of understanding (*verstehen*) can be achieved. (Guba & Lincoln, 1982, pp. 237-238)

I used a qualitative research design to explore seven northern principals' experiences, and to identify how their beliefs and concerns were reflected in their actions. It was important to gather the data "from the inside, through a process of deep attentiveness, of empathic understanding (*verstehen*) and of suspending . . . preconceptions about the topics under discussion" (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 6). Through flexibly-structured interviews, I have attempted to glean from principals, in considerable detail, how they thought, how they came to develop their perspectives, and what constituted their practice.

I recognize that the principals' stories represent unique realities of "local characters, circumstances and cultures" and their schools are like ongoing scripts written "in continual process of transformation" (Foster, 1986, p. 200). As such, this study is based on the assumptions of narrative inquiry, a "mutual construction of the research relationship in which both practitioners and researchers feel cared for and have a voice with which to tell their stories" (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990, p. 4). The practitioner's story was key to this study, and each principal was given opportunity, "time and space to tell her or his story so that it too gains the authority and validity that the research story has long had" (p. 4).

I believe that people construct their own understandings from what they have experienced and from what they learn. My task as researcher has been "to gain entry into the conceptual world of my subjects in order to understand how and what meaning they construct around events in their daily lives . . . that it is the meaning of our experiences that constitutes reality" (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992, p. 34). Each principal in the study has an unique understanding of the Department's educational documents, and of their implications for his or her school and community. Since experiences are integral to such knowledge, the principal's values are an integral part of this understanding. "Reality, as it is lived by the subjects of research . . . is experienced holistically and mediated heavily by values, attitudes, beliefs and the meanings which persons ascribe to their experiences" (Guba & Lincoln, 1982, p. 249).

The process of doing qualitative research "reflects a kind of dialogue or interplay between researcher and their subjects since researchers do not approach their subjects neutrally" (Bogdan & Bilken, 1992, p. 33). As an N.W.T. administrator and colleague, as well as researcher, I am aware that my experiences and values influence my own understanding and my interpretations of these principals' accounts. We will influence each other in their telling, since questions and responses are interconnected and collaboratively constructed conversations. Hence, there will be no one truth revealed in this study. Rather, each principal's story will provide a rich account of the context of his or her understanding which, since we are all also colleagues, will intersect and overlap at various points. The patterns or themes which emerge from these accounts are one manifestation of these connections. They will provide entry points for other readers who, it is hoped, will find in them connections to their own practice.

The following discussion of method of the study will address five areas: (a) Selection of Participants, (b) Research Design, (c) Pilot Study, (d) Data Collection, (e) Data Analysis, and (f) Ethical Considerations.

SELECTION OF PARTICIPANTS

> The open-ended nature of the approach allows the subjects to answer from their own frame of reference rather than from one structured by pre-arranged questions. In this type of interviewing, questionnaires are not used; while loosely structured interview guides may sometimes be employed, most often the researcher is the only instrument, and works at getting the subjects to freely express their thoughts around particular topics. Because of the detail sought, most studies have small samples. (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992, p. 3)

The target population comprised all school principals in N.W.T. schools currently offering some form of high school programming. The accessible population comprised schools in 37 N.W.T. communities offering high school programming at the grade 10 level, of which 17 communities had a full complement of grade 10 to 12 programs in place in 1995-96. Participants were selected from communities currently offering high school courses in the ten Divisional Boards of Education across the territories: Beaufort Delta, Deh Cho, Dogrib, Sahtu, Baffin, Keewatin, Kitikmeot, South Slave, and Yellowknife Regions #1 and #2.

Sampling was purposive rather than random. Participants were selected through consultation with a variety of educators (i.e., regional director, supervisor of schools, secondary school consultant, Principal Certification Program personnel) who suggested principals whom they knew to be successful or innovative in implementing community schooling and high school programming in northern schools. From the names put forth and the general information provided, I selected seven principals. Selection took into

consideration long-term northern principals and relatively new principals; principals who were just beginning to introduce high school programming into their communities, and principals who had grades 10 to12 established for many years; principals from both small and large communities; principals from both the Eastern and Western Arctic, thereby considering the ethnic mix in schools; and representation by gender, thereby selecting four male and three female principals. I expected their general accessibility and willingness to participate might affect the final selection of participants, but each of the first seven principals contacted agreed to participate.

First contact was made by telephone, which allowed an opportunity for introductions and provision of details, and also provided a chance for them to ask questions. Each indicated a willingness to participate at that point. Initial telephone calls were followed on the same day by a faxed letter and a consent form (also required by the Nunavut Research Institute and Science Institute West, see appendix A). This letter confirmed our initial contact, reiterated details of the study discussed by phone, and gave principals an opportunity to bow out, if they wished (see appendix B).

The introductory letter provided information on the purpose of the study and its benefits (to both the N.W.T. and the participant). It also gave information on research methodoiogy, requirements of support documentation, approximate time-lines expected, issues of anonymity and confidentialty, and university contact numbers. It concluded with another invitation to participate, a request to sign the consent form and to begin gathering documentation from the school, and a promise to buy dinner if we would be so fortunate as to meet. I have had the pleasure of three, to date.

RESEARCH DESIGN

The research strategy for this study facilitated open and naturalistic inquiry. As a qualitative research study, it makes use of the detailed and heuristic content analysis methods of data analysis, drawing on emergent themes as they were gained through individual interviews with the principals. The study includes thick description of contextual data gathered through interview and analysis of documents (school handbook, newsletters, yearbook, staff memo's and minutes, principal's month-end reports, school mission statement, Department of Education documents, and other materials provided by the principal for my orientation and understanding of his or her particular school situation).

Data were gathered in three phases. In the first phase, the principal was asked to repond to two general questions in writing (see appendix C). These shaped the open-ended questions that were subsequently prepared for the 1 1/2 hour telephone interview of phase two. Phase three comprised a follow-up telephone interview of approximately

one hour. This second interview was intended as a continuation of the first conversation. Because it usually followed several months after the first, the second conversation was often more reflective, with principals usually making significant comments about their earlier perceptions, and about ongoing tensions in their workplace. After the principals received the transcript of the second conversation, I called again to check about anything they wished to change and to put any follow-up queries or questions or clarifications to them. On average, I spoke to every principal between three and six times during the six months of data collection. These follow-up calls confirmed for me how much I had learned about each of their situations and how much understanding we had developed, an inquiry characterized as reinforcing, congruent, or "value-resonant" (Lincoln & Guba, 1982, p. 243).

Principals received copies of the transcripts that came from our taped telephone conversations, and were invited to make corrections and additions, or to note deletions. Almost all respondents remarked on their colloquial style of conversation; otherwise, very little was changed. An interaction with one principal is quite typical of what was said:

> A: This is our last wrap, and I wondered if you have further comments on your transcript?
>
> B: Nothing I haven't said before (laughs) There are places where I seemed to jump, but a couple of places where I articulated really what I wanted to say and to share.

PILOT STUDY

My work with the first principal was treated as a "pilot study" in that it was undertaken to anticipate possible problems with the research design, and possible difficulties inherent in a "long distance research" design which would be heavily dependent on my gaining comfort with telephone interviewing. In this pilot study, I focused on ways to gather preliminary data, prepare for and refine interview questions, and gain confidence in telephone interviewing. Things went well and subsequent procedures were similar to the "pilot" completed with the first principal.

I gathered data in three phases. The principal first responded to my two general questions in writing, which he faxed to me within the month. His 10-page response shaped the open-ended questions that framed our 1 1/2 hour telephone interview (phase two.) For phase three, I completed a follow-up interview with him in Yellowknife after the three-day Principals' Workshop to which I had been invited. No changes were made to the first transcript, but new ideas emerged from this second interview, which was constructed to include open-ended questions on topics raised in the first interview, and which provided further clarification, as well as more general input from the respondent.

DATA COLLECTION

> The naturalistic enquirer, believing in unfolding multiple realities (through interactions with respondents that will change both them and the inquirer over time) and in grounded theory, will insist on a design that unfolds over time and which is never complete until the inquiry is arbitrarily terminated as time, resources, and other logistical considerations may dictate. (Guba as cited in Owens, 1982, p. 6)

Having chosen a qualitative approach for this study, major data gathering strategies included letters, semi-structured interviews, reflective conversations based on interview data, and document analysis. Beginning in early January, I determined a list of participants based on the names I had been given, and contacted principals by telephone, beginning with one and then adding more as my time permitted. I was heartened by their willingness to participate, because it was quite clearly going to be time-consuming for them, and they were all very busy people.

Each of the principals was sent an introductory letter which confirmed the information discussed by telephone, and was asked to return a signed consent form, and to respond to two questions in writing or on audio tape (appendix C). Flexibility was key, as distances would prohibit meeting most of my participants, yet allow face-to-face interviews in other circumstances. In my opening letter I referred to the flexibility inherent in the study:

> Methods of data collection may vary with my proximity to the school and the comfort of the principal in using various means of communicating ideas. Together, we will attempt to find the best way possible to conduct interviews and share information. . . . Most interviews will be completed via telephone; for some principals, interviews will be done while they are in Edmonton or Yellowknife on other business; others may agree to tape record their responses to questions and send them in to me for transcription; and yet others will communicate via e-mail. . . . Less "conventional" methods for completing interviews may have to be invented along the way for the process to be as thorough and satisfying as possible.

Phase one required a thoughtful response to two questions on celebrations and challenges of the past year. I believe that it was the opportunity to reflect on their school in terms of topics that piqued their interest! Most principals faxed written responses of between two to ten pages. One principal tape-recorded his thoughts, ("I do too much time in front of that computer already") and another responded by telephone. I transcribed each of these responses and sent them copies.

The purpose of the two open-ended questions was to establish an understanding for each principal's school reality, and to use it as a beginning to shape the semi-structured questions for the upcoming 1 1/2 hour telephone interview. Interview questions were also urged by the information that principals began to send to me about their

schools, a variety of riches that came in the form of newsletters, reports, school handbooks, newspaper clippings, yearbooks, pictures, and even one school video!

Transcripts

Following the first (and also with the second) interview, each principal was sent a verbatim transcript of the telephone conversation, and was invited to comment or make necessary corrections and additions to the transcript. This allowed for verification of details in the transcripts, and confirmation of my understandings of their stories. I completed all my own transcribing as I became keenly interested in replicating as closely as possible the nuances I had caught in the interviews . . . the chuckles, the laughs, the pauses and the silences. By doing my own transcribing I could also capture the punctuation that would best depict the meaning of what I had heard. My respondents did not indicate otherwise when they returned transcripts to me.

Some principals sent more school documents and materials as a result of the first interview, and so my orientation to each story became more complete, and also provided important triangulation or cross-referencing of meaning.

The Telephone Interview

The interview questions were generally open-ended, and were drawn from the principals' initial written responses. As such, the interview was based on their realities, celebrations and concerns emerging from their school context. Interview questions tended to focus first on the present and the personal, and then move to the past. This seemed to be a reassuring and comfortable starting point, and stimulated memory of past events. I drafted a set of questions to direct the first interview (see appendix D), intended to keep me focused on the principal's story; however, these were intended only as a guide to the interview, and were not followed verbatim, as I asked questions of clarification and elaboration where necessary, and sometimes passed by questions that had been answered elsewhere, or reiterated the question, paraphrasing what I understood to that point before inviting further details.

At the end of the interview, principals were encouraged to add other insights, or suggest further ideas beyond those discussed. Documents mentioned in the interview process were also welcomed. For example, one mentioned a 20-page visioning document that was used before constructing the new school, and also a student film that had been made as the school was being built; both were sent to me, and further illuminated and enriched my study.

Face-to-face Interviews

I worked with three respondents at the time of the Yellowknife Principals' Conference in April; one was an opening interview, and the two others were follow-up conversations. All three face-to-face interviews were significantly longer, which perhaps speaks to the more congenial setting, and lack of long-distance costs! All interviews, as well as the Principals' Conference itself, enabled further confirmation and clarification of data, extending and enriching the information that had been gathered to that date. The interviews also afforded the opportunity to "put a face to a name," a new dimension to what had to that point been strictly telephone work.

Importance of Ongoing Communication

Care was taken to maintain communication with all principals. The fax machine proved invaluable in enabling me to send a short note of thanks after an interview, or make contact when transcripts were about to be sent, or to arrange for another interview, and to thank them in June (see appendix E). A thorough and continuing relationship was maintained in this way with all respondents. I recognized and appreciated their incredible commitment in terms not only of their time, but also their willingness to give real thought to the process and make it worth pursuing.

The inquiry was "terminated" in each case after the follow-up interview was completed, although I maintained contact with principals until after they had confirmed receipt of the last transcript. Interviews took place between February and May, which gave time for the unfolding of "multiple realities" and several "ah-ha's." Transcripts averaged 28,000 words per participant, and yielded a rich source of data for the study.

DATA ANALYSIS

> From the start of data collection, the qualitative analyst is beginning to decide what things mean - is noting regularities, patterns, explanations, possible configurations, causal flows and propositions. The competent researcher holds these conclusions lightly, maintaining openness and skepticism, but the conclusions are still there, inchoate and vague at first, then increasingly explicit and grounded, to use a classic term of Glaser and Strauss (1967). (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 11)

Qualitative data analysis is a continuous process. In the content analysis method of qualitative research, themes begin to emerge from the research as gained through interview. Data analysis is ongoing through data collection that is iterative in its process. Broad-scale exploration at the outset has been accompanied by continual "checking for accuracy, seeking verification, testing, probing and confirming as the data collection proceeds" (Owens, 1982, p.11). Data analysis involved categorizing of transcripts,

document analysis and the identification of critical incidents. Themes emerged from the research gained through the interview. First, categories were found in principals' responses through careful coding, and became the basis of thick descriptive analysis. Data were analyzed for regularities and patterns and possible topics. Secondly, the interview transcripts and field notes were then read through rapidly and consecutively a number of times. Themes and underlying patterns emerged from this inductive process which were verified with participants.

Trustworthiness of the Data

Audit trail

As Owens (1982) stated, "Judgements and conclusions in the report should be demonstrably reasonable, meaning that they are well connected to the evidence and supported by a carefully maintained audit trail" (p. 14). An audit trail of tapes, transcripts, interview notes, journals and documents was collected and stored for purposes of future referral. Throughout the research process, I kept a journal comprising personal memos and commentaries to record ongoing speculations regarding data collection and analysis. This was valuable for tracking new directions and learning throughout the months of research, and later aided in identifying themes, and in developing judgements and conclusions.

Credibility

Techniques to maximize "trustworthiness" of the data included seeking clarification and elaboration of responses throughout the interview session, summarizing points as they were made for confirmation, and doing follow-up. Respondents received transcripts of their interviews for purposes of verification and were given the opportunity to correct and enhance them. Because the study was completed over the summer and principals were not in school, it was not possible to ask them for feedback on the first draft of the findings chapter. However, principals were asked for comments and feedback related to the accuracy of both data and interpretation throughout the months of the study. Follow-up interviews offered significant opportunity for clarification and ongoing discussion of issues.

Dependability and Confirmability

Although there is much more that can be learned by continuing the conversation with each of the principals, I am confident that the data gathered were dependable. Miles and Huberman (1994) speak of confidence in qualitative data: "The time involved and the inherent flexibility of qualitative studies (data collection times and methods can be varied

as the study proceeds) gives further confidence that we've really understood what has been going on" (p. 10). I made conscious effort to monitor my biases and assumptions through constant referrals and member checks. Given my long experience in northern education, I have also placed trust in my own judgement. Triangulation, which is intended to ensure that data are trustworthy, was for me more important as a means of gaining greater understanding of principals' realities. However, it also confirmed their stories.

Transferability

The thick description emerging from seven principals' stories offers sufficient detail to provide readers with the needed context and sufficient understanding to determine where the information falls. Beyond the specific research subjects and their settings, the study has transferability "if enough 'thick description' is available about both 'sending' and 'receiving' contexts to make a reasoned judgement about the degree of transferability possible" (Guba & Lincoln, 1982, p. 246). I believe that there is much of what these principals spoke that will strike resonances with other educators. It has been argued that essentially, "human behavior is not random or idiosyncratic. There is more about us that is the same than different, and findings can be easily generalizable to other settings and subjects" (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992, p. 40).

The same authors contend that "the worth of a study is the degree to which it generates theory, description or understanding" (p. 46). Although it is not intended that generalizations be drawn from a study such as this, it is hoped that readers will find resonances in the stories of the principals as presented, and gain insights into some issues of school leadership in the north today, as seen from their perspectives.

Throughout the study, it has been my goal to provide thick description that is

> more than mere information or descriptive data: it conveys a literal description that figuratively transports the readers into the situation with a sense of insight, understanding and illumination not only of the facts or the events in the case, but also the texture, the quality, and the power of the context *as the participants in the situation experienced it. (*Owens, 1982, p. 8, emphasis in original)

ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Ethical considerations were closely observed. Principals were always aware when conversations were being taped, and were assured that information was given in confidence; that their names and the names and locations of their schools would not be used in the document; that the information about people, places and situations as found in the transcripts would also remain confidential; and that the data gathered for the study would be synthesized so as not to identify specific schools, situations, or people, as

much as is humanly possible. Given that the N.W.T. comprises relatively few people, and is in some ways "a small community" regardless of its land mass, I forewarned them of the possibility that some schools and names could be identified by some people through the process of elimination, particularly in the first year of publication.

I have worked for many years as an educator in the N.W.T., and have purposely not selected my own school or district for this study, feeling that the possibilities for bias might be too great to put aside, or would be perceived as such.

A few of the stories told me by principals could potentially cause harm or discomfort to them. I included these by avoiding specifics, using adequate information to maintain their richness without compromising confidentiality. These pages were checked through by participants and were permitted to be included in the study.

I have endeavoured to make this as authentic and honest a rendering of the thoughts and ideas, stories and beliefs entrusted to me by the seven principals. Copies of an executive summary of this study will be sent to them.

> In narrative inquiry, it is important that the researcher listen first to the practitioner's story, and that it is the practitioner who first tells his or her story. . . . Because collaboration occurs from beginning to end in narrative inquiry, plot outlines are continually revised as consultation takes place over written materials and as further data are collected to develop points of importance in the revised story. (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990, pp. 4,10)

Chapter 4
THE PARTICIPANTS AND THEIR EXPERIENCES

> *For in every action what is primarily intended by the doer, whether [s]he acts from natural necessity or out of free will, is the disclosure or his [or her] own image. Hence it comes about that every doer, in so far as [s]he does, takes delight in doing; since everything that is, desires its own being, and since in action the being of the doer is somehow intensified, delight necessarily follows. . . . Thus, nothing acts unless [by acting] it makes patent its latent self.* (Dante, translated in Arendt, 1958, p. 175)

My own work and interest in educational leadership, and my commitment to doing research significant to northern education, have led me to this exploration of the work of northern principals. Each of the seven principals interviewed over six months recounted stories of school successes and challenges. Their stories reflect beliefs and attitudes that drive their actions and define the nature of their leadership, creative action that is context-driven, each situation unique in its demographics and human dynamics. Their stories identify actions of men and women who as principals have chosen to be "doers," in terms of the opening quotation, concerned with making education relevant for students and connected to community aspirations.

THE PARTICIPATING PRINCIPALS

All seven principals' stories represent unique realities of local circumstances that are in continual process of transformation, and it is important to recognize that their understandings are constructed from what they have experienced and learned there. Each principal in this study has an unique understanding of the educational mandates and their implications for his or her school and community. As one principal explained,

> When I talk to other principals in the region, a lot of times we do things completely different, we approach them from a different way, our schools are run differently, you know, there's a lot of things in common but there's a whole lot of things too that aren't. There's a lot of things that aren't even looked at in the same way. A lot of it depends on your community, because your school reflects how your community thinks.

The four male and three female principals interviewed represent both Eastern and Western Arctic communities, some under 500 and others over 3000 in population, and some above the Arctic Circle. Three communities have offered grade 12 programs in their school for many years; the other four are smaller communities where grade extensions are in progress, extending to grade 12 next year. Neverthless, several of these smaller community schools have offered some grade 12 coursework this year, in each case using distance education and staff support to guide the student through his or her coursework.

One principal was in a 9-12 urban high school; the second, a 7-12, and the third, a 6-12 school. The other four principals were in K-11 schools, officially extending to grade 12 programming for the first time in 1996-97. Three of the communities have a direct link to the "south" via road; two are accessible by air and winter roads; and two are accessible only by air. Insofar as they are separated by hundreds (and sometimes thousands) of kilometers, all schools experience a type of isolation that schools in the "south" are less likely to encounter.

Every school was unique, as reflected in the richness of each principal's story. All principals were active change agents for their schools and in their communities, some working with Department of Education personnel, others working within the staffrooms of their schools or the business sectors of their communities. The first participant, in his fourth year as principal of a 9-12 urban high school that currently houses 450 students, cited the planning and building of a new school that opened just this year as "one of the most significant and worthwhile projects I have ever been fortunate enough to work on."

The process used to plan the new building was "at the heart of the success and philosophy of the school" and included extensive visioning with community stakeholders in considering fundamental change in attitudes and approaches to creating a future school:

> a whole community effort in the sense that we talked to students, we talked to staff, we talked amongst ourselves. . . . We also spoke to the general public, our trustees, and just generally architects who had had a lot of high school building experience, and to the point of opening up a store front and allowing the general community to be involved. . . . And I think that the more that we talked, and shared a vision of a building that was more than nine-to-five, that it was service to community, and in essence, though not a formal community school, a community school that was open more than was typically experienced, and it seemed to work, and we are still in the process of discovering the potential of it all, and it seems to have worked very well.

He stressed that ultimately, it is the "instructional and operational philosophies . . . that have made us a very high profile school" more so than the new building itself.

The second participant, in his third year as principal of a 7-12 school of 450 students, took a similar approach towards school growth and improvement, eliciting the input of all community stakeholders in an overall plan to improve the quality of education in their school. He felt confident that the emerging school improvement plan would become "a blueprint for hiring, for timetabling, for staffing, for basically any set of initiatives that are going to be taking place in this school," as the plan provides the framework and process for future school improvement. He saw it as a means of not only enhancing school operations and public perception of the school, but also uplifting staff morale:

> I guess I'm a big believer in having some sort of accreditation, some form of formal mechanism for accountability, not just to reassure the public but it's also a way of giving due credit to the staff and students for a job well done, and it's done in a very

> public way. My experience has been that it can be a real positive instrument that enhances staff self-esteem, make them feel real good about the work they're doing in the school and about their place in the community.

For the third participant, a long-time principal in a small K-11 school of 150 students, the majority of whom are aboriginal, planning a new school was a community event that included creating a parent questionnaire on report card day that yielded near-100% response, and ensuring that students were also involved in the process:

> As well as the junior high students, all the intermediate classes spent time with the architectural team learning about the process. The grade 4-6 class spent one morning with two of the assistants using recently learned measuring skills to measure the sizes of existing classrooms which will remain as part of the new building.

The process created a design which will yield "a community school since the students have been such an integral part throughout the process." She felt the process was very useful because "the students did some real-life learning in a situation which we would not have been able to provide; they took the process very seriously, including the presentation to the steering committee. . . . even months later, I see the students standing in front of the design and talking about their role in the process."

Sharing facilities with Aurora College builds on the concept of creating a community school. She enjoys a close working relationship with the adult educator:

> She uses our science equipment, we use her library, it's always been that way. . . . We were the first ones that started saying, put us together, we'll share computer rooms, we'll share library, we'll share science . . . she can't afford the computers, I can afford computers; but I can't afford a CTS [Career and Technology Studies] instructor, whereas if we use her students, we've got enough students that she can teach, so we just sort of share.

My fourth participant was a second-year principal who spent 50% of his time teaching. His K-11 school housed 165 students, the majority of them non-aboriginal. One of his initiatives over the past two years involved working with the business community, and through them he has effected positive changes in school programming by promoting strong school-community links. He pointed out that "when you teach in the far north in a small school, you only have so much staff to go around. You are therefore limited in the number of courses and the variety of courses that you are able to offer." He felt strongly that "CTS opens the door to a much broader variety of experiences potentially that the students can have, other than what's being offered right in the school. . . . Many, many, many more options." However, he put in countless hours of leg work to educate the public and "sell" the idea of developing CTS modules in partnership with the business community:

> I asked to be put on a Chamber of Commerce meeting and I went to the Chamber of Commerce meeting and went with a rather thick blurb and gave a copy to each one at that meeting . . . I went through everything in living detail, and it was like a salespitch. In fact, it was a salespitch because I was selling CTS, and I was telling people, you know, it's a community-based school, that's where it is. That means that you as a community have a responsibility. You are the business leaders of this community. You have a responsibility to those children, to give them the variety of educational experiences that they deserve.

The fifth participant has been a principal for three years in a small K-11 school of about 150 students in an isolated Inuit community. Her interest in providing more relevant learning for students was exemplified in the success she has seen in bringing elders into the school for a second year. The program "involved 10 elders, women and men, who came to the school to work with students to share their traditional knowledge of Inuit culture and language with students and to teach students about traditional skills." Students were not the only learners in this process:

> Not only have students benefited from our elders program, but we as staff members have also benefited greatly. We have learned a great deal about Inuit values and beliefs by having the elders work with us during our professional Improvement days last year and also on a few occasions during our weekly theme planning sessions. This time also allowed all staff members valuable and necessary weekly preparation time during the school day. In March of last year, several staff members chose to meet with eight elders for our five days of Professional Improvement and to brainstorm and record the skills, values, and knowledge our students should develop.

The benefits were significant, as students were "afforded the opportunity to develop a better sense of self and pride in the Inuit language, in their heritage and their culture."

The sixth principal was a seasoned northern educator and principal for four years in an isolated community of about 900 people, with a K-11 school of 190 students. The nature of the community required implementing two aboriginal curricula, both *Dene Kede* and *Inuuqatigiit*, in this school. When she first came into the community four years ago, this principal was surprised to find that

> there really was no land program, no activity program, that involved traditions and hunting and those kinds of things. There was no set program. The only time it happened was if there were individual teachers who wanted to take out their kids, and basically they took them out themselves, and some way finaggled people to help them out, borrowed some skidoos and things like that. And that was happening in isolated cases where teachers were very interested. I had come from a school where we had a very good program going, we had a program for the older kids that went on year round, plus a lot of different camps, and so on. It was surprising that up here, it wasn't happening. That was another big thing that we started to work on.

In the beginning, "a lot of this was done on very small scale, sort of just trying to get our way in to it" whereas "this year in the fall, the whole school was involved in netting and smcking fish and the whole thing like that. Then as the ice froze over, we did

jiggling, snaring, trapping, those kinds of things." Gaining support from the community also came over time, and "gradually over the years we got more involvement." This year, "one of the big steps is that most of the land trips have been paid for through the Aboriginal Committee, rather than our local CEC (Community Education Council) or school organizations. That's a big step." Her personal belief that culture is an important component of her students' education is espoused by many of her aboriginal parents:

> Well, I think that you need that as well in order to make the connection. Even the parents who really stress the academics and doing the academic work still see the need for a lot of the cultural progams that we do. They don't want to see it as detracting from academic levels, but they see it as an important thing for the children to participate in these things.

The seventh participant, an experienced northern educator and principal of a 6-12 school of 190 students in an isolated community, spoke to the realities of offering grade extensions in small northern communities. Going to a regional high school often yielded high failure rates amongst the young students leaving home, "so there was quite a bit of failure that was based on social failure as much as anything else. There were occasional social problems or homesickness." However, staying in the community for high school

> involves making some choices, and also involves some compromises as everything does, I guess. We can't do the same kinds of things in the community high school as you can in a bigger school. The economy scale just isn't there. However, you've got the support of the community and the support of the families and the fact that the kid is in his or her own hometown makes it easier, so we've had a fair measure of success with it.

Offering both 10 and 13/16 courses in a small school puts an enormous strain on resources. The principal pointed out that his school has a total of 80 high school students of whom eight were in grade 12; the numbers opting for academic courses were small. He explained that there is pressure from the Board that the school offer the 10/20/30 courses and to have students in all of those, "but in Alberta, not every student takes 10. Quite a few take 13 and because of the small numbers and the fact that English is a second language for them, quite often 10 is not the appropriate course."

In northern communities, high school tends to be the "levelling ground," which explains the bottleneck that occurs in grade 10 in his school. Whereas students tend to be promoted with their peers throughout their early schooling, when they reach grade 10, they are faced with completing 100 credits in order to graduate. These students can be "anywhere from 14 to 19 or 20" and still be in grade 10 because:

> a lot of kids who have moved along on a yearly basis suddenly have the brakes applied to them as their move now is determined by what they have accomplished as opposed to time passage. So there's a fair good-sized bottle-neck in there. . . . We have the grade 10s who are taking the academic courses, the 13 and 10 level

> courses, and we have the grade 10s who are doing upgrading or who are doing the 16/26 level courses or mostly CTS modules or who are quite far behind. What often happens is that they will spend one or two years in grade 10 and that's the end of formal schooling, they'll move on into the world of work or whatever. Or they can spend one or two years in grade 10 and then move into the 10 academic stream, if they have sufficiently upgraded or caught up to start taking maybe English 13 or Math 13 and so forth. And then move on towards a High School Diploma in that area.

The realities of being a principal in the north are in many ways unique to the rest of Canada. The seven principals interviewed for this study voiced concerns that can be attributed to this northern reality. They shared the belief that continuance and funding of new programs are daunting challenges given current fiscal realities; and that school leadership in the N.W.T. today is indeed a massive undertaking. Sheer geography, distance and climate affect their working circumstance. More and more, education in the north is being determined at the local level. These principals recognize the importance of taking a collaborative approach, connecting with community stakeholders and developing new visions and strategies for education. In a land that fosters severe isolation, one cannot afford to act alone.

To conclude, considerable emphasis has been placed on the northern school administrator to be the driving force for change at the school level as well as in the community. Looking closely at the main issues that arose through the conversations with principals, I have identified five broad categories that will frame the remaining discussion of this chapter: (a) A Belief in the Future, (b) Handling the Challenges, (c) Working between the Lines, (d) Positioning in the Culture, and (e) The Unending Workday.

A BELIEF IN THE FUTURE

> *Good things are happening in our schools. Don't lose sight of the good things that have happened. We have made a lot of changes and we have had a lot of success.* (Helen Balanoff, Principals' Workshop, 1996)

These words reflect the importance of not letting our vision become too darkened by current issues. Hope is a powerful motivator! It is fascinating to discover against the backdrop of endless challenges that beset northern principals the gentle flickers of hope that flame their imaginations and flare their energies. To be human is to live with hope; to be an educator is to live with the belief that tomorrow can be better. There are various examples of such belief reflected in these principals' stories; their actions also speak to creating more promising tomorrows. This section will deal with several indicators of these principals' belief in the future: (a) Career and Technology Studies, (b) Bask in

Successes, Learn from Failures, (c) Opportunities for Students, (d) Hope in the Students to Come, and (e) Leadership that is Collaborative and Inclusive.

Career and Technology Studies: "A Breath of Fresh Air"

Most of the principals spoke favourably to the introduction of CTS as offering endless flexibility and choice in student learning. CTS implementation has the potential to bring new dimensions for program delivery, with courses offered in one-credit modules, enabling students to pick up missed or failed units of work rather than repeating entire semesters. One principal described the potential:

> This wonderful effort is a breath of fresh air and has allowed educators to begin to realize a different vision of education. Our school has taken it on with a vengeance. . . . we now offer modules in Information Processing, Financial Management, Enterprise and Innovation, Communication Technology, Design Studies, Legal Studies, Community Health, Tourism, Foods, Renewable Resources and Cooperative Education. It is truly exciting and rewarding to see the kind of learning experiences that are taking place for students and the difference it is making for them.

He suggested that CTS course offerings "also highlights that school has to be more than academics." Furthermore, the CTS program "offers the kind of variety, flexibility and application that students should have afforded to them within the main 'core' curriculum. It would be my wish that we begin to approach all learning in the same manner."

In the north, technology is increasingly being integrated in both the school programming and operations. "The sooner we learn how to use it effectively, the more potential we will realize in it." Although schools are at different stages of technological development and readiness, most are taking strides in this area, with some principals showing tremendous creativity in inspiring their communities and funding their initiatives.

C.T.S. and Business Partnerships.

Most principals saw CTS as related to creating learning networks and partnerships. One explained that "CTS doesn't stop in the school walls . . . so I've tried to emphasize the role of career, or cooperative, education as CTS off-campus. And that really ties in very well with learning networks and work experience." Another added that "partnership is essential to all of it, the whole thing is supposed to be about the community being involved in the school, and the school opening its doors to the community . . . the walls keep out the cold and the rain and the snow, and so does the roof; other than that, they are really invisible." Some CTS modules are being developed by local businesses, with the help of teachers, and these are enhancing course offerings

in one principal's K-11 school. He enthusiastically described some materials currently ready for use in his school:

> This is one module! This is carpentry. One credit. This is the construction one. I have 4 of these developed. I have 4 of these big binders, and I can use them for other students if we have opportunities in the future. I've got the equivalent from the Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce, and a student going out there now. I've got two at the Northern store . . . you know, that's real commitment! These people are doing this free of charge. They're not charging us for this!

C.T.S. and Cultural Learning

An Eastern Arctic principal concurs that CTS can offer authentic learning for her students: "We're really trying to look at the community experience and CTS also as ways to bringing meaningful learning to the kids. . . . can we decide across the Territories, because it's so individual, community to community as well." The CTS modules developed in her school reflect a commitment to providing relevant learning for students:

> Just to give you an example, four staff members were involved in developing three CTS courses, and they also worked with two staff members from another school. They used their PI [Professional Improvement] funds to come and join our staff members. And elders were part of it, they wrote and developed three courses for students. One was on skin preparation, preparing seal skins; the other was on kamik making; and third one was on igloo building. And elders were part of that development as well, and it was really exciting.

When asked to explain how she meant "exciting," she described how the students had enjoyed the cultural learnings of their elders, traditional knowledge being shared by community members:

> I think a lot of the excitement was that sense of self and purpose of being able to complete something; they did it, that sense of taking a project and working through it and doing it. Two of the young women in the grade 10 program, we just have two who have actually finished their kamiks and then there are four more who are close to finishing; but to go through and they've made their first pair of kamiks, they were just blown away (laughs).

Beyond the excitement is also the hope that lies in holding on to language and culture in this way, young people given the opportunity to claim a piece of their heritage:

> we have elders and women in their fifties and sixties who still have that skill, but there's a whole group, almost a void of women especially in their 20s and 30s, women in their 30s who may have gone to residential school or to schools not in their communities who didn't have opportunities to learn those skills from their mothers or their grandmothers.

In a Western Arctic K-11 community school, some CTS coursework was also being interpreted through the cultural programs:

> but because of our mission statement, culture is very much part of our school programs, and for our high school students, we are doing a forestry pilot for the Career

> and Technology Studies. One of the courses that needed to be done was the Woods Survival course; we hooked it into the community hunt last week, so the kids sort of got both, they went out for the whole week, did the community hunt with community members, but also did the woods survival skills required for their credits for the course.

One enterprising principal described two CTS modules offered in his school:

> Well, from Spring camp we have a group that goes to the Halibut fishing and they do a study of the halibut fishing industry from the fishing shacks back into the fish plant here in town, to the processing of the fish and getting sent on the plane and going south. That's one item. Another item is, we have a video-making unit that ties in with many of the other units, where a small film is made about a particular topic, it could be a tourism topic or it can be a caribou hunting trip or whatever, and there's a CTS unit on video technology.

He further described how a third CTS module had accomplished three happy purposes: the students had a highly enjoyable and hands-on learning experience; the community was offered a service not normally available, given its isolation; and the school made some money for future entrepreneurial projects:

> They've also offered photography here in town, and there we had an integrated unit that involved marketing, business and photography. Four girls and I think a couple of boys from the Grade 10 Alternatives took the pictures of nearly everybody in town who wanted. They had a sitting fee of $2 and processed them and made packages and sold them for $30 or $35, for which itinerant photographers coming through charge $100. That generated about $5000 for my slush fund (laughs) in addition to pleasing the community a great deal because this was a service that's not present, and when we did provide it, it was a lot cheaper than the other guys going through, so I think all around it went very well.

These principals saw technology as a means of attracting students to learning. One principal suggested we excite and involve students in school

> not just in the traditional extra-curricular although it remains one of the keys to keeping students in school, but also by trying to create game centers in the school, to keep them in the school. . . . using technology in practical ways to ensure that the video generation is "hooked" not only on the tools, but the content. Learning, more than ever, must be fun. Learning through doing is a key.

These administrators generally saw CTS as "a breath of fresh air that has allowed educators to begin to realize a different vision of education." It provides opportunities to offer a smorgasbord of authentic learnings for all students.

"Bask in Our Successes, and Learn from our Failures"

It is human to focus on the problems in a day and undeniably, there are many. One principal, feeling he had been spending a disproportionate amount of time on negative aspects of his work, noted, "That's what I mean about giving you a sense of balance. There's a lot of good things going on, but you know what it's like. You spend 80 per cent of your time with 20 per cent of the problems." However, there was general recognition amongst principals that when they take the time to pause, there are indeed

many reasons for celebration in their schools, and they took clear pleasure in reflecting back over the highlights of their year. Somewhat like raising one's eyes to the horizon, it can be a worthwhile and affirming process when practiced by principals and their schools.

Reasons for Celebration

Principals found celebration in many events. Several principals identified seeing greater student success as a result of the grade extensions program as reason for celebration; two cited the implementation of aboriginal curricula (*Dene Kede* and *Inuuqatigiit*) and the extension of land programs and cultural camps as paramount in their school focus this past year. The development of a Cooperative Education Handbook for students and businesses was identified by one principal as one positive development. Another principal spoke of eliciting strong staff participation in after-school and community events as cause for celebration; yet two others described receiving strong CEC support in school fundraising as well as developing school-business partnerships. Making the school more accessible to community was mentioned by all principals.

Several principals spoke highly of participation in successful school-community visioning workshops over three years and their work with elders in the school. Continued efforts in implementation of the inclusive schooling policy were also described by several principals as making progress. One principal cited the successful completion of a mandatory 4-week healing session for all high school students in one community school, and another the strong in-school parent volunteer program in the school; renovation or building of schools with wide input from a variety of stakeholders was also mentioned by several principals as celebrations of this past year.

Many principals expressed satisfaction in collaborative visioning activities that build a better school. The following principal's words express the synergistic power of working with her staff, and reflect her personal excitement:

> As a staff, we spend a great deal of time discussing how we can improve to provide a better environment and education for our students. As we try one thing, other concerns are raised and we move to try and deal with this. I believe this is one of the reasons I like my job. In 15 years, we have never accepted that we are doing everything right and we are willing to research and experiment with different ways of doing things. I look foreward to going to work everyday and bask in our successes and learn from our failures.

Asked what gives her job excitement, she responded that "it's the successes," adding that she has learned that it is essential to take time to "reflect on where we are and where we've come, instead of always looking at where we haven't got yet . . . look behind and look at where you came from." Good things have been happening along the way.

Opportunities for Students

Northern students may live in relative isolation, but often a great effort is made to connect them with their southern peers. Travel costs tend to be prohibitive, yet schools find pockets of money that enable travel for deserving groups of northern learners. It can be said that students in the north enjoy opportunities afforded comparatively few of their southern counterparts:

> The kids here have had things that I think the kids in the south can only dream of. I know a couple of years ago, we had some of our students here went to Inuvik and the Edmonton Symphony Orchestra was in town, and they actually got to play with them, you know? They actually got to play the violin and those kinds of things that happen in the north.

In this year's regional science fair hosted by her school, this principal could claim 90% participation by the students of her school. The success speaks to a whole-school commitment by students and staff. "We basically set aside time in science classes and in classes in general to concentrate on Science Fair projects. And I know the larger schools don't." Four winners, two in junior high and two in high school, all from her community school, went on to participate in the National Science Fair in North Bay this year. That the airline lost "all the backboards with their stuff on it" was met with characteristic humour by both the principal and her science teacher, and a "back-up solution" was soon devised in the event the airlines failed to find the missing displays in time for presentation:

> One of our teachers here is from North Bay and he called his dad, and his dad said he would help them remake the backboards if they didn't show up. He hasn't called back, so I don't know what happened (laughs).

A principal from another district reflected on the success of his young science students this year, and the tremendous commitment shown by teachers as well:

> We had a Science Fair and went on to the regionals; now two of our students are going on to the nationals in North Bay, Ontario. We also had a Geography Challenge. One of our students . . . went on to the territorials and wrote the territorials. Came back from Mexico two days early to be able to do this, and I had two people on the staff take a day, a Saturday from their spring break to go in and do this geography challenge with him. But here's the payoff. He's going to Ottawa, to the nationals. . . . Those are the little flowers that show that this school is moving in the right direction.

With less money available, principals focus even more on making travel an educational experience by addressing curriculum objectives as well:

> We had a French Immersion and second language French group combine. They're over in Paris (France) right now. Not a Travel Club but very much a curriculum based expedition that was just incredible. The amount of detail they put into it, the agenda, the learning objectives, everything that went into that, these two staff members took

> that on and while there was some direct dividend for them to do it, there was also them thinking of opportunities for students.

This principal added that although there should always be value attached to school activities and events, "I don't know where it's written that being sound in the program area is antithetical to being holistically supportive of students. And there's my struggle." In all, principals spoke highly of the staff initiative and commitment that has gone into creating the rich variety of opportunities available for students in their schools.

Hope in the Students Coming Up

Many principals spoke of "the next group of high school students" with eager anticipation, kids more equipped to learn, with more voice and potential than the ones currently going through the high school process in their communities. It is clear that the work towards this goal has been long in coming, and that there are still struggles:

> It's better that you've gone through the growing pains with the students that you have, because by the time they are in grade 10, they will have dealt with all that stuff and you are going to offer them an excellent program . . . there's hope that they're going to be on grade level. They're readers, they're writers, they're mathematicians, they have the skills that they need to be successful.

Grade Extensions Program

The excitement for upcoming grades in the high school is about making progress with students by empowering them in their own learning process:

> one of the most exciting aspects is for kids, they're now our high school students, and even our grade 8 and 9's, they have a voice now, to be able to say, I don't particularly like the way we're doing this at our school, whereas before, they didn't have that voice, or I didn't have the feeling that they had that voice. It was adults making decisions for kids, not with kids, and for me that's been really exciting to see the growth.

Another principal spoke of a particularly strong group of students entering the high school, but recognized that their language skills may be weaker because they are ESL students, having completed their first years of schooling in their aboriginl language:

> Yeah, I'm sure that some of those five will pass Math 20 as well, and as we keep it going, Math 30 the following year . . . that little group, that very good core group of grade 9's that came in. I'm not sure if they're going to do as well in the more language-intensive subjects as English and Social Studies, as they did in Math and Science.

The grade extensions program has succeeded in offering greater learning access for students across the territories. As more students "drop back in" for high school upgrading in their community, the potential for success is more clearly within their reach.

Keeping students in their home communities for school is more effective than sending them to regional schools

> because they're home, and because they're home, they're supported! They've got mom and dad, or mom or dad or whatever, and they've got teachers who can call home . . . who can ask for parents to come in . . . who can contact on an ongoing basis if necessary.

Most principals felt that today's high school students generally have a better chance of success than prior students who had to do their learning far away from the influence of home and community. The difference was already being seen in some schools, and anticipated in others.

Leadership is Collaborative and Inclusive

That the principals believe in the future of education, and that they see it as important and hopeful was evidenced in their leadership style which was frequently collaborative, leading with others and from within. "It comes down to being willing to work really hard, to be willing to really listen to people, and really understand what they're saying." Another principal added that there must also be a "willingness to be able to grow, to be accepting and to be open to various points of view" and also "to be respectful to the values that the community holds, and to be willing to promote that within our school, because this is the essence and the basis of our programs." That "willingness" provides the subtext for much of what principals take on is clear in listening to their words.

One principal noted that "I think that a good sense of humour is really important you know, and a lot of commitment to growing." For this principal, it is critical "to be open and willing to try new ideas, and if they don't work, then to keep reflecting and to keep looking at what we're doing and how can we make it better." This reflection was often done with colleagues in collaborative settings:

> Percolating, I call it. I tell my staff, I've got an idea percolating. It takes me a while, I tell them from the beginning, and then they throw ideas or come and say, you know what you were saying about . . . and so you get their grounds in there too, and it continues to percolate. . . . Except some grounds never change.

Teamwork on this staff extended to the janitors, who "are very much part of the staff" and often come in early to pitch in,

> and then when I said about the carnival, they chose to stay over the lunch hour and set up for the carnival . . . They are much more than just the people who come in and clean. They do hall displays, they cut out things, they make us bannock, (chuckles) whatever we want!

Shared Leadership

Although principals found their tasks challenging and time-consuming, most came to the end of their year with a sense of accomplishment, recognizing that "Rome was not built in one day." Many of them do their work with and through their staffs and recognize that team is essential: delegating, empowering, sharing the work load and the worry often makes it more manageable. One principal suggested turning to shared leadership in several ways:

> to let go of, to not do everything myself, and so it's been part of my own personal and professional growth. Identifying the skills and strengths among my colleagues and helping them to grow as well has been a real important part, and I think a strength in our school. I just more and more see the necessity of having shared leadership. That just keeps coming back to me time and time again, to really re-think our traditional view of what a principalship is, and more and more I think it needs to be a shared leadership drawing on many people's strengths.

The shared principalship model tried in several Eastern Arctic communities was not without its problems, particularly with issues of transience that inevitably "break up" such teams after a year or two. However, this principal experienced it as a highly satisfying approach to her three-year leadership as principal: "I feel that in large part, due to this team approach to the leadership in our school with both an Inuk and non-Inuk leader, we have been able to achieve a great deal and have created many successes as a result."

Accessibility to Staff

Year-end brought an interesting epiphany from a principal who decided to ignore the paperwork and, in the last three months, practiced

> management by walking around, going into classrooms, walking in the corridors, just being seen, being around. Two or three teachers have some concerns with how to deal with students. Just going around and giving a lot of moral support . . . and it's really born some fruit. It's been very noticeable to myself, people on staff, students.

This principal, who felt that he was always accessible in his office, discovered the positive effects that his greater visibility had in the school. Although this has escalated his paperwork at nights, the learning that "my priority should be to be out and about" ended his year on a personally positive note.

His following remarks were very much like those of a number of the principals, and neatly summarized the hope, clarity of purpose and strong sense of optimism that I found in my discussions with them. They hold strong beliefs in the future.

> No, no, I don't feel like packing it in, I enjoy my work. The only thing is, I need to see some light at the end of the tunnel, it can't be something that's sloppy, and it has to be something that's really meaningful, and it's taken a long time to get to that. I just hope that some of the stuff comes through for next year, I think that next year will really sail.

> Like, I have a lot of the ground work in place, and I think that we'll get more done in the next year than in the previous three. . . . I feel confident that next year will be really good. I just am keeping my fingers crossed.

HANDLING THE CHALLENGES

"Handling the Challenges" provides a snapshot of some of the tensions that form a part of principals' work, tensions inherent in the varied and sometimes competing interests and activities of schools. This section develops the following topics: (a) Parents, (b) Student Behavior, (c) Student Welfare, (d) Funding, (e) Achievement and Success,(f) Staff Welfare, and (g) Community Relations.

Parents: Generating Support and Commitment to Learning

Principals believed that parental attitudes to education generally influence how well children do in school. Given the geographic distance and past delivery of schooling in the N.W.T., northern parents have not always played a significant role in their children's education. With more and more students remaining in their communities to grade 12, principals are cognizant that they may also have to help parents become more involved than in the past, and to educate parents in this process.

Inviting Parents into the School

One principal described how important is was for her school to become open to having parents, "to start saying we want you in our school, we want you to start dropping in anytime, please come and have a coffee, please come and talk to us." However it took more than mere invitation to get parents out and comfortable in school:

> It took a real concerted effort, and by that I mean inviting parents into the school everytime we had a celebration, or everytime we finished a theme. Having them come for an afternoon, for instance. To give you an idea, we did a theme a couple of years ago called *Takogene,* and it was the Inuktitut equivalent of *Sesame Street,* produced by the Inuit Broadcasting Corporation out of Iqaluit, so that was one of our primary themes, and there are a number of puppets that are the characters on *Takogene.* As a theme or an end of theme celebration, we invited parents to come and see.
>
> We had the hallways decorated, the classrooms decorated, folders they had prepared, books they had prepared, songs that they had created on video tape and ah, you know, just lots of material that the kids had created to share with their parents. And then we had invited parents for the afternoon. It was a puppet-making afternoon, and parents were part of that, making puppets with their children, and we had coffee and tea, and I think that was . . . one of the first kind of theme celebrations that we had with parents. Ever since we do that every time.

In another region, a principal described his "very aggressive parent-volunteer group" as playing a significant role in the daily work of his school. This program ensures that there is a room parent in each classroom, "a parent who is your main helper, and they help you to coordinate all the other parents, for all the other things that go on." An effective means of networking parents in the community, this program made a significant difference in this school's parent involvement. However, the program dwindles in the high school classroom: "We have the parent volunteer program for grade 10-11, we have the room parent, but in terms of aggressive, no!"

Success of Grade Extensions Program

The importance of keeping students in their home community for high school is confirmed for one principal as he described his home-boarding situation by contrast. Three out of the four students have dropped out, and he despaired the loss, "They're our failures, my failures, they're gone. They've gone home. It didn't work." He suggests that often, the homeboarding situation lacked concern for the student:

> and some of those people don't have phones of their own, and some of those people are boozing it up and that's the reality of it, and most of them are doing it for $30 a day. They lose control of the situation, and you lose control of the kids. And then you lose the kids, because then they bring their behaviors in, they fall behind, you can't do anything about it. . . . The bottom line is, they're not home and no one's taking care of them where they are.

He proposed an alternative scenario for students who must homeboard in his community:

> Instead of taking those individuals and putting them into this house and this house and this house, at the rate of $900 each, why not take them, find two people who are kind and loving and firm and structured and not boozing it up and so on; call them home parents or whatever, pay them, put those four students and those two people into a house together, and then let the principal be the contact person and very, very heavily involved in the interaction, the principal and the teachers. . . . So that you have the school and the homeboarding home, the two are like an extension of each other, you can embrace and envelop these people then.

Whether or not homeboarding continues much past the next school year, this principal made an important point: the home and the school must work closely to ensure that a child has the opportunity for continued success in his or her learning. It is crucial to ensure the child has a "home" because the alternative, "they're not home and no one's taking care of them where they are," spells almost certain failure, not only for the student, but ultimately for society.

Educating Parents

One principal commented, "Parenting, contrary to popular belief does not just happen naturally. It is hard work combined with a great deal of luck. Somehow parents need to be helped and supported to really begin to make the difference that is needed." Parenting workshops offer one answer towards creating healthy families and healthy kids:

> She's going to be working with our high school students on self-awareness and doing healing groups with them, trust-building, and then she's also working with the drug and alcohol workers in the community to provide workshops for them, on how to set up and support helping groups in the community, as well as evening healing sessions in the community for anyone who wants to go, so that linking I guess, that goes back to linking the school to the community, that if we have healthy families, we're going to have healthy kids.

Principals discussed many social dysfunctions that play havoc with a child's chances for learning in school. There is a clear need for wellness counselling and healing for some parents as well as students. In one community, healing sessions for high school students are supported by parents "who are asked to attend evening sessions with the trainers so they would recognize and be prepared to help their children with any change they may start experiencing," but "of course it was the sober parents and the ones who had done some of their own healing who could attend and not feel threatened." Although this principal did not gain support from all the parents of the 26 students who participated in the four-week healing sessions, there was approval from general community members:

> I did get a large response from elders on the street. They said thank you for what you're doing. And other people that didn't have their kids right in there approved, and told me about it, on the street. When I'm on the street and when I'm at Northern [store].

"Educating parents" for many principals includes sending regular newsletters informing them of school activities, successes and meetings. One principal writes preschool newsletters to the parents of children who are starting kindergarten in the following year, in order to "give them some ideas" about learning readiness for their child:

> I really see the need for early, early intervention here. . . . What we were finding was that, when we screened in May, students were at one level, and when they came in to school, and parents saw what we expected, all of a sudden they'd learned those things. So I realized that, maybe if I start in September and begin sending this stuff out to the kids, that gives the parents something to work on with them. Maybe we'll see some changes, and in some cases we have. Some parents I don't think do anything with it, but other ones do.

This principal also wants parents more directly engaged in issues of discipline and more actively committed to their child's learning. Many students regularly dismissed from school because of inappropriate behavior,

> are back on the playground within the hour . . . and have on some occasions caused other problems. We have tried through our newsletters to educate parents and offer

> suggestions on ways to deal with a suspension, but still many parents feel we are reponsible for their children from 9 to 4, especially if they are working.

Parents' Commitment to Schooling

A related concern was the general lack of commitment to school evidenced by both students and parents. Faced with children who are not working and failing in school, parents in one community

> want us to send their kids to a regional school where residence and house parents monitor study hall and homework and the students are quite successful. Even though the CEC [Community Education Council] agreed that it was time the parents took back responsibility for their children and stop passing their problems to the regional school, we have not seen any change and have not found the magic combination yet.

A principal of a 9-12 high school concurred that schools would be more effective if there were "more real supports from the home. This is especially so at the high school level where, it seems, parents now believe their work is over. Sadly, it is where the most attention should be paid." The value placed on education differed from community to community. A commitment to education as embraced by parents and community and communicated to children was lacking in some cases, and fairly inconsistent in others:

> Up here, education is not necessarily valued as such. The school is a good thing to have in the community, it's a place the kids can be taken for most of the day and it provides community resources, but as for education per se, I'm not sure that anything is understood about that by anything more than a few of the population. I think that's a much bigger variable [than first language instruction], it's probably the biggest variable in how well the kid will do. Parental attitude towards education is probably the single biggest variable. It can even overcome things like intellectual difficulties.

The school principal in this community felt that most parents were basically uninformed about the educational choices that lay before their children, and yet were expected to be the ones to make decisions on their child's coursework in high school. His experience was that for most parents,

> all they know is that school is school, that's it. The subtleties or details of what it entails we have to explain, the difference between academic and general, so for the parents to make the decision is lofty and idealistic. Practically speaking, we end up . . . advising them and steering them in a direction that their child is best suited for.

There was concerted effort made by all these principals to maintain frequent contact with the home in a variety of ways - regular newsletters, mid-term and end-semester reports, parent-student-teacher conferences, monthly attendance reports and phone calls home, as well as public radio announcements, newspaper articles, and invitations to parents to attend a variety of school activities and presentations - for

communications to be strengthened between the home and the school, and for parents to become more involved in their children's education from kindergarten right on through to grade twelve.

For these principals, generating parent support and commitment to learning continued to be a challenge. One principal summarized it succinctly: "The school that can figure out how to get active parental involvement will also be the one that begins to effect change."

Inappropriate Behavior: "An inordinate amount of time"

With current cutbacks, counselling services in schools were often inadequate and an added workload was generally shifted to the principals. Most principals reported spending far too much time on problems of student behavior. One principal noted that it seriously eroded time spent with students in a positive context, and that she often felt discouraged and frustrated:

> We seem to be having a lot more problems than we were having before. We have a couple of fairly extreme younger students that we're having great difficulty with and I spend a lot of time with Social Services these days, and Family Counselling and organizations like that, and with these younger students. You get involved with them but you know that there is nothing you can do about their home life and there is nothing you can do about the things that go on in their lives, but you have to cope with their reactions in school, and we're spending a lot of time on those kinds of things.

This principal was not alone in her feelings that "there's days that I feel I spend much more time on counselling and social work than I do on what you would consider administration kinds of activities . . . I even do my marriage counsellor bit with a couple of parents!"

Counselling and discipline were a binary focus for a second principal, who was "spending a lot of time this year dealing with discipline, an inordinate amount of time, and I think that a lot of these problems or concerns could be avoided if there was some better programming and some different staffing in some key places." He worked with Program Support and Student Service Coordination, and with Guidance Counsellors, Home-school Counsellors and Program Support teachers:

> I spend a lot of time in that area and will continue to spend a lot of time in that area. I guess part of the concern has been that these positions have been staffed by people who really don't have the credentials or the skills to do the job well. Not a slight against them, they're conscientious, hard-working people, but they've been put into positions that they really they should never have been put into. . . . But in terms of the types of problems and the complexity of problems we are dealing with at the school in terms of kids with emotional problems, behavioural problems, learning disabilities and the need for assessment and program planning and implementation and the amount of energy that's needed to do that job, well I think we need to be

> recruiting and hiring these people very carefully. Those are very key positions in the school.

A third principal reported that although there is a discipline policy in place, and a zero tolerance policy that went into effect a year ago, "I spend most of my time talking to students and their parents about behavior. . . . We are using the Second Step Program in the school which teaches the students problem solving skills and I use this process in my dealings." This principal found she does much of her paper work at home in the evenings, and pondered a more workable solution: "I have been thinking about a procedure where the counsellor could start the process and bring students to me after she has got the main info from them and written it down for me."

Establishing Control

Several principals had to establish control in their new schools on first arriving:

> The first year we spent a lot of time on discipline and routines. A lot of time. For instance, the first couple of months it was perfectly normal for kids to leave the classroom and run pell-mell down the hallways to the bathroom, it seemed to be an accepted kind of behavior that they would do that. Things like pushing and shoving in the hallways and on the playgrounds, and hitting and those kinds of things seemed to be fairly common. That was a lot of our emphasis in the first year, was gaining control and getting things into routines and getting kids to understand limits, what they could and couldn't do, and then of course from there trying to get the focus on the actual classroom learning and getting the kids focused in that sense.

Another principal described a similar situation, and invited all staff, CEC members and parents to come together to help solve the widespread problem of inappropriate behaviors she witnessed in her school. Parents did not come to the first meetings, but the principal, CEC and school staff put together "a list of everything that we couldn't put up with. It went from stealing hats at recess to fights, it covered the whole spectrum, I bet there were 25 to 30 things." They were determined to "take a very hard-line approach . . . because we needed control, we felt we had no control at all." As the school began sending home the many student offenders, parents began to take notice. "We had the parents angry enough that they were willing to come out and talk and look at what problems we were facing and help us try to deal with them."

With parents on side, they began the process of developing a discipline policy that would work in the school. However, there are issues that remain a struggle today:

> And (sigh) that has continued to progress, I've gone to sessions with Barbara Coloroso, we tried a time out room, in-school suspensions. . . . The only big change in the last couple of years that we've just felt repercussions with is automatic dismissal for any kind of violence, because that was the only one that we have not been able to deal with, that kids are still being very mean and violent towards each other, and that one in the last year has become the zero tolerance policy that we put into place.

Causes of Student Misbehavior

Principals suggested a variety of reasons for the escalating problems in student misbehavior. For one principal, his school struggled

> with the realities of students who for whatever reasons, cannot seem to give school their full attention. They know that school is what they need to "do," but somehow do not have the wherewithal to make theory their reality. Dysfunctional homes, unsupportive parents, substance abuse, learning disabilities, the attraction of part-time work and "quick money", social dynamics and many other factors vie for students' attention. To make it to school and actually focus for five hours a day seems insurmountable for some students we have.

Another principal agreed that social dysfunctions head the list of causes of increasing discipline-related issues at the K-11 school. She identified as one problem the changes in the community, that "drug, alcohol and gambling problems seem to be on the rise. This is finding its way into the school, not only in its effects but also in the problems themselves." Another principal concurred that there have been alcohol and abuse problems in the community for many years, and that the greatest frustration was "to try and deal with issues when there was so much denial."

A second cause of misbehavior revolved around issues of ambiguity, with "CEC members [who] are giving ambiguous messages, want more input but are not willing to put in time or become versed in realities of school." The principal explained,

> One prime example of how you can't get a concensus of exactly what direction they want you to go is, of course this is Arctic Winter Games year. Since I've been here, we've emphasized to the students that "Yeah, we'll give you all kinds of opportunities to go on trips and participate in sports, but in return you have to give us academic effort and proper behavior and those kinds of things." Last year the CEC members decided, no, Arctic Winter Games is a community event and should have absolutely nothing to do with the school. So, this fall, the junior high kids, which is the prime group for Arctic Winter Games were coming in and saying to their teachers, we don't have to listen to you, I'm going to be on the team anyway, so it doesn't make any difference. I think that contributed a lot to our upheaval at the junior high this year.

A third cause of students' disruptive behavior was related to staff transience. This year, there are "seven new staff members, and four are directly from the south." Furthermore, "trying to accommodate high school within a primary-elementary system" added to the disruptions and behavior problems in the hallways:

> We had to try to get across to these "adults" that, we know you're an adult but while you're within these walls we have to expect behavior in certain ways because you are, there's also a five-year old child watching you behave. We had some difficulty getting that idea across.

Changing staff was identified by two other principals as the root of classroom behavioral problems leading to office referrals. One described that:

> we have had a real tough time with two classes, two grade 8-9 classes, and they both have new teachers this year, they were very attached to, had the same staff members, or knew the staff members who were with us for four years, so that was very hard for kids to accept, and they are challenging the new people, so we have had a lot of issues to deal with, with them.

Another principal described a similar case, where a young class acted out against losing their teacher in mid-year. First interpreted as disruptive misbehavior, she eventually recognized them as signs of grieving and loss:

> You know, they knew, she was pregnant when the year started, they knew that it was coming, and I never would have anticipated that it was going to be a problem, that they wouldn't just accept somebody new coming in, but right away they didn't like her, she couldn't do anything at first that could win them over. It was so disappointing to see what they had changed to, the behaviors and everything. You'd hear comments, and she'd hear them too, they'd call her the wicked witch, and she wasn't doing anything to deserve what she was getting. It was just their process of going through their grief, I'm sure that's what they were going through, missing her.

Dealing with Student Misbehavior

Schools are using a variety of strategies in attempting to deal with discipline problems. One principal implemented a Second Step Program, which teaches students to use problem solving skills rather than physical violence in her school. Another principal heard his staff's concern for "kids who act out, who could be abusive or whatever" and planned for "six staff development exercises or workshops that became a part of our staff meetings," where they worked on "how to deal with threatening students in terms of modulating your voice, how you address them, your body language and that kind of thing."

A third principal introduced a Five Step Problem Solving process "to help students learn to deal more effectively with issues, disputes or disagreements as opposed to using violence." Elders have been involved in helping students problem-solve an issue or they have also gone into classes and spoken to small groups of the whole class about expected behaviors from a traditional Inuit perspective (i.e., the importance of sharing and showing respect for others). Preventive Discipline Workshops have also been offered in this school:

> "catch them being good, noticing the positive" so out of that we did go back and revisit. We had had a behavior or belief statement, and we did some changing of that to come up with two school-wide rules that we could all live with and believe in. . . . And we chose five key words that we felt embody what we believe in in our school, and that's communication, pride, respect, responsibility and tradition, so everything we do centres around those key words.

This principal described her efforts to change what was formerly a punitive system of dealing with issues as they were handled by former principals, and trying to create a process where students are responsible for their own behavior and problem-solving. "We have problem solving steps, there's a five-step process that we use, encourage everyone to use, be it a staff member or a student or whatever." She commented also that suspension was not the answer to most problems:

> I just find that lengthy suspensions do not work. It may help in the short run for a staff member or the group of students in the classroom, but it is not doing anything productive for that child or that student, and we have got to get to the core of that issue, to what's causing that behavior, and I think that something that's coming across very strongly is that if we have programs that are challenging to kids, that are exciting, are of interest to kids, that are relevant to their lives, then we're going to have a lot less in terms of behavior problems.

Making students responsible for their own behavior was the route several principals tried this year, as well as offering positive rewards and exemptions for exemplary behavior and attendance. Offering exciting programs and flexible timetables were also directed at "the reality of constantly trying to bring lacklustre students up to speed, not just once, but repeatedly as they continue patterns of poor attendance." One school principal feels that "the school is valiant in its efforts; unfortunately it must be said that in some cases, student effort is not of a corresponding nature." It can be difficult to gain staff concensus on issues of dealing with reluctant attenders:

> There is also the reality of a staff very much divided on what approach to take with respect to attendance. Some believe that there should be a rigid, black and white policy that is adhered to regardless of circumstance or performance. . . boundaries are set and clear and there is no enabling students to be irresponsible. The other side of the argument is that natural consequences ultimately determine the reward or penalty for a student. As with all things, there are no clear cut answers, only more questions.

Issues of student behavior were generally handled by the principal and his or her staff; there was less support from outside agencies and parents, supports badly needed in coming to grips with what most principals saw as an escalating problem with few ready solutions. One principal, presented with problems of classroom control, put the question back to the staff.

> And when it came to crunch time with a couple of teachers really feeling threatened that they couldn't control their class, it's like what am I going to do about it? And I had a really hard time in the sense of what am I going to do, what are you going to do? You are always asking the kids to change, but how are you going to change, and people really feeling threatened by that. Somehow . . . it just wasn't coming together, in terms of what I thought, people should be taking more professional responsibility for what's going on in the room.

In summary, encouraging the attendance, study habits and appropriate behaviors of many recalcitrant students took much time out of every administrator's day.

Student Welfare

Principals also expressed strong concerns for student welfare in all the domains. Discipline was carried out with a caring hand, and although it usurped time from other important tasks, one principal saw her work in this area as essential to improved student welfare:

> I spend a lot of time with the kids. My desk right now, I'm sitting here, you cannot see my desk, and I never take time to worry about that. It's not worth it. . . . My role has really changed. I used to spend a lot of time sitting at my desk, doing paper work. That is the last thing on my mind right now, I would rather be with the kids, trying to help them deal with issues, change behavior in a positive way. Um, I have one kid who says he doesn't want to come to my office anymore because all I do is talk, talk, talk, (laughs) one of the grade ones, who says (mimicking exasperation) "Why do I always have to go to see because all she she wants to do is talk, talk, talk" (laughs) and I said, well, you must go home instead. "Oh, I'll come and talk then," he says.

Principals' commitment to students' learning experiences in school went far beyond curriculum matters, and suggested an overriding concern for the general welfare of students. Three areas related to student welfare that consistently surfaced in conversations with principals were (a) Providing for wellness, healing and greater self-esteem, (b) Creating inclusive schools that are welcoming, exciting and relevant places to learn, and (c) Offering greater access to learning for all students through new initiatives such as more flexible timetabling and provision of daycare facilities and school-to-workplace experiences.

Providing for Wellness, Healing and Self-esteem

One principal stated that "my role has really changed" in terms of the amount of time she spends with students. She commented on the greater need for healing in her school: "I don't know whether it is because we've dealt with the stupid little discipline things and we're getting into deeper discipline stuff that's coming from other things that's causing the behaviors, and that's where the need's coming from" but it was her belief that learning readiness is related to wellness and self-esteem, issues that she felt her school must tackle before real learning can begin to take place.

This is the "deeper discipline stuff" she addressed when she introduced a four-week healing session that she made a mandatory requirement for all high school students returning to school this past September: "If you are willing to do the 20 days and be

successful, then I am willing to look at you coming back to school, whether 16 or 20 or whatever the age." She described the program:

> The first session took place the first four weeks of school and were facilitated by trainers from the Dene Cultural Institute. Twenty-six students started the program which was broken down into four themes, one for each week. The first week, the materials covered dealt with self-esteem, the second week was on the affect of drug and alcohol abuse, the third very briefly introduced grieving and the final week looked at support within the community. Although very strict guidelines were set for attendance and tardiness, twenty four students successfully completed the four weeks.

A second session was planned and funded for four weeks in the spring. The principal notes that with the "two four-week blocks, we have been very creative in our timetabling for high school students and have also worked with the Department to find curriculum matches so students have received credits for material covered in the healing program." She explained further that it was a "four-credit program, two CALM credits for covering two CALM themes, and two CTS Health courses were being covered in the materials we had picked, accidentally, so it turned into four weeks, four credits. For the first session." It is difficult to assess the success of the program at this time, but this principal is convinced that its value will be realized in years to come:

> Although we have not seen any great change in our students, I feel our success is in starting the healing process. Our students have always held so much back and not been willing to open up and start dealing with things that have happened in their past and continue to happen outside of school. I have realized for years until some of this "stuff" is dealt with, many of our students will not be successful in school or ultimately their lives. It may be years before these students realize or start to use some of the ideas covered but as I said above, it is a start to the process.

Recognizing the need to continue this program past the first four weeks- "initially we saw a big change, but it didn't take long before old behaviors cropped right back up"- this principal introduced a daily healing circle "we decided to run, instead of CALM, a daily circle, so that it was in their minds everyday for a half hour." Her argument was that

> credits are not important to me for these kids right now, because they're not being successful anyway. So to use that half hour to try and deal with some of these issues was more important to me than whether they are going to get their CALM credits . . . they just were not being successful because other things were happening to them outside of school, they weren't doing homework, they weren't doing assignments, they weren't studying for exams, they were failing anyway. So, to me it was more important that that half hour keep those issues on top instead of letting them start pushing them back down again.

The healing circle did not continue when the counsellor-in-training was hired elsewhere and "there [was] no one on my staff who quite feels comfortable enough or is

available half an hour a day to hold a healing circle with them every day, so it's been sort of put on hold." However, her conviction for this program continues in her actions:

> at the celebration we had at the end of the first four weeks, I presented them with one feather, and said that was the start of their wing, and they had to earn the rest of their feathers as this process continued, either through whichever way they chose, or through our way, whichever way they chose. And, um, (sigh) when we knew it was going to continue I went in to talk to the kids, and they are very interested, they thoroughly enjoyed the twenty days.

In planning for next year, she wondered about her target group for healing because her grades 7, 8, 9s were "willing to talk" whereas "the older kids have started abusing. The high school kids have already made that jump over, whereas the 7, 8, 9s may have a couple of times, but they haven't jumped right over the line yet." In working with this group on second step intervention, she found them more willing to communicate:

> They were willing to talk about what's going on in the home, how they deal with it, all the coping skills they've come up with, and so my brain started going again. Where is my target group? Who should be my target group here? Should I say, so these guys are hopeless, or these guys are ready, or what???

Her solution was to include the 7, 8 and 9s in one week of healing in the spring:

> So the way we are going to go is, the 7, 8, 9s are going to have one week in the spring, they're going to take the first week of the four weeks, and the DCI [Dene Cultural Institute] is going to get a feel of where are we with this group in a week, and how far can we take them. The older kids will still have three weeks, we're hoping to do a bit of it out on the land, so it's going on 24 hours a day and things can't be going on outside the workshop, with the older kids. And then, we're going to look at, now what are we going to do next year. Should we be hitting the 7, 8, 9s? What I 'd really like to do, I'd like to do a whole year of healing for my whole school, but. . . .

"Healthy Families and Healthy Kids." An Eastern Arctic principal echoed similar concerns, "that if we have healthy families, we're going to have healthy kids" and that "there's more recognition now, until the kids are better, in a better state of mind and with a better sense of self, the learning isn't going to take place anyway. I'm hearing that more and more." She described issues that impact student welfare:

> and they bring those to school with them, I mean there are all kinds of social and emotional issues, be it that mom and dad have had an argument and mom has been physically assaulted last night and then kids are coming to school having witnessed it. Drug use, yes, and we have had kids that we have had to support and we've learned that they have been sniffing gas for instance, or glue or whatever. Yeah, we definitely have those issues as well, and I think that we have to deal with those issues.

This principal urged the need for support networks that focus on the "whole person":

> When there is a child who comes, and you know the night before there may have been alcohol in the home and that child hasn't slept, that we support that child, that it's okay to be feeling upset and that it's okay to be angry at dad or at mom because they were drinking last night, and that we have supports in place, be it through another staff member or the school community counsellor, or to be able to talk to an elder, or maybe they just need time to go and help with a younger group of kids, you know, out of their own classroom environment for a little bit. So it's that idea of looking at the whole person and supporting wherever that support is needed.

For this principal, healing and awareness went hand-in-hand, and bringing in other northern educators who have proven expertise in behavior modification, "and the two of them came and were with us for two days of our PI time . . . they also gave a parenting workshop in the evening when they were here" was one way of handling the challenges of wellness in the school and community.

Working with individual students. Several principals described their one-on-one work with students as being both important and personally satisfying.

> I work with individuals sometimes, I try to find an excuse to have kids who are having difficulties be with me for a while, you know, just spend some time talking and see what we can get across to them or help them. I do spend a fair bit of time just casually with kids. If the high school are having their break and they're sitting around in the lobby area, I just wander out and see what they're chatting about and talk with them.

These principals liked to work with kids, and generally had heightened sensitivities to, and various ways of coping with, the many circumstances their students brought to school. They expressed the need for early intervention initiatives. One argued that:

> For the average student with a supportive home environment, schools are successful. However, for those who do not come from such an experience, we can't even begin to teach because there is usually so much else to deal with. Inclusion is supposed to be about learning, but too often becomes about other factors like behavior or attitude or an unwillingness to work. These are real hurdles, and prevent us from being as successful as we should be.

He believed that early prevention will lessen problems down the road, problems abundant in today's high schools:

> Systemically, we are not keeping pace with the new nature of the child who arrives on the doorsteps of schools everywhere in North America. FAS, FAE, ADD, ADHD and on goes the alphabet soup. It is not impossible to deal with, it is just improbable to deal with effectively if schools are not supported appropriately. This does not necessarily mean through additional monies. It does mean that leadership and professional development must be a priority at every level of the educational field. It also means that as a society we must become proactive and begin to deal with our problems effectively. The appropriate time is when students are young and reachable. We must put the appropriate services into schools where every child is accessible. If prevention is practiced early in a child's life, there is a possibility that a difference can be made, despite whatever personal circumstances a child comes from.

One K-11 principal wondered how early one should start with healing in the school where "other things have started happening . . . drugs sold in our school to two classes below even the grade 7, 8, 9 class," and recognized the "continual stuff on peer pressure and decision making and problem solving and you're your own person . . . is a major, major focus in the classes, everywhere, but major in the kids that are in grades three and up." Early intervention was seen as critical in taking a proactive stance.

Creating Welcoming and Exciting Schools that offer Relevant Learning

Each of the seven principals worked in a school that exists within a community facing unique challenges of distance, climate and geography, as well as differences in size, resources, culture and language. Creating schools that reflect the community mandate for cultural relevance and academic standards is a big challenge. This section will touch on (a) Academic standards, (b) Relevant programs, (c) Safe and caring schools, and (d) Developing a positive school culture.

Academic Standards. One principal considered the desire to offer academic programs in his community school, where parents are not clear as to the difference between academic and general programs, to be "lofty and idealistic."

> For example, we're mandated now to offer 10-level courses every year. Now, if there's no one in grade 9 who has the capacity to take grade 10, as happens to be the case this year, we only have one and she is pregnant, so we are not going to offer any 10-level courses next semester. we're going to offer 13/23/33 but we will offer 20 for the students who started with 10 last year. We started out with 8 or 9, and wound up with five that actually passed all four 10-level courses. The pressure is on from the Board to have 10/20/30 and have students in all of those, but in Alberta, not every student takes10. Quite a few of them take 13 and because of the small numbers and the fact that English is a second language for them, quite often 10 is not the appropriate course. We're told that we're not the ones to make that decision, we're told that that should be up to the parents and the individual students. So unrealistic.

Another principal saw it differently. For her, providing high school in the home community offered more challenge for students while in a safe environment. Students were encouraged to try academic levels and were generally dissuaded from pursuing 16-level courses. She pointed out her deep concern for pushing the learning potential of students, that

> as a settlement teacher one of my complaints for years has been that when our kids go to the regional centres they get slotted into the lowest programs, and I think that we have made a real effort to correct that here because we do have mostly settlement teachers here and we are well aware of how kids get slotted into 16-level courses and stay there, instead of getting moved up. You know, 16 was intended to be a bridging kind of thing, but from my experience it hasn't worked out that way.

> Kids go into them and they finish their grade 12 still at that level of course. I guess we try to address that here and encourage kids into at least 13-level courses.

A third principal raised questions of relevance: "As in any community, we've very much taken th Alberta and N.W.T. curricula and made it more relevant to the experiences of the kids here, to offer programs to try and meet the needs of everyone." Again, the situation of meeting the needs of all poses challenges to flexibility and innovation:

> And that's the challenge, you know, when you have kids that have dropped out of school and have been out, they may have been non-attenders in their grade 8 and 9 years and so they may have been out of school really for three years. And then they're really keen and really want to go back to grade 10, and so we've allowed them to come back to our grade 10 program. So in that same classroom you have those folks and you have folks who have come right from your grade 9 program, so it's a challenge, yeah!

Relevant Programs. For all principals, the commitment was to provide relevant programs for students, with the belief that self-esteem was enhanced and promoted through culturally relevant programs. In discussing high school programs to be introduced next year, one principal emphasized the importance of considering the whole person, that education should embrace all the domains:

> In talking about the varying programs that we would like to offer, what came through again today was the importance of learning being a process. . . . I guess ultimately what I want students to have is that desire to continue to learn, that it's going to be a process for their life, and that they will develop skills in a wide range of areas and will be able to know themselves and to identify what they can do well and build on that and also be honest about what they don't do so well and if they so choose to work on that, then wonderful. . . . And to have that balance between all aspects of who we are as individuals and human beings, you know, that balance between our intellectual selves, our spiritual, the emotional, social and the physical, I think that's so important.

A similar concern drove the principal of a larger 9-12 high school. Believing that schools must appeal to all the dom ains, "the intellectual is in a sense the easy one . . . but learning takes place along many different planes." He pointed out that schools provide

> the only kind of real support structure that [students] have, and I don't want necessarily to take on the adoptive parent role, but in some cases you almost have to go to that extreme, but I do know that we need to provide a safe and nurturing environment in many domains. We have a Department that's asking us to focus on not just the intellectual but the spiritual, the social, emotional, and physical, and I don't know how you do that unless you're going beyond the program, because it's beyond the program where you essentially hit the social and emotional and even potentially some of the physical aspects, and certainly in our case, the spiritual aspect.

Another principal confirmed the growing importance of the spiritual aspect of learning, that "it's really again that idea of a holistic approach to the whole person, and they [community] want the spiritual aspect taught as well . . . and it came to the CEC as a

question they had around the Education Act, and they wanted to see spiritual education as part of the school programs."

Safe, Caring and Inviting Schools. Beyond the ever-present focus of providing relevant learning, the theme of making schools more welcoming, "a safe and caring and inviting place" was illustrated in various ways as principals pointed out again and again that schools today must be about more than achieving grades. All schools offered a variety of extra-curricular activities that reflected student interests and available staff and community talents. Several larger schools have implemented TAP [Teacher-Advisor Programs] that foster a sense of belonging amongst multi-grade, heterogeneous groupings of students. The teachers of the program meet regularly to plan themes and the month's activities. The advantages are many, one being the direct contact with parents that each TAP teacher ensures:

> We encourage that the TAP teacher be the front line in terms of contact, and as with all things, some teachers do a much better job than others. It's outside of, over and above the work load of teaching, but essentially I think that it's now in the position where no one can ignore it, and staff members have to deal with some of the expectations because it has become an integrated part of the school.

One school included a rationale for TAP in its school calendar. In part it stated:

> The youth of today face, and will continue to face, at least as complex a world as ours is today. The hope is that they will approach their world and the problems and choices it poses with more wisdom, courage, and insight than their parents, teachers and leaders typically display. It is with this in mind that we hope to begin to make a difference with the TAP initiative. . . . TAP is predicated on the belief that we are all responsible for the quality of life in the school. The role of advisor and the personal contact between the adult and the young adult fosters a feeling of self worth that enhances the learning experience.

Efforts to make school a "community, a family-based kind of thing, the analogy to looking out for one another and being a part of a family" were reflected in the steps taken to make new grade 9 students comfortable in their new high school, and giving all students the opportunity to practice leadership in a variety of ways:

> We are getting more leadership out of our kids, more initiative and more responsibility, but we're not where we need to be yet. We're a bit disappointed with our grade 12's. But there have been many activities that have made a difference. The SADD [Students Against Drunk Drivers] group are busy with student-sponsored and student-initiated kinds of activity that has just taken off and made a real impact. . . . It evolved out of a very tragic set of circumstances . . . and it has just grown in two years to the point where they'll be going to a national SADD convention.

This principal recognized that there are always students who "don't appreciate very much, mainly because they don't really appreciate themselves to begin with" and

that "they take all of that out on either the people or the things around them . . . it's becoming more prevalent unfortunately, and I think that is the direction society is going now" but noted that the majority of students are excited about their new school:

> They love, for instance, the radio broadcasts. Every noonhour it's one hopping place. And I don't mind it. There's life and excitement and a good social environment too. And we still have the struggle of getting kids to class when they should be in and all those kinds of things, and we can take it in good humour and take it in stride and generally respond favourably.

Developing a Positive School Culture. One large school invited their grade nine students to a retreat intended as a welcome and orientation to the school:

> Well, we have a grade 12 retreat, which is kind of the end of the journey for grad . . . and a reflective opportunity, a chance to think about where they've been and where they are now and where they're headed, who they're with, the glad times, the sad times, and just an opportunity to gel into a cohesive group. And that's important. But I thought it was equally important, coming in, that the kids get to know one another, they're coming from different schools, that they gel together and understand a little about the spirit of our high school, what is important, what we value, and that we just have fun together. And that intent was achieved.

In developing a positive culture in the school, support must be given in all the domains:

> we've worked very hard at offering diverse activities, and so our student activities program is actually mapped out . . . to hit the five domains, the intellectual, spiritual, emotional, social, physical, and so sports are not the dominant thing. It is an element in the school, and an important one, but no more important than say, the intellectual pursuits. Our yearbook, we're really pleased, just won a national award for its layout.

For another principal, "creating a clear and uncompromising stand that in this school the students will come first, not just in philosophy but in day-to-day practice" clarified the focus which "becomes suddenly very clear in every decision that is made - even the difficult ones." Providing students with opportunities to flex their voice in matters of their schooling is actively practiced by most principals. Collaborating in the writing of the school mission statement is one example. One student council requested a clearer "distinguishing between elementary and junior and senior . . . a structured voice. They wanted their student council not just to be a fundraising thing." Another student council worked with the school administration and teacher advisor groups in gathering ideas from their student body in a whole-school revisiting and re-writing of the mission statement. In two other K-11 schools, the grade 7, 8, 9 classes took student leadership roles in their schools; one initiated a newly-formed student council and the other participated in the school renovation plans, reporting back to the entire school and involving the student body in decisions as well.

All principals spoke of holding assemblies and activities that encourage a positive school culture to develop over time. In one K-11 school, the introduction of *Inuuqatigiit* offered such an opportunity for people in the school to come together every Monday, Wednesday and Friday mornings for the first half-hour of the day:

> At the beginning of the school year, we put our students in multi-age groups, and named a grade 10 or 11 student as the group facilitator or leader. We have 18 groups of about 8 or 9 students per group ranging from grade 1 to grade 11. . . . We have a variety of both traditional and non-traditional games such as bone games, sealskin juggling balls, traditional drums, rabbit skull game, skipping, snakes & ladders, dominoes, etc. Each group is encouraged to work cooperatively to play the game with the other group members. We also have activities each month during *Inuuqatigiit* group time to focus on our school key words which are communication, pride, respect, responsibility and tradition. We are concentrating on tradition for the month of March and each *Inuuqatigiit* group made a mural of what tradition means to them.
>
> We felt this "getting together" on Monday, Wednesday and Friday mornings would allow us opportunites to develop cooperation skills, to develop peer helping skills with older students being responsible for helping younger students, which is a strong traditional belief of the Inuit, and it would allow us time to get together as a whole school to create more of a sense of community and to have regularly scheduled time to share successes and to celebrate our learning. I feel our *Inuuqatigiit* Group time . . . provides a nice way of opening in the morning by bringing us together as a whole group, a family or community!

Offering Greater Access to Learning for All Students

Making learning more accessible for all students is a departmental mandate in the N.W.T. as reflected in the implementation of grade extensions in communities and the growing opportunities for distance learning; it is also a personally held conviction for each of the principals as seen in several initiatives introduced in their schools. One principal felt that "about 80% of our student population is not destined for post-secondary" and that

> here in the North we've been missing an element that the South has effectively in place and that is that kind of school-to-work transitioning, whether it be post-secondary to tech institutes or to work environment immediately. We have to do a better job of having that articulated and happening.

This section will deal briefly with some of the principals' beliefs on the need for greater access to learning for all students through (a) Authentic Learning in the workplace, (b) Flexibility in timetabling, and (c) Day care facilities in schools.

Authentic Learning and the Work Place. Most principals were offering CTS modules to offer students opportunities to "learn more of the real things" in school. Given that many more students will join the workforce rather than pursue post-secondary studies, one principal suggested:

> Now we need to get that middle bridging happening and the opportunity for students while they are in high school to begin on a tech-prep kind of program so that they can make that transition into either a technical institute or into a job that requires the kinds of

> skills that business are demanding, and I think that there's an understanding that those linkages and bridgings have to happen, but I don't think that we've got to a point where it is going to happen.

For another principal, apprenticeship programs in his school offer students an opportunity to learn from the real world, with the school

> working with a couple of businesses, where students actually are not going to school fulltime, they're actually at these businesses for a big part of their time, and we're working with the businesses. We have a teacher here who works with the manager-owner and with the administration.

This school has also developed a Cooperative Education Handbook in collaboration with the business community, with the intention of improving school-community relations in work experience situations:

> The main concern I guess from the community is, basically, the type of students who end up going into work experience often are students who are dropping out of classes, or students who ah, didn't want to take, are more vocational oriented, or maybe not more vocational but maybe more dysfunctional kind of students. They're the ones that wouldn't be showing up on time, that would be missing their work, or there's problems of attendance showing up, or following directions, you know, not working hard enough. These sort of attitudes, work habits type of things.

Working with both community and students towards creating more productive work experiences continued to be a challenge for principals:

> The people you want to get out there who don't want to be in school, or the kids who don't want to be in school full time and want to be learning someplace else, are often the ones who don't, haven't maybe the literacy skills or don't have the work habits to be successful.

Recently re-writing the Cooperative Education Handbook on school has "rewritten the guidelines for students and businesses, basically tightened things up so things would work more smoothly . . . that there be clearer expectations for employers and students, for teachers and the school. And that's something that has worked really well." Principals have also worked on career planning as mandated by the Department, giving students the tools to take initiative for their own education:

> We've made a mandatory job preparation course for grade 9 students, that these students must have before going out to a cooperative education worksite, and we've done that the second semester this year and again, that's very positive. Its very much getting students to think about setting goals, about planning, you know, the idea of plan your work and work your plan. That again is kind of in its beginning stages and is something that's gone really well.

Becoming more technologically "literate" is the emphasis for both students and teachers this year in some high schools. One principal described such a focus:

> We have structured our school so that all students must come to terms with it. For instance, all grade nine students must take an Information Processing required foundation module so that they are familiar with computers and word processing. They must also complete at least one module from the Communication Technology strand which features work in the areas of graphics, animation, audio/visual production, desktop publishing and so on.

Another principal of a smaller K-11 school ensured that all students working in the community are carefully monitored by staff, and that some of his students arrive at their worksite on time by driving them there himself. His belief was that once the student begins to experience success, attitudes and work habits tend to turn around:

> In fact, it [monitoring] is almost mind-boggling, but it is worth it. When it works, it's really worth it. You see, you can send a kid who is having trouble at school with the academics out on one of those things. That child experiences success, real success. That causes him to come back into the school in a better state of mind and motivated. Because that child knows I arranged that. That's the advantage of a little school, too, because they appreciate it.

Furthermore, the extent of this principal's support reflected his belief that students' learning at worksites was valuable, and that maintaining a positive rapport with the business community was a responsibility to be shared by the school and community.

Flexibility in Timetabling. Flexible timetabling also provided greater access for students. One high school had three timetables, "the Copernican [half-day classes], an 80-minute period, and four 64-minute periods, three different timetables rolled into one." One morning per week, classes began at 9:45, and several courses are offered after normal school hours also. In smaller community schools, the timetabling tended to be flexible to accommodate such activities as spring and fall camps, science fairs, book fairs and community celebrations.

CTS modules, usually 25 hours per credit, were entirely flexible and allowed students to work at their own pace and complete the number of modules they choose to do in a time frame they themselves determined.

Day Care Facilities. Some schools were looking at including daycare facilities, providing the young parents with a place to bring their child, as well as learn about childcare as part of their coursework. One principal had plans for her school to be part of a Community Learning Centre that included a Daycare and Aurora College on site, although plans are currently on hold, "Well, we had hoped, but now that has sort of fallen along the wayside because of money. The Department wouldn't provide the floorspace. That

doesn't mean we won't do it." She planned to coordinate classes and workspace with Aurora College in the newly renovated school:

> Aurora College has their own entrance, with their own area although still very much a part of us. The community was very happy with it. So we're going to have a building out back that . . . may become daycare. . . . It's a thick, solid building, and that may very well become the daycare building when we deal with everything else here.

For another school, the facility was already running in partnership with a community daycare:

> Right now there is no doubt that the community is actively involved in building from a physical accommodation, but it's also very much involved in the program, and in the operations of the building. The nature of some of the partnerships that we have dictate that. We have the YWCA in the daycare, and we have to work with them, both from a program perspective and from just the daycare operations perspective.

In this school, students not only leave their babies in the daycare while they attend classes, they also spend time in the daycare, learning about childcare, nutrition and so on, thereby enabling young mothers and fathers access to their own learning and their child's well-being - arguably one step towards the early intervention programs that principals believe are necessary for the welfare of their future students.

What is Learned: Achievement and Success

In a society that has seen rapid changes, so too have its children changed, and schools are attempting to come to terms with those changes. In the N.W.T., the "look" of schooling has shifted from a rather academic and impersonal treatment of subject matter as delivered in the regional centres, to an integrated approach to learning in home communities that makes efforts to take into account culture, language, and the wishes of the community. Principals raised concerns with maintaining standards, identifying levels of achievement and recognizing areas of success in schools.

There were various interpretations about what defined "academic" study across the territories, what should be learned in school, and how students should be evaluated on what they learn. This section will deal with (a) Changing Students, (b) Success versus Achievement, (c) High Academic Standards, (d) Courses Mandated by Community, and (e) "There's an Awful lot of Work to be Done".

Changing Students

One high school principal felt that "students have changed within our society and I don't think that schools have made an adjustment yet to this reality." In his school he recognized that for some students,

> to make it to school and actually focus for five hours a day seems insurmountable, especially when the expectation is that they must attend for 190 days a year. We have made every effort to make our building exciting programmatically and operationally. We have a dedicated staff who offer more in one month than most schools do in half a year. We have instituted an attendance policy that recognizes and rewards students who attend regularly. Students who maintain regular attendance may be recognized by their respective subject area teachers with exemptions from exams, regardless of marks.

Offering no easy answers, this principal recognized that schools must address these problems and that education claims different kinds of success for its various students. Marks were only one indicator of a successful student; regular attendance and a cooperative work ethic was also expected of a rounded student today. Achievement in the school system tended to be addressed in terms of Canadian Achievement Test (CAT) scores, Alberta Diploma Exam scores, School Achievement Indicators Program (SAIP) results, and so on; the numbers of students graduating tended also to be a way of measuring school achievement. However, principals generally recognize that "achievement" was usually measured against outside, or more universal criteria, and "success" was more personally referenced and spoke to individual growth. On the whole, principals tended to speak far more about students in terms of their success, and less in terms of their achievement on Diploma exams and such.

Success vs. Achievement

"In the north perhaps more than in the south, we have to deal with the personal welfare of the student first," said one principal.

> Achievement is important but I don't think we get to achievement until we have the wellness of the students as well as the school somewhat securely in place, and what is difficult right now for us in the north is that achievement is being sought, and perhaps unfair comparisons are being made between northern and southern schools on a common set of exams, diploma exams, and we are really and truly not the same. That's not a cop-out, it's just a recognition of a reality. Frequently we've heard how young this school system is in the north, and I think that when you make those kinds of comparisons without some tolerance for that, that inherently you have an inequitable arrangement or system.

He specified that "this does not mean that we shouldn't be striving for standards, that we shouldn't be looking for success in achievement; it just means that coincidentally, we have this mammoth task of trying to bring students to a point where they're ready to make that leap to achievement success." What further complicates the situation in the north is that there are fundamental differences "between some of the larger magnet communities, and the smaller settlement-like communities, and I think we saw that even

happening around the table in our conference here the last three days." He elaborated on the differences noted:

> When we discussed programming or achievement, for one group it was one thing, and for another group, the larger community group, it was another thing. The whole issue of trying to become fairly standard in success in the achievement area, when you're dealing with such a disparate situation, becomes even more complex.

This principal grappled with establishing fair and realistic standards in his school, given the disparate population, "we have a responsibility to our students to raise them to a common standard within at least each of our buildings, to have the same expectations and do that while recognizing individuals."

> I think we do a disservice to any subculture if we say, oh well, you are something different, or you need to be treated as a group differently, or that we can't expect the same from you. I believe you can. As long as you're being considerate of the people that you have, that you're trying to be as even-handed and as individual with them as you can be, that it is possible.

High Academic Standards Desired

A second principal in a K-11 school noted that the high standards demanded of his school and teachers are for "basic, sound, structured teaching" and that "there's no condescending to anybody. If you can do it, you're going to do it. The rest really is just details." This principal, in his long experience as a teacher and more recently as a principal, was convinced that expectations should be high and that students tend to live up to them:

> They soar! Once they accept that you mean it, they soar. So I think that without stating it too idealistically, I really don't see a gap between the expectations of the aboriginal populations and those of the non-aboriginal population. They all want standards of education for their children. And if anything, I find the aboriginal population [in this town] very focused on that issue. It's sort of like, we demand the challenge. No more second best. We don't want our kids in grade 10 operating at a grade 5 level. We want our children in grade 5 operating at a grade 10 level.

This principal was encouraged by his community to continue his pursuit of high standards. For example, a culture camp that was set up as part of the Northern Studies course met community approval:

> It's wonderful because I do believe from the feedback I get directly and indirectly, through other teachers and through everyday interactions with the aboriginal people, some of whom are very, very politically loud, but they talk to you and tell you how happy they are with the school. Well as soon as they're saying things like that and there's nothing negative being said, then . . . you've got something going there. You've got a combination of standards that they appreciate, and a sensitivity, a demonstrated sensitivity to where the town is, where the school is and so on.

The high standards he spoke of are also demonstrated in CAT results where some students are "getting those results. Not across-the-board results, but we're getting results.

And we're comparing very well. And people see that, and they know it's happening." He pointed out that the test results serve to reassure parents that students are achieving in his school:

> Let me show you our CAT tests. These are our grade 7s, and you can see that a lot of them are scoring up in the grade10, 11 etc. I mean, you know, some of that is just student basic capability, right, but you can say that this is a student who was in our school for four or five years, so obviously the potential was there, but the potential is being met in education or in teaching, otherwise the kid wouldn't be where he or she was. So the payoff for you as an administrator of a school is that you can use these things then to reassure people you don't have to be afraid. The standards are here.

Aware that some parents were concerned that their children were getting a "second-rate education in a small northern community school," this principal pointed to the successes of his students, "we have students that go on to the Science Fair in Ontario; and we have one student that won the Geography Challenge through to the nationals which are in Ottawa; and these are junior high and senior high students." He is confident that students in the grade 12 program next year will do well.

However, for the students who were home boarding and attending his school, there was not much success, as three out of four dropped out of school this year. He felt that the lack of support for these young people was the primary cause of their failure, "because they're billeted . . . and you know there's a million things that can be written on paper, but in fact, it's not mom and dad."

For another principal, many issues stood in the way of success for her students, personal issues that the school has not been able to deal with successfully:

> There are some kids that I have talked to before, and I realize it's not worth it. There are other things going on in their lives that I can't control, and they just slip away, and I just let them slip, and hopefully they come back, and sometimes they do come back, and then they know that it's open to come back. And there's other kids that, if I maybe talk just one more time, there's still hope! But other ones, they're gone.

Courses Mandated by Community

In another small community K-11 school, there was a strong focus on academics. The principal explained that although parents want traditional aspects of learning maintained in school, "they're also very academically oriented and want their children to be able to succeed in today's world, they want their children to be able to go out and succeed . . . not only territorially but also across Canada." However, it's a tough balancing act between offering the traditional learning through both *Dene Kede* and *Inuuqatigiit*, and the curricular materials developed through the N.W.T. from K-9, and 10-12 through Alberta:

> I think that the thing here is to strike the balance, because a lot of our parents are very insistent that their kids get the best academic education possible, and sometimes they do, some of them do come and question, why are the kids going out to this camp when

> they should be doing math or science or social studies and then you have to try to explain to them that this is also a basis for math and science and social studies. But they also want to be very sure that their kids are getting the academics, so sometimes it is a balancing act of how much of each did you do.

This principal commented that "students are succeeding at 10-level courses, something that is rare at the regional level." The success in her view is in the opportunity that students now get to be challenged to higher levels, students who may, in the larger regional schools "get lost in the system."

> And you're still going to have, like we have students coming back from the regional high school who didn't have the commitment, and we can see it here that they didn't have the commitment, and some of them didn't last past the first two months because they were given standards to achieve and they didn't, and you're going to get those kids. But we also have students coming back who have tried it there several times, and either were doing 16-level courses and were doing very little, or didn't make it through a semester. We have some that we see a high level of success right now.

Whereas this principal believed in encouraging students to challenge themselves by taking higher courses, another principal felt greater success could be reached by having students enrolled in courses in which they can be assured of success. Required this year by the community education council to offer the academic stream, he argued that for most students, the choice is unrealistic. Given that of the nine students who were enrolled in 10-level courses, only five passed all four courses, this principal felt he "would rather have a student in 13 and pass with 60-70%, than be in 10 and get a 35 or 40%." He was also strongly committed to maintaining standards in the high school programming:

> We follow the curriculum guide quite closely. I've taught Math 10 and if they don't, ah, what I've done for one girl last year, as she got near the end of the line, I told her that she was going to fail the10, and she could write the 10 exam and the 13 exam both, and I wound up giving her credit for 13. I gave her 50% in Math 13 and sent her into 23 this year, because if we hadn't done that she was going to fail Math 10.

He described that "there is subtle pressure to make sure that [students] pass the 10, and I won't agree with any of that. 10 is 10 and if they don't meet the standards of it, either by attendance or covering material, they're going to fail." And some students do fail or drop out of the program, while other succeed:

> So, then we had three more drop out, we had nine to start with and three dropped out as the year moved on, out of Math 10, dropped the course, and then I had her, who was going to fail; and then I had the other five who passed, two with bare passes, one with a middle grade pass and two with quite good passes. One of them was 81%.

For this school, this is the first year of successful offering of the 10-level courses; "before, we used to refer to our academic kids as the 13s and our alternative kids as

anything else" and hence there is confusion about what "academic" means in the community. Although people claimed that 10-level courses had been offered successfully in past years, the principal stated otherwise:

> I have the transcripts of every kid that has been here since 1978 and I have found no, not a single pass at the 10 level other than in Phys Ed and Art. So there's people who have left the community who have dimmed memory of what was actually done. (chuckles) So we have 10 here now.

"There's an Awful lot of Work to be Done"

What students should learn and how to best evaluate that learning are big questions for educators across the territories. In one K-11 school, the majority of students in grade 10 were enrolled in "the level 13 courses, and we have some kids taking the advanced, but I guess as a whole the students are tending to take the 16, or the 13-level courses." The need for flexibility and a wide range of entry points into the high school program can be seen in this principal's description of several of her students this year:

> We did have a grade 12, she was finishing, she was still doing some of her grade 11 subjects and doing some grade 12 subjects, and there were two students and S. was in grade 10 and they both decided when they knew we were getting grade 11 this year, they both decided to stay here in the community and take courses here. But both of them are now, um, one of them is pregnant and so hasn't been attending very regularly and the other student has a job with First Air recently and has been attending afternoons and still doing her courses in the afternoons but not in the mornings.

In this community, students begin school in their first language. Kindergarten to grade 5 is all first language instruction. English is taught as a second language, beginning in kindergarten and increasing gradually, with grades 6 and 7 as transition years, where students move from th[illegible]y of instructional time in Inuktitut to 50% English and 50% Inuktitut. In discussing st[illegible]valuation, this principal pointed out:

> I think we really have [illegible]reating . . . evaluative measures that are reflective of the programs that t[illegible]e learning, as opposed to taking something that's been developed in Alberta and expecting kids to work through that, [which] to me is just assinine. Our evaluative measures have to be reflective of the programs that we're using, and it's certainly my understanding that the programs are based on the kids' lives and experiences, and I mean, you have to start there before you branch out to regional and then national and even global knowledge and learning, so I think there's an awful lot of work and it needs to be done real soon, in terms of having final exams and diploma exams that are based on the learning of kids in the Territories. And that's going to vary across the territories, from folks in communities in the west, the Central Arctic, and then the Eastern Arctic. It's just not fair, it is not fair to students.

The principals generally agreed that student success was more likely if they completed their studies in their home communities, and if their community prized education to the extent that it sent strong messages out to its young people and supported them in

their learning. As one principal stated, "In recent years there haven't been a lot of grade 12 graduates coming out of [our community]. And we're hoping, I guess, that the high school in the community will give us more of that and more potential for students to go on to Aurora College or to colleges in the south to do things." Another principal stated hopefully of her new high school students this spring, "Only two kids passed all courses, but others are passing more."

For one principal, success was unexpectedly modelled in her school by two "outside students" who came into the community, took four diploma courses with the help of the teachers, distance education modules and CD ROMs for Math 30, and passed all four diploma exams with exceptionally good marks. The principal enjoyed the positive spinoff:

> That was a good thing actually, because we could see some of the pitfalls and some of the success, and what we have to do to make those courses successful with more of our own kids. . . . It was good because the other kids in the school could see the commitment, because these kids were very committed and very motivated.

The principals agreed that creating programs that are "challenging to kids, that are exciting, are of interest to kids, that are relevant to their lives" will bring greater success and fewer behavior problems. For one principal, "you can see that in our primary grades especially, we have programs that are meeting their needs, that are challenging, that are of interest."

Success can be defined in many ways. It can be about graduating and moving on; and it can be about returning to the community school to share success stories, or just to join in its activities once more. Success was certainly the subtext of this principal's story:

> Yeah, the kids that have gone to [the regional] school always come back. Um, they all do, really, the ones who graduated, they still come back and walk the halls, the ones who have gone on to NAIT or SAIT or something and come home for a break, they check in. And come and talk. Some kids just come and plop themselves in my office and come and tell me that's one of the reasons that, ah, things like perfect attendance and student-of-the-month awards were never taken out, because those kids, some have gone to schools that have continued that, come back and talk about it, and know how important it is, you know, I won student of the month on such and such a day, and I know it's important to them, it's important in their life.

Funding: Doing More with Less

One of the "overall frustrations and time-consuming aspects of the job is how to do more with less," stated one principal. "The upside is that we become better problem solvers and more creative. However, I believe that there is a point of diminishing return." The principals talked about funding issues, more than is being provided. This situation is

not unique to the north. One principal allowed that his school was still "a fairly rich system, at least rich in comparison to what other jurisdictions south of the 60th parallel are experiencing." Nonetheless, "many teachers have found it really difficult to adapt." Principals spoke in particular about (a) the Reality of Cutbacks in Educational Funding, and (b) Dealing with Cutbacks.

Reality of Cutbacks in Educational Funding

Learning how to do more with less has been the general outcry of all principals who cite many examples of the effects of budget cutbacks in their systems. Some have also indicated ingenious ways for dealing with deficit funding in their schools. However, fiscal constraints have threatened school programs, cut resources and lowered staff morale across the N.W.T. One principal spoke to these:

> Inclusion is, perhaps, our biggest struggle. Philosophically, it makes all kinds of sense for all kinds of reasons. But this can only effectively happen provided that the resources and personnel match the expectations. Our reality has been a growth of over 125 students, an operational budget that has lost ground proportionately, a loss of classroom assistants allocation over last year when our population was less than this year, a loss of guidance counsellor time, a loss of therapy time, a loss of administration time and a gain in the expectations from the ECE and our own Board. Teachers are asked to work with a higher pupil-teacher ratio. So, the numbers go up, the need to differentiate lessons goes up correspondingly, as does the planning time required to adequately cope with the diverse population we are expected to serve.

A second principal noted that the recently announced cutbacks in his school system have affected the morale of a staff already reeling under personal cuts in salary, vacation travel assistance and removal costs:

> Plus the staff cutbacks, my school is 14 where I thought it was going to be 16. And my Operating and Management Budget has been cut by about 18%.... Other schools will be looking at about that same amount. Maybe not quite so much because I also gave up a class. I think about an 11 or 12% cut in O&M, then that modified again by the number of kids you have. (sigh) So staff morale is always a problem in those kinds of circumstances.

A third principal commented on cutbacks that have crippled the delivery of programs this past year:

> Our enrollment this year is up 40 some students, our staff was decreased by 21/2 teachers, we are down to .6 Guidance Counsellor in the school for 450 students, we have a home school Counsellor, she's .4, our administration time was cut from 1.6 to 1.2, we had no one to do distance education or career planning. Normally we were allocating staff for that, this year we weren't, and program support was cut from 1.5 to 1 teacher. In the areas of non-classroom teachers, basically in terms of student services and administration. We were cut I think from 5.9 to 3.5 positions, and it's been a tough adjustment.

For a fourth principal, after cutbacks they had lost a position and a half for funding "and the CEC decided that we'd look at rearranging some funding and trying to hang on to at least 12 positions instead of 11, and I think we've managed to do that, we've reallocated some funding from other things." However, the dilemma is that "we're expected to offer grade 12 courses next year and we still have only 3 high school teachers, the same number of teachers, but we have to offer extra courses." A fifth principal also recognized that the lack of resources seriously impinged on programs and staff, and that "the people who budget for education do not seem to understand the staff requirements which are essential to the effective delivery of programs."

Dealing with Cutbacks

The principals have coped in a number of ways. Many have taken on teaching a class or two, which was an additional "thing to do" in terms of their already heavy time-constraints, but it did offer a type of sanity, "a chance to really connect with the kids" and "a time when nobody can get to me." One principal described it this way:

> This year, just out of necessity and the timetabling and the cutting back of admin time and those kind of things, I just said well I have to do my part and make it work, and it's been somewhat minimal in one respect, but it's seen as making a contribution during a time when all of us are being asked to make a sacrifice that I too will make those kinds of sacrifices. And what a sacrifice to make. I mean, to actually be in teaching and working with kids, which is something that I've always loved to do, in some ways it's the sanest point of the day.

Several principals have taken on more of the guidance counsellor's role "in the area of program support, partly out of necessity because that's an area that's been really hard hit in terms of staffing," which could be difficult in terms of "role conflict and being an authority figure"; however, this principal also recognized that students "get to see me in a different environment and that's good, too." Another principal made arrangements to "borrow" the secretary from the CEC every afternoon by arranging for her to do both jobs from his school office, thereby giving him a full-time secretary in the school. He himself taught half-time and had no assistant principal.

Several principals described supportive CECs who provided funding for special projects like the four-week wellness sessions in one school and the fall and spring camps in several other schools. Business partnerships also provided necessary support and facilities and resources in several schools, with principals actively looking for more next year. Fundraising for trips was done by staff and students, placing a heavy demand on their communities, a familiar situation in the north:

> you've got the Travel Club and they're going to California and they're fundraising for that and have a table at the Christmas Bazaar and at the Easter Bazaar and are selling chocolates door to door; they have the community calendar going and they did that as well, that involves door to door canvassing and all kinds of stuff like that happening!

Principals spoke of accessing funding from the Brighter Futures Fund, the Environmental Action Grant, Boards of Education. Aboriginal Organizations, the Inuvialuit Regional Corporation, the Gwich'in Tribal Council, the Dene Cultural Institute and so on. Some enjoyed a funded pilot program in their schools, such as the Apprenticeship Program and the Elders in the School Program, which were offered to several schools across the Territories. Principals have been scrambling to keep programs going in their schools, sometimes at tremendous expense to their staffs and themselves.

One principal described her reality when asked to introduce CTS modules in her K-11 community school last September, "You've got three teachers, and you're trying to offer at least 10-level and 13-level courses plus your Northern Studies and your Drama, and there's only so much you can do." Principals have perhaps become more creative and better problem solvers, but there indeed does come a "point of diminishing return."

Staff Welfare: Professional Issues

What does it take to be an effective educator in the North today? Suggested qualities of a suitable teacher were many. One Eastern Arctic principal put it this way:

> Flexible, adaptable, sense of humour, ah, to be [illegible]omental, and good people person. Good social skills. Being what they call back home "a good mixer." Somebody who can sit down with just about anybody and talk with them and establish some kind of rapport with them [community and colleagues].

He added that "the fact that you stick around for a little bit longer than the average, continuity, helps. Two years is a very common length of time to stay."

Another principal added that good teachers are willing to grow and try new ideas; are respectful of community values and willing to promote those values within the school's programs; have a good sense of humour; and are reflective in their practice with an eye to improving self and system. A third principal looked for

> certain attitudes and abilities, beyond what have you taught, you know? Like, where's your head? Where's your heart? And as much as anything else, what is your whole concept of the team? I was looking for people who were flexible, I was looking for people with integrity, I was looking for people with . . . a whole sense of working together, the whole sense of taking risks and being willing and able to make mistakes and mess up and pick up and brush yourself off and keep on going.

This principal also identified that staff be "willing to support me and willing to take the support from me, and to squabble and fight it out, and keep on moving in that direction."

It was also vital to live up to "the standards that the community has of the school" because "that was clearly laid out, and people had to embrace that." This principal also "wanted people who bubbled with enthusiasm, I wanted people who would be contributing to a school where there was hum and buzz, because believe me, there's hum and buzz at that school." Other principals included caring and commitment and collegiality as strong qualities for a successful staff, and one remarked on the "potency of group work" in discussing the importance of staff collaboration.

The principals in this study believed in working with their staffs, and in the necessity for shared leadership as they attempted to fulfil their educational mandates. There is a conscious blurring of roles as principals often spoke in terms of "we" rather than "I," and many recognized that a large share of the running of an effective school falls directly on staff. "We're in it together," spoke one principal who believed that her school should "be staffed by those who want to work in my school because it will be their school, too."

This section explores three areas that were raised repeatedly when principals discussed staff issues: (a) Communication with Staff, (b) Empowerment and Balance, and (c) Professional Growth and Evaluation.

Communication with Staff: "Time to just Sit and Talk"

Most principals made consistent efforts to communicate with their staffs, to "share the knowledge" that ensures a more effective school is possible. They did not claim to succeed however, and expressed frustration over the many times people seemed not to know what was going on despite their efforts to communicate via e-mail, memo, and regular staff meetings. "I just think that the communication is really important, that everyone needs to understand what's going on, and even despite our best efforts we sometimes lapse, so it is very difficult to keep people right where you need them or as informed as you need to."

Many principals found themselves tied down to their office for too much of the day, and got out to personally touch base with teachers only infrequently. Others made time for personal chit-chat, and valued the process. One principal of a 9-12 high school wrote a weekly memo to his staff: "I kind of map out what's happening, what to look forward to, dates that are coming up, and just try to keep them as well informed as I can. I also throw in quotes for the week, and some teaching tip, and a question of the week." Another principal in a K-11 community school wrote daily comments on the staff whiteboard to communicate messages to staff. Some principals made an effort to drop into every classroom every day, even if just for a few minutes; others felt it would be an impossible

goal to accomplish. Principals discussed three issues related to the importance of staff communication: staff meetings, professional isolation, and high staff turnover.

Staff Meetings. One K-11 principal valued the many informal meetings that occurred in her school, "we only have 10 minute recesses, but if you're in the building, to come and spend that time, just having a quick glass of water or a coffee or tea or whatever with your colleagues for that connecting."

Most schools have moved away from the traditional monthly staff meeting to ones that are held bi-monthly, and two principals held weekly staff meetings. For one principal,

> we've been really fortunate in this and the Board is supportive in that there is a policy where we can close early four times a month and we've chosen to close every single Thursday at 2:30. We alternate, one week is set aside for theme planning, and that's around the particular topic, themes that we're working on. It may be as a whole school, or we may get into smaller groups by division, say K-4 are working on seals as their current themes, so they would get together to plan that, they may be developing activities, they may be looking for resources, they may be writing a little booklet or finding songs or games or whatever. And then the other staff members say in 6-9 may get together, or right up to grade 11 may get together to plan. Every other Thursday, we meet for professional improvement and professional growth. And those sessions I find to be particularly beneficial.

The benefit of the sessions is in the opportunity for staff to work together, learn from one another and develop new units or learning strategies with one another. A second principal pointed out that meeting as a staff was important because

> we know we're busy and we know that we're constantly doing things, but I think that sometimes we don't stop to take a good look and reflect on just exactly what we are accomplishing, and who we are catering to, because that is very much the plan, and the plan is to try to have something for everyone, which is pretty ambitious and very definitely tiring, but I think that we are getting that done.

This principal had weekly Tuesday meetings with staff, combining information and professional development and TAP theme planning monthly. He felt that "overall, if we stayed with the traditional one faculty meeting a month, I don't think we'd be as effective." In his meetings, he placed strong emphasis on the communication of what has been done, as well as what was still to be done:

> We begin ours with something called the good news, a sharing and celebration of initiatives, and doesn't have to be just curriculum or instructional although it has covered that, but it can also be about other things that have been happening in the building, it can be a celebration of an achievement or a recognition. Recently with SADD winning a national award, with the Yearbook winning a national award, with the Bio trip successfully being completed, with our, just last weekend we had an under-14 group go down to Calgary and win a first-ever award. I mean, it's those things that get highlighted at the beginning and we don't do that enough.

For another K-11 principal, staff meeting times and dates were less formalized:

> No, actually what we've done, and this is something the CEC gave us permission to do last year, is set up staff meetings periodically during school time. Last Tuesday, we started our meeting 8:30 in the morning and went to 10:30, and the kids didn't come in until quarter to eleven. . . . We do it sometimes at the other end of the day, we dismiss at two-fifteen. . . . What we do is, at the beginning of each month, we send a calendar home, and everything's on there, well not everything, you know how things come up but, things we have planned are on there. So the parents know that Monday March 15, school doesn't start until 10:45 because there's a staff meeting starting at 8:30.

That there is a need for staff to get together to talk and deal with issues was obvious to one principal of a K-11 school:

> We never find the time to just sit and talk. Staff meetings go blah-blah-ble-ble-blllllllllll and there's all these things to cover. However (resolutely) next year, this is one thing I know about next year, thanks to our parents who said yes they agree, our day is extended 15 minutes longer, which is going to give us two mornings a month where there's not going to be any kids in the school. The teachers will go to school longer, the kids will get exactly the same time, but the staff has a little more time, and the whole staff felt it was important. . . . And one morning will either be a PD or planning session if there's something we need to talk about and work on, and the other will be a staff meeting.

This principal added that "the parents were very supportive, the CEC was a little concerned because of babysitting. Once we listed the reasons why we were asking for this time for us, and explained that hey, we're not making it easier for us, we're working more hours but we see the need. So hopefully next year we'll have some time to just sit and talk. And deal with issues."

Professional Isolation versus Collaboration. Another principal spoke of the importance for staff to work together, that "we have worked far too long in isolation, you know, you hear that story about teachers going into their classrooms and closing their door and putting in their day and then leaving." He arranged for a common staff work room in his new school that encourages staff collaboration across subject disciplines:

> I think that in general, our building fights against that, even though some teachers had some difficulty with it, where they're all in the common planning area, and even though scheduling doesn't mean that they're all there every moment of every day, it does mean that there is a connective quality to what can happen there, and even just eavesdropping on conversations that are happening, it often times involves them, you know, hey I've got an answer to that, or here is something I've tried so it lends itself more to the sharing.

Although "it wasn't an original idea with respect to Southern schools," the idea of a common planning room was new to Northern schools and "it's one of the best things that

we ever did." He noted that while there were still varied opinions and levels of comfort to the common planning area,

> it has fostered a lot more talk, professional dialogue, and just a cohesiveness that was missing in the past, because potentially we do work in isolation as teachers, and I think there is a need not to, so even that in terms of a design concept driven by more of a vision that staff needs to work and play together exists in our building, and that has been bearing fruit, I mean, people work with one another, they're very accessible, we know where they are and we can go to their desks and leave notes, we have an e-mail system that allows us to communicate back and forth like never before, just unbelievable to be able to leave a message and they'll read it, the jokes that go back and forth are amazing (chuckles) so there's a really good feeling in the building.

For another principal, common planning and staff collaboration were more difficult to achieve. Faced with a traditional staff who were "at various stages of their careers," this principal was challenged to work with people who at first were resistent to change, and with a few that were "really recalcitrant, really reluctant, and fairly hard-core." Unused to collaboration, some staff were fairly resistant to his newly established bi-monthly staff meetings that began, for example, to look at a systematic approach to professional growth, rather than the familiar information-giving and house-cleaning functions of past monthly staff meetings:

> There's a standard format, there's some committees that are out, like basically the chair of Student Support Services might address some concerns, the Professional Improvement Committee address the concerns they'd have, Student Council Staff Rep, Vice Principal, would have some things he'd want to go over. I try to stay away if I can from as many house cleaning chores as possible, try to do that through memos or whatever, and then save some time out of the meeting for some sort of Staff Development.

One major commitment for this principal was to keep his staff both informed of and involved in decisions that were being made, and he made a concerted effort to ask for staff input on programs, staffing, and timetabling. Although highly time consuming, he thought it was an important process in which staff must have a participating hand:

> Well, I think I've had four staff meetings in the last two weeks just based on, I've put out a whole lot of memos and questionnaires to staff looking for feedback on programs, evaluations, and we are going to get an increase of 1 1/2 teachers and how we should use that, how best can that staff be used to utilize school/student needs, so I get it back and collate it and present the results to staff and basically we shared in the staffing, so that the left hand knows what the right hand is thinking.

<u>High Staff Turnover</u>. High Staff turnover can also be problematic to progress in schools. One principal described the work involved,

> One of the challenges was to welcome, orientate and help teachers both new to the north, and some new to teaching, adjust to their new environment and to support them as they learned how to teach effectively in a northern school. Some of them needed a

> great deal of support in learning how to program effectively for students who are learners of English as a Second Language, how to plan and implement programs that are culturally relevant, how to ensure that they are facilitators of learning through activity-based and student-centered programs.

Staff orientations were time-consuming but an essential means of communicating expectations and establishing understanding in a school:

> We've had a fair bit of change in terms of staff turnover, and it was something I came to see as essential to having consistency. Particularly for the kids because it can be very hard on them to have that constant turnover, and just to start to trust someone and have them leave, and then start all over again, building a relationship with new teachers. . . . I guess what came through loud and clear is that the effort that goes into welcoming southern Canadians to a community, and they're only going to be here a couple of years, it's an incredible amount of work that's necessary to support them.

Staff orientations occurred at the school level at the beginning of the school year and were considered to be a valuable time for tone-setting and team-building.

> We have staff orientions, usually out on the land. One year we had a boat trip, took all of Saturday. The Board used to be more generous with moneys for that. They used to supply us with $2000 at the beginning of the year for staff orientation. And I would hire a boat and take the staff or as many of them as wanted, usually about 15 or 16, we'd head out to some distant spot, watch Belugas frollicking in the water and we'd have tea and do our little social bonding thing, and the first day of school we would do the more practical orientation.

Several principals also noted that being involved in staff hiring, hiring for what is needed in the school, and letting new staff know expectations and prevalent philosophies of the school at the time of hiring could be critical to the future success of newly hired staff.

Empowerment and Balance: Shared Leadership

Most principals spoke about the importance of teambuilding and empowering staff members to take leadership in the school. One principal commented that "a great deal of my energies this year have gone into building our school team and into providing support to staff members. It has been essential to allow for on-going opportunities to build team through team-building activities at staff meetings and at our weekly theme planning and PI [Professional Improvement] meeting when we close early every Thursday afternoon."

Empowering a staff, for one principal, was "really about facilitating that people take on roles that are appropriate. . . so I talk about a community of leaders and a community of learners, that we're all of those things. . . and we need to model those things. " He spoke of tapping the potential in a school:

> What's marvelous is seeing the potential that staff have, and that students have, but in particular in terms of making school happen, that staff have. That is the human element at work, and . . . I think it's recognizing that . . . and being able to pull those

> things out of people, or encourage people, cajole people, and maybe even sometimes state the need for people to take on certain roles, move in certain directions.

Principals discussed the need to set goals with staff, for teamwork and shared leadership, and for balance.

Setting Goals with Staff. Principals believed in a common vision for their school with their staffs, working through the community visioning with staff and developing from that the goals for the school year. One principal described

> setting goals and setting year plans for the school. We usually take those from the visioning process of the previous Spring, the community visions, we look at the goals the community wanted, and then we look at the ways of trying to implement those goals and we have a day or so of meetings with staffs of both schools together, and from that we try and build a year plan for both schools and then we go to individuals, teachers, and by the end of September I'd like to get a year-plan from each teacher that spells out their curriculum plans and as well as that, what they plan to do to implement the visioning goals.

For one K-11 school principal, the goal setting was also done collaboratively. "We have set goals. Last year was our first real successful year with school goals, our first time that we really set them, stuck with them, and talked about them at staff meetings and met our goals." However, the goal setting was not done at the beginning of the year:

> That always seems to be the problem, you do it at the beginning and you always have new staff. I think we did it probably November or December, and that seemed to work because we were already a group and we all knew how the school worked and, because we found that if we did it at the first staff meeting or near the beginning people were saying things that we already had means of dealing with, and we just hadn't run into it yet to let them know (chuckles), so it worked quite successfully.

Teamwork and Leadership. In working through issues collaboratively with staff, all ideas were welcomed, and staff members were expected to be involved in finding solutions to current problems in the school. One K-11 school principal described the process:

> We brainstorm for ideas. If somebody comes across something, like the Second Step, something crossed my desk about the Second Step Violence Prevention Program, I went out and took the training, and I came back and trained the staff. If somebody else comes across something else and is interested, and we all think, yeah, maybe this is something that we can try, then out they go and come back with information on it. Or else through other educators that people are in contact with. But it is always done as a staff decision.

Athough staff worked well together in the school, "we don't do that much socializing outside of school hours. A few, but not as a group. We don't do group things outside of school, but in the school we work really well as a team." These staff were known for pitching in and supporting their principal: "If I say next week we're gonna have a pizza

night, it's not just me who's gonna be there; they'll be there. There's no question about am I there by myself; no, we're in it all together."

> And it's worked out. And we've had people who haven't fit, and we never had to say anything, they've left, you know, they've just reaized you know, boy maybe it just doesn't work here for me and they've found a job in another place, and we've had people that haven't fit at first and decided maybe they'd better (laughs) and try it and eventually worked themselves in and worked with us as a team.

Another principal believed in "drawing on many people's strengths" by asking every staff member to "facilitate one professional improvement session, using their areas of strength . . . and to me it is also a way to help people develop their leadership skills as well." Yet another principal delegated leadership to students and staff members at assemblies:

> Well, when we have assemblies, basically what I would do is I try not to run the assembly, I'd get the Student Council to introduce me and I'd say a few words and whatever, then pass it back to student council and they run the assembly. That works well. . . . That passes off to the teachers too, in terms of the positive things that are going on in the school, in terms of programs and initiatives, that the teachers who are involved in it, let them be the start, so to speak.

One school staff took the reigns of leadership spontaneously, celebrating their principal's return to school following a difficult and emotional two weeks:

> On Friday afternoon at two o'clock, much to my surprise, there came the announcement that we were going to have the rest of the day as a school celebration. There was food, there were movies, we had performances, the kids had performances at all the different grade levels, they sang songs. . . . You have to understand it was totally disorganized, it was total chaos, but we had a school celebration, just this last Friday. People ran to the school and they got popcorn and pop . . . and kids were up and down the hall and parents were in and they had dragged the portable stage, they had a Karaoke thing, it was called a celebration.

Balance: Where to draw the Line? One principal, when asked how staff handled the extremely busy March calendar that included two back-to-back weekends filled entirely with school-commmunity activities, commented:

> Teachers do have to get involved with things, and mostly when we do school-wide things, it works out very well. We did the Book Fair in early December and everybody came; like, the organizing committee was about five or six people and everything, but the night they did the fair, everybody came, everybody contributed and participated, and I think it will be the same with these things. I think everybody will get on side and everybody will participate. . . . Because they're just that. Staff are like that here.

Another principal described why staff takes ownership for many school activities:

> I think that people have a sense that I am very open to new possibilities, that I believe that we collectively own the building and what goes on within it, and many,

> many people have taken initiatives and taken them beyond where I would have taken them. It's phenomenal.

Many principals expressed amazement for what gets accomplished in their schools, and that many staff members put extraordinary hours into school curricular and extra-curricular activities. "We have a dedicated staff who offer more in one month than most schools do in half a year," exclaimed one principal who this year created some "down time" for staff by freeing up an hour on Friday afternoon, beginning at 2:08. He describes it as "a conscious choice to allow them a bit more freedom to do the things that they need to do." The initial idea was to

> rotate and do some professional [activities] and allow them to do some planning for the following week. I've been very conscious of trying to really be ah, nurturing, I guess, as far as giving staff time to plan and to work on things that they need to, or even if they just decide that they're not going to do anything, but just kind of socialize together, to do that because I think that it's important. They worked very hard, the official opening was a demand and a drain, and coupled with all the things.

One principal commented on the busy activities in his K-11 school - Christmas Concert, International Food Day, Public Speaking Contest, Travel Club fundraising and a school-community Fashion Show - and recognized he need to call for some staff "time out" in February:

> In February I gathered some staff together and I told them, point blank, time for a breather guys, like this thing is not just rolling but it is getting a little crazy here and it's time for a breather because I don't want you to burn out, because we have the rest of the year to go yet. Because don't forget, while all of these special events are going on, there's the weekly co-curricular activities going on, and the list is almost never-ending. It's really unbelievable, the list of co-curricular activities through lunch hour, intramurals, the different sports things.

For another principal there also came a point when she had to draw the line on staff involvement. "We just had a thing happen last Friday afternoon, kids' events for the carnival, one more time, nobody to run them." This principal pointed out that sometimes she just says no, "that is not fair, it's always the teachers. And I do that continually, I throw it back to the community and say, sometimes it has to be somebody else besides the teacher."

> Because every single teacher on my staff does run something after school, between basketball, computer club, green club, choir, all those things go on, and they're willing to, and if I would have gone to them and said, they want us to run the kids events, we would have done it, but I believe that sometimes the line's got to be drawn and said, we give enough. The CEC has declared a local holiday, that includes us, and we've dealt with these kids the other 113 days this year! Isn't there somebody who could . . . and we ran a carnival anyway, we ran a mini carnival in the Gym.

Concern that staff become over-extended was expressed by several principals. One principal had planned a Staff Sharing Circle, "where, amongst ourselves, we can sit and talk if something's bugging us, just to get it out. . . . If there's something that needs to come out and people need to . . . get rid of it, we could do it there." To her regret,

> The staff sharing circle hasn't happened yet! Due to other things, they continually come up on the day that Staff Circle is, it's just been (pauses). . . .

Professional Growth and Evaluation

Principals discussed a variety of practices directed at continuous professional growth, from mentoring new teachers, to modelling in the classroom, to facilitating professional development at staff meetings in collaboration with staff, to encouraging yearly growth through individual growth plans for all staff.

Mentoring new Teachers. The challenge for these principals was in working with staff at many levels. For one principal, an hour's conversation on a Sunday at school with an assistant principal considering his own principalship provided opportunity for mentorship, although he noted that "it's rare that we get those kinds of uninterrupted periods together."

> I tried to explain all of the components that I felt were important in terms of the experience, the training, just the readiness, and that when you actually take that role of principalship on, everything stops with you, it really does. And I said that the only way to be fair with yourself is to get yourself ready, to expose yourself to as many different kinds of experiences, different levels, different school systems, whatever the case may be, the more that you have, the better prepared you are. . . . we were all around this yesterday. It was interesting.

Another principal mentored new teachers and has found the hours he put in with a new teacher valuable. He helped one new teacher develop unit plans:

> This is not a fun process. You have to do it for every subject that you teach, every year, by the middle of September . . . but we give a two-week extension. And it has to be to the middle of February. And then the middle of February goes to the end. . . . I had one teacher come to me this year, crying. I don't know how to do this, I really don't. I'm a good teacher but I don't know how to do this. Over a period of a couple of weeks and 14 hours later, one on one, that teacher finally looked at me and said, I don't need you to help me with this, I can do this one. Magic words. Thank you.

The principal pointed out that although it "was a big time investment on my part" he believed that "that teacher has paid me back those 14 hours a hundred fold" he stated, "because this is a teacher with fabulous potential. . . . You get it back, you really do. You get it back in loyalty, you get it back in the amount of hours the person is willing to spend at school with kids." He concluded,

> If you show people how important they are, then they'll become what they can be. If you show them how important they are, and how good they are, then they'll grow to that, and they'll gain the self-confidence. Now, February came, (snap) unit plans in!

Modelling in the Classroom. For one principal, having to guide two teachers with discipline problems at first created some personal irritation. Having coached the teachers on strategies, he discovered that more was required of him.

> That wasn't enough. I kept thinking that in a sense, it was their problem. I felt I had done what I needed to do, but it really wasn't enough, and this problem wouldn't go away and it was really bothering me and worrying me in terms of student behavior, and I finally said, well, I'm just going to have to go in there and do the damn thing myself. And I kind of resented that, because these guys are being paid a salary (laughs) and it means more for me on weekends and in the evenings, but nonetheless that's my job, to support teachers in their work, and I felt that, you know, how much do I have to give? And in terms of two teachers, I had to give a hell of a lot. And I still do.

The principal had to "intervene to do some basic teaching, to demonstrate to teachers how to deal with these kinds of behaviors." Ultimately, he's found it "is paying real dividends." For another principal, taking a direct approach with a staff member who needed help with classroom control was difficult, and modelling was personally uncomfortable although she did eventually resort to it:

> I find myself preaching to the whole staff about things that maybe one person needs to know, because . . . I don't want to hurt someone, so I put in a staff memo, something that sounds general that really is directed at somebody, and I'm just not good at that, I know I'm not. I have one class that, if there's better classroom management in there, it would save me a lot of heartaches. I've tried to go in the classroom and bring control myself . . . without her knowing, not saying watch me or, ah, just stepping in

Facilitating Staff Development. Most principals "save some time out of the staff meeting for staff development, school policy or procedure or addressing a particular," but, staff development has been a major challenge to introduce. "It has not been emphasized in this district and it really shows in professional development . . . there is no system in place, there is no plan . . . it just hasn't been emphasized." He described the situation as a free for all:

> It's just a free for all in terms of staff development, professional development. People just do whatever the heck they want to do and that's what they've done for 20 years. . . . At the school level we certainly do staff development on a regular basis with my staff meetings. An example is the school growth plan using staff meetings . . . to implement and organize the tasks relating to the growth plan. It's tough when . . . a large portion of your staff are not accustomed to doing staff development activities and they're not really interested or they're reluctant.

Introducing a personal growth plan as part of staff supervision, this principal made several suggestions to encourage staff to "do things differently, and I had talked about clinical supervision, peer mentoring, peer coaching, that sort of thing. And if people wanted to do something differently, I was happy with that." In spite of his encouragements, no one took him up on peer mentoring:

> The funny thing is, we have some excellent teachers in our school, and I approached a couple of them about it, like there were a couple of first year teachers or term teachers, and I asked if they could take this person under their wing, and I got the big no both times.

Staff reticence was linked to clinging to past practice. The principal recalled that

> When I brought things to staff, people kept telling me, well that's not past practice. And I used to always say, well I'm not interested, it's not just a mattter of past practice, it's also a matter of best practice. . . . ah, so again, past practice had a lot of baggage. But professional development . . . was a positive thing anyway.

Progress has been encouraging, with six staff workshops on student behavior completed; "in terms of staff development, the mission statement took . . . six staff meetings, it took half a year to get that done." Facilitated by a high school consultant who was "excellent, one of the best educators I've ever worked with," the value of the staff development activity was probably not in the final product of a mission statement, but in the process the staff worked through together, answering questions about "what is your vision of an ideal school" and "what qualities would an ideal graduate have?"

> The process of the staff development activity was more important that the topic. . . . putting teachers in different groups and putting out a question on an overhead or whatever and saying, what's your idea of an ideal graduate, and he'd say OK, you have 10 minutes with this group, and then when you finish you'd rotate to another group where there'd be another question, then you'd rotate again. At the end, a presenter would come up and say what the concensus was, what people came up with on that particular topic.

Another principal had success with having every staff member facilitate one professional improvement session at staff meetings over the year, requiring staff to identify and share an area of strength with their colleagues. Tied to that was the professional growth plan, where staff is to

> Identify an area for the year that they want to improve on, and it could be through peer coaching, it might be informal supervision with an assistant principal or the principal or the PST [program support teacher], it might be individual reflection, so we've tied that with the professional improvement session, and each staff member now has done it. They have facilitated some kind of sharing and learning session with the rest of the staff. . . . So much of the learning can come from each other. Our program support teacher who's new with us this year is a wealth of knowledge on whole language and reading and writing, so she has done an awful lot with us as well in terms of facilitating sessions during our professional improvement time as well.

Many principals encouraged professional growth by sending interested staff members out to participate in workshops of many kinds, such as crisis intervention, CTS, grade extensions, and secondary school workshops. Most often these workshops required travel, which was much appreciated by those teaching in small and remote communities. One principal described taking a staff member with her to present at the Dreamcatcher Conference in Edmonton in October, creating an opportunity for professional growth:

> This time I said when they called me, I'm not going to present but I am going to bring a presenter, I'll bring my Cultural Instructor there and let her present. This time I will bring a presenter with me and I want her to see what's going on down there, but I don't want to present.

Staff Supervision and Personal Growth Plans. For most principals, staff supervision and personal growth plans were related activities aimed at staff development. "My main concern was that there was a systematic approach to professional growth, regardless if you're a 30-year veteran or a first year teacher," said one principal. For this principal, the work he began in his school on supervision and evaluation has seen encouraging progress, as "there was no system in place for evaluating teachers until last year, and I think that's been introduced in an effective way . . . and has been, as much as evaluation can be, a positive experience for staff."

Another principal described staff supervision comprising either assessment or personal growth:

> For teachers who are on probation, in the first or second year, there's a formal option of classroom supervision and visits and conferences before and after the visits, and it's quite a formal process and it gets written up and passed on to them. For those who aren't in that stream, then generally they have the options of coming up with their own growth plan, either by themselves or with another staff member as peer-peer coaching.

This principal found that the personal growth option for teachers not on probation made staff supervision somewhat less time consuming, although "there is still a conferencing period. I want to see them at the beginning of the process, and the end, have a little meeting with them, make sure something is happening." Written assessments are required every four years for teachers not on probation, but in the smaller community schools, few teachers stay that long; he had five probationary teachers on a staff of 14.

A third principal described an evaluation process that used "reflective criteria for staff members on kind of a checklist on their own classroom teaching in different categories, such as classroom instruction, creating a positive classroom environment, student

evaluation." Beyond this reflective appro) to personal growth, a more formalized approach has been developed in the region for staff who are "on term, for example, outlining that whole process, so it's much more defined than it was in the past, and the expectations that are of us as principals to ensure that proper documentation is done."

Finding Time to Complete the Tasks. Although most principals made valiant efforts to complete staff evaluations as prescribed by their boards, for most it was a task left to the last month of school. For one principal of a school of 450, "within our district we're charged with visiting every staff member every other year. That is a horrendous task." The task of summative evaluation becomes more onerous when meaningful assessment is the goal:

> But I have always believed that the kind of checklist approach to things, while it may be good in terms of I guess observation and data collection, I think ultimately the more effective way of giving it back to staff is through more anecdotal reflections and writing. So often times, our evaluations end up being 8 -10 page comprehensive coverage which in a sense is one of our, I guess, contributors to the feeling that we can't get it all done. We're trying to be as complete in our assessment as we can be . . . and also add a personal dimension to it.

For another principal, staff supervision was generally informal and occurred as she walked around the school or subbed for teachers who were away to culture camp:

> Whichever teacher goes [to culture camp], I teach that class for two days, so for the month of camp, I become a teacher, so I teach and cover for them . . . and it's kind of a neat time for me too, because it gives me a chance, if I haven't been in a class very much. I spend lots of time informally in class, in classes, but if I go into somebody's class for two days, I can pretty tell how things are going. In two days it becomes pretty clear, if you become the teacher in the class, what's going on there.

One principal used IOTA (Instrument for Observation of Teacher Activity) in processing his staff evaluations, for which he made time: "I've evaluated every probationary teacher in the school, which is, well I guess if you're in a big school that's quite a lot, but if you're in a little school like ours [9.5 teaching staff], yeah, I've evaluated half the staff! Full IOTA's." This new principal felt it was successful:

> The teachers that I've been through that process with, everyone of them this year actually, have said to me that it's, they were afraid of it, but once we started, they were fine. They were very comfortable wth it and they felt it was a time more than me evaluating them, it was a time of introspection, a time of being able to reflect and take the time to think and see.

Currently teaching half time himself, he feels, raises his credibility in assessing teaching activity:

> I have taught all different grade levels, everything except kindergarten and grade two. So when I talk with the grade one teacher, I know what the grade one teacher is talking about when she says that sometimes her skin crawls because she's got 15 kids crawling all over her and she's not in the mood today, you know what I mean, but she has to. I've been there. . . . And similarly with the grade 12's you know. The tension and stress that comes from knowing that you have diploma exams coming up.

Many principals saw their task of supervision as time consuming and the paper work as daunting, but recognized the value it has in terms of mentoring and encouraging teachers along the way. One principal described his enthusiasm for the process:

> And you know, you go and observe a lot of people and it is something filling your time, and every now and then . . . there's someone and oh, whoa, and you take off inside because you're watching this happening, and it's like magic. There's something really nice as a principal that you can encourage very directly and influence and write evaluations on people like that, to slam it to them just how good they are, so that they know, you know?

Unsatisfactory Evaluations. One principal described the process and frustrations of dealing with at-risk teachers in a system that lacked a clearly defined teacher evaluation policy, and where he lacked "authority to deal with it." He felt that, "I'm doing what I can to provide support for these teachers, but that's very frustrating, and you know that a lot of your time is spent on a situation like that."

This principal encountered this situation in his time as principal of the school:

> I don't know how many letters I've received from parents, why don't you do something. I can't tell them the truth. I can't tell them, I don't have a teacher evaluation policy. If push comes to shove, if a teacher is doing a terrible job, I think a principal would be negligent not to do something anyway, but here, you know, you'd like to have some systems in place to support you. Otherwise you end up being taken to court and everything else.

An evaluation policy was put place in the district this year. Although he saw it as a positive step, " It's nothing to write home about, I might tell you."

Another principal described "career counselling" teachers who were not succeeding in the classroom. In dealing with "a marginal teacher very much at risk of being considered incompetent," this principal found great difficulty with "having to support her in a process of growing when she didn't see that she needed to grow." Believing strongly in "balancing the need and the time for everyone to grow, especially our colleagues and staff members," she also recognized "having to draw the line," and questioned,

> Where does that time and the amount of energy that goes into supporting someone to grow, stop when it's harming children. For me that's what it came down to when um, the learning of children is being interfered with or they are being harmed as a result of trying to help an individual grow. And that was a tough one for me, because I believe so strongly in giving everyone every opportunity and providing them with the support, whatever that support may be, to grow.

Connecting with Community

The principals in this study reflected the understanding that the education of children is a reponsibility shared by educators, parents and the community at large, and that learning can take place virtually anywhere. The role of parents was discussed in a previous section, as were mandating of courses by community, and beginnings of CTS and business partnerships. Several of the principals' discussions presented to this point have also touched on their connections with community. This last section under "Handling the Challenges" will move beyond what has been previously presented on community to include (a) Building Bridges with Community, (b) Public Relations between School and Community, (c) Bringing the Community into the School, (d) The Power of Communities, and (e) A Larger Sense of Community.

Building Bridges with Community

It is apparent in the findings that principals are ever-cognizant of developing strong and positive community-school relationships. This is exemplified in their work with CECs, and in school fundraising and school visioning activities. One Eastern Arctic principal emphasized that, "we have to have good relations with the community and the school if education is to mean anything for these people. Otherwise it's just going to be a southern institution plunked down in the middle of Inuit land." He finds that there are students whose parents "put a strong emphasis, have more commitment to learning than the others. And it's a continuum, all the way to those who couldn't care less and the ones who don't have a clue what they're doing, why they're there." There are, however, a "number of parents, you can likely count them on one hand, who have a driving commitment to their child's learning. It's growing, but it's still a minority." He pointed out:

> That's why it's so important to build good bridges with the community, because once they're built, then the more you get the community into the school the more you can emphasize the need for education, and with the arrival of Nunavut, you can point out to them that a lot of the jobs that are held by whites in this town can be held by Inuit, and very soon too. This community has more jobs held by Inuit than other communities.

It is understood that educational partners offer relevant culture-based schooling that will differ from community to community because of the diverse culture and socio-economic make-up of the N.W.T. To be meaningful, education must be relevant to the child's world. A second principal described having elders as teachers in the school for the second year, a goal that

> came out of work we have done to involve students, parents, elders, community members in community visioning workshops held over the last three years. We met on several occasions [eight workshops] to share our views on the kind of education that

> should be provided to best meet the needs of the children and youth of [our community]. During these workshops we reviewed and revised our school goals. In a special student visioning workshop, held during the 1994-95 school year, students indicated their strong desire to see elders as teachers in our school. This is now happening!

The benefits are far-reaching for both the students, who are developing a stronger identity and understanding of their heritage, and for community members, who are becoming more involved in shaping their children's education, some in the school as teachers, others involved in recounting their stories to staff and students who transcribe and use the narratives as part of the theme work of *Inuuqatigiit*. The elders-in-the-school program "is again linked with our cultural program, which we now refer to as our Community Living Program. This name change better reflects the learning that the students are doing." This principal described how the CEC chairman took pride in the work accomplished in his community school, a pride based on ownership for what had been developed collectively:

> We have a good supportive group of people who sit at a CEC meeting. Last night again, it was our chairperson who had just gone to Divisional Board Meeting and had come back quite proud of our community because the Director had asked him about the kamik making course . . . and the igloo building with the CTS courses, and then asked him to share information on that with the other board members. So that was nice to see him, just a smile and the sense of pride, it was encouraging too.

Public Relations between School and Community

For many principals, communication was key to the success of school-community relations. Using community radio was one means of keeping people informed. Writing monthly newsletters was another, and this was usually done by the principal. One principal used her newsletters to inform and educate parents, and found

> we had such high demands, like I said we have 85 families, we now have 225 copies get mailed out, to other communities, to our community, every single household now in our community now get it, because we started getting asked, asked, asked from the elders, and the CEC said, you know we are saying we are a community school, that doesn't just mean parents, let's get it out to everybody, so it's doubled production in the last little while.

A school newspaper created by a grade 4-5 class was also welcomed by this community. "They had contests in there, and you name it, they covered everything," described one principal, describing "articles on the lunar eclipse that was happening the week that they got information off the Internet and pictures that they put in there from the Internet. It was really, really neat."

> They just did it all on their own. They sold 109 copies, made $109. And the day that they, they got it finished just before recess, and at recess they said, can we go out and sell the newspaper, and I said, go. Well, those few went out, and all of a sudden

> people started coming to the school to buy this newspaper that they had seen other people with and I was just amazed. . . . They had a page about all the babies that had been born in the last little while, and they had birthday celebrations in there and a calendar for April showing everybody's birthdays and anniversaries, and they had a little thing that was um, they gave us a piece of paper, certain people, and we had to write one special thing we've done in our life, and then you had to match the person with something they'd done. Everybody right from the janitors to whoever in the school, about eight of us, and you had to figure out who had done this special thing in their life. They came up with some really good ideas.

For another principal, the community newspaper proved valuable communication with the community. "We have a 4-page spread every month in that newspaper. It's everything under the sun of what's happening." They use their media club to do interviews and gather information, and "sometimes the kids go in and do the layout with them, but in the last few months, they have been so busy with other things that we have just given it to the newspaper people." Staff have also received accolades from the community:

> The other thing that is very, very gratifying is . . . under beefs and bouquets, four or five times this year there has been stuff sent in, and its thanking the staff, thanking the teachers, you know, and that is really nice. Last year it happened once, prior to that it never happened. This year it's happened four or five times. And it's really a nice feeling when you read that. It just gives staff a boost, eh.

One principal described one Education Week activity that took the whole school into the community for a day. The theme which was "strengthening the mix between education and the workplace" saw 11 multi-aged groups visit workplaces. The principal "had sent out things ahead of time" to the workplaces, suggesting they "talk about work that's available there, what kind of education you need to be there, what kind of future jobs may be available, and do a little spiel on stay in school while you've got the kids there." As a creative way to say "thank you", the groups prepared wall murals,

> And it really strengthened the links, and you go into the stores and there are the murals high up where nobody could get them, they all had them up on display, so it really turned out to be a good, a good activity. And students become the teachers, especially to the new ones in the community. They become the teachers and like to talk to the teachers about people and things that they see as they're walking along and doing things.

Bringing the Community into the School: Partners in Learning

Most principals had been actively searching out partnerships with community businesses. Several were in the beginning stages of creating Community Learning Networks, "developing a few partnerships and working with community agencies." Registered apprenticeship programs and job preparation and work experience programs took students out of the school and into the workplace. There were many examples of

community coming into the school to support programs and students in those programs. The bridging was beginning to happen, and traffic flowing in both directions.

In one school, "there is no doubt that the community is actively involved in building from a physical accommodation" as well as in program and operations. "The nature of some of the partnerships that we have dictate that. We have the YWCA in the daycare, and we have to work with them, both from a program perspective and from just the daycare operations perspective." The Guild of Arts and Crafts worked out of the school's art facility and supported the school art program. A community artist came in to offer two-hour sessions to a day time art class and a science class, over a six-week period. "We have integrated art into the science and he's going to do some interesting work there." CBC volunteered time to the school radio club:

> In actual fact they tell us we have a better radio set-up than they do, so they see a mutual benefit to coming in and talking to kids about how to interview, how to program, how to do the disk jockey kind of routines effectively, and they get to work with our equipment and learn about digitized radio equipment and that kind of thing.

The principal noted that "there is such a rich repertoire of possibilities . . . I think that it's just a matter of seizing upon the elements that fit best with your vision of your school."

> We just recently had another Bio 20 field trip go out where natural resources personel were involved, where parents were involved, where CBC again was involved in reporting it. So you know, a convergence of players coming together and producing something pretty remarkable that the kids have genuinely enjoyed and learned from.

This principal sat on the board for Crimestoppers because he was acutely aware of criminal activity in the community and its impact on youth:

> and I do it for a very good reason. We'd have to be blind not to see that there are some difficulties with respect to criminal activity and youth, but I think that it's important that, anything that I choose to get involved with outside of the school context generally has a student focus, it's something that, when you start to bridge and make networking possibilities there, I have great RCMP contacts, I have great business contacts now, and I have people who have worked with me now to offer many possibilities for the school just because of the fact that I sit on that board. So, I think the networking that happens is just a matter of being open and receptive to it.

The structural elements of community learning networks varied from community to community and were partially dependent on what the community itself could offer, as well as the leadership that was taken to initiate and forge the partnerships. The majority of the work has tended to fall to school principals.

The Power of Communities

One principal noted that although there was a lot that communities had in common, there was more that made them unique, and "your school reflects how your community thinks." Achievement, she felt,

> is driven by the view of the community, because we can do all we want at school, and if it is not perceived at least by a portion of the community, it's not viewed as important. We're going to get a small percentage of students who are going to achieve just from family alone, but the others who have the possibility of achieving and don't have the family support are going to need that whole community feeling and leadership feeling that academics are important before they're going to make it.

This principal felt that without community support, schools cannot overcome the many problems facing young people and affecting their learning:

> We also have other students who are very capable but who do not have that support at home and if they don't perceive it from the community at large, it's going to be very difficult within the school to motivate them to do well. They only spend six or seven hours in the school in a day, and it's going to be very difficult to combat all the negative influences outside, unless they perceive a general support and a general push from the community that this is important, and they are looked upon as doing well when they do well in school. And I don't think we've achieved that here yet as a general community feeling.

Some of the principals commented that occasionally, professionalism became an issue in their community schools when staff members and substitute teachers were also "local," and privy to staffroom discussion about student concerns. "Oh good lord! This is also a problem sometimes, because you have local people who are related to some of the students (chuckles). That has caused a few upheavals." In this principal's experience, professionalism "is a difficult concept to get across sometimes."

For another principal, small town dynamics can create intolerable situations within a school. "This is small town north at its best and its worst" he said of his experience of having his reputation slandered, first professionally, and then "it turned into an attack on me personally . . . and it really snowballed." While away at a conference, rumours had been started and "the town just went nuts, one way or the other. People just have nothing better to do, eh? This is where small town gossip got carried away." The principal eventually resigned; what followed was that townspeople, the "silent majority," began to respond to the situation. "A certain number of people took it upon themselves, this is parents in the community, that they weren't going to accept this, that I had been worn down this way and that I had resigned under these circumstances."

First a parent delegation, and then a public CEC meeting proved overwhelmingly that the community was supportive of this principal, and he eventually reconsidered and

rescinded his resignation. The principal had much to say about the incident, but perhaps these words best capture his feelings:

> I've been in this community for seven or eight years, and finally the huge silent majority had had enough, and I think that when they saw that I had resigned and that I meant it and it was over for me, and they saw that a week had passed and I still really meant it, then that huge silent majority, all those years with all those people, kicked in and man, did they kick butt! And it was nice!! And on that basis, I'm back as principal and I can tell you, if any principal ever had a community behind him and knew it, I know it! Basically this community pulled together for me big time.

A Larger Sense of Community

A number of the principals defined community as beginning within their school with students and with staff; the most direct community link to those schools came through the parents. The community education council or school board was the next logical group, followed by the "greater community," the business community and others in the community that have an interest in and a desire to support the school in various ways. For some principals, there was also a larger sense of community in some of what they did. This involved working with people from other communities to create rich learning experiences for northern students.

For one school principal, it meant pitching in when necessary. She wrote:

> We hosted a very successful regional science fair last year, and staff quickly volunteered again after the McPherson School burned down, even though it was short notice. We are also hosting a regional 'friendship games' which entailed finding about $15,000 from a variety of sources.

Her school hosted several community events this past year, requiring large-scale involvement and support by staff. Both the regional science air and the friendship games were completed on "short notice," the former due to tragic mishap, and the latter due to an eleventh-hour confirmation of adequate funding. In both situations, the school community supported the entire organization of bringing many people into a small and remote community for a long weekend, and accomplished it with detailed consideration for human comfort and enjoyment. The phrase "northern hospitality" describes it well.

The idea of having a Friendship Games weekend in the community began in this school two years previously. The principal hastened to add that something similar has been done in one of the southern regions of the N.W.T. She described the underlying focus of the games as "non-competitive, cooperative socializing kinds of things that bring the communities together."

> Even when we do team games like soccer . . . it'll be mixed teams. We set them up in groups, and the groups will probably stay for the whole weekend, like we'll have groups of 10-12 kids and those groups will be a mixture of all communities and

> schools, and it will stay together for the weekend, and whatever activities they're involved with, they'll be involved with as a team. And of course we'll have social events like drum dancing and feasts and things like that going as well. Hopefully, even with the short notice, hopefully it will come together and be successful.

After the games, she reported that "the staff pulled really well together. We had participation of well over 100 students from all the other communities [8] including ours, and we had extra students from ours. We had very positive feedback from all communities."

> it went very, very well. We made it into a very relaxed kind of time. There was no competition. People did get together as a group and mixed very well. It was a long weekend, long in terms of hours, yeah. You'd get home at 11 or 12 at night and then back at school by eight, but the CEC did give us that Monday as a CEC holiday, so they appreciated the effort that went into it as well.

The principal pointed out that, "We've been trying to pull it off for a while, and it was only this year that the funding came through." Funding came "from the Inuvialuit corporations in the different communities. And we sent a report and pictures and things like that." There were letters of thanks from all the communities:

> We had letters from a lot of the students saying they really enjoyed participating in the different events. A lot of them enjoyed the northern games sections that we had, some of them would say that they had a great time, the food they really appreciated, and we did have a fairly extensive kind of thing for food. It wasn't just hot dogs or stuff like that. It was full fledged meals. Every group we heard from, and we heard back from them all, highlighted something a little different that they really enjoyed.

Although hosted by a school, this was a community event and clearly a good example of "a larger sense of community"!

> It was a school event in the sense that most of the work was done by the staff members, although we did have some participation particularly the RCMP, some nurses and a couple of community members that came and helped out. For the other community in a lot of ways, it was a community event, because their local community corps got involved in organizing it, not only in contributing money but also in arranging for supervisors to go, and a lot of the supervisors were not school personnel in several of the communities. They were community volunteers.

Summary

To conclude, when one considers these principals' stories, one begins to understand their complex and far-reaching interactions with parents, students, staff and community, and to recognize that they continually function as facilitators and sense makers for their school. The work can be described as "Handling the Challenges," and is deliberate and ongoing, as one principal suggests here:

> I don't think, sometimes, that the day is long enough or that there is enough energy to devote to the issues and concerns of the day. It would seem to me that the nature of

> this beast called school is one that sees us constantly seeking solutions or improvements to what we do. These efforts are usually directed at trying to be more effective within the operation of the facility/organization or in responding to changes from external sources. Perhaps the very nature of school means that we will never have answers and that we will truly never be optimized as a learning organization.

WORKING BETWEEN THE LINES

One question principals grappled with was how to best fulfil their educational mandates given the particular realities in their community. How could principals garner community involvement in educational decision-making? What program choices made sense for their schools, and how were these decisions being made? How did fiscal realities impact decisions being made about schooling at the community level? This section considers what principals said about their mandated responsibilities as school leaders, and explores the ways that Department mandates are being reframed within communities.

The Department recognizes the importance of grounding education in its people and communities, who must ultimately "translate" the mandate in a realistic fashion to fit their individual contexts; in short, that learning be a relevant and culture-based process for their children. "Working Between the Lines" explores: (a) Strategy to 2010: Principals' Views, (b) The Realities: Creative Tensions, (c) Differences in Communities, (d) Principals' Workshop: Developing Like-Mindedness, and (e) Reframing: Flexing the Rules.

The Strategy to 2010: Principals' Views

"Education is seen as a partnership between student, family, teacher and community," stated Richard Nerysoo, former Minister of ECE. Boards and divisional boards of education should promote the involvement of parents and guardians as key players in their children's learning.

> In striving for success for all students, 'inclusive schooling' augments a community based, culturally relevant approach and recognizes that additional supports and training need to be in place for teachers and students in order to facilitate the learning of <u>all</u> students. (Educating all Our Children, 1993)

This statement suggests that education must focus on making learning more accessible for all students, and on facilitating the learning of <u>all</u> students by ensuring that additional supports and training are in place for students and teachers. It touches on four major concerns in northern education today: inclusionary schooling, grade extensions,

community involvement, and cultural relevance. The principals in this study were wrestling with all four, with varying degrees of success. These will be discussed in this section under the subheadings of (a) Inclusionary Schooling and Grade Extensions, (b) Community Involvement and Cultural Relevance, and (c) Long-term Vision.

Inclusionary Schooling and Grade Extensions

Philosophically, principals supported the inclusionary schooling mandate. However, with recent cutbacks and more to come, all felt understaffed and underfunded to take on its challenges. The general outcry was that increased numbers of students were being matched with dwindling operational dollars and fewer student support personnel. One principal found that

> It is not unusual to have students in high school who are only literately functional at the grade two level! The norm is more and more to have modified programs to compensate for inadequacies or deficiencies. Teachers have not been trained to cope. Universities have not really caught up to this reality. As is fairly usual, intern teachers often are baptized in the true world of teaching only once they have been exposed to a classroom of students.

This principal saw a whole community approach as the only realistic answer:

> I believe schools would be so much more effective if there were more "real" support from the home. This is especially so at the high school level where, it seems, parents now believe their work is over. Sadly, it where the most attention should be paid. With this kind of change, then what schools are currently doing might be adequate. Resources and personnel would not be the issue they are now. Educators, alone, cannot possibly cope with the multiple dysfunctionalities that walk through school doors daily. A whole society/community approach is needed. But it needs to be done, not just talked about. We need visionaries within government who can effect the appropriate changes to allow for different and refreshing approaches to education.

Believing that "we need various departments within government to actually work together and get along," he questioned if there there was "the will within various bureaucracies to do so. . . . Government is too big, too removed and distant to really understand or effectively support its clients."

A principal of a smaller K-11 school found inclusion more workable in its first year of implementation:

> I am very pleased with the high level of success we are experiencing this year implementing the new Inclusive Schooling policy as directed by the Deparment of Education. I have a .5 IST [inclusionary support teacher] who is gifted beyond description and with a work ethic to match. She has taken the school and molded us into a place where inclusive schooling has become a verb and a fact.. This involved starting from scratch . . . developing functional IEP's for all appropriate students, developing a work environment where teachers were wiling to accept inclusive schooling and willing to accept the knowledge of the IST in terms of learning how to implement it in all the varying classes and levels . . . developing trust among parents who were not that willing to accept the policy in some cases.

He credited some of the success to his personal involvement in the process, in providing support for the IST at the beginning of the year.

> We dialogued at considerable length in the first days back in August. I told her what I wanted for the school in terms of inclusive schooling and she then told me how we were going to achieve it. I trusted her knowledge and her ability, and I gave her support during the first hard months when it was new and very controversial. And now we are sailing with it. Our students are better off.

A third principal commented that "special needs has never been a priority here. The reason is when you have a class that goes grades 1 to 4 anyways, none of your students really look like special needs students, or very few, because you're dealing with the whole realm anyways." This being commonly the case in smaller communities where students are often learning in multi-grade classrooms, and "no one stays back in the same class for more than two years, no matter what," inclusion seemed to be less of a concern, than it was with principals of predominantly junior high and high schools.

This principal indicated that taking on the M&R (Methods and Resources) position, half-time, for two years was "not a good combination." As a principal, "you are totally available to everyone to be the principal, and that's what happened. I never got to the Special Needs stuff because people were dealing continuously with the administrative stuff with me, you know, phone calls, whatever..."

> so this year we have said, yes we will, we are writing IEPs and we are holding IEP meetings every Thursday night, we have set up the list of kids who we want to look at. Now that we have dealt with a lot of esteem things, we are starting to see the difference on the students. At first we needed to deal with all that stuff, and now it's not just that they don't feel good about themselves, there is something we need to look at and find out why they are not learning. So we, ah, that's what we have been working on this year, is special needs, getting our students identified and IEPs written. It is a very long process with that many kids in the school. . . .

All the principals perceived grade extensions as an important step in Northern education, most importantly because it allowed students to remain home with family during the high school years, and also because it offered more opportunity for students to participate in culturally relevant learning. One community principal, who had been grade extension coordinator in his region for two years prior to becoming principal, reflected on the extensive preparation done in some communities to prepare for high school programming.

His tasks, directed to his school, included: scheduling; participating in the hiring of staff; developing a long-range plan for the high school; determining which high school courses would be available; determining how to distinguish between the elementary and the high school, "like the perks as we called them at that time for our senior students";

determining what was needed in the community to accommodate "this new element of the population, that their social needs are met'; determining support systems for the families of students now remaining in the community, "because there were a whole lot of people who never had to have teenagers before in this community, because they were always sent out"; and determining ways "to broaden the social base through sports and so on with other students who were coming in to their own community extension programs" in the region.

The move away from regional high schools and to community delivery of secondary programs has seen radical change in northern education, with "a huge increase due to providing access closer to home." Malcolm Farrow commented to a group of principals from the Western Arctic in April, 1996: "There's an incredible system growth happening. Student enrolment increased dramatically in the N.W.T., about twice the Canadian average. We have to look at how programs are delivered. Regional schools are out of the question at this point, even if we'd want to do it!"

Community Involvement and Cultural Relevance

One principal observed that "one of the most important things about a school being successful, be it inclusive schooling or grade extension or anything else, one of the most important things is to listen to your clientelle. What do they want?" Involving the community required close listening and collaboration from northern educators. In developing culturally relevant programming for schools, Divisional Boards of Education are creating vision statements and identifying the direction of education for their regions. For one Divisional Board, a Strategic Planning process was initiated in 1993 with the intention of presenting "a vision of where the Board intends to focus its resources and energy." Calling for input from all stakeholders, this board believed that "true community empowerment means governing at the grassroots level." In part, its strategic plan stated:

> Over the past 5 years we have improved the value of a child's heritage and language, the use of technology is also increasing, children will have the support of their parents' support with grade extensions in our large communities, and the academic instruction has become an important issue for the success of our students.
>
> The following strategic plan identifies certain goals that set directions for the future. Student success, Aboriginal Culture, Technology and Governance are the four major areas that the Board has determined they would like to work on with the support of educators, education council members, parents and other partners, such as aboriginal groups and community governments.
>
> We will have to work more closely with everyone that has some connection with education, training or culture because funding will decrease in the next few years and, to broaden the involvement in the education of our children, we will finally change education from a government program to a community program.

In one Eastern Arctic region, the vision that has been presented by the Board offers strong direction for schools. One principal attempted an explanation:

> We ought to be prepared for Nunavut in such a way that more aboriginal educators will be involved in education, and the vision is to produce an educational system that will serve the needs of Nunavut and produce administrators (I don't mean educational administrators) just produce the managers and the shakers and movers for Nunavut so that we don't have to keep bringing up southerners, and at the same time, balance that with maintaining a cultural identity. It's no small task.

Principals' Views: "It's a long-term vision"

The above principal pointed out that "it's no small task" because

> One of those tasks is big enough by itself. If I was told I had to create an educational system that would preserve the culture, and not have to worry about any of the other dimensions, I'd probably do it pretty easily, bring in lots of elders . . . but then if I was told I have to prepare for people passing Alberta Math 30, English 30, Socials 30 and Science 30 subjects, that's even do-able. It's more difficult, but it's do-able with the right preparation. But to do the both, and also to bring in vocational ed and to have special ed, like there's quite a lot of dimensions to the task!

In discussing their work, principals directed comments to the *Strategy to 2010* document. "I don't think it's a given that it's going to work," stated one principal. "Timing is everything, and people are going to have to want to work together." He added that "the system has to be set up in such a way that the incentives are in the right place, and that might happen through block funding" in that it would force people "to get together with people and kind of hammer it out." He saw the vision as idealistic:

> One of my roles is definitely to work with different outside agencies and I see myself as part of the important link to the community in terms of providing learning or education. I don't have any problem with the concept of these learning networks and looking at the concept of lifelong learning and that, but that's asking an incredible amount of the public. I mean, it's very idealistic. . . . and I don't think that you don't do it, it just means that it's a long-term vision. I think (chuckles) that 2010, I think that maybe they should have called it 2050 or something.

He questioned the emphasis on technology: "basically billions of dollars have been spent on technology and there still to this day hasn't been a positive correlation between technology and student achievement." He added that "the real issue is literacy . . . I see a lot of money being spent on computers and on software, but at the end of the day, I don't see a better product or better results." For this principal,

> It always comes back to the human element . . . where kids really do get on the computers, it's because the teachers have turned them on to computers, or because the teacher uses the computer himself or herself, they're role modelling. To me that's the number one factor to increasing students' achievement through technology.

Another principal recognized that as local control of education increased, education would be delivered differently in every community, and "a lot of it depends on your community because your school reflects how your comrnunity thinks."

> I think every community is going to be totally different, and now with the changes that are coming with the Education Act, I think if our CECs don't make the commitment and become more involved in a proactive kind of way, I think that things are going to get a whole lot more difficult. . . . the other people involved, have to start picking up the reins and doing things as well. And you have to get people in there who have the commitment to doing that. If you don't, I think it will be more and more difficult to make schools function and function well.

"What is really missing in the *Vision to 2010* is any kind of implementation strategy, at least none that I have seen to this point," stressed one principal. "It's a wonderful document. It has a sound vision," some of which was already in place in his school where there was extensive work on visioning with stakeholders, and with interagency initiatives. However, "it's nothing unless some kind of action plan is put into place to support it," expressing frustration "that there is supposed to be some sort of protocol developed, for instance, between ECE [Education, Culture an Emplorment], Health, Social Services." He pointed out that, "to date we have not seen anything constructive come out of that, and the bureaucratic bickering that comes out of what goes on keeps the practical reality from happening." He urged that Department officials listen more closely to practitioners:

> Very much like the Education Act that is being put in, I mean, people have been given some opportunity for dialogue and input, but they've gone ahead and instituted some things for political purpose, for example, the 1045 hour year which means that in a sense they are trying to force the 200-day school calendar. . . . I often times worry that they are not listening closely enough to those who are trying to do it.

This principal also believed the Department to be "woefully understaffed" and "woefully disorganized" and that "it's not a very hopeful prospect." However, he recognized that Department "personnel are not nurtured in the way they need to be, we all need to be, and it must be disheartening to . . . value education and what we're doing and yet feel isolated as I'm sure many of them do." His belief was that "that fundamentally the Department is moving in the right direction" and that "the move to Project Team, to working together, to being open to input and dialogue and partnership, those things are important," and this principal expressed the hope that "if we work together, I think that we'll get to concensus or to some conclusions and to some successful directions." He described the task facing all educators ironically:

> I think that it's such a mammoth context and situation and system to have to grapple with, and there are so many variables. *Mission Impossible* probably just about describes it.

The Realities: Creative Tensions

From the principals' stories, it was clear that differences existed between what the Department mandated and what the community envisioned, as educational directives were "translated" to fit the community context. A creative tension also existed between what the community mandated and what the principal thought could possibly be offered in his or her school, given needs and resources.

One principal described his reality of being required to offer 10-level courses:

> We live on a bell curve, every one of us, height, weight, intelligence levels and abilities, all the rest of it. There's some people that that doesn't sit well with, egalitarians who think that everybody should be equal in all things, not necessarily any celebration of the differences that people have or the talents that they have, so I try to explain that to the powers that be, but if they are very far away and I am here locally, in the end I wind up compromising between the mandates of the Divisional Board or the Department of Education and the reality that we're faced with in the school. Generally speaking favouring the realities!

For this principal, geographical distance brought greater autonomy, responsibility and freedom; he recognized that "you basically confront a lot more problems than your southern counterpart" but that there was also "more flexibility and creativity . . . in terms of how you deal with those problems, because you're very far away from your board office, geographically and in every other sense of the word."

For another principal, the balancing of tradition, technology and spirituality created an ongoing tension for her school:

> I guess again this came out really strongly in our visioning the community vision sessions that we had, the parents and the elders, that the school must reflect culture, and that they want students learning traditional activities during the school day so that that is part of their learning. Again, they also see and know that kids have to have the skills to be able to work in and to live in a technological and modern society, so it's that balancing of both. It's really again that idea of a holistic approach to the whole person, and they want the spiritual aspect taught as well.

One principal saw the implementation of *Inuuqatigiit* as having more effect in the lower grades but thought that although "there is a notion that these things can be carried all the way up to grade 12, some aspects of it can, but some aspects of it cannot." There would be competition for time with an Alberta curriculum that still drives secondary school programs in the north. Although "the attitudes maybe can pervade all the way through, or the ways people relate to each other and the resources," when he considered the high school science curriculum and math curriculum:

> it can lend itself a little bit to Science, but not at all in Math, I would say, unless you try to contrive it and make it artificial. English and Social Studies it could to some degree influence, but then again, there sits a heavy curriculum that are not really open to a

> whole lot of regional change, and they're designed for Alberta. . . . A problem I have and other teachers have, is that there isn't an outright clear vision, I think in anybody's mind, as to what is ultimately wanted. I think there's grasping towards certain things, and certain general principles at work, but nobody has actually demonstrated how to do any of this, so it makes for some frustrations in trying to implement Alberta Ed guidelines and *Piniaqtavut/ Inuuqatigiit.*

Differences in Communities

For the schools in this study, the implementation of the educational framework varied depending on the current beliefs and practices of individual jurisdictions and schools. Communities were in different stages of readiness. One principal commented that

> even in the Education Act, in devolving these responsibilities to communities, some communities will be ready, they'll have their leadership in place to take care of it . . . but take [another community] for example, that community is a basket case. They have so many problems there, and I'm not sure how you deal with a situation like that. But some communities are ready and can take on more responsibilities. Some can't.

A second principal agreed that disparities in community situations existed and that Department officials "who may perhaps only look at the statistical information, and not realize that there's a lot more to this than what's down on paper or what happens during the sitting of a set of exams" need to appreciate the situation more fully.

One principal commented that every principal makes choices about what needs to be done, because you can't do it all. For him, the first goal was to "make sure the school continues to function" and to ensure that "the community see the school as a positive force . . . a worthwhile place for them to be." He pointed out that "another goal is to ensure that there's learning going on as manifested by graduations, students who have good grade 12, and at the other levels of the school beyond the high school, that students have actually benefitted from being in the school." He believed that principals have different ways of accomplishing that in schools:

> I think that I try to set a tone for the rest of the staff, how to deal with the community and how to deal with the students. Try to establish a fairly nice rapport with them. We don't have a lot of discipline problems in our school, compared to some, even though we have a fairly outgoing and extroverted population of kids.

He explained further that;

> There are problems in town, sniffing and so forth, but we try to, despite all of that, make school a happy place for studets to come, make it beneficial for them, and bear in mind the reason we're here is for students and it's for the betterment of this community as opposed to any dry and distant dictates from Yellowknife or the Divisional Board in terms of meeting goals and so forth. Try to put a human face on it.

For another principal, community visioning workshops, i.e., "including communities in the directions that we're going" which came from the Board Director "and from the Department too . . . where each community is asked for their plan of the future for education in their community," are the starting place for development of school goals.

> Where each community is asked for their plan of the future for education in their community, and we held a number of, I think it might be eight, workshops, might be one day or two days or three days, where we involved students, parents, elders, CEC members and staff members, and went through many activities on, what do we believe, what do we value about education? What do we see for the future of education of children in [our community]? What characteristics are important?

This process of community visioning has framed the five school goals developed in this process of workshops for another Eastern Arctic school:

> The first one is promoting and encouraging Inuktitut and English language skills, reading, writing, listening and speaking. The second one is promoting and developing self-worth and self concept through culturally relevant programs. Our third one is developing the whole person, emotional, social, physical, spiritual, academic and the fourth is having daily culturally relevant programs with elders as teachers. The fifth is to ensure Inuit values, knowledge and traditional skills are taught and are an integral part of our programs.

Principals' Workshop: Discovering Like-Mindedness

Community schools in the Territories are in many ways unique from one another, but "generally speaking, people are still trying to be positive, still trying to look to the good. still looking to opportunities, still framing it, making the most of what you have, and I think that's what you do. That's the only answer because there is no other way." The Principals' Workshop held in April 1996 was the first of its kind, and provided an opportunity for greater understanding among principals from a variety of school situations and Department personnel. Practitioners and policy-makers sat down to talk, and listen.

> I thought the conference and the Department's willingness to support it is a step in the right direction. It could happen, but we need to take responsibility too and say that we need to keep pursuing this and helping it happen, and stay connected with one another and this is where you were at where there's a kind of common grounding and understanding and a supportive network.

One principal commented that, "I was totally absorbing everything that was happening, and I found that a tremendous amount of it did not apply directly to my situation as a principal in a small school." He made the point that "a tremendous amount of what went on at that conference seemed to be more oriented to the larger schools . . . I think it's because (laughs) this sounds kind of silly, but that was the bulk of people who were there." However,

> There were one or two sessions that seemd to centre in on the type of school that I'm in, and in those sessions we covered a lot, and I got a tremendous amount kind of nuts and bolts kind of stuff, comparing of scheduling,... how do you run a school, what about the guy who is going on to grade 10 who is actually functioning at grade 8. That kind of stuff. It was really good.

Another principal found the idea of creating leadership teams in schools an interesting concept, and reasoned that "co-principalships . . . helps us move from a sense of a hierarchical structure to more of a team concept, and increasingly we need to move to team . . . to work together in a supportive kind of network." He suggested that government might be moving in that direction:

> It can't continue to be kind of separate departments and separate entities and separate layers of management and that perhaps, there is some room for optimism because out of this kind of fiscally driven "right-sizing" we'll call it and restructuring, perhaps becomes a more philosophically sound arrangement even though there are growing pains with the change.

Reframing: Flexing the Rules

Generally, the four study principals at the workshop enjoyed the informal discussions they had the opportunity to have with colleagues who shared various school experiences:

> I found that what I gained from them was the flexibility that was there that I didn't know was there. The fact that you can take something and just view it as guidelines and play with it and twist it, turn it and make it work for your students, and this individual struck me as someone of creativity beyond measure, and somebody who is not afraid to take situations and just make it work for the students, and so I gained from him that way.

Most principals assumed some flexibility in the interpretation of guidelines; directives should be grounded in community and contextualized by its people, making learning a relevant process for their children. Of the seven school principals in the study, two spoke of implementation of *Inuuqatigiit;* two spoke of working with *Dene Kede;* one was using both aboriginal curricula in the school; and two made no mention of working with either curriculum, possibly because they were in junior-senior high and high schools in urban centres. The amount of attention given to aboriginal curricula is determined by the community itself, through its CEC.

Principals took a variety of positions on issues, asking how can I best do this to achieve the mandate? Interpretations were based on perceived needs in the school and directed towards students' success There were many examples of principals using creativity and intuition and common sense in their daily actions and decisions in school.

The principal who stated, "credits are not important to me for these kids right now, because they're not being successful anyway" recognized urgent needs in their school.

Several commented that adjusting the Alberta and N.W.T. curricula for greater relevance to students' experiences and needs posed challenges to flexibility and innovation. Most principals in communities used grade 10 as the "bridging years," accommodating the wide entry points for the grade 10 "drop-ins" prevalent in communities today. Whereas some students may well be age-grade appropriate for grade 10, others "may have been non-attenders in their grade 8 and 9 years and so they may have been out of school really for three years."

Distance education has been used in several communities as a means to provide some secondary programs prior to having grade extensions formally in place in the school:

> We used a lot of distance ed materials with them, the CD's for Math 30 out of Alberta, so we used that, and we used some distance ed materials for the others, and the teachers did the correcting and helped them along and that kind of thing.

Another principal used distance education with some success, but saw it as only useful when carefully supervised, requiring teacher resources as well:

> It still requires supervision and teacher time because independent Distance Ed even in Alberta with adults who take correspondence courses as they used to be called, they have a 55% success rate, which means that 45% of them fail. And that's from adults who are motivated and pay money. So you can imagine what less disciplined kids from a different culture who are not perhaps as motivated and haven't paid any money for these things, what their success rate would be for these things if they were unsupervised.

The Northern Studies program has been interpreted in a variety of ways. One principal described part of the course as including a

> trip, which was a number of credit hours; and we have a kayak making course which is coming in which will be part of the credit for Northern Studies, so basically we are trying to do a lot of activity-kind of things that include the students in doing things, and the course is wide open enough that we can do those kinds of things and still meet the objectives of the course. We tend to try to do those kinds of things rather than sticking strictly with the book kind of things.

In another school, junior high Social Studies is combined with Northern Studies and students work together to set up a culture camp for a week.

Most principals have discovered the potential of CTS as a means of offering cultural programming for high school students:

> Yeah, we do have some courses in the career and technology modules. They offer about 15 or 20 of them. . . . Small engine repair, wood working, metal working, cooking, tanning hides, we've created some of our own. Tourism studies, that general kind of thing. And we do generally hand out CTS credits for some of the students participating at Spring camp.

Another principal pointed out that although *Dene Kede* was not yet available for the high school, some of its cultural learning could be facilitated through CTS:

> Because of our mission statement, culture is very much part of our school programs, and like our high school students, we are doing a forestry pilot for the Career and Technology Studies. One of the courses that needed to be done was the Woods Survival course. We hooked it into the community hunt last week, so the kids sort of got both, they went out for the whole week, did the community hunt with community members, but also did the woods survival skills required for their credits for the course.

Modularizing programs so that students could complete course work one credit at a time, eliminating the need to repeat entire 5-credit courses was also being considered by some principals, who were taking the idea from the CTS courses and applying it to some core curricula.

Principals made concessions in specific situations to enable a student's greater success. Making arrangements to get a student out of the community and to school elsewhere is one example:

> We had someone else who had done the two years with us here, unsuccessfully, was into his third year, was unsuccessful again, and it was more the home life, and I went to bat for him and said, this kid needs to get out of the community to see if it makes a difference. To see if (chuckles) is it him or the home? Then he'll be able to face the reality if it's him. At least give him the chance.

The principals' stories illustrated how they were constantly "working between the lines" of Department mandates, reframing, flexing rules and creatively arriving at solutions for situations specific to their community and reflective of their students' needs.

POSITIONING IN THE CULTURE

In efforts to provide more relevant, culture-based schooling, principals focused on how their schools reflected the culture of their communities. They searched for personal answers to such questions as, is first language instruction desireable in the early years of schooling? Is traditional knowledge still worth learning today? If so, how does one juggle these with current curricular requirements? How are standards maintained in the process? What are those standards? Principals raised these and other questions and in addressing them, they have worked through a variety of processes that included meeting with all stakeholders, participating in community visioning workshops, developing school growth plans, and working closely with parent advisory groups and CECs.

One principal commented that at the elementary level there generally was more success in developing programs that integrate language, culture and tradition. One K-11 principal noted, "Something that's coming across very strongly is that we have programs that are challenging to kids . . . you can see that in our primary grades especially, we have programs that are meeting their needs." The secondary programs juggled curricular requirements and credit systems with culture camps and community aspirations. This section will present the principals' experiences around "Positioning in the Culture" through (a) Culture Camps, (b) Community Visioning, (c) Cultural Sensitivity, and (d) Community Readiness.

Culture Camps

Spring and fall trips "out on the land" were regular events in all of the schools. In the communities they are referred to as the "Culture camp" or "Spring camp" or "Fall camp," whereas in the urban schools, they may be called the "Bio 20 field trip" or "Phys Ed 20/30 camping trip" or "Northern Studies excursion."

One principal talked about completing the fifth Spring camp in April-May of this year. The first Spring camp, generously funded by the CEC, had cost $12,000 for purchase of initial materials such as tents and coleman stoves. This year's camp started with the high school students who went out and set up tents, hunted for food and so on; the younger students came later; and the K-3 group came only for day trips. Elders and others from the community were involved in the camp. The principal described it this way:

> Yeah, there's caribou hunts right at the beginning of the camp, and then even after the camp is set up, there's more caribou hunts that are training little fellows how to hunt. It's not uncommon for a kid to get his first caribou at Spring camp, in fact that happened to a number of kids this year. Ten or eleven years old, they get their first "bou". . . . It is very exciting. We celebrate it right out there.

They "generally hand out CTS credits for some students participating at Spring camp." As a continuation to Spring camp, "we have a group that do a study of the halibut fishing industry, from the fishing shacks back into the fish plant here in town, to the processing of the fish and getting them sent on the plane and going south." He added that "we don't have any money this year for the Spring camp so I just fundraised a little more, dug deeper into the slush fund." Fall camp took less time: "For the previous two years we've had a shorter Fall camp which consists of day trips and berry picking and the likes, involving the parents as well."

For another principal, this year's Spring camp was "the most organized that I can remember us being . . . it's another feeling of accomplishment!" Six camp leaders, three men and three women, four of them elders, "brainstormed as a committee the activities that

we wanted the children to take part in, and the learning that we wanted them to have when they were out at camp." They also had "three men who drive the skidoos and komatiks to take the kids out to camp, and they also help when they're out there." K-5 go out for day trips only. Spring camp begins with the kindergarten students who go out "for just 1/2 a day, for the afternoon on Tuesday, and we went out to our floe edge."

> Our floe edge, that's where the sea ice meets open water in the ocean, is very close to our community this year. Usually it's a good 3 to 4 to 6 hours, but this year it's less than an hour's drive from the community, and it's really exciting because of the open water. There's a possibility of going seal hunting, there may even be, we haven't seen any yet, but some hunters that went out about a week ago thought they saw narwhales, and there's sea gulls, ducks, sea birds, so it's exciting.

There was excitement in the air as young classes travelled out to observe the catching of seal at Spring camp:

> Yesterday our grades 1 and 2 classroom went, all 22 kids went, and today our grade 2 and 3 class went, and a staff member just gave me a call about an hour ago to say that they had just a wonderful time. Our language cultural specialist caught two seals and the kids were on the ice of course, and he was out in a little boat, but they got to see and learn how you would catch the seal and then bring it to the ice, and to talk about safety of course near the floe edge. They were learning about safety around guns especially as well, because a couple of the men were shooting at ducks for instance so they talked a lot about safety around guns. They made bannock, and have to set up tents when they get out there and get their camps set up. They have two tents, they're canvas tents that they take out and set up, and we have mattresses and coleman stoves for each of the tents, and they have hot dogs while they were there, and I guess they had seal meat as well.

For some students, this learning was replicated at home, as "a number of families still have close ties to the land and get out on the land fairly regularly." However, the principal pointed out that there are single parent families "where it may be tough, sometimes the family may not have a machine, so they might not get out as often as other students." Spring camp was an exciting time for "especially our younger kids." The principal commented that

> I was just checking today, in our high school grouping, there were only three students who had brought back their permission slips, and then, after I'd gone in and talked again to them, encouraging them, then we were up to seven this afternoon (laughs). Once they knew . . . I think it was the idea that well, if my friend isn't going, then neither am I kind of thing, and so when a few more committed, then of course we got more and more.

A third principal planned spring and fall camps with two cultural instructors, male and female, one on staff and one hired by the CEC. The staff member is "our major instructor, she just moves out to the camp for the month that it runs, Sam is also out there, the other person that the CEC pays." New topics are selected every year, and the topic covered "depends who else goes out, or who we bring in for short periods. Sometimes it's

been renewable resource officers, sometimes the community health representative when we want to do first aid, or gun safety or whatever." Although students stay at camp for two days, topics are covered by community people who go out usually only for the presentation and don't "stay out there with them because we are close enough to drive back and forth, but goes out for hour, hour and a half presentations."

Asked if Spring camp was popular with the students, this principal explained how camp began in the school, and how school culture camps have been received:

> They love it, they absolutely love it, and the reason it started was that in the spring, we lost our students. They all went down to the winter road, with their parents, to the Spring camp. Winter was over, weather was beautiful and they wanted to be outside, they were duck hunting, they were doing this, and our school program pretty well got lost for a month because it was so sporadic, the attendance, because kids would go out there and live, they wouldn't come back.
>
> And so one day I said, why can't we run our own camp? Why don't we, because there are some kids who never get to go, 'cause the parents just don't go. Why don't we run our own camp? Well, off it went, we went out and found us a spot, Renewable [Resources] cleaned it, cleared it for us, we put up tents, and off we went. We now have two cabins, we've graduated and we're starting to get insulated. We now have insulated floors and insulated roofs, so we have kept upgrading every year. And, our camp's the place to be, you don't go with the parents anymore (laughs) you go to our camp!
>
> And we, by fluke, very fluke again, picked the best area across from the best frog pond, and we go through the neatest time, because there are six groups, and it's done by total lottery, which group you end up in, because we do it in family groups, we don't go out by class, we do family groups out there, and if you go out early, you get tadpoles, and if you go late, you get frogs, and every group in between gets the stages in between, and it becomes a real interesting thing to find out which group you are in, because of what's going to be happening. But they absolutely, absolutely love Spring camp.

Organizing was done by "families" as students "go with a group right from kindergarten to grade ten, two from each class pretty well." Such "family groups" were selected "so you had a woodcutter, you had kindle gatherers, you had water gatherers, you had a mixed group." Along with the cultural instructors, "usually one of our support staff goes, including the janitors, and our secretary, they have their two days at the camp too, and one teacher." Parents are also invited and "they do drop in. We haven't had any parents who want to go for a two day session, but they do drop in continually, out there, because it is right on the road."

The principal covered for whichever teacher went, teaching the class for two days,

> So for the month of camp, I become a teacher, the month of May. . . . And the teachers love it. That Spring camp turned into Fall camp because teachers said, if I would only have had a chance to get to know some of these older kids at the beginning of the year. The grade one teacher ended out at the camp with kids in grade ten.

For a fourth principal, positioning the school in the community required addressing two aboriginal cultures, both Dene and Inuvialuit. Community involvement in the culture

camps has increased in the years that she has been there, "a very big thing that we got on the go" four years ago when she first came to the community as principal. She had been surprised to discover that "there was no land program, no activity program that involved traditions and hunting" in the school; individual teachers would arrange class trips, and depended on volunteers and borrowed skidoos to help out. Another indication of progress was that land trips are now funded through the Aboriginal Committee, "rather than our local CEC or school organizations. That's a big step."

Because her school has needed to implement both the *Dene Kede* and *Inuuqatigiit* curricula to accommodate both aboriginal cultures, the school tried doing two trips this year:

> We had a Gwich'in camp and we had an Inuvialuit camp, and they were out, they left Tuesday morning and came back Friday evening. I remember something like $2500 total cost. That included people who were doing instructions, the different skidoos, the gas, the food, all this kind of stuff. It employs people in the community. One of the things we have to do is to try to make sure we're employing both Gwich'in and Inuvialuit. Most of the things we do together. This has been one of the first times on trips, that we've actually separated them. One of the reasons, I guess, is because it was part of the northern Studies in high school so it's part of a credit course, and we wanted the Gwich'in kids to do a Gwich'in and the Inuvialuit to do the Inuvialuit, and we threw in the Junior High as sort of the extra bodies kind of thing.

Although this principal saw no particular competition between the two groups, she thought that "the Inuvialuit one probably went over better because it was a longer distance to travel, and th[illegible] was more skidoo time (chuckles). . . . It was a harder trip. When they were out, too, [illegible] got a lot of snow, and it was a really hard trek back. They were like, five hours out, the Inuvialuit trip was five hours out and they had to go through the mountains and that kind of thing. It was pretty rough coming back."

In preparing for the March muskrat camp, teachers coordinated themes from both aboriginal curricula:

> Camping is a theme in both *Dene Kede* and *Inuuqatigiit,* so what we've done, we look at both and teachers are encouraged to integrate it, whether it's in their Social Studies, like camping especially in primary would fit right in with Social Studies, and as part of their reading, looking at northern books, reading northern books; as part of their writing, writing those kinds of stories; and we try to work, with some degree of success, depending on the topic, with our language teachers, that they're working on the same topic, and doing a lot of either the Gwich'in or Inuvialuit words associated with camping . . . so the kids are getting the same ideas from two different perspectives . . . and of course our activity with camping would be our Muskrat camp which we set up the last two weeks of March, and all our students get to participate in.

After the hunt, the community was invited to a celebration at the school:

> We had the feast the year before last, we arranged to get all the elders brought over from the old folks, and they thought it was just great. They were just so happy. And the kids put on drum dancing, and drum dancing is really big at our school, and they put on demonstrations of drum dancing, and the elders were just so happy. They hadn't seen this for a long time, and it really was something that they were proud of.

> Last year, we didn't have quite that many [muskrat], so what we did, the language instructors took some of the older classes into the Home Ec Room and did up a care package for the local elders, and each care package had a muskrat, some bannock, and things like that in it. And the kids took them around to the elders in town and delivered them to the elders. So it's kind of trying to involve the community as much as possible with those kinds of things.

Community Visioning

All of the principals gave clear indications of working with their communities to identify what schooling should offer its youth. There was a focus on community, with strong regard for culture, tradition and relevant learning. Words like "identity" and "self-esteem" and "pride" cropped up frequently as principals discussed shaping education with community stakeholders, as did "communication", "leadership" and "visioning." This section will describe how community visioning has shaped the picture of education in several northern communities.

Building from Within: "The Benefits are Far-reaching"

The schools were at different stages of developing directions and goals that are more clearly positioned in the culture of the community. For one principal, it was the "elders in the school" program, completing its second year, which

> has developed stronger links with the community. Elders now have a better understanding of what schooling is about in our community and they are also more aware about our goals and vision and the importance of their involvement in helping us to reach those goals. CEC members and more importantly parents are becoming more aware of our goals to ensure that our school reflects the values and beliefs of Inuit people and that our school is a welcoming, safe and positive learning environment for students, parents, elders, community members, CEC members and staff members.

This principal noted that in the seven years that she has been in the community, demographics have shifted from having a majority of southern Canadian educators in the school as the teachers, and the Inuit as support staff, "to now having Inuit educators and/or teachers in training as I feel our language/cultural specialists are . . . to having a majority of Inuit educators in our school, and being supported by non-aboriginal people in the school." There are now 14 Inuit staff members and six non-Inuit. She noted that "it has become increasingly evident that we have to start promoting aboriginal educators in our system and from our community, and encouraging them." There were several reasons, but one was related to "the effort that goes into welcoming new southern Canadians to a community, and they're going to be here a couple of years, it's just an incredible amount of work that's necessary to support them."

For this principal, sharing leadership with an Inuk assistant principal for three years was an important experience

> I was just at a meeting at the board office last week on how we can best provide in-school support at a time of cutbacks and reductions, and we'd been talking about rethinking and looking at the whole model, the box we have around principals and around leadership, and we talked at length about shared leadership and looking at having a team of leaders.

She offered two reasons for sharing the leadership:

> I think it was more how can we provide the best possible leadership in our systems, and support people so that we do. Because of the ever-increasing demands that are asked of people in leadership roles in schools, I think that its becoming increasingly difficult for one individual to do everything. You just can't be the super-human individual and do it all. So I think that it was more from that aspect, and also from the perspective of especially supporting Inuit educators to move into leadership roles as well.

Aboriginal staff and elders played an important role in developing programs for the school. For example, the sewing instructor was integral in developing the course, "in identifying what skills the girls would have to learn through the process and would have to show by the end of the course, so it was pretty much completely developed and facilitated by [her] with other community members." The community visioning workshops, involving students, parents, elders, CEC members and staff members, went through activities on beliefs and values about education: "What do we see for the future of education of children in our community. What values from the Inuit perspective are necessary in our teaching?" This process helped build trust and understanding:

> That in itself opened so many doors, people felt that they were valued, that their opinions and what they believed about education was also important. The CEC would go on the radio to explain what we had talked about to the whole community after we had these workshops, so just that kind of sharing and communicating about what's happening in the school was really important and I think went a long way to building that trust between us as a school community and parents and elders.

"Involving elders in the process of developing program from a traditional perspective and an Inuit perspective" underscores much of the school's agenda. At times, elders are called in to facilitate in problem solving: "I think there are some kids who will be what I consider rude or disrespectful back, but generally and especially with elders, they will listen." Trying to "Northernize and Inuktitize" some of the CTS courses and the content and make it more relevant to the learning of her students has paid dividends. Next year's CTS courses include

> the igloo making, the kamik making, skin preparation, we're looking at small tools, like ulus and snow knives, floe edge boat making, possibly a construction kind of course and a design course to make a qammaq, they were traditional houses, the first kinds of

houses that were built, some with whale bone and skin, but ours would be a wooden structure.

In this school, K to 5 was in first language instruction. English as a second language begins in kindergarten and is then increased gradually. "Grade 6 and 7 are our transition years, where our students move from the vast majority of the instructional time being in Inuktitut to about 50-50, 50% in Inuktitut instruction and 50% English." The benefits, this principal felt, were numerous and far-reaching as students had the opportunity "to develop a better sense of self and pride in the Inuit language, in their heritage and culture as Inuit people."

For this principal, "the emphasis on community decision-making is something that I've found so beneficial and just so essential to having the best possible schooling and programs for our kids."

"Everybody has a Stake in these Things"

A second principal concurred that working with the community decision-making process was an important part of his job. However, he pointed out that "when we moved to community-based high schools, we lost some of the economy of scale that you can have in [regional high schools]" explaining them as "some of the things that we can't do because we don't have the numbers for it. We try to offer the best high school program possible." He expressed some difficulty with the community mandate that the school offer both streams of high school programming, reasoning that 13/23/33 level courses are offered in the communities because they are more "do-able, the ones we will have the most success with." However, offering 10/20/30 as well splits the resources, and be observed that "there's only a very, very small number of our students in the position to do 10/20/30, and it wouldn't be fair to the overall body of the school to devote roughly the same resources to the academic."

He suggested that "one of the ways around it is offering 13 and 10 in the same classroom" but argued,

> that is less than ideal because our guys need an awful lot of, say we schedule 120 hours for a 120-hour course, first off we lose a lot of time with the various things that happen here. Storms, power outages, Nunavut Implementation Committee members coming in to talk to the kids about Nunavut, the Spring camp, lots of other odds and ends, so you're lucky if you end up with 90 hours of the 120.

Although they have budgeted 160 hours for each 120-hour course for the coming year "with the expectation that we'll lose some time," he pointed out that

> Even if they got 120 hours, because for our kids English is a second language, they need more to accomplish the same amount, and they need more instruction to

> accomplish the same amount as what might be expected in Alberta. So arguably there are not very many people who are really in the 10 level to start with, and when you put 10's and 13's together and you're teaching two courses that, the Board has an oversimplified version of it. They see English 10 and 13 can be taught together and 10 is basically English 13 with a few add-on's, but it's not . . . The whole treatment is different. There's a different level of expectation.

Although he described the whole decision-making process as "community-based, driven by the community, in a community-based school, and the community determines what direction we go," he had difficulty reconciling their desire for culture-based learning with an academic curriculum. "It makes for some frustrations in trying to implement Alberta Ed guidelines and *Piniaqtavut/Inuuqatigiit."* The aboriginal curriculum is "not a big part of our academic program though. It's more for the lower grades." It was his view that the Alberta senior program definitely had relevance for his students:

> Well, for the technical side, math and science are going to be required if you're going to become a carpenter, an electrician, a plumber, those subjects are required. If you want to build anything, and I don't mean igloos and tents, I mean bigger structures, math and science are definitely requisite. If you want to write proposals or if you want to communicate effectively with Yellowknife or other government agencies, English is required. And if you want to have a grasp of the political process I suppose, how things actually get done, it wouldn't hurt to have some social studies background. So there is a relevance to it.

This principal expressed concerns about the "allocation of resources to bring in elders," clarifying that

> When the elders come in I don't mind the values being transmitted, and the ways we did things in the past being transmitted, and how we resolve difficulties and problems and conflicts being transmitted, but when I'm told that the knowledge that the elders have for survival on the land is essential for our students, I profoundly disagree. Those knowledges are not essential at all. . . . Technology has rendered all those things historic. . . . They all have snowmobiles, outboard motors, so the knowledge of the elders in that regard, it's nice and it's quaint and it's sentimental but it's not essential by any means, and when they say it's essential, either they don't know what essential means, or they're seriously misled.

Without dismissing the importance of cultural identity, he felt however, that much of it was not practical "from a daily living point of view" and he also voiced concern for creating narrowed outlooks and exclusivity:

> Values are important I think, that they get those transmitted, but most of the elders have no real good concept of what the 20th century and the 21st century look like. They are from another era and from another time, and over-emphasis on the kinds of things that they have to offer, or an over-dependence on them, I think is backward looking and not in the best interests. . . . If you value your own culture to the exclusion of all the others, especially with the world getting smaller and smaller with communications being what they are, I think you do yourself a disservice too. You get insular and narrow in your outlook. . . . Part of that is cultural intolerance.

However, recognizing the tensions inherent in his position and the balanced approach required, he believed it was critical for a principal to be

> a problem solver, a people person. The technical details work themselves out if you can establish rapport with the parties concerned, if you can get everybody's input and regardless of what you think of it, if you can integrate it into your decision, and if you can remember that everybody has a stake in these things, some of them moreso than us, who are transients.

Visioning: Seeding New Ideas

The planning and building of a new school was a four-year process for one principal, one "that saw us seek the input of all the stake holders in the community, that saw us build on the community strengths and include partners from various sectors." The new superintendent offered "an attractive vision . . . about all the people having input and opportunity and leadership possibility." To this end, she herself took on "through Arctic [Aurora] College . . . leadership training, where she really tried to encourage all potential leaders. Anyone interested in leadership would take a course through the college, offered by herself, as a means to have continuing dialogue in that area." A Futures Group which "looked at the entire district" was established and began "a discussion and thinking and talking about education in general, the issues, directions, concerns, successes. . . . A good dialogue on education was begun that year."

The district opened a storefront, inviting the larger community to participate in the visioning process for the new school. Although "there was lots of input," much of the early discussion with the general public was "more traditional in nature, in a sense of how it used to be." This principal described the early process as one that looked at schools and "education in a rearview mirror. They're looking forward, yes, and they think they have all the answers . . . but they're always kind of reflecting back on how it used to be . . . that halcyon perspective of the ideal that it was." However,

> we also had people who were willing to entertain the possibility of a different vision, and we had an instructional program that we had been drafting and rewriting and ultimately reached some 20 pages of kind of directioning, and we had that out and available to people so that they could read it and think about it and get a sense of what we were talking about, which didn't necessarily always happen in a single visit. We often had repeat visitors who had taken the time, actually, to get through what was actually a fairly intimidating document and take a look at it and share their perspective.

New ideas were in this way seeded, and inspired new thinking and directioning:

> Even architecturally speaking, there were many people who had preset ideas about how a building could look. In fact, they wanted a building built first. And many of them were looking for the shell and the concept when they came in and were very surprised to find out that no such thing existed, and that we were trying to design from the inside

> out and cater to the program. So when we looked at it, many came in and said, are you going to do an automotives area, or are you going to do woodworking, these are fairly traditional concepts.
>
> We talked about the fact that we thought we could accomplish that through the community, and use their facilities. Many were taken aback, but as they thought about it, especially in the economic times today, they thought, yeah, that makes a lot of sense. And then, there was fairly limited exposure to Career and Technology Studies which was just coming on line coincidentally at that time. But we were quite aware of it, and saw it as a breath of fresh air, and a lot of our planning immediately started to gravitate to that direction.

The storefront provided a good place to work out ideas coming from community:

> We were able to talk to architects about CTS while the public was around, because our architects had actually worked on Lester B. Pearson [high school] . . . a forerunner to CTS and its technologies, and had been dialoguing with the Department of Education in Alberta. So we were a little ahead of it because we had a pretty good sense of what these architects had done, what the department was thinking in terms of CTS, and of course, as it came on line, we were very much interested and early participants in a lot of things facilitated partly through our own department, and partly through our own initiatives through the Calgary Board, where we had spent a lot of time because what they had been doing intrigued us.

The design concept of the school represented the collective efforts of the community, based on four areas: educational philosophy, community need, changing economic times, and adaptability. The principal stressed that adaptability was the driving force behind the school design: "We recognized more and more that we couldn't afford to have huge spaces, shops if you will" and looked at the multi-purpose facility concept, suggesting "that we could make use of spaces for more than one thing, and have some flexibility, and be able to grow into the future.

> We decided to focus on communication technology, and I think that overall, that is the direction we're going. We have of course, a lot of the business-like areas: information processing, word processing, computers, communication technology, which looks at graphics and animation, desktop publishing, audio-visual, including a radio broadcasting booth, and we're doing silk screening, and stained glass as a part of design studies. One that we're really excited about and working on right now is the whole recycling initiative which is one of the modules out of I think, renewable resources, and we received an environmental action grant for $5000 to purchase equipment. What we'll actually be doing is emulsing our own paper products, recycled products, into a big vat and we have a process with a press and all of that, and we'll be creating our own gift paper, and trying to get a little enterprise and innovation and sales going, of gift packaging.

This principal emphasized the need for the community to continue to support the school. Although the communication technology lab was set up for about $50,000 "which at surface sounds like a lot of money" he argued that the cost is far less than "what it would take to keep current some of the new shop environments with the new electronic testing equipment and those kind of things" available in "garages with new technologies that are abreast of things are able to do." He would like to

> place people there in more of a cooperative program of some kind, we are probably going to be that much further ahead because we don't have to buy the actual equipment. We just have to have the relationship or partnership with a community business venture, and I believe that the community itself has to rise to the occasion of educating our youth and helping out where it can.

He concluded that all was ultimately directed at meeting the needs of kids: "I guess that fundamentally, it is about philosophy, it's about working with kids and taking them from where they are and trying to move them to where they need to be."

The official opening of the school stretched over four days and "sought to include all the dignitaries necessary at such an event, coupled with representatives of the partners we have in the building."

> [The first evening] was a combination of entertainment and ceremony . . . we blended puppets, special guest appearances by the Queen and the Prime Minister with humor and the required pageantry and recognition demanded by the evening; the second evening featured an Arts component comprising choral groups, a dramatic recreation of the history of the school district focusing on the high school, static art displays and a series of "busker-like" acts throughout the building as people toured (we had over 1100 people through our doors over the first two nights); the third evening saw a night which focused more specifically on the students as there was a "Sports night" Volleyball challenge; this was followed by a student dance. The last night sponsored a community dance; all those who had anything to do with the building, from City officials, parents, building consultants or just interested public could attend. This event saw over 400 people show and have a good time. In every sense of the word, this celebration capped a process that very much involved the community in the process of building and made all feel that they had been part of making the new school a reality.

Cultural Sensitivity

One principal identified the implementation of 2 aboriginal curricula as one of the strong points in her school this year. "Both *Dene Kede* and *Inuuqatigiit* are becoming 'institutionalized'. . . . Each month or so the whole school follows a theme taken from the aboriginal curriculum. These are then integrated in other subject areas, depending on the grade level." She explained that most of the units

> have an activity that all students participate in. This year, many of these activities (fish netting, jiggling, snaring, caribou hunting, muskrat trapping, etc.) have been funded from sources other than the school or CEC budget. Also the organization of the activities as well as finding funding has been taken over by one of the language instructors.

Her comment that "this has been a real strong point, especially with mostly a new staff" suggested that delegating such responsibility to aboriginal staff makes sense in isolated communities with high turnover of southern staff.

The programs are generally liked by students, although more so by the younger ones. The difficulty seems to in junior high. "It's not perceived as cool, and we do have some difficulty. The language instructors keep saying that they enjoy their K-6 groups mostly, but the 7-9 groups are often very difficult for them." This principal saw several reasons why the older groups are more difficult:

> Harder to motivate. They don't have a strong basis in language, so I think sometimes they feel it's very simplistic kind of things that they do. And they're probably right in some ways because, although these people have had some courses, like we have an aboriginal language program alongside the TEP program, and they've all done, I think it's 10 courses over the past couple of years, but still, that's not a lot of training, not with 10 courses, you know yourself that's not a lot of training for people who've had little schooling, so they find it difficult to come up with ideas that are appropriate interest-wise plus ability-wise that the kids can cope with in the different languages.

Both of the language instructors have "a very good background in hunting, fishing, trapping, those kinds of things" and "we do have a Gwich'in Language Centre . . . that produces some materials and sends them off to schools." She noted that "the Inuvialuit one is kind of hard to get on the go" and that "they're trying to get the centre reopened up in the region, and hire somebody there to run the same kind of thing, mostly concentrating on trying to provide materials in the language."

In the community itself, "language is not very strong." The school tended to focus "on academic areas because I find that here, although the parents like to have the aspect of the traditional things, they're also very academic-oriented and want their children to be able to succeed in today's world." There were some aboriginal parents

> who will say that we shouldn't even be having language programs and these kinds of things in the school. But they are in the minority, I think. I would assume too that parents are pulled both ways. A lot of them see the value of academic achievement for the future and everything, but they also don't want to pull the children completely away from their background and their language. They see value in that as well.

This principal understood the ambivalence but expressed the difficulty it raised for the school in determining a direction for itself:

> Yeah, I guess in a lot of ways, a lot of parents aren't quite sure what they want, and I think this is sometimes the difficulty of getting a straight forward direction because I think, maybe parents are a little ambivalent about what they want as well. You know, they see one value in the level of academic achievement and going on and being able to fill the positions that are now filled by non-native people and all of these kind of things. But on the other hand too, they don't want to lose the connection to the background. Parents are pulled both ways as well.

Because "very few parents have the language skills to do it," this principal felt that most parents were not in the position to do the language instruction for their children themselves. It seemed impossible to achieve consensus on such issues. In another

community, where the white population constitutes seven per cent of the population and the majority of parents use the Inuktitut language, there is controversy about first language instruction from K-3.

> K to 3 is in Inuktitut, and they don't start English until grade four. And a good segment of the community favours this. In fact, it theoretically comes from the community. But there's also a large minority, maybe larger than the board would like to admit, and not just from Qaallunaq parents but from Inuit parents who say, my kid knows Inuktitut already. I send him to school so he can learn English.

For one principal in the Western Arctic, the aboriginal curriculum is used as a resource, and not followed closely as a curriculum:

> It is used as a resource, a resource book, a resource curriculum, whatever you want to call it. . . . And if you read the introduction to *Dene Kede,* you'll see that it is meant to be used as the individual community sees fit, and the CEC has seen fit, three years ago, to have it used as a resource.

He pointed out that the decision is "a community mandate, so to speak" because I think at the time the CEC voted on that three years ago, there was aboriginal representation, and there is now, for that matter. Now the issue has not come up this year, but I remember at that time very clearly, there was no gray area in this, it was very clear cut. This is what we want in our community." Instead, this principal worked with "what we call a sensitivity to the culture, a sensitivity to where we are." Aboriginal teachings are

> not a surface veneer type of thing at all. Last year, as part of our junior high Social Studies, in combination with the Northern Studies 15, the teacher who was doing that last year in the early fall, that teacher set up a full working camp, and had, if there is a 15 per cent native population in [our community], I'm sure he had seven per cent of the population involved, coming into the school, doing all the teaching and getting the kids out, the junior and senior kids, . . . and they ended up with a full working camp, right down to cutting the boughs and getting the boughs down on the floor and getting the tents set up. . . . A real culture camp. And so you see, we're not following *Dene Kede*, but we are certainly exposing our students to where they are in the world.

In a community where the focus was on achieving academic standards, this principal felt that he had achieved a balance, "a combination of standards that they appreciate, and a sensitivity, a demonstrated sensitivity to where the town is, and where the school is."

Community Readiness

Several principals expressed the belief that working from within a community towards change implies a readiness on the part of the community to take the steps

themselves. One principal described learning about an outdoor education program that his friend had managed last year for a month in the summer:

> Basically they brought a bunch of elders together and they planned this trip where they went on a 400-mile canoe trip through a traditional fishing area . . . They really thought it through in terms of how the elders worked with the kids, and the roles of the teachers and the aides, and they took some really hard-core kids and it was just a very positive experience. And that nudged my interest because I have some experience in terms of alternative programs and outdoor education . . . And then the work that they were doing in terms of governance issues; they are trying to amalgamate their Health, Social Services and Education boards, so that's really interesting, and they really believe in working from the grass roots up.

Another principal described her feelings of risk-taking when she wanted to introduce a healing program in the school. "We've known for as long as I've been here that there is an alcohol problem, lots of abuse in the community, not just alcohol. It became very frustrating for me as a principal to try and deal with issues when there was so much denial, and I was pretty well beating my head against the wall. All of us were. We were getting nowhere. We had gone the route of the alcohol and drug abuse people coming into the school and working with the students on a regular basis, and sometimes it worked, depending on the alcohol worker. For the last probably eight years it hasn't worked because the alcohol workers just didn't feel comfortable with the teacher in the class, but they could not control the students without the teacher in the class. It got left by the wayside."

> All I saw was everybody heading to the same boat, that these kids are going to be there soon, and is it going to happen when they're 40 . . . before they realize that there's another side to life. And I knew, although we've had very few disclosures, I know what goes on in this community because I have been a part of it, I know through gossip, through rumour, through truth, whatever, of the sexual abuse, the physical abuse, the other things that go on. So I knew that a lot of these kids had stuff that they weren't dealing with, it was all pushed down. And the first talk about this started at the board level.

Concurrently, there was talk about starting a summer program in the regional high school residence, "that the kids who were going to come had to come and take this program in the residence. So the talk started there."

> Our supervisor of schools talked to an alcohol and drug person here, if they knew anything about a youth program, so one day he came to drop some stuff off for me to fax over, and I started talking to him. It was $2000 to send a student out for the program they were having in the summer time, and my mind started working, and I said, could we have a program here in the school? How could it be done? And he said, Yah, Yah, it could happen . . . so my mind just went a thousand ways. There was no other way we are going to be able to deal with so many kids unless we do it here, we cannot afford $2000 per student to send them out, who would you pick? How would you decide?

The principal shared her thoughts with the counsellor-in-training who happened to be outside her office:

> she just jumped! She said, this would be wonderful if you could do it . . . this would be breaking ground, we'll bring somebody in and we'll do a needs assessment. I said I need time to go to the CEC. This was the first time I was ever scared to death, because I was making a social comment on the community, the kids, and I didn't know whether I had the right, yet, whether I was in far enough yet to be able to say it.

The CEC was supportive of the idea, and one of the members had said at the meeting, "'If only somebody would have done that for me.' And that was it. It was unanimous. How much? Ten thousand. We'll take it out of our van money. If you believe that this will help, we'll pay for it." The counsellor-in-training, who had gone through a healing program herself, went to the Band meeting. "She's on Band Council, and came back with a ten thousand dollar cheque."

Letters went out inviting parents to come and talk: "Well nobody came, and I thought that was where the breakdown was going to be, that parents were going to say, who do you think you are?" The principal spoke to the grades 9-11 students, who "spent some time with a trainer, when she came in to do the needs assessment. We met with her and went over all the things that came out of the needs assessment and worked on the programs." These took place between the beginning of May to mid-June, in readiness for August school opening, and "two weeks before school started, when kids started coming and saying 'we want to come back to school,' I made the healing program mandatory."

> So the first day of school, we still hadn't really heard from parents. The kids had said yes. I was just about sick the night before school started because I was sure that no one was going to come, I was sure that the kids weren't going to show up . . . that they still were going to say I don't need this, that's what I was afraid of, that they were going to say you still don't have the right and I don't need it. And, the Monday morning, 26 kids showed up and 26 kids went there, and there was never any question of whether it was optional or not, nobody ever asked, they just went, and took it. 20 days, four weeks.

The principal had to deal with different levels of readiness on the parts of both parents and students. She explained that "a big part of the program was the Wednesday night sessions for parents of kids who were in the healing process" to educate them as to what was happening, "and if they started noticing changes, they could encourage it instead of discouraging it and saying, what the hell's going on with you?"

> One thing that we didn't think about which happened was that the parents who had been treated or had started doing healing were the only ones who would come out, because it was too scarey for the other ones, you know, you might find something out about me. So, some of the parents that were in the healing workshop, a couple of them agreed to run the Saturday night session. The alcohol and drug worker did pop in Friday night after an angry session I had with her and said exactly what I thought. She rethought it and started coming out Friday night. The kids didn't come. They were

there for a little bit, as long as we opened the gym after, they'd be there, but they weren't doing it for the right reasons.

This principal was advised that it was time to wait for the kids to reach readiness:

> We talked to the Dene Cultural institute, and I talked hours and hours . . . and they said you can't make them. We've got to wait until they're ready and when they're ready they'll come. Dene Cultural Institute has come back twice, to do day sessions with the kids, to try and keep it fresh in their minds . . . [and] we decided to run, instead of CALM, a daily circle, so that it was in their minds everyday for a half hour.

Twenty-four students completed the course successfully and a second session was planned and funded for the spring semester. The students, who "thoroughly enjoyed the twenty days" were agreeable to go on. Although parent response "on the street" was limited, community elders responded favourably to the program, as did "other people that didn't have their kids right in there."

The CEC was strongly supportive of this initiative, and the principal continued to work closley with them:

> We work on school policy, we're just reviewing all the policy. And money, we're always talking money. They run TV Bingo, they do Christmas gifts for all the kids, some parental concerns and issues that come up. But they are quite interested in my monthly report, a copy goes to them. They read it and ask questions about things that are in there and what's going on, and I always talk about other things that, either they are on the agenda or they have happened since the report goes in, and the school year. And that sort of things they do, but they're happy just to be at that level.

However, the principal commented that when it came to school program and curriculum and matters, CEC members had generally not shown much interest, leaving it to her to work through with staff:

> My CEC is not very active in the school, and sometimes that's good and sometimes . . . . They come to meetings. They do their two hours at the meeting and that's it, and they do that but not much more. They're not there to see what's happening in classes. They all have jobs and have other things going on in their lives. They don't want to hear about progras, they never say let's go through this curriculum and so on . . . no thank you. . . . You know, you handle that end of it.

To summarize, the means of "Positioning in the Culture" are as varied as the communities represented in this study. Relevant and culture-based schooling must reflect the culture of the community, and these principals searched for personal answers to many questions around first language instruction and traditional knowledge on one hand, and current curricular requirements and academic standards on the other. They are working with a variety of stakeholders in their community toward reaching solutions that best suit their particular schools. The answers are not easy. One principal defined his challenge:

> There's some controversy about what the language of instruction ought to be during those first three years. And paralleling that, there's some controversy about how much cultural inclusion we should have at the high school, junior high, should we have a Spring camp, as it detracts from academic time. Should we have other days where we do similar types of things, or should we have other time taken away from the academics in order to reflect that this is an Inuit community. Personally I think we should, but my outlook is not necessarily the only one.

THE UNENDING WORKDAY

In discussing both the celebrations and on-going problems in their schools over the past year, principals indicated time and again that their work was all-encompassing and all-consuming, and that putting a beginning and an end to a work day was a challenge none can claim to have achieved. The following will be discussed under principals' perspectives of their exhaustive roles as educational leaders: (a) The Role defined, (b) Mission Impossible, (c) Achieving Personal Balance, (d) Tensions between Caring and Setting Balances in School, (e) Isolation, (f) Advocacy, and (g) Uncertainty.

The Role Defined

The principals defined their roles in many ways. For one, to be a principal in the north today requires "a thick skin." Further to that, he saw principals as "the key and the so-called change agents." He suggested that it can be accomplished differently, that "people have their different styles. Right now, basically the whole collaborative, collegial model of getting things done is in vogue . . . of bringing about change in terms of school improvement in the school." This principal liked to be an advocate for teenagers, and to promote education when "walking down the street or socializing or in the school." His personal goal was

> to be able to say to the parents or the students or the teachers, you're better off today than when you first arrived, and not just a little bit but a lot. And I'd like to be able to say yeah! things are a lot better.

A second principal would agree that it is important to see improvement, to "look behind and look at where you came from . . . how far ahead we are. . . . Issues that schools are asking us about are things that were dealt with ten years ago . . . . We can deal with deeper issues now." For this principal, the staff room coffee urn was an apt metaphor of staff decision-making, where many ideas are thrown in to percolate. However, "some grounds never change . . . there are things that percolate forever in there that I have never found ways to deal with." For another principal, the image of

"sponge" described his fervent learning of a new role, as he "very aggressively attempts to absorb everything around [him] and then try to sort it all out later."

Another principal saw his role enacted through his goals, which included making sure the school functions well; that the community sees school in a positive light, and as an important and worthwhile place to be; that "there's learning going on as manifested by graduations; and that a good tone is set with staff, and between staff and students." It is also important to maintain good community relations, which he believed he had accomplished:

> We have been getting a little positive feedback whereas before, the community seemed to, I am told anyway by the school community counsellor and the secretary who have lived here all their lives, that the school used to be under a lot of flack from the community.

One principal described her role as that of facilitator and coordinator of people in the school and the greater community:

> There is so much in terms of the role, in helping to set direction and providing, being able to look globally but also to look at one's own and the community situation and drawing on community wants and wishes for their children and taking that and turning it into progress that will provide that for students and for the community. I think it really takes individuals that can know themselves, know their own strengths and be able to draw on others in order to find strengths in others that complement their own. It is a key role in providing and facilitating learning in the community and in the school.

For another principal, the complexity of the role made it increasingly difficult to juggle all the players and demands on her time:

> It's much more complicated now. There's a lot more balls to keep in the air. Ah, there's a lot more people getting involved, and sometimes getting involved maybe out of good intention, but having very little knowledge of the background of schools or how schools function or academic achievement or things like that.

The juggler metaphor also best described, for this last principal, a role that is so multi-directional as to challenge any hope for balance:

> A juggler, a facilitator, an individual that has to be resourceful, creative, flexible, tolerant of ambiguity. You have to have stamina, unbelievable stamina really, because you can be besieged from all directions at the same time, and it can be quite wearying, quite tiring, quite frustrating, mentally fatiguing as you grapple with all of the issues that are facing educators today.The only difference being that you not only deal with the issues, but you deal with the people.You talk about staff, you talk about students, you talk about board members and senior admin and it's multi-directional, and so you tend to be probably the most stressful, high-pressured position. I don't know that there is anything that describes it better than being a juggler. I mean you just constantly have things up in the air and on the go. I sometimes worry about dropping them and sometimes not seeing some things through, and there are some things right now that I feel like I haven't been able to attend to like I want to. . . sometimes I think time just doesn't allow for us to be as effective as we'd like to be.

"Mission Impossible"

All participants agreed that their workload seems at times impossible. One principal pointed out that it is impossible, so make your choices and run with them; you can't do it all. Another principal, considering the possibility of success in "truly connecting and making an impact with those we serve," described the task as "mission impossible":

> Four hundred and fifty students, over 30 staff members and the thousands of interactions that take place within the daily reality of the school's operation make one marvel that in this living, dynamic organism or community, any kind of true direction is possible. Add to this the aspects of lives that you cannot possibly control and it makes meaningful and significant impact seem even more remote. The fiscal realities and direction of government even further compound the situation. It would be easy to give it all up and not make the effort if it were not for the fact that in all of this there are signs that we do make a difference.

Staff evaluations were one activity that tended to be pushed to the last for several principals. One principal pointed out that there is no time in the day to do it, so immediately, writing evaluations have to be fit in outside of school time, and although "there's a measure of that that you expect to happen" but "add that to all the other things that ultimately end up outside of school time, and I'm just talking in the professional capacity only, to me that's the big struggle." Writing an evaluation takes "sitting down for uninterrupted writing time of three to four hours for at least a draft that you feel is reflective of what you've seen and experienced and discussed."

Another principal described his situation as an endless continuum of school concerns. One task he took on was the one-on-one career planning and counselling into course work for every grade 9 student, including their parents: "Now you have to understand that in this school, it's only about eight kids, so it's not like 30 or 40 people. But we have no Guidance Counsellor in this school, and our IST is only 1/2 time and then she teaches the other half day, and . . . at this point, I just don't think it would be fair." Unable to complete tasks to his satisfaction, he explained that "as with almost everything surrounding this position, there is an element of compromise."

> I see my energies going in too many directions at the same time and I am usually operating at the saturation point . . . there is a price to pay for this as I witness the age lines appear on my face since I have entered this position!

The principals generally found that their role had become more complex and far-reaching. "I spend a lot of time on phones, and writing letters and calling people. I spend a lot of time around the school during the day. A lot of my work, paper work and stuff, gets done early in the morning and late evening." This principal explained,

> I see a lot more time spent with social agencies, I even have an appointment this week with our new alcohol and drug coordinator, trying to find ways that we can bring

> these people in in an effective way, because it is very difficult to bring in people that students don't know and have them interact with any great degree of effectiveness. Maybe we're trying to find ways to set up programs using community agencies that address some of the problems that students are having. Ah, I'm becoming more of a social worker!

Experiencing much the same, another principal commented that "because of the ever-increasing demands that are asked of people in leadership roles in schools, I think that it's becoming increasingly difficult for one individual to do everything. You just can't be the super-human individual and do it all." And another principal,

> Because of the time spent with the students, I have not yet this year done a teacher evaluation, and do most of my letter writing and paperwork at home in the evening. I have been thinking about a procedure where the counsellor could start the process and bring students to me after she has got the main info from them and written it down for me.

One principal managed to complete 10 evaluations this year, "and I've gone to those three teachers who I'm not evaluating this year, but have gone into their classrooms lots . . . and given them feedback which they really appreciate, and I think has paid some dividends." He does much of his paperwork at home as well. Attending the Principals' Workshop, he noted that others were feeling swamped in their work, which he found somewhat reassuring:

> And [he] was saying the same thing, he just can't get out of his office, I don't know if he is just swamped with paper work, or . . . but I was definitely feeling the same way. Just feeling really tired and so it's not just a matter of being able to delegate more efficiently, there's just a lot put on your plate. You know, and then people say, you have to prioritize more clearly, knock some of that stuff off the plate, and it's like, Hey man, I do knock a lot off.

Balance in Work and Life

Although the principals all expressed a need to find a balance between school and a home life, they were finding it difficult to do so. For one principal, "burning the candle at both ends" eventually caused him to respond "emotionally and physically" in a way he hadn't experienced before, "and in ways that I wasn't particularly pleased with.
I lost my appetite. I've never lost my appetite before, and I'm sure that it was stress-related. I remember sitting down to the table and I just wasn't hungry."

> I went on the 30-hour fast with the kids, they did this fundraising. Anyway, it was excellent, there were 180 kids involved in this 30-hour fast on the weekend, I was involved in it, and then after the 30 hours, I wasn't hungry! Like, normally, I would have eaten half a pig, you know, so again, I thought it was basically worry, which I guess is what stress really is. That was a shocker, like here are some signals being sent out here that I need to listen to. But I wasn't sure how to grapple with it, or how to deal with it effectively. So it forced some issues in terms of doing things really

> drastically like you know, obviously I can't continue doing things the way I am, and that's when I said I have to do things differently and then thinking it through.

As he put it, "I certainly have that feeling, if this is what it's all about, then where does my family fit into it and everything else? I'd rather take a paycut of $30,000 and do something else. Mind you, I would have those kind of thoughts on a bad day." Speaking of another time, he recognized that "I was feeling really down or depressed, lots of really good things were going on and all I kept hearing about was the crap that was going on in this part of the school." Reflecting on that time, he felt that, "looking back on it, I think I needed a kind of attaboy. . . . I call it an attaboy, you know, somebody comes up and pats you on the back and, 'At-a-boy!'"

Another principal took the approach that we can "bask in our successes and learn from our failures." She maintained a positive frame of mind, qualifying that "I think the successes. I'm happy to go to work every day. It's not drudgery, once I get out of the house. It's drudgery dealing with the morning things. Once I'm out of the house, I want to be there." One principal expressed a similar point of view:

> I enjoy what I am doing. If I didn't enjoy it, I couldn't even imagine having the energy to do it. But I do enjoy it and I find that I not only enjoy it, but I really love it, and therefore I find it's not like a job, it's just what you do. It's sort of who you are and what you do. . . . Like I don't really distinguish between when work starts and stops and when non-work starts and stops, because the two get all intermingled with each other, and for some people that could be a problem, but for me right now in my life it isn't a problem. Like anything else, you get what you give.

Achieving balance between one's personal and professional life is imperative for personal health as well as effective leadership, according to one principal, who saw delegating responsibilities to others as a win-win situation in a school. "I talk about a community of leaders and a community of learners."

> One of the things I try to do, and I'm not always successful, is to look at how to stay balanced, because if you're not healthy, if you're not looking after all the domains yourself, you're not of much use to anyone else, so you know, just looking after yourself is an important thing to do and trying to put the time into perspective. I think you have to also delegate a great deal. . . . it's really about facilitating that people take on roles that are appropriate, and ones that they have a lot of expertise in.

Another principal expressed both fatigue and the conviction that next year will be different.

> This will definitely, definitely be the last time that I'm going to do this [Principals' Certfication]. I have enjoyed it, it's been great, it's three years in a row now, but I've got a daughter now and I enjoy spending time with her. I like to waste a couple of hours every day with her, just steady time. The Association, this is my last year of involvement with that too, and next year I'll just simply be the principal, and a parent, and a teacher too. I've always been a teaching principal. Even the first year when I

> had 21 staff and 250 students, none of the other principals of schools that size taught, but I wanted to teach at least one course just to stay in the game. Now that I only have 14 staff and 190 students I am still teaching, but now it is by necessity rather than on principle.

This principal enjoyed his daily hour in the classroom with students, and offered several reasons:

> Contact with the students. Ah, it's the least stressful time of the day, I usually teach the first two periods so I tell the secretary I can't be disturbed for the first period, it doesn't matter who calls, he's in class right now. It's a time where I'm sort of free! Not free but freed from interruptions, no one can walk in and grab me. The second aspect is the contact with the kids. I get to establish a rapport with some of the high school students. I enjoy the actual teaching as well, I teach a Math course, usually I've taught one of the Math courses every year, maybe this year I'll do something different.

Tensions: Providing Care and Achieving Balance

There were workplace tensions for the principals in terms of finding a balance between having to set standards and expectations, and providing care and support for staff and students. Many principals have spoken about taking on somewhat contradictory roles of counselling and student discipline that added stress and consumed more time. However, for one principal, this worked to advantage as she decided to walk away from the clutter of her desk and deal more with kids. One of the staff members commented to her on the advantage of "knowing kids", that

> although you do not know academically about the kids, you can take them and talk to them exactly the same way I would, and you have more information about what goes on outside the school with them, and have more success because of that, talking to them, because you know their life, you know their family, you know, you know them, you grew up with them! (laughs) Half of these kids are kids of kids that I taught.

For another principal, the fourth year in the community school had witnessed a backward slide. "I realize that for specific projects or events this is not a particularly good year. I can see many changes and improvements in the four years that I have been here, but this year I seem to be back dealing with things that I haven't had to deal with since year one." Social conditions in the community played a large part in her daily work as she tried to make possible some success for students "in spite of all the other things that are going on in their lives. . . . I see a lot more time spent with social agencies, discussing with them."

One principal stated, "this has been no banner year for morale." Moving staff towards a desire for change was the challenge he faced:

> I do think that by and large, I have a demoralized staff, and I'm not concerned about it in the sense that I have seen real growth. There are real indicators of that, but I think too you have an cumulative effect, and when people work in an environment that's

> really quite mediocre . . . people find it extremely difficult to get out of that. They're not even aware of it, or if they are aware of it, they can intellectualize it, yeah they want to get out of it, but to actually find the spirit to do it, it's just so damn hard.

Taking time in the last three months of the year to be "out and about" in the hallways and classrooms had made a difference to morale and student behavior, "I would say that it's borne some fruit, it's been very noticeable to myself, people on staff, students. . . . I guess teachers are feeling that I'm more supportive . . . more available."

Another principal emphasized the need to achieve balance on staff by sharing the leadership,

> Drawing on many people's strengths" and gaining concensus. In creating shared leadership, "there needs to be that flexibility and openness to be able to cross over and when someone feels comfortable doing something that may not necessarily be something that was originally agreed on, that the two individuals, or three or four or whatever the model may be, that the group can sit down and say, sure, go ahead if you're comfortable with that aspect, then you'll be the leader for this.

Trust-building and "taking time to develop that relationship with the others" is essential to this process, but "I guess that some people may not see that as having as much value as the daily things that are coming at them."

Fiscal realities and generally "doing more with less" in the past as well as the upcoming years, was a strong point of concern for all principals. One principal expects that the major cutbacks will affect teachers both in the classroom and out, putting

> added stress on everyone, it's going to mean so-called creative timetabling; and then there's the compensation package that is going to be adversely affected by John Todd's budget, so that is going to lead to a more demoralized staff next year, so next year might be a difficult year not just in my school but in other schools.

Another principal pursued funding though Human Resources Development for 10 months, "funding which we thought we were going to have in September to support a program we're still to this day without, even though they'd said they set the money aside . . . they just wanted a few points addressed," points out that "we're a full year later and no closer to realizing any funding. . . . 'Hurry up and wait!' There seems to be quite a bit of that. It's kind of a peristalsis."

For this principal, it was important to maintain a balance in his school by making concessions that

> allow more free time for people, because it's been pretty intense for the last two years, and certainly the first half of this year in terms of just getting used to the building and operationalizing and using the technology has been very intense, so we have allowed for more freedom, more personal planning time, through the last quarter of the year at least.

Working with troubled teens and kids in distress, teaching coping skills, non-violent intervention and healing, and dealing with home/community agencies on these and related issues challenged all principals as they balanced roles of caretaking and schooling.

Isolation

Given the geographical distances between communities, most principals worked in relative isolation from other administrators. One principal, in considering the strengths in her school this year, commented that "sometimes I forget [the strengths] until I talk to other principals in the region." The distance from regional office and a general lack of communication further enforced her sense of "having to work it alone." Asked for copies of her monthly principal's reports, she recounted,

> We had, at the last principal's meeting, we had a grand chuckle out of that [doing monthly principal's reports], because that's supposed to be one of the things, right? But of course we discovered very quickly that no one at the Board office actually reads them so, the poor old guy in [another community] actually does these things and sends them in at the end of every month, and we, everybody else around the table - and he said, now are you serious, you're kidding! And I said, look, I haven't done one of these in years! The rest of the principals looked at him and said, you're nuts! We know that half the stuff we send to Board Office gets filed in the garbage files.

Several principals expressed similar feelings of being isolated from their district offices or "headquarters". For one principal it was a difficult way to begin in his new school.

> I think it makes a big difference if a school has the support of their superintendent of their district, and I mean tangible support, not just 'Oh yes, just go ahead and do it,' but in terms of planning with your principals and your administrators that this is a high priority item, and can we use our professional development for staff development to meet specific district and school goals. . . . I wonder whether I'm getting the payoff that we really deserve to have but we don't get because of a lack of system in place to help coordinate and energize these things.

Meeting with colleagues confirmed for him that he wasn't alone,

> When I went up to Yellowknife for that conference, I wasn't looking forward to going because I wanted to be at school and as it turned out, it was actually a kind of a blessing, because the feedback that I was hearing, you know, sometimes you hear what you want to hear too, I am cognizant of that too, but again people feeling that there is so much out there that has to be done, and people feeling tired, I was kind of getting a reality check from other people and it wasn't all that far off base.

For other principals, distances did not appear to limit their contact with district concerns and initiatives, or participating in district meetings. Some liked the distance, or have learned to deal with it philosophically:

> Now that has to be balanced by Yellowknife and Iqaluit, but I don't know, as you might guess, Iqaluit is far away and so is Yellowknife. We are very far away from

> Rome, as somebody said once, so we do things more or less . . . not more or less as we please, that would be too flippant, but if the community is strongly in favour of one thing and Iqaluit wants me to do something different, you can be sure which way it's going to go. I live in this town (laughs).

Some principals were more fully integrated into their community, and thus felt less isolated than others. Often the number of years spent in the community impacted on the level of integration, as did making an effort to get to know the community. For one,

> The people and their acceptance didn't come immediately, that did take time to develop those relationships. And I think to give myself credit as well, it was getting myself involved in the community by going to the Saturday sewing class and spending time with women outside of school time, getting to know parents of children, just that kind of involvement, getting to know people, making a real effort to learn Inuktitut, to try and speak with people, I think that.

Another principal had some proficiency in the local aboriginal language, "I know a few words and a little bit of its structure, not very much". He saw himself "more integrated into the Inuit community than some." This integration he attributed not to his smattering of Inuktitut

> Although the language helps a bit; but it's disposition and inclination and the fact that I enjoy hunting and fishing and going out on the land as they say, and the cultural things that they do. I don't do it as much as the average Inuk does, but more than the average white teacher. And I know more people in town, maybe because of the length of time I've been there.

However, there was a general sense of isolation felt by southerners transplanted to this remote community, most of whom intended to stay only a short while:

> Yeah, they're isolated in the sense that we constitute seven per cent of [the community] population, and the white society is quite small. There's some integration with the Inuit society and it's nice, but by the same token there's lots of exclusion, not deliberate exclusion but lots of things that the whites can't participate in or don't have the cultural background and the inclination to participate in, so therefore there's a fair amount of isolation. And it is regarded as a little bit of a hardship to be there, and so a lot of people have the goal to either move south or, failing that, to move west.

Being seen as outsiders to the community can create tough situations. One principal who had endured a hurtful incident of gossip-mongering that eventually settled in his favour stated, "that's what it's like in a small northern town; realities change quickly." For another principal, the struggle was in not being aboriginal:

> Oh, my chair gets rocked all the time, 'we should have an aboriginal principal' and I get shaken every so often and have to re-evaluate and make sure that I still believe in what I'm doing. . . . Before Christmas, I spent a week totally dysfunctional here. [Someone] asked for me to be removed from my position. . . . There were some other things going on with some parents who were questioning some things and making some accusations about me, and by the week before Christmas, I just came to work every day and accomplished nothing.

At a CEC meeting, the principal faced the accusations:

> He started saying that I had created all the problems in the school, that I had created children that were not native anymore, that were white and only happy being white, and the only time they were happy was doing white people things, and that I had created the violence, everything, into the school, and that it was my fault. . . . I went through hell for a couple of weeks, with myself, trying to figure out who reality's real here? My reality, or are they seeing me as he sees me. My CEC of course did not say a word, I knew they wouldn't.
>
> After he had left they sort of went, whew, thank God he's gone, but never said, we stand behind you or we support you, nothing, they just said thank God he's gone and never did anything about it, and that was it. . . . And I couldn't expect them to, because that is not the type of people they are, and I knew that, but at that time I needed somebody to say, we believe in you, and we believe in what you're doing. So that was a really bad time for me, and I really had to look at, did I believe in what I was doing, or was I this person that he saw, or he thought I was?

The "interest in looking for a native principal" discussions continued to arise from time to time, and this principal felt little confidence, in spite of the many years committed to this community school.

> I don't know, if it came down to the crunch, that's what I don't know. If it came down to the crunch, where would they stand. Because I see, like I said, when I first went to the CEC, they were not there for me. So if it came right down to it . . . .

Advocacy

Within their communities, all principals were strong advocates for kids' learning and well-being. This was reflected in a variety of ways, many of which have been discussed in this study. To state that these principals carry a high profile in the community is generally an understatement. Their activities in the community on behalf of schools were exhaustive. There was a growing involvement with the community, and with building links with businesses; with integration of community values; with networking with all stakeholders; with looking at education in the workplace; with educating the public through newsletters and media coverage; and with developing a stronger student voice in school and community.

The principals were attempting to develop a shared educational vision that supported the learning needs of students and the aspirations of the community through stakeholder collaboration. There was a strong student-centered focus to many of their activities as they practiced their philosophy of child-centered education and life-long learning. All were involved to some extent in working with community agencies to devise appropriate support strategies for students. Some have been able to address the

community values in authentic ways, respecting language and traditions that foster student growth, and integrating them in school programming.

The principals recognized that their position lent them high visibility, and most worked it to their advantage. For example, working with Crimestoppers enabled one principal to raise levels of awareness in his school with staff and students. Speaking to the Chamber of Commerce gave another a strong link with the business community in developing CTS initiatives. Organizing visits to the workplace allowed one principal to develop stronger community relations and to further students' understanding and motivation. Organizing Friendship Games that brought together eight communities fostered stronger inter-community ties and appreciation for cooperative ventures, and offered healthy alternatives for youth. The principals were strong advocates of children's well-being. The work was high profile and demanded high energy. One principal exhibited her ongoing concern for kids in this way:

> Pictures are really no problem 'cause we do tend to take a lot of pictures. What we normally do, our hallway pictures we change every year, and we put up all the different activities that we've done in the past year . . . we have different frames around the school, and one might be the Science Fair, and one might be Grade 9 Graduation, and one might be the Muskrat Camp, one might be Hallowe'en,... that kind of thing.

Many principals spoke about the importance of communication. For one principal, "in most cases the community is very involved in what we're doing anyway, but I do have newsletters that I'm sending" and "I do very, very detailed reports to the CEC monthly, and I do grade extension reports to the director which I send copies of to the CEC, they're in living detail." He added that "there's very little that's going on that's not included in the report with all the supporting material and documentation that goes with it."

For another principal, presenting at a conference in the south brought surprising results. Her strong spirit of advocacy is reflected here:

> The first time I spoke on our cultural program. The funny thing was, our chief was in Edmonton! It was the first time he'd ever heard of our cultural program, and I got a lovely evaluation from him on our cultural program, and how he was amazed at what was going on. I said, "See, that's why I want to be at a band meeting and let people know what sorts of things are going on at our school."

Consistent Uncertainty

There has always been a consistent element of uncertainty in northern education, partly because it was frequently delivered by southerners who generally stay only a short time, particularly if they have been posted to remote communities.

A lot of people have the goal to either move south or, failing that, to move west.

> And the targets of choice are Hay River, which is regarded as the best choice in the NWT to move to, and Fort Smith, and then Yellowknife, and then Inuvik, and then Fort Simpson and Rae Edzo. There's a little pecking order all the way down until you get down to a certain size and then you figure well, there's no point in moving because you're just as well off here. For example, there wouldn't be any point moving to Fort Good Hope or to Aklavik or some such spot, but if it's a larger centre with roads, houses, trees, grass, restaurants, bars, clubs and so on, the main one being the road, because you can get out.

The uncertainty has much to do with transience, with teacher turnover and changes in the community population. The principals spoke of the need to orient their new southern staff every September and the loss of continuity of programming in a community when staff left after two years. One principal saw it as a continual cycle, this year "dealing with square one again." With half of the staff changing for September, the outlook for continuing past programs is discouraging: "four directly from the South . . . Well you know yourself that if a new teacher comes in, at the very basic level students are going to try it out, right? And if you have seven new teachers being tried out."

Cutbacks have exacerbated this problem, with more teachers leaving the north this year:

> It's the cutback thing and a variety of things. You know, the uncertainty and everything else that's going on up here, and some people decided that they were going to make a change and some people going back to school, and others are going to different places and try to get on wherever it is they have decided to go. Yeah. It's a whole mess of things.

For this principal, it meant rehiring for the majority of staff positions:

> Well, total, we had all terms here pretty much, so when it came down to the crunch, we were looking at nine positions and three of those were filled by TEP grads and two by returning terms and I've got one more, and I'm still short three positions right now.

Out of 12 1/2 staff positions, "with the cutbacks, we lost a position and a half for funding out of GNWT. The CEC decided that we'd look at rearranging some funding and try to hang on to at least 12 positions instead of 11, and so I think we've managed to do that, we've reallocated some funding from other things and have managed to hang on to the 12 positions." Her discouragement in the mid-May conversation was evident. Looking at next year's new staff,

> One of them has actually been a CA [classroom assisant] for 14 or 15 years. She finished the TEP program just before Christmas. The other two are a fair bit younger. They've been around the school as subs. They did their internship obviously around the school and that kind of stuff, so they know the kids and that kind of thing. But then again, it's quite a bit different being a CA than being a classroom teacher, so that's going to be quite a bit of a change there. . . . One of my high school teachers is leaving, he's been here for three years, that's a big stability gone for the school.

Planning for next year was yet to be done, given the recent changes:

> Well, with the turnover again, we're hoping to do some planning for next year, but it has to be left open a little because of all the new people coming in, to the end of the school year. We had a staff meeting the other day and talked about some ideas about how we want to do this.

Another principal, who had enjoyed low staff turnover in the past, anticipated changes in the future: "Two years is a very common length of time to stay. I don't know what the new contract is going to do to all of that. . . . It could lead to a much more transient workforce if they follow the measures they plan to implement."

One principal believed that encouraging more aboriginal teachers to take leadership would create a more consistent and relevant education system for students, as well as a community school "that reflects community values and life." Citing several communities where shared school leadership was being tried with aboriginal and non-aboriginal co-principalships, she recognized the problems inherent in northern transience, "How do you sustain and continue that leadership that's started, that team approach when one individual has to step away or whatever?"

Planning to take a year's leave, this principal was also concerned about sustaining what has been built in the school over her last three years as principal, and had taken steps to ensure its continuation:

> Four of our southern Qaallunaq staff members are returning next year, so that has really helped to know that they will continue on, and our Program Support teacher has been a consultant in our school, so she's worked with us for a few years now. This is her first year as a program support teacher, but having her on staff, and that we share the same kinds of goals and values and beliefs and so she has a clear understanding of the process that we've gone through in terms of developing our goals and out beliefs, feel confident that way that there are folks on staff who have been with us through that process. And the same with a number of our Inuit staff members. They have gone through the goal setting process and the visioning with community members and staff members and students and CEC members.

High turnover in administrative posts, and lack of orientation for new principals were also mentioned by some as leading to more uncertainty. One principal commented on a lack of orientation when he first stepped into his new school:

> I've learned an awful lot, professionally but also administratively. I had no orientation, and that was really negative, too. It's one thing to go through an interview process and get hired, but the school really was dysfunctional, there was nothing. There were no files on staff. . . . My secretary had one file called principal's file and that was it. Anything that came into the school went into the principal's file, there was nothing else, nothing under company names, there was nothing in the cum files. . . . Anyway, I knew things were bad, like I was told things were really bad, but it's one thing to be told, and another to go into your office and there's nothing.

High turnover of staff and administrators lessened the possibility of consistent growth in schools. Caring and nurturing of principals is necessary, one principal pointed out. The role of the principal is

> easily the equivalent to CEOs of any company. They are not valued as such, they are not met with the same kind of remuneration for instance, or the benefits or any of those things. I think that their role is far, far more important in the sense that [they] really are shaping or molding future generations collectively.

He argued that without the continuity, there was a loss of coherence:

> Continuity is also important. If you lose the key player at the principalship level prematurely, and by that I mean within a year or two, it's difficult to see a coherent vision and movement in a direction, and that's why it's important to value them, and to value the role and to keep supporting it.

SUMMARY

This chapter has presented the major findings of the study under five broad categories. Principals indicated their work encompassed a belief in the future, the handling of a myriad of daily challenges, working between the lines, positioning in the culture, and facing seemingly endless workdays. The following chapter presents a delineation of the major themes of the data.

Chapter 5

THEMES ON NORTHERN LEADERSHIP

The principals in this study were quite clear that a principal's work cannot be carried out alone. All agreed - some more than others - that as education begins to follow the model of program and service delivery at the community level, the onus is also on the community to shape and support the education of its children. The role of the principal is to work in concert with community stakeholders to create relevant, culture-based schooling. The introduction of high school into the communities has increased students' access to education, and more demand and responsibility for what that education should be and how it can be supported, is directed to the community.

As key players in this new process, the principals saw their work as immense and lacking boundaries. They recognized the need for support for their endeavours. It is a powerful mandate to undertake, and requires a powerful and unwavering spirit. In the seven principals, I witnessed an enormity of personal vision, energy and courage, and a strong desire to make a difference.

The previous chapter discussed five categories that emerged from the extensive findings: (a) The principals generally exude belief and hope in the future through their actions and words; (b) The challenges of the job are infinite and include concerns for parents, student behavior, student welfare, achievement, finance, staff welfare, and community; (c) In attempting to fulfil their educational mandates, principals continually flex the rules to ensure learning "works" in their community schools; (d) Positioning the school within the culture means working actively with community towards a shared vision and delivery of education; and (e) The Unending Workday and "reaching saturation points" is a reality for these principals, change agents in the shaping of a new educational vision.

Three themes have also emerged from the data, themes that address the question of "what is the essence of the principalship" in the territories, as gathered from these principals. Each theme, (a) Community, (b) Character, and (c) Change, is described and then discussed in relation to the current literature on educational leadership.

COMMUNITY: "IT TAKES A VILLAGE"

This old proverb offers "a timeless reminder that children will thrive only if their families thrive, and if the whole society cares enough to provide for them" (Clinton, 1996, p.12). This was clearly the thrust of *Learning, Tradition & Change in the N.W.T.*, a document that reflected the recommendations of the Special Committee Report on

Education in 1982: "Schooling is an educational partnership in which parents play an important role." The Education Act of 1995 further stressed that "education must be a partnership between students, parents, elders, community, educators and government who have a vital role to play." Furthermore, communities "have greater responsibility for the content and delivery of education," and "the important contribution that elders have made and will continue to make to the education of people of the N.W.T." was also recognized.

The principals' stories indicate that they are inextricably woven into this process of educational change in their communities, and more significantly, *with* their communities. Many have described a variety of efforts to bring these mandates to fruition in their schools. They have called on stakeholders to join in making important school decisions on school programs specific to their communities, as "official policy for curriculum development must recognize substantial differences among many communities and varied regions of the N.W.T. . . . the divisional board must be alert to local needs and sensitive to ways that may encourage participation and decision-making at the community level" (*Learning, Tradition & Change,* 1982, p. 73).

It is a challenging role for principals, and one to which these principals bring a kind of leadership that works well in the north. In comparing two educational leadership profiles, one created in the N.W.T. and the other in Ontario, Begley (1995) noted that both incorporated descriptors of effective practice relating to three key dimensions: school culture management, instructional leadership and organizational management. However, further comparison revealed

> a heavier emphasis in the N.W.T. profile on transformational (collaborative, teacher, and community empowering) strategies. The ideal N.W.T. principal is portrayed as engaging in school culture "management" as opposed to being "the manager". The emphasis is also on facilitation and consensus building rather than control. This reflects the particular social priorities of the N.W.T., including a concern for cultural preservation, aboriginal self-governance, direct community involvement in schooling, and the traditional emphasis on consensual decision making. (p. 189)

There is a clear connection between the kind of school leadership these principals exhibit and the social priorities in the N.W.T. The traditional emphasis on consensual decision-making in particular is reflected in these principals, whose style is collaborative and whose school focus is "to create and maintain a supportive school climate which is conducive to learning" (Begley & Murray,1993, p. 13). Begley (1994) pointed out that the Ontario profile presents a "more ambitious image of the principalship in the sense of incorporating more recent research findings," including "visionary" and "problem solver" as additional key dimensions of practice. Not including these in an N.W.T. principal profile

does not deny their presence in the practice of these seven principals, who express strong educational vision and creativity and persistence in problem solving.

Begley (1994) made the point that "the characteristic common to both profiles, and important as an implication to practice, is that both writing teams clearly expanded the image of the principal's role beyond the limits of traditional instructional leadership" (p.191). It is clear that the principals' stories throughout the study reflect a role that has gone far beyond what is commonly known as instructional leadership. Their actions attest to a desire to make a difference in schools for students - creating healing programs, spearheading a school-community feast, organizing school culture camps, placing an all-school focus on literacy, and so on. As Hodgkinson (1991) argued from a values-of-administration context, an organizational role in practice is always an interpretation of what is to be done, as filtered through the moral aspects of a person's character (p. 93). As educational leaders, these principals' many choices reflect their values and beliefs, their actions clearly directed towards a leadership that is "transforming and empowering" and collaborative (Foster, 1986, p. 187).

Barth (1994) made the point that "differences of social class - or gender, race, ability, interest - these differences are the building blocks promoting learning. People's learning curve is steepest when you put them around a table where a number of different world views are present. . . . I'd like to have my child in a school that celebrates and welcomes difference" (p. 5-6). From these principals' varied stories of struggles and celebrations comes a powerful sense of the "we" in education. From their stories come many examples that it truly takes a whole village to raise a child.

It takes a village . . . to build a new school, shaping a new vision for learning with the help of all stakeholders; to seed new ideas and work with an entire community, and to build excitement and ownership into the process:

> In every sense of the word, this celebration capped a process that very much involved the community in the process of building and made all feel that they had been part of making the new school a reality. . . . we felt that it was very important that it be inclusive, that it be involving, that it represent the cross-section of people who had put the time and effort into it, and that it was entertaining and humorous and light; that we didn't take ourselves too seriously.

It takes a village . . . to include students in the process of decision making and presentation; and to extend the concept of schooling to include a daycare and a college:

> I see students standing in front of the design and talking about their roles in the process. Although the students were not in full agreement, we have joined the school and Aurora College into one building and it will be a community learning centre as well as the school. If our dream of a daycare or play school becomes a reality; we will cover the whole gamut of learning!

It takes a village . . . to ensure that all children will value an education, will find it meaningful and joyful, and will acquire knowledge, skills and attitudes needed to be responsible and confident members of society, able to provide future leadership. Housego (1993) warned against the disappearance of community values (which imply "sister values of cooperation, compassion and compromise") under regimes "which glorify individualism, elitism and the competitive 'tooth and fang' philosophy of survival of the fittest" (p. 8), and puts out the challenge to educational leaders:

> to protect and promote community values with all the strength and intellingence and good will they can muster, believing that the prospect of a "good life" for all children and youth now and in the future depends on our best efforts to do so! (p. 8)

In one community school where elders were already playing a role in the school, teaching traditional skills and occasionally helping deal with behavior issues, the principal described:

> Students would meet in the tent with elders and would often listen to stories or play traditional games such as the bone game. . . . We had wonderful planning time with the elders and gathered and recorded valuable information from a traditional perspective on what skills and values and knowledge students should know by the end of each of our three themes. We were also able to tape record stories from these elders about our three themes that have been valuable in planning activities.

Greater community use of a school is one indication that people are becoming more comfortable in their school, and that education is seen as part of the community scene and so valued:

> the community is a fair amount in the school for their events. They can use the Gym and the kitchen and so forth. I think there's a fair amount of freedom to come and go that didn't used to exist, there used to be a reluctance to come in. We have community use of our Gym from 5 to 9 every night during most of the academic year.

Another school, located fairly centrally in the community, offered a short cut for community members on a cold day. It was welcomed by this principal as a positive sign:

> We have a lot of people coming from the back, especially if it's cold, they just make a detour through our school through the hallways, and that is quite acceptable, you know, come and see what's on the halls, see what's going on, so we do get some just flow-through traffic and that's quite all right.

Bringing community into the school became a wonderful opportunity to share with parents the joy of learning: "Parents were part of that, making puppets with their children, and we had coffee and tea. . . . Every class from kindergarten to grade 11 takes a thematic approach to that particular topic." The principal explained that "this year we've

taken family relationships, names and naming as one, from the Inuit perspective, and we had a gym-full (laughs), grandparents and babies and moms and dads..."

It takes a village . . . to encourage the grade extensions programs introduced into community schools, in providing family and community support to children who are continuing their learning or "dropping back in" for high school courses. It requires community to learn about new programs, and for schools to build bridges with community towards greater understanding of what education has to offer, and what the community has to offer to education. One divisional board of education wrote that they will "work more closely with everyone that has some connection with education, training or culture . . . to broaden the involvement in the education of our children, we will finally change education from a government program to a community program." And one principal pointed out, it also takes a community commitment to care and provide for the remaining students that still have to home-board to get their high school.

It takes a village . . . to cooperate in providing with schools the school-to-work transition programs, and to support the work-experience programs, the CTS initiatives, and the tech-prep programs that some principals were attempting to offer their students:

> We're piloting a program this year called Registered Apprenticeship Program . . . we have a student here working with a Ford dealership, and doing welding, we also have another student doing gas fitting with a Propane company, so you know, there the school's working with a couple of businesses . . . and we have a lot of students who do cooperative work experience.

Another principal pointed to a greater need in his school "to see students prepared for something beyond just high school, and not necessarily just the work force" arguing that "about 80% of our student population is not destined for post-secondary and will be going another direction . . . and that's where the concept of tech prep is critical." Providing students with a tech-prep program in school so that the transition to a technical school or a job is eased was an important focus for this principal, who was looking to create the necessary linkages with the community:

> We just have to have the relationship or partnership with a community business venture, and I believe that the community itself has to rise to the occasion of educating our youth and helping out where it can.

It takes a village . . . to offer more effective education through stakeholder support that involves all the players in efforts of collaboration and teamwork, the students, parents, elders, communities, educators and government who each have a vital role. Some communties have had educational visioning workshops with the community for the past two or three years to discuss community values, beliefs and determine future directions for their school. Meaningful exchange with their distant partners, the department

personnel, is also necessary as they are a part of the collaborative effort towards improved education for all:

> Who ultimately is responsible for a student's attendance? What real support does the Education Act give you to deal with non-attendance? What support can you expect from ECE? Many questions. . . . Until the ECE and government in general, understand the need to have all human support agencies working together, we are going to continue to be frustrated.

It takes a village . . . to create a community of leaders and learners (Barth, 1994), because "significant school reform must come from those who reside within the school community - teachers, students, parents, administrators" and "those within the school community must be [illegible] to take risks" (p.1). Barth continued that

> These are times of change. It seems to me that our most important reponsibility as educators is to engage in, make visible, and celebrate the most important enterprise of the school house, which is learning. We must do it in a way which students and parents and other teachers can see. . . . Schools can be places whose very mission is to ensure that all teachers and all students, everybody under the roof of the school house, become school leaders in some ways at some times, in concert with others (p. 3).

The principals have given countless examples of shared leadership with staff, with students and with community members, exemplifying leadership that comes from within. The Friendship Games offer one example of shared responsibility amongst staff and community members, in non-competitive spirit that truly emphasizes community at its best. "Staff pitch in because they're like that" stated one principal of her staff who support community events involving students. Shared principalships are another example of making the community self-supporting over time:

> We had a vision of what we wanted for our school and had lived through some frustrating years with a principal with whom we did not always agree in terms of his philosophy of education. So, we asked if we could share the principalship and work together in co-principalship..... and we would work closely together in the team leadership roles of our school. I feel in large part, due to this "team" approach to the leadership in our school with both an Inuk and a non-Inuk leader, we have been able to achieve a great deal and have created many successes as a result.

Students also took leadership in many principals' stories, from forming a persuasive voice for their generation in Students Against Drunk Drivers campaigns, to leadership in the Student Forum on Education in April, 1996. Community is taking greater leadership in education as well (more in some communities than in others at this time), as seen with the healing program that elicited strong community support for one principal's initiative, and in the elders' involvement in developing traditional programs through CTS modules in high school programming.

It takes a village . . . to shape an educational partnership directed towards creating a school "that meets the highest possible standards for education" and recognizes the "relationship between language, culture and learning" in the N.W.T. (Education Act, 1995).

> Nowhere is the partnership of parents and the rest of the village more crucial to the schools than in the expectation that discipline and order are necessary for learning to happen. . . . Ultimately, what schools need most from the village are high standards to live up to. (Clinton, 1996, pp. 255, 257)

For several principals, establishing ground rules was their first step towards making progress in their schools. "Before all this, two other factors must be in place and working in the school: a high rate of attendance and a low rate of discipline problems." For some principals, the community support was eventually forthcoming and attendance and discipline problems improved. For others, lack of support from the community has brought less success in the school:

> If they don't perceive it from the community at large, it's going to be very difficult within the school to motivate them to do well. They only spend six or seven hours in the school in a day, and it's going to be very difficult to combat all the negative influences outside, unless they perceive a general support and a general push from the community that this is important, and they are looked upon as doing well when they do well in school. And I don't think we've achieved that here yet as a general community feeling.

Principals continue their struggle with determining standards, and with evaluation of students' learning. Across the territories, there is a need to create evaluative measures "that are reflective of the programs that the kids are learning, as opposed to taking something that's been developed in Alberta" and the recognition that to be fair to students, "that's going to vary across the territories, from folks in communities in the west, the central arctic, and then the Eastern Arctic." This principal warns that "there's an awful lot of work and it needs to be done real soon, in terms of having final exams and diploma exams that are based on the learning of kids in the Territories." A particular concern in the secondary school programs that are coming into the community schools, principals see the range of programs and possibilities for high school learning today across the territories.

For a few schools, an Alberta-based academic program works because parents and students are highly supportive of that; for many others in smaller communities, the emphasis on academics are important, but so are traditional and cultural learnings. It is up to principals to work with their communities in finding a favourable and workable balance for the school. Chief Jimmy Bruneau spoke of his vision for schooling, on the occasion of the official opening of the new Edzo School: "I have asked for a school to be built . . . on my land . . . and that school will be run by my people and my people will work at that

school and our children will learn both ways, our way and the whitemen's way" (1971).

Elizabeth Mackenzie, reflecting on his words, formed a powerful metaphor that became the essence of the mission statement for the Dogrib Divisional Board of Education almost 20 years later: "He spoke as though we are only one person, we can be two persons. . . . So if children are taught in both cultures, they will be strong like two people..." (*Strong Like Two People,* 1991, p. iii).

"The Necessary and the Sacred"

It takes a whole village to raise a child, and "our challenge is to arrive at a consensus of values and a common vision of what we can do today, individually and collectively, to build strong families and communities." (Clinton, 1996, pp. 14-15). The community school has the potential to be an integral part of the community with strong community support and grassroots efforts towards improvement.

"Recent studies, while limited . . . imply that perhaps the best way to accomplish rural school improvement is to enhance the inherent strengths of rural schools than attempts to force them to fit outside structures" (Good Schools, 1981). It is clear that the northern principals are working from within their communities, questioning the relevance of outside structures and continually improvising to deliver more relevant learning. CTS modules that offer forestry and woods survival in a Western Arctic school, kamik making and carving in an eastern school, and print-making, silkscreening, ceramics, stained-glass designs, recycling and environmental studies in other settings makes the point clearly; business apprenticeships and work experience offer yet other opportunities for students that come from the community of skills.

Summary

Clearly the demands of a school that serves diverse peoples with diverse needs are challenging. "When we try to serve them all equally well, the inherent differences among them often translate into competition among them. . . . The principal . . . lives constantly in the bubbling cauldron of these mixed and often competing interests and needs" (Ackerman et al., 1994, p. 140). Ackerman suggests that a collaborative style has pay-offs for the principal, that "building community has a partially selfish dimension in that it provides a sense of broad-based support for decisions . . . and helps overcome the feeling that they are 'alone at the top'" (p.142).

CHARACTER: MORAL AND SOCIAL ISSUES OF LEADERSHIP

Political leaders have frequently asked us to make sacrifices for the sake of developing better circumstances, and to engage in conflict to meet or protect some of our cherished ideals. Our literature on school administrators rarely discusses this dimension of leadership; administrators are portrayed in less than glowing terms, as mere bureaucrats. Yet many administrators do ask for sacrifices, do make transformations, and do empower. They take risks and deal with conflicts. Administration needs more stories about these types of administrators to give us, as a profession, the confidence we need to raise questions of a critical nature that, despite their risks, may ultimately lead to the formation of a more proper educational organization. (Foster, 1986, p. 195)

The northern principals in this study have shared a variety of concerns, such as dealing with community aspirations of aboriginal language and cultural inclusion; developing and implementing of two aboriginal curricula; coping with recent school legislation; continuing inclusionary mandates in spite of financial cutbacks; requiring stronger counselling and interagency support services within the schools; offering healing sessions for students in school; integrating culturally relevant learning into secondary school programming; developing community learning networks; introducing CTS and technology into school programming and operations; and using distance education learning for delivery of some secondary programs in smaller community schools.

There were also discussions on success and achievement, and my sense was that many focused more on success (which is personally referenced and speaks to individual growth) than achievement (measured against the outside). Principals are looking at what is important for students, and grapple with the issues of "self-esteem and wellness" versus "the academics" versus "cultural inclusion and relevance." What should education offer its clients? The answer appears in many forms, depending on the community and the values of its people. On the whole, principals tended to speak far more about students in terms of success, and less in terms of achievement on Diploma exams and such, although some are concerned that external assessments are used as markers of general "success" and "failure" by department personnel and offer at best, an incomplete picture.

Although this study has raised many issues that may be labelled "northern", when one looks at the broader question of principals' attitudes towards their roles as educational leaders, there is little that differentiates the seven principals in this study from one another, and from exemplary principals elsewhere (although these principals do not consider themselves "exemplary", alluding to their shortcomings and to the lack of time to do things as well as they would wish, that "the time to sit down and 'let me write a quality document' just doesn't happen").

Caring Leadership

Research literature suggests that principals in the nineties are looking at a more comprehensive approach to education that includes working with stakeholders in the running and decision-making of the school. The "community school" sees parents as actively involved in their children's learning, and the community an active part of the living school. There is a strong caring for the individual, the student's needs, and the delivery of a learning program that considers the whole child.

Caring leadership is evident in the work of the seven principals interviewed. Greenleaf's (1977) concept of servant leadership is reflected in many of these principals' stories, stories that reveal close listening and communication, empathy, healing, intuition, tolerance for imperfection, commitment to the growth of people, creativity, insight and trust. Servant-leadership also suggests that "one can tolerate a sustained wide span of awareness so that one better 'sees it as it is'; however, "awareness is not a giver of solace . . . it is a disturber and an awakener. Able leaders are usually sharply awake and reasonably disturbed" (p. 28). These principals were generally intolerant of "the status quo" and were making changes in response. Some have learned to be patient, and to take time to recognize progress along the way. Such leaders can be quietly persuasive in presentment of their views and beliefs, as "leadership by persuasion has the virtue of change by convincement rather than coercion" (p. 30). Others have found it very difficult to practice patience. However, all practiced servant leadership in their striving to create a community built on respect and trust and mutual goals that are essential to the growth of its people and their unique culture.

The Head, Heart and Hand of Leadership

All the principals interviewed have shown through their stories, the personal beliefs and attitudes that drive their actions, and that ultimately define their leadership. Each context is different, yet in each story can be traced the actions of women and men who as principals have chosen to be "doers", promoting an education that has greater relevance for students and connectedness to community aspirations. "For in every action what is primarily intended by the doer, whether [s]he acts from natural necessity or out of free will, is the disclosure or his [or her] own image" (Dante). In translating their beliefs and attitudes into action, these principals exemplify philosophy-in-action (Hodgkinson, 1971), action that makes their practice both personal and distinct.

One of the principals of a K-11 northern settlement school has prominently displayed in her office her vision for her school:

"My school will"
..... be a place where parents, teachers and kids want to be.
..... have infinite patience and be a safe place to make mistakes.
..... stress motivation, relevance and process.
..... not be bound by walls, schedules, systems and inflexible policies.
..... strive for excellence, no matter how long it takes.
..... measure what can be done, not what can't; the cup will always be half-full.
..... be staffed by those who want to work in my school because it will be their school, too.

Although there are principals who are more comfortable with a traditional "command leadership style" (Sergiovanni, 1992, p. 123), these northern principals exhibit a different thinking about their leadership, and are making significant changes that affect school culture and learning environments. They are involving their staffs in collaborative decision-making, and demanding greater commitment of staff to their teaching as well as to life-long learning. Through their actions, it is clear that they see their principal's role as primarily one of service to students, to staff, to parents and to the community at large.

"Bringing together head, heart, and hand in practice; the unique nature of the school's mission; and the typically loose structured, non-linear, and messy context of schooling combine to make administering a moral craft, a fate shared with teaching" (Sergiovanni, 1995, p. 309). The moral leader is more concerned with "doing the right things" rather than "doing things right." These principals' values infuse their schools, their leadership described as one of "'ministering' to the needs of the schools they serve . . . needs defined by the shared values and purposes of the school's covenant" (p. 320).

Character Education in Schools

There is a strong call for a return to character education in the 90s. There are many reasons, but the decline of the family and troubling trends in youth character are cited as two (Lickona, 1993). Criminal activity, violence and teenage suicide are ever-increasing. Principals recognize that schools must play a part in addressing the current conditions of society which include single-parent homes, poverty, children left too much on their own, physical and sexual abuse, and drug and alcohol abuse. One northern principal described a particularly difficult week at school:

> So many incidents to report, it was just impossible. I don't know how many parents I talked to that week, I must have spent hours discussing things with Social Services and Family Counselling and my School Community Counsellor who is back on staff and is very, very helpful. She was in the TEP program and came back in January as well. She's come to me since January and said, "My God, what's wrong here", you know. She goes home stressed out.
>
> We're starting to get really concerned that in our junior high level there was a lot of, . . . now by a lot, a lot by our standards . . . there were kids coming in that we thought were coming in on drugs, that were coming down from drugs, that were missing school

> because of that. It seems . . . some of our students have very little supervision, some of our older students, and we seem to be getting a lot of partying with the 14-16 age group, and a lot of problems like that, and of course once you get into that, there's all kinds of behavior problems at school and you're spending a lot of time with those kinds of things. The week before last, there were days that I didn't get to go around the school much at all because I was tied up with so many people at the Office.
>
> There was one point last week when the secretary said, enough's enough and she went into the Home Ec room and sat down and said I just have to take a break. because of course she bears the brunt of it too, because she's sitting in the Office

Values that affirm human dignity, promote the good of humanity and protect human rights need to be reflected in daily school activities and learnings.

> A number of schools are incorporating the teaching of empathy and self-discipline, what social theorist Amitai Etzioni calls "character education," into their curricula . . . Children learn techniques for developing and enhancing social skills, identifying and managing emotions like anger, and solving problems creatively. The program appears to raise achievement scores and grades as well as to improve behavior. (Clinton, 1996, p. 66)

Some school staffs have developed a comprehensive approach to helping students in school, all personnel acting as caregivers, teaching and reinforcing such interventions in the "two-step" or "five-step" programs to non-violent problem solving. One school had the program outlined in its school handbook. In another school, a full-time guidance counsellor was available; in another, the principal taught conflict resolution, and took on discipline cases herself, reinforcing students' learning of the 2-step model.

There were many efforts to make students feel comfortable in school, and to develop among them a sense of belonging through offering grade 9 retreats, creating teacher-advisor groups, organizing "family groupings" for culture camps, and so on. Values were sometimes taught through elders, as well as through curricular materials, field trips, class discussions and environmental issues that touched on respect for the earth and evoked a sense of reponsibility and commitment for the preservation of the planet, and responsibility for self and others. Some principals were successful in recruiting parents and community as partners, promoting such core values as respect, responsibility, trustworthines, fairness, caring and civic virtue.

Summary

The principalship today is both a demanding and an exciting place for the individual with a strong sense of mission and a desire to make a difference in the school. The school principal's role calls for vision, courage and integrity, as well as strong interpersonal skills, humour and heart. Today's principal must develop a symbiotic relationship between school and community, and together they must rethink and reshape

schools for the future. It is a daunting task, particularly given current fiscal and political realities.

Robert Browning puts forth the challenge: "Ah, but a man's (sic) reach should exceed his grasp, or what's a heaven for?" It is echoed by Sergiovanni (1995): "When moral authority drives leadership practice, the principal is at the same time a leader of leaders, follower of ideas, minister of values, and servant to the followership (p. 318). Servant-leadership and profound commitment is inherent in both.

CHANGE

> *It's really changing in that, for traditionalists and for elders, it was not acceptable to speak out against an elder. It was expected that you would respect what an elder had to say. I mean, we've talked about this with Inuit staff members. At least to respect the person to be heard, not necessarily that you have to agree with, but at least respect that person's right to hold that view. And I think for young people, you often hear elders talk about young people are not showing the same kind of respect that they would expect in their day, and again I think it's the modern world and generational change and younger people expressing more of their issues and concerns in a very different way than what elders may have experienced.* (Study participant)

The kind of change described above is accurately identified by the principal in an Inuit community as "generational," her words reminiscent of Socrates' statement made 400 years before the birth of Christ:

> Our youth now love luxury, they have bad manners, contempt for authority, show disrespect for their elders, and love to chatter in place of exercise. They no longer rise when others enter the room. They contradict their parents, they chatter before company, they gobble their food, and terrorize their teachers. (quoted in Goble & Brooks, 1983, p. 2)

Much can remain the same even in the relentless sweep of change! However, this does not discount the realities that face educators in school, as all principals have indicated. For this principal, the behavior can be learned if coached gently, persistently:

> Especially with our teenagers, our junior high folks, it's that real anger and that talking back. Not everyone, but I don't think it's talking back, it's a speaking out and we have to continue to look at it that way, that's it's been, like if you haven't felt that you've been able to voice or to be heard, then I think the anger is going to come with it, and once it's felt that there is the trust to do that, then there will also be the respect as well, and I think that we're getting to that, moving towards that.

The themes of Community and Character have to this point formed the basis of my discussion of northern schooling and the principal's role. Change is the third and final theme in looking at the essence of the principal's role in the north today.

Currents of Change

Some principals are experiencing a sense of chaos in dealing with the present changes in education. This study has presented many good examples of the complex relationships with communities that some principals have initiated, and that will bring about power changes in the next ten years. Division in 1999 will bring tremendous changes, forming a second Department of Education in Nunavut that will shape an educational vision for the Eastern Arctic The projected growth rate for N.W.T. schools indicate staggering figures, from 16,000 in schools in 1995 to 25,000 by 2010. It is "an incredible system growth" that reflects the high birth rates in the north, as well as the number of students dropping back in to complete their schooling in their home communities. Merely providing access to school programs through grade extensions has raised the school participation rate of cent in the 1970s to 80 per cent in 1992 and even higher today (Malcolm Farrow, Principals' Conference, 1996). Development of natural resources in the Western Arctic that are currently speculated will likely affect population sizes and projected growth figures in schools.

For northern administrators it is virtually impossible to make a yearly plan that can be repeated. The "ship is in order" syndrome does not work well and September always brings its surprises. Principals described staff changeovers as late as June that affected planning; student enrolments vary unpredictably as well. In 1995-96, one small community predicted 17 for the new grade 10 program, and enrolled 52. Yearly enrolments tend to fluctuate wildly in northern schools, even in the larger centres, as September and October school attendance registers indicate. Programming decisions are difficult given the variables of staff and student population and community dynamics. Every year is different:

> I don't know what my next year will look at, I don't have a clue right now, considering what time of year it is! I really do not have a clue what we'll do with our high school kids next year, or whether we will look at, after that week, DCI will still be here for three weeks, are we going to decide then.

For another principal, next year's plans came suddenly, "it's been just two weeks that we have got our staff allocation, and with that we learned that we're extending to grade 12, so (laughs) that's really, ah, for next year. At present we have up to grade 11." Staff turnover affects June planning to an extent, as one principal indicated:

> Well, we'll be doing some next year, it'll depend probably on how our staffing shakes down when we get it finished up. . . . And next year we have a whole ah, we have three TEP students coming in, brand new teachers (laughs). . . . Well, with the turnover again, we're hoping to do some planning for next year, but it has to be left open a little because of all the new people coming in.

Lack of continuity also affects shared principalship initiatives in the north. One principal described some current dynamics of which she is aware in four communities:

> No, [she] and her family moved to * so [the other half of the partnership] was then principal completely. I know they're also trying that . . . at the elementary school, so it's a model that's being tried in those 4 schools including us, and I mean, it's had its, for instance, next year [principal 1] is stepping down, [principal 2] has resigned from the Baffin and is going south for personal and family reasons, and [principal 1] as a result has also stepped down from the principalship, because he feels that support, not having that partnership there with [principal 2], and he feels he needs a change, so we're looking at that as well. How do you sustain and continue that leadership that's started, that team approach when one individual has to step away or whatever?

Funding priorities change and can also delay decisions, as various agencies are usually involved and dynamics are unexpected. The Friendship Games, for example, was an enormous undertaking for a small community to plan and host, bringing in 6 outside communities, two of which would cost $10,000 for airfare alone. However, funding decisions were confirmed at the eleventh hour: "Yeah, and that's finally come about. The Friendship Games has been a concept that we've been working on here for a couple of years, and basically we couldn't bring the funding together." This principal explained that funding came through very recently, "Actually, it was this Friday. Now we have two weeks to bring this Friendship Games thing together, because it's happening on the weekend of the15th." Dealing with stop-go agendas is one of the northern principal's daily struggles.

Government policies are also undergoing many changes that create confusions in the field. The principal implements a departmental directive in good faith only to discover it has been revised. The *Senior Secondary Handbook* (1993), for example, is "already out of date" (Malcolm Farrow, Western Arctic Principals' Conference, April 1996) and under revision as a result of sudden increases in the numbers of programs available. Some principals expressed confusion about what comprised the most recent information, and to some principals, directions at times appeared to change midstream. Government mandates are themselves in a state of flux. Amalgamation of departments brings changes to initiatives that may have been started and worked on for months, initiatives that are "re-priorized" and are put on hold. "I am the coordinator of uncompleted/cancelled projects" was one member's gloomy reflection on her past year's work in the department. Change permeates the entire educational spectrum, and it is unsettling, everywhere.

Another change for some principals comes in handling the extended time period that schools in communities are now using, opening early to accommodate the child development centres, and reaching to 10 pm or later for the community athletics programs.

art programs and college night classes offered after school and in the evening hours. Do principals continue to have reponsibility for the building? Does it further extend their time in school? How does it address issues of ownership?

Increasing technology in schools has redirected many principals' energies. The Educational Bulletin Board System is currently available to students and staff in the Baffin, Kitikmeot, Dogrib and Yellowknife regions and Inuvik, and has 4000 users. By 1997 access to all schools in the N.W.T. is planned. Access to the Internet for all educational institutions is also planned by 1997 (*Improving Student Achievement: A Strategy to 2010,* 1996). Computer literacy for staff is ongoing, as is the operationalizing of schools to make more efficient use of the technology that is becoming available.

Such changes are desireable and worthwhile. The impact that technology will make on students' learning is yet to be realized in many smaller communities. In some larger schools, technology is freeing students to become researchers and historians in their own right. OISE's Dr. Scardamalia flew into Iqaluit and was impressed:

> It was enchanting. The students took ownership of this technology, assuming for themselves a central place in the creation of cultural resources. They interviewed their elders and wrote about race and rare languages, creating records more valuable than we might have anticipated. I came away with a powerful image of students taking issues significant to them and writing, sharing notes, and doing a great deal of constructive commentary. (*The Network's Most Exotic Laboratory,* 1996, p. 4)

Summary

The essence of the principalship in the territories emerges around a powerful sense of community, of character and caring, and of change. These northern principals have shifted beyond instructional leadership, and towards cultivating a caring school community. Like innovative and effective principals everywhere, these principals attempt to "forge partnerships and build strategic aliances with parents, with businesses, and with social service agencies" and "lead in efforts to coordinate the energy and work of all stakeholders so that all the children in their schools are well served" (Murphy & Beck, 1994, p. 15).

Chapter 6
SUMMARY, REFLECTIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

Purpose

The purpose in this study was to gain a fuller appreciation for school leadership in the N.W.T., and specifically, to understand how principals in the N.W.T. are fulfilling their roles as educational leaders. This thesis describes, through the narratives of seven principals, the changing roles of principals in the N.W.T. today. Northern education has seen dramatic changes in the 90s. The nature of educational leadership is changing in the north as a result of the rapid decentralization of and expanded community involvement in education. These have placed the principal in a key position as change agent, one deeply involved in the process of consulting with and empowering others in a shared vision of continuous learning.

The ongoing directive for relevant and culture-based schooling is currently moving into secondary school programs in community schools. There is a growing focus on community involvement to determine local school programs. The recent *Education Act* (1995) stresses that education must be played out as a partnership between students, parents, elders, community, educators and government. Communities are given greater responsibility for the content and delivery of education. The principals' stories indicate that they are inextricably woven into this process of educational change with their communities.

Method

It was seen as crucial to study educational leadership in the N.W.T. through focusing on the experiences of principals, given the new legislation in Northern education (*Education Act,* 1995; *People: Our Focus for the Future,* 1994; *Preparing for Tomorrow: Departmental Directive on Community Senior Secondary Schooling,* 1994, *Educating All Our Children: Departmental Directive on Inclusive Schooling,* 1993; *School Leadership in the N.W.T.: A Profile for the 90s,* 1993; and *Our Students, our Future: An Educational Framework,* 1991); and given that principals are key players in the movement that emphasizes parent-community dominated governance of local schools.

Seven principals were chosen, by reputation, with consideration given to geographic location, gender, northern experience, size of school and isolation of community. Although the stories of seven principals cannot reflect consensus across the

N.W.T., they do reflect the diversity that exists in an educational system which spans 3,340,550 square kilometers of land, and comprises eight official languages and many varied ethnic and cultural backgrounds. This qualitative research study is based on conversations with principals, documentation sent from each school, and materials that were faxed back and forth over the six months of data collection. From the content analysis of the extensive data emerged five main categories that reflect the principals' understandings of their roles as school administrators.

Categories

The five categories that emerged from the principals' stories include (a) Belief in the Future, (b) Handling of Daily School Challenges, (c) Working Between the Lines, (d) Positioning the School in the Culture of the Community, and (e) The Unending Workday.

Belief in the Future

The principals exuded belief and hope in the future through their words and actions. They generally saw the Career and Technology Studies as "a breath of fresh air" that offered learning beyond the academics and into the work place. CTS also enabled cultural programs in smaller communities which offer language and cultural learning for aboriginal students. Principals recounted a rich variety of successes in their schools over the past year, and also spoke of opportunities available for students in northern education. Several spoke hopefully about future high school students as being more ready for learning, and having greater options for learning through the community high school programs, and inclusionary schooling mandates. Greater collaboration with staff and shared leadership and community also signaled for these principals a hopeful attitude for education.

Handling the Challenges

To make sense of the kaleidoscopic nature of principals' work is to listen to their stories, and to come to the understanding that it is a composite of interactions with parents, students, staff and community, that it revolves constantly about people and issues. In the discussions of their work, it was apparent that principals were often called on to function as sense makers for their school. The challenges of the job appeared to be infinite. They spoke of concerns for generating parent support and educating parents and community through newsletters and school involvement. Dealing with student behavior, providing for student wellness and self-esteem, enabling success and achievement for all

students while ensuring "standards," and offering greater access for learning for all students challenged these principals' energies and left them feeling that "there's an awful lot of w[illegible] to be done."

Furthermore, the principals discussed a variety of practices directed at continuous professional growth for staff, from facilitating staff development, to mentoring new staff, to modelling in the classroom, and to encouraging yearly growth through individual staff growth plans and staff supervision. Although seen as important, these were difficult to complete to the principals' satisfaction, and were sometimes left undone. Building bridges with community was a major and ongoing challenge for principals who believed that in order to be meaningful, education must be relevant to the child's world. As culture-based schooling differed from community to community because of the diverse culture ar[illegible] socio-economic make-up of the N.W.T., every principal's concerns was unique and context-driven. Strong communications were also seen as key to the success of school-community relations but difficult to maintain consistently.

Working Between the Lines

Most principals assumed some flexibility in the interpretation of guidelines. Directives were grounded in community and contextualized by its people, making learning a relevant and culture-based process for students. In attempting to fulfil their educational mandates, these principals "worked between the lines" of Department mandates, reframing, flexing rules and creatively arriving at solutions for situations that were specific to their community and reflective of their students' needs. From the principals' stories it was clear that if differences existed between what the Department mandated and what the community envisioned, efforts were made to "translate" directives to fit the community context.

Positioning in the Culture

Positioning the school within the culture meant working actively with community towards a shared vision of education, and its delivery in efforts to provide more relevant, culture-based schooling. Principals worked through a variety of processes that included meeting with stakeholders, participating in community visioning workshops, developing school improvement plans with community, and actively working with parent advisory groups and CECs. Schools were at different stages of developing directions and goals that more clearly positioned schools in the culture of the community, but working with community members and elders where "everybody has a stake in these things" offered far-reaching benefits in several of the schools discussed in this study. Cultural sensitivity

and community readiness for change were discussed by most principals, as was the need for educational leaders to at times "seed new ideas" in the community visioning process.

The Unending Workday

This was a reality for all seven principals in the study. They spoke of exhaustion, stress and "reaching saturation levels." In discussing both the celebrations and on-going problems in their schools over the past year, they indicated time and again that their work was all-encompassing and all-consuming, and that maintaining a personal balance was necessary but difficult to achieve. Discussions of "burning the candle at both ends" and "energies going in too many directions at the same time" were countered with "we bask in our successes and learn from our failures." One principal said it well: "I enjoy what I'm doing. If I didn't enjoy it, I couldn't even imagine having the energy to do it."

Themes

The three themes which emerged from the data address the question of "what is the essence of the principalship" in the territories, as gathered from these principals: (a) Concept of Community, (b) Character: Moral and Social Issues, and (c) Change: Redefining the Principalship.

Community: "It Takes a Village to Raise a Child"

The proverb rings true in all the principals' stories. As northern communities take greater responsibility for the schooling of their children by taking an active role in shaping programs, setting standards, and encouraging their children's learning, it can be said that "It takes a whole village to raise a child." These principals have become more deeply involved in the process of educational change within their communities, and the call for leadership must go out to all members of the community. It is a village consciousness that implies the strong sense that human beings are all connected, that "we're all in it together."

For each of these principals, there is an authenticity in the way education is enacted in their school, an authenticity driven by a focus to meet the needs of all children first, an inclusionary approach to education that requires parent, child, community and teacher to all be a part of the interlock of learning. The idea of community is far-reaching in the principals' vision of providing learning that is relevant to the learner. They work hard at making school a place where kids will come and learn:

> Such leaders provide vision of both the necessary and the sacred. The essence of leadership is the desire and attempt to change the human condition. It is a political and

> courageous act to attempt to empower followers. . . . Leadership is conscious of conditions and conscious of change. . . . Leadership is the process of transforming and empowering. (Foster, 1986, pp.181,187)

Many principals felt that their job makes endless demands on their time and energy, and that it carries a heavy burden of responsibility and accountability. Ackerman et al. (1996) believed that "the burden of this mantle of authority must be shared if a school is to thrive," emphatically pointing out that "it must be shared if the *principal* is to thrive" because "the number, variety and frequency of problems hurtling at caring principals are simply too great for any one person to handle. To attempt to resist them alone destines a principal to burnout" (p. 150).

Character: Moral and Social Issues around Creating "Healthy Communities, Healthy Kids"

Whereas the first theme focused on community as significant in northern leadership, the second theme identified the importance of character and caring, or "moral leadership" that I saw as a driving force in the principals' daily actions.

Principals modeled moral leadership through their actions, showing time and again that their students were worth fighting for. One worked actively with Crimestoppers because he knew it impacted his school and his students; another drove two or three students to work experience to assure their success; yet another fasted for 30 hours with 180 of his students in a Gym. One joined students at culture camp and shared in a student's excitement in catching his first "bou"; another gave up on the paperwork and began to spend more time "talking to the kids" and knowing kids; another learned the language of her students; and yet another rallied all students after a culture camp, to share muskrat and bannock in "care packages" for community elders. These are only a few of many examples discussed in the findings. Lickona (1993) suggested that, "Schools need to look at themselves through a moral lens and consider how everything that goes on in school affects the values and character of students" (p.11).

Most principals expressed deep concerns for the lack of learning readiness of many of their students, and they searched for the causes of disruptive behaviors and how to reach out to help. These issues call for all - the head, heart and hand - of leadership to work together. One principal stated, "There are all kinds of social and emotional issues" and recognized that "until the kids are in a better state of mind and with a better sense of self, the learning isn't going to take place anyway."

Healing, wellness and self-esteem issues were addressed in all schools. Inclusionary schooling policies were implemented as best as possible, given deficient budgets. The need for early intervention was mentioned by several principals, and has

called for much-needed support to help them fight what often feels like a losing battle. They realize that support must come from the parents and the community, as well as government:

> Systemically, we are not keeping pace with the new nature of the child who arrives on the doorsteps of schools everywhere in North America. FAS, FAE, ADD, ADHD and on goes the alphabet soup. It is not impossible to deal with, it is just improbable to deal with effectively if schools are not supported appropriately. . . . Educators, alone, cannot possibly cope with the multiple dysfunctionalities that walk through school doors daily. A whole society/community approach is needed.

There is much that principals have not been able to achieve; they need more funding, more personnel, and more time. However, they are doggedly committed to improving conditions of learning for all children in their schools, as one principals pointed out:

> Generally speaking, people are still trying to be positive, still trying to look to the good. Still looking to opportunities, still framing it, making the most of what you have, and I think that's what you do. That's the only answer because there is no other way.

Change: Redefining the Principalship

A major concern for northern principals is the constant change that they face in their schools and are expected to facilitate with their communities. Indeed, "juggling too many balls in the air at once" and fearing the dropping of some was a metaphor for two of the principals. Most would agree that they often feel overwhelmed with the amount they are handling:

> The likelihood of project success tends to rest with the principal. . . . Principals must assume quite different roles if they are to ensure success. In light of the vastly different communities, teachers, students, it should not be surprising that principals attempted to adapt to or accommodate these differences . . . to empower teachers to accept and implement reform, [the principal] would first need to convince them that he would serve as a buffer (or run 'interference') between them, the district administration, and the community. (Anderson & Shirley, 1995, p. 421)

In looking at how principals bring about change, these researchers found that principals must themselves change, adopt different roles and use different strategies. Most importantly, principals as keepers of the vision, must be more involved in "people work" and less in "paper work" (p. 422). Administrators must demonstrate through their actions that such change is necessary; principals must "walk the talk". All principals exemplify this in their efforts to model the educational vision of their school community in their daily work and personal actions.

REFLECTIONS ON THE THEMES

> *Great ideas, it has been said, come into the world as gently as doves. Perhaps then, if we listen attentively, we shall hear, amid the uproar of empires and nations, a faint flutter of wings, the gentle stirring of life and hope.* (Albert Camus, *Create Dangerously* translated in Greenleaf, 1972, p. 17)

Reflecting further on the three themes raises issues that are embedded in the practice of northern principals today. Principals in the north have a great deal to cope with, and although the job is perceived as endless and lacking boundaries, it also provides opportunities for authentic action. The principals' stories illustrate that these may be seen as "the best of times and the worst of times." As Greenleaf (1972) pointed out, "one is always searching, listening, expecting a better wheel for these times is in the making" (p. 9).

I perceive that for these principals there is a sense of hope and belief that drives their actions regardless the personal cost; that they see the possibility in their work. From their stories there comes an awareness that they have taken on large tasks, and work hard to make their community schools a success. However, their stories also reflect the various issues around northern education. These encompass the three themes around community and community-related issues of: (a) creating authentic learning within the community; (b) Focusing on caring and community health; and (c) Reshaping the principalship to accommodate community governance.

Creating Authentic Learning

Facilitating the development of collective action strategies often falls on the principal, although authority and responsibility can be shared. Chance (1992) suggests that, "One thing the visionary leader knows for sure is that the journey to actualize a vision cannot be made alone" (p. 199). The principal must involve others "in developing an overall organizational vision, a way to communicate that vision, and the plan by which it is actualized" (p. 199), as was reflected in the various community visioning activities described by the principals of this study:

> This involvement of others requires the leader to understand group processes, human behavior, roles, leadership styles and human needs. It also requires that he or she be able to guide, facilitate, cajole, and manipulate outcomes so that the organizational vision with its goals is closely aligned with his or her personal vision. (Chance, 1992, p. 111)

In querying how principals cope with their practice, the response is that they cannot do it alone, and that all make efforts to work within their communities. However, every community raises different issues for these administrators, issues that are value-based and never completely resolved. Principals are challenged to accommodate such issues through working with the other members in the community.

Because communities vary enormously, there exists a wide diversity in northern schools, each raising very different issues for the school administrator. Some principals work in unitary cultures, and others work within multi-ethnic cultures. One community has only seven per cent non-aboriginal, and another, only fifteen per cent aboriginal population. These vast differences raise separate concerns. For example, there are issues around differing values for the future and the past. In some communities, it is seen as very important to be aware of what is happening in the future, and in others, a greater importance is placed on the past and ensuring traditional learning. Some principals, with their communities, were committed to honouring the past and making sure that it is integral to present learning, whereas others principals, with their communities, tended to negate the past and to privilege the future. There is a need for administrators to develop a strong consciousness about where communities focus the importance, and where principals themselves stand, on those issues.

Communities also reflect differences in academic expectations, showing pressures for principals to put in a full complement of courses to enable learning for all. For some students in a community, the academic stream is appropriate, but for many more who perhaps want to live in the community and have less interest in academics, the 13-levels are more desired. There is a tension for the administrator to honour a student's academic abilities without privileging academics, but at the same time, not to marginalize those who would be in the academic stream in order to benefit the others. Offering a full complement of courses requires creative programming decisions as well, given the limited resources available in isolated community schools.

Another tension for administrators has to do with the pressures related to Department mandates v.s. the community aspirations. Department directives tend to be global, and require reframing to fit community contexts. Principals play a key role in ensuring that education is relevant and appropriate for their particular students, and that it follows the directions shaped through community visioning.

Several of the principals faced issues around aboriginal and non-aboriginal leadership in schools. Some are highly cognizant of the need to develop aboriginal leadership and to redefine leadership models that include, for example, the concept of co-principalships; others are more aware of being in communities that, although more or less

supportive of current non-aboriginal leadership, are desirous of bringing in an aboriginal principal. Issues of principals being there for only a short tenure face some principals who may not always feel supported in their northern communities. Issues of isolation can exacerbate this notion for some administrators. Principals need also to be cognizant of the effects of isolation and the destructive impact of gossip, and to work towards its control within the community.

Through the principals' stories it is clear that every community in the N.W.T. is unique, and that it is incumbent upon the principal to get to know the community well in order to develop a working relationship. The issues discussed here were handled quite successfully by these principals, but they are potential issues for any principal, and important ones to raise in discussions at Principals' meetings in a spirit of collegiality and supportive learning.

Ackerman et al. (1996) suggested that building community has important benefits, that "the pooling and coordination of ideas, techniques, resources, and strategies create a synergy best described in the old adage, 'It takes a whole village to raise a child'" (p. 147). It bears repeating that for the principals in the study, leadership works from within a group, driven by student needs and community aspirations. This kind of leadership holds promise of being more authentic, and the schools and community less likely to be victimized by "somebody coming in on their white horse and telling [them] how this place should be" (Barth, 1994, p. 9). Working with stakeholders, both lay and professional, towards realizing a better school in the community, expends much of the northern principal's time and energy; however, it is an authentic act of school leadership because it is rooted in community.

Focusing on Caring and Community Health

> *The idea that the business of schools is strictly and exclusively academic is crumbling as problems related to poverty, injustice, violence, lack of adequate health care, and the like take center stage in many educational institutions. As we move towards the 21st century, principals must be able to forge partnerships and build strategic alliances with parents, with businesses, and with social service agencies.* (Murphy & Beck, 1994, p. 15)

The conditions that shape students' lives today are very different from past generations. Social and economic changes, family patterns and work arrangements have altered irrevocably, and many children receive less guidance from their parents today. This is true also in the northern communities. It is recognized that the community must work together to raise its children, and that schools must do their part in building a positive culture and modeling the behavior they want children to emulate.

Although the principals feel their current "social-worker" roles takes away from other pressing administrative matters, they are aware of the high needs in the area of student welfare, and that their role is to "lead in efforts to coordinate the energy and work of all stakeholders so that all children in their schools are well served" (Murphy and Beck, 1994, p. 15). The concept of character education, that "the job of the school is to transform its students not only by providing them with knowledge and skills but by building character and instilling virtue" (Sergiovanni, 1995, p. 309), logically connects to the community, where healthy communities raise healthy children - spiritually, emotionally, socially, psychologically and academically.

One of the issues principals contend with is offering wellness and healing programs in the schools for children, but their efforts do not bring out all the families of participating students. For educators to identify such problems in the school community and to initiate action towards community wellness can be difficult and one that can only be successful if the need is recognized within the community and so supported. Coping with past problems, parents who went to residential schools, the loss of language and identity and self-esteem, are some issues integrated into the way students behave in school. The rules of school (no kicking, no biting, no fighting) sets up a culture in the school that is potentially different from what happens outside of school, with schools constantly finding ways to maintain it and gain support for it.

The re-valuing of traditional ways and recognition that the elders are the last keepers of that knowledge, and that elders may have a strong influence in shaping students' behaviors and sense of self in today's society are reflections of such moral and social issues. Greenfield (1991, p. 10) stated, "The future is, of course, never cut off from the past, but is rather an extrapolation and extension of it, though the utterly new may sometimes confound the progression." It is an intricate balance that principals are endeavouring to reach within their schools, as they work with their community councils and elders and stakeholders to determine what kind of education makes best sense for their children. It requires much careful listening on the parts of all players, and sound judgement in reaching consensus. It will also require time and patience.

As the major thrust of the Education Act moves education into the community, so must the community take greater responsibility for preparing their children for learning. Most principals report widespread societal problems reflected in their schools on the faces of the tired, troubled, traumatized children that need attention. Macfarlane (1992), a Canadian school principal of twenty years, makes a powerful observation:

> The problems of the parents are indeed the problems of the child. Unfortunately we are usually exposed only to the problems of the child and often forget that they are

> helpless individuals in situations far beyond their control. . . . The greatest favour we can do the youth we serve is to proclaim from every rooftop that the parent is responsible for the development of the child and must provide leadership, example and love. The failures of society are not the failures of the institution; they are, instead, the ones the institutions could not salvage from the damage inflicted by home environment. (pp. 21-22)

Several northern principals have described their efforts to work towards community wellness as they recognize the roots of problems seen in their schools, and in this they need their community support. They believe that working from within a community towards change implies a readiness on the part of the community to take the steps themselves. Several principals spoke of the need for parent support in high schools, for example, a time when many parents are less likely to come to the school. Others spoke of the need for early intervention programs to ensure learning readiness when children begin school. Again, it requires a strong alliance forged between community and school to create the conditions desired for life long learning for all in the community.

Values that affirm human dignity, promote the good of humanity and protect human rights should be reflected in daily school activities and learnings. Some communities, in working closely with their schools, are well on their way to emphasizing such values in offering schooling that infuses the traditional ways in current curriculum, and that promotes healthy living, focusing on self esteem first. Their belief is that the learning will follow. It is a sound vision.

Change: Reshaping the Principalship

> *The search for a new vision for education and a redefined role for self must unfold as part of the growth of the school community. No longer can principals search for solutions that they then bring to the schools.* (Louis & Murphy, 1994, p. 272)

That principals are attempting to maintain balance while standing in strong currents of change in the Northwest Territories is undeniable. Some would feel quite comfortable describing it as "chaos." In this perhaps they are not unlike their colleagues elsewhere. "Most principals feel overburdened by their jobs at one time or another, and some do continually. Indeed, [they] do not have a closed-ended job description. Everybody can, and does, place demands on [them]" (Ackerman et al., 1996, p. 164).

Devolving educational decisions to the community has placed new responsibilities on principals. Many struggle with the chaos that has come with the restructuring of the northern educational system, and find their roles both complex and ambiguous, and impossible to "contain." Some principals are more successful that others in being able to cope with changes. Some have a more flexible sense of school, and are more successful

at engaging change as they "embrace the complexity swirling around them and integrate it into the life of the school -- rather than attempting to manage it as a separate set of activities (Louis & Murphy, 1994, p. 270). Such principals "reject -- at least intellectually-- the notions that they must know everything, solve every problem, and be all things to all people all of the time" (p. 271).

Some principals see school as encompassing community and are better able to envisage ways to make changes, to go out into the community and connect with people and draw them into some school activity. It is clear that all school administrators have to learn such creativity and flexibility if they are to survive in education today. A school cut off from the community life is a school without context and relevance for its students. However, principals cannot achieve the task alone, and must adopt different roles and use strategies that draw others into the work.

Successful principals are exploring models of shared leadership, co-principalling, collaborative decision-making, and are generally "rejecting omniscience" (Louis & Murphy, 1994, p. 271) and the sense that they must do it all themselves. Stimulating effective teamwork among teachers who then take on responsibility for innovation is a way of enabling teachers and sharing responsibility: "leadership is an art that enables others and allows them, in turn, to become enablers" (Foster, 1986, p.187). In the decision-making process, principals "routinely change positions . . . in one instance at the forefront, at another in the background, and still later on the sideline," and thus "leading from the center" (Louis & Murphy, p. 267).

Supportive structures to orient newly hired teachers to the community are essential in northern schools, and can be delegated to a complement of experienced staff and community members, as shown to be possible by several principals in this study. There are issues of TEP graduates who also need more support as they come on to teaching staffs, as well as the CAs, elders and other community members who come into the school for part-time work, and need support and orientation.

A study of Chicago School reform (McPherson & Crowson, 1994) described school principals as frequently referring to themselves as "mini-superintendents" because "as key players in a reform movement emphasizing parent/community dominated governance . . . they find themselves contending with a real budget, board relations, entreprenneurial leadership expectations, school community politics, and staff-development issues," responsibilities that used to belong to superintendents, and "a far cry from the just-obey-the-orders-from-above culture of pre-reform Chicago" (p. 57). The study points out that new directions in school-community relations are indicated, and "a much more complicated blending of school and community" is emerging (p. 75). Similar to

the findings in this study, "the match of a school to its environment may vary with the strengths of each community, with citizen commitment to reform, and with the skills of each school's leadership" (p. 73).

The Exemplary Schools Project (Gaskell, 1995) presents the study of 21 schools, describing "the diversity of Canadian secondary schools, the challenges they face and the tensions with which they must deal" and the "creative responses that many schools are making to these challenges and tensions" (p. 274). The point is made that "the expansion of horizons, resources, and connections with a world that is larger than a school building are critical for education" (p. 235) and that "schools are not self-contained communities" (p. 221). Schools exist in communities that are themselves changing. Many schools have developed links with business and social services and offer joint services, "but here too the nature of the community and the opportunities it affords are determining factors in shaping the kinds of relationships the school forms and the influence the community has on the school" (p. 276-277).

About school leadership, Gaskell concluded by saying that

> School leadership should not rely too much on one person but rather on different elements in the school community: administrators, teachers, parents, students, politicians and community leaders. Collaborative modes are more stable and successful. (p. 280)

Louis and Murphy (1994) concurred, suggesting that the vision cannot be brought by the principal to his or her school. Rather,

> Their quest, both for the school and for themselves, must be part of the community's search. This is an important lesson for school leaders to internalize. The process of letting go of old role scripts and ways of doing business and the creation of new ones is contextual and social in nature. (p. 272)

Summary

Northern principals may consider these "the best of times, the worst of times" as they undergo changes in education that force them into new roles. But there is a kind of sense that educators are at a marvelous disjuncture that permits them not to carry over patterns that no longer work. Rather, this time can be seen as an opportunity to re-design an education that better fits the needs of all students. Much is already moving on that road to change. Notions of "personhood and community" certainly hint at important aspects of good educational leadership, as do notions of humanity and caring and the establishment of compassionate justice in schools and society (Murphy & Beck, 1994, pp. 10-11). These authors suggest that school leaders of the 21st century will be required to balance a variety of roles and

> live and work with the contradictions or ambiguities . . . they must find their authority in their personal, interpersonal, and professional competencies, not in formal positions; they must cultivate collegiality, cooperation,and shared commitments among all with whom they work. . . . In addition, they must be cognizant that changes between the school and its environment are imminent. (p. 15)

The principals have described various efforts to bring mandates to fruition in their schools.They bring a kind of leadership that works well in the north, tending to a transformational and collaborative style that empowers both teachers and community stakeholders in shaping schools. Their leadership is styled around facilitation and consensus building, reflecting the particular social priorities in the north: preserving the various cultures and eight official languages, aboriginal self-governance, direct community involvement in schooling, and consensual decision-making.

Prestine (1994) suggested that the principalship is "not simply a revisioning or redefining of the principal's role, it is a new conception, a turning of the role of the principal 90 degrees from everywhere" and that "more and more, evidence would seem to suggest that the two issues of restructuring and leadership are inextricably bound" (pp.149-150). Murphy and Beck (1994) encourage principals to enter into constructive dialogues on topics of education and their roles as educators, because otherwise "others -- not intimately related to or affected by schooling - will define missions, visions, standards, roles and responsibilities. . . School leaders should be more proactive in shaping what the principalship is to be . . . the 21st century" (p. 16).

The principals in this study have shared what they do as they shape education with their communities. Given that their mandates are heavy and that they are the appointed change agents, they have taken on their tasks with admirable energy and commitment. In giving thoughtful consideration to their beliefs and their actions it can be said that they are, in fact, redefining the principalship as we enter a new millennium.

REFLECTIONS

Reflection for Principals: A Space for Self

That these northern principals are change agents in the most dynamic sense of the word is clear; they are also embroiled in conditions of change beyond their control. How do principals attend to their personal needs while responding to so many in their school and community? Ackerman et al. (1996) point out that "the open-endedness of the job makes it extraordinarily easy to put in sixty or more hours at school in a typical week. Being responsive and helpful often leads to making phone calls from home at night or on

weekends" (p. 164). All principals in this study would agree. My question to them, "who nourishes the nurturer" was generally met with long pauses and profound silence. The answer must come in the need to take time to reflect, to sit back and assess from time to time what has happened, and to take heart in what has been achieved. The answer is also in finding others with whom a professional dialogue can be developed. It is about taking time to talk one's craft.

Many of the principals commented that participating in this study has been personally rewarding. One principal stated, "I've found it really helps me reflect on my own practice." For another, it was "an exercise to reflect on what you're doing, and sometimes I think we can get so caught up in what we are doing and so close to it that we get mired in the frustrations and the impatience and the, I guess, loss of focus." He pointed out that although it can be time consuming, reflection is an important part of practice:

> I felt good with it. I mean, as usual time always enters its ugly head on these kinds of things, but I felt the opportunity to sit down and reflect, which doesn't happen as frequently as it should, was good for me. . . . I guess it was just important to be able to pause and this has done it. We have retreats and generally they're labelled as spiritual retreats and an opportunity to reflect on that dimension. . . . Somehow maybe what needs to happen in our district is to set that kind of time too, to talk about the practices and talk about the issues, and I think there's a bit of tokenism that goes on with that right now. I don't think that we get into the heart of those kinds of things.

A third principal commented on the need to build in times to stand back and to take time, a leave of whatever kind, "to stand back and reflect and to take time to rest as well. I'm constantly working on it in terms of self-awareness and self-care, how important it is to have, to find that balance." Planning a year's leave after three years in the principalship, she departs with some reluctance but recognizes that "it's also that awareness, that knowing self, and for me at this particular point, I know I'll be coming back, but I have to take that time now or I will not be effective to anyone."

For a fourth principal, it is striving for ongoing personal growth, and "hoping that the one thing I am able to do in my role is to continue to challenge myself and to continually grow and not stagnate in my thinking." All principals take seriously their professional growth, and almost all are taking two weeks in the summer to attend the N.W.T. Principals' Certification Program, either as facilitators or as student participants. One principal feels that professional growth and broadened horizons are two goals he has been able to pursue in the north:

> I also have taken the opportunity while being in the North to do things that would eventually be useful in a PhD or an administrative position by broadening the dimensions that I've had to do with education. For example, a classroom teacher and assistant principal and now a principal, and close involvement with the association at the local level and then the regional level and also at the territorial level, involving myself in the committees, negotiate the contract, the last contract, I'm glad I'm not

> negotiating this one! And PCP is another one . . . and community visioning. I'm working closely with the CECs, and I've had something to do with nearly all the partners in the educational process, some involvement at some level, and I think it all helps to understand how things happen. Providing an understanding and insight into it tends to make the job a little bit easier because things connect. And the academic side of things too, I've taken the masters program, and I've used my school for the major paper.

For another principal, continuing on after Principals' Certification to attend a high-powered American conference and workshop on leadership, *Leadership and Evolving Vision,* is highly tempting, "but it means I won't see my family for five weeks, and I haven't seen them much this year. And I would just love to spend 4 weeks of down-time, and going to summer school means I get two weeks of holidays and that's it." He balances the pros and cons:

> If I go to school, even though it's work, it's something that I see myself getting really pumped about, so in some ways it's not really work. But at the same time, I'd really like to spend a month with my kids. . . . I would love to go horseback riding, I would love to do that in a rural setting, and I'd do it in style, I'd want there to be a hot tub when I get back. I'm not talking about roughing it in a tent and sleeping on rocks (laughing). My wife said that would be great. So maybe that would be okay too."

Making time for reflection in school offers the opportunity to take an appraising look back and see the progress that has been made. In talking to staff, one principal "brings up stuff about other schools, because we run smoothly and we don't realize what happens in other schools because they've got used to the way the elementary and the secondary runs." She adds that "when it comes to these crunches people are saying, well look at [that community] it's having major problems this year." Another principal agrees that this reflective process offers a much-needed reality check for staff and students, and he does the same on occasion:

> I gave one little pep talk to them and I reviewed with them all of things that had happened on their behalf, and the kinds of events and activities that had transpired in the first semester. We did an assembly kicking off the second semester. And I think that they were quite impressed, not necessarily surprised. I think even the staff were, because we know we're busy and we know that we're constantly doing things, but I think that sometimes we don't stop to take a good look and reflect on just exactly what we are accomplishing.

Several principals spoke of finding their support in mentorships of various kinds. For one, it is "the director, an amazing man." For this principal, "a lot of things I do come from him, the way he does things, the way he can talk to people and handle situations and things." Mentorship can also come from one's colleagues, as one new principal noted after attending the Western Arctic Principals' Workshop:

> This was a person that I found myself listening to everything and absorbing absolutely everything that she was saying, and some of what she was saying

> wouldn't apply to my school . . . but there are still motivations and forces, and there are parallels to be drawn you know, there are spirits to be taken from another person and to be absorbed into yourself, and you can use it. The details almost don't matter, you just sort of take the spirit of that person and you say, oh yes, this is where I want to be and when I go back to my school, this is what I want to be carrying back. Not a piece of information but a spirit. And so I gained a tremendous amount from her.

The consensus among all principals is that their work is stimulating, extensive, and seemingly never-ending. One principal emphasized the need to value the role of principal and "appreciate and support it . . . not out of self-importance, but out of the need to be sure that we're taken care of, and nurturing that role because if what we saw is coming, it's going to be increasingly imperative that we do it. And there's going to be burnout, I hear people doing it now." At the Principals' Workshop he stated that:

> Right now, frankly, I don't think that I can work any harder, I really don't think that I can work any harder than I am, and I'm questioning even now how much longer I will work at this job, because personally I don't believe there is a harder job in education, I really don't. You get the pressures of the school situation, the board situation, the overall pressure of the education system and the government expectations, and you're torn asunder. I don't have to tell you that you are, because you are; I see you all in tatters right now. Is it fair for that to continue?

One principal spoke of the need to work cognizantly towards balance in her life. For this principal, taking time to reflect on experience is "a stepping stone to personal and professional growth. It has helped me to keep in mind the importance of seeing challenges as bridges for growth and learning along the path, and not necessarily as obstacles to overcome."

For another, a measure of balance can be found in the land itself:

> Yeah, that's true. And the barrenness and starkness of it is actually attractive at some times. Very peaceful. Drive out of town for 25 miles, shut off your snowmobile, and it's dead quiet. You're treading on ground that's maybe never been stepped on before and there's not a soul around. You have complete solitude. Not too many places down south where I can do that.

Epilogue

Our last discussions ended in late May of 1996. Principals were able to bring some closure to their year in terms of their own reflections, and plan their summers. Two principals were headed out for holidays; five were going to Rae-Edzo for ten days at the Principals' Certification Program. One principal was very happy to report a good year's end; he has "seen the light at the end of the tunnel, and it's not another train" and expects the next will be a better year. A second was stoically hopeful about his upcoming fourth year, and moving closer to the ideal school that he envisions. A third principal was looking forward to moving into a partially renovated school next year, and a fourth expected to be

moving "full steam ahead," with his community squarely behind him. A fifth principal has promised to cut back on professional activities next year to take joy in parenting, and a sixth is taking a year's leave to build a cabin and indulge in the creative arts, specifically spinning and weaving. In mid-June, the seventh principal bowed out. "Change of plans. We've resigned. No set plans for next year. Very busy. Out of here Friday 21st."

And so closed the year for these seven school principals. 1996-97 will bring unique challenges. There will be unexpected changes. Ask any northern principal in August.

A Personal Reflection

As I look back over the substance of this study, much has been said. There have been many "words, words, words," mostly through the principals' voices, which is appropriate given that much of administrative work is based on talk. Learning about the principalship in the North has been the main journey of this study, although there were intriguing side-trips and related learnings along the way.

As a long-time northern high school teacher and more recently, an administrator of a large regional high school with a student residence that housed 300 in the "good old days," I worked closely with many aboriginal students who had come to the city for their years of secondary schooling. I learned that those who came from the communities to our school were special, a select few who, in their teachers' view, had the best chance of making it away from home. I heard their many stories of homesickness and of frustration with residence living. I saw many wander the streets at night when the "city kids" had places to go and "be." Many went home to their communities early, often missing final exams by just a few weeks, finding life "away" intolerable; only the most tenacious survived to graduation, in spite of efforts of some very committed teachers and residence supervisors to provide emotional and program supports.

When the residence closed down two years ago, I mourned the loss of the many community kids that I had enjoyed in my classroom and in the school for over ten years. I wondered what was to come of the many who would no longer be coming. Some students had done well and had become proud leaders in our school in many different forums; others had more quietly worked their way through their courses and to graduation. Some had hated it all but had stuck it out. I believed that in general, the school had offered them a good shot at education. I can name so many who had "made it" proudly, and who had good things to say about school; however, I did not know the many, many more who had never come.

For me, the most important learning in this study has been to discover the kinds of successes around extending the senior secondary grades to communities, and to discover the commitment and effort that has gone into developing relevant programming at the community level, with community. Some principals have seen it as an opportunity to encourage students to reach for higher levels than they were getting in regional schools; others see more students able to reach success, given community support. Some have had to struggle with getting parents to support the learning opportunities now available by urging their kids to come to school; others have had to deal with incredible enrolment increases in small school settings. I had little awareness of these dynamics.

For most principals, it has meant a whole lot of adjustment and new learning. One stated at the April Conference:

> Three years ago when we found out that we were going to grade ten, I knew nothing about high schools. I was very interested to find out what people think a grade 10 program is. Ours kept changing with each year, as the year unfolds.

With the need for flexibility came the obvious question of standards. The Northern principals who gathered in April 1996 to look critically at the nature of high school programs in the Territories, were challenged to think long and hard about past practice, and were asked to think differently about the kind of education that will better serve students' needs in their schools today. Some of those principals were like the ones interviewed for this study, critical humanists who have before them an enormous work that needs to be started, decisively. The learning curve in education has been, and continues to be very steep . . . for educators themselves!

"Breaking the Southern model" in enacting education that is more relevant and authentic to include all children of the north has taken time since its first curriculum articulation in the early 70s. It is beginning to be rooted in decisions made and actions taken within different regions of the territories, and interpreted within the community context.The recent Education Act is purposeful in taking the power from a remote department and investing much of it with Divisional Education Councils and local District Education Authorities. It recognizes the cultural variation of the peoples of the Northwest Territories and stresses the knowledge of elders; it declares the importance of inclusive education, of kindergarten education, and of the eight official languages in the Territories.

This study has focused on the impact that the new legislation has had on the principal's role in education, specifically of seven principals. In these changing times, their leadership (the word is chosen purposefully, because these are not "managers" who set out merely to maintain the status quo) has proven to be all-consuming, multi-faceted and multi-directional, but above all, critically important. Principals have an educational

perspective and the opportunity as school leaders to reach both into their schools and out to their communities, and as such, many have become the key players in educational change, keepers of the sacred covenant of learning for all children.

Quite simply, effective principals today exude "a chemistry between person, staff, students and the community" that "requires constant thought, observation, people skills, judgement, trust and humour," qualities that are "neither finite or quantifiable . . . even good principals never have enough of them" (Ackerman et al., 1996). All seven principals reflect an immense awareness of the myriad educational issues before them, and have the ability to "see clearly the school's core functions, to evaluate events in the light of those functions, and to help the members of the school community conduct their work and their relationships in ways that serve these core functions" (p.1).

The task is never easy, but the efforts are significant and honourable. I am hopeful that bringing to light their stories will raise awareness and begin articulation about such important work. As Foster (1986) clarified, leadership is conscious of conditions and conscious of change; more stories are needed about such administrators *"to give us, as a profession, the confidence we need to raise questions of a critical nature that, despite their risks, may ultimately lead to the formation of a more proper educational organization "* (emphasis added, p.195).

When it comes to the education of children, we all have a stake in their future, as do they in ours. John Donne's words echo "Never send to know for whom the bell tolls, it tolls for thee." We cannot afford to propagate the "dreamless society" when, as principals, there is so much opportunity to inspire others to excellence through the ethic of caring and commitment. We are all "such stuff as dreams are made on" and what better than to forge our own dreams, our own truth within our community? And what better way than to work with one's people, to begin by listening to others, and to exhibit the courage of one's convictions to guide one's actions when necessary? It is an enormous challenge, one that cannot be taken alone. Greenleaf (1976) is reassuring:

> But if one is servant, either leader or follower, one is always searching, listening, expecting a better wheel for these times is in the making. It may emerge any day. Any one of us may find out from personal experience. I am hopeful. (p. 9)

Summary

There is little time for reflection, and usually less opportunity taken to express appreciation for what gets done. I am hopeful that this study brings to light some of the daily administrative actions that have tended to be taken for granted, even by the administrators themselves. Perhaps this begins to offer a broader perspective.

I close with a quote that for me encapsulates what drives good educators in the north, those who make their hon es for many years in the communities where they teach, and those who move on after a :ew years of committed community service. I have had the privilege of knowing both:

> It's the action, not the fruit of the action, that's important. You have to do the right thing. It may not be in your power, may not be in your time, that there'll be any fruit. But that doesn't mean you stop doing the right thing. You may never know what results come from your action. But if you do nothing, there will be no result. (M. Gandhi)

IMPLICATIONS

Implications to Further Research

This exploratory study has provided a picture of the roles of educational leaders in the N.W.T. as seen through the told experiences of seven principals in high school settings. I think that additional descriptive studies of other innovative principals would provide a rich source of alternatives that would further understanding of principals' roles. This study concentrated to a large extent on their concerns with implementing the senior secondary school programming and other recent legislation impacting high school programs in particular.

Any further research on Northern education would be highly worthwhile. We need more shared stories, to learn what is being done in all parts of the territories. So little has been written to date. Given the variety of contexts across the north, there is much to be learned and shared. One could say that there is vast potential for diamonds to be mined in the northern fields of education; distanced, perhaps somewhat elusive, but valuable!

Researching students' views on their northern education is worth pursuing. Some ideas expressed at the recent Students' Forum (April 1996) showed remarkable insight as well as a sense of urgency for accountability of educators.

A comparative study of the early curriculum of the green and red books with the *Strategy to 2010* vision document and the recent emphasis in the Education Act would offer a fascinating study on change over a period of time.

First-language instruction in the territorial schools and its successes/failures offers another pertinent topic for research over time. Give current mandates, it is worth learning from past endeavours before shaping new school programming directives.

The concept of co-principalling as it has been attempted in the Eastern Arctic should be investigated for its values in mentorship and Professional Development for

educational administrators, as well as a means of encouraging aboriginal leadership and enabling more continuity of leadership in community schools.

Tracking the impact of the Principals' Certification Program since its introduction through OISE in the mid-80s is worthwhile. The changed directions in the program since cutting ties with OISE, and in northern education itself, are worth exploring. It would be interesting to learn how the program has impacted the direction of the principalship and educational leadership in the north, and what directions it needs to consider towards 2010.

The impact of the inclusive schooling policies, and the availability of support and funding to action the policy should be examined. There appear to be large concerns and fuzzy areas around the whole question of providing funding and support; although philosophically supported by principals, most find the mandate impossible to actuate as there appears to be a lack of support dollars and personnel for the many high needs identified today.

Finally, a study of women in administration is highly relevant in the north where more women are taking leadership roles in schools. This study suggests that some are developing highly collaborative cultures between their school and community. Dr Shantz (1993) contends that "schools of today and the future need to have collaborative cultures - and the accumulating evidence indicates that women are more adept at fostering collaboration" (Shantz, 1993, p. 3). Shabbits (1993) pursues a similar view, noting that "Women describe themselves as being in the middle of things rather than at the top, reaching out and not down," and that " nurturing, cooperating, seeing things in connections, and not getting hung up on protocol [are] exactly the traits that are required to be a successful contemporary principal" (pp. 22, 23).

Implications to Educational Practice

This study has provided a positive learning for both the researcher and the respondents. The collaborative conversations that evolved over several hours with every principal, as well as the writings on school celebrations and struggles that were part of the methodology of the study, enabled principals to actively reflect on their practice, if even for a short period of time.

The Principals' Conference in April afforded a similar process with colleagues. As a "first," this conference should be continued next year, a joint effort between Divisional Boards and the Department. The opportunity to discuss common issues and learn from one another was valued by many of the principals; sharing ideas between principals and department personnel was worthwhile; providing a forum to express school frustrations was also healthy for a group of people who, back in their own schools, tend to suffer the

professional isolation that comes as part of their turf. One principal felt that, "We need to take responsibility too and say that we need to keep pursuing this and helping it happen, and stay connected with one another . . . a kind of common grounding and understanding and a supportive network."

Important to the practice of administration is the notion that one grows into one's role as administrator, that it's not a job one walks into and does, and then leaves. It is more of a career, a profession, a position that one becomes more skilled at through practice and through refection, given experiences and support. One can learn leadership from experts, those more experienced and hence, skilled, and who can be instrumental in another's growth. Mentorships can be mutually beneficial as principal-mentors can also benefit from revisiting past actions and rethinking their decisions in discussion with others. The reflective process can be valuable for both parties.

Bolman and Deal (1994) stated that leadership is learned mainly from experience, and from being placed in proximity to exemplary leaders (p. 88). Yearly workshops for administrators, courses such as the Principals' Certification Program, and individual mentorships, when they can be found, can be critically important to nurturing novice and experienced administrators. Skilling comes through practice and reflection (otherwise known as "praxis", Foster, 1978) and is key to creating opportunities for principals to share knowledge and problems that confound them. Furthermore, "self-reflection can be enhanced by getting feedback from others" (Bolman & Deal, 1994, p. 89). Collegial support systems can provide opportunities for shared knowledge and would also reduce the sense of isolation that goes with most principalships in the north. Some examples include networking on North of 60, creating monthly newsletters, developing an Administration Specialist Council through the N.W.T.T.A., getting on the web pages, and sharing the latest technology and computer applications that fundamentally change how students learn and programs can be delivered.

Ackerman et al. (1996) noted that every principal works in a relatively unique environment, that a principal's greatest growth "will result from regular and honest conversation with others interested in school leadership and in collaboration on [their] joint search for better strategies," and that "no other learning medium has matched the colleague-critic conversation for deepening our understanding of leadership and our capacities to lead in our own schools" (p. 9). Given the complexity of the role and the amount of new information coming at schools, principals need to be updated regularly.

"The role is evolving and various societal forces are requiring that principals obtain new knowledge and new skills," and given the diversity of administrative decision-making

today, "activities needed to update professional knowledge and skills [must] be continually provided" (Holdaway & Ratsoy, 1991, p. 7).

The Principals' Certification Program in the past has served as a valuable form of principal inservice to northern issues. I encourage its continuing emphasis on reflective journalling and building of collegial supports and networks:

> Designing new leadership development programs will require an emphasis on informal learning from experience, reflection, and dialogue with other leaders. . . . We need to rethink and restructure school systems to encourage the kind of leadership that can help transform schools from past practices or patterns to those that will be needed to shape a successful future. (Bolman & Deal, 1994, p. 95)

The "informal learning from experience, reflection, and dialogue with other leaders" was at work at the Principals' Conference in the Western Arctic, where several principals later expressed a desire to work together again. It was valuable to be so informed by others' practice, and to learn from others how recent mandates are being interpreted in diverse community situations. It offered a rare opportunity to express frustrations of overwork and solicit support:

> There's almost an assumed expectation that principals will sacrifice their personal circumstance to make sure things work. Because even in that admin time, the nature of the job is so frenetic and chaotic, that the time to sit down and 'let me write a quality document' just doesn't happen (laughter). Boards dictate admin time, usually on the minimal end. What kind of support or nurturing is a principal going to get? It is a key area about leadership that needs to be addressed and acknowledged and supported.

It is essential that leaders come together, "leaders of leaders" in Northern circumstances where administrators are essentially learning "as they go" the best way to deliver educational mandates in the community.

Although time for reflection is a scarce commodity for principals, all recognize its importance in terms of regaining valuable perspective. School leadership is a massive undertaking that requires one to step away from time to time and meet "the spirit that one takes back," refreshed and inspired. The village needs also to nurture its principals.

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APPENDIX A: Research License and Consent Form

Nunavut Research Institute / Nunavummi Qaujisaqtulirijikkut
Box 160, Iqaluit, NT X0A 0H0 phone:(819) 979-4108 fax:(819) 979-491 e-mail: stroke@inukshuk.gov.nt.ca

SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH LICENCE

LICENCE # 0500196N

ISSUED TO: Anne-Mieke Cameron
11135-45th Avenue
Edmonton, Alberta
T6H 0C8
(403) 438-1245

TEAM MEMBERS: none

AFFILIATION: University of Alberta

TITLE: The Changing Roles of Principals in the Northwest Territories

OBJECTIVES OF RESEARCH:

To learn more about how principals in the NWT perceive and act out their roles as educational leaders, and to identify patterns and themes that have emerged on the horizons of educational change in the North.

DATA COLLECTION IN THE NWT:
DATES: February 14, 1996 - September 30, 1996
LOCATION: Baffin and Keewatin Regions

Scientific Research Licence 0500196N expires on December 31, 1996
Issued at Iqaluit, NT on 14 February, 1996

Bruce Rigby
Science Advisor

Research License #2

SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH LICENCE

Licence # 128..

File # 12 410 503

March 25, 1996

ISSUED BY: **Aurora Research Institute - Aurora College**
Inuvik, Northwest Territories

ISSUED TO: Ms Anne-Mieke Cameron
11135 45th Ave.
Edmonton, AB T6H 0C8
403-438-1245

ON: 25 March, 1996

TEAM MEMBERS: self

AFFILIATION: University of Alberta

FUNDING: N/A

TITLE: The Changing Roles of Principals in the Northwest Territories

OBJECTIVES OF RESEARCH:
To learn more about how principals in the Northwest Territories perceive and act out their roles as educational leaders. Recent movement towards the decentralization of and expanded community involvement in northern education place new responsibilities on the principal. The research will provide greater understanding of the kinds of leadership style and character of successful, currently practicing, northern principals.

DATA COLLECTION IN THE WESTERN NWT:
DATE(S): Feb. 1st - Sept. 31, 1996
LOCATION: Sahtu, South Slave, Inuvik, North Slave

Licence# 12837 expires on December 31, 1996.
Issued at the Town of Inuvik on 25/03/96

David G. Malcolm, Ph.D.
Science Advisor

Consent Form: Signed by Informant

Project Title: *"The Roles of School Principals in the N.W.T."*

Description of Project to be given to informant Prior to Interview:

As per telephone conversation and follow-up letter of introduction.

Researcher's Name, Address and Telephone/FAX

A.M. Cameron
11135-48 Ave.
Edmonton Alberta T6H OC8
Ph/FAX (403) 438-1245

To Be Signed by the Informant:

I have been fully informed of the objectives of the project being conducted by A.M. Cameron. I understand these objectives and consent to bein interviewed for the project. I understandthat steps will be taken to ensure that this interview will remain confidential unless I consent to being identified. I also understand that, if I wish to withdraw from this study, I may do so without any repercussions. Any and all data that I provide may be withdrawn at my request.

PART I: Consent to be interviewed

Name (please print):

Signature:

Date:

PART TWO: Consent for Interview to be audio-taped, Video-taped, or photographed (indicate form of documentation)

Name (please print):

Signature:

Date:

Conditions for release of recorded information:

APPENDIX B: Introductory Letter

January 29, 1996

TO: *

FR: Anne-Mieke Cameron
11135-48 Ave.
Edmonton, AB T6H OC8

RE: Participation in Proposed Research

Greetings *!

It was good to talk to you today, and hear your enthusiasm for my research study. I feel a strong commitment to doing something that is significant to Northern education, "bringing something back home", so to speak. I am very glad that you have agreed to participate, for two main reasons. You will bring wonderful insight to the question, for one, and we will be able to work together, for another!

Through my participation in the P.C.P., Phases I and II, in Yellowknife and Rankin Inlet over the past two years, I have become more keenly aware of the responsibilities that are shouldered by Principals across the Territories. Although this study will require your time, I hope that you will see it as a worthwhile endeavour and an opportunity to contribute meaningfully to the topic of the challenges of educational leadership in the North.

To reiterate the main points of our telephone discussion:

1) Purpose of the Study: To my knowledge, there has been no research done related to educational leadership in N.W.T. schools. My intention is to gain a greater understanding of the kinds of leadership style and character of successful, currently practicing northern principals, and to identify patterns and themes that have emerged on the horizons of educational change in the North.

2) Benefits of this Study: Findings of this study will reflect understandings that come from northern principals. They will offer insights to educators in the North, and may bring greater awareness of and appreciation for the challenges facing northern principals for other readers as well. For the participants, it is hoped that the process will provide an opportunity for personal reflection as well as meaningful dialogue about their practice as principals.

3) Research Methodology: The main data-gathering strategies will be based on informal interviews and document analysis, and the process will take place over a number of months as materials are sent back and forth for clarification and further input. Methods of data collection may vary with my proximity to the school and the comfort of the principal in using various means of communicating ideas. Together, we will attempt to find the best way possible to conduct interviews and share information.

I expect that most interviews will be completed via telephone; for some principals, interviews will be done while they are in Edmonton or Yellowknife on other business; others may agree to tape record their responses to questions and send them in to me for transcription; and yet others will communicate via Internet. All responses will be transcribed, and returned for further clarification, feedback, and follow-up discussion.

Less "conventional" methods for completing interviews may have to be invented along the way for the process to be as thorough and satisfying as possible.

4) Procedures for Collection and Retention of Data: If the Principal agrees to participate in this study, he/she will be encouraged to send any documents that will help me to gain a better understanding of the school and community: i.e. school handbook, yearbook, newsletters, school-community brochures, staff memos and minutes, Dep't of Ed

documents, and any other materials the principal may wish to share with me for the purpose of my orientation and understanding of his/her particular school experience. These documents will be retained for future referral.

5) Approximate Time-lines: Information-gathering and interviewing will take time. The process will require commitment by both the researcher and the respondent; costs (telephone calls, tapes) will be absorbed by the researcher. Respondents will receive transcripts of their interviews for verification and be given the opportunity to correct and enhance them.

Principals who agree to participating in this study will receive a follow-up letter that confirms the information discussed in the initial telephone contact. The letter will also pose two questions to which the principals are asked to respond, either in writing, or on tape, or by telephone or Internet. Written responses may be faxed. All responses will be transcribed, and returned for further clarification, feedback, and follow-up discussion.This initial response to two questions will form the basis of the interview portion of the study.

I will make the process as time-efficient as possible given the circumstances of distance.

6. Right to opt out:

Participants have the right to opt out of the study at any time. For those who follow through, copies of the executive summary of the study will be available.

7. Anonymity and Confidentiality:

All research will be carried out in a highly integrous and sensitive manner, with the intention to present as truthful and clear a picture of northern principals as is possible, given the information gleaned through a series of interactions with respondents.

It may be difficult to ensure anonymity while interviewing a select number of principals in a relatively underpopulated area. However, I will ensure the confidentiality of names of principals, students and community members by using pseudonyms. Principals will be given opportunities to look over drafts prior to publication and will participate in assuring confidentiality. I expect that this will not be a problem with the principals selected, as their stories will reflect successes and initiatives that they will feel pride in sharing.

8) Contact Numbers: For further clarification, you may contact me or my advisor at:

RESEARCHER: Anne-Mieke Cameron
Ph/FAX (403) 438-1245

ADVISOR: Dr Margaret Haughey, University of Alberta
Ed. Admin. and Policy Studies
Ph: (403) 492-7609 FAX: (403) 492-2024

9) Agreement to Participate: I am pleased that you have agreed to participate in the study. It will require time and commitment from us both, but I expect that the results will be well worth the effort! Having read this letter, if your answer is still "Yes," please return your signed consent form which confirms that you are familiar with the contents of this letter, understand the purpose of this study and its procedures, and will be a participant.

* Enclosed are the two questions that will begin our dialogue. There are no limitations on length... only that it be as complete as possible. Give me an approximate timeline that is realistic for you. If you would also send me documentation from your school as described in #4, I can begin my formal orientation of * School.

If you are going to be in Edmonton, give me dates, and we'll set up a meeting time for our interview. Dinner will be on me!

Anxious to begin, I hope to hear from you soon!

Anne-Mieke Cameron

APPENDIX C: The Two Opening Questions

Beginning our Conversation

Please respond to each of these questions with as much detail as you can. I am interested in the story, not the grammar or essay format! You could write your story, or speak it into an audio tape, if that is easier. I will have it transcribed and will send you back a copy of your words. I would like you to talk about what is important in your particular context. This is why detail is essential, and why there is no such thing as too much detail!

1. Describe for me one or two happenings from this year that you, as principal, consider to be a highlight, an example of success or "celebration", and give your reasons.

2. Where do you see your energies going? Describe for me some issues or concerns that you, as principal, are grappling with in your school this year, and talk about them. Include specific examples.

Thank you for completing this portion of the study.
The next step will be our interview!

Anne-Mieke Cameron

APPENDIX D: Sample of interview questions generated from response to the two opening questions

Interview with Principal A Phone: * March 17, 1996

* Determine time for the interview. This is being taped, and a transcript will be sent out. We can revisit some of the points raised, again later. There will be four sections: Background information, about the community, the school, and yourself; the changes over the past 5 years; the celebrations; and the issues.

1. Background: * School is a K-11 school of 145 students? Some background questions first:
   a) 8 Classes, K, 1-6, and 10-11 Explain?
   b) Number of students K-6? 7-9? 10-12?
   c) Number of Staff
   d) Support staff?

High School Programs: Grade 10 since '93-94? Grade 11?
   d) Courses offered?
   e) Any grade 12 Exams being written yet? When expected?

The Community: Located within the treeline
   f) Population?
   g) Number of Dene? Slavey? G'wichin? Non-aboriginal?
   h) What is its primary resource-base? Are people employed? Is there work?

2. Please tell me a little about yourself: How long in the North? Where have you taught, # of years as principal here?
   * Do you teach as well? (How much, what?)

3. In the years at * School, you've seen many changes and improvements . What was it like when you first came and how has it changed and improved?
   B) How is your school changing this year? What did you want to change, how did you decide, who did you work with, what were the results?

4. Describe for me "a day in the life of a principal at *?" How do you start your day? Any routines you try to follow? How does your school run?

5. The 4-week healing sessions you described for high school students:
   a) How did the idea begin? What needs?
   b) You had good response from students. What exactly were the strict guidelines for attendance and tardiness?
   c) The second camp this spring; there are only 13 remaining high school students. What happened to the others? What will session 2 be about?
   d) You mention a lot of "stuff" that kids have to work through, and that you were at first apprehensive to bring it to the community. Can you explain the "apprehension" and the "stuff" ?
   e) What was the overall response from parents? the community?
   f) How did you timetable it, and what kinds of credits did kids get?

6. Your new school planning: Will you be building from scratch? When will it open?
   a) Who were the "stakeholders" that sat on the steering committee? What did they do?
   b) Were the architects from the north? Were they comfortable talking to kids?
   c) What kinds of things were important to the students? the parents/community?
   d) How was staff involved in this? The CEC?
   e) What will this school look like in terms of its programs? Operations?

f)Technology: You have been working on the introduction of CTS into your H.S. program. Would you tell me more? Who works on this with you?

g) What's ahead in terms of your work in this?

7. Your school will be part of a community learning centre that includes a day care or play school at one end, and a college at the other. This fits into the themes of Strategy to 2010. Are you one of the "pilot schools" in this initiative? What new issues are you dealing with as a result of this mandate from ECE?

8. Bringing High School programs to the community has been a gradual process. Please give me an idea of the problems that came with implementing this. How did you begin?

a) I read about the 5 that have passed all their classes and were treated to lunch. Are more students succeeding at 10-level courses?

b) is there a pre-apprenticeship pgm at the Jr High; does it involve the community?

b) How has bringing high school into your building impacted your school, its culture?

c) How do you integrate Dene Kede with high school programs? Is community involved?

d) Has this changed your staff? Your job?

9. You mention that your staff works closely in discussing how to provide a better environment and education for all your students.

a) Is staff involved in a lot of extra-curricular activity through the school? You?

b) How do they feel about these claims on their time? Do community teachers generally have a high profile?

c) How would you describe a successful teacher in your school?

10. Issues and Concerns: Discipline commonly deprives principals of time they want to spend in other areas!

a) What kind of discipline problems? Are you encountering more behavioral and learning problems? If so, why?

b) What is the Second Step Program you use?

c) Are you the only one to handle the discipline?

d) How do staff see this problem?

e) Do many parents see school as a babysitting role? Is there headway? Are there other strategies you are considering?

11. Why is there a lack of commitment to school?

b) How long has the CEC been so strongly involved in student achievement, homework, and staying at Ft Providence rather than being shipped to a residence in Ft Simpson. (still open?)

c) Is "educating the parents" a large part of your job as well??

12. Dene Kede Culture camps and Slavey Classes:

a) How does it work re: integration with subject areas; at all levels?

b) The organizing and funding of it: how is it done?

c) How is the community involved in this?

d) Is it popular with kids? staff? community?

13. Can we talk about how you see your role as principal? I know that you are described as very student-centered, on the move within the school and community. How would you describe your role, the role of the principal in the North, given your context? Has it changed?

a) Are there support systems that accommodate the changing emphasis to community learning and inclusionary schooling? What about professional growth for the principal?

b) How do you keep balance in your life? You mention taking your writing home.

14. Thank you. I will sen .nscript; hopefully I'll get up in April for Principals' Workshop.

* Would you send me materials
  - Healing sessions agenda, program, presenter, etc.
  - CTS initiatives;
  - students' three schemes for the steering comittee

SAMPLE FOLL0W-UP INTERVIEW Principal B May 19, 1996

* Any changes to text of transcript? Add comments and mail back to me.

1. The High School Principal's Conference:
   a) Your reactions?
   b) Ideas it highlighted for you?

2. PCP '96
   a) You'll be going? Any new to; nasis or assigned questions?
   b) Your thoughts on the PCP?

3. Has anyting new or interesting developed since we last talked?

4. What are some indicators that you're doing well this year?

5. What still lays ahead?
   a) May reporting period; Graduation
   b) CTS next year (labour intensivere: course prep & monitoring of students)
   c) Staff turnover (you had 5 new hires last year. Orientation plans?)
   d) How will you end your school year or start the next?

6. You mentioned being a Grade Extensions Coordinator 2 years ago. What was that about? Process?

8. Please send me some documentation; intro piece for CTS module quoted p. 23.

APPENDIX E: Sample of Ongoing Correspondence

Fax Transmission Cover Sheet

Good Morning *!

Thank you for your time last night... we have begun our journey, and it promises to be a rewarding one, hopefully for us both!! I will mail out a transcript of our telephone interview to your school next week.

In thinking back over the richness of our conversation, I am reminded of Robert Greenleaf's words: "As I reflect on the many vexing problems and the stresses of our times that complicate their solutions, this simple scene from long ago comes vividly to mind. And I draw the obvious moral: No matter how difficult the challenge or how impossible or hopeless the task may seem, if you are reasonably sure of your course, just keep on going".

The feelings that stay with me are many... caring, commitment, challenge... and of course, hope! Again, from Greenleaf, "But if one is servant, either leader or follower, one is always searching, listening, expecting a better wheel for these times is in the making. It may emerge any day. Any one of us may find out from personal experience. I am hopeful."

Have a wonderful and replenishing holiday!

Mieke

F a x Cover Sheet

Hello *!

Just received your FAX. Sorry to hear you had so much illness on Staff, but this is the time of year... Will your crew be going anywhere "south" for a Teachers' Convention?

I wonder if you ever received my fax, sent last Monday morning to your school. I may have had the wrong number. In any case, I will send the letter and consent form, which needs your signature, again.

Please do not rush yourself about doing the main two questions; it sounds like you need a breather for a day or two, after the week you've put in!

I am so happy that you are "in" on this study. It will be wonderful to work with you. If you do come out at Spring break, I hope there will be time for us to do our interview. It will be so much more comfortable to do it in person, than over long distance. But if that is not possible, we will work out another time!

Have a good week...

Fax Transmission Cover Sheet

May 3, 1996

Hello *!

I received your package through Buffalo Air today. Thank you for sending the materials so promptly. I will be going through them this weekend.

I may have trouble getting into RSG for the Instructional Plan materials; our RSG is too old (4.5) and won't open the file, Les tells me. For now, don't worry. There is enough other material to go through for the time being. The conference materials will be interesting for me, and I look forward to receiving them, although the actual principals' stories (like yours) are the meat of my research, and will take a great deal of my time in the next while.

The Ken Dryden book looks compelling, and I yearn to read it, but for now, there are other interviews to transcribe and one more to plan. I suppose you'd have time this weekend for Sergiovanni if I sent him up?? Ha!

I enjoyed the High School Conference and my time in Yellowknife thoroughly, and know that somehow, I will have to rest up before heading back for next year's work. Meanwhile, Intersession begins on Tuesday.

I trust that your trip south was interesting and proved useful. I will be in touch in a few weeks' time. If you have anything you wish to correct from, or add to, our last conversation, jot down some notes on the second transcript, or elsewhere, and send back to me when you find time.

May Friday slide gently into a peaceful weekend for you and yours!

Mieke Cameron

F a x Transmission Cover Sheet

June 14, 1996

Dear *,

I received your package today! One cheer for Canada Post! If you find that piece on Educational Leadership and the Magician, it may be best to fax it to me, given the time it takes for mail to get here. Or of course, bring it to Yellowknife when you go there. I would appreciate it!

My course work finally over, I am trying to get my head into the thesis work. I completed all follow-up interviews by May 20. It's been an ambitious undertaking. Multiply our conversations and communications times seven, plus completing my course work and well, suffice to say, I too was busy! Through the interviews I have gained a far better perspective on what principals have to deal with across the north. Each of the stories are unique, yet all reflect common northern realities. How the writing will actually come off is yet to be seen, as I am currently scouring through hundreds of pages of interview transcript. I will try to complete as much of it as I can before heading back north, knowing the work that awaits me.

You may have heard by now that I have accepted a new professional challenge. For the next two years I will be working with the Department of Education, Culture and Employment in Helen Balanoff's position as Director of Early Childhood and School Services. From some of our conversations, I know there is a very large task ahead. It certainly know it cannot be done alone! In a sense, this year's work led me to applying for the position when I was told about it, knowing some of the issues, and knowing that there are people like yourself who have strong concerns and wishes for our students. I hope to be able to make a difference there, given that people like you will talk to me, time and again.

A strange letter to write, because I am still very much in research mode, and will not take on the new job until the end of August. I know I would not have considered moving from my loved Sir John if it hadn't been for this journey in research with people like you. I want to thank you again for your part in the research, and hope to do it justice.

As you know, I will be in Yellowknife June 26-July 5, and out to PCP for a day or so. Can we plan to get together for a few hours? I would like to share the writings that are related to your interviews and just talk generally.

Let me know what works for you,

Mieke Cameron

F a x Transmission Cover Sheet

June 19/96

Hello *!

RE: Tying up Loose ends.

The last time I called you at school, you were out at a 2-day workshop on implementation of *Inuuqatigiit.* How did that go and were there new thoughts as a result of that? I wondered if you would be willing to discuss that with me tonight for a short time... I know you must be busy getting ready to leave, but if it is at all possible, I'd appreciate 15 minutes of your time.

If you can make the time, please tell me when and where to call.

Thanks *.

Mieke