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Regulation of Vocational Education and Training Fields in Northern Canada

by

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Abstract

Regulation of Vocational Education and Training Fields in Northern Canada

This dissertation examines vocational education and training (VET) partnership programs designed to increase aboriginal participation in the skilled trades. Pre-apprenticeship training programs were examined in two regions: the Beaufort Delta of the Northwest Territories (NWT) and the Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo located in north eastern Alberta. Program sponsorship varied: the territorial program was federally-funded, while the provincial program was primarily funded by a mine. Drawing from a multiple case site methodology, both programs were examined over the course of a year when participants were in class (fall, 2010) and afterwards (spring 2011) when programs had ended. During both phases of the research interviews with program participants (n = 20) and program partners (n = 24) were conducted. The theoretical framework developed in this inquiry nests social theories of Pierre Bourdieu within late capitalism. Bourdieu's concept of the field, capital, and habitus respectively elucidate the social relations, asset structures, and dispositions of program partners and participants. Findings indicate that training partnerships are brokered on contested fields involving asymmetrical power relations occurring between different partners. VET programs that are demand-driven and have a committed employment partner are more likely to lead to successful learning-to-work transitions than programs where goals and commitments are less clearly defined. Socialisation of program participants is impacted by the economic relationship characterising each region.

While there have been ample studies conducted in northern Canada concerning the socioeconomic impacts of resource extractive economic developments, there remains a dearth of research examining education, training, and employment initiatives that specifically target aboriginal people. This research will be of particular use to policy makers who are interested in improving training policy and practice. The research also provides insight into the shifting nature of aboriginal-industry-state relations occurring within a postFordist regime of capital accumulation. Recommendations include improving governance structures to over-see partnership programs, as well as ensuring stable and predictable funding regimes are in place.

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List of Acronyms

ABE	Adult Basic Education
ACFN	Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation
AFN	Assembly of First Nations
AFS	Aboriginal Futures Society
AHRDA	Aboriginal Human Resource Development Agreement
APG	Aboriginal Pipeline Group
APCA	All Parties Core Agreement
ARI	Aurora Research Institute
ASEP	Aboriginal Skills and Employment Partnership
ASETS	Aboriginal Skills Employment Strategy
ATC	Athabasca Tribal Council
BD	Beaufort Delta
BDEC	Beaufort Delta Educational Council
BIPS	Building Inuvialuit Potential Society
C/BAR	Circumpolar/Boreal Alberta Research
CBC	Conference Board of Canada
CME	Coordinated Market Economy
GNWT	Government of the Northwest Territories
GoA	Government of Alberta
GoC	Government of Canada
GTC	Gwich’in Tribal Council
HRSDC	Human Resources Skills Development Canada
IBA	Impact Benefit Agreements
IMSR	Indigenous Mode of Social Regulation
IRC	Inuvialuit Regional Corporation
LAC	Local Apprenticeship Committee
LDC	Less Developed Country
LME	Labour Market Economy
LPA	Labour Pool Analysis
LTW	Learning-to-Work Transition
MSR	Mode of Social Regulation
MCFN	Mikisew Cree First Nation
NSTP	Northern Scientific Training Program
NWT	Northwest Territories
PAC	Provincial Apprenticeship Committee
PAT	Provincial Achievement Test
PSSSP	Post-Secondary Student Support Program
RMWB	Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo
TAP	Trades Access Program
TDA	Training Delivery Agent
TEE	Trades Entrance Exam
VET	Vocational Education and Training
WBML	Wood Buffalo Métis Locals
WBPAT	Wood Buffalo Partners and Training

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Purpose

The purpose of this dissertation is to examine the effects of vocational education[1] and training (VET) partnership programs on communities in northern Canada. My interest in conducting this research is in part motivated by both my personal and professional experiences. Having spent most of my life in northern Canada and starting my career as a school teacher there, I returned to university to study the sociology of northern education by enrolling in a Master's of Education program in the Department of Educational Policy Studies at the University of Alberta in 2003.

My Master's thesis examined the manner by which adult education in the NWT has positioned itself with respect to the pressure of future and on-going non-renewable resource extraction developments (commonly referred to as megaprojects). Initially what captured my interest were federal government training programs specifically targeting aboriginal[2] groups, and I wanted to know more about the political, social, and economic implications of these policies and how they were impacting northern communities. The inquiry primarily gathered perceptions of those given authority and responsibility for developing policy on behalf of northerners. Interviews were conducted during the summer of 2005 and included policy planners at Aurora College and other stakeholders involved in northern development, adult education, and training.

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[1] A useful definition of vocational education and training is "the development and application of knowledge and skills for middle level occupations needed by society from time to time" (Moodie, 2002, p. 260).

[2] The term aboriginal is used in Canada to collectively refer to three separate indigenous groups: First Nations, Métis, and Inuit. As the term is an adjective it is not capitalised in this dissertation, other than when a direct quote has been used where the author has capitalised it.

A comparison of programs offered at the college indicates trades-related programming has significantly increased in the past decade in response to potential (Mackenzie Gas Project) and on-going (diamond mining) megaprojects. These developments are occurring in regions that have settled land claims and are in the process of implementing aboriginal self-governance agreements, which has significantly shifted the balance of power in the territory. Private agreements involving aboriginal governments and industry, along with federal government programs and funding have resulted in the creation of VET partnerships that are designed to increase aboriginal skilled labour in specific industries. Northern VET programs are brokered between various levels of governments, training delivery agents, and industry.

During the Master's research it became evident that contradictions and tensions existed with respect to partnership training programs, and that a more nuanced analysis was required to fully understand the impacts these programs were having on communities. For instance, some respondents speculated that the establishment of megaprojects like diamond mining or oil and gas development motivates students to get further education, while others stated the opposite. A non-college respondent expressed concerns regarding the kinds of career counselling aboriginal youth in small communities were receiving, as it was perceived that there was an over-emphasis in promoting employment associated with megaprojects. The research also indicated the folly of attempting to match learning to jobs in future megaprojects which have yet to come on stream. In the end, I was left with more questions than answers concerning the efficacy of aboriginal VET programs to achieve their stated objectives, as well as the implications of these programs in a post-land claims economy.

Research Description

This dissertation explores the relationship between resource development, governance, and educational policy by examining specific pre-apprenticeship VET partnership programs designed to transition aboriginal people into employment in the trades. Using a comparative case site analysis, VET partnerships occurring in two northern regions were examined: the Beaufort Delta of the Northwest Territories (NWT) and the Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo (RMWB) located in north-eastern Alberta (see Appendices A, B, & C). By examining two regions rather than one, a broader understanding of the research inquiry was achieved.

The central thesis of this dissertation is that northern aboriginal VET partnership programs reflect globalising transitions toward a “postFordist” restructuring of labour. While the antecedents of struggle occurring between different partner groups originate from colonial-capitalist relations that continue to configure orientations and dispositions of key partners, interests between aboriginal groups, the state, and industry increasingly reflect a shift towards a system of localised alliances characterising late capitalism. These transitions have resulted in an ad hoc, market approach to education and training, where the roles, responsibilities, program outcomes, and measures of success remain poorly defined and communicated. The challenge of this dissertation is to empirically gather evidence in a manner capable of informing transitions accompanying VET partnership programs, with the underlying assumption that policy approaches to VET and the institutional political and economic contexts shape affordances for learning.

Drawing from the “extended case method” (Burawoy, 1991, 1998, 2009), I ground the research to a tangible event – VET programs. The inquiry is *extended* over a particular period of time by following learning-to-work (LTW) transitions of students in these programs. VET participants were followed over the course of a year, during which time I was able to gather perceptions while participants were attending the in-class portion of training (fall 2010) and then later on once they had completed their training (spring 2011). These transitional junctures also enabled me to interview program partners, key stakeholders, and experts, gain access to policy and program documents, and make observations of the programs while they were in operation.

While both programs were designed to upgrade skills for the purpose of entering the trades, the nature of the programs differed. The Wood Buffalo program was driven by the interests of a large bitumen[3] mine employer who was also the primary program sponsor. The mine training program ran for three years (2009 – 2012) and involved 3 cohorts of students – one cohort for each year the program was in operation; students in the second cohort were interviewed. The

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[3] Unlike the commonplace term, oil sands, bitumen is a more accurate term and is used-interchangeably with tar sands to describe the tar-like deposits located in northeastern Alberta.

Beaufort Delta program was sponsored and facilitated by the federal government's Human Resources Skills Development Canada (HRSDC) Aboriginal Skills Employment Program (ASEP). As a national program, ASEP required sponsored regions to solicit support and commitment from large employers (through matching in-kind contributions) before receiving federal government funding. Key employment partners in the Beaufort Delta included both construction and transportation sectors of the local economy. In this case, students participating in both an introductory carpentry preparation program and trades access program were interviewed.

By considering VET programs as imbricated with the wider political economy, the methodological strategy I develop nests synchronic social relations (that is, the perspectives of program partners and students) within a diachronic (i.e. historical) postFordist framework of capital and labour. Sociological theories developed by Pierre Bourdieu as well as regulation theory are drawn upon to conceptualise VET partnerships as constituting social relations regulated on localised "fields" where the key "players" are the state, aboriginal governments, and industry. Partnerships are also conceptualised as forming part of a local-global dialectic whereby global capitalism is contingently mediated by a multiplicity of social relations occurring at the local level. The social topography of the VET field is therefore considered to constitute the intersection of local extraeconomic social relations embedded within a larger overarching periodization of capital and labour. By examining two different VET partnerships occurring in regions where megaproject developments have significantly influenced training, the research considers how different locations and economies impact both the provision for partnerships as well as the learning-to-work transitions of participants.

Background

Northern training partnerships

Communities in northern Canada are geographically remote, sparsely populated, and both ethnically and culturally diverse. Economically, the North is characterized by sporadic megaproject developments that are principally buffered by government social welfare intervention. These “boom and bust” episodic incursions hamper efforts to develop a consistent and predictable approach to training (Abele, 2006). The labour market is also characterized as being socially, ethnically, and spatially stratified, with aboriginal people tending to work seasonal labouring jobs, and live in smaller outlying communities, while most non-aboriginal people occupy higher paying and professional positions in larger regional centers.

While larger regional centers benefit from better delivery of services and enjoy a higher standard of living, smaller communities face numerous challenges, including higher costs of living, high unemployment, low levels of education, lack of housing, social problems, and lack of an economic base. Smaller communities also face a “brain drain” of talent; when young people relocate to larger centers to gain further education and training, they often do not return home as the cost of living is cheaper and the job opportunities and benefits are better elsewhere. Added to pressures of smaller communities to retain a skilled workforce is a perception that the quality of schooling and education in larger centers is of a higher standard and quality. Rather than facing these social challenges alone, northern regions have entered into partnerships with other governments and industry to develop training programs.

As Taylor, McGray, and Watt-Malcolm (2007) note, “The concept of partnership constitutes a key part of policies related to vocational education and training (VET) in most OECD countries” (p. 379). These public-private education business partnerships are premised on human capital theory and try to address the problem of a mismatch between skills and jobs (Livingstone, 1999; 2009; Wotherspoon, 2009). Differences in the kinds of partnerships, and the ways in which they are implemented, are based on how labour markets have been historically structured, and whether or not programs are oriented towards addressing supply- or demand-side needs (Billett, 2000; Billett & Seddon, 2007; Billett, Ovens, Clemons, & Seddon, 2007; Toner, 2003). Embedded in partnerships are asymmetrical power relations driving training priorities. In North America VET partnerships are likely to be played out on uneven fields privileging employers (Taylor, 2009). They are also considered to be part of a larger strategy of neoliberal state retrenchment of social services and an attempt to reform welfare policies in favour of corporate economic development (Taylor, 2001; Wheelahan, 2010). Accordingly, VET partnerships raise questions concerning the role of the market in defining training needs as educational needs, and whether or not the kinds of partnerships implemented empower local communities by raising the level and quality of skilled labour as a cornerstone of self-determination.

Promotion of marketized approaches to education is also considered to erode democratic decision-making and civil engagement as there is no longer a separation of the economic sphere from the political sphere which is required in order to carve out a sphere of civil society as a requisite space for critical awareness and democratic engagement.[4]

Federal, provincial, and territorial governments have created a variety of VET partnerships as part of an economic development strategy designed to increase aboriginal participation in key sectors of the economy. These programs are especially prominent in remote northern regions containing significant deposits of natural resource wealth. Historically, agreements have been formed between the state, aboriginal groups, and industry. These agreements have been designed to ensure a stable and predictable business climate is maintained in order to attract investment to extract natural resources for profit. Stated benefits to these agreements often include education, training, and employment provisions for local communities.

Academics and national aboriginal organisations have presented mixed responses to VET partnerships, both in terms of program conception, design, and implementation, as well as outcomes. For instance, concerns have been raised by the Assembly of First Nations (AFN, 2007) that training programs lack an integrated policy framework. The AFN argues that partnerships must occur on a government-to-government basis, which the current federal training programs fail to do; tripartite agreements are also considered a means for the federal government to off-load its fiduciary responsibilities to the provinces. Similarly, Alison Taylor and colleagues found that the expanding role of industry in education and training in Wood Buffalo has resulted in inequities within and between communities in terms of funding and access, producing a “patchwork of programs that do not necessarily cohere” (Taylor, Friedel, & Edge, 2009, p. 19; see also Taylor & Friedel, 2011; Friedel & Taylor, 2011). Alternatively, others have argued that aboriginal-industry agreements may actually benefit some groups as they allow local development to proceed in a manner more conducive to indigenous models of economic development and self determination (Anderson, 1998; Helin, 2006; Slowey, 2008).

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[4] See Murphy (2001) for a succinct discussion on the relationship between civil society and adult education as theorized from the standpoint of Hegel, Marx, and Gramsci.

A second set of considerations impacting VET partnerships are learning-to-work (LTW) transitions. As a group aboriginal youth are considered “at risk.” Factors contributing to this classification include high rates of teen pregnancy, high rates of incarceration, high rates of residential and school mobility, high rates of suicide, and low educational attainment (Aman & Ungerleider, 2008; Chandler & Lalonde, 2008; Guimond & Cooke, 2008; Guimond & Robitaille, 2008; Richards, 2008).

While recognising the inter-connectedness of the aforementioned social problems, education and its relation to accessing the labour market is given particular attention. According to the 2006 Alberta Census, the percentage of people not holding a diploma in Alberta is 16% non-Aboriginal, 29% Métis, 46% First Nations living off reserve, and 67% living on reserve (cited from Taylor et al. 2009). Similar statistics are found across the North (Berger, 2006; Papillon, 2008; Vodden, 2001). These figures indicate both the diversity and degree of the problem concerning low educational attainment, as well as the significant barriers facing aboriginal youth. However, as Taylor et al. (2009) note, “It is clear that further documentation of ‘the problems’ facing Aboriginal youth in their school-to-work transitions is only useful if accompanied by greater discussion of historical and contemporary social, political, and economic relations among groups, acknowledgement of values, tensions and contradictions and frank discussion about institutional opportunities and constraints” (p. 19). The following two sections provide some local context to these considerations by presenting a brief overview of each case site chosen for the research. Aside from general demographic information, attention is paid to the restructuring of social relations that have emerged from the settlement of land claims.

The Beaufort Delta

The Beaufort Delta is home to 8 communities of non-aboriginal residents, western Arctic Inuit known as the Inuvialuit, and Gwich’in Dene. The total population of the region is comprised of 3,120 Inuvialuit, 2,500 Gwich’in and 1,520 non-aboriginal (Statistics Canada, 2008a). The majority of Métis live in the Slave Lake region of the NWT and are politically organized primarily through the NWT Métis Nation in Fort Smith, although Inuvik has a Métis local council. The largest regional center is Inuvik, where the majority of residents are non-aboriginal. Inuvik was built by the federal government in the 1950s in response to developing a base to support oil and gas development.

Beginning in the 1970s, the region has experienced intense and sporadic bursts of oil and gas development. These activities have spawned the settlement of modern day treaties known as comprehensive land claims. Geopolitically the settlement of comprehensive land claims divides the region into two territories: the Inuvialuit Settlement Region (ISR) (Appendix A) and the Gwich'in settlement area (Appendix B). Each region respectively contains six and four communities. The communities of Aklavik and Inuvik are resided by both Inuvialuit, Gwich'in, Métis and non-Aboriginal residents.

A summary of the two land claims helps to frame existing governance. Signed in 1984 with the federal government, the Inuvialuit Final Agreement (IFA) "extinguished Inuvialuit rights and interests in land in exchange for ownership of 91,000 km^2 of land, cash compensation of Can$170 million, preferential hunting rights, participation in resource management, subsurface mineral rights to a small area of land, and a provision for future self-government" (Nuttall, 2008, p.622). In comparison, the Gwich'in Comprehensive Claim Agreement, signed in 1992, gives "the Gwich'in ownership of 22,331 km^2 of traditional lands with subsurface mineral rights to one-third of that area. Other rights and benefits include Can$75 million, a share of Mackenzie Valley resource royalties, participation in the planning and management of land, water and resource use, and a federal commitment to negotiate self-government" (p. 622). Both claims also stipulate that economic development in the region must benefit land claims beneficiaries, including preferential contracts for local aboriginal-owned businesses linked to provision for education, training, and employment of beneficiaries.

At the time of the settlements the Gwich'in Tribal Council (GTC) and the Inuvialuit Regional Corporation (IRC) were formed and provide aboriginal representation on government decision-making boards to ensure land owned by the Inuvialuit and Gwich'in is protected for beneficiaries, and used in a way that benefits them. Both governments work together to implement self government through the Beaufort Delta Agreement in Principle which was signed in 2001 with both the federal and territorial governments. This process calls for further devolution of political and economic control to the region, including increased control over education. At the same time, municipal services (including education) are provided through the territorial government, which receives the bulk of its capital annually from the federal government through transfer payments.

Underscoring tensions between resource development and education, training, and employment is the present impetus to develop the Mackenzie Gas Project (MGP). The project was endorsed by the Joint Review Panel on the Mackenzie Gas Project on December 30, 2009, but has yet to come on stream owing to heightened production costs and a depressed market for natural gas. With the signing of land claims, aboriginal and non-aboriginal business and political leaders have strongly endorsed the project, citing increased employment for local people.[5]

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[5] Estimates indicate the MGP could exhaust its natural gas reserves in as little as eight and a half years and require 2,600 short-term positions during the construction phase and only fifty permanent positions thereafter (Leadbeater, 2007; Nuttall, 2008). Opposition to the pipeline was notably organised by the Arctic Indigenous Youth Alliance (AIYA) who felt that the project was not sustainable in terms of both the ecosystem and employment opportunities (AIYA, 2007).

Importantly, the MGP illustrates a significant shift in aboriginal-industry-state relations and policy discourse. As a means of increasing an equity share in the proposed MGP, Dene leaders of the Gwich'in, their neighbours to the south, the Sahtu, and the Inuvialuit have formed the Aboriginal Pipeline Group (APG) in partnership with Imperial Oil, ConocoPhillips, Shell Canada and Exxon Mobil in the Mackenzie Gas Project consortium. Funding for the group came from the federal government (Vodden, 2001). While APG is considered to represent a "new model for Aboriginal participation in the developing economy of the NWT, to maximize Aboriginal ownership of development projects and benefits from the proposed Mackenzie Valley pipeline, and to support greater independence and self-reliance" (Nuttall, 2008, p. 626), the group also illustrates the continued and problematic tendency of conflating business with politics, where discourses of self-determination are increasingly tied to the ethnification of economic development. Here, the assumption is that greater control and ownership of megaprojects will lead to increased education, training, and employment opportunities for local aboriginal land claim beneficiaries. However, there is no evidence to indicate that megaprojects will reap the rewards local aboriginal leaders and politicians have indicated; rather, it is more likely that when oil and gas development proceeds, local people will continue to be hired as labourers due to the lack of skills required to gain meaningful and long-term positions.

The Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo

The RMWB (Appendix C), (herein referred to as Wood Buffalo) contains five First Nations of Cree and Chipewyan descent, which collectively comprise the Athabasca Tribal Council (Table 1). Significant populations of Métis also live in Fort McMurray, Fort McKay, Fort Chipewyan, Chard (Janvier), Willow Lake (Anzac) and Conklin. The aboriginal population of Wood Buffalo comprises approximately 5,365 of the 51,496 inhabitants of the region with 2,530 identifying as Métis, and 2,225 registered as status Indians (Statistics Canada, 2008b). Governance includes a chief and several band council members elected for several years by band members.

Table 1

Athabasca Tribal Council (ATC)

Name	Location	Registered Population
Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation (ACFN)	Fort Chipewyan (8 reserves)	888
Mikisew Cree (MCFN)	Fort Chipewyan (9 reserves)	2,550
Chipewyan Prairie Dene First Nation (CPFN)	Chard (3 reserves)	704
Fort McKay (FMFN)	Fort McKay (5 reserves)	648
Fort McMurray First Nation No. 468	Fort McMurray (4 reserves)	608

Sources: http://www.atc97.org/index.html; http://pse5-esd5.ainc-inac.gc.ca/FNP/Main/Search/TCMain.aspx?TC_NUMBER=1029&lang=e

Unlike modern day comprehensive land claims settlements in the Beaufort Delta, First Nations and Métis in northern Alberta respectively entered into Treaty 8 and scrip agreements in 1899. Reserve lands set aside for First Nations are identified in Table 1. Since the time of treaty signing, many northern Treaty 8

First Nations have contested the size of these land parcels owing to the nature of how treaties were signed, claiming that original numbers were under-represented by treaty commissioners at the time of signing. For instance, MCFN entered into a Treaty Land Entitlement claim in 1971. The original request for 97,280 acres, including 42,000 acres in Wood Buffalo National Park was based on the Treaty 8 formula of 123 acres per person. In response, the federal government refused to use contemporary population figures that lead to an impasse in negotiations. In the 1980s talks resumed when MCFN withdrew its claims to the tar sands regions, with recommendations that matters of social development be integrated with economic development. In 1986 MCFN was awarded 12,280 acres of land and $26.6 million, with the GoA contributing land and $17.6 million while the federal government contributed $9 million. Land allocation included nine reserve sites. These developments marked the beginning of the transformation of the MCFN governance with a band philosophy promoting economic development as a strategy for self-preservation (Slowey, 2008, pp. 34 –36).

With respect to Métis rights, a settlement claim against the provincial and federal governments was filed in 2006, as it was felt that state governments have failed to consult with Wood Buffalo Métis locals (WBML) in the same way as they have with First Nations in the region. This claim relates to concern over cumulative effects on tar sands activities for their members (Taylor et al., 2009, pp. 5 –7). WBML are also seeking out formalized agreements with tar sands companies over education, training and employment for their members (p. 16).

Aboriginal and treaty rights continue to frame relationships between resource extraction industries, the state, and aboriginal groups in Wood Buffalo. Generally speaking, the signing of treaty land entitlements has resulted in an alignment of the interests of the state and market, with those of aboriginal governments (Slowey, 2008). Tar sands companies are the prime employer of the region, and as part of agreements signed between the provincial government, companies, and local aboriginal governments, companies have set targets rather than hiring quotas to increase the numbers of aboriginal employees. Increased development of tar sands mining has created more employment and economic opportunities, but it has also heightened tensions with aboriginal groups owing to the deleterious impacts that mining has on the environment and community health, as well as degradation and encroachment of traditional lands. Consequently, demand-driven training-to-employment programs related to local mining remains both contradictory and contested.

Research Questions

By combining Bourdieuian social reproduction theories with regulation theory the nature of training partnerships is understood as occurring from the standpoint of both synchronic and diachronic relations of production and consumption. Hence, the positionality of partnership groups is examined within the parameters of a social field animated by different dispositions and asset structures contingently regulated by colonial-capitalist relations occurring within particular temporal and spatial matrices.

The central question of this dissertation is what is the nature of aboriginal training partnership programs in northern Canada? Related to this question are several sub-questions which are divided into two areas. The first set of questions concerns the structure of programs:

1) Who partners and why?; and,
2) What do partnerships elucidate about the shifting nature of aboriginal-industry-state relations, including the inter-connections occurring within and between these key partner groups?

The second set of questions involves processes and outcomes:

3) What are the experiences of VET participants as they transition from learning-to-work?;
4) How is success measured?;
5) How are VET participants selected and subsequently socialized to particular work cultures?; and
6) How do differences in regional political economies impact program outcomes?

Both sets of questions collectively elucidate the nature of northern aboriginal VET partnerships. The first set of questions requires nesting synchronic social relations within a historical trajectory in order to consider the shifting positionality of partner groups. The second set of questions is more clear-cut in the sense that they primarily relate directly to the two training programs investigated. Here, the concept of vocational habitus is developed in order to explain how particular training fields socialise program participants.

Significance

One of the most important social policy challenges facing "settler states[6]" involves addressing the continued and unacceptable impoverishment of indigenous peoples. Education is considered a primary way of reducing poverty, as it is reasoned that increased educational attainment will improve labour market participation, which in turn will increase material well-being. VET partnerships have been ostensibly presented by industry, government, and aboriginal groups as a means of alleviating poverty for aboriginal peoples in northern Canada. Yet a dearth of research has been conducted to examine whether in fact outcomes improve life chances for targeted aboriginal groups. Moreover, few studies examining training programs empirically from the standpoint of longitudinal learning-to-work transitions have been conducted.

The United Nations recognizes indigenous peoples' rights to development in accordance with their own needs and interests (United Nations, 2007, 2009). Northerners have identified a need to compile and discuss both the current knowledge of the short- and long-term impacts of developments on local labour pools, as well as ways to manage gaps between local labour capacity and the labour needs of a particular economic development (NWT Board Forum, 2009). And yet, research involving education, training, and employment has generally been neglected. Whereas on-going expansion of mining in Wood Buffalo and potential oil and gas development in the Beaufort Delta have spawned numerous social, economic, and environmental studies, my contribution stems from the paucity of educational policy research in northern regions, as well as the paucity of education research relating to pre-apprenticeship training programs nationally (Watt-Malcolm, 2010). Whilst research has been conducted concerning the nature of VET partnerships (Billett, 2000; Billett & Seddon, 2007; Billett, et al., 2007; Taylor, 2001; 2009), and studies on education and training programs have been conducted within the research contexts (Hobart & Kupfer, 1974; Hobart, Walsh & Associates, 1979; Hobart, 1981, 1984, 1986; Abele, 1989; Taylor et al., 2007; Taylor et al., 2009), there is a tendency to overlook insights of those who these training program programs are designed for. There is also a tendency to frame partnerships in terms of social binaries (aboriginal – non-aboriginal) which obscures differences in regional or group interests, as well as the shifting nature of aboriginal-industry-state relations occurring since the settlement of land claims agreements.

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[6] This term describes states formed by migrant groups through colonisation of the region's indigenous population.

This dissertation responds to gaps in the literature by embedding learning-to-work (LTW) transitions within a political economy of training and employment regimes of late capitalism. Research findings elucidate tensions accompanying the LTW transition from the perspectives of local people and VET participants. This dissertation contributes towards developing greater knowledge about VET partnerships, LTW transitions, aboriginal education, northern governance, and aboriginal-industry-state relations. At a pragmatic policy level, my research will identify ways to improve education, training, and skills development as northerners continue to navigate new frameworks of governance and economic development. Findings will also contribute towards greater dialogue, as lessons learned can be shared between regions experiencing different stages of the resource extractive development cycle. New strategies for improving VET partnerships will occur at a time when federal apprenticeship programs, including those specifically targeting aboriginal people, are coming under review. The research also occurs at a time when critical questions are being raised regarding the efficacy of the current emphasis concerning aboriginal – industry agreements. By presenting empirical findings in the form of actual program outcomes, the research addresses policy gaps and blind spots.

Of broader significance, my research will contribute to the existing scholarship on VET partnerships and also contribute greater understanding of the impacts of global capitalism in local contexts as articulated within the field of VET. Most analysis of aboriginal political economy and northern VET programs in particular, has neglected to consider the full range of social relations occurring within a given context, preferring instead to analyse partnerships from the vantage point of broad inter-group differences rather than from intra-group differences that animate the former. This approach inevitably produces a series of binaries (aboriginal – non-aboriginal, worker – capitalist, oppressor – oppressed) that obfuscates differences occurring within and between groups, as well as the shifting positionality and overlapping interests that now characterise contemporary partnerships. In a departure from this approach, the research is theorised in a manner that considers the full range of social relations.

Organisation of the Dissertation

The remainder of this dissertation is organized into two sections. Section one contains four chapters that lay a context for the empirical study. Chapter 2 orients the research by surveying and identifying gaps in literature relating to research on northern education, training, and employment. The review serves as a means to justify the research questions posed and methodological and theoretical approaches developed. Chapter 3 examines the political economy of northern training programs. The first section of the chapter presents an historical account of northern training and labour in relation to capitalist incursions. The evolution of neoliberal training partnership agreements is then presented, including impact and benefit agreements involving transnational mining, oil and gas corporations. Chapter 4 extends the contents of the previous chapter by abstracting social relations from the standpoint of a postFordist restructuring of capital and labour. The conceptual framework developed in this chapter provides the analytic tools to critically evaluate the current provision of aboriginal VET partnerships in both case sites. The framework elucidates the habitus of training fields as contingently structured by localised economic relationships, which constitute a federal grants economy (Beaufort Delta) and a domiciled transnational resource extractive economy (Wood Buffalo). Mediating localised economic relationships is a liberal culturalist ideology. Collectively, localised postFordist accumulation regimes are understood to constitute an indigenous mode of social regulation which serves to structure the habitus of both partners and participants.

Linking the theoretical framework to the empirical data is Chapter 5. This chapter develops a qualitative methodology designed to incorporate both the partnership field and LTW transitions into one study. Drawing from Michael Burawoy's "extended case study method" various components of the methodological approach are developed with respect to the case sites chosen. A discussion of northern research and ethics concludes this chapter.

In section 2, empirical findings are gathered and organized into chapters 6, 7, and 8. Chapter 6 examines the political institutional context of training. In this chapter, northern labour markets, the apprenticeship system, and relevant training programs are presented. In the second section, both the Wood Buffalo and Beaufort Delta training programs are examined in terms of their rationale, structure, organisation, and financial cost. Analysis presented in chapter 6 subsequently lays the foundation for considering perspectives of program partners and participants. Chapters 7 and 8 are respectively devoted to examining the politics of partnerships and LTW transitions of each cast site. Rather than separate the two case sites, broader themes that emerge from the data are used to anchor findings. Both chapters draw extensively from interview data, supported by relevant primary documents gathered in both case sites. Chapter 7 further develops the theoretical framework by considering the local context of the VET field. Here, I refer to the Beaufort Delta as a *Numbers Game*, while in Wood Buffalo the VET field is one of *Risk Management*. Chapter 8 explores training programs primarily from the perspectives of VET participants while they were being trained at local colleges, and then later on once programs had been completed. These findings provide empirical evidence to develop the concept of vocational habitus. Here, particular attention is paid to strategies of partners and impacts of vocational habitus on participants. Capital conversion strategies of partners and participants presented in both chapters elucidate the shifting topography of the training partnership field and career trajectories of participants. By elucidating transitions toward a postFordist restructuring of capital and labour, capital conversion strategies serve to link empirical findings to the central thesis of this dissertation. In closing, responses to the research questions are examined in chapter 9. The chapter also considers both the contributions and limitations of the research. These considerations provide the basis to identify implications, including pragmatic policy recommendations, training trajectories, and future research.

CHAPTER TWO

A SURVEY OF LITERATURE ON NORTHERN VET PROGRAMS

Introduction

This chapter is delimited to surveying empirical studies and associated literature relating to northern education, training, and employment programs. The survey includes studies that began in the 1960s up through the decades until the present, including academic research, as well as government labour pool studies and anecdotal reports. Key findings and recommendations from these studies are briefly presented. The review provides the necessary context to identify what has and has not been conducted in terms of research to inform and locate my dissertation within the wider oeuvre. The review also provides an opportunity to assess the theoretical approaches taken and how these have impacted findings. Together, both the research conducted and approaches taken provide the appropriate context to situate the research questions and theoretical framework. Additional research and literature pertaining to the political economy of northern economic development and aboriginal education is presented in following chapters.

Empirical VET Studies

Aside from anecdotal observations and statistical information presented by earlier ethnographers and adult educators (e.g. Jenness, 1964; Lidster, 1978; Slobodin, 1966), empirical studies examining pre-employment apprenticeship trades preparation programs have occurred in both case sites – most of which relates to mining, oil and gas. Some of these studies have assessed the degree of effectiveness of specific training programs on local communities (Hobart & Kupfer, 1974, and Hobart 1981, 1984, 1986); other studies have sought to examine the sociology of partnerships (Hodgkins, 2007; Taylor, McGray, & Watt-Malcolm, 2007; Taylor, Friedel, & Edge, 2009; Taylor & Friedel, 2011; Friedel & Taylor 2011); and other studies have endeavoured to combine both elements (Abele, 1989; Bell, 2011, 2012). Studies conducted in the 1970s and 1980s by Charles Hobart include both Arctic and Alberta training programs. Labour market studies were also conducted in Wood Buffalo (Athabasca Tribal Council [ATC], 2005, 2007; Hobart et al., 1979). A six-year study in the NWT during the 1980s was lead by Frances Abele (1989) and involved eight training programs; findings were subsequently used to inform policies during the MGP hearings (Abele, 2006). Some analysis was conducted in 2005 in the NWT on VET training partnerships (Hodgkins, 2007), and more detailed work was conducted by Alison Taylor and colleagues in Wood Buffalo in two separate studies – one examining social partnerships for youth apprenticeship training which occurred in 2007, and a second study in 2008 that examined the political, social, and economic influences on First Nations and Métis youths' attitudes towards further learning.

A survey of findings and recommendations contained in these studies, and related labour market studies, elucidates persistent themes and tensions, including barriers to training and employment, socialization, the nature of partnership programs, as well as significant gaps existing in the literature.

Barriers

Barriers to education, training, and employment include low educational and skill attainment (e.g. lack of a driver's licence), restrictive job entry qualifications, cost of relocation, transportation, inadequate funding, lack of training locations, racism, gender discrimination, high staff turnover, drug and alcohol abuse, inter-generational disruptions caused by residential schooling, and welfare dependency. Lack of formal education and training, both in terms of availability and attainment, is cited as a significant problem occurring in both regions (Abele, 2006; ATC, 2005, 2007; Jenness, 1964; Littlejohn & Powell, 1981; Slobodin, 1966), and is reflected in both national and international research (Canadian Apprenticeship Forum [CAF], 2004, 2011; Drost, 1994; Helme, 2007; Richards & Scott, 2009).[7]

Reasons for low levels of formal education include a fragmented schooling experience (e.g. local community schools offering K – 9 programming requiring students to relocate to larger centers), perceptions that local schooling is of a lower quality (caused in part by high teacher turnover), a home environment that is not conducive to learning (e.g. substance abuse, poverty), and parents who are unfamiliar with and/or cynical of schooling (Berger, 2006; Salokangas, 2009; Taylor et al., 2009). It should also be noted in regions where land claims have been settled and education has been accorded greater local control, education achievement has not improved and in some cases deteriorated as measured by high school completion rates (Hodgkins, 2010; Papillon, 2008; Salokangas, 2009; van Meurs, 1993; Vodden, 2001). In turn, prospective trainees are excluded from training and employment opportunities on account of educational requirements set by employers for high school completion with little value placed on prior learning and skills (Abele, 1989, 2006; Taylor & Friedel, 2011). When training is offered, trainees must often relocate to larger centers where programs are offered at regional campuses; however, training allowances are not sufficient to cover the high costs of living, especially for families (Abele 1989, 2006; Littlejohn & Powell, 1981; Taylor et al., 2009). Women face additional financial barriers related to child and elder care (Abele 2006; Drost, 1994).[8]

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[7] While a positive correlation exists between K –12 education and employment, Drost (1994) shows that a negative correlation exists between possession of a trade school or college certificate and employment for on-reserve aboriginal male populations (attributed to "dismal" employment opportunities). Drost (1994) considers the single most important variable affecting unemployment is dependency upon social assistance.

Historically, there is evidence to suggest that discrimination based upon ethnicity was a factor precluding aboriginal participation in the workforce (Krahn, 1983; McCormack, 1984). Despite the preponderance of affirmative action policies, racism is usually qualified as being "systemic" or "structural" rather than overt. For instance, Abele (1989) noted that there was minimal overt racism in the training programs her team investigated, but considered there to be structural racism insofar as the labour market is ethnically stratified, with the source of discrimination to be found in the institutional arrangements or economic structures.[9] Hobart's findings (1974, 1981, 1984) indicate that discrimination or racism was not experienced by aboriginal trainees in the programs he investigated, and that trainees and trainers experienced positive working relationships. One reason cited for the positive reception of native trainees was that the oil and gas industry could absorb significant numbers of employees and therefore aboriginal trainees did not pose a threat to those training them, even though they could potentially be replaced by the trainees through affirmative action policies (Hobart, 1984).

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[8] The overall trend in aboriginal post-secondary participation indicates a significant gender gap favouring female participation and male participation in trades-related programs (Drost, 1994; Kleinfeld & Andrews, 2006). In 2005, among 299 registered apprentices in the NWT, 9 were women (Abele, 2006, p. 14; see Lehmann, 2007 for the Alberta context).

[9] Helme (2007) argues that structural racism is the greatest barrier for aboriginal (Koorie) participation in VET programs in Australia – ameliorated through the creation of culturally sensitive programs.

Participation in adult education is also affected by absenteeism and substance abuse (Kleinfeld & Andrews, 2006; Lidster, 1978; Slobodin, 1966). On-site training programs that house trainees have been found to have a much higher program completion rate (Abele, 1989). Training programs for work on the Norman Wells pipeline during the 1980s experienced a 2% attrition rate (Abele, 1989), and the Nortran training program designed to provide employment for the Mackenzie Valley pipeline experienced a 31% drop-out rate which Hobart (1981) considered low due to the fact that 70% of the trainees had no prior experience living in the South. These findings also suggest that on-site, demand-driven employment training programs increase motivation and mitigate factors contributing towards program attrition.

Socialisation

Hobart (1981) noted that the structure of the training program rewarded behaviour in association with a southern life style, and this may have had a strong socialization effect on trainees who were cut off from northern role models and their communities. Young and McDermott (1988) show that over the course of a decade (1971 – 72 to 1982 – 83) the structure of northern program delivery offered in the Northwest Territories has generally been implemented in such a way as to induce cultural change among aboriginal trainees. Using five variables to gauge levels of acculturation (language, sector, daily scheduling, annual scheduling, and location) Young and McDermott (1988) concluded that industrial training is highly acculturative, while apprenticeship training contained elements (language and annual scheduling) that were accommodative. For instance, some programs had been offered in Inuktitut and were offered during times of the year when people would not be out hunting. However, like Hobart's (1981) findings most programs were strongly acculturative.[10]

The effects of employment with Gulf Oil on career aspirations of boys of fathers who were employed by the company indicated a preference to work in the oil industry and gain labouring (driving heavy equipment or trucks) and skilled manual trades (Hobart & Kupfer, 1974). Several teachers and community members indicated that one effect of employment with the company was that some children, especially boys, saw formal schooling as unnecessary for their future (Hobart & Kupfer, 1974). High participation rates in oil and gas activity during the 1980s in the Beaufort Delta suggest that few above 15 years of age remained in school, thus contributing towards a skills deficit (Vodden, 2001). Contradictory messages from industry and adult educators over whether industrial activity increases or decreases school attendance were also made in response to the potential development of the MGP (Hodgkins, 2007); it is also anticipated that a significant number of young people will leave school for MGP-related employment before completing Grade 12 (Abele, 2006). In contrast, statistics in Alaskan North Slope Iñupiat (Inuit) communities indicates a positive correlation between oil and gas development and social well being, including increased provision for and participation in education (Kruse, 2010). Regardless of these contradictory findings, push and pull factors related to school participation must be couched in the goals of education and schooling; it is argued that schools come to prioritize the needs of corporations and reproduce their values in resource dependent regions (Taylor et al., 2007, 2009).

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[10] In an effort to localise education and training, Greenlandic curriculum is written in both Danish and Greenlandic and programs are designed to reflect local labour needs (Rasmussen, n.d.).

Program Structure

Abele (1989, 2006) characterized NWT training programs to be of two kinds: those occurring during relatively stable business-as-usual periods and those created in response to megaproject developments. With respect to the latter, Abele (2006) describes them as episodic, uncoordinated, disjointed, and suffering from "program amnesia" (i.e. repeated introduction of new programs to address persistent problems). These programs have been created as an afterthought to development, with funding controlled by the federal government and allocated based upon national rather than local priorities.

Similarly, Taylor and Friedel (2011) note programs in Wood Buffalo are fragmented, constantly changing, and at times competing within and across federal and provincial jurisdictions. While the researchers found multiple funding sources available, these sources created confusion amongst "clients" and aboriginal employment coordinators. Moreover, insufficient funding caused aboriginal groups to become increasingly reliant on private sector monies, and also compete across communities owing to the preference of corporations to work individually rather than collectively with groups. A myriad of competing government programs to address training of aboriginal workers was also observed. The shift in federal funding (from AHRDA to ASETS[11]) gave even more priority to demand-driven skills development, industry-driven partnerships, and accountability and results related to programs which tend to be shorter and more narrowly focused. Taylor et al. (2007) also found that a tension exists between training providers, industry, and unions over control of who should provide training; while some employers were interested in developing a flexible, short-term workforce to meet their immediate needs, established owners were more content to work within the college system to secure skilled labour. Finally, the researchers noted a difference between the core and peripheral workforce with the VET partnership for youth apprenticeship designed to increase the needs of large employers in building their *core* workforce.[12]

Recommendations

Recommendations involve both the training programs themselves, as well as changes to policy occurring at the institutional and political level. Enhanced access and provision for education and training includes making a stronger link between "essential skills"[13] and the trades at the High School level, increasing both training allowances and courses, raising cultural awareness of employers and trainers, and increasing aboriginal involvement in recruitment, training, and upgrading (Assheton-Smith, 1979; CAF, 2011; Littlejohn & Powell, 1981). In Wood Buffalo these recommendations are based upon the willingness of people to gain full-time work in the tar sands industry, primarily in the trades/skilled technician (ATC, 2005, 2007; Hobart et al., 1979). Work-site related recommendations include implementation by government, industry, and communities of a laddering system for employees through in-service training and upgrading (Hobart & Kupfer, 1974). A possible option to fulfill employer credential requirements are hiring practices based upon demonstrable skills, with grade requirements gradually phased in with time allotted to attend school while workers are on-the-job (Abele, 1989).

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[11] AHRDA stands for Aboriginal Human Resources Development Agreements, which ended in 2010 and were replaced by Aboriginal Strategic Education Training Strategy (ASETS).

[12] Core industries are large transnational oil, gas, and mining firms, whereas, peripheral industries are construction and transportation companies. Fort McMurray is characterized as a dual (core and peripheral) economy that is both ethnically stratified and segregated (Krahn, 1983). Most aboriginal labour is located in the peripheral sector, which is characterized as unstable and short-term (ATC, 2005; Krahn, 1983). As tar sands operations become more efficient it is expected that contract work in the peripheral sector will increase and become more stable given the large amount of projects slated for development (ATC, 2005).

Continuity in available programming and sustained funding; stable links among various initiatives; a fully coordinated and implementation process; formative evaluations; and recognition of the local context in developing programs are also recommended (Abele, 2006). There is a need to mitigate the tendency to create *uneven accelerated development*, whereby a few larger centers reap economic benefits while outlying communities remain impoverished. It is recommended that the effects of boom economies be distributed in time and space, and the viability of local economies in smaller communities be supported vis-à-vis the mixed economy which tends to moderate cycles of boom and bust

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[13] Essential skills include: reading, document use, numeracy, writing, oral communication, working with others, thinking, computer use, and continuous learning.

(Abele, 2006). Finally, there is a need to clarify local values, priorities, and learning needs as identified by community members (Abele, 1989; Taylor et al., 2009). While regional training partnership coordination committees have been established to coordinate training, the Auditor General of Canada (2010) recommends that the GNWT develop a comprehensive territory-wide labour market needs assessment and undertake a more rigorous analysis of adult education and training in order to gauge the level of success of these programs.

Aside from changes to training programs, recommendations have also been made with respect to ensuring students have the necessary educational knowledge and skills before they enter programs. Importantly, the National Strategy on Inuit Education (*First Canadians*, 2011) notes “parents play a primary and important role in supporting students and in student success rates” (p. 11).

Research Approaches

The aforementioned studies generally relied on interview data from program participants, and representatives from government, industry, and training delivery agents. Different conceptual frameworks (implicit or explicit) employed by investigators range from human capital theory to post-colonialism and neo-Marxism. Hobart’s suggestion that a transition to modernity through participation in a wage economy is both favourable and inevitable for aboriginal northerners was contested (Berger, 2004), and most academic research has subsequently been historicized within a post-colonial framework (e.g. Abele, 1989). Findings indicate that training programs reflect colonial power relations and produce differentiated citizenships (Bell, 2011, 2012; Taylor et al., 2007, 2009; Taylor & Friedel, 2011; see also McLean, 1997).

Partnership Studies

Of particular relevance to this dissertation is the work of Alison Taylor and colleagues. Taylor's 2008 empirical study of VET partnerships in Wood Buffalo, involved 65 interviews and focus groups with 91 individuals from multiple stakeholder groups and youth. Based upon this work, Taylor and Friedel found that current government social inclusion policies perpetuates racist and colonial ideologies by emphasising a deficit approach that places the blame on aboriginal peoples for their failure to integrate into existing education, training, and employment provisions (2011; see also Bell, 2011, 2012). Following Altimirano-Jimenez (2004), the authors argue that an "effect of neoliberal globalization on indigenous peoples" is the production of "market citizens" that have been "co-opted" into "networks of allegiances" (2011, p. 820). The authors conclude by stating that "First Nation and Métis communities actively seek alternatives to current institutional arrangements," and that "…this will require non-Aboriginal groups [sic] think differently about their relationship with Indigenous peoples, to get past the idea that partnerships focused on economic development will address the disadvantage faced by communities" (p. 832).

Aside from its direct and timely relevance occurring in one of the chosen case sites, the research by Taylor et al. is also significant in terms of its critique of neoliberal education-business partnerships, and for examining how these ideological underpinnings driving training programs exacerbate regional inequality linked to colonial-capitalist relations. In many ways, the research has been framed within similar contexts to my dissertation. However, a point of extension involves conceptualising partnership relations occurring within postFordism, and also tying partnership findings to program outcomes. Specifically, the location of partnership agreements, which Taylor and Friedel (2011) consider to exist between “groups,” “peoples,” and their “communities,” warrants further examination, thereby providing an important entry point to extend the inquiry by considering how partnership relations are positioned, and how partner relations impact outcomes for those these programs are intended to benefit.

Conclusion

Evidence from the empirical studies conducted in both case sites suggests that despite the implementation of affirmative action policies, a host of problems and barriers persist. Research findings indicate that a generic “one-size fits all approach” to education and training does not adequately meet local needs, and that the particularities of local and historical contexts must be considered for programs to be effective. Findings also suggest that jobs and job-training alone will not overcome extant social, political, and economic cleavages.

Most research conducted to date emphasizes either a human capital approach or a post-colonial critique of existing programs. While varying degrees of VET partnership sociological analysis have been conducted in both regions, longitudinal learning-to-work transition studies have not occurred in the case sites; nor has this research occurred in other parts of Canada (Watt-Malcolm, 2010).

The literature review also indicates a dearth of research examining partnership relations. Studies that have endeavoured to examine the sociology of training partnerships are conducted within a post-colonial framework that tends to locate partners within fixed and bounded essentialised categories (settler state, aboriginal groups, and industry). In doing so, these analyses do not offer insight into actual engagement occurring within and between partner groups, nor do they provide much insight into how the positionality of partner groups has shifted over time. While it is possible to essentialise difference on account of how training partnerships have been colonially imposed and orchestrated by the interests of the state and industry, the conflation of group *identity* ("aboriginal community") with group *interests* requires deconstruction in order to fully probe how intra-group dynamics may also impact partnership agreements, including the capacity for local people and organisations to effectively work together. The review also indicates a lacuna regarding the socialisation of program participants; most studies that did examine participant socialisation occurred 30 or 40 years ago. However, these studies neglected to provide perspectives of program participants.

Consequently, there is a need to develop VET research in a manner that combines and extends elements of the aforementioned studies. In particular, research that links micro-social processes of learning-to-work transitions from the perspectives of trainees and trainers to the wider historical and macro-social political and global economic contexts of partnership agreements is needed. In order to understand how different groups are positioned on the VET field consideration of the micro-social relations impacting partnership agreements require consideration of the inter-cultural hybridity that has gradually formed within and between communities, how partnership agreements get brokered, who represents community interests, as well as consideration of differences existing within and between communities based upon wealth, power, gender, or status. These dynamics are first understood by examining how partnership programs evolved into their present form.

CHAPTER THREE

A POLITICAL ECONOMY OF NORTHERN ABORIGINAL JOB TRAINING

Chapter Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to identify broad policy trajectories through an historical examination of both aboriginal and northern education, training, and employment initiatives. In doing so, the chapter provides a suitable context to elucidate the shifting positionality of key partnership groups as they navigate new frameworks of global capitalism.

As “subjects of empire” (Coulthard, 2007), the interests of aboriginal peoples have been collectively subjugated by the interests of the state and industry through land dispossession and reconstruction of both identities and societies in order to facilitate the expansion of the bourgeois state. As such, it is possible to generalise similar experiences and positioning of aboriginal people with respect to the state and industry, whose interests are aligned in terms of facilitating the expansion of both industrial capital and Westphalian sovereignty. Accordingly, training partnerships are understood to contain vestigial structures of a colonial relationship existing between the three primary partnership groups examined in this dissertation.

While a colonial legacy has impacted partnership relations, colonialism has been experienced differently at both the regional level as well as by individuals. Therefore, it is important to recognise difference occurring within and between groups without losing sight of essential differences that bind primary partnership groups together. Consequently, aboriginal groups have developed an ambivalent relationship towards the interests of the state and industry. From this standpoint, education is a Janus face of sorts – considered both an assimilative vehicle of bourgeois state formation, while also providing the necessary skills and knowledge required to access employment opportunities in order to improve life chances.

This chapter is organized into two parts: section 1 presents an historical overview of northern labour and training, and section 2 outlines the emergence of northern VET partnerships. Rather than considering education and training as separate from political and economic events, both are combined in order to reveal the dialectical processes of policy formation. Following Maaka and Fleras (2005), the historical context is organized into various aboriginal state policy transitions, beginning in the pre-World War II era and leading to the present. Of particular significance is the trajectory of aboriginal-industry-state relations associated with transformations accompanying transition from a “politics of protest” to a “politics of partnerships.”[14] References are drawn from both case sites, but also consider related international, national, provincial, and territorial events and sources. The chapter subsequently lays the historical foundation for examination of the present institutional structures, programs, and partnership arrangements occurring in both case sites, as well as further identifying gaps in the literature that relate to the research questions posed.

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[14] This statement is made in reference to a particular time period examined in this chapter, as well as particular aboriginal political organizations examined in this dissertation. This statement also recognizes that protests continue today.

Historical Context

Pre-War Years: Relative Autonomy

Training traditionally involved aboriginal adults teaching children necessary skills required to ensure survival and well-being of the local group (Asch, 1977). With the arrival of Europeans and advent of mercantilist trade, new skills were required for different forms of labour related to commercial ventures or for assistance in establishing missions and hospitals (Abele, 1989). Wage labour was unskilled and seasonal, and any training provided was “on-the-job.” Labour generally related to four areas: 1) the fur trade (trapping, trading, tripping); 2) transportation (portaging, deckhands, wood cutters); 3) missions (gardening, hay making, saw mill operations); and 4) commercial hunting and fishing (Knight, 1996; Parker, 1980; Slobodin, 1962, 1966). By the 1870s, some vocational training was provided at mission schools where girls learnt to sew, cook, and perform general house work, and boys learnt building and agriculture (Fumoleau, 1973).

Aboriginal groups were not homogeneous in terms of labour force participation. As Knight (1978) has noted, “it may make some sense historically to conceive of Métis as that sector of the native population which had adapted to and relied upon on-going employment by external agencies, thus being more fundamental than cultural or social distinctions between Métis and Indian” (cited in McCormack, 1984, p. 67). Métis tended to dominate marine transportation, commercial fishing, and trading, but also engaged in seasonal trapping, while “Indians” were more tied to local hunting, trapping, and fishing (Knight, 1996;

Slobodin, 1966, 1962). Inuvialuit also participated in the whaling industry which experienced an intense burst of activity in the Beaufort Delta between 1890 and 1910. It is reported that by the turn of the twentieth century Inuvialuit owned expensive schooners and numerous trading posts along the Arctic coast – a noteworthy fact that has been linked to an entrepreneurial spirit occurring in the region (Alunik, Kalausok, & Morrison, 2003; Mitchell, 1996; Salokangas, 2009).

For purposes of state formation, the federal government differentially imposed a series of settlements. The *Indian Act* (1867), numbered treaties (8 & 11), and Métis scrip commissions (1899, 1921) had the dual effect of land dispossession and inscribing identities that irrevocably institutionalized people into ethnic-political categories. Treaties provided the necessary means to establish state sovereignty and appropriate lands required for exploitation through "extinguishment" of aboriginal title, while the *Indian Act* sought to "manage lands, expenditures and resources, and define who Indians were, and who was entitled to federal resources" (Maaka & Fleras, 2005, p. 184). Like many leaders at the time of treaty signing, chiefs in Fort Chipewyan negotiated for the unrestricted right to hunt, trap, fish, and have their children educated at mission schools (Fumoleau, 1973; Maaka & Fleras, 2005). Those who did not sign treaty were classified as Métis, receiving scrip (cash or land) in exchange for enfranchisement and extinguishment of treaty rights.[15] Inuit, including Inuvialuit, were subsequently brought into the *Act* and recognized as "Indians" through a bill passed in 1924, but were never subjected to it, including artificial political distinctions (status, non-status, or Métis) dividing other aboriginal peoples (Jenness, 1964; White, 2009). Nevertheless, beginning in the 1940s and ending in the 1970s, the state developed a "Disk List" system which legally defined Inuit status for the purposes of administrating the population (Smith, 1993). As we shall see, the imposition of these settlements have significant implications in structuring social, economic, and political relations, including training partnerships and access to programs for VET participants.[16]

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[15] Through the new regime, Indians discussed grievances with Indian agents; Métis had no parallel forum – a consequence being that Métis issues have been obscured historically (McCormack, 2010, p. 203).

Despite the restructuring of land and identity, social relations in the pre-war period are generally considered to represent a time of relative equality owing to: 1) the initial ability of aboriginal populations to maintain a domestic mode of production; and 2) the integration of non-aboriginal people whose population was small, isolated, and reliant on aboriginals for support (Abele, 1989; McCormack, 1984; Slobodin, 1966, 1962). With respect to the first reason, wage labour was selectively incorporated into a domestic mode of production resulting in a highly flexible "mixed economy" that enabled maintenance of a traditional economy where social relations were relations tied to the local group[17] (Alunik et al., 2003; Asch, 1977).

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[16] Forced assimilation through the Indian Act, treaties, and scrip have had significant and long-term impacts on education. For instance, the federal government argues it is responsible for K – 12 education, while post-secondary education is considered to be a provincial responsibility; First Nations groups argue that post-secondary education is also a federal responsibility (Stonechild, 2006).

[17] A domestic mode of production is broadly egalitarian, producing what a local group needed based upon local forces of production (flora and fauna) and technology (simple tools); a mixed economy is comprised of "three different sectors: domestic production, independent commodity production, and wage labour. It was oriented in many ways to, but not dominated by, capitalist exchanges" (McCormack, 2010, p. 35). See Wolf (1982) for a further analysis of differing and interchanging modes of production.

Nevertheless, several factors eventually conspired to undermine the mixed economy. The introduction of new technologies, practices, and ventures, including guns, registered trap lines, transportation, and commercial fishing, had the dual effect of individualizing production and displacing aboriginal workers in favour of migrant labour (McCormack, 1984; Mitchell, 1996; Parker, 1980; Wolf, 1982). The depletion of the fur base is attributed to intensification of trapping caused by an influx of southern trappers. Local trappers also had to trap more intensively in order to afford externally produced goods that had increased in price at a time when fur prices had plummeted; Métis also became full-time trappers once employment in transportation was no longer available to them (Fumoleau, 1973; Jenness, 1964; McCormack, 1984). At the same time, diseases originating from Europe decimated local populations, which rendered survivors more amenable to Christianity, the tutelage of missionaries, and inculcation of Euro-Canadian values[18] (Alunik et al., 2003; McCormack, 1984; Mitchell, 1996).

Integration

Most scholars consider World War II to mark a significant transition in northern policy. Governance had shifted from laissez faire proxy administration – through missions, traders, and police – to active state intervention marked by a modernization paradigm facilitated by Keynesian welfare state policies (Dickerson, 1992; McCormack, 1984; Morrison, 1998). The post-war period experienced an intensification of efforts by the state to industrialise and modernise the North – the apotheosis of which came with Prime Minister Diefenbaker's 1957 "Roads to Resources" "Northern Vision" which literally paved the way for resource exploitation and the arrival of a state bureaucratic apparatus. In the NWT the demographic shift occurred prior to World War II, and was followed two decades later by the industrial transformation of Fort McMurray in the 1960s when tar sands mining commenced.[19]

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[18] A survey of northern literature and anecdotal comments during field work suggests that the degree to which residential schools contributed towards cultural loss is inconclusive and requires consideration of the local and historical context, as well as individual circumstances (Carney, 1993; Irlbacher-Fox, 2009; Maaka & Fleras, 2005; Poelzer, 2009; Slobodin, 1966; Taylor et al., 2009). Instead, it is more useful to consider denigration of aboriginal peoples and cultures as being pervasive rather than a peculiarity of any one institution (McCormack, 1984; Mitchell, 1996). Although the assimilating effects of education occurred within the wider contexts of state formation that sought to inculcate Euro-Canadian values in both immigrant and non-immigrant populations (Curtis, 1988; Wotherspoon, 2009), programs targeting aboriginal people promoted assimilation into the Canadian working class through basic vocational training, with the added intention of disavowing the historic treaty relationships between the Crown and First Nations (Bohaker & Iacovetta, 2009).

During the War, American construction of a pipeline (Canol) to link oil in Norman Wells, NWT to the Alaska Highway significantly increased the need for labour along the Athabasca-Mackenzie basin in both transportation and construction (McCormack 1984). Amidst Cold War paranoia and potential for oil and gas development, construction of the Distant Early Warning System (DEW line) began in the mid-1950s followed by construction of the new government center, Inuvik in 1956. Both developments created local employment opportunities, with some people sent out to Alberta for training. According to Hill (2008), the construction of Inuvik was purposely extended over ten years in order to provide local people in the surrounding region training in a variety of trades: "Contractors were obliged to provide employment and training for every interested local resident. Local residents were hired directly, or given training for employment before any Inuvik construction positions were made available to outsiders" (p. 44). Nevertheless, Inuvik came to represent new social relations in the Beaufort Delta – a government center that was resented by locals owing to a rapid influx of southern tradesmen and civil servants who were racially segregated and occupied privileged positions and housing (Alunik, et al., 2003; Slobodin, 1966).

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[19] From 1931 to 1941 people classified in the NWT as "other" rose from 1,007 to 4,000; in the same decade, the population classified as Indian and Eskimo rose by 700 (Berger, 2004). From 1953 to 1966 federal employees increased from 250 – 300 to approximately 2,600 (Berger, 2004). From 1961 to 1978 (the time period for construction and operation of both Suncor and Syncrude) the population of Fort McMurray rose from 1,186 to 24, 600 (Littlejohn & Powell, 1981). In 1963, 700 of the 1,300 residents in Fort McMurray were aboriginal (Assheton-Smith, 1979).

In 1933 direct investment in Canada had shifted from British to American interests (Hammer & Gartrell, 2008). The American economy had expanded rapidly during the war, and to help fuel the boom American companies began investing in Arctic and sub-Arctic oil and gas fields, including the vast deposits of tar sands located in north eastern Alberta (McCormack 1984; Pratt, 1976).[20] As Canada became incorporated into the American sphere of political, military, and economic influence, the economy became oriented to staples export, and close cooperation between government and business leaders ensued (McCormack, 2010; Laxer 1989).

As part of a larger process of "continentalist integration" (Laxer, 1989) – subsequently institutionalised through free trade agreements in the 1980s and 1990s – policy in the post-War period also sought to "normalise" relations with aboriginal people through national *integration* (Maaka & Fleras, 2005).[21] Unlike the pre-war era where the interests of the state was to leave education to missionaries, the 1950s and 1960s marked a policy reversal whereby incorporation into modernity was seen as inevitable – the vehicle of which was state education (McLean, 1997). The introduction of welfare state policies included the Family Allowance Act in 1944, which essentially tied food credits to school attendance (Jenness, 1964; McCormack, 1984). Through the introduction of an Education Act in 1955 the federal government undertook an ambitious campaign of constructing schools and hostels in most communities; schools were gradually secularized and attendance made compulsory (Dickerson, 1992; Jenness, 1964). By the late 1960s most children were in school and families had relocated into communities to be with their children (Berger, 2004; Jenness, 1964).[22] It is reported that by 1975 less than 5% of the Fort Chipewyan population had trapped in recent years (Littlejohn & Powell, 1981).[23]

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[20] The establishment of an institutional framework to replace merchant capitalism with industrial capitalism began after World War I when investment in mining opportunities occurred (McCormack, 1984). By 1937, there were 400 prospectors searching for minerals in the Mackenzie District (Berger, 2004). The first major discovery of oil in western Canada occurred at Norman Wells in 1920; in Alberta oil was discovered in Leduc in 1947, and by 1958 oil exploration had begun in the Mackenzie Delta.

In summary, the combined effects of increased state regulation of lands and resources, depletion of fur-bearing animals and game, plummeting fur prices, and disease undermined both domestic and fur trade modes of production at a time when the state was paradoxically facilitating the exploitation of mineral resources through foreign direct investment while concomitantly asserting its sovereignty. Cut off from their resource base and unable to find adequate employment, the mode of production had shifted to one of social assistance, government transfer payments, insecure wage labour, and hunting and fishing – in effect aboriginal people had become a *lumpenproletariat*[24] (McCormack, 2010).

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[21] Stonechild (2006) considers assimilation to be a process where services become the same for all other Canadians (with no distinctions being made); whereas integration is a slower, non-coercive process that gradually encourages aboriginal peoples to enter into mainstream society on the basis of consultation (p. 32).

[22] These transformations mirrored similar policies and practices occurring in southern Canada at this time (Wotherspoon, 2009, p. 24).

[23] For further qualitative insight into this figure and shifting attitudes, see *Man Who Chooses the Bush* (National Film Board, 1975) chronicling the life of Métis trapper, Frank Ladouceur, and his family in Fort Chipewyan.

Devolution and the Politics of Protest

In the same year that the seat of government was transferred from Ottawa to Yellowknife, the influential *Hawthorn Report* (1967) was released which urged the federal government to both increase and extend the provision for aboriginal vocational training beyond that of up-grading (Hawthorn, 1967, pp. 168 –170; Stonechild, 2006). These recommendations were subsequently implemented through the 1972 federal report, *Canada's North*, which for 15 years remained the official government statement for northern economic development (Young & McDermott, 1988).

Adult vocational training centres were established in Fort McMurray in 1965 and Fort Smith in 1968 (respectively renamed Keyano and Aurora College later on). Besides federally-run programs, other programs linked to the oil and gas industry were introduced and coordinated between the colleges and private employers (Abele, 1989; Howard & Kupfer, 1974). However, men had been sent outside the NWT for apprenticeship training prior to the development of college programs (Hill, 2008; Jenness, 1964). Training, related to pipeline construction and clerical work, also occurred in the South after creation of the college system (Abele, 1989; Hobart, 1981, 1984).

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[24] Marx (1867/1990) distinguished between three kinds of reserve labour: floating, latent, and stagnant – the latter referring to a lumpenproletariat, as that sector of reserve labour that has been in the proletariat but can no longer function for a variety of reasons (p. 794; see also Wolf, 1982, p. 353). As commodity producers owned the means of production in the fur trade, application of lumpenproletariat to describe aboriginal location in the labour force recognizes exigencies of merchant capitalism which never proletarianized production. The global transformation into industrial capitalism affected *all* people but to varying degrees.

In Fort McMurray, unprecedented expansion of tar sands mining began with the construction of Suncor in 1964. As part of its licence to operate, industry sponsored various training programs: Suncor, in conjunction with the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs developed on-the job training programs; Syncrude created a Native Personnel Specialist responsible for designing and implementing specialized training programs; and Canadian Bechtel (the company that constructed Syncrude), in conjunction with the Construction and General Workers Union and Keyano College developed a 5-week pre-employment course (Littlejohn & Powell, 1981; see also Assheton-Smith, 1979; Krahn, 1983; Voyageur, 1997).[25] Mine operations were also encouraged to award contracts to aboriginal businesses (Littlejohn & Powell, 1981). It is estimated that approximately 26% (600) of the Suncor construction workforce were aboriginal and by 1975 approximately 10% of the Suncor workforce was aboriginal; only 100 aboriginal workers were employed in 1975 to construct Syncrude (Littlejohn & Powell, 1981).[26] Most employees occupied low skilled and low paying positions, and both companies were more successful at hiring aboriginal people from other parts of the province than the immediate region (Krahn, 1983, p. 75).

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[25] These reports conflict with an industry respondent, who considered that Syncrude engagement with aboriginal groups was due to the fact that as a consortium it is “far more sensitive to risk management as a management company than say a wholly owned company like Suncor. Because they were managing risk on behalf of their clients” (I –5).

[26] Some of these figures may not be accurate owing to conflicting reports. For instance, a 1980 newspaper account in the *Edmonton Journal* indicated that less than 5% of the total Suncor workforce of 1500 were aboriginal (cited in Krahn, 1983, p. 75). A decade later, the same newspaper reported that only 1% of jobs at Suncor, and 6% of jobs at Syncrude were filled by local aboriginal people – a concern that was raised by the Athabasca Tribal Council that Ottawa was not providing enough money for education and job training (Hryciuk, 1990). In 2008 there were approximately 1,500 aboriginal people employed by the tar sands industry in permanent

While training-to-employment programs were being implemented, aboriginal leaders were beginning to organise themselves politically.[27] The 1969 *Statement of the Government of Canada on Indian Policy* (White Paper) which sought to revoke the *Indian Act* and abolish Indian status inadvertently galvanized pan-tribal nationwide resistance. Amidst the backlash, the government responded by implementing policies that favoured devolution of power from central to local control. Put more cynically, in order to appease their resentment, the government deployed a co-optation strategy by funnelling financial assistance to aboriginal organizations in order to make them seek solutions with the government rather than against it (Castro-Rea & Altimirano-Jiminez, 2007).

In 1970 oil was discovered in the Beaufort Delta. In response, the Canadian government proposed guidelines for the construction and operation of oil and gas pipelines in the North which lead to public hearings. Known as the Berger Inquiry (1974 – 77), after Justice Thomas Berger who led the inquiry, hearings into a proposal to develop a pipeline along the Mackenzie Valley gathered testimony from close to 1,000 witnesses in 35 communities (Berger, 2004). The general sentiment expressed was for development to proceed once

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operations jobs in the Wood Buffalo region (Oil Sands Developers Group, 2009). Constituting one of the largest employers of Aboriginal people in Canada, approximately 8% of the Syncrude workforce in 2011 identify as Aboriginal (Syncrude, n.d.).

[27] By the 1960s political mobilisation of both indigenous and marginalized peoples was a global phenomenon, sparking a politics of recognition (Brubaker, 2005; Friedman, 1999; Hobsbawm, 1994).

land claims had been negotiated.[28] In response, Berger recommended that a 10-year moratorium be placed on all oil and gas activity in order for negotiations to begin. Two key outcomes of the inquiry that have implications for training and employment include political changes affecting northern aboriginal peoples, and increased attention and scrutiny on training programs being offered.

Proponents at the inquiry had implemented a training program to prepare aboriginal northerners for employment in pipeline construction. Research presented by Charles Hobart on industry training programs was criticized by Berger (2004) for neglecting to adequately consider the full social impacts of megaprojects on local indigenous populations.[29] Despite the recommended moratorium, oil and gas activity was permitted to expand in the 1980s. These developments resulted in resentment and poor communication between aboriginal groups and the federal government, which in some instances translated to training programs that were poorly conceived, implemented, monitored, and coordinated (Abele 1989; *Denendeh*, 1984). In addition, economic *growth* rather than development accompanied developments during this time. For instance, oil and gas activity in the ISR employed 450 workers, generating $1700 per capita in earnings for local residents (Vodden, 2001, p. 52). However, between 1977 and

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[28] While recognising that aboriginal resistance to both pipeline development and infringements on treaty rights occurred throughout the NWT during this timeframe (e.g. see *Denendeh*, 1984; Paulette Case, 1976), of the 49 witnesses who made statements to the hearing commission in Inuvik (Jan. 28th to Feb. 18th, 1976) most were not opposed to development per se, but sought clarification from project proponents. Witnesses generally felt benefits of the pipeline would be maximised, and costs mitigated, through the settlement of land claims *before* development proceeded. Several witnesses expressed concern that a construction boom would add to school attrition rates. Other witnesses questioned project proponents about the provision of northern training (Berger, 2004, Vols. 36 –39). See also Hill (2008, p. 125) for a critical assessment of the inquiry.

[29] Berger's criticism occurred *after* the hearings and formed part of an overall critique of northern industrial development presented by others during the hearings (see Watkins, 1977).

1986 the majority of the economic benefits of offshore development flowed south to oil companies, stockholders, and southern workers and suppliers (p. 53).

In 1973, two Supreme Court case decisions – Calder and Morrow – cleared the way for comprehensive claims by recognizing aboriginal title to traditional lands (Calder, 1973; Fumoleau, 1973).[30] In 1969 the Indian Brotherhood of the NWT formed and was later organized into the Dene Nation in 1978. Métis were asked to join the Dene Nation in order to strengthen it politically, but remained a separate entity and supported the Mackenzie Valley pipeline proposal instead (*Denendeh*, 1984). In 1978, Inuvialuit formed the Committee for Peoples of Original Entitlement (COPE) and began its claim settlement; by 1984 the first territorial settlement, The Inuvialuit Final Agreement, was reached. That same year the Government of Canada (GoC) entered joint negotiations with the Dene and Métis, but it was never ratified and by 1990 separate groups of Dene and Métis began to negotiate settlements independently (DIAND, 2009).[31] Of these, the Gwich'in Land Claim Settlement Act was completed in 1992. Self government negotiations are currently underway with both the Gwich'in and Inuvialuit.[32]

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[30] Both Aboriginal and treaty rights were subsequently entrenched in the 1982 *Canadian Constitution*.

[31] Like the numbered treaties, modern day ("comprehensive") land claims, have been furnished by the state to create "stable and predictable communities and economies" (Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development [DIAND], 2009).

[32] As noted in the introductory chapter, Alberta's First Nations have entered into Treaty Land Entitlements which do not provide subsurface rights to resources as comprehensive land claims do. Agreements with First Nations and Métis are on-going.

The Politics of Partnerships

As Fenge (2009) notes, “The politics of protest that surrounded proposed northern development projects in the 1970s and 1980s has been replaced by the politics of partnerships – a major, if unheralded achievement by the Government of Canada and northerners, both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal” (p. 383). Aside from the fact that partnerships have not “replaced” protests (they continue today), Fenge’s assertion that this transformation signifies an “unheralded achievement” requires a critical evaluation of how agreements were brokered and have subsequently impacted training programs.

As we have already seen, efforts to increase aboriginal participation in the labour force through training-to-employment programs were being implemented by the mid-1950s, and public-private partnership training programs were in existence by the early 1970s. However, these programs became consolidated under a new policy paradigm in the following decades. Under the Liberals, the National Training Plan (1982) which emphasized training workers in “strategic skills” was subsequently dismantled in 1984 when the Progressive Conservatives produced its National Job Strategy which prioritized subsidized job creation by channelling funding to private employers to create jobs at the expense of college apprenticeship programs (Abele, 1989). According to McBride and Smith (2001), this labour market strategy was eventually extended to aboriginal peoples, and was based upon two core principles: “increasing the value of people through education (the ‘human capital’ approach) and creating partnerships between leaders in the labour market (the ‘partnership’ approach)” (pp. 178 –179).

Maaka and Fleras (2005) qualify this era of devolution as *conditional autonomy*, meaning that the state ultimately remains in control of policy and programs. However, while the state remains an active player, it has endeavoured to replace government with *governance* as part of a neoliberal paradigm that has increasingly tied self determination to economic development in an effort to wean aboriginal groups off of welfare state dependency, thereby shifting policy from entitlements to partnerships (Harvey, 2005; Slowey, 2008). While some aboriginal groups, which, according to Slowey (2008) includes the Mikisew Cree First Nation, have endorsed the partnership and human capital model (see also Helin, 2006) – there is also recognition that public-private partnership agreements need to occur on a federal government-to-First Nation basis rather than being off-loaded to provincial governments and industry (AFN, 2007). This shift in policy has sparked debates over whether in fact the partnership and human capital model represents a new form of assimilation; while the federal government attempts to extricate itself from fiduciary responsibilities by privileging third-party partnerships, it is argued that aboriginal groups are in a take-it or leave-it situation as megaprojects will proceed with or without their consent (Altimirano-Jimenez, 2004; Castro-Rea & Altimirano-Jimenez, 2007). Yet, a review of recent policy events indicates aboriginal groups have actively embraced the new model.

In response to the Oka Crisis (1990), the federal government created the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP) in 1991. The commission – an ad hoc advisory committee set up to hear public grievances on a specific issue – was given a broad mandate which included examining educational issues of concern to aboriginal peoples (Frideres, 1996). Few topics received more attention during the 5-year hearing than education and training as part of a strategy for change (RCAP, 1996).[33] The Report (1996) cited the 1991 federal government program *Pathways to Success* (1991 – 1995) as a promising initiative. *Pathways* was unique in that it involved a significant degree of decentralized decision making at the local level where local boards decided training needs. Moreover, despite cut-backs to the federal department administering the program, the program afforded stability through five years of funding (Eberts, 1994).[34] However, the program was criticized for failing to recognize the existing distinctive institutional capacities and arrangements at the local level, for lacking an integrated labour market development strategy, and for emphasizing a supply- rather than a demand-side to training (Eberts, 1994; RCAP, 1996, section 2.7). The RCAP (1996) recommended that an integrated approach to training reflect the labour market, and be developed through public-private partnerships delivered through local training centers (see also Eberts, 1994; McBride & Smith, 2001).

In 1996 the federal government, AFN, Métis National Council, and the Inuit Tapirisat of Canada signed an agreement for a new program to replace Pathways, *The National Framework for First Nations Human Resources*

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[33] Many of the education issues addressed by the RCAP report are a reiteration of those contained 20 years earlier in the report *Indian Control of Indian Education* which was developed and released by the National Indian Brotherhood (renamed the Assembly of First Nations) and adopted by the federal government in 1973. Greater control of education at the local level was being urged across the country by aboriginal leaders, including those in the North (Kakfwi & Overvold, 1977).

[34] In the 1990s the Government of Alberta (GoA) introduced a policy framework to increase education business partnerships while concomitantly reducing education funding (Barnetson & Boberg, 2000; GoA, 1996; Taylor, 2001). Based upon the earliest 5-year average (1989 –1993) and the most recent 5-year average (2005 –2009), Taft (2012) reports that in Alberta corporate profits increased 317.2% compared to 2.4% and 27.9% provincial education funding respectively in K –12 and post-secondary during these timeframes (p. 86).

Development. In essence, the Pathways model was extended to increase devolution of decision-making to the local level, enabling local governments to extend training opportunities beyond their reserve boundaries, have greater flexibility to develop programs, and make regional bilateral agreements between the federal government (HRSDC) and First Nation communities in order to make skills portable by conforming to Canadian standards (McBride & Smith, 2001). In 1998 the federal government responded to the RCAP report with a document entitled *Gathering Strength – Canada's Aboriginal Action Plan* (Government of Canada [GoC], 2000). Amongst other goals the initiative implemented "Resource Partnership Programs," designed to "support" and "encourage" both public-private partnerships, including tar sands development with the Athabasca Tribal Council, and impact and benefits agreements (IBAs) negotiated between aboriginal groups and diamond companies in the NWT (GoC, 2000). In both cases the federal government cited increased aboriginal employment as a result of these initiatives (GoC, 2000). In 2009 the federal government presented a *Federal Framework for Aboriginal Economic Development* which essentially re-affirmed the RCAP report recommendations that training be demand-driven (GoC, 2009). According to the minister responsible for the new framework, "Under the old strategy, the federal government was often the only financial partner. Under our new framework, the private sector will drive investment, lending, joint ventures and major projects with Aboriginal Canadians" (Strahl, 2009). Furthermore, the new framework warned that land claims regions (now comprising approximately 20% of Canada's land mass) will remain "idle" if "impediments" to developing these “assets” – notably Northern regulatory regimes and the *Indian Act* – are not removed (GoC, 2009; Strahl, 2009; Fenge, 2009). Finally, the new framework show-cased the economic development strategies of the Inuvialuit, including the Aboriginal Pipeline Group (APG), considered both a major beneficiary and driver of the proposed Mackenzie Gas Pipeline (MGP) (GoC, 2009).

Coinciding with new training policies and programs are efforts by the state to provide aboriginal people the necessary capital to participate in the marketplace. In 1999, the Aboriginal Business Development Initiative (ABDI) was launched, which according to Slowey (2008) has had significant success in increasing businesses for aboriginal people at twice the rate for non-aboriginal people. Through the federal government division Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC), Aboriginal Business Canada (ABC) was also developed which supports small to medium-sized businesses through capital grants to start or expand a business. Major Resource and Energy Development (MRED) Investments is a third INAC program designed “to position Aboriginal businesses to partner in some of the most important economic and energy developments in the country. These investments will target equity gaps facing Aboriginal firms, to enable them to finance and operationalize as resource and energy businesses” (Aboriginal Affairs, n.d.). And as noted before, as part of the Inuvialuit land claims agreement federal government funds were used to create the Aboriginal Pipeline Group (Vodden, 2001).

Impact and Benefits Agreements

Further insight into the neoliberal trajectory of training partnerships can be gathered from impact benefit agreements. IBAs constitute de facto, quasi-legal contractual arrangements that do not fall under the purview of the state, and are designed to establish formal relationships between mining companies and local aboriginal communities (Caine & Krogman, 2010; Sosa & Keenan, 2001). Ostensibly, IBAs address the adverse effects of commercial mining activities on local communities and their environments, and ensure that communities receive benefits from the development.

IBAs are negotiated for different reasons: 1) where land claims have been settled, aboriginal groups can control whether or not mining can proceed, enabling the group to impose the negotiation of an IBA (outstanding land claims may also serve as sufficient initiative for mining companies to enter IBA discussions)[35]; 2) the federal government may require a company to negotiate an IBA[36]; and 3) the private sector may voluntarily negotiate an IBA as a public relations strategy to garner local community support, thereby avoiding costly delays, and securing a local labour force for the mine at a reasonable cost (Sosa & Keenan, 2001; Slowey, 2008).

“On signing an IBA an Aboriginal group accepts some restrictions to the exercise of their traditional rights and Aboriginal title, provides access to their lands, and, in doing so, supports the resource development project" (Caine & Krogman, 2010, p. 80). Perceived benefits include provision for employment, business development, social and cultural programs, as well as revenue sharing (profit shares, royalties, fixed cash amounts, etc.) (Sosa & Keenan, 2001). Employment opportunities are usually a central focus of IBAs, and include provisions for preferential hiring policies, flexible work schedules, and training and apprenticeship programs (Sosa & Keenan, 2001). Training programs may be either the sole responsibility of the mining company, or developed in partnership with government and training institutions, and include government funds (Kennett, 1999). It is perceived that these provisions can assist a community in meeting short-term and often urgent needs to fund services such as housing, health, and education, as well as providing a degree of autonomy from the state in deriving income separately from mines (O'Faircheallaigh 2008).

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[35] For instance, the Inuvialuit Final Agreement (IFA) makes negotiation of a “Participant Agreement” mandatory when permanent access is granted to Inuvialuit lands (Sosa & Keenan, 2001).

[36] As part of its licence to operate, the federal government, in 1996, imposed a 60-day timeframe for BHP (Canada’s first diamond mine) to negotiate five separate IBAs with neighbouring Dene, Métis, and Inuit in the NWT (Bielawski, 2003).

Despite representing common practice since the 1970s, there is little analysis of the factors that determine the success or failure of IBAs, the extent to which they have been enforced, the effects these agreements have on other options and strategies available to aboriginal groups, or the implications they have on aboriginal-state relations, democracy, and civil society (O'Faircheallaigh, 2008; Sosa & Keenan, 2001). A central reason for this lack of analysis is that mining companies impose confidentiality clauses on IBAs.

Not surprisingly, IBAs have been criticized for their lack of transparency, restrictions on communities' freedom of speech, and inability for communities to learn from each other as they negotiate with the same company. As Caine and

Krogman (2010) surmise, “IBAs, given their private First Nation leaders-to-industry lawyer negotiations, do not appear to encourage widespread involvement of Aboriginal people in the Canadian North to think and act toward their own social and economic development” (p. 89). Communities’ ability to manoeuvre politically in relation to environmental and other groups is also restricted (O’Faircheallaigh, 2008). It is also noted that aboriginal groups may perceive more benefit than drawbacks to confidentiality clauses as they are able to leverage greater funding from *both* the federal government and mining companies, without having the federal government claw back funding in light of agreements reached with mining companies (Caine & Krogman, 2010). However, by willingly allowing IBAs to proceed, it is argued, the federal government has abrogated its “fiduciary responsibilities to Aboriginal people in the North for education and training by not knowing what is needed, or agreed to, within IBAs” (Caine & Krogman, 2010, p. 88; see also AFN, 2007). It is also noted that IBAs have shifted much of the discussion away from questions of indigenous lands and livelihoods to questions of labour (Bell, 2012).

The contradictory effects of IBAs can be seen in both case sites where a paradoxical relationship exists between the muted criticism of “Aboriginal elites-cum novitiate investors” (Cizek, 2005) and members of these same aboriginal groups who have voiced vocal opposition to proposed developments in light of concerns over environmental degradation, health, and community well-being (Nuttall, 2008). With respect to tar sands development, the political leadership of both the ACFN and MCFN have withdrawn their objections to the five tar sands projects that were subjected to environmental reviews between 2003 and 2007, and along with the Fort McKay First Nation, ACFN and MCFN accommodated Total's Joslyn North Mine project in 2010; in every case, undisclosed agreements were reached between the mine proponent and each respective First Nation (Urquhart, 2010).[37] In the NWT, aboriginal groups that have signed land claims (Inuvialuit, Gwich'in, and Sahtu) and lie along the proposed pipeline route are members of the Aboriginal Pipeline Group (APG), while the Dehcho who have yet to sign a land claim are not part of the pipeline group even though 40% of the route goes through their lands. According to Cizek (2005), the Inuvialuit Regional Corporation are prime drivers of the APG as they stand to reap the greatest profits from exploiting gas fields in their settlement region. Cizek (2005) argues that the Inuvialuit have defused most opposition to the MGP by convincing other aboriginal groups to sign on to the APG, which means that other groups will be "deterred from negotiating costly access and benefits agreements on their own lands, since they would in effect be negotiating with themselves and cut into their own potential profits (¶13)."

Conclusion

As the historical review has shown, a number of significant policies targeting aboriginal people, along with responses to these policies, continue to shape the present provision for education, training, and employment. Resistance to state policies of assimilation notably gained traction during the 1970s when aboriginal groups became politically organized. Since then, state policies have increasingly shifted from centralized to decentralized decision-making. While the state strategy towards aboriginal peoples has shifted, its goals remain the same – integration into the mainstream society through policies that are geared towards encouraging wage labour participation. By the same token, the transformation of a politics of protest into one of partnerships indicates that the traditional positioning of interests of partner groups have become increasingly aligned and less distinct.

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[37] Monique Passelac-Ross contends, "In most cases the EUB or ERCB has simply dismissed the Aboriginal concerns or refused to deal with issues of Aboriginal or treaty rights or stated that there has been adequate consultation with the proponent. Further, even when agreements were signed with proponents, some FNs have pointed out that not all their concerns were addressed by the agreement and they still had objections (eg. Albian Sands Muskeg River Mine, 2006)" (personal communication, November 18, 2011).

Rather than being a recent phenomenon, aboriginal northerners have participated in the wage economy to varying degrees and with varying levels of education and training. Training programs are relatively recent and have always relied on some level of public – private partnerships. Yet the overall policy trajectory accompanying neoliberalism in the 1980s vis-à-vis land claims negotiations and creation of development corporations have come to prioritize self determination through economic development brokered and mediated by aboriginal-industry agreements. Embedded in these agreements are vestigial colonial structures of assimilation, considering that the imposition of artificial political distinctions has resulted in group fragmentation and re-categorization of ethnicity, resulting in the separate and ad hoc manner by which partnerships are currently being brokered between individual groups and industry. Evidence from the review also indicates that aboriginal groups have endorsed the partnership approach as an economic development strategy designed to wean itself off of government dependency and control. Consequently, current partnership arrangements are fraught with tensions and contradictions that do not neatly fit within a traditional colonialist paradigm of “categorical inequalities” (Tilly, 1998).

With respect to the case site regions, the historical review has shown that policy trajectories have been uniformly applied, and yet, depending upon the political and economic relationship germane to each case site vary depending upon the manner by which policies have been received and implemented. Nevertheless, a common colonial legacy, combined with a vertically integrated political economy of oil, provides important, sustained, and enduring linkages between the two regions.

From this review comes a need to abstract the social relations emerging from the significant juncture emerging in what is now considered to represent a politics of partnerships. In particular, there is a need to elucidate the shifting positionality of key partner groups operating on the training field, and also consider how these rapid social, political, and economic changes impact the socialisation of an ethnically targeted labour force occurring in both case site regions.

CHAPTER FOUR

REGULATION OF THE VET FIELD

Chapter Introduction

This chapter develops a conceptual framework to elucidate the shifting positionalities of aboriginal groups, the state, and industry with respect to the brokerage of training partnerships. Partnership agreements are understood as being historically contingent upon the restructuring of colonial-capitalist relations. The link between colonialism and capitalism is significant because, owing to its inherent expansionary dynamic, capitalism was, and remains, the engine of colonialism; without capitalism, colonialism would not exist. And yet, one is not an irreducible feature of the other. While the former contains ideological features pertaining to cultural (mis)recognition, the latter contains ideological features that are primarily economic; and while the former makes it possible to essentialise group difference owing to a common history of subjugation, the latter makes it possible to deconstruct difference existing within and between colonised groups owing to the spatial and temporal nature of capital accumulation. And so, while different aboriginal peoples collectively remain "subjects of empire," different circumstances impact the way groups respond to structural and economic features of capitalism. For instance, in southern Canada, land was permanently made way for agricultural expansion, whereas in the North, colonisation was much more recent and episodic due to remoteness as well as the boom and bust nature of resource extractive industries. Consequently, treaty-making in northern Canada occurred within different economic and demographic contexts than it did in southern Canada. Moreover, differences in the nature of agreements signed between aboriginal groups and the state occurring in the two case site regions also impacts the nature of partnership agreements: in the Northwest Territories comprehensive land claims provide more power to aboriginal signatories than treaty land entitlements settled by First Nations in Wood Buffalo. Whereas, in Wood Buffalo, groups have less power, but more employment opportunities; the reverse is true in the Beaufort Delta. And so, while a history of colonisation impacts present-day relationships, the spatial and temporal nature of colonisation occurred, and continues to occur, differently. Conceptualising these differences, similarities, as well as the degree of overlap in interests existing between different partners is the subject of this chapter.

The principal argument I develop is that VET is most adequately conceptualised in terms of a social *field* that functions to *regulate* contradictions of late capitalism. The strategy I develop involves situating micro-social relations of consumption and production within an overarching framework of global capitalism. This strategy enables the research to contextualise local perspectives by grounding them to both historical and global economic forces impacting training partnerships.

As labour constitutes an ontological feature shaping *the human condition* (Arendt, 1958/1998), structures and strategies by which labour and resources are organized, productively materialized, and commodified, form the basis from which to consider VET partnerships. Drawing from regulation theory, accumulation regimes are theorised as contingently mediated by localised modes of social regulation. Linking regulation theory's macro-structural analysis with a micro-empirical analysis is Pierre Bourdieu's tripartite leitmotif of *capital*, *habitus*, and *field*. By combining these two theoretical models, the analysis considers the actions of individuals and groups of individuals from the standpoint of a synchronic Bourdieuian analysis nested within a diachronic regulationist framework. By linking the two theories, empirical data gathered from case sites remains anchored to historical colonial-capitalist trajectories. The task then is to link the seen with the unseen in a manner that does not lose sight of a common colonial legacy, but also takes seriously agency of actors operating within different socio-economic contexts of late capitalism.

I begin by outlining basic features of both Bourdieu's social reproduction theory followed by a description of regulation theory. This review provides the necessary background to abstract social relations shaping and determining VET partnerships, beginning with identification of the principal discursive formation mediating local accumulation strategies, which I refer to as *liberal-culturalism*. Following Steur (2005), liberal-culturalism is understood to characterise popular conceptions of indigeneity that are "liberal because the emancipation of indigenous people is deemed possible in a properly functioning liberal capitalist system, and culturalist because of the overriding priority of keeping a politics based on 'cultural' or even 'ethnic' sameness intact" (p. 169). The institutionalisation of liberal culturalism is then examined from the standpoint of a postFordist restructuring of labour. Here, I make conjectures concerning the formation of an *indigenist mode of social regulation.*[38] In doing so, training partnerships and their associated structuring effects on participants are theorised as the confluence of inter-related fields that together form part of a global-local dialectic.

Bourdieu's Social Reproduction Theory

Like Weber's interest in "status groups," Bourdieu was concerned with how people, or "agents," negotiate their class position vis-à-vis the location of other agents within a given social field. By operating in the domains of social interaction, Bourdieuian theory presents a relational model as a way of accounting for categorical inequality (Tilly, 1998). In contradistinction to Marx, Bourdieu emphasized patterns of consumption rather than production in elucidating cultural characteristics pertaining to social class. In doing so, Bourdieu adds a symbolic dimension to class analysis.

Three primary concepts of Bourdieu's analysis include capital, habitus, and field, which he formulized according to the equation: "[(habitus) (capital)] + field = practice" (1984, p. 101). Bourdieu (1984) considers capital as a "set of actually useable resources and powers" (p. 114), which he differentiates into three "species": economic, cultural, and social. The most important of these are economic and cultural. While economic capital is self-evident, cultural capital constitutes "culturally specific 'competence,' albeit one which is unequally distributed and which is efficacious … in a particular social setting" (Weninger, 2005, p. 87). Bourdieu (1984, 1986) was especially interested in educational qualifications which he considers to constitute a special “institutionalized” form of cultural capital explaining the unequal scholastic achievement of children from different social classes. Further to this, Bourdieu (1986) considers an individual’s social capital to constitute “the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition [which are] …socially instituted and guaranteed by application of a common name (the name of a family, a class, or a tribe…)” (p. 51). In other words, an individual’s life chances are an admixture of material conditions (economic capital), networks (social capital), and education (cultural capital). This last denomination, along with its materialized and symbolic form (credentials) is considered the most significant “individual attribute” determining an individual’s life chances in economically developed countries (Wright, 2009).

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[38] The term indigenist mode of social regulation is similar to "tribal regime of accumulation" which Rata (2000) has coined to explain *a political economy of neotribal capitalism*.

Related to the concept of capital are its volume, composition, and trajectory. Depending upon class location (as measured in an occupational division of labour) different agents possess different volumes and compositions of capital. It is here that a significant relational process between different species of capital occurs – their ability to be converted from one form into another in order to enhance an individual or group’s assets (and hence position in the class structure). According to Bourdieu (1984), “these [reconversion] strategies depend, first, on the volume and composition of the capital to be reproduced; and secondly, on the state of the instruments of reproduction (…labour market, the education system, etc.) which itself depends on the state of power relations between the classes” (p. 125). Moreover,

> The volume of the social capital possessed by a given agent [thus] depends on the size of the network of connections he can effectively mobilize and on the volume of the capital (economic, cultural or symbolic) possessed in his own right by each of those to whom he is connected. (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 51)

Marx’s commodity dialectic as explicated in *Capital* (1867/1990) constitutes the central contradiction animating capitalist social relations of production within the VET field. Capital conversion strategies are derived from Marx’s original dialectical positioning of the commodity with respect to its exchange and use values. It is in the exchange values that the utility of capital conversion strategies resides, whereby agents as bearers of particular species of capital are capable of converting capital from one form to another in order to either maintain or advance a position on the field.

Strategies employed by agents to convert capital depend in part upon the volume possessed, as well as the rules of the game which vary depending upon who the prime bearer of economic capital is. As a relational process, agents’ priorities and capacities are dialectically shaped by the volume and composition of capital that partners possess and are *capable* of converting from one form to another in order to either maintain or advance their position on the field.

How various forms of capital are mobilised within particular social settings depends upon what Bourdieu terms habitus. The concept can be used to describe either individual or collective *dispositions* which correspond to a particular set of class conditions (Bourdieu, 1990; Weninger, 2005). As products of socialisation and past experience, dispositions composing the habitus orient individuals at a subconscious level to the world around them, guaranteeing the "'correctness' of practices and their constancy over time, more reliably than all formal rules and explicit norms" (Bourdieu, 1990, p. 54). Accordingly, the concept of "vocational habitus" proposes that learners aspire to a certain combination of dispositions demanded by a particular vocational culture pertaining to how they should "properly feel, look and act" as well as the values, attitudes, and beliefs they should espouse in order to become "right for the job" (Colley, James, Tedder, & Diment, 2003, p. 488). As we shall later see, the concept of vocational habitus is especially useful to inform the analysis when presentation of interview findings of VET participants is made in chapter 7.

"Field" constitutes the third and final concept in Bourdieu's arsenal. With caution, Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992) compare the social field to that of a game played out on a field by different players who are granted access onto the field by concurring in their belief ("doxa") of the game; "Players agree, by the mere fact of playing that it is worth playing…and this collusion is the very basis of their competition" (p. 98). In order to advance their positions on the field players use different species of capital. While fundamental species of capital are efficacious in all fields, "their relative value as trump cards is determined by each field" (p. 98). Species of capital determine a player's "relative force in the game" and "strategic orientation." Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992) elaborate upon this last point by stating,

> The strategies of a "player" and everything that defines his "game" are a function not only of the volume and structure of his capital…but also of the *evolution over time* of the volume and structure of this capital, that is of his social trajectory and of the dispositions (habitus) constituted in the prolonged relation to a definite distribution of objective chances. (p. 99)

A final property of fields relates to the role of the individual. Fields are considered to constitute "systems of relations that are independent of the populations which these relations define" (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 106). This metatheoretical orientation informs an empirical methodology whereby the "true object of social science" is not the individual but rather the field; individuals exist as "agents" – that is "bearers of capital" with a "propensity to orient themselves actively either toward the preservation of the distribution of capital or towards the subversion of this distribution" (p. 108). Empirical construction of the field requires that the different forms of capital operating within it be identified, and in order to identify these forms of capital, "one must know the specific logics of the field" (p. 108).

A final aspect pertaining to a field's social topography relates to its interaction with other fields. Rather than being conceived of as bounded entities, fields are porous, meaning that they interact synergistically to produce "cross field effects" (Rawolle & Lingard, 2008). Internationally, policy fields include organizations like the OECD which have become policy actors in their own right in influencing national education and economic policy agendas (Jessop, 2002; Rawolle & Lingard, 2008). At the national level, the state retains a broad interest in labour force development through the institutionalisation of inter-provincial and territorial training and employment agreements. Hence, the political-institutional context can be considered to constitute an apprenticeship field. As bearers of economic capital, the interests of the state and industry overlap to ultimately structure the habitus of the apprenticeship field by defining the rules of the game, including who is, and who is not, entitled to enter onto the field; these actors also establish the rules of the pedagogical game by defining learner needs as market needs. As we shall also see, at the regional level, different social and economic fields articulate to produce the local order. Together these different fields produce the VET field.

Regulation of Capital

As a social stratification theory, Bourdieuian analysis presents a powerful heuristic device for framing the field of partnerships and participants' habitus. However, as this orientation is synchronic (in the sense that it is concerned with elucidating extant social relations), key questions remain unanswered, which relate to agents' "social trajectory," "structure of capital," the "state of power relations between classes," and how the volume and structure of capital have evolved over time. In order to elucidate these features pertaining to a field's "logic," consideration of how capitalism is regulated at the local level must be incorporated into the overall theoretical framework. This is because economic capital constitutes the most significant currency animating the VET field.

Regulation theory supports the conceptual framework by providing the necessary grammar to understand the shifting terrain of partnership agreements in a manner that positions global capitalism as being *contingently* mediated at the local level. That is to say, markets do not "govern the entirety of social interaction" but instead coexist and rely on "institutions that regulate interaction according to values that encode status distinctions" (Fraser, 2003, p. 58). Hence, while constituting a significant force impacting colonial relations and the position of VET partners on training fields, capitalism nonetheless is incorporated into extra-economic social relations in a multiplicity of ways that are not economically predetermined. Thus, regulation theory infuses a degree of agency neglected by orthodox Marxist accounts, yet at the same time recognizes that "structural contradictions and their associated strategic dilemmas always exist but assume different forms and primacies in different contexts" (Jessop, 2002, p. 289). I now turn my attention towards describing regulation theory and its application to the VET field.

Regulation theory emerged in response to two general theories of development that can broadly be categorized as orthodox modernization paradigms and neo-Marxist dependency theories – both of which reached their apogee in the post-World War II era of post-colonial independence. Modernization theories optimistically postulated a series of stages by which Less Developed Countries (LDCs) would progressively achieve a model of individual and social development that approximated that of Western industrialised nations. In contrast, dependency theories argue that on a global scale capitalism produces the "development of underdevelopment," meaning that uneven development between regions, considered to consist of a capitalist "core" and resource rich "periphery," results from unequal exchange – the latter consigned to a state of *dependency* upon the former.[39] By the 1960s and 1970s both paradigms began to fall out of favour due to their emphasis on macro-structural explanations formulated within the dictates of a totalizing language that presupposed a pre-ordained teleological order governed by a set of abstract laws that ultimately failed to adequately explain empirical events unfolding at the local level (see Peet & Hartwick, 1999; Rist, 1997; Wolf, 1982). A third set of (post)development theories emerged in response to two inter-related events: the failure of orthodox modernization policies to improve the lives of people in LDCs, and secondly, as a response to the crisis-induced periodization of late capitalism occurring during the mid-1970s that subsequently ushered in a "condition of postmodernity" privileging the local with its attendant emphasis on alternative forms of development (Harvey, 1990).[40] Models of economic development promoted through community engagement and direction permeates much of the partnership discourse to the point that "participatory development" can now be considered to represent the "new orthodoxy" (Henkel & Stirrat, 2001, cited in Nadasdy, 2005).

As its name implies, regulation theory explains how capitalism is *regulated* at the local level, positing a *mode of development* as the articulation of a *regime of accumulation* and *mode of social regulation*. A regime of accumulation is defined as a "historically specific production apparatus (in capitalism) through which surplus is generated, appropriated, and redeployed" which includes as a key element, “a characteristic way of organizing production and labour relations” (Scott, 1998 cited in Anderson, 1999, p. 35). Stabilizing a regime of accumulation is a mode of social regulation (MSR), which according to Hirst and Zeitlin (1992) is capable of securing “at least for a certain period the *adjustment* [emphasis added] of individual agents and social groups to the over-arching principle of the accumulation regime…” (cited in Anderson 1999, p. 35). Importantly, a regime of accumulation – as a contingent yet universally global strategy – may be socially regulated (in order to maximise surplus value) in a multiplicity of ways depending upon the local context and the course of action taken by key actors (Anderson, 1999).

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[39] The term "development of underdevelopment" was coined by Andre Gunder Frank (1929 – 2005) and has been applied to explain the northern territories for some of the reasons explained in this paragraph (Pretes, 1988; Watkins, 1977).

[40] Though the vague term "postmodern" has lost much of its usefulness, it continues to be used in development studies. Hence, it is possible to speak of a postmodern turn in development studies in the 1990s as a way of linking originally distinct but often overlapping theoretical tendencies such as post-colonialism, poststructuralism, and post-developmentalism (cited from Hodgkins, 2009).

Jessop (2002) further elaborates the spatio-temporal nature of regulation (or what he terms the “spatio-temporal fix”) by explaining that the key feature of periodization “is its concern with the strategic possibilities any given period provides for different actors, different identities, different interests, different coalition possibilities, different horizons of action, different strategies, different tactics” (p. 286). In essence, MSR is what Marx and Engels (1846/1978) initially described, and later elaborated upon by Gramsci (1971), as *hegemony* – the coercion of mass consent through non-violent means. Following Gramsci, Green (1990) explains, hegemony is “won through continual conflict which involves the creation of alliances, the attempted incorporation of subordinate groups, and even, the granting of concessions so long as these do not damage the vital interests of the dominant group” (p. 94). Hegemony aids in understanding how social regulation can conceal power relations governing partnership agreements while also producing a structuring effect in shaping career choices for VET participants. We can therefore inflect a critical element into the analysis by qualifying the word "adjustment" (in the previous definition) with (hegemonic) *consent*.

Ideological Conditions of Social Regulation

As a means of revising orthodox modernization development paradigms liberal theories have incorporated the language of culturalism to the point that one can discern a "liberal-culturalist" discursive formation regulating localised modes of social regulation, whereby liberal policies shrouded in the veneer of identity politics are made more palatable at the local level. In the contexts of this analysis, liberal-culturalism is understood as an orientation towards promoting a politics of recognition through creation of demand-driven training-to-employment programs – the sum of which ostensibly contributes towards building aboriginal human capital (AFN, 2007; Burleton & Gulati, 2011; GoC, 2000, 2009; Martin, 2011; RCAP, 1996; Sisco, Caron-Vuotari, Stonebridge, Sutherland & Rheaume, 2012). Consequently, modernization remains the most significant policy paradigm impacting training-to-employment programs, but unlike the original orthodox version, identity politics is now considered the most significant *means* of achieving modernizing *ends*. To support this contention I begin by tracing the emergence of liberal culturalism in relation to political philosophy undergirding contemporary positioning of aboriginal education and economic development. I then expose the inherent contradictions and weaknesses of the ideology, with particular attention paid to its application in training partnerships.

As Coulthard (2007) notes, over the past three decades indigenous claims to recognition have been couched in the vernacular of identity politics. Identity politics has been theorised using Hegel's (1977) notion of reciprocal recognition occurring between masters (i.e. colonisers) and slaves (colonised). It is assumed that affirmation, through intersubjective recognition, provides the necessary conditions for self-consciousness and emancipation to unfold. Hegel's master/slave dialectic has been popularized by Charles Taylor's influential essay, "The Politics of Recognition." In it, Taylor (1994) argues that it is incumbent upon the state to incorporate within its multicultural mosaic subaltern groups by affirming recognition of cultural differences so as to avoid the devastating psychological effects of misrecognition. Coulthard (2007) notes that within the contexts of indigenous relations, "most models of recognition involve delegation of land, capital and political power from the state to indigenous communities through land claims, economic development initiatives, and self-government processes" (p. 438). That is to say, recognition of indigenous groups is structured within the confines and dictates of the state; it is on the terms and conditions of the state that indigenous peoples are recognised. A perusal of literature on aboriginal education and economic development situates liberal and culturalist discourses within the wider theoretical spectrum of analysis.

Paradigms undergirding education, and more specifically aboriginal education, have been broadly organized into liberal, cultural, and structural theories.[41] Each category can be further sub-divided: the liberal category[42] contains exchange theories (human capital theory, rational choice theory); the cultural category contains both resistance and cultural discontinuity theories; and the structural category contains both liberal and conflict theories. Liberal theories "locate the success or failure with each person," (Schissel & Wotherspoon, 2003, p. 17) and cultural theories "shifts the blame for failure from Aboriginal cultural traditions to the gap between this heritage and the schools and other institutions that represent the dominant society" (p. 21). Structural theories emphasise oppressive social, economic, and political frameworks, as well as institutions and policies that produce social inequality.

Different ideological perspectives lead to different normative prescriptions. Human capital theory (HCT) considers education as an investment in building human resources, requiring people to compete for jobs on the basis of their abilities, skills, and experience (Lehmann, 2007; Wotherspoon, 2009). Rational choice theory (RCT) suggests "people attempt to maximise the utility of their educational decisions based on costs, expected benefits, and the probability of success of various alternatives" (Boudon, 1974; Goldthorpe, 1996, cited in Lehmann, 2007, p. 18). Cultural discontinuity theory considers that minority educational performance is diminished owing to differences between the predominantly Eurocentric culture and curriculum of schools and the prior cultural socialization of students, which influences how they learn (Cummins, 1990, 2000; see also Deyhle, 2008). Resistance theory argues that minority groups *resist* the imposition of curricula and pedagogy of the dominant culture by adopting oppositional behaviour and eventually drop out of school (Ogbu, 2008; see also Willis, 1977). Liberal structural theories argue for removing impediments to the free market in order to assert the sovereignty of the individual (Rand, 1967; Friedman, 1979), while conflict theories reverse this logic by arguing that social inequality ultimately resides in capitalistic exploitative relations of production (Livingstone, 1999; Marx, 1867/1990).

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[41] Schissel & Wotherspoon (2003) specifically organise these theories with respect to the aboriginal education literature. Aside from the identification of "cultural theories," there exists considerable overlap with the general education literature as well.

[42] Neoclassical economics is divided into two competing theories: liberal theories espouse government intervention to create efficient economic systems, whereas conservative theories (precursors to "neoliberal" economics that emerged in the 1980s) reject government intervention (Klees, 2008). Neoliberalism has subsequently been implemented on a global scale, radiating an ideology that facilitates movement of foreign capital, augmented by government creation of markets where markets did not previously exist, necessitating retrenchment and subsequent privatization of social services, including education (Harvey, 2005; Klees, 2008).

Lacunae

It is argued that education has had an “uneven or ambiguous effect on development” (Wotherspoon, 2009, p. 224), owing to the tenuous link existing between educational investment and both employment and increased wages (Livingstone, 1999, 2009). At the root of the problem are two conceptual weaknesses associated with human capital theory: assumptions about the economic system and assumptions about the nature of learning and work. With respect to the economic system, there remains a neoclassical assumption “that wages can be taken as indicators of economic output,” which cannot be sustained “in conditions of differing degrees of industrial competition” (Livingstone, 2009, p. 15); with respect to the nature of learning and work, “an unspecified alchemy converts education into output” (p. 16), meaning credentials are used to measure “rates of return” which do not accurately represent abilities, and do not address mismatches between the actual formal education attained by the labour force and the education required for current jobs.[43] Moreover, by placing the onus on individual responsibility, liberal theories assume perfect competition, thereby ignoring structural inequalities and barriers impeding educational success, as well as historical relations existing between different groups, which in the research context include exploitative relations.[44] Evidence also indicates that rational choice theory ignores social forces impacting individual decision-making; individuals do contain agency, but it is *bounded* – that is to say, cost-benefit analyses regarding educational choices and career trajectory are strongly influenced by social networks, institutions, and opportunities (Heinz, 2009; Furlong, 2009; Lehmann, 2007). In other words, career choice reflects both an individual's habitus and the field within which decisions are made (Morrison, 2008).

When compared to structural factors, cultural theories also warrant closer scrutiny. It has been shown that poverty, a sound economic base, and home environment are more significant in determining success at school for aboriginal learners than sui generis provision of culture-based education (Kanu, 2008). Structural factors relating to the demand for VET programs are also significant in determining their success. It is reasoned that motivation on the part of employers to provide pre-apprenticeship training is driven by demand-side labour market structures relating to both economic shifts in the economy and non-economic factors relating to the institutional culture of firms (Toner, 2003; Watt-Malcolm, 2010).[45] If we consider pre-apprenticeship training programs described in the last chapter, those that are demand-driven, and house and train trainees on-site, appear to be most successful in developing trades skills, especially when members of local communities have input into the kinds of training programs they need. Furthermore, Canadian research has found no evidence to indicate that rebellious or counter-culture behaviour exists among "working class" learners (Lehmann, 2007). Positivistic arguments that draw a correlation between resistance and poor performance for Inuit adult learners (McLean, 1997; see also Helme, 2007) appear over-stated when contrasted with empirical evidence showing adult aboriginal learners in case site VET programs were highly motivated, experienced minimal racial discrimination, and were capable of negotiating their ethno-cultural *identities* on a micro-level (Abele, 1989; Hobart, 1981, 1984).

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[43] Credentialism has been cited as a key barrier into entry level positions in northern megaprojects (Hodgkins, 2007; Joint Review Panel Report on the Mackenzie Gas Project, 2009, p. 455), as well as with high school-to-work transition apprenticeship programs in Wood Buffalo (Taylor & Friedel, 2011).

[44] Bourdieu (1986) critiques human capital theory for ignoring the relationship between "scholastic yield" and cultural capital previously invested by the family (p. 48).

Finally, the contradictory yet symbiotic ideological conflation of liberalism and culturalism requires further attention. Both theories are contradictory in the sense that liberalism espouses an economic *universalism* predicated upon an ontological individualism actualized through a utopic "free" market; whereas culturalism espouses ontological collectivism reified through the *particularism* of ethnic group identity. Yet both theories are also symbiotic in the sense that one relies on the other for its legitimacy, regulation, and production; by appearing to be progressive, liberal-culturalism resists criticism by appeasing (and silencing) proponents of cultural theories while simultaneously aggrandizing the business community beholden to expropriating ephemeral surplus value.

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[45] This observation recognizes that "demand-side" arguments must extend beyond the needs of industry and enterprises to also include the needs of individuals (notably transferable skills) and regions (e.g. local planning, negotiation of content) (Billett, 2000).

Political philosophers have expressly taken aim at a politics of recognition in their critique of contemporary approaches towards theorising colonial relations. These critiques generally relate to three inter-related areas: 1) decoupling matters of recognition to those of distribution; 2) essentialism of group difference; and 3) reification of culture.

Coulthard (2007) notes, a politics of recognition tied to projects of anti-colonialism is problematic as the structural economic relations remain intact owing to the fact that is it the state (master) who dictates the terms and conditions by which recognition is granted to indigenous peoples (slave). Because these terms and conditions are non-threatening to the structures of capital, exploitative relations are maintained (see also Bannerji, 2000). In a similar vein, Fraser (2003) argues an emphasis and preoccupation with matters of recognition, has displaced matters of redistribution. To ameliorate problems of displacement, Fraser (2003) suggests foregrounding both recognition and redistribution (a “dual perspective” approach) in order to achieve “participatory parity” which she argues is attained through social arrangements that permit all members of society to interact with one another equally. To avoid reification of difference, Fraser replaces identity politics with a status model of recognition, thereby situating the site of investigation not within the location of the individual or interpersonal psychology, but rather in social relations; social actors are no longer assigned to an exclusive status group, but rather exist within “cross-cutting axes of subordination.” While advantaged along some axes status subordinated individuals are simultaneously disadvantaged along other axes. Redressing status subordination therefore requires changing institutions and social practices by deinstitutionalising patterns of cultural value that impede parity of participation.

Fraser's (2003) notion of "cross-cutting axes of subordination" adds a further dimension to the notion of habitus by elucidating dispositions enmeshed by race, status, and class; rather than being slotted into one particular status group, individuals are "frequently disadvantaged along some axes and simultaneously advantaged along others" (p. 57).[46] In other words, agent's vocational habitus is in part contingently constituted by asset structures conferring both advantages and disadvantages. Differences in ethnic status and asset structure confer differential entry onto the training field for both VET participants and aboriginal partners, despite the fact that aboriginal people collectively experience status subordination within the broader mainstream arena.

Related to the problem of privileging recognition over redistribution is the tendency to essentialise group difference, producing what Brubaker (2005) terms "identitarian" ethnic oppositional positioning which he argues reduces analytical leverage. For instance, by conflating group interests to group identity, intra-group differences are obfuscated. Within the contexts of colonialism, essentialising groups into "colonisers" and "colonised" tends to consign status subordinated groups to a passive victimhood vis-à-vis the machinations of a conspiratorial state. For instance, Altimirano-Jimenez (2004) considers that indigenous people have “slipped up into market citizenship” – an assertion that gets applied without adequately considering the local contexts. While this assertion may characterise aboriginal peoples in Wood Buffalo, vis-à-vis inexorable tar sands development, her own description of the Beaufort Delta is problematic as evidence indicates that both Gwich’in and Inuvialuit have been active proponents of megaproject developments, as witnessed at the community level (Salokangas, 2005a, 2005b), amongst political leaders (Anderson, 1999; Nuttall, 2008), and during Berger Inquiry testimony presented in Inuvik.

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[46] Larson and Zalanga (2003) also note that in ethnically divided societies multiple axes of identity (i.e. class and ethnicity) produce distinctive social locations with particular political capacities to mobilize popular support for ethnic redistribution.

Associated with group essentialism is cultural reification. As Rata (2000) explains, “neotraditional cultural theories” are “grounded in entelechical assumptions of social change in which human beings are construed as products rather than as producers of culture” (p. 27). Similarly, Barcham (2000) explains that the prioritisation of identity over difference is grounded in ahistorical assumptions concerning the nature of indigeneity, which then reifies groups into existential dualities (being and non-being), thereby excluding the dynamic process of “becoming.” In other words, indigenous peoples are presented as somehow existing outside of history, a condition that Bourgeault (2003) refers to as constituting an “independent transhistorical invariant.”

The contradictory yet symbiotic nature of liberal-culturalism is illustrated by oil industry involvement in promoting linkages between residential schools and collective social suffering. For instance, I was informed that a tar sands company sponsored former residential school students to attend a residential school hearing in a case site community (personal communications with both an industry employee and hearing session participant). I have also witnessed an aboriginal community liaison representative for an oil company present second-hand testimony of residential school abuse to a group of educators. In both cases the *cause* for social suffering was directed towards perceived *historical* injustices. It is therefore reasonable to suggest that the oil industry has used the residential schooling experience as an expedient scapegoat to distract from on-going capitalist dispossession, while appearing to be supportive of the very populations they have dispossessed of traditional lands and resources.[47]

At the same time, liberal-culturalist discourses have become engrained in the rhetoric of aboriginal leaders. Increasingly there is a conflation of aboriginal political and business leaders who share the same message that self-determination is tied to economic development through partnerships involving megaprojects. In the Beaufort Delta, Inuvialuit and Gwich'in business/political leaders extol the virtues of forming partnerships with oil companies, as noted in the formation of the Aboriginal Pipeline Group and witnessed in the annual petroleum conference occurring in Inuvik that receives sponsorship and promotion from both aboriginal groups.[48] Similarly, in Wood Buffalo, the tribal council promotes economic development through partnerships with tar sands companies; aboriginal role models who present to youth are either elite members of the oil industry or endorse the partnership approach with tar sands companies.[49] In both case sites a link between schooling and employment in the resource extraction industry is made. And while the state has channelled funding to both regions that is contingent upon embracing the market approach to self-determination, evidence also indicates that aboriginal groups have embraced this ideological shift. As I shall argue, liberal culturalism, as the predominant ideology of an indigenous mode of social regulation, has significant implications for how vocational habitus articulates with social, cultural, and economic capital occurring on the VET field.

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[47] On an international scale, World Bank reports have rediscovered the virtues of collective tenure as a means to promote capitalism (Li, 2010).

[48] See Ezra Levant's interview (June 27, 2012) with Fred Carmichael, who is president of the Aboriginal Pipeline Group and former president of the Gwich'in Tribal Council. Accessed online November 18, 2012 from: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GAVL29xPviA

Responses to the overlapping interests occurring between different partners have tended to either ignore aboriginal capitalism and class formation, or have inadequately presented a one-dimensional functional deterministic account of aboriginal – non-aboriginal relations. Commonly, aboriginal groups are presented in a “take it or leave it situation” as development will occur with or without their consent (Altimirano-Jimenez, 2004). In other cases aboriginal people are scorned for failing to uphold traditional practices and values when they do embrace the market (e.g. Alfred, 2005; Coulthard, 2007). These approaches tend to either assign false consciousness or passive victimhood to explain how aboriginal leaders and role models have failed to uphold traditional values, which get linked to notions of egalitarianism. And while these observations may be true to varying degrees, these conditions are not germane to aboriginal people per se. Moreover, this line of argument tends to ignore agency of actors and romantically considers traditional values to be somehow innate and timeless. For instance,

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[49] Slowey (2008) describes how individual entrepreneurs from regional communities have been mentored by tar sands companies. It was noted during interviews that one of these individuals is a regular guest speaker in Fort McMurray schools.

Friedel and Taylor (2011) consider “traditional activities” such as “trapping and hunting” as a “strategy of economic development consistent with the goals of Indigenous nationhood and cultural survival” (p. 41). Aside from the assumptions embedded in this statement, further consideration of the complex interplay occurring between wage labour and subsistence activities is required. For instance, empirical studies suggest that wage labour provides the means to engage in subsistence activities (Kruse, 2010; Natcher, 2008). However, it was also noted from personal interviews and observations that those lacking sufficient cash are compelled to engage in subsistence activities as they cannot afford store bought food. In either case findings indicate a class dimension. In addition, just because an aboriginal person becomes wealthy off of resource development, or chooses to embrace the logic of the market, does not mean to suggest that he/she does so through false consciousness, has no other alternative, or should be scorned for failing to uphold “traditional” aboriginal values.

Part of the reason for the failure to properly identify the full range of social relations occurring at the local level is due to the fact that postmodern analysis is ill-equipped to adequately interrogate the very mechanisms it purports to critique. This is because the site of critique rests with modernity, rather than its perverse mode of production – capitalism; while the construction of the critique nihilistically falters on the shores of Hegelian recognition, thereby displacing matters of redistribution that are so central to understanding colonial-capitalist relations. Even when capitalist relations are embedded in the analysis, there is a tendency to essentialise difference and ignore overlapping interests that have formed between aboriginal and non-aboriginal groups.

A more plausible means for recognising and explaining the changing positionality of partner groups is to be found in analysing the restructuring of capital and labour. In order to examine intra-group relations and overlapping interests, this approach requires that essentialised group differences are first deconstructed and teased apart before reconfiguring these same groupings back into their nominal classifications occurring on the training field. I now turn my attention to examining the habitus of the VET field through transformations in the regulation of labour, followed by examination of transformations in indigenous modes of social regulation.

Transformations in the Regulation of Labour

If liberal-culturalism provides the ideological conditions to regulate localised capital accumulation regimes, then how has labour been restructured to accommodate this vision? As numerous scholars have noted, neoliberal globalization has resulted in policy agendas that have targeted education and its association with economic development, which include promotion of public-private partnerships as a means of reducing public expenditures (Harvey, 2005, Klees, 2008, Taylor, 2001, Wotherspoon, 2009). Understanding this policy transformation and its impacts on the restructuring of labour is most adequately conceptualised through a periodization of capital accumulation strategies.

A period of stability referred to as Fordism (named after Fordist factory production and consumption techniques and patterns) occurred during the first part of the twentieth Century and culminated in a collapse during the 1970s. According to Anderson (1999), Fordism underwent a series of stages beginning with expansion of capitalism (imperialism, colonialism), mass production based techniques, the growing importance of multinational corporations, international trade, and increased mobility of capital. Accompanying these stages were modes of “monopolistic” social regulation which saw increased production matched by increased consumption, and oligopolistic corporations operating within a relatively stable competitive framework coordinated by Keynesian state policies that sought to “minimize the vulnerability of the accumulation system to cyclical recessions” (Pick & Tickell, 1992, cited in Anderson, 1999, p. 38).

Reasons for the Fordist collapse are related to the weakening of national economies in light of the unrestricted flow of international capital which sparked a crisis that could not be managed and contained by Keynesian welfare state interventions (Jessop, 2002). Accordingly, scales of mass production coordinated through national policies have increasingly given way to accumulation strategies requiring flexible production, or what is commonly referred to as postFordist “flexible accumulation.” Characteristics of postFordism include more specialized workplaces, a greater reliance on subcontracting, and more temporary and part-time hiring; owing to a collapse of the national Keynesian-Fordism compromise there has also been a shift in strategy towards forging localised networks and alliances (Anderson, 1999; Harvey, 1990).

As Anderson (1999) notes, under the broad umbrella of Fordism “distinctive national and regional variants emerged” including the “free enterprise" approach of the United States and the "social democratic" approach of Scandinavian countries (p. 38). Different approaches correspond to differences in the organisation of labour and training: North American systems are considered to be "labour market economies" (LME) and northern European systems are considered to be "coordinated market economies" (CME) (Hall & Soskice, 2001). Whereas, *social democratic partnerships* are considered to exist in coordinated market economies, *neoliberal partnerships* are considered to exist in labour market economies. And while the former is considered to have the "potential to promote less hierarchical and more active decision-making and to promote economic innovation," neoliberal partnerships "may be a way of addressing contradictions to state and market failures and allowing the state to steer at a distance through local community networks" (Jessop, 2002, cited in Taylor, 2009, p. 129).

Differences in how market economies are organized impact the provision and organization of partnerships occurring at the local level. Social partnerships have been classified into three categories: 1) "community partnerships" (whose genesis is often aligned with local issues); 2) "enacted partnerships" (intentionally established by government and non-government agencies for specific policy purposes); and 3) "negotiated partnerships" that are negotiated between the needs of a community and an enacting agency (Billett et al., 2007, p. 640). The goals of each partnership vary, with community partnerships motivated to secure resources to address localised needs, and enacted partnerships oriented towards securing policy goals of the sponsoring agency (Billett et al., 2007, p. 642).

Billett and Seddon (2004) also organise social partnerships temporally. "Old partnerships" refer to those that have established and institutionalised reciprocal relationships with central governments involving tripartite processes (government, capital, and labour) (occurring in CMEs). In these cases, a social charter that is embedded in community and society underpins partnership governance. It is argued that on account of the presence of tripartite arrangements, CME training partnerships are more likely to proceed through deliberation, negotiation, and coordination, whereas in LME countries there tends to be an historic absence of these same networks and structures, including institutional links between secondary education and employment (Hall & Soskice, 2001; Taylor, 2009). Billett and Seddon (2004) further define old partnerships by stating: "While not necessarily being consensual (e.g. the contested relations between industrial parties), these partnerships are based on shared understandings about the purposes, points of conflict and means by which these can be resolved" (p. 56). Conversely, "new social partnerships" are the product of weakened institutional arrangements and tend to be characterized by "prescriptive structures, processes and pre-specified goals" (p. 56), whereby

> understandings among partners may be dissonant, rather than shared, focus diverse, and interest in engagement subject to fluctuation and particular needs and initial stages. These sets of conditions are largely products of the partnerships being initiated outside of the relations and communities in which it is being enacted. (p. 56)

Using the above categorisations we can infer that the "structure" of the Canada's labour market economy "conditions the corporate strategy" of VET partnerships to be ideologically neoliberal and structurally both "enacted" and "new."[50] Partnerships are also likely to be played out on a contested field that privileges bearers of economic capital who set the rules of the game (Taylor, 2009). These characteristics of social partnerships also align with descriptions of aboriginal VET partnerships in both the NWT and north-eastern Alberta insofar as they are initiated and funded outside of communities through considerable overlap existing between the interests of settler state governments and industry (Abele, 1989; Taylor & Friedel, 2011; Friedel & Taylor, 2011). However, it should be noted that enacted partnerships are masked as negotiated partnerships considering that they are ostensibly negotiated between the needs of a community and an enacting agency.

Understandably, there is a tendency to normatively prescribe a social democratic community partnership approach to ameliorate problems associated with neoliberal enacted partnerships. Embedded in this prescription is an assumption that greater involvement at the local level will foster democratic decision making and enhance community well-being and empowerment. However, this prescription tends to problematically conflate group identity with group interests. Consequently, in order to understand how different groups are positioned on the VET field micro-social relations impacting partnership agreements must be examined in a manner that considers how postFordism continues to structure the habitus of the VET field in terms of actors' interests, strategies, and dispositions, including how alliances have shifted vis-à-vis the restructuring of capital. Ascertaining the logic of particular VET fields therefore requires one last consideration – modes of social regulation shaping and conditioning the local order.

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[50] Hall and Soskice (2001) argue that institutional structures condition corporate strategies. With respect to training, CMEs privilege general, rather than firm-specific skills, owing to a highly fluid labour market. With respect to training partnerships, in CMEs firms are subject to third party sanctions for providing misleading information, whereas in LMEs firms are not adversely impacted.

Transformations in Indigenous Modes of Social Regulation

Writing in the New Zealand context, Elizabeth Rata (2000) argues that the contemporary Maori tribe is understood as being located within a postFordist mode of regulation rather than in relation to a struggle against hegemonic domination per se. Fundamentally, a shift in the means of production from *use-values* associated with redistributive tribal economies to *exchange values* has resulted in the establishment of “neotribal capitalism” – now a global phenomena. According to the theory, the capitalist relations of production characterizing the modern period are now combined with social and political relations of pre-modern production. And yet, a revival of kin relations has not translated into a revival of communal relations owing to the emergence of class distinctions that have formed in the wake of land claims agreements. Understanding the evolution of tribal class formation requires examination of aboriginal-industry-state relations from two inter-related standpoints: 1) colonial establishment of capital; and 2) current engagements of global capitalism with established colonial structures. With respect to the former, the structuring effects of land claim settlements accompanying a transition to postFordism are examined. With respect to the latter, articulation of the colonial structures of capital within the wider international political economy of oil dependency is examined. Together, both analyses elucidate the positionality of partnership groups operating on the VET field.

If we recall, simple commodity production through wage labour was selectively incorporated into subsistence practices as a measure of sustaining a semi-autonomous mixed economy. As part of capitalism's combined and uneven development, antecedents of industrial development dispossessed indigenous inhabitants of their means of production, resulting in non-immigrant proletariat diasporas dependent on government welfare for assistance. Wright (2005) theorises conditions of settler state colonialism as representing "non-exploitative oppression," meaning that colonizers were unable to sufficiently exploit indigenous labour power on account of it remaining unskilled and undisciplined; yet, the capitalization of resources located on traditional territories required state orchestrated "accumulation by" (Harvey, 2005) and "management of" (Li, 2010) dispossession through treaty signing, scrip commissions, and the Disk List system, followed by land claims agreements.[51] Consequently, state formation, which has been theorized as simultaneously producing both "totalizing and individualizing" effects (Corrigan & Sayer, 1985), is governed by erasure of difference through legitimation of reinscribed identities tied to de- and subsequent re-territorialization of lands required for the expansion of the bourgeois state.[52]

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[51] Non-exploitative oppression can be summarised in the egregiously racist remark, "A good Indian is a dead Indian"; by way of contrast, one would not say, "A good slave is a dead slave" (Wright, 2005; see also Wolfe, 2006 for a similar analysis concerning the "logic of elimination"). As a caveat, aboriginal people in northern Canada have had a long-standing participation in wage labour as well as experiencing varying levels of entrepreneurship. Therefore, the term is only used to theorise the general broad sweep of change that accompanied the socio-economic transition into industrial capitalism.

[52] As Harvey (2007) notes, the principle role of the bourgeois state is to provide a system to both organise capital (by guaranteeing private property rights) and manage a labour supply.

While this last observation holds true for the initial structuring of colonial-capitalist relations, these conditions are rooted within a Fordist mode of social regulation organised within a national frame of governmentality. Consequently, there is a need to locate new social formations within a postFordist accumulation regime, as "social ordering is no longer nationally bounded, or correlated with a national state, or centered in any locus of coordination" (Fraser, 2009, p. 126). From this standpoint, an indigenous mode of social regulation is understood to be one effect, of many, characterising a postFordist restructuring of capital and labour.

As chronicled in the last chapter, status subordination spawned a politics of protest that subsequently transitioned into a politics of partnerships by the 1990s. Ogbu (2008) organises the deleterious effects of colonisation into four categories: 1) *involuntary incorporation into society*; 2) *instrumental discrimination* (denial of equal access to good jobs, education, political participation); 3) *social subordination* (residential and social segregation); and 4) *expressive mistreatment* (cultural, language, and intellectual denigration). These components of status subordination have been amply documented by northern studies scholars (e.g. Abele, 1989; Asch, 1977; Berger, 2006; Irlbacher-Fox, 2009; McCormack, 1984) and can be linked to state educational development associated with industrialism, urbanization, state intervention, and changes in family structure (Green, 1990).

While these deleterious effects have been amply documented, what has not been adequately considered are changes to social relations that accompanied a transition from a politics of protest to a politics of partnerships. As previously chronicled, this transition was precipitated by political resistance by national aboriginal groups in response to federal government policies of assimilation during the late 1960s, and signified a state paradigm shift in neoliberal governance. Significantly, similar events were also unfolding on a global scale and coincided with a transformation from Fordist to postFordist production (Brubaker, 2005; Fraser, 2003; Freidman, 1994; Hobsbawm, 1994; Rata, 2000).

According to Rata (2000), a transformation from Fordism – associated with detribalisation and urbanisation in the 1950s and 1960s – was replaced in the 1980s by postFordism and retribalization. Hence, the withering away of pre-capitalist societies which was foreseen in Marx's teleological philosophy of history, and embedded in both modernization theories and state policies, never materialised. Instead, a renaissance of ethnic and cultural pride irrupted that was accompanied by a restructuring of aboriginal-industry-state relations.

In northern Canada a politics of protest crystallized during the Berger Inquiry when a confluence of interests (aboriginal, church, state, industry) publicly galvanized the popular imagination and support of a largely southern Canadian, non-aboriginal, urban population that was removed from the day-to-day realities of northern peoples yet sympathetic to aboriginal status subordination. The much-publicized inquiry resulted in the creation of a heroic "David and Goliath" essentialist duality that pitted traditionalist interests of aboriginal peoples on the one hand, against the mercenary interests of the state and industry on the other. Despite a marked change in the pro-business rhetoric of most northern aboriginal leaders, the essentialist duality occurring at the time of the inquiry continues to frame understandings of aboriginal – non-aboriginal relations, resulting in obfuscation of nascent class interests that were cemented through the *structuring* effects of land claims agreements occurring in the aftermath of the inquiry.[53]

In order to promote stable economic growth, land claims have been orchestrated by the state at the behest of industry in order to resolve disputes concerning title to the land (DIAND, 2009; Slowey, 2008). Writing in the context of the Canadian Arctic, Mitchell (1996) describes how the state strategy to facilitate land claims resulted in the creation of a comprador class element. According to Mitchell (1996), “Dispossessing Inuit of their land, making them into shareholders, and exacerbating disparities in wealth and power, the state’s incursion into the North succeeded in institutionalizing power differentials among the Inuit to the point of class distinctions” (p. 341). Mitchell (1996) goes on to state:

> The development of corporations are the vehicles that perpetuate an Inuit ruling class, one without a power source of its own. The original capital comes from the state. We can say, therefore, that the state created a ruling class that facilitated industrial development of the North. This dependent “ruling class” is helping state/industry to dispossess all Inuit of their land, and it controls the capital paid by the state to all Inuit (indirectly) as compensation for dispossession. Although the development corporations are becoming increasingly important as employers of Inuit, their main significance is that they control the allocation of resources and wealth, and that their economic control is combined with political control. I suggest that what has occurred is an incorporation of Inuit into the Canadian class structure, but it is an unequal incorporation because the capital controlled by the ruling class is not self-generated, and because the “inferior” ethnic

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[53] Giddens’ (1984) theory of *structuration* helps conceptualise how brokerage of the traditional means of production changed the *relationship* to the lands and resources through processes of “bureaucratization, juridification, and commodification,” engendering rent entitlements to land claims beneficiaries, disbursed by a managerial comprador class (Rata, 2000).

> status of the ruling class acts as a check to its involvement in mainstream industrial development and meaningful involvement at the political level. (pp. 397 – 398)

In reference to the Inuvialuit Final Agreement (IFA) that began in the early 1970s and was eventually ratified in 1984, Hochstein (1987) notes that the IFA in essence constituted an exchange for rights and benefits, including a cash settlement, in return for clear title to exploit oil and gas in the Beaufort Sea and Mackenzie Delta (p. 138). The central issue of importance for those negotiating the agreement on behalf of the Inuvialuit were rights to oil and gas revenues; however, "the idea of development corporations, lawyers and consultants gobbling up the money, properly viewed by Inuvialuit, was anathema to some residents" (p. 126). According to Vodden's (2001) socioeconomic analysis of the IFA, the result has been a costly implementation process that lacks a planning framework, including a need for education and training; and because Inuvialuit do not fall under the *Indian Act* umbrella, capacity dollars have not been readily available by the federal government.

Similar political and economic transformations have been described in Wood Buffalo. Slowey (2008) notes that the Mikisew Cree first Nation (MCFN) Treaty Land Entitlement (TLE) began in 1971 and was finally ratified in the 1980s once MCFN withdrew its claim to the economically all-important tar sands region, and proposals to participate in the new economy were endorsed (p. 34). Significantly, changes in band governance philosophy promoting economic development as a strategy for self-preservation ensued.

From these accounts, it can be surmised that land claims settlements have enabled the "state to be put into the tribes" while at the same time, "putting the tribes into capitalism" (Rata, 2000, p. 58; see also Nadasdy, 2005). In turn, tensions are noted to exist between communities in Wood Buffalo, as some groups compete more vigorously than others in asserting their dominance in the marketplace, raising concerns about the potential effects of land claims settlements and resource development (Slowey, 2008, p. 79). Accordingly, aboriginal governance continues to be structured according to the needs of capital. However, unlike the original treaty agreements where interests were more distinct and homogenously bounded, considerable overlap in interests now exists between the different partner groups that broker training and employment agreements.

Accompanying increasing overlap in interests is the relocation of administrative and bureaucratic centers to regional centers. These centers were originally created by the state to expeditiously manage the exploitation of oil and gas resources. Land claims, as part of this process, has resulted in regional centers housing the central administrative centers for aboriginal governments as well. Regional centers like Fort McMurray and Inuvik represent, to use Wallerstein's (1974) phrase, "semiperipheries" that have been created to broker resources occurring between peripheral "hinterlands" and the southern "core." Centralised aboriginal governments (tribal councils, regional corporations) that evolved out of settlements to serve as an advocate and resource for separate bands and community corporations also fulfill a key function of semiperipheries; by serving as an intermediary between outlying communities and regional centers capital accumulation is naturalised, as the interests of the core are maintained, while those of the periphery appeased.

Tectonic shifts in the restructuring of aboriginal-industry-state relations provide a basis from which to further consider how groups engage with on-going imperatives of global capitalism. In both case site regions the restructuring of labour is fundamentally understood to be contingently tied to oil and gas developments occurring within a postFordist regime of accumulation. Unlike a Fordist colonial regime of accumulation, contradictions within the new regime that must be managed include the weakening of the nation state vis-à-vis policies and institutional structures that entrench the unrestricted flow of transnational capital across borders.[54] Unlike finance capital, industrial capital is characterized as an increasing dependence on valorizing extra-economic social relations tied to place, which requires "more general attempts to penetrate microsocial relations" (Jessop, 2002, p. 295).

As a result of the fragmentation of the nation from the state, a "clientelist" relationship has formed between the state and various interest groups (Friedman, 1999). As Karl (1997) notes, resource extractive industries are especially adept at undermining nation state sovereignty, as the "the number of firms (few) involved in mining and oil activities and their size (large) enhance their ability to challenge the state. They are able to subvert the political process by forming partnerships with local elites" (p. 55). It is reasoned that in Canada, resource extractive industries condition political behaviour at the national level (McBeath, Berman, Rosenberg, & Ehrlander, 2008). Owing to federal devolution of energy resources occurring at the subnational level, it is also noted that oil-dependency conditions political behaviour in Alberta (Taft 2007, 2012). In the NWT, similar analysis has been made regarding the impacts of resource dependency on local aboriginal governments. In reference to the Mackenzie Gas Project, Leadbeater (2007) writes, "pro-export expansion has been promoted to governments and local elites who become dependent on hydrocarbon exports and resource rents – which itself perpetuates policies favoring resource export dependency" (p. 30).

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[54] Free trade agreements in the 1980s and 1990s constrain national policy options (e.g. see the energy proportionality clause of the North American Free Trade Agreement, Chapter 6, n.d.). NAFTA is also considered to run counter to a high skill, high wage economy owing to the "replacement of unionized, steady, well-paid jobs" with "temporary, non-unionized and largely part-time Mc-Jobs" (Lefort, 2007, cited in Taylor, 2009, p. 128).

While postFordist flexible accumulation may be characterized as constituting "vertical disintegration" (sub-contracting and out-sourcing) (Harvey, 1990), as noted in core industries operating in Wood Buffalo (Taylor et al., 2007), the political economy of oil requires a stable accumulation regime to maintain favourable conditions for productive/consumptive ("wells to wheels") *vertical integration*. While weakened, the state's role is to furnish transnational capital (low royalty regimes, publicly financed infrastructure, strike-free labour), despite the fact that the centralization of capital has enabled resource extractive industries to maintain supremacy in negotiating federal and provincial energy agreements (Pratt, 1976). In turn, the trajectory of the VET field in Wood Buffalo is ultimately driven by the needs of transnational capital. While the state may have actively promoted formation of the tar sands industry, the centralization of capital allows industry to leverage other species of capital in order to advance its own agenda of designing training programs that specifically further its own interests.

Writing in the context of the 1971 Alaskan Native Claims Settlement Act, Anders (1983) characterises two types of economic relationships occurring in Alaskan native communities: an "extractive economy," which generates a surplus in the form of cheap renewable and non-renewable commodities, and a "grants economy" which is based upon "cash transfers that flow into villages in the form of state and corporate dividends, government grants, and transfer payments. These then flow out, without substantial benefit to the local populace, in the form of construction projects, consultant studies…[etc]" (p. 569).[55]

Grants economies are usually associated with interim periods of senescence. During these relatively stable periods the state strategy is oriented towards on-going Westphalia sovereignty through entrenchment of welfare policies. Conversely, when resource extractive industries are present new social relations emerge characterized by what is termed a "Doctrine of Domicile." According to Stander and Becker (1990):

> The TNC's interest in maximizing global profitability and avoiding suboptimization at a subsidiary level will be weighed against another, equally important interest: the corporation must legitimize its host-country presence in order to obtain the stability it needs to plan the maximization of capital accumulation under its control. (cited in Anderson, 1999, p. 44)

Importantly, the establishment of domiciled capital results in the co-evolution of a "local managerial bourgeoisie" which forms vis-à-vis the interests of a “TNC bourgeoisie” (Anderson, 1999); the role of the managerial bourgeoisie is to domesticate/indigenise TNCs, while the TNC bourgeoisie simultaneously globalizes the interests of the managerial bourgeoisie (McBeath, et al., 2008). These conditions are not peculiar to aboriginal political economy, but also are considered to exist in “mature-dependent” resource rich countries like Canada (McBeath et al., 2008). However, checks and balances occurring in parliamentary democracies help ensure a clearer division between politics and business occurs.[56] In contrast, northern aboriginal governance is characterized as possessing low public accountability, and a blatant mixing of business with politics has been noted to occur in both case sites (Cizek, 2005; Hodgkins, 2009; Mitchell, 1996; Slowey, 2008; van Meurs, 1993; White, 2009).

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[55] Anders (1983) argues ANCSA was lobbied for and supported by oil companies, as it was reasoned it would be easier to manipulate aboriginal groups, rather than the state, in obtaining support for the development of a pipeline (cited from Hodgkins, 2009, p. 183).

Writing ten years after the settlement of the Inuvialuit Final Agreement, van Meurs (1993) notes that the merger of politics and business creates problems of defining the role of leaders, as the leaders “end up being either commercial leaders who loose [sic] touch with the electorate or political leaders who will squander the land claims capital, or both” (p. 3). The Aboriginal Pipeline Group (APG) exemplifies how TNCs have partnered with aboriginal groups in order to leverage support for a particular venture. In this case APG is headed by aboriginal elites who act (or have acted) simultaneously as both political and business leaders in the territory (Vodden, 2001).

A second difference relating to aboriginal governance involves the ability of First Nations to leverage political and juridical capital in order to challenge development through legal and constitutional challenges. In Wood Buffalo, an ambivalent relationship exists with respect to tar sands development owing to the enormous impact the developments continue to have on local people and the environment. As Slowey (2008) notes, corporate executives now consider establishing good relationships with FN leaders a priority in order to maximize shareholder value, as delaying a mine approval over "bad relations," can cost companies millions of dollars (p. 68).

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[56] As Rata (2011) explains, “the formal separation of the economic and political spheres is essential to democracy because it is in the political sphere that the unequal economic subject becomes the equal citizen” (p. 331).

In both economic relationships dependency on rents structures the relationship existing between aboriginal groups, the state, and industry. With respect to oil-dependent states, Beblawi (1987) characterises *rentierism* to exist where: 1) rent situations predominate; 2) substantial external rent is capable of sustaining the economy without a strong productive domestic sector; 3) only a few are engaged in the generation and control of this rent, with the majority involved in the distribution or utilization of it; and 4) the *government* is the principal recipient of the external rent, affecting the role of the state in the economy (pp. 51 –52). These characteristics produce a *rentier mentality*, where income or wealth is not related to work or risk but rather to chance or situation; for a rentier, "reward becomes a windfall gain, an *isolated* fact, situational or accidental as against the conventional outlook where reward is integrated in a *process* as the end result of a long, systematic and organized production circuit" (p. 52).

Whether rents are being generated from the state or industry, the antecedents of rent-seeking behaviour occurred through the settlement of land claims and now conditions political behaviour in both case sites.[57] Aboriginal governments are dependent upon resource royalties to supplement federal government transfer payments. Resource rents, as noted through brokerage of impact and benefits agreements, are considered a vital means to wean aboriginal groups off of government dependency – a strategy endorsed by aboriginal leaders as it allows groups to increasingly gain autonomy from the state. Evidence of this policy trajectory can be found at the time of the Berger Inquiry when aboriginal leaders believed rents (over federal government grants) would be more amenable to supporting a mixed economy (Asch, 1982; see also Dacks, 1983). Nevertheless, the double edged sword of neoliberal policies impacts communities: while enabling a degree of autonomy from the state, these policies nonetheless serve to exacerbate social inequalities within and between communities by distancing political/business elites from a proletariat they represent owing to common ethnic ancestry.

In either economic relationship, a triadic relationship forms between key actors who represent the state, industry, and aboriginal people. The disposition of actors to mobilise various forms of capital onto the VET field depends on the local economic relationship. In resource extractive economies a *domiciled habitus* motivated by "corporate social responsibility" exists; whereas in regions where domiciled capital is no longer present or senescent a grants economy habitus oriented towards acquisition of federal grants structures the field. In the first case, industry is the driver of training and is motivated primarily by public relations to promote training partnerships in order to maintain shareholder confidence. In the second case, the federal government is the driver of training programs and is motivated to legitimise its continued presence in order to maintain state sovereignty; in the eventuality that megaprojects are established, the state strategy will shift towards promoting neoliberal enacted partnerships with core industries. Consequently, the Beaufort Delta is characterised by a government funded training field, whereas in Wood Buffalo, an industry-driven training field.

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[57] Some theorists consider rentierism to characterise the political economy of aboriginal reserves in southern Canada (Flanagan, 2000; Minnis, 2006), as well as in Nunavut (Widdowson, 2005). It has also been noted that a tendency to prioritise issues related to land claims over matters concerning education exists amongst aboriginal leaders (Blanchett-Cohen & Richardson, 2000). This observation supports the notion that aboriginal governments have directed their priorities towards matters of rent rather than production.

With respect to the Beaufort Delta, sources of economic capital are derived from the state, and employers are peripheral industries. Peripheral industries include construction and transportation companies. As peripheral industries are not required to gain contracts through public hearing processes that draw attention to costs and benefits associated with a particular development, they are not held to the same level of scrutiny as core industries. By way of contrast, core industries (i.e. TNCs) operating in Wood Buffalo are compelled to play by different rules of the game, as they must obey the Doctrine of Domicile in order to maximise surplus value.

A second major difference between these two industry partner groups is that development corporations have ownership stakes in peripheral industries; these companies are either dependent upon economic capital derived from the state (through grants) or from contracts derived from core industries. Importantly, development corporations do not own core industries. Marked by their presence or temporary absence in a region, core industries ultimately structure the habitus of both northern training fields.

Owing to the nature of land claims settlements that formed in relation to the industrial expansion of oil and gas activity in northern Canada, the habitus of aboriginal governments in both case sites is similar. Despite a somewhat ambivalent relationship that continues to frame inter-group relations, varying degrees of overlap in interests now exist between industry and the newly formed aboriginal governments which co-evolved alongside industrial development. This new postFordist relation to capital has resulted in changes in colonial relations; while the state remains an active player, it does so at a distance by channelling aboriginal groups towards contractual engagements with transnational core industries.

In Wood Buffalo, part of the ambivalence towards industry relates to on-going industrial dispossession of lands and resources; whereas in the Beaufort Delta, ambivalence has been replaced by frustration over failed attempts to develop the oil and gas industry in the region. Nevertheless, in either case, an alignment of ideological interests with those of the state and industry has resulted. Aboriginal governments now constitute the key conduit between aboriginal people and the market. Despite a merging of interests, differences between these groups also exist owing to a colonial legacy that has imprinted a similar group identity of status subordination. Secondly, access to capital remains limited. As aboriginal governments in both case sites are not the owners, but rather the renters of megaprojects, there remains a limited capacity to generate independent sources of capital. Depending upon the economic relationship, partnerships with core industries, the state, or some combination of the two, allow aboriginal governments to generate capital in the form of resource rents, or through joint ventures and subcontracting services. Mediating this relationship is a liberal culturalist ideology where an emphasis on group sameness (through a revival of kin relations) occurs through engagement with deregulated markets. Cementing this new relation is the ability of a managerial/comprador class to control capital that is then distributed in the form of rents to members of the corporate tribe through annual dividends. In essence, a shift from Fordism to postFordism has resulted in aboriginal people transitioning from being *strangers* in their own land to becoming *renters* in their own land –in effect constituting on-going alienation from the means of production.

Taken from this perspective, aboriginal VET partnership programs characterise a postFordist accumulation of regime, considering they constitute part of new social relations ("alliances") forged between industry and aboriginal governments, and regulated and legitimised by the state with varying degrees of intervention depending upon the presence (or likely presence) of established forms of domiciled capital. A key outcome of post-Fordist modes of social regulation is to hegemonically regulate neoliberal state retrenchment through liberal discourses of self-determination that essentialise ethnicity and reify culture. Implications for the overlap in partner interests are considerable, as the vocational habitus of the field is one of liberal culturalist discourses now channelled by all three partner groups.

Conclusion

This chapter has developed a framework to conceptualise an empirical account of aboriginal VET partnership programs in a manner that is supple enough to accommodate local variance and stable enough to link the seen with the unseen. Components of this framework include metatheoretical and empirical considerations. Ontologically, labour in its commodified form constitutes a universal condition that draws different agents into training partnership agreements as well as learners to gain the necessary credentials to participate in the labour force. Empirically, the local context is evaluated in terms of policy paradigms and their structural effects on education, training, and employment. Methodologically, training programs are organised and conceptualised using a synchronic Bourdieuian stratification analysis nested within a diachronic regulationist framework in which global capitalism is contingently regulated at the local level.

I have argued that VET is most adequately conceptualised as the confluence of global and local forces discursively regulated by a liberal-culturalist ideology. Accordingly, aboriginal job training programs constitute an institutionalised compromise designed to help consolidate a postFordist regime of accumulation by incorporating a once oppositional “non-exploitative” contradiction into the logic of the accumulation regime. Contradictions embedded in capitalist relations of production and consumption produce a field of struggles occurring between different agents that operate within asymmetrical power relations owing to historical differences in both volumes and compositions of capital possessed by different agents.

Regulation theory provides the necessary grammar of late capitalism to properly utilise Bourdieu's heuristic framework of field, capital, and habitus. That is to say, if analysis of training partnerships and the attendant aboriginal-industry-state relations are to be effectively conceptualised within a Bourdieuian schema, then they must be conceptualised within the contexts of late capitalism; to do otherwise lends itself to out-dated Fordist analysis of colonial-capitalist regimes of social regulation that remain ineffectually bounded to national, rather than post-national compromises. And so, while the VET field remains ostensibly structured through essentialised differences of partners, and while the predispositions of actors are structured by positions contingently defined by colonial relations, the means by which actors engage on the field as manifested through the rhetoric of partnerships is nonetheless impacted by transformations in the restructuring of capital and labour. Consequently, in order to elucidate both the logic of the field, including its social trajectory, the structure of capital, and its evolution over time, analysis must be grounded to conditions of late capitalism, without losing sight of its antecedents that created these divisions in the first place.

With the traditional Fordist positionalities of partners thrown into flux, the complexity of the VET field is exposed, including the overlap and shifting ideological positions of partners. And while liberal culturalism may constitute the established doxa, ambivalence and resistance to the rules of the game continue to structure the habitus of the training fields under investigation. How the logic of the field interacts with various species of capital, their subsequent strategies of conversion, and habitus of partners and participants is the subject of the second section of this dissertation.

CHAPTER FIVE

EXTENDING THE CASE METHOD

Chapter Introduction

As a comprehensive research strategy the case study methodology developed in this inquiry fulfills both a pragmatic policy analysis as well as theory reconstruction. While the former responds to research questions instrumentally, the latter uses empirical evidence to interrogate propositions made in order to further develop existing theory. A pragmatic policy analysis is developed in order to justify the research to stakeholders who have generously assisted in the field work component of the research. Engagement of concrete and context-specific issues of mutual interest also provides both an entry point into communities and an essential means of collaboratively gathering primary data.

Drawing from Burawoy (1991, 1998, 2009) a “reflexive” scientific methodology is used to link micro social *processes* to macro structural *forces* described in the previous chapter. This chapter unpacks the case study approach by first providing a rationale for conducting case study as a methodology of choice, followed by a discussion of metatheoretical assumptions as a context to introduce the research design and methods used for this inquiry.

Rationale and Purpose

The case study method can be defined as involving an approach towards investigating a contemporary phenomenon over a course of time within its real life context using multiple sources of information (Creswell, 2007; Flyvberg, 2006; Yin, 1994). Case study method may involve more than one case, where “the one issue or concern is selected, but the inquirer selects multiple case studies to illustrate the case” (Creswell, 2009, p. 74).

A reflexive scientific methodology guides the research, and uses “extended case” methods borrowed from constructivist traditions to analyse data. “ECM [extended case method] seeks to uncover the macro foundations of a microsociology. It takes the social situation as the point of empirical examination and works with given general concepts and laws about states, economies, legal orders, and the like to understand how these micro situations are shaped by wider structures” (Burawoy, 1991, p. 282; see also Little, 1995). In order to derive meaning beyond a particular context, the case study is “extended” in four ways: 1) by the observer into the field; 2) through observations over time and space; 3) by transitioning micro processes to macro forces; and 4) through theory reconstruction (Burawoy, 2009). The purpose of conducting multiple case site analysis is not to derive inductive generalizations – i.e. seeking out common patterns among diverse cases – but rather to seek out the source of external forces that make similar cases different (Burawoy, 2009).

Given the complexity of its real-life context, the nature of the questions posed, and the chronological time series of data gathering accompanying a learning-to-work transition, a multi-case site approach employing the methods described in this chapter most adequately meets the objectives of my research and the research questions posed. In both regions similarities and differences exist with respect to both the political and economic contexts as well as the training partnerships examined. A review of these provides a rationale for the case sites chosen.

In both case sites oil, gas, and mineral development continue to structure social relations. Despite the vast geographical distances separating them, both regions are linked through the vertically integrated nature of oil and gas development, whereby the same TNCs have interests in both regions, and have brokered agreements with various levels of governments in both regions. In response to the interests of the state and industry, aboriginal systems of governance have been restructured through treaties, land claims, and self-governance initiatives. Regional centers designed to administrate the regions and expedite the exploitation of resource development now exist, with outlying communities characterised as relatively impoverished, where the majority of people are of aboriginal descent, have low levels of education, and engage intermittently with the wage economy. In both case sites aboriginal governance and economic development trajectories have become increasingly aligned with the interests of the state and industry. With respect to training, both regions have a similar history of “enacted” training to employment partnership programs designed and delivered in conjunction with both industry and the state. These programs have experienced varying degrees of success.

However, differences between the two regions also warrant a case study approach. Both regions are undergoing different stages of the resource extractive cycle; the Beaufort Delta is experiencing a protracted preparatory pre-cycle stage, whereas Wood Buffalo is experiencing a mid-cycle operational stage of development. Respectively, the Beaufort Delta and Wood Buffalo regions are characterized by supply- and demand-driven employment, with markedly different economies of scale, labour force requirements, and sources of capital. While the Beaufort Delta is experiencing a federal grants economy characterised by construction projects, the oil-dependent economy of Wood Buffalo is driven and governed by the interests of transnational capital. And despite similarities in governance systems, significant differences also exist with respect to power bases. Whereas aboriginal governments enjoy more power in the Beaufort Delta, owing to the settlements of comprehensive land claims, those in Wood Buffalo have less power owing to the provisions set out in the treaty land entitlement agreements. Demographic differences are also worthy of note. In the Beaufort Delta, the majority of people are aboriginal, whereas in Wood Buffalo, aboriginal people constitute a minority of the population.

Economically, the NWT continues to be tied to speculative megaproject developments – notably diamonds and oil and gas, whereas Wood Buffalo has been able to sustain the boom effects of tar sands development. Consequently, the economic and political conditions vary with respect to aboriginal groups in the two regions; in Wood Buffalo the problem is too much development and not enough benefits or control by aboriginal people, whereas in the Beaufort Delta, aboriginal people are in control of how development can proceed and present a much more unified front in promoting it, but there currently exists a dearth of opportunity to exploit the resource base.

Comparative political economic analysis leads to analysis of the two training programs investigated. Through the federally-funded Aboriginal Skills Employment Training Strategy (ASETS), aboriginal governments in both regions have a role in administering training programs. Both regions have experienced federal training programs for aboriginal people; however, differences in economic relationships continues to structure the nature of training programs differently. In the NWT trades training continues to be speculative, supply-side driven, and government-funded. In contrast, Wood Buffalo's tar sands boom has produced a different set of dynamics, where greater institutional capacity to respond to demand-driven training has produced detailed labour pool analyses cognizant of looming labour shortages, and a history of hiring aboriginal people as part of an institutional culture of core industries willing to negotiate corporate social responsibility. The Beaufort Delta continues to receive federal training program support through the Aboriginal Skills Employment Partnership (ASEP) program, whereas in Wood Buffalo ASEP was discontinued and eventually replaced by a mine sponsored training program instead, although considerable financial and in-kind support is derived from aboriginal groups and both the federal and provincial government. Differences in sources of economic capital have resulted in different partnership strategies; the Beaufort Delta must rely on partnering with peripheral industrial employers in developing training programs, whereas in Wood Buffalo core industries are drivers of training programs.

Considering the differences and similarities existing between the two case sites, a multiple case site analysis is warranted, especially considering the nature of the research questions posed. These questions include the following: How are training decisions made? Who partners and why? What do partnerships tell us about the shifting nature of aboriginal-industry-state relations? The case sites are capable of responding to these questions while being anchored to the central thesis guiding the inquiry: partnerships are regulated similarly due to a restructuring of capital and labour occurring under postFordist colonial-capitalist relations. The research inquiry therefore fulfills an extended case study method by seeking out external forces that make similar cases different.

The second set of questions involves case site program processes and outcomes and relates to how programs impact the socialisation of VET participants. These questions include, What are the experiences of VET participants as they transition from learning-to-work?; How is success measured?; How are VET participants selected and subsequently socialized to fit in with particular work cultures?; and, How do differences in regional political economies impact program outcomes? Again, a multiple case site analysis is well suited to answering these questions as differences in regions can be contrasted and compared.

Metatheoretical Assumptions

Guiding a reflexive scientific methodology are meta-theoretical assumptions informed by what I describe as a Marxian ontology of labour mediated by a constructivist epistemology. Put simply, “we cannot know the external world without having a relationship with it” (Burawoy, 2009, p. 106). Labour constitutes a universal and primordial feature of all societies. It is through the productive forces of labour that resources are distributed and social processes regulating the "intercourse of individuals with one another" determined (Marx & Engels, 1846/1978, p. 150).

However, aligning productive forces to consciousness produces an Archimedean point existing outside of space and time. A universal ontology of labour is thus mediated dialectically by the particularism of local historical contexts. Drawing from Eisner (1979), Shekedi (2005) explains constructivist ontology "emphasizes the importance of context in understanding the phenomenon. It tends to place great emphasis on the historical conditions which events occur, and argues that parts cannot be understood outside their relationship to the whole in which they take place" (p. 3). Situational knowledge is therefore attained through a dialogical, inter-subjective relation occurring over time and space.

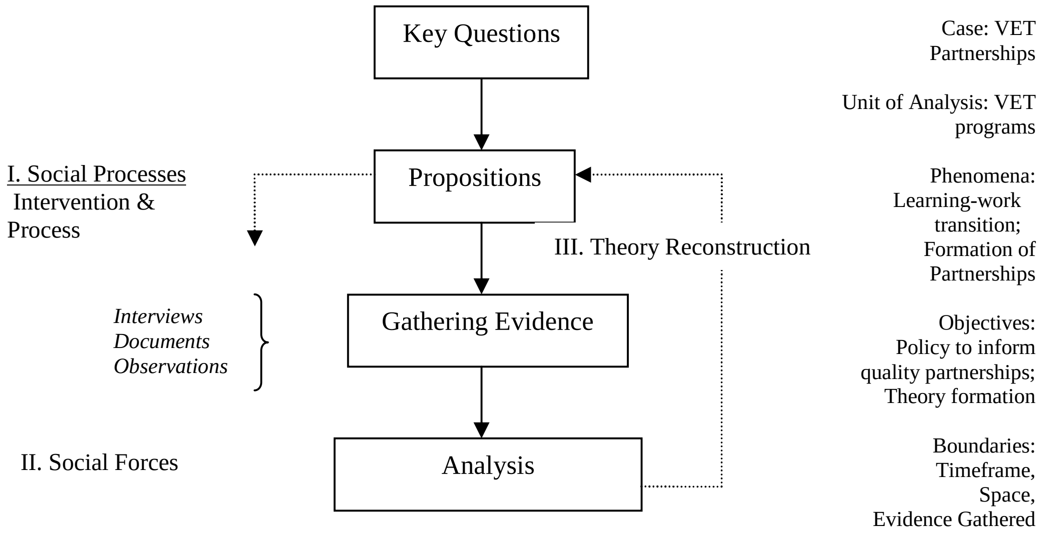
Two important distinctions separate reflexive science from competing methodological paradigms. In a point of departure from positivistic forms of inquiry (e.g. surveys), reflexive science, like constructivist inquiry, does not pretend to create an objective posture with respect to the phenomenon being studied. However, constructivist approaches like grounded theory, do not consider theory as a precondition for understanding social phenomenon, nor do they consider the dimensions of power within the micro context (Burawoy, 1991). Alternatively, reflexive science accepts that entry into the field is theory laden; theory is not a vice to be expunged as it allows us to "see the world." As anomalies from empirical data emerge, pre-existing theory is *extended* both through falsification and refutation (Burawoy, 1998, 2009).

Returning to the concrete, VET partnerships and programs become vehicles to comprehend macro forces shaping local contexts. Partnerships are considered to represent hegemonic sites of struggle, which may be revealed in perceptions shared by students and stakeholders over an extended period of time connected to a key event – notably, a learning-to-work transition. The research methodology thus leads to an analysis connecting the local processes with macro forces. By examining empirical evidence gathered, differences in the case sites are sought as a means to reconstruct theory rather than to confirm pre-existing theory. Theory reconstruction is achieved by identifying congruency and tensions existing between key findings and the theoretical framework developed and used in this inquiry. In particular, empirical evidence gathered from the case site research is used to ground Bourdieuian theory to the conditions of late capitalism. Theory reconstruction occurs throughout the findings chapters in the second section of the dissertation as well as in the closing chapter when a synopsis of key findings is presented. As such, theory reconstruction represents a key finding and contribution of this dissertation.

Research Design

Figure 1 illustrates both logistical and conceptual stages of the inquiry. The structure of the design is conceptually organized into four “context effects”: 1) *intervention*; 2) *social processes*; 3) *external forces*; and 4) *theory reconstruction* (Burawoy, 1998, 2009). As its name implies, intervention connotes perturbations in the case sites deliberately created by the presence of the researcher. In contradistinction to positivistic forms of data gathering which attempt to separate participant from observer, and knowledge from social situation, intervention requires that participants be extracted from their routine (both space and time) in order to inter subjectively probe the bounds of understanding between researcher and participant (Burawoy, 1998). Intervention strategies designed to gather situational knowledge are both discursive (interviews) and non-discursive (observation).

Figure 1. Research Design


Key Questions
Case: VET Partnerships
Unit of Analysis: VET programs
I. Social Processes
Intervention & Process
Propositions
III. Theory Reconstruction
Phenomena: Learning-work transition; Formation of Partnerships
Interviews
Documents
Observations
Gathering Evidence
Objectives: Policy to inform quality partnerships; Theory formation
II. Social Forces
Analysis
Boundaries: Timeframe, Space, Evidence Gathered

Collectively, empirical evidence is aggregated and generalized into social processes before being subsequently delineated into social forces (Burawoy, 2009). Grounded theorists, Corbin and Strauss (2008) explain that social processes are like a coordinated ballet where each movement is aligned, purposeful, and sometimes routine, with one action flowing into another. The authors go on to state: “Processes demonstrate an individual’s, organization’s, and group's ability to give meaning to and respond to problems and/or shape the situations that they find themselves to be in…" (p. 98). These descriptions of social interactions help to explain process and engagement at the micro sociological level, however, like neoWeberian theories of "structuration" (Giddens 1986), they fail to probe limitations to agency imposed by *external forces* – that is to say, "powers emanating from beyond the field site yet existing largely outside the control of the site" (Burawoy, 2009, p. 90). Returning to a Marxian ontology of labour, external forces cannot be understood from ethnographic work alone, but instead require a theoretical framework capable of explicating the dynamic interplay of agency with particular forms of structure, which are understood to be historically and spatially *regulated* within an overarching capitalistic world system.

Parameters

The process of identifying research questions and developing a research design to answer questions posed is iterative; questions are refined and sharpened as the research progresses and greater understanding develops. Development of central questions leads to identification of sub-questions. Collectively, questions organise the research in that they serve to develop propositions to be tested once sufficient evidence has been gathered and triangulated.

According to Yin (1994), case study is generally used to answer "How" and "Why" questions, but can also serve as a methodology to answer "What" questions. "What" questions (e.g. "What are the barriers for aboriginal learners as they transition from learning-to-work") are *exploratory* in nature – "the goal being to develop pertinent hypotheses and propositions for further inquiry"; "How" and "Why" questions (e.g. "How do transitions from learning-to-work compare in both case sites?") are more *explanatory* in nature, requiring "operational links that need to be traced over time, rather than mere frequencies or incidence" (Yin, 1994, p. 6).

Aside from identifying the nature of the inquiry – be it explanatory, exploratory, or both – questions serve to develop propositions. Propositions tell the researcher where to look for evidence and also help to set feasible limits to the research (Yin, 1994). For instance, the proposition: "Organizations collaborate to derive mutual benefit from a VET partnership," requires visiting various organizations and asking questions of why organizations partner to develop VET programs. By structuring the research in this manner, propositions serve as focal points to return to once sufficient data have been gathered. Identifying organizations that collaborate on a particular partnership also sets both temporal and spatial limits to the research by anchoring it to a particular program.

Once questions and propositions have been identified, various parameters of the research design are set, including the *case*, *unit of analysis*, *phenomenon*, *research objectives*, and *boundaries* (time, space, and evidence to be gathered). By assigning cases as nouns, the research becomes focused on a specific policy or program around which a multitude of functions and relationships coalesce (Stake, 2006). Following Yin (1994) the unit of analysis, phenomenon, and objectives are identified, and the study is then delimited to a set of boundaries. Boundaries for locations, evidence to be gathered, and the timeframe required to gather evidence is determined. Ethical considerations and logistical arrangements are also included at this stage, and will be fully described in the last section of this chapter.

I have assigned northern VET partnerships as the case and the units of analysis specific VET programs. Presenting both a pragmatic policy analysis and theory reconstruction requires that the phenomena investigated respectively include learning-to-work transitions and the politics of partnerships. Objectives of the study are respectively: policy to inform quality partnerships and theory reconstruction. The research is delimited spatially and temporally in relation to the unit of analysis. Hence, the timeframe, locations, and evidence gathered are determined by the specific nature of VET programs and occur at strategic times and locations – that is, both during and after a cohort of students have participated in a particular VET program. In this way VET programs serve as a fulcrum to gather evidence through interviews, documents, and observations. Table 2 identifies key components and stages of the research inquiry.

Table 2

Research Chronology

Date	Event
March 2010	Candidacy Exam
April	Application to the Review Ethics Board, University of Alberta
May	Pre-project consultations; refine research questions, identify participants, finalize case sites
June	Application to the Aurora Research Institute (ARI) for license
October/November	First Round of Case Site Visitations
Winter 2010/2011	Methodology, Literature Review, Start of Data Analysis
April/May 2011	Second Round of Case Site Visitations
Summer	Data Analysis
Fall/Winter 2012	Chapter writing
Summer, Fall 2012	Dissemination: Community Presentation of Findings to Clarify Results and Media Interviews

Pre-Project Consultations

Once the University of Alberta's research ethics board had reviewed and approved my application for research, aboriginal organizations (local bands, Métis locals, tribal councils, and regional corporations) were sent an information package explaining the nature of the research as well as questions that I wanted to ask particular groups of informants. Pre-project consultations were then made with representatives of these organizations in spring 2010. Initially three locations were visited, including two identified in the original candidacy proposal and a third location in the NWT. These meetings provided an opportunity to narrow potential case sites to two regions that were considered most suitable and feasible for meeting the objectives of the research.

Pre-project consultations provided an opportunity to explain my research intentions to local organizations, receive feedback, and gauge level of interest and commitment. The following questions accompanied initial conversations: What types of direct and indirect benefits could my project have within a community? How can I positively engage community members in the research process?

During this stage, a key component of *intervention* involved negotiations with gatekeepers – i.e., those individuals who hold a position of power within an organization or institution. Gatekeepers included executives of companies, colleges, and aboriginal governments. Gatekeepers ultimately decide the fate of the research as they control access to situational knowledge, including interview participants and observations of processes occurring within restricted sites. Gaining the trust and cooperation of gatekeepers also increases the chances of access to restricted documents (e.g. labour force surveys). In most cases gatekeepers provided access to interview participants, observations, and limited access to documents. In other cases, all forms of access were denied as in the case of employment partners in one of the case site regions. Differences in degrees of gatekeeper cooperation and receptivity during this phase of the research represent an intervention into the field. Differences in cooperation were noted to occur in training institutions, aboriginal organizations, and core and peripheral employment partners.

Depending on local research protocols, contact with colleges occurred in either May 2010 or August 2010, with follow-up phone conversations occurring in the fall 2010. During negotiations with college gatekeepers, identification of suitable VET programs and times to visit were agreed upon. A list of questions and ethics was also sent to college gatekeepers and/or personnel ahead of time.

Evidence Gathered

Evidence gathered came from interviews, observations, and documents. Data gathered occurred primarily during community visitations. The first round of formal case site visitations occurred in fall 2010; each case site was visited for approximately two weeks. During this time, I became acquainted with students, college personnel, and other stakeholders. Subsequent visitations occurred in late March, April, and May, 2011 when follow-up interviews with students occurred. During this time other stakeholders were also interviewed.

Interviews: Participants and Procedures

The selection process for VET participants between the two case sites varied somewhat in formality. During initial fall 2010 visitations, college personnel assisted in identifying student participants and arranged for suitable times to conduct interviews. In both regions I was able to select students using my own criteria, which included place of residence, aboriginal affiliation (Métis, Cree, Chipewyan, Inuvialuit, and Gwich’in), and gender. For instance, as all students registered in the Beaufort Delta carpentry preparation program were men, I also interviewed two female students registered in a trades access program in order to gain a gendered perspective. Once potential interview candidates were selected, students were introduced to the research by myself, and were subsequently invited to be interviewed by college personnel. In one case site 3 students refrained from being interviewed when the request was made by college personnel. Interviews were set up with those students who agreed to be interviewed.

Selection criteria for recruiting stakeholders involved identifying individuals that could provide varying social, economic, political, and historical perspectives on education, training, and employment programs. Stakeholders included college administrators, educators, government and industry representatives, members of aboriginal organizations, and local knowledge holders. Initial site visitations served as a means for identifying key stakeholders.

VET programs were a natural focal point to *snowball sample* participants, meaning that word-of-mouth and in-person introductions made by college gatekeepers often provided the most useful means for identifying stakeholder participants. In other cases, representatives from organizations and institutions were directly sought. In most cases, stakeholder interviews were arranged prior to the first round of visitations in fall 2010.

Semi-structured interviews and focus groups were conducted with 43 participants in both regions, with the majority of stakeholders interviewed one-on-one, and the majority of students interviewed in focus groups. The majority of student interviews occurred in focus groups as it was more convenient to access information in this manner owing to time constraints occurring in their schedules when they were in class. However, follow-up interviews were conducted individually, and most occurred over the telephone, as it was more convenient to contact students in this manner as they were no longer together in class and were also living in different regions. Interviews varied in structure depending upon who was being interviewed. Ten students in each region were interviewed during the fall 2010; follow-up interviews occurred in the fall 2011 with 18 of the original 20 students. The remainder of the interviews involved individuals associated with VET partnership training programs in each region. Participants came from organized labour (5), high schools (2), colleges (3), school boards (2), aboriginal organizations (8), territorial (3) and provincial (1) governments. A total of 62 interviews were conducted in regional centers (42), outlying communities (29), and in Edmonton (1). As Appendix D shows, there is a fairly high degree of congruency between the two case sites in terms of both organizations and programs represented.

While stakeholders are organized into various occupational groups, there were situations where some overlap occurred in terms of perspectives presented. For instance, an aboriginal human resources employee who was also a parent of a VET participant was interviewed; in another instance an industry respondent had also been a chief. In addition, numerous informal conversations occurred throughout the course of the research inquiry. These conversations were recorded in a research journal and served to help triangulate formal interview findings.

Most interviews were conducted in person; some interviews were also conducted over the telephone (17 student follow-up; 2 partners). In-person interviews and focus groups occurred in classrooms, offices, and a college cafeteria. Stakeholder interviews lasted longer than student interviews and covered a broader range of topics. On average stakeholder interviews lasted 45 minutes, whereas student interviews lasted half an hour. All interviews were audio-recorded with the exception of student follow-up interviews and three partner interviews. All interview notes and recordings were transcribed. In accordance with my research ethics application, participants were sent a copy of the interview transcript to verify the accuracy of the statements made.

Basic conventions pertaining to interviews were adhered to, including appropriate level of language, preparatory discussions, and question format. In most cases, an information package was sent to stakeholder participants ahead of time in order for them to review questions I intended to ask. Prior to each interview, the contents of the letter of consent were explained, including the research purpose, rights and responsibilities of researcher and participant, and confidentiality. At this time opportunity was provided for participants to ask questions to clarify the research process. Each interview ended with participants signing and dating a letter of consent. A copy of the consent form was given to each participant for their own reference (Appendix E). As a thank you for agreeing to be interviewed, each participant was given a gift certificate worth $10.00 – $15.00 (Chapters Bookstore and iTunes).

In order to compare data from a relatively large and homogenous sample of participants, student interviews were based on a prescribed set of questions that explored educational and family background, career aspirations, and challenges associated with getting an education (Appendix F). Stakeholder interviews explored issues related to VET programs and policies, including the work of partnership, visions of apprenticeship, and relationships between groups (Appendix F). Given the specific expertise, knowledge, and experience of each stakeholder, questions varied considerably and often deviated from prescribed questions as conversations unfolded.

Interview questions were both “open-ended” and “in-depth” (Shekedi, 2005; Travers, 2010). In order to sharpen the focus of the discussion, interviews began with introductory questions and progressed to specific questions. The following categories of questions were used: *descriptive*, *meaning*, *comparison*, *complement*, *contrast*, and *triggered* (Shekedi, 2005). *Descriptive* questions are very general (e.g. “Why are you interested in taking this program?”); *meaning* questions help clarify descriptive questions (e.g. “Who or what influenced you to take this program?”); *comparison* questions (e.g. “Why did you choose to take this program and not another program offered at the college?); *complement* questions clarify what has been said earlier (What did you mean when you said…?); similarly, *contrast* questions tease out contradictions in what has been said (You mentioned that there is a high level of interest in these programs, however you also mentioned that there were problems with recruiting students this year, why?); and *trigger* questions confront participants with their own words and opinions (You mentioned that the education system is failing students, yet last night I saw young people out at midnight. What role do parents play?).

While the first three types of questions were prescribed and sent to gatekeepers and, in most cases participants, ahead of time, the latter set of questions (complement, contrast, trigger) were used as the opportunity arose. These last questions involved the most risk and reward in that they were able to further probe meaning and insight, yet also elicit strong emotion from respondents.

Stakeholder interviews provided an important opportunity to identify and develop *key informants* – that is, participants who I was able to develop long-term relationships with over the course of the research for purposes of gathering evidence. Key informants were crucial to the success of the research as they were able to volunteer opinions and insights, and suggest corroboratory sources of evidence, and initiate access to these sources over the course of the research (Yin, 1994). Hence, the relationship with key informants is richer owing to a long-term level of commitment that exists in comparison to regular participants. While not developed exclusively through interviews, key informants came to represent people from all stakeholder groups in both regions. Key informants also served as an essential source of triangulation as they provided me with a sounding board to help confirm or disconfirm observations and ideas I made throughout the course of the research.

Focus groups provided a convenient and efficient way of simultaneously interviewing a large number of student participants. Focus groups also provided a highly effective form of participant observation as I was able to observe group dynamics that resulted from interview questions posed. Unlike one-on-one interviews, focus groups provided an opportunity for participants to clarify and confirm perceptions voiced by others in the group. Hence, contrast and trigger questions spontaneously emerged from group members themselves as the interviews progressed. Observation of group dynamics included interaction between males and females, leadership, and camaraderie as evidenced in tone, language use, pauses, and humour. At the same time focus groups provided an effective means to introduce myself and the research to students in a manner that was engaging.

Observations

Observations provide another key source of evidence gathered as they serve to add new dimensions for understanding either the context or the phenomenon being studied (Yin, 1994). Observations can be divided into direct observation and participant observation. Direct observations included attending community meetings, classroom visitations, cultural and sporting events, and going for walks in communities at different times of the day and days of the week. Direct observation also involved taking photos of key events or sites (construction sites, promotional posters, classrooms). In contrast to direct observation, participant observation required active participation in a phenomenon being studied and involved assuming a variety of roles (Yin, 1994). Aside from the aforementioned focus group observations, I was also able to participate in a variety of formal and informal activities throughout the course of the research. These activities ranged in duration, and included attending and participating in VET program lessons (e.g. performing wood work, participating in class discussions, tutoring), sharing opinions and insights during informal meetings with stakeholders and community members, participating in cultural celebrations (e.g. tea dance) and traditional subsistence activities (e.g. fishing), and staying with friends in different communities over the course of several days.

Participant observation helped to form relationships with community members and convey my willingness to learn and get to know people on their terms, time, and space. In some cases participant observation provided an opportunity to reciprocate by sharing knowledge and skills; in other cases I was able to perform a variety of tasks. For instance, by participating in class activities I was able to tutor students on occasion or offer insights during a group discussion; on other occasions I was invited to participate in informal meetings involving program partners; by participating in fishing trips or staying with people, I was able to assist with chores. These activities allowed me to get “inside the heads” of local people and participants. Like interviews, responses monitored during participant observation provided important insights regarding social relations occurring between different partners.

In both case sites I had the good fortune of having friends. In some situations, the research provided an opportunity to rekindle old friendships and make connections with people who had been friends with my family; in other cases new friendships formed. Friends include people I regularly stayed with, visited with, or who invited me to participate in some activity or event. In one community, I regularly visited with a well-known elder who had been good friends with my parents for many years when they met and lived in the same community during the 1960s. In another case, I regularly visited and went fishing with a recognized knowledge holder and his partner.

Why are friends so important to the research? While these relationships are not formed or rekindled solely for ulterior motives of gathering evidence, friendships nevertheless provided situational knowledge. Friends acted in varying capacities as key informants as well as conduits into social processes that I otherwise would not be privy to. Aside from support and company (field work can be very lonely), friends also provided a crucial means of holistically grounding the research within the particular contexts of each case site. Friendships helped to provide glimpses into a region's "social economy" – that is, the "multiplicity of institutions within Aboriginal communities that perform a blend of commercial (wages) and non-commercial (subsistence) activities as well as involve monetary (public transfers) and non-monetary transactions (sharing subsistence resources with others)" (Restakis, 2006, cited in Natcher, 2008, p. 2). The social economy is an important consideration in analysing learning-to-work transitions as it buttresses cyclical and episodic wage labour with its associated mobility patterns of relocation.

Through friendships trust and respect developed. Friendships provided a means to develop new frames of reference, which in turn provided fresh insights into social processes contingent upon social, cultural, and historical forces. Through friendships a "sense of place" formed. Friendships also foster a sense of commitment, empathy, solidarity, and responsibility to both people and place – collectively making ethnographic work a transformative experience.

Documents

Aside from presenting opportunity to gather evidence through interviews and observations, site visitations enabled the collection of documents that otherwise would not have been possible. Government, industry, and aboriginal groups generously provided documents that served to triangulate interviews and observations, thereby increasing reliability and validity of findings. Together, interviews, observations, and documents are combined to form the basis of case analysis.

Data Analysis

Before describing specific techniques of data analysis, I first want to provide some historical context in order to frame case site analysis as a form of "focussed revisit" that is capable of historically elucidating linkages between social processes and external forces (Burawoy, 2009). Stemming from my time living and working in northern Canada, as well as performing social scientific work there, I have had long-standing relationships with both case sites. While northern Alberta has primarily been associated with a former place of residence (1968 –1974) and seasonal employment (Wood Buffalo National Park, 1988 – 1991), the NWT is both a former place of residence (1976 – 2000) and employment as a school teacher (1991 – 2000).

How have these lifetime associations supported an extended case method? Let me illustrate using the Beaufort Delta. My first visits to Inuvik occurred in the early 1980s when I stayed there twice to participate in sport competitions. Both times I was billeted at the residential school, Grollier Hall. As a graduate student, I returned to Inuvik in 2005 as part of a territorial-wide series of interviews I was conducting for master's related research. One of the people I interviewed at the time now represents a gatekeeper and key informant for my doctoral research. Consequently, my interest in trades-related training has enabled me to revisit Inuvik over a period spanning six years. During this time changes to VET programs have accompanied shifts in external forces – namely, an economic downturn. Each successive visit has enabled me to gain further insight into the nature of VET partnerships and their relationship to external forces.

Nested within this time-span is the present research inquiry. By following a learning-to-work transition accompanying specific VET programs I was able to create a natural pause in data collection which allowed time for analysis prior to returning to the case sites four months later when students I had interviewed had entered – or at least were supposed to be entering – the world of work. Analysis occurred *simultaneously* with gathering evidence; as more evidence was gathered, concepts emerged that lead to the formation of further questions, necessitating a new cycle of field work.

The following three stages helped to guide the analysis: 1) arranging data into codes; 2) mapping codes; and 3) forming themes and a core code. The computer software program, NVivo9 helped analyze interviews, field notes, and memos. Once transcripts and texts were read in full, I used NVivo9 to "code" (Strauss & Corbin, 2008) or "categorize" (Shekedi, 2005) data into manageable chunks. The terms *category* and *sub-category* are used interchangeably with *code* and *properties*, although I generally refer to these processes using the former descriptors.

The process of coding transcripts involved conceptually categorizing bits of raw data into manageable chunks in order to find commonalities, differences, and linkages between different categories (Shekedi, 2005). Two general processes characterized this stage of analysis: *open coding* and *axial coding*. Open coding involved "breaking data apart and delineating concepts to stand for blocks of raw data" while axial coding is the "act of relating concepts/categories to each other" (Corbin & Strauss, 2008, p. 198). Each category was further broken into subcategories. Initially *in-vivo codes* – that is, actual words or phrases from participants – were used to label categories in order to align original meanings as closely as possible to what was said. Where possible, in-vivo codes were not changed; as the analysis became more focused some of these codes were replaced with ex-vivo names. For example, the category "factors affecting the learning-to-work transitions" was broken into subcategories (tuition, substance abuse, geography, attendance, etc); the category "interactions" included the subcategories "between institutions" and "intergenerational." These categories were later replaced with the categories, Challenges, Motivators/Incentives, and Social Capital.

Coding data varied. In most cases data were entered into several categories as concepts in the data partially or completely overlapped. Unlike interviews, three layers of data were analysed in focus groups – the individual, the group, and the group interaction (Willis, 2010). Group dynamics analysed included language used, tone, pauses, and sense of humour. Moments of ambiguity or discord during conversations provided insight to how consensus was reached, indicating patterns of leadership, and relationships between group members, including between genders and also between myself and the group as a whole.

Once interview data were coded, it was mapped using methods described by Shekedi (2005). Coding maps are organized hierarchically in both axes. Horizontally different categories are linked together and vertically categories are linked to sub-categories. Capitalized words indicate “indication categories” which “indicate a characteristic of the phenomenon without connection to any special piece of content” (Shekedi, p. 112); whereas “content categories not only indicate a characteristic of the phenomena but also contain elements of content” (p. 112). Content categories are located on the lowest branches of the tree and contain a number indicating the number of responses given by respondents that pertain to that category. Lower case titles indicate in-vivo names– that is, wording taken directly from the text to capture the essence of a category. Underlined words indicate categories that do not contain any responses. For example, using the 2010 coding map for students in Wood Buffalo (Appendix G) the general category “learning” is divided into two sub-categories: “challenges” and “motivators/incentives.” The sub-category “challenges” is further divided into five sub-categories, including “previous education.” In turn, “previous education” is divided into two sub-categories, “dropping out” which has 9 responses, and “social pass” which has only one person reporting this.

By mapping my data in the form of a tree, it forced me, by a process of deduction and induction, to continually go back and forth between categories and associated data in order to verify the accuracy of what I had originally coded and the data I had organized into each category or subcategory. Tree mapping was simultaneously concept-driven (top-down) and data-driven (bottom-up). Coding maps are presented in Appendices G, H, I, J, K, & L, and are used to organise findings discussed in the following chapters.

The final stage of analysis involved identification of a *core category* capable of linking all the categories and subcategories together. This level of abstraction allows for the development of themes to form from the data. As Green et al. (cited in Willis, 2010) explain, a theme is more than a category; “it involves shifting to an *explanation*, or even better, an *interpretation* of the issue under investigation” (p. 422). Through thematic analysis, the ultimate “extension” of the case method was achieved – theory reconstruction. Themes emanating from coding maps relate to the notion of field and habitus that are developed in the following chapters.

Dissemination

Triangulation of findings occurred formally during community presentations in Inuvik (July 2012) and Yellowknife (October 2012), and informally during on-going conversations throughout the course of the research. The Inuvik presentation was hosted by the Aurora Research Institute, and the Yellowknife presentation was given as part of the northern governance and economy conference, “Pathways to Prosperity.” Further dissemination of findings included three media interviews with CBC North (July 2012). Timing of the first community presentation was impacted by completion of findings and work commitments in the fall. No presentations were given in Wood Buffalo on account of a lack of response or interest by various partner organizations contacted, which included aboriginal governments, and the mine sponsor. This may be due to the fact that Wood Buffalo does not have the same level of capacity to host researchers as Inuvik does. Lack of response by various stakeholders may also indicate the political nature of the findings, or lack of interest by stakeholders.

Funding

My salary was in part supported by a SSHRC doctoral scholarship (2010 – 2012) and a University of Alberta dissertation fellowship (2012 –13). Research grants came from a variety of sources, including the Northern Scientific Training Program (NSTP), the Boreal Circumpolar/Boreal Alberta Research (C/BAR), the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency, and the Aurora Research Institute. NSTP and C/BAR grants provided seed money for northern research and were administered respectively through Indian and Northern Affairs Canada and the Circumpolar Institute at the University of Alberta.

Ethical Considerations

Protocols governing northern research were adhered to during all phases of the research. As the research occurred in two jurisdictions consideration was given to the guidelines pertaining to both regions in accordance with the

Tricouncil policy statement on research ethics (2005) along with more specific protocols for conducting northern research.

As Nickels, Shirley, and Laidler (2007) note, there are several advantages to community involvement in research, including, local support for the project, identification of local experts, and providing valuable insights for refining research questions, interpreting findings, communicating findings and applying research results by moving research to policy. The research incorporated needs of northerners into the research design as articulated by the NWT Board Forum (2009). To varying degrees community members were either involved or aware of the research during all four stages: project design, data collection, analysis, and dissemination.

All research in the NWT must be licensed by the GNWT through its licensing body, the Aurora Research Institute (ARI). Part of ARI's mandate is "supporting or conducting research which contributes to the social, cultural and economic prosperity of the people of the NWT" (ARI, n.d.). ARI approved a license once written confirmation from local aboriginal organizations affected by the research was received. In addition, ARI required the following information:

1. How are you obtaining informed consent from participants in the study?
2. How will participant confidentiality be maintained in your research?
3. Long- and short-term use and storage of data collected from participants.
4. How will your research be reported to participants and the community?
5. Whether you have applied for an ethics review and, if so, by whom?

These questions were answered through application to the Research Ethics Board at the University of Alberta, and negotiated face-to-face during pre-project consultations.

Negotiating a research relationship with communities was on-going and involved defining respective roles and responsibilities and outlining mutual benefits and expectations (Nickels, et al., 2007). Key personal attributes that helped ensure success of my research, included being honest and straightforward about community involvement, making an effort to be taught by local people, becoming informed prior to the meeting of what potential research needs are based on past work, and being open about intentions.

My social location as a researcher can best be described as both an “insider” and “outsider.” In one sense I am an insider, having formed a northern identity by living most of my life in the North, and also working in the NWT as both a teacher and researcher. This “lived experience” has helped provide the social and cultural capital to gain support and interest in my research by community members. Often times I had had past associations with people related to the research. Common associations provided natural icebreakers, and later helped establish credibility when findings were presented and recommendations made. At the same time I am also an outsider on account of my location as a non-aboriginal person who now has a vested interested in gathering information for research purposes. My location as an outsider may have contributed towards creating barriers to trust, communication, and understanding, although in retrospect I cannot say that I felt that it did.

During discussions concerning consent, the following items were raised: conflict resolution on how to either suspend or terminate the project if communities decide to; clarification of data control, including clear procedures for releasing information to the media or academic publications; compensation guidelines established for informants; and finally, local expectations concerning the wording of informed consent and options for verbal consent.

Informed consent from interview participants provided informants information regarding confidentiality, storage of data, information gathering techniques, and the format in which information will be disseminated, including the right to withdraw from the research at any point (Association of Canadian Universities for Northern Studies [ACUNS], 2003). I received informed consent each time an interview was conducted. Regular visits to case sites and email communication throughout the research helped ensure explanations of research objectives, methods, findings and their interpretation were made available.

Research protocols differ somewhat in the NWT and Alberta. In Alberta, researchers require approval from the research ethics board to conduct research, and therefore are not required to meet with aboriginal organizations first to introduce proposed research. However, as both a courtesy and as a research protocol, I met with aboriginal organizations first to introduce the research before meeting with other stakeholders. After meeting with aboriginal organizations in the NWT to discuss the research and collaboratively refine the proposal I subsequently applied for an NWT research licence through the Aurora Research Institute. The licence was granted in the summer of 2010 once organizations of the Beaufort Delta had reviewed and accepted the licence application. I subsequently made formal contact with Aurora College to explain the research. During this time college administrators accepted the research and we were able to collectively identify suitable VET programs that met the objectives of the research as well as suitable times to visit.

It is encouraged that researchers store data locally in communities from which it was gathered, along with descriptions of the methods used and place of storage data (ACUNS, 2003, p. 7; Nickels et al., 2007). However, in conversations with local authorities, data storage in communities was not raised as an issue of importance. Instead, dissemination of research findings was mentioned several times by community members as being an issue of importance.

All interviews were recorded, transcribed, and sent back to each participant for verification within one month of the interview. After transcripts had been sent, participants were given two months to decide whether I could use the information they had provided; thereafter I reserved the right to use the information provided. Of the 42 people interviewed, two contacted me afterwards to express concern with issues of confidentiality. In these instances, terms of use were negotiated. In all cases participants allowed me to use their transcripts. In addition written permission was sought from participants to use direct quotes. This permission was sought at the end of the dissertation writing once I had decided upon which quotes to use. In all cases where interview participants had been contacted, permission to use direct quotes was granted.

CHAPTER SIX

INSTITUTIONAL CONTEXTS OF TRAINING

Chapter Introduction

The organization of training programs as a response to labour markets is examined within existing political-institutional arrangements occurring at both the national and sub-national level. The chapter is divided into two main sections. The first section presents relevant information relating to labour markets, the apprenticeship system, and both federal and industry-driven aboriginal job training programs. In addition, K – 12 achievement indicators and educational funding provisions are included. Section two contextualises these institutional parameters by specifically examining programs that formed the basis of the case site research. Together, both sections provide political and institutional contexts required to frame findings presented in the following two chapters when partnerships and learning-to-work transitions are examined from the perspectives of program stakeholders and participants. The analysis draws from primary and secondary sources, including interviews and government documents. Presentation of information varies somewhat for each case site due to jurisdictional differences in research conducted and matters concerning access to information.[58]

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[58] For instance, two different data sources were used to consider workforce residency. In the NWT, income was used, whereas in Alberta population estimates served as a more reliable metric.

Political and Institutional Contexts

Labour Market

It is predicted that by 2020 there will be a shortage of one million workers in Canada on account of an aging workforce and fewer people choosing a career in the trades (Conference Board of Canada [CBC], 2011; Sharpe & Gibson, 2005). It is also predicted that northern mining will lead the country in economic growth over the next couple of years (CBC, 2011). Historically, Canada has relied upon immigrants to supply its skilled labour. However, over the past couple of decades there has been a decline in immigrant skilled trades people, requiring more expeditious attempts to attract immigrants and temporary foreign workers, as well as efforts to improve the current apprenticeship and training systems (Vindberg, 2012).

Most mining jobs are now considered skilled or semi-skilled, and due to shortages in skilled labour, some employers are developing their own programs to train potential employees (CBC, 2011; Ekati, 2011; Wilson, 2011). Government and corporate sponsored training programs include those targeted to encourage non-traditional workers (women, aboriginals, and youth) to consider trades as a career option (Human Resources Skills Development Canada [HRSDC], 2009). While these programs are considered to have a significant positive impact on worker productivity and wage levels, it is also noted that “having to support poorly skilled people who are under- or unemployed is very costly for governments” (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development [OECD], 2011, p. 7).

With respect to aboriginal peoples' participation in the labour market, several statistics are worthy of note. At 4% of the national population, the population is both younger and growing faster than other Canadians. In 2006, the median age of the population was 27 years, compared with 40 years for non-aboriginal people; children and youth aged 24 and under made up almost half (48%) of all aboriginal people, compared with 31% of the non-aboriginal population (Statistics Canada, 2008a). The 2010 national labour force employment rate for the "core age" workforce (ages 25 to 54) was: 61%, First Nations (off-reserve); 71%, Métis; and 81%, non-aboriginal (Statistics Canada, 2011). Significantly, the only level where aboriginal people's education outcomes exceed those of non-aboriginal Canadians on a proportional basis is in the trades certificates and diplomas (CBC, 2012).[59]

In recent years there has been a shift in the aboriginal labour force towards the natural resource sector. For instance, between 1996 and 2001 there was a 21% increase in aboriginal participation in mining (Natural Resources Canada, 2007). Increased employment in the resource sector is linked to both proximity of operations to northern communities as well as to impact and benefits agreements signed between these communities and companies (Burleton & Gulati, 2011; CBC, 2012; Ekati, 2011).

Nevertheless, the northern labour market remains ethnically stratified, and geographically restricted to regional centers. Generally speaking non-aboriginal residents live in larger centers, possess higher levels of education, and occupy higher paying, higher status jobs than northern aboriginal residents. A significant proportion of income is also derived from a “fly-in, fly-out” peripatetic workforce. In the NWT non-resident income as a percentage of total income increased from 13% (1999) to 17% (2010), with a high of 18% in 2006 – 07 (Statistics Canada, 2011, November). Given differences in income recorded in Alberta, these same figures do not indicate a measure of resident and non-resident income. Instead, Wood Buffalo’s “shadow” population serve as residency indicators, which were estimated to be 39,271 non-resident workers living in camps in summer 2012, compared to 72,944 residents living in Fort McMurray and 4,192 residents living in 10 rural communities of the municipality (Klinkenberg, 2012). These figures suggest that while a peripatetic workforce will inevitably be required to fulfill labour power needs owing to the economies of scale operating in sparsely populated regions, strategies to invest in local skilled labour should be a priority area for governments given the additional costs incurred (e.g. relocation, housing, high non-resident turnover, etc.).

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[59] Thirteen percent of non-aboriginal population (25 to 64) hold a trade certificate compared to 14% Aboriginal (CBC, 2012, p. 5).

Northwest Territories and the Beaufort Delta

The population of the Northwest Territories (NWT) is approximately 43,000 and is equally divided between aboriginal and non-aboriginal residents. Nearly half of the population lives in the capital city of Yellowknife whose population is primarily non-aboriginal (Government of the Northwest Territories [GNWT], 2012 March). Similarly, the majority of non-aboriginal people living in the Beaufort Delta reside in Inuvik – both a government administrative center and the largest community in the region.

In April 2012, 22,100 out of 32,100 NWT residents 15-years of age and older were employed in the NWT, representing an aboriginal employment rate of 52% and 84% for non-aboriginal residents. Employment rates for the Beaufort Delta were 44% aboriginal and 90% non-aboriginal – with aboriginal employment figures ranging significantly across the eight regional communities (from 32%, Tuktoyaktuk to 57%, Inuvik).

Vodden (2001) notes that since the Inuvialuit land claim was settled in 1984 there has been an increase in business development, with 97 organisations operating in 2000, including 66 businesses. Only 21% of these organisations existed before the land claim; two of these organisations accounted for 79% of all employees (n = 1200) working for these organisations (p. 58). Only 322 employees were employed within the ISR, and only 26% of positions created out of these organisations were filled by Inuvialuit (pp. 58 – 59).

In 2009, most people in the Beaufort Delta were employed by government services (44%), followed by "Other Industries" (42%), and then "Goods Producing" (14%) (GNWT, 2012, Jan.). Regional labour force activity for 2009 indicates that 3,053 out of 5,398 Beaufort Delta residents 15-years of age or over were employed, while 674 residents were unemployed, and 1,671 residents were not in the labour force (GNWT, 2012, Jan.). The percentage of individuals with a high school diploma or more increased from 44% (1986) to 56% (2009) compared to the NWT average of 69% for that same year.[60] Employment rates with less than a high school diploma was 31% compared to 77% with a high school diploma or greater (GNWT, 2012, Jan.).

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[60] Anecdotal reports suggest that the GNWT has increasingly inflated graduating figures and that students are not graduating with the requisite skills (May, 2009).

In 2010, mining, oil, and gas constituted 34% of the NWT GDP by industry, which respectively translates to $2 billion in diamonds, $457 million in oil, and $21 million in gas production (GNWT, 2012, March).[61] Mining and construction represents the main private (goods producing) employers in the NWT, employing about 2100 to 2500 people per year in each sector (GNWT, 2011; Moon, 2011).[62] Aboriginal people comprise approximately one-fifth of NWT mine employment.[63]

With news that the Mackenzie Gas Project has been put on indefinite hold, oil and gas activity in the Beaufort Delta has stagnated; 2009/2010 was the first year since 2001 that there was no land based gas exploration in the Inuvialuit Settlement Region (Inuvialuit Regional Corporation [IRC], 2010). In 2009, spending on mineral exploration dropped to historic lows, but since then it has risen each year. Notably, off-shore exploration in the Beaufort Sea and investments in central Mackenzie shale formations have resulted in billions of dollars worth of licence sales to major energy players in recent years (O’Meara, 2012; Vanderklippe, 2012). Coinciding with a drop in regional oil and gas development are government funded construction projects, including a new $100 million school in Inuvik that was completed in 2012. Reasons for initiating construction projects during economic downturns may be due to governments taking advantage of lower costs of labour, materials, and borrowing rates (Moon, 2012).

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[61] The use of GDP as an economic indicator recognizes that the term does not accurately reflect a measure of the region’s standard of living as benefits are distributed unevenly, both in terms of geography (where mines are located) and politically (revenues generated from profits and taxes, as well as impact and benefits agreements signed with neighbouring communities).

[62] During economic downturns, which characterises the present NWT situation, government contracts replace those driven by the private sector.

[63] For instance, at BHP’s Ekati diamond mine, aboriginal employees in 2011 constituted 23% of the workforce (356 of 1528 employees), most of who occupy semi-skilled positions (Ekati, 2011).

Wood Buffalo

In contrast to the precarious economy north of the 60th parallel, Alberta's tar sands have catapulted the country to third largest accessible oil reserves on the planet. Bitumen production now exceeds conventional oil and gas production in the province, and is set to double in the next decade in light of growing world-wide demand for energy, with production estimates of 3.7 million barrels per day by 2025 (Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers, 2011a, 2011b).

As of 2010, there were 4 mines operating, 1 on hold, 3 under construction, and 6 proposed, with in-situ operations including 12 operating, 7 under construction, and 23 proposed (Government of Alberta [GoA], January 2011). With about $22 billion per year in new capital tar sands spending projected until 2015, it is estimated that Alberta will create more than 600,000 new jobs by 2021, resulting in a net shortage of 114,000 workers (Lamphier, 2012).

Wood Buffalo has been experiencing sustained economic growth over the past decade with employment rate growth the fastest among all economic regions in Canada. The unemployment rate in Wood Buffalo (5% in 2010) is the second lowest in Canada (GoA, Winter 2011). The region's population has increased annually on average by 7% over this same timeframe, with a population of over 116,000 recorded in 2012 (Klinkenberg, 2012).

Finding qualified workers in the region has always been an issue, especially in construction and heavy industrial trades. Employment is forecasted to more than double from 2008 levels over the next ten years as approximately 13,000 additional workers will be required to meet the anticipated production growth (GoA, 2011, Winter). Demand for skilled labour in the following sectors has been identified: oil and gas drilling (+3500), testers (+3500), operators (+3500), heavy equipment operators (+3000) and supervisors (+2500); with a shift to in-situ operations more steam-ticketed operators (power engineers) have also been identified (GoA, 2011, Winter).

Aboriginal participation rates in bitumen related mining activities for 2009 includes 1600 people employed in permanent jobs, and $710 million worth of contracts to aboriginal owned companies (Oil Sands Developers Group, 2010). Aside from oil and gas related work, other aboriginal employment includes seasonal work in forestry (fire fighting and lumbering), some commercial fisheries, and government work. Hunting and trapping also comprise a small percentage of income and is considered a part of the mixed or social economy of the region.

According to Slowey (2008) the Mikisew family of companies is the largest source of employment for Mikisew members, employing close to 200 people. Three companies service tar sands operations, where almost 50% of employees were aboriginal (p. 42). MCFN also employed 103 people in its government, business, and education departments (p. 65).

Characteristics of the Wood Buffalo aboriginal labour pool, include people that are primarily not from the region, are 30 years or older, lack a high school education but possess demonstrable skills in operating equipment, and are interested in seasonal work:

> You've got the ones that are the hunters or the trappers that come out to Fort McMurray in the winter time to get the slashing job or to get just the regular labourer job or the ones that do hold a drivers licence that go and do the operating. And then in the summer time the same thing; you've got your seasonal fishermen. So those are the ones that are coming to look for work in the winter and then in the summer months. [I – 4][64]

To gain a better understanding of ATC member training needs, labour pool analyses (LPA) were conducted in 2003 and 2006. The 2003 LPA notes that there are over 400 vacancies that cannot be filled in either the band offices or within band or member-owned companies (ATC, 2005, p. 8). The 2006 LPA indicates that approximately two-thirds of ATC respondents (n = 825, ages 18 to 64) desire employment in the skilled technician or trades, yet only 13% of respondents have these jobs (ATC 2007, pp. 32, 34). Other findings indicate that 63% of respondents have less than GED education, and 48% of this group are unemployed (ATC, 2007).

K – 12 School Indicators

The majority of First Nation and Métis students in Wood Buffalo attend provincial schools. Students in the city of Fort McMurray attend schools within Fort McMurray Public School District or Fort McMurray Roman Catholic Separate School District. In 2007 – 08, the proportion of aboriginal students attending these schools was respectively 15% and 11.4%; whereas the vast majority of students (95%) in outlying communities attend schools that are part of Northlands School Division (Taylor et al., 2009). In Wood Buffalo, there are five Northlands' schools, which are located in the communities of Fort Chipewyan, Fort McKay, Conklin, Chard, and Anzac. Of these, only Fort Chipewyan offers high school; therefore, students in the other outlying schools must relocate to Fort McMurray in order to attend high school. Students are either bussed in from nearby communities, accommodated with relatives living in the city, or are boarded through a program organized through the Athabasca Tribal Council (I – 3).

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[64] As indicated in Table 3 of chapter 4, I – 4 denotes interview number four. "F –" after a quote indicates a focus group interview. In some cases, gender (M, F) of the respondent has also been indicated (e.g. I – 4, M).

In the NWT, there are eight education jurisdictions. Of these, the Beaufort Delta Education Council (BDEC) serves approximately 1800 students in the region's eight communities. Six of the eight community schools offer high school. In the two communities that do not offer high school, a home boarding program is offered by the district so students can attend high school in Inuvik.

BDEC attendance for the 2010-2011 school year varies across the eight schools, ranging from 72% to 89% (Sept – February) (BDEC, 2011). For the same year, attendance in one Northlands School was 78%, with the lowest rate recorded in Grade 9 at 48% (I – 12). The 3-year high school completion rates in Wood Buffalo for 2010 –11 are Fort McMurray Catholic (78%), Fort McMurray Public (73%) and Northlands (18%) (GoA, 2012, May). In comparison, the NWT graduation rates for 2006-07 are: 77% non-aboriginal, and 45% aboriginal (Auditor General, 2010).

A comparison of 2010-11 Grade 9 Provincial Achievement Test (PAT) results for Alberta and the NWT indicates a significant discrepancy occurring across school districts and regions.[65]

Table 3

2010-11 Grade 9 Math PAT results (% based on numbers enrolled)

	NWT Regional Centers	NWT Communities	Northlands	Fort McMurray Public	Fort McMurray Catholic	Provincial Average
Acceptable Standard	41	12	2	60	62	65
Standard of Excellence	included in above		0	14	14	17
Below Acceptable Standard	35	37	50	32	35	24
Results not Available	24	51	48	8	3	11

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[65] As the NWT adopts the Alberta curriculum for its core subjects, the same achievement and diploma exams are written. PATs are comprehensive exams for core subjects that are written in grades 3, 6, and 9. In Grade 12 students write diploma exams which comprise half the student's total mark in any given subject. In Alberta achievement results are provided for schools and school districts. In the NWT results are aggregated into three categories: Yellowknife, Regional Centers and Communities. Therefore, it is not possible to ascertain actual BDEC achievement results. However, given the small populations, it is possible to gain some sense of achievement levels.

Table 4

2010-11 Grade 9 Language Arts PAT results (% based on numbers enrolled)

	NWT Regional Centers	NWT Communities	Northland School Division No. 61	Fort McMurray Public	Fort McMurray Catholic	Provincial Average
Acceptable Standard	54	15	20	79	78	79
Standard of Excellence	included in above		0	14	10	16
Below Acceptable Standard	20	33	29	10	18	10
Results not Available	25	52	51	11	4	11

Sources: GoA (2011); GNWT (2012, Feb)

In Wood Buffalo, aboriginal labour pool analyses have been conducted since the early 1970s. LPAs are considered by some to constitute significant regional capacity to strategically plan as they can be used to empirically identify both gaps and the interventions to close those gaps. Yet it was argued:

> What was missing out of that analysis which would have been fascinating is to do a look at what people’s paper qualifications were, like a lot of them had Grade 12 and what their actual capacity was. That was when we took those students with Grade 12 diplomas into training programs and tested them for numeracy and literacy and they were coming out with Grade 3, Grade 4, Grade 5 levels which said those diplomas aren’t worth the paper they were written on. [I –5, WB]

These figures and anecdotal reports indicate the enormous educational achievement gap existing between aboriginal and non-aboriginal people as noted in the gap existing between regional centers, where the majority of non-aboriginal students attend school, and rural centers where the majority of students attending are aboriginal. This achievement gap also indicates the depth and degree of the skills deficits facing many aboriginal students who enter pre-trades apprenticeship programs. These figures also explain why regional schools are perceived as providing a better education for students than rural schools.

In addition, low educational achievement calls into question the efficacy of land claims settlements to substantially improve the lives of its beneficiaries, despite the fact that settlements are intended to provide greater control of services at the local level. According to Vodden (2001) the economy of the Inuvialuit Settlement Region (ISR), which is heavily dependent upon oil and gas activity, has not improved substantially since the signing of the land claim agreement in 1984, and that the "high school graduation rate is extremely low and getting worse relative to other areas in the North" (p. 67). Similar observations relating to educational achievement have been made in other regions where comprehensive land claims have been settled, including Nunavut (Berger, 2006) and northern Quebec (Papillon, 2008). These observations suggest that despite implementation of affirmative action policies within land claims agreements, the ability to train and employ land claim beneficiaries remains at best limited. Even if economic growth occurs, it will not be accompanied by social or economic development, as aboriginal-owned companies will be forced to hire skilled labour drawn from outside of the region.

The Apprenticeship System

Governance, Pedagogy, and Administration

An apprenticeship program is a formalized system where an employee enters into a contractual agreement with a government apprenticeship agency and an employer. In Canada, education is deemed the responsibility of provinces and territories, and each region legislates, regulates, and monitors its own apprenticeship system, with the federal government retaining a broad interest for national labour force development (Meredith, 2011; Watt-Malcolm, 2010).

Apprenticeship boards comprised of business and labour organizations are authorised to designate occupations as eligible for apprenticeship training and trade certification. The Alberta apprenticeship system is the responsibility of the Minister of Advanced Education who appoints a 13-industry-member Alberta Apprenticeship and Industry Training Board to enact the mandate of the Apprenticeship and Industry Training Act. Under the Act each of the 49 designated trades are regulated and educational and entrance requirements and standards are established.[66] The Board receives input regarding various trades from three committees: Provincial Apprenticeship Committees (PACs), Local Apprenticeship Committees (LACs), and Occupational Committees. In essence, grassroots level input from LACs is channelled to PACs who then make recommendations to the Board, while Occupational Committees make recommendations regarding certification standards and monitor training programs.

In the NWT there are 53 designated trades and occupations; nearly 20 occupations are certifiable (GNWT, n.d.). Apprenticeship and Occupational Certification is administered through regional offices of the Government of the Northwest Territories' (GNWT) Department of Education, Culture, and

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[66] Information about trades in Alberta is available on the Government Alberta "trades secrets" website accessed July 29, 2012: http://www.tradesecrets.gov.ab.ca

Employment (ECE). The Minister of ECE appoints members to the Apprenticeship Training Occupational Certification Board made up of industry representatives (GNWT n.d.). Across the territory the GNWT has established six regional training committees that are responsible for specifying regional/community-based labour market needs and for coordinating the delivery of training programs. Committee membership includes representation from aboriginal governments, the territorial government, the federal government, Aurora College, industry, and other interested stakeholders (Auditor General, 2010).

To qualify for a contract of apprenticeship, applicants must be at least 16 years of age, be a resident of the territory or province in which they are entering into an apprenticeship contract, pass the applicable TEE, and obtain an employer who employs a journeyperson in the trade. Although some trades do not require Grade 12 or its equivalent, most corporate employers (e.g. Syncrude) expect it before a formal registration and apprenticeship contract is signed. Subsequent to retaining employment sponsorship, apprentices are required to complete an alternate series of on-the-job and in-class technical training. Approximately 80% of the training is done on-the-job (1800 hrs), and the remaining technical portion is covered by a training delivery agent (TDA) and usually lasts eight weeks (I – 34). Programs range in duration from two to five years and usually last four years, and require the apprentice to alternate between in-class and on-site training for the duration of that time. Apprentices must pass a written examination at each level of in-class training and accumulate a prescribed number of work hours in the occupation. During on-the-job training, apprentices receive pay that is on a sliding scale, meaning that with each apprenticeship, apprentices are paid an increasing percentage of the actual wage. In the Northwest Territories (NWT) apprentices in a four year training program receive 60% of the trade salary in their first year, with a 10% increase per level thereafter.

Regional post-secondary institutions offer various training programs. In Alberta there are six different sectors where apprenticeship training is offered, including Comprehensive Community Institutions, such as Keyano College. The college’s main campus is located in Fort McMurray, along with two other campuses (one located in Fort Chipewyan) and four learning centers. In the NWT, many courses have been delivered at Aurora College. The college includes three campuses and 23 learning centers, with apprenticeship training offered at the regional campus in Fort Smith. The GNWT is obligated to send students to Fort Smith when programs are offered there. Programs include Carpentry (Level 4), Electrician (Level 3), Heavy Duty Technician (Level 1 – 2), and Plumber (Level 1) (GNWT n.d.).

As a means of increasing trades enrolments for individuals that do not meet the minimum requirements, pre-apprenticeship training programs – often referred to as trades access programs (TAPs) – are offered at vocational technical post-secondary institutes. These programs are a form of pre-employment or bridging training designed to help people learn basic skills and knowledge of one or more skilled trades and subsequently to be employed and obtain skilled trade apprenticeship training (Watt-Malcolm, 2010). TAPs include a general introduction to trades and allow students to earn time credits towards a respective apprenticeship as well as providing a means to finding an employer willing to sponsor an apprenticeship.

A primary focus of TAPs is to prepare students to write and pass trades entrance exams (TEE). These exams are administered by apprenticeship officers and are designed to prove that apprenticeship candidates have the basic educational requirements for technical training in a particular trade. There are five different entrance exams – one for each of the five different clusters of trades. For instance, Construction Craft Labourers are required to pass the first entrance exam, whereas Electricians are required to pass Entrance Level 5. Exams test for competencies in math, science, and reading comprehension.[67] Candidates who successfully pass the TEE in Alberta may enter into an apprenticeship in the province (GoA, 2003). Because the NWT uses the Alberta curriculum, these conditions also apply there as well. However, the NWT Apprenticeship Act requires an apprentice to have passed the exam before entering into an apprenticeship; in Alberta you are required within your first year of apprenticeship to write the exam (I – 28).

Enrolment and Completion Rates

National enrolment in apprenticeship programs appear to have increased, having accounted for 13% of post-secondary enrolments in 1998 (Sharpe & Gibson, 2005), to approximately 19% ten years later (Statistics Canada, 2009). In 2004/05 trades and technology programs offered at Aurora College accounted for approximately 18% of the 1445 full time equivalents (GNWT, 2007b). Of the 321 active apprentices in 2005, 42% (134) were aboriginal. The majority (53%) of apprentices are signed on with employers in the North Slave region (where diamond mining activity is occurring); the remainder are located in the South Slave (23%), the Beaufort Delta/Sahtu (18%), and the Deh Cho region (5%) (GNWT, 2007b). As previously noted employment in the trades or as skilled technicians by ATC members in Wood Buffalo was reportedly 13% of respondents surveyed (ATC, 2007).

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[67] Most VET participants reported difficulties with Math, which fits general observations regarding learning barriers (I – 23, 34). Each portion of the TEE is weighted equally, with a pass of 70% or higher required in each section.

Between 1999 and 2004 there was a 44% increase in registered apprentices in Canada; in the NWT the average number of apprentices remained static at approximately 400 annually (95% men and 62% non-aboriginal), whereas in Alberta there was nearly a 43% increase in that same time frame (GNWT, 2007a).

Alberta has about 11% of Canada's labour force; however the province has the second highest number of registered apprentices in the country (Statistics Canada, n.d.) and hires more than 20% of the country's apprentices (GoA, 2011, Nov.). As Lehmann (2007) notes, "compared to other provinces, Alberta has been the most persistent and successful in its pursuit of linking schools and industry in general and expanding its youth apprenticeship program in particular" – a situation he attributes to the province's "industry-friendly policy environment and its higher than average adult participation in apprenticeship training" (p. 34).

In the NWT, the percentage of women in the trades (5%) is approximately half the national average (GNWT, 2007a; see also Table 5). It was reported that for Inuvialuit in Inuvik aged 19 years and older, 2% of women and 11% of men had attended a trade school (Inuvik Community Corporation, 2009). At the time of interviews (spring 2011) it was reported that there were 452 journeymen in the NWT, and 50 apprentices in the Beaufort Delta; 12 of whom were apprenticing with a program partner; 2 of these apprentices were women (I – 27). It was perceived that the Beaufort Delta ran the risk of having apprentices poached to the North Slave region where mining activity is occurring (I – 27).

While it was acknowledged that there was demand for skilled trades people in other regions of the territory experiencing economic growth on account of mining, it was also felt that movement out of the territory of skilled – or semi-skilled labour contributed to a brain drain of talent, thereby leaving the region without the necessary skills required for basic services (I – 25, 27). However, it was also suggested that people need to leave the region in order to gain experience and employment during periods of low economic activity.

It was also noted that the Beaufort Delta lacked the necessary expertise to train apprentices owing to a limited number of journey-persons available – meaning that often times apprentices would have to seek training outside of the region. Consequently, projects lasting several years that coincided with training programs were deemed to be of considerable importance, as long-term projects provided the necessary time-frame required for an apprentice to receive local mentorship from a skilled journeyman without having to leave the region.

Table 5

Registered Apprenticeship Training by Sex and Region

	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Canada	328,167	358,557	390,705	409,041	430,452
Males	295,206	320,490	345,924	357,456	372,792
Females	32,961	38,070	44,778	51,585	57,663
Alberta	73,494	85,209	93,399	88,224	89,190
Males	67,035	77,880	85,587	80,451	81,060
Females	6,459	7,326	7,812	7,773	8,130
Northwest Territories	411	405	453	474	459
Males	390	393	435	459	435
Females	21	15	18	18	27

Source: Statistics Canada (n.d.)

Apprenticeship completion rates have decreased over time. Meredith (2011) notes a 40% completion rate of a 4-year program over six years, and Sharpe and Gibson (2005) note that the completion rate of apprentices in 2001 was 47% – down from 63% in 1982 (the earliest year available) (p. 9). In 2002, electrical and electronics trades and motor vehicle and heavy equipment trades had the highest completion rates (around 50%), while building construction trades and miscellaneous trades had the lowest completion rates (around 25%) (Sharpe & Gibson, 2005, p. 50).

Completion rates also vary by ethnicity. In 1991 aboriginal completion rates in the NWT were 36% and non-aboriginal completions were 64%; in 2005 completion rates were respectively 42% and 58% for both groups (GNWT, 2007b, p. 66).

Aboriginal Programs[68]

Federal Programs

Through Human Resources and Skills Development Canada (HRSDC), the federal government has created a variety of aboriginal training-to-employment partnership programs.[69] These programs support education, training, and employment agreements negotiated in government-to-government agreements, including both Gwich'in and Inuvialuit comprehensive land claims agreements (Government of Canada [GoC], 1984, 1992). Two relevant programs include the Aboriginal Skills and Employment Training Strategy (ASETS) and the Aboriginal Skills and Employment Partnership (ASEP) program.

In 1999, the existing Regional Bilateral Agreements were changed over to Aboriginal Human Resource Development Agreements (AHRDA) which ended in April 2010 and were subsequently replaced by ASETS which ends in March 2015. Agreement holders "are responsible for designing and delivering employment programs and services best suited to meet the unique needs of their communities. These programs include market interventions, programs for youth and persons with disabilities" (Taylor et al., 2009, p. 22). Unlike the AHRDA that allowed aboriginal governments to "bulk purchase" programs from a Training Delivery Agent (TDA), ASETS reflects the federal strategy of tying training directly to prospective employment (I – 25). As one respondent explained:

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[68] For purposes of this analysis provincial and territorial government programs have not been included as the case site analysis only examines federally-funded and industry-driven training programs, although some of the funding and student financial support for these programs is provided for by provincial and territorial governments.

[69] These programs are in addition to the approximate $2.5 billion annual allocation to provinces and territories for skills training and employment made through its Labour Market, and Labour Market Development Agreements. Information about these programs was accessed July 30, 2012 and is available online: http://www.hrsdc.gc.ca/eng/employment/partnerships/index.shtml

> ASETS has three criteria; the one important one is that training has to lead to employment. So now you are forced into a situation where you have to start working with the student to do a career plan. So the student comes in and you do an assessment. What skills do you have? What do you want to do? What do you want to become? Using that information you are able to try to determine where that student best fits and you develop a career plan and you work through that career plan and start offering training. But also, you have to have the student start pounding the pavement, if you will, to find an employer that at the end of his training is willing to take him on as an employee. So there's going to be more follow-up; you have to do more one-on-ones with the student throughout the training program to make sure they are doing the steps through the training plan. [I – 32]

Another federal program that ran from 2003 to 2012 is the ASEP program. The goal of ASEP was to respond to "specific industry labour needs" in major economic development projects in order to create "long-term sustainable employment" for aboriginal people. Partnerships involved "forging and facilitating positive and productive relationships between employers, educators and communities." In 2003, the first national ASEP program received $85 million over five years, which resulted in 9 projects. ASEP was subsequently extended, with an additional $205 million in federal funding supporting 25 new projects over three years (2009 – 2012). Provincial and territorial governments also helped fund and support the projects, along with private sector partners contributing in-kind support.[70] Each project was administered by an incorporated not-for-profit organization consisting of aboriginal organizations and major employers. National outcomes included 18,000 people trained and 6,600 employed.[71]

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[70] In-kind support accounts for 50% of the matching contribution which is covered through the cost of equipment and time. For instance, attending a meeting may cost $50.00 per hour (F – 5).

[71] Information on ASEP was obtained online from: http://www.tbs-sct.gc.ca/hidb-bdih/initiative-eng.aspx?Hi=37; http://aboriginalskills.ca/_downloads/ASEP_1pager.pdf

It should be noted that both AHRDA and ASEP programs have been criticized by the Assembly of First Nations (2007) for being imposed unilaterally, for lacking an integrated policy framework that links basic education (K – 12) to training, and for promoting tripartite agreements as a way of off-loading fiduciary responsibilities to other governments and industry. The ASEP program was also criticized for its pan-Aboriginal approach to training, and for administration responsibilities being shared with corporations which diminished the role of First Nations governments (p. 7). Further to this, in both case sites ASEP incurred a number of challenges, including unrealistic expectations over implementation timelines, lack of clarity, tools, and resources from the federal government required to guide the board, high staff turnover, and unequal representation (I – 8). [72] The next section, as well as the following chapter, examines the implications of these program challenges on partnership agreements.

Industry Programs

The private sector has developed and sponsored various training programs. These programs are often provided with varying levels of coordination and financial support (cash or in-kind) from aboriginal ASETS holders, and provincial and federal governments. Programs implemented in Wood Buffalo represent a continuation of previous programs stemming from the 1960s. As part of a $5 million donation by Syncrude to Keyano College, approximately $2 million has been used to develop a three-year pre-employment training program, called the Syncrude Aboriginal Trades Preparation program. In 2008, Shell sponsored the

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[72] Similar issues are raised in a formative evaluation of the ASEP program by the federal government, Human Resources Skills Development Canada (HRSDC, 2009 July).

Building Environmental Aboriginal Human Resources program in Fort Chipewyan, which was designed to increase aboriginal employment in the environmental monitoring sector (nine students completed the program). Suncor has also sponsored the Women Building Futures Suncor Training Centre which trains women in non-traditional careers such as construction; the program includes aboriginal learners. In the NWT, diamond mines sponsor various training programs that are offered both on-site at remote mine camps and in communities.[73]

Funding

Student financial assistance and program funding comes from a variety of sources and varies depending upon location and aboriginal status. Within the Alberta context, Taylor et al. (2009) explain that a "medley of funding options" exists. According to the authors,

> Current sources of funding for college upgrading include the provincial government (the Alberta Works[74] program that funds both First Nation and Métis students) and the federal government (through AHRDA, which in some cases funds Métis and First Nation students, and the PSSSP, which funds First Nation students only). AHRDA is administered separately by Métis and First Nations in Wood Buffalo. The PSSSP[75] is administered by the ATC in conjunction with the five First Nations in the region. (p. 41)

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[73] Information about these programs is available on company websites, accessed July 30, 2012: http://www.syncrude.ca; http://www.shell.ca; http://www.suncor.com/default.aspx; http://www.bhpbilliton.com/home/businesses/diamonds/pages/default.aspx

[74] Alberta Works "helps unemployed people find and keep jobs, help employers meet their need for skilled workers, and help Albertans with low incomes cover their basic costs of living. Income Support is available to eligible adults to participate in employment and training programs, and includes support for tuition, books and supplies." Information about this program was available on the following website and accessed July 26, 2012: http://employment.alberta.ca/FCH/3171.html

[75] The Post-Secondary Student Support Program also funds Inuit students as well. The number of students requiring support exceeds the funding available. See Stonechild (2006) for a history of federal-provincial First Nations post-secondary education funding.

In addition to PSSSP the federal government has also created a University to College Entrance Preparation program which provides financial assistance for the equivalent of *one year* to eligible First Nation and Inuit students to enable them to attain the academic level required for admittance to post-secondary education programs.

In the NWT apprenticeships are subsidized by the GNWT, which covers the cost of a 4-year program ($23,000 per apprentice). Apprentices contribute $760 annually to their training, however if they elect to receive training outside of the territory they must cover the full cost of tuition (I –34). Students are eligible for financial assistance, including a $700 per month living allowance offered through the territorial government. Connected to these allowances is an attendance policy which stipulates that students can miss only 5% (usually 2 days) of classes (GNWT n.d.).

College funding is derived from two sources: base funding is received from provincial and territorial governments, and third party funding which is derived from programs like ASEP and ASETS, or those directly funded by industry. Base funding is generally more stable and carried over from year-to-year. For 2004 – 05, 76% of Aurora College's $37.8 million budget was base funded (GNWT, 2007b, p. 27). Of this total, approximately 40% of the college budget is spent on upgrading programs (I – 25). This figure is most likely similar for Keyano College. Of the 1,324 aboriginal students attending the college between 2005 and 2008, 40% were enrolled in upgrading courses (Taylor, et al., 2009, p. 21). Of these, just over one-quarter were sponsored by a First Nation and 42% paid for their own education (p. 22).

Previous Case Site VET Programs

Initial ASEP programs (2004 – 2009) included the Northwest Territories Oil and Gas ASEP administered by the *Aboriginal Futures Society* (AFS) ($12.7 million), and the Aboriginal Mine Works ASEP, administered by the *Wood Buffalo Partners in Aboriginal Training* (WBPAT) ($4.8 million) in Wood Buffalo. Both programs involved multiple stakeholder groups including large oil and gas industry partners, aboriginal organizations, and federal, territorial – and in the case of WBPAT, provincial partners who participated on the boards. Both projects were intended for participants to achieve long-term employment in the oil and gas industry, with the NWT project based upon speculative development of the Mackenzie Gas Project (MGP). In this case, the project's proponents were industry representatives, whereas in Wood Buffalo partnerships involved established bitumen mines.

Funds were distributed to participating regions and organizations to identify community-driven training programs. Program streams included 1) upgrading basic skills; 2) industrial skills and apprenticeship training (e.g. trades access programs, Heavy Equipment Operators program); and 3) work experience.[76]

In association with its industry partners, preparation for employment in the MGP was intended to provide more than 50 full-time jobs. However, the project never resulted in the timelines identified, requiring employment opportunities to be sought elsewhere (AFS, 2008). The society reported that there were 650 training projects delivered, totalling approximately $10 million; and of the 1366 program participants, 1090 jobs were attained by over 150 employers (AFS, 2008, p. 21). Of these, 9 indentured-apprenticeships with industry partners subsequently formed, requiring apprentices to receive both their technical training and on-the-job training in Alberta (AFS, 2008, p. 20).

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[76] More information about ASEP programs is available on the HRSDC website: www.hrsdc.gc.ca

While the AFS ASEP program was deemed a success by the organizers (on account of the numbers of people trained) it nevertheless recognized that the intended benefits (employment with the project) had not occurred (AFS, 2008). Put more cynically, one respondent stated that the funding should have been put towards literacy, explaining that the cost of the ASEP program to train a limited number of positions related to the MGP did not make sense: “Do the math: 10 to 12 million dollars divided by 58 ‘sustainable employment positions’ equals money spent per student” (I – 28).

While undoubtedly many people did receive some form of training during the last ASEP (as reported by the society administering the funds) and were subsequently able to apply newly acquired skills in other sectors of the northern economy, the relationship between federal funding and the actual number of predicted “sustainable employment positions” available once the construction phase of the project would be completed raises concerns with respect to government investment in longer term basic skills relating to literacy that can be broadly applied to numerous occupations.

The Wood Buffalo Partners in Aboriginal Training (*WBPAT*) Aboriginal Mine Works was an ASEP program created out of an agreement known as the All Parties Core Agreement (APCA). The Agreement involved 17 resource companies, the five First Nations represented by the Athabasca Tribal Council (ATC), and three levels of government (federal, provincial, and municipal). As Taylor et al. (2009) explain, “expected results from the APCA agreement include an increase in the number of socio-economic agreements between First Nations and corporations, an increase in First Nations access to industrial development opportunities, and an increase in consultation and understanding between industry and First Nation communities” (p. 14). Labour market gaps were identified based upon information from labour pool analyses (LPA) conducted for the tribal council by the APCA Sustainable Employment Sub-Committee (ATC, 2005, 2007).[77]

Exacerbating program challenges associated with ASEP that have previously been cited were tensions occurring between groups that formed the Wood Buffalo ASEP. These tensions occurred between First Nations and Industry, and between First Nations and Métis. Out of the APCA was funding provided to each First Nation to establish Industry Relations Corporations (IRC). The five IRC positions (one for each local community) were “supposed to be a conduit between industry and Chief and Council” to enhance local capacity to consult with companies over proposed developments and monitoring (I – 6).

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[77] I am unable to procure actual training and employment figures achieved due to the fact that no reports were made available; respondents were vague regarding the whereabouts of published reports.

Instead, relations were considered “often adversarial” (I – 6) – with some IRC positions serving as a conduit to mount publicity campaigns against the industry.[78]

A second tension occurred between aboriginal groups. It was noted that Métis in Wood Buffalo were asked to join the ASEP program as an “after-thought” in order to bolster numbers of eligible clients so that funding requirements could be met – a situation that created resentment and tension between the two aboriginal partner groups (I – 5). As a result of these tensions, the WBPAT program fell apart and the program was not renewed.

Current Case Site VET Programs

Beaufort Delta

Subsequent to the *Aboriginal Futures Society* ASEP program which ended in 2008, the Beaufort Delta region was successful in receiving a second ASEP program. Unlike the previous ASEP program that involved oil and gas and was designed to prepare people for work in the Mackenzie Gas Project, the most recent ASEP program relied on employers in construction and marine transportation to partner with the program. The $7.2 million, 3-year project, entitled “Our Resources, Our Future,” was launched in 2009 and administered by the *Building Inuvialuit Potential Society* (BIPS, 2011). Program partners included the territorial government, local industry, and both aboriginal organizations (Inuvialuit Regional Corporation and the Gwich’in Tribal Council). [79]

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[78] The Canadian Council for Aboriginal Business (2009) lauds the IRC program as an example of effective partnerships between industry and communities.

[79] At the time of project implementation the following organizations and matching contributions were reported: GNWT ($1, 852, 894); Business One ($1, 225, 780); Business Two ($1, 225, 780); Business Three ($907, 833); Inuvialuit Regional Corporation ($866, 892); and aboriginal organizations ($1, 076, 001). At the time of implementation, two of the companies were part of the

BIP's mandate was to train people in areas related to construction, marine transportation, and aviation, with the goal of creating 400 "long-term job placements" in these identified areas. At the time of interviews it was thought that the region would be experiencing a significant period of road construction which would therefore require priorities to shift toward training Heavy Equipment Operators, work related to ice profiling, and environmental monitoring (F–5).

Final results indicate that 465 clients were employed. It was also reported that over its 3-year duration the program had supported 31 apprentices (welder, 4; plumber, 9; cook, 3; carpenter, 9; electrical, 4; sheet metal, 1; machinist, 1); of these, 28 were in their first year of apprenticeship (IRC, 2012).[80]

For the 2010 – 11 year, the society sponsored 19 regional programs, 10 of which were provided through a training delivery agent (TDA), while the other 9 were provided by other partners. Programs included: Kitchen Helper, Caribou Outreach, Small Engine Repair, Heavy Equipment Operator, Trades Access, Pre-Employment Construction Training, and well as on-the-job training. Programs ranged in duration from less than a week (Career Assessment) to two years (Business Administration). On average programs for the 2010 –11 year lasted 18.5 weeks, with a 78% completion rate for all programs. Of the 244 students that completed their programs, 131 (or 54%) were classified as "employed" that same year (BIPS, 2011).

Inuvialuit Development Corporation portfolio of 16 companies (wholly owned, joint ventures or partnerships). This information was originally provided on the website: www.hrsdc.gc.ca

[80] ASEP industry partners are compensated by the program on a per capita basis for each apprentice they take on. Industry partners who mentor apprentices receive $20.00 per hour for the first two years (F – 5).

The 7-week trades preparation program was designed for students to improve their math, science, and English skills in order to pass the Level 1 or Level 2 TEE. All 10 students registered in the program completed it. Selection criteria were based upon three items: an application, resume, and a Level 2 written assessment. Program applicants were screened by the instructor and two members of the same aboriginal organization.

Women in the program were supported through *Women Building Futures*, an Edmonton-based society that promotes careers in the trades for women. The society is listed as an ASEP partner and was contracted by one of the local aboriginal organizations to provide a 5-day workshop in the community for women. The workshop occurred two weeks prior to the start of the trades preparation program. According to the two women interviewed, women who participated in the workshop were given preference in selection for the trades preparation program. Four of the 8 women who participated in the workshop were subsequently accepted to enter the trades preparation program.

All female students in the trades preparation program either have children or are pregnant. Funding for childcare is provided by the program, and amounts to $700 per month. Students from regional communities are housed in the college residence, which contains facilities for both students with families, and those that are single.

The 17-week carpentry introductory program was designed for students to gain skills and knowledge required to find entry level work in the carpentry field.[81] Of the 30 people who had originally applied to take the program, 10 were accepted, and 7 graduated from the program in March, 2011. Of these, 3 students were referred to write the TEE which they subsequently passed (see Appendix M).

Twelve Alberta curricula modules (e.g. Carpentry Math, First Aid) formed the basis of course work, covering a total of 510 hours. Two long-term construction projects that occurred throughout the course of the carpentry program formed the basis of the students' practical work experience. These projects were the result of a partnership between the town and the college, and included building a shack to be used in the town's spring jamboree and renovation of a community youth centre. Aside from off-campus work experience, the carpentry program was taught in a mobile trades unit, which was parked next to the campus. The $1.9 million dollar state-of-the-art facility was acquired in 2007 through funding derived from the last ASEP project (Auditor General, 2010). The 900-square-foot unit is composed of two expandable tractor-trailers which are fully self-contained and centrally heated – containing both classroom equipment (whiteboard, projector, tables and chairs) and shop facilities (work benches, tools, power outlets, etc.).

The mobile trades training lab allows the college to deliver trades training in road-accessible outlying communities that otherwise would not be possible due to limited infrastructure. Students also gain skills without having to leave their home community. Between April 2008 and June 2011, the MTTL delivered 12 programs – half of which occurred in the regional center; 129 students were registered for these programs, which collectively had an 83% completion rate. Average program length was nine weeks and ranged from 1 to 17 weeks in duration. Of the ASEP-funded programs, 3 programs used the training lab as the primary site of instruction: two programs were delivered in outlying centers and the introductory to carpentry program was delivered in the regional center.

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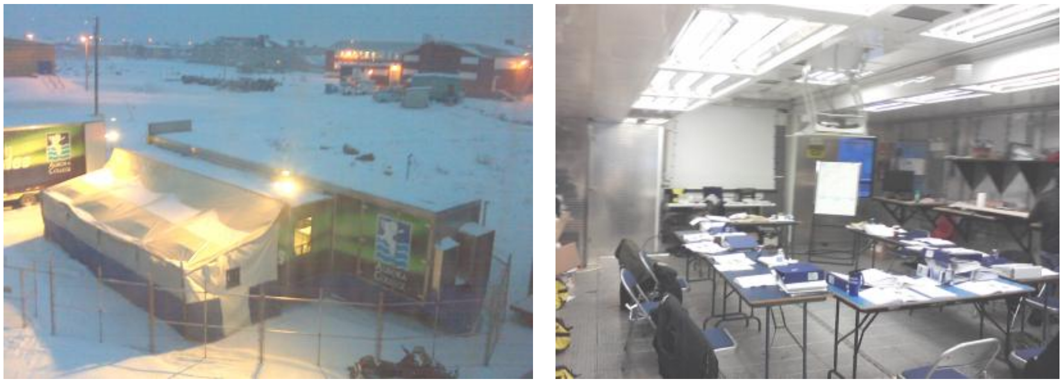
[81] Entry level jobs include carpenter helper, material handler, and truck driver.

Figure 2. Mobile Trades Training Lab



Wood Buffalo

The mine sponsored program examined in Wood Buffalo marks a departure from the previous ASEP program that was subsequently not renewed. As previously noted, political barriers and tensions provided the impetus for a particular mine to unilaterally develop its own training program which involved fewer partners, and sought to "get in at the grassroots level" (I – 6) in order to access aboriginal labour.

Unlike ASEP, the mine trades preparation program involved the creation of only one program, had fewer stakeholders (no direct federal government involvement), and was designed with the intention of directly procuring apprentices with the mine sponsor. As part of a corporate donation to a local training delivery agent approximately $600,000 was dedicated annually to the program over a 3-year period, beginning September 2009 with the first cohort of 40 students and ending in 2012 with the last cohort. The other half of the program funding was collectively provided by Alberta Employment and Immigration (AEI), the Métis Nation of Alberta, and the Athabasca Tribal Council. As part of its contribution, AEI covered tuition, books, exam fees, health and dental plans, and part of the instruction costs. Students received a "top-up" allowance of $50.00 per week from their respective First Nations or Métis organizations, although these funds were not forthcoming from one of the bands.[82] Living support of $250 per week per student was provided by the mine sponsor.

The 29-week program was designed to prepare students to write and pass the TEE, TOWES, and GED Exam[83], and also gain practical on-the-job training and experience offered through a one-month work placement at the mine site. Each cohort accommodated 40 students from the region (20 from Fort McMurray and 20 from other communities within the Region of Wood Buffalo), who were 18-years or older, had a minimum of Grade 9, were drug and alcohol free (personal declaration), and had indicated interest in working in the industry. Program outcomes included developing the necessary skills and competencies to proceed onto a trade's apprenticeship path with the mine, with a targeted program completion rate of 75%.

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[82] No reason was given by the band's ASETS coordinator as to why the top up allowance was not being provided for band affiliated students.

[83] Test of Workplace Essential Skills (TOWES) is an exam required by the mine sponsor, and tests for workplace essential skills (working with others, reading, numeracy, writing, oral communication, thinking skills, computers). General Equivalency Diploma (GED) is a high school equivalency exam; students must be 18-years-old and out of school for more than 10 consecutive months.

The mine training program was offered at four community learning centers and two campuses, with students attending a minimum of 30 hours of instruction per week. Program materials included seven modules of “Connecting to College and Careers” (704 hours)[84], and customized resources that included “exploring Aboriginal culture issues related to cultural differences in interviewing and other work experiences…” (Personal Communication, Program Executive Summary, 2010). In this case, students used the workbook, “Workforce Development English Language Programs: Cultural Competence,” developed by Citizenship and Immigration Canada and the Government of Alberta. The final month of the program was spent at the mine site where students performed a variety of jobs related to a chosen trade under the guidance of a mentor. Upon successful completion of the program students were offered an apprenticeship with the mine.

Recruitment of candidates involved three selection and screening protocols performed by three stakeholders in the following order: ASETS employment coordinators (program eligibility), the TDA (academic eligibility), and the mine (employment eligibility) (see Appendix N). Program admission was based upon a scored selection criteria. For instance, 5 points were awarded if the candidate could provide proof of aboriginal status, whereas the candidate received 3 points if he/she had “started the [application] process” and no points if the candidate had not started the process. Similarly, education certification was scored according to the following criteria: Grades 10 –12 (10 points); Grade 9 (5 points); no High School Diploma or GED (no points). Other assessment criteria included “Career Goal” which required applicants to identify a *specific* apprenticeship trade offered by the program (Welder, Mobile Crane and Hoist Operator, Electrician, Heavy Equipment Technician, Millwright, Steam fitter, Pipe fitter). In this case, no points were awarded if applicants did not want to be an apprentice, and 25 points were deducted if the candidate “initially identifies career goal incompatible with Trades Apprenticeship but changes mind.” In the category “Understanding of Oil Sands and sites” candidates were scored on their ability to accept shift work, getting 10 points if “Client knows and accepts”; 5 points if “Client accepts once it is explained” and a 10 point deduction if client “Expresses displeasure” (Program Application Form, 2010).

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[84] CCC is a provincially accredited program that was developed in consultation with industry. Topics include “Pre-apprenticeship Preparation” (academic skill enhancement), “Career exploration,” “Working as an Aboriginal in a Culturally Diverse Environment” (Personal Communication, Program Executive Summary, 2010).

Regular attendance was also expected, whereby a fourth unexcused absence reportedly resulted in program termination. However, it is noted that since students entering this program “have deficits in core employability skills, it is logical from an educational/training perspective to anticipate that not all learners will achieve the desired target behaviors (punctuality and attendance) immediately…[which] will require attitudinal change and interventions for some students…including trainees to undergo a cultural and social attitudinal modification” which is considered to be far more difficult than “the acquisition of facts or the mastery of physical skills” (Program Executive Summary, 2010). As one respondent explained, “besides the GED, the main curriculum is pre-trades entrance exam preparation... Reading is mostly documentation: charts, forms, manuals, instructions. It’s not literature and poetry – it’s trades orientated” (I – 7).

Program Expenditures

Considering that VET fields are animated by economic capital, examination of program expenditures in relation to outcomes provides a starting point to analyse deployment of capital reconversion strategies set in motion on the VET field. Excluding matching partner funds, the two NWT ASEP programs that ran in the Beaufort Delta (AFS and BIPS) collectively cost the federal government approximately $20 million. According to final reports gathered from both programs 40 apprentices were indentured, which included 9 apprentices in the first ASEP program. In this case all apprentices were trained outside of the territory – most with an Alberta pipeline company, with the in-class portion of training occurring at technical training institutions in Edmonton or Calgary (AFS, 2008). In the second ASEP program it was reported that 31 people were apprenticing (IRC, 2012). That is to say, at the time of reporting, certifiable and transferable skills were/are being developed with 40 people who were/are not labourers. These figures do not indicate whether apprentices are still apprenticing or have either dropped out or become journeypersons. If we consider the national apprenticeship completion rate of a 4-year program within 6 years is reportedly 40% (Meredith, 2011), then combined ASEP programs will likely produce 24 journey people.

By way of comparison the 3-year Wood Buffalo program cost approximately $1.2 million per year – half of which came from the sponsoring mine. Of the 55 students registered in the 3 training cohorts that were offered apprenticeships with the mine, 6/13 and 18/18 students in cohorts 1 and 2 respectively are still apprenticing with the mine. Twenty four students from the third cohort have also been offered an apprenticeship with the mine. Using the 40% apprenticeship completion rate estimate, of the original 116 students that entered the program approximately 22 journeypersons will complete their training.

Based upon these calculations the cost of producing a journeyperson in the Beaufort Delta was $830,000 ($20 million/24 journeymen), whereas the cost for the Wood Buffalo program was $163,000 ($3.6 million/22 journeymen). These figures do not take into account matching contributions from other ASEP partners which would double the cost per apprentice in the Beaufort Delta. Nor do these figures account for benefits derived by other VET participants who participated in these programs and either became labourers along the way, decided on a different career path, or were registered in non-trades programs. However, as ASEP program participants were not tracked after program completion, it is not possible to quantify actual stated benefits of programs leading to employment.

The BIPS ASEP program reported that 465 program participants secured employment. This figure is not accurate in terms of the number reported, nor does it indicate the kind or duration of employment gained. Consequently, long-term benefits derived from investments in developing skilled labour cannot be estimated for the region other than those apprenticeship figures presented.

We can surmise from the financial commitments presented that an inordinate amount of energy and resources has been invested in developing northern aboriginal skilled labour. Comparing the two programs indicates that the Wood Buffalo was superior to the Beaufort Delta ASEP programs in terms of organisation, accountability, communication, and meeting program objectives. From this comparison, it could be argued that neoliberal enacted social partnerships privileging marketized approaches to education, training, and employment are more effective than federal government programs. Certainly, the liberal doxa of *efficiency* appears to be upheld in the Wood Buffalo mine training program which was 80% more cost effective at procuring skilled labour than its ASEP counterpart.[85] This figure would be much higher if both the matching ASEP contributions and timeline for procuring the skilled labour were considered; the Beaufort Delta ASEP programs ran for 8 years in comparison to the 3-year Wood Buffalo program.

According to Watt-Malcolm (2010), the ultimate success of training programs lies in the numbers of successful graduates that are gainfully employed. Whether or not this is indeed the case depends on whether the ends necessarily justify the means. While program expenditures and outcomes are significant in terms of illustrating funding commitments, costs incurred, and their subsequent translation into transferable skills attained, when considered alone these figures belie impacts on communities in terms of the social relations and attendant contradictions underscoring partnership programs as noted in tensions surrounding the Wood Buffalo ASEP program.

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[85] Percent efficiency calculated by dividing the cost difference between the two programs [($830,000 - $163, 000) ÷ $830,000] x 100.

Conclusion

This chapter has presented relevant economic, labour market, and program information required to historically contextualise perspectives of program participants and partners presented in the following two chapters. As the analysis has shown, there is a tremendous demand for skilled labour in the trades. Despite the fact that aboriginal participation in the trades is increasing in key resource extractive industries, there remain considerable gaps in terms of education and completion rates compared to the rest of the population. Aboriginal governments have begun to develop capacity and expertise in working with community members to gain employment, however, these interventions are “too little too late” considering the educational deficits of clients. These deficits indicate a tighter linkage between K – 12 is required. Federal government programs also illustrate the tendency to create programs without properly supporting them through adequate implementation or through linking training to the K – 12 system.

The review also indicates key labour market differences occurring between the two case sites lies in the ability to maintain and retain a pool of skilled labourers; in Wood Buffalo, a pool of journeypersons exists that can be drawn upon to train apprentices, whereas in the Beaufort Delta, training is limited by the availability of journeypersons. Apprenticing in the Beaufort Delta is further hampered by access to training programs and finances incurred by prospective apprentices.

By examining previous training programs in both case sites, the chapter has also laid a foundation for considering the social trajectory of training partnerships occurring in different regions, including partnership capacity and vocational habitus of participants. For instance, “attitudinal change and interventions” associated with the screening process in Wood Buffalo presents evidence that entrance into the world of work is highly politicized, and requires inculcation of a vocational habitus tailored to meet the specific needs of program funders. By examining financial commitments of different program partners, the chapter has also presented empirical evidence showing the relative degrees of overlap and interests at stake in partnership programs, as well as the jurisdictional boundaries evolving over time between different partners as they struggle to maintain their position on the training field. How these structural program parameters interact to impact partnerships and participants is the subject of the following two chapters.

CHAPTER SEVEN

FIELDS OF STRUGGLE[86]

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to examine agency and structure of the VET field respectively from the standpoint of both *priorities* and *capacities* of different partners to partner (see Appendices K & L). Aside from Bourdieu's explication of the field as a stratified social space within which agents struggle for unequally distributed resources, I also borrow respectively from Giddens' (1986) conception of agency and Lukes' (2005) conception of power as referring not so much to the "intentions people have in doing things but to their capability of doing those things in the first place" (Giddens, p. 9) in order to "bring about significant effects, specifically by furthering their own interests and/or affecting the interests of others, whether positively or negatively" (Lukes, p. 65). Accordingly, the ability of agents to advance or maintain their interests on a field depends upon both their asset structure and ability to convert species of capital.

I begin by examining the logic of the field and rules of the game for each case site, followed by considering the capacity to implement priorities, and conclude with how resistance and resignation to the rules of the game become manifested by agents possessing less power. By organising the chapter in this manner, the relation between agency and structure of the VET field is understood as producing resignation, habituation, and resistance to the introduced priorities of economic agents. The dispositions of partners to reorient species of capital in response to tensions occurring on the VET field produces shifting positionalities and overlap that characterises new social relations occurring within a postFordist regime of accumulation.

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[86] Taken from Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992, p. 100).

Priorities

While the rules of the game may vary somewhat depending upon the nature of the partnership, labour nevertheless constitutes the single unifying ontological feature drawing agents onto the VET field. At first blush the priorities of all agents may therefore be considered the same – to collaboratively improve the chances that a targeted and marginalized ethnic group will be able to participate in the wider economy by gaining accreditation in the skilled trades. Nevertheless, this common ground serves as a point of departure concerning the means by which the end goal is achieved. As I shall show, both case site VET programs constitute forms of enacted partnerships, but vary according to the principal sources of economic capital animating each field: the mine sponsored program in Wood Buffalo is designed to procure racialized labour[87] as a form of risk management, while the Beaufort Delta ASEP program represents a variegated form of welfare state intervention administered and coordinated through aboriginal governing bodies. In each case the priorities of agents are shaped by program funders and recipients alike, as well as the nature by which power dynamics impact and threaten jurisdictional control and authority of agents possessing less power.

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[87] The term “racialised labour power” borrows from the Marxist concept of labour power as representing capabilities set in motion whenever a use-value of any kind is produced (Marx 1867/1990, p. 270). By extension, racialised labour power indicates that particular ethnic forms of labour power are sought in order to provide additional symbolic value to capitalists beyond immediate production of a use-value.

The Risk Management Field

In Wood Buffalo, competition for, and retention of, labour power remains a significant and on-going concern for "economic producer groups" (Taylor, 2009). Contained within the sub-field is inter-firm competition over profit – a portion of which is either reinvested in labour power or revolutionizing the technologies of production.[88] Other epiphenomenal effects that are associated with postFordism also emerge from inter-firm competition. Securing shareholder confidence in the capability of resource extractive companies invested in to produce ever-increasing amounts of profit requires establishment of "good neighbour" policies – also known as corporate social responsibility (CSR) or *risk management*.[89] CSR constitutes the primary process by which liberal culturalism ideologically regulates training partnership agreements in Wood Buffalo. Because postFordist production compels transnational oil firms to naturalise processes of capital accumulation locally, the structuring effects of CSR globalise the interests of indigenous groups, while simultaneously localising those of TNCs. The state furnishes these conditions through the settlement of land claims. Hence, the training field is regulated through the coordinating interests of both the state and industry, which together hegemonically grant concessions to subordinate groups through the intermediary arm of a managerial comprador bourgeoisie located in the regional semi-periphery of Fort McMurray.

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[88] The dialectical relationship involving surplus value relates to "coercive laws of competition" that compel capitalists to reinvest a portion of their surplus value to varying degrees in either labour power or technologies of production (Harvey, 2007; Marx 1867/1990).

[89] Here I distinguish between two forms of risk management: human capital and reputational. Human capital risk management refers to recruitment and retention of skilled labour; reputational risk management refers instead to protecting a firm's reputation and increasing trustworthiness. However, different companies have different risk management strategies. Significant differences existing between mines with respect to levels of aboriginal engagement was noted with some having no provisions in place with respect to training and employment.

For the mine sponsoring the training program in Wood Buffalo, investing in education is ostensibly considered to represent the “number one thrust of community development” (I – 6); and that part of its “permit to operate” includes “the utilization of an aboriginal work force” (I – 11). Taken from a critical perspective, risk management hegemonically fetishizes commodities by concealing the exploitative relationship existing between externalities of production (pollution, environmental degradation, colonial land dispossession, etc.) and the social relations of production (profit). Strategies to appease the resentment of local communities often get expressed and defined as labour power needs.

While specific trades-related training needs were identified by industry (as seen in the training program application), and by local First Nations (as seen in labour pool analyses), labour power as a stand alone priority is of secondary importance to resource extractive industries; the *primary* motive to train and employ people of aboriginal ethnicity involves (reputational) risk management:

> Part of the job of any stakeholder relations person internally is to convince your own management that it is a risk and that it needs to be managed. And a lot of that work occurred over the last 10 or 12 years, and the companies came a huge way in actually acknowledging that and taking it on as a risk management approach. And they’ve built that into their corporate social responsibility program. But no mistake, it is a business risk management approach…. it’s now gotten to the point it is measured and objectified and starts to impact your shareholder relations, your share price. So the moment that that happens – it hits the bottom line, it becomes an issue and you have to manage it. [I – 5]

These observations indicate that risk management is a strategy deployed to safeguard investor confidence that requires the conversion of economic capital (i.e. reinvestment of a portion of surplus value) into symbolic capital instantiated as racialized labour. Symbolic capital is reconstituted as economic capital both in the form of labour power (representing a small portion of the workforce) and most significantly as a means of increasing shareholder confidence that a “risk” occurring in the field of production has been “managed.”

Risks capable of fettering a postFordist domiciled regime of capital accumulation that require management relate to the potential of some First Nations to mobilise forms of symbolic and social capital within political and juridical spheres.[90] By entering into contractually-based settlements with TNCs extra-economic forms of capital are neutralized. For instance, when aboriginal governments negotiate impact and benefits agreements they convert symbolic capital into economic capital. In doing so they are able to have some influence on development, including the provision for education, training, and employment. However, in the process, they weaken relations with groups that could be drawn upon to lobby and put political pressure on governments to regulate development. These settlements also reduce the chances of litigation against companies relating to continued and blatant infractions of aboriginal and treaty rights. Consequently, reorientation of capital via risk management strategies constitutes the principal postFordist strategy characterising an indigenous mode of social regulation.

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[90] Within the political sphere groups form relationships with the media, environmental groups, and trade unions; within the juridical sphere processes of legislation and regulation of development occur (O’Faircheallaigh, 2008).

Numbers Game Field

In regions like the Beaufort Delta that are marked by a periodic absence of domiciled capital, training programs must instead develop partnerships with local peripheral industries (construction, transportation). These companies are owned by aboriginal organizations using land claims capital, with the intention that capital derived from these projects will allow groups to become economically self-sufficient. Unlike core industries that are subject to intense public scrutiny, peripheral industries do not require the employment of risk management strategies in order to maintain shareholder confidence since a "social licence to operate" is guaranteed owing to their aboriginal affiliation. Nor are they subject to regional inter-firm competition for labour power, enjoying instead preferential, *sole source* contract bidding processes that safeguards their monopoly.[91] Consequently, the strategy of employers associated with ASEP in the Beaufort Delta is to initially convert economic capital into symbolic capital as a means of ensuring that grants in the form of contracts get awarded. That is to say, by being ostensibly "aboriginal-owned" companies gain preferential entrance by land claims organisations onto the economic field. Once entrance onto the field is granted companies are not held accountable for upholding training partnership commitments.

A second difference in capital conversion strategies relates to differences in exchanges. Unlike their counterparts in Wood Buffalo, symbolic capital in the

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[91] The Northwest Territories' *Business Incentive Policy* provides northern businesses with "bid adjustments" in order "to compensate for the additional cost of operating in the NWT" (Government of the Northwest Territories, 1995). Sole source contracting bids in Inuvik have been awarded to aboriginal-owned companies by politicians that are land claim beneficiaries of the same aboriginal group (see MLAs grill Roland, 2008).

Beaufort Delta is not converted into economic capital in zero-sum fashion. Hence, the term capital (which is a relational concept) is somewhat problematic, as comprehensive land claims has rendered the relationship between forms of capital static; there is no longer conversion from one form to the other as federal grants are more or less guaranteed. Accordingly, rentierism, rather than *production* conditions the habitus of the numbers game field.[92] This condition is not to suggest that rentierism does not structure the habitus of the Wood Buffalo field for aboriginal governments, but as a whole, rent-seeking behaviour is pervasively infused in all elements of social relations occurring in the Beaufort Delta.

As seen in publicly available reports, a priority of program sponsors in both regions was to report success as measured by the number of students that had graduated or gained employment. Yet their motivation to graduate participants differed. In the case of the Wood Buffalo mine sponsor, pressure to graduate students related to the priority to procure racialized labour that they had invested in, whereas in the Beaufort Delta these employment pressures were absent. Instead, the reporting of numbers provided legitimacy to the presence of federal government programs. Because the economic relationship involves a federal grants economy, training is ultimately supply-driven in nature although it retains the appearance of being demand-driven; the demand for training is derived from the supply of economic growth rather than the other way around as in Wood Buffalo where training is required to supply the demand by industry for labour.

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[92] Here, I make reference to Marx's conception of production which relates to a "complex set of mutually dependent relations among nature, work, social labor, and social organization" (Wolf, 1982, p. 74); while Marx (1894/1967) wrote extensively on the problem of rents, he did not foresee the creation of ethnic rents that have formed within a postFordist regime of capital accumulation.

By appearing to be demand-driven, federal ASEP stipulations are ostensibly fulfilled. The following passage outlines the importance placed on reporting numbers as part of the ASEP program mandate:

> As far as the federal government is concerned it is about stats because we have a mandate. And each ASEP agreement is a contract with the federal government that the board of directors sign, and in order for us to gather money every three months we have to meet our mandate. And our mandate is set out in our agreement that we have to bring so many people to employment; we have to have so many client interventions which is part of the ARMS[93] database. And so for instance I hired [name] today and I was paying for his on-the-job subsidy through [program partner] and he left three weeks after by his own life choice; I can count that person to employment, but I would still track that person, so he would fall into the category of unemployed. So it is a bit of a *numbers game* [emphasis added] in some ways for the federal government to announce that we have so many people to employment. But that's what the funding is all about. As long as it meets our mandate – that person is getting on-the-job training in a construction environment, that's meeting our mandate. That's it in a nutshell; the numbers have to somehow link up to the numbers of the dollars, so a dollar-for-dollar person there is an equation there that they are hoping to meet. [F – 5]

The State

Far from being a passive agent, the state as bearer of symbolic capital acts as legitimator, guarantor, and broker of capital conversion strategies. Because the state is induced to act through a series of incentives relating to maintaining power through an electorate, programs like ASEP which are widely publicized, allow it to appear to be doing something about the "Indian problem" without it having to significantly address the root of the problem which originate in educational deficits occurring in the K – 12 system. Because addressing the root of the problem would incur far greater costs than a capitalist state is prepared to fund, the line of least resistance and greatest political gain resides with funding aboriginal training programs. Given this standpoint, the primary state strategy is to ensure that conversion of capital on the VET field occurs smoothly with minimal encumbrances so as not to raise the spectre of political and juridical mobilization on the part of aboriginal groups possessing sufficient volumes of economic and symbolic capital. If the rules of the game are subverted and the economic order sufficiently fettered through litigation and mounting negative publicity, the state will then be drawn directly into relations of production, thus exposing contradictions of its dual role as guarantor of private property and investment, and its historical and constitutional fiduciary responsibilities to aboriginal peoples.[94] At the same time, the state is tasked with orchestrating the interests of capital which includes managing a labour supply; like a chuck wagon racer harnessing raw power, the state must marshal the disparate forces of capital in order to provide some level of coordination to the narrow self-interest of corporations beholden to chasing ephemeral surplus value.

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[93] ARMS stands for Audit Resource Management System, and was described by one respondent as "putting tickies in boxes." [I – 28]

Nevertheless, state strategies differ with respect to various stages of the resource extraction cycle. During preparatory or senescent stages, the state provides the capital required to support and coordinate VET programs. As noted in federal government rhetoric, ASEP programs are ostensibly awarded to regions that are demand-driven and have identified committed employment training partners. However, once industries become established, the state strategy shifts to one of (neoliberal) bystander as entrenched through aboriginal – industry agreements. Although the state still loosely organises training, the overall trajectory of the field indicates that neoliberal policies contribute towards fragmentation and weakening of the nation-state.

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[94] These tensions have been ameliorated through the settlement of comprehensive land claims in the NWT. See Duncan (2010) for a description of the roles and responsibilities of the federal government relating to tar sands development.

Despite differences in program priorities, the neoliberal state's role as a "regulatory apparatus" is to resolutely guarantee private property and manage a labour supply (Harvey, 2007). Taylor (2009) also notes that the "contradictory role of the state is indicated by its central role in brokering VET partnerships and controlling program funding, objectives, and evaluation coupled with a voluntary approach to employer engagement and devolution of responsibility to the community level" (p. 147).

In Wood Buffalo the state acts to normalise and legitimise private property of TNCs. It also serves to coordinate both its attendant labour power needs and promote the trajectory of the risk management field through public-private partnerships for aboriginal peoples. While playing an active role, the state has changed its strategy to that of "neutral partner" by facilitating the brokerage of training programs between industry and aboriginal agents:

> Ours is a response to an expressed need; for me working in collaboration and in partnership – and it is a true partnership. Again, industry identifies a need. Our aboriginal stakeholder says, "Province – we'd like to work with you; we'd like to work with this industry. [I – 8]

Conversely, in a federal grants economy region where domiciled capital is senescent, the state plays a direct role through massive federal government transfer payments that are required to support economically unviable communities.[95] As all roads eventually lead back to the federal government – be they funds supporting training, construction contracts, and public services – a significant role played by agents is to administer and distribute the economic surplus generated from the southern core.

Training Delivery Agents and their Clients

Rather than examining the priorities of clients and training delivery agents separately, both groups are brought together to elucidate the synergistic interaction of interests occurring between these two groups. In doing so, examination of the impacts of their engagement on program delivery is elucidated.

As public institutions, community colleges represent the unofficial training arms of territorial and provincial governments, although in Wood Buffalo the college's raison d'être is considered to directly serve the needs of the tars sands industry. However, this status does not guarantee that colleges are the TDA of choice for clients. What was referred to by one respondent as the "self-serving nature" (I – 5) of the college – to fill seats – relies on its ability to serve the needs of the client, be they mining, oil and gas corporations, or territorial, provincial, or aboriginal governments. Consequently, in order to examine the priorities of TDAs, one must do so in relation to their primary clients and their sources of capital.

In the Beaufort Delta, the primary clients are land claims groups, whereas in Wood Buffalo the primary client is the tar sands industry, with the secondary client being aboriginal groups and the state if one considers the source of capital driving training programs. This distinction is important to make, as economic capital structures the habitus of the field. Furthermore, a second distinction occurring in the Beaufort Delta is also worthy of note, as a difference exists between the funder (federal government) and client (land claims groups). And while the funder devolves conditional autonomy to the “client” the relation existing between funder and client illustrates the structuring effects of land claims, which as Rata (2000) notes, is about putting the state into tribes and the tribes into capitalism.

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[95] Federal government presence in the North also serves the purpose of establishing Westphalian sovereignty. Transfer payments will inevitably decrease with the eventual establishment of resource extractive industries.

To maintain their legitimacy as the trainer of choice TDAs must navigate a field where funding regimes are increasingly fragmented, and access to training contracts and dollars is increasingly competitive. Contributing to increased fragmentation of funds are third party agreements resulting from either the settlement of land claims or derived separately from industry or government as in the case of ASEP. In each case, different pools of funding have different stipulations tied to them.

Following land claims settlements, aboriginal governments in the Beaufort Delta exercise considerable political power. They are now considered the main drivers of regional training priorities, with the territorial government, through its regional training partnership board, playing a more “strategic role” in identifying training needs and funding (I – 27). Conversely, in regions like Wood Buffalo, aboriginal governments possess considerably less political power and are beholden to forging relationships with resource extractive industries to develop training programs. Consequently, they remain secondary clients to TDAs.

Land claims settlements have resulted in some Dene and Inuvialuit adopting a centralized system of governance (tribal councils, regional corporations), whereas other groups have elected to decentralize decision-making to local community organizations. Differences in governance impact funding: centralized systems are able to pool larger pots of funding to deliver programs, whereas decentralized systems of governance require training brokerage to be negotiated on a community-by-community basis and therefore involves smaller pools of funds.[96] Métis locals have a looser governing structure and less funding. In both regions there were no Métis employment offices, meaning that services and client support was coordinated through other First Nations ASETS/AHRDA personnel instead.

Differences in how governance is structured may impact differences existing between regional centers and outlying communities. In the Beaufort Delta, both Inuvialuit and Gwich'in have formed centralised systems of governance. Through these executive governing arms, both groups were able to coordinate application of ASEP government training funds; whereas, in Wood Buffalo, this process fell by the way-side, considering that the program was initiated by industry, with subsequent financial contributions made by aboriginal groups and the province. Consequently, aboriginal governments in the Beaufort Delta were able to provide more direction on training, including identifying the training delivery agent and employment partners they wanted to partner with, than those groups in Wood Buffalo.

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[96] It was perceived by one respondent that some communities preferentially receive more training than other communities (I – 34).

In addition to land claims and self-government initiatives, changes to federal funding for aboriginal agreement holders have also affected brokerage of programming. In order to justify stipulations pertaining to federal funding envelopes there is added pressure on delivery agents to demonstrate that students entering programs have a credential that will link training directly to employment. While the former AHRDA program was very broad in how the money was used and enabled agreement holders to "bulk purchase" (I – 32) a lot of programs by a training provider that would be delivered on their behalf, the new ASETS program requires that training be demonstrably linked to employment. Consequently, changes in funding requirements implies changes in how success is understood, measured, and managed – shifting from an emphasis on student participation and skill attainment (while not necessarily completing a program or gaining employment), to an emphasis on earning credentials. As one respondent explained:

> The funding partners [aboriginal governments] are certainly much more numbers conscious and they quite often measure success based on the number of people that have successfully completed a program…. Have they gone on to employment? And with the funding pots that are available right now, more and more they are strictly tied to prospective employment. [I – 25, BD]

Program completion therefore remains an on-going concern for both the trainer and funder alike in order to legitimise program delivery and funding. In one instance, an ASEP coordinator reported being requested by college personnel to meet with students to encourage them to remain in their program, at which time students were reminded of the ASEP subsidy which ranged between 20 to 30 thousand dollars per student (F – 5). Consequently, a shift in emphasis on learning-to-work transitions suggests that in some respects closer linkages exist between aboriginal agreement holders, ASEP coordinators, and training delivery agents. However, it was also reported that the college was “accepting anybody” into its pre-trade programs, resulting in people graduating from programs but not passing the trades entrance exam, despite the fact that numerous re-writes were provided:

> We might see somebody go from a 12% to a 28% to a 34% in those three exams, but we weren’t seeing them go from a 12% to a 75%.... And so we stopped agreeing to do that. And I think we would give them a test exam at the start and maybe at the end, agree to write them – but you know, six exams in half a term? (I – 28)

This last observation indicates a tension exists between the priorities of the college (to fill seats) and the priorities of funders (to increasingly monitor results as measured by program completion rates). As a result, federal government stipulations have shifted towards tying funding to demand-driven industrial development; and yet, owing to the absence of resource extractive industries, a “one-size-fits-all” approach being implemented in the Beaufort Delta is clearly out of step with local needs. In essence, the priorities of the funder are out of step with the realities and needs of the primary client. As one ASETS coordinator explained:

> Sometimes the priorities of the program that we are delivering is so far removed from the area that it is delivered. Sometimes they [federal government] don't realize that you may not be able to fit the criteria with the program. And the ASETS is a good one, especially in an economic downturn where you don't have a lot of economic opportunity. As a result, a lot of the companies are not hiring as many people, and they're watching their pennies. And so now you have a program where training has to lead to employment; so how are you going to get the employers to buy into it when you are in an economic downturn? So I think you know, Canada in some cases needs to get out into the field more and see how they are going to develop programs that are going to benefit the people. And like I said the ASETS training-to-employment is not realistic. [I – 32, BD]

In Wood Buffalo, program design was tightly controlled by the mine sponsor. As one respondent explained, the mine took a very "hands-on role" with the program, and "money was not handed out until they were convinced that the program would succeed"– meaning that the same 40 students that entered the program would become indentured apprentices with the mine upon graduation (I – 6). Given the cost of the program to the mine sponsor[97], it stands to reason that there was a heavy emphasis placed on procurement and retention of its newly developed racialized labour power.

While the priorities of the mine were clear in terms of training, mentorship, and socialization of inductees, the priorities of the TDA were less clearly articulated. It was perceived that fulfilling the mandate of the mine program sponsor in Wood Buffalo created political pressure at the local level to retain students (I – 14). This pressure resulted in mixed messages concerning expectations, which inadvertently undermined the in-class portion of the program.

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[97] Mine expenditures for apprentices that it retained one year after graduation are respectively $100,000 (Cohort 1) $33, 333 (Cohort 2). Expenditures are calculated by dividing the annual company contribution by the number of graduates apprenticing with the mine one year after graduation. Actual figures are higher if provincial and aboriginal government contributions are included.

In one instance it was reported that a student attended only 1.5 days out of 5 weeks, and yet this same student graduated and was offered an apprenticeship with the sponsoring mine (I – 7). This incident clearly violates the program's attendance policies which state that students can be expelled after 4 unexcused absences.[98] It can therefore be reasoned that the in-class portion of the training program constitutes a credentialing formality that is required in accordance with government training policies while simultaneously protecting companies from insurance liability. As one respondent explained, mine sites emphasise a "safety culture," and if people do not possess literacy skills to read safety requirements, then the mine is responsible if an accident happens (I – 5).

In summary, differences in sources of economic capital ultimately structure the habitus of the VET field. Examination of partners' priorities indicates that in Wood Buffalo a *Risk Management* habitus has evolved, whereas in the Beaufort Delta the VET field is characterised by a *Numbers Game* habitus. Despite these different orientations (owing to differences in sources of economic capital) similarities in the dispositions of key partners are noteworthy; in both case sites program funders were able to bend the rules of the game in order to maintain or advance their position (and hence priorities) on the field. In turn, those groups containing less power who are positioned as recipients of grants, must work within funding stipulations that may not reflect their needs. How agents with less power respond to the priorities shaping the VET field is influenced by both their capacity to partner and also the willingness to play by and subvert the rules of the game. In the following section partnership capacity is examined followed by a re-examination of priorities of agents possessing less power.

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[98] Two students resented the fact that some students were "given too many chances" while others "worked their butts off" (I – 14, 22).

Capacity

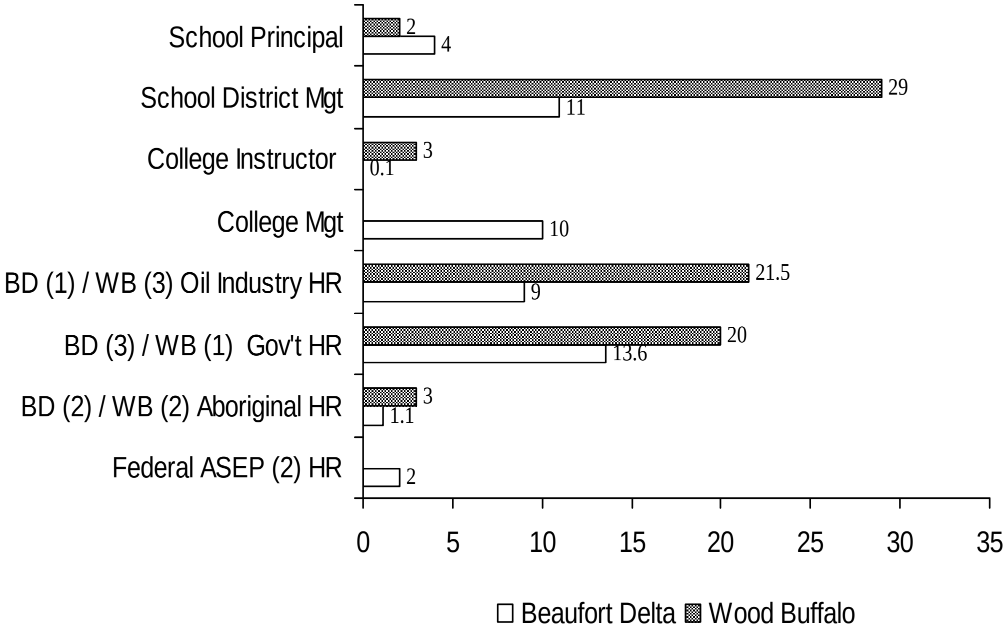
Capacity to implement the aforementioned priorities relates to both local labour markets as well as the capacity of organizations to meaningfully partner. As labour market capacity has already been addressed in chapter 5, this section examines institutional capacity. If we consider institutional capacity as constituting a form of cultural and social capital, insofar as both species of capital respectively represent intellectual assets and institutionalised networks, then a synergy exists between economic, cultural, and social capital. Institutional capacity is organised into three inter-related categories: 1) turnover; 2) monitoring and accountability; and 3) trust and communication.

Turnover

Figure 3 shows years of service respondents indicated they had been employed by a particular organization. As K – 12 school employees were also interviewed, I have included this data to provide further context, although for the purposes of this discussion program partners are specifically examined. Taken as a measure of institutional capacity, significant discrepancy in variable turnover rates indicate that organizations with high turnover (i.e. low employment tenure) do not possess the same level of capacity to contribute to partnership agreements.

Figure 3.

Years of Service as a Measure of Stakeholder Turnover



Most respondents provided years of service with their respective organization. All 12 respondents provided years of service in the Beaufort Delta; in Wood Buffalo, 8 of 10 respondents provided this same information. Numbers presented do not indicate location (regional or local community), level of formal training, or ethnicity. However, years of service generally tended to be longer in regional communities. Where there were several employees interviewed from the same organization, a yearly average is provided. For instance, a total of 5 human resources personnel employed by aboriginal organizations were interviewed; of these, 2 employees in each case site provided years of employment with their respective organization. In the Beaufort Delta, one individual had worked for the organization for 1.5 years, and the other individual had worked for 9 months, aboriginal human resource respondents had been employed for 3 years.

If we compare rates of turnover as a measure of institutional capacity existing between partner organizations, then by default employment partners maintain partnership supremacy. Of particular significance is the discrepancy in employment tenure existing between aboriginal human resources personnel and their industry and government counterparts. In Wood Buffalo, an approximate 7:1 ratio exists in terms of years of service between both oil and government respondents interviewed compared to aboriginal respondents interviewed. In the Beaufort Delta these figures respectively are 9:1 and 13:1. Two caveats include small sample size as well as the fact that Beaufort Delta ASEP employment partners either declined requests to be interviewed or were not available. In this case the Beaufort Delta industry figures relied on years of employment presented by a previous ASEP industry partner.

Several staff changes in aboriginal organizations were noted to have occurred throughout the course of the research. For instance, both ASEP project staff started, but did not complete the program's 3-year term. High turnover rates amongst school staff in outlying communities were also noted, with most staff serving a minimal amount of time before being drawn to larger regional centers. Similarly, TDA instructors interviewed were contract employees new to the region.

High staff turnover amongst aboriginal employment coordinators can be attributed to a variety of factors. It was speculated that the relatively low pay that employment coordinators received in comparison to industry wages made it difficult to attract qualified people to perform the various tasks involving client assessment and career counselling (I – 5). One can also surmise that in regions that are remote, contain small populations, and possess low levels of formal education, devolution of services requiring the training of counterparts within each aboriginal organization to facilitate the federal training to employment agreements unrealistically stretches human resources thin. Interviews with employment coordinators indicated a high level of frustration associated with the job. As noted, sources of frustration include implementing programs that are insufficiently supported by the federal government and are considered out of step with local needs and realities; these programs are for the most part short-term and contain complex and fragmented funding provisions that must be coordinated with funding sources from other jurisdictions. It was perceived that changing program requirements related to shifts from AHRDA to ASETS, as well as the periodic nature of funding envelopes (the 3-year ASEP program is the longest federal program offered of its kind) results in a fragmented, short-term approach towards training that contributes towards misunderstandings between employees and agreement holders as the target is always shifting; just when people are becoming acquainted with one program it is being replaced with another (F – 5). In turn, organizations with high employee turnover find themselves in a constant training cycle, which further saps capacity to partner. It was also noted that “doing the rounds” in terms of holding multiple jobs with various agencies (town, government, industry, etc) was commonplace and not considered a “red flag on CVs” (I – 28).[99]

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[99] Similar observations were made in a summative evaluation of AHRDA programs (HRSDC, 2009).

These observations indicate that while gaining a limited degree of autonomy to manage their own affairs, the increased level of bureaucracy created by the devolution of services in a post-land claims economy has resulted in untenable conditions which aboriginal groups must now operate under in order to implement programs and services designed for a limited pool of clientele that lack the necessary skills and qualifications to gain meaningful and long-term employment.[100] Consequently, enacted partnerships do not serve to empower aboriginal organisations or improve regional economic or social development owing to different levels of capacity to implement programs that aboriginal groups have little say or control over.

Accountability and Monitoring

One of the most contentious areas to emerge from partner interviews involved differing perceptions over partnership accountability. Two related components of accountability include labour market research required to inform training policy, and tracking and monitoring of program participants.

In the Beaufort Delta, respondents intimated varying degrees of buck passing when it came to assigning responsibility (and blame) for monitoring and tracking VET participants as they transitioned from learning-to-work. This observation suggests partners were not clear on who was responsible for tracking student success. While some partners felt it was the responsibility of the TDA to track students in their programs, others considered it to reside with aboriginal agreement holders or the ASEP project staff.

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[100] For instance, Vodden (2001) found that there was a lack of proper implementation of the Inuvialuit land claims economic development objectives, owing to limited federal funding capacity dollars. Similarly, criticisms accompanied the Wood Buffalo ASEP program as well.

Beaufort Delta program partners also presented mixed messages with respect to whether or not the regional economy was strong or soft. When asked whether the region had conducted a labour pool analysis, respondents were vague; while some partners thought one had been conducted, others thought otherwise (I – 24, 24, 27, 31, 34). I was also informed that an aboriginal organization had collected proprietary data on numbers hired by an industry partner. These observations suggest that while there are strategies in place to support communication amongst partners, there remains miscommunication and misunderstanding around key policy documents that can be used to develop a concerted long-term regional strategic plan.[101]

Equally problematic is the regional reporting of trainees. One respondent expressed frustration concerning both federal reporting requirements and with industry partners over their failure to procure accurate figures required for reporting purposes:

> There's a lot of fluff in there, and I don't like the reporting. What they call it is an *intervention*. It would be if the work coach for [ASEP] went over and talked to one of the apprentices and they would put that down as an intervention. As far as success rates, I'm a little leery of all those numbers. As an example they put an apprentice through – say Joe. We hired him and we did training on-the-job, and a lot of that comes from [ASEP], and that all looks wonderful and we're going to do that for three months. We are hearing horror stories that when his three months are up they lay him off and bring another person in. So those numbers – I just don't like them. And we've been really frustrated….So if you are to going to assess that as true numbers in the North we have this and you know these numbers of

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[101] Similarly, the Auditor General (2010) found that the Department of Education, Culture and Employment and Aurora College was not tracking the number of adults who were taking training provided through numerous partnerships they have organizations with, nor were they analyzing data collected on a regular basis to improve program delivery or evaluating the results of existing training programs. The Report states, "Without this data and analysis, the Department and Aurora College cannot demonstrate how much progress has been made in building capacity to meet labour market challenges and needs, and whether existing training programs should be maintained or modified, or new ones considered" (items # 85 & 86).

> people we’ve trained. It’s very erroneous and it alters the situation. [I –31, BD]

In reference to actual numbers of people trained on site and employed, the same respondent stated that the information provided would not be accurate, as numbers of people hired do not necessarily indicate numbers retained: “I have gone to meetings where they have said, ‘OK, here’s our numbers, and I have said, ‘OK, what’s the breakdown?’ … And they give me those numbers and they didn’t add up to the number that we gave; it would only be like half” (I – 31).

It was also speculated that lack of accountability and transparency is not necessarily germane to any one particular group or organization, but rather is endemic to the region:

> It’s a culture. And it’s like with me coming in and putting these demands on them; it’s like: “What are you doing?” Believe me, I am hearing it all the time. And other businesses are saying, “It’s never been done like this before. What are you doing?”….There should be accountability, absolutely. You cannot move forward as a society if you are not being held accountable. [I – 31, BD]

If we consider the above passage in light of the *Numbers Game* mandate of ASEP, federal government reporting is also problematic in the sense that counting a person to employment and then having that same person fall into the category of unemployed obfuscates actual outcomes, which are further muddied by human resources jargon (e.g. “sustainable employment,” “intervention,” “long term job placements”) used in reports. As it was also explained, employment “could mean a client worked for a day and was terminated (various reasons – voluntary and involuntary) or was in a cycle of work/lay-off/work which would constitute two results” (personal communication, ASETS coordinator, June 12, 2012). It would therefore appear that federal ASEP programs are “more about services than outcomes” with the assumption that outcomes will follow (I – 28).

Problems with monitoring and reporting program outcomes indicate that in a Numbers Game field a conflict of interest arises, as those partners administering programs and receiving funds are also the same partners legitimating their presence by defining success in terms of numbers, which in these cases clearly do not add up. An emphasis on program enrolments and completion rates also indicates that TDAs are resource dependent as federal funding provides program dollars required to employ campus personnel and program administrators.

Improving accountability in rentier-like economies is problematic because there are no mechanisms in place, or incentives to publicly monitor program outcomes. That is to say, “it [low accountability] is a culture up here,” because there is no incentive to improve outcomes in a region where federal grants are more or less guaranteed. In addition, the sphere of civil society that exists in modern democratic states is absent or at best significantly compromised owing to a conflation of the economic and political spheres resulting from the mixing of business with politics which goes unchecked, as well as the fact that land claimants are not tax payers, but rather beneficiaries who, for the most part, possess extremely low levels of education. Beneficiaries are therefore unlikely to raise critical questions of their own organisations that administer the distribution of rents, especially considering that the control of rents, including allotment of sinecure positions, would directly impact employment opportunities for them and their families. Instead, the dispositions orienting agents within an indigenous mode of social regulation is to increase access to the rent circuit rather than being oriented towards increasing productivity. Consequently, a cause and effect relationship existing between productivity and accountability is absent in rentier-like economies.

Accusations over lack of accountability were also levelled at aboriginal organizations in Wood Buffalo by one industry respondent:

> So, it was extremely frustrating to sit at the table, look at the issues, understand the dynamics, and not be able to get to the strategies because [aboriginal organization] simply couldn't get there. They simply didn't have the capacity. They have outcomes as a requirement of their contribution agreement to the government but nobody ever holds them accountable to it. So money goes in all sorts of different directions. No one ever holds their feet to the fire over the lack of outcomes over all of that money because it is a politically difficult thing to do. And you can't challenge them over their lack of results. [I – 5, WB]

Similarly, the same respondent also levelled criticism over the federal and provincial government's inability to partner:

> So, do you have a comprehensive approach to addressing aboriginal issues in this country? No. So what happens is that you find when you are industry you are on the ground and you are working pretty much like a social worker getting an understanding of the issues at a very intimate level…. You get very close to the issues and you begin to understand the network of issues and how they interconnect and then you are trying to work with the government on it and they are incapable of doing it because they work in silos. And they will have their little piece of it but the work that is required to connect the government together to develop a consensus program leads to ultimate frustration – for [aboriginal government] but also industry, which is why companies like [mine sponsor] go off and develop their own programs because they can't get all the people to work together. So they do it themselves. And God knows how the First Nations, with the capacity they have, work with the federal government who's responsible for their issues. [I –5, WB]

These industry insights are significant for several reasons. Firstly, in addition to the criticisms over low accountability and outcomes levelled at aboriginal governments by industry, criticism over federal government incompetence – owing to institutional and bureaucratic inertia – is also cited as a reason for hampering training programs. This observation indicates that industry and the state are not homogeneous entities operating on the VET field. Instead, both groups operate with different dispositions and institutional capacities owing to differences in asset structure. These differences enable industry to assert its dominance on the field, which Pratt (1976) identified in his analysis of government industry relations occurring at the time of the creation of Syncrude when the consortium was able to capitalise on political tensions existing between the federal government of Pierre Trudeau and the provincial government of Peter Lougheed. Tensions occurring between industry and the state also indicate the problematic tendency of post-colonial theorising that tendentiously applies colonialism to situate aboriginal-industry-state relations without regard for the contexts of late capitalism where interests are increasingly merging at the local level owing to the weakening of the nation-state.

Secondly, these industry perspectives indicate that while governmental and bureaucratic inertia may contribute towards thwarting efforts to develop a coordinated approach to training partnerships, criticisms over lack of capacity on the part of both aboriginal and state governments to effectively partner also provides a convenient excuse for industry to develop its own programs. Consequently, perceptions of federal government ineptitude enable industry to assert its dominance on the field. When agreements collapse – in part owing to differences in economic capital and ensuing resentment and grievances between aboriginal groups, industry lament (disingenuously) that the lack of institutional capacity of other groups to partner requires the unilateral development and implementation of in-house, customized, for profit, programming tailored to specific labour power and risk management needs. From this standpoint, institutional capacity as a form of cultural and social capital enables TNCs to circumvent the rules of federal partnership agreements in favour of forging separate ad hoc agreements involving one-industry and one First Nation (or to a much lesser extent Métis). Consequently, the centralisation and concentration of capital occurring on a postFordist VET field in Wood Buffalo enables the mine to write the rules of the game, as noted when it failed to enforce its own attendance policies and allow students who had violated the policy to apprentice.

Trust and Communication

The success or failure of partnerships hinges on issues relating to maintaining trust and communication between different partners. For effective partnerships to unfold, agents must be prepared to make concessions in order to work together on a common objective. As indicated in the previous section, in both regions a breakdown in trust and communication occurred owing to frustrations over the inability of partners to reach a common objective.

Trust and communication most effectively occurred at the sub-field level when different organizations were willing to put their political differences aside (“we don’t bring the baggage,” I – 27) and where there was at least one long-term employee who was able to bring different partners together to discuss training priorities. In these instances political differences occurring at the leadership level were considered to be put aside so as to avoid preferential treatment of any one group (I – 9, 24, 27, 31). Interestingly, this was the same region where industry partners either were unavailable to be interviewed or did not wish to be interviewed. In this instance, frustrations were expressed by respondents over poor communication and questionable results that were provided by the main employment partner.[102] In Wood Buffalo, acrimony and levelling accusations and criticisms of each agent was more pronounced – an indication that tensions may be exacerbated by the establishment of transnational oligopolistic corporations who are capable of dominating the field to the detriment of other partners.

These observations indicate than an inversely proportional relationship exists between habitus of partners and population size; in communities with smaller populations roles are less formal and rigidly defined, thereby enabling partners to collaborate more effectively than would otherwise be the case in larger centers where roles are rigidified and lines of communication formalized. In the Beaufort Delta different partners were able to work together more effectively on some levels – an indication that the habitus of agents was less rigidly oriented towards particular institutional cultures, although the habitus of peripheral employment partners thwarted attempts to effectively partner. Conversely, in the larger population of Wood Buffalo, groups interact more formally in terms of their positionality on the training field. In addition, inter-agent stakes are raised to a threshold that rigidifies institutional habitus to the point where partners are unwilling to concede resources in order to effectively partner. Consequently, for VET fields to produce effective partnerships size matters, both in terms of the volume and composition of capital that must be evenly distributed amongst partners. Relative equitable distribution of asset structures in effect constitute structural antecedents for establishing "trust" and "accountability" in effective partnership work.

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[102] As employers in the Beaufort Delta did not provide interviews, one may by way of conjecture draw from findings in similar studies. For instance, an Ontario partnership study noted that construction employers were “absent partners,” who were not interested in apprenticeship training as it was perceived that the rate of return did not warrant the investment in human capital, especially considering the fact that trained apprentices could be poached by competing firms (Taylor, 2009). The study also found that apprentices were considered unproductive labour, which rationalized “employers’ lack of engagement and the need for increased government subsidies for apprenticeship training” (p. 138). While employment partners in the Beaufort Delta may consider program participants to be unproductive labour, poaching was not likely an issue considering the limited opportunities VET participants had to find work elsewhere. With respect to the Wood Buffalo program, employers indicated that the apprentices were highly valued and did not constitute a drain on productivity (I – 11).

Differing levels of trust and communication were also noted to occur within partner organisations. Communication breakdown was most pronounced in organizations with the highest turnover. For instance, some respondents in aboriginal organizations felt that they should not comment on certain issues relating to employment partners as their position in the organization did not allow them to. In other instances, some of these same respondents did not have all the relevant information to comment on questions asked. These observations suggest a communication divide exists between the executive arm of aboriginal organizations and human resources personnel working for these organisations. Reasons for this communication divide may be due to higher turnover rate existing between human resources personnel compared to that of the executive arm. A second reason may also be linked to regional differences occurring between centralised decision making authorities (tribal councils and regional corporations) and band councils and community corporations. While tribal councils may represent the interests of local bands concerning training and employment, councils are largely apolitical administrative entities that serve to collectively coordinate and communicate interests and initiatives on behalf of separate bands affiliated with the council. Unlike some of the First Nations they represent, the tribal council in Wood Buffalo does not publicly challenge industrial development, but instead endorses it through promotion of partnerships with mining companies. These contradictions indicate that instead of meeting with community members who live in outlying communities, large corporations are more likely to engage through centralised administrative political entities occurring in the semiperiphery. In doing so, they are able to subvert local highly politicized leadership while simultaneously appearing to show a willingness to "engage" with communities. Conversely, industry respondents were generally congruent in the perspectives presented during interviews, indicating internal lines of communication are more consistent. In the Beaufort Delta, congruency between the varying levels of aboriginal governance concerning the establishment of megaproject developments was also evident.

Aside from differences pertaining to internal lines of communication within organizations is the capacity to maintain communication between organizations. Perceptions of racist practices and attitudes notably eroded trust and communication for aboriginal agreement holders. In both regions perceptions of racist or discriminatory behaviour were levelled at employers. These perceptions were shared by aboriginal respondents (with the exception of one non-aboriginal respondent), and came from respondents working in aboriginal organizations (n = 3), government (n = 1), and industry (n = 1). Three aboriginal human resources personnel cited workplace prejudicial behaviour as a reason why some clients discontinued employment with particular companies owing to an unwelcoming workplace atmosphere.[103] Other respondents expressed resentment over the failure of partner companies to honour partnership agreements even though they had supported the partnership, but now felt “shut out” (I – 31, 32, 34). One aboriginal human resources respondent noted:

> There are companies – even our own companies – that are racist to put it bluntly. There’s a stigma in a lot of cases with hiring aboriginal people or Indians: they’re not reliable, they’re drunks, they have all these issues, they are not going to show up. At the end of the day you give them these opportunities and sometimes they could become your best employee. It’s just education and giving that opportunity to aboriginal people. In some cases managers may be brought in from the South that may not have faith in our people and as a result they are bringing people in from the South which is an additional cost. And the other side of it – because we are such a small area to draw people from – we don’t have the skilled labour force to fill those positions to do the large construction jobs. In some cases you are forced to bring people in from the South. [I – 32, BD]

What is particularly significant about this last observation is that aboriginal owned companies were being identified as racist and for not hiring or training local land claims beneficiaries. And yet, these were the same companies that were supposed to be partnering with the ASEP program. Added to a sense of frustration and betrayal was the perception that discriminatory company housing policies precluded out-of-town participants from participating in training opportunities as VET participants had to find and pay for their own housing while being apprenticed – a condition that did not apply to out-of-town employees hired by the same company (I – 31, BD).

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[103] All students interviewed that were apprenticed with the mine unanimously stated that the experience was positive, and they had not experienced any prejudicial or racist behaviour by the mine or co-workers.

Non-aboriginal industry respondents (n = 3) were either dismissive of allegations of racism or discrimination, citing company policy towards hiring was "color blind" and based on merit (I – 6). One Wood Buffalo respondent indicated that during a hiring freeze, their organization had only hired aboriginal people.[104] Instead, frustration at the lack of capacity to partner effectively was levelled at aboriginal organizations by a Wood Buffalo industry respondent:

> You'll get to a certain point and then the First Nations people will pull back because you're treading on their political agenda, right? And you have to remember they have a public political agenda. Their public political agenda is to challenge the government on land claims, and challenge the government on constitutional rights and the lack of attention, and whatever…. They can't let go of their public agenda. They can't turn around and say "Oh things are actually pretty good, and yeah we've got enough money to do this," because that would be giving up their public agenda. [I – 5, WB]

Several inferences can be made with respect to the above statement in terms of how partnership relations are framed. Firstly, a communication breakdown between key players destroys the level of trust and transparency required to form effective partnerships. As we have also seen, miscommunication creates perceptions of racist and discriminatory practices as local people are "shut out" of employment opportunities, with worksites primarily filled with a peripatetic workforce. As a form of symbolic capital, the strategically essentialised rhetoric of aboriginal leaders' "public political agenda" is used to maintain jurisdictional authority on the field, while simultaneously strengthening kin relations (despite a failure to revive communal relations). These dispositions can be traced back to colonial dispossession whereby jurisdictional authority as understood through treaty agreements has been systematically undermined by both the state and industry. Despite a transition to PostFordism, Fordist colonial relations therefore remain embedded as vestigial elements that continue to structure the habitus of agents.

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[104] In this instance the mine received the prestigious gold level accreditation with the Canadian Council of Aboriginal Business program for its hiring practices.

Resistance and Resignation

Up until this point in the analysis, findings indicate the different priorities and asset structures occurring on the VET field result in a differential capacity to partner, which in turn produces tensions manifested in a breakdown in trust and communication occurring between different partners. From this standpoint, ameliorating program tensions would simply require “capacity building” – a nebulous term contained within the lexicon of liberal culturalist discourse, connoting “empowerment” of marginalised groups in order that they may be able to participate in the global economy.

As Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992) note, “Those who dominate in a given field are in a position to make it function to their advantage, but they must always contend with the resistance, the claims, the contention, ‘political’ or otherwise, of the dominated” (p. 102). Shaped by the lack of alternatives, agents are also simultaneously habituated and resigned to play by the rules of the game. Drawing from Sayer (2005) the habitus of VET fields is inflected with emotional dispositions (pride, resentment, shame) – some of which have already been alluded to in the previous sections of this chapter.[105] And so, while agents may push their priorities onto the field, and while capacity to implement priorities must inevitably reconcile structural limitations of the field – be they either market or human capital – emotional habitus of agents also plays a significant role in structuring the field. A final component of the VET field must therefore consider responses to the priorities, design, and delivery of VET programs. Accordingly, habituation and resignation to the rules of the game is manifested in respondents' cynicism of both the efficacy of programs to increase employment, as well as the underlying motives of program funders.

With respect to the influence of priorities exerted by resource extractive industries, some respondents expressed cynicism regarding industry sponsorship of local school programs (I – 3), and considered community visits by these same companies involving "feasts and lavish door prizes" to be "very demeaning and a way of wearing people down" (I – 7). Another respondent stated: "Yeah, [community] is dying of cancer and [company] is dumping into the river, but just keep your mouth shut because we're giving you all this free stuff, or promising you X amount of jobs for your people" (I – 4). It was also noted oil company partners had invested in initiatives that maximized public relations which drew money away from small literacy organizations (I – 28). These observations underscore the notion that the priority (or "agenda") of the risk management field is to hire as many indigenous people as possible as a means of hegemonically granting concessions to subordinate groups in order to gain their consent to continue to maximise surplus value through exploitation of treaty lands.

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[105] Sayer (2005) argues that Bourdieu's habitus emphasises the habitual and instrumental dispositions of agents, but fails to consider the ethical and emotional dispositions, which robs groups of agency as they struggle on the field (see also Livingstone, 1999).

Still others expressed cynicism over speculative training schemes that did not materialise into tangible employment outcomes (I – 28, F – 5). As one respondent explained:

> It'll be like every other boom – they'll push northerners aside and bring in their expertise and we'll get the labour jobs – truck driving. *It ain't going to change* [emphasis added]. Look at how much people we get hired. It's been over and over. [F – 5, BD]

In reference to developing transferable skills related to resource extractive industries, the same respondent stated:

> We call it the imaginary pipeline. You've got five or six booms. I've been trained in three of them. I went to Alberta and got pipeline training; I went to Norman Wells and got training; I went out on the Beaufort and got training. They never used me.

They never used you?

> Every time the boom quit everybody got laid off. I can name quite a bit [sic] of people that got the same training as me and we never used it. I worked on refineries for over six years – never used it. I've worked on pipelines for over two years – never used it. I've worked on offshore drilling for about five years – never used it. [F – 5, BD]

What do you mean you never used it?

Well, I worked when I worked there but when I got laid off never used it again.

So it's not a transferable skill?

> Well they don't believe your expertise. They'd sooner get someone that's been working over at the North Sea over here and trust them than the people that worked here without the education. [F – 5, BD]

What is most startling about this last set of claims is that the respondent was responsible for recruiting and promoting programs that were considered to have no long-term benefit in developing transferable skills. These sentiments regarding the Beaufort Delta ASEP were also expressed as constituting another (disguised) form of "glorified welfare" ("Funding announced…", 2010), and a "band aid" solution to a much wider systemic problem of unemployment that could not be solved with quick-fix "drive by training" solutions (F – 5, I – 5).

In an effort to address local needs while fulfilling the federal ASEP mandate, federal government respondents indicated:

> We're focusing more on the apprenticeships – the certification – because if they get that it's transferable skills – it's education. Whereas if they don't have that they go from one labourer job to another labourer job.… Whereas the federal government – they're not looking at that – they're not capturing how many people I have as apprenticeships for instance – that's something we're taking on to try and add value to the program. That's not in our mandate. [F – 5]

Resignation to the rules of the game also relate to program design and delivery. Federal government programs were generally perceived to contain awkward and cumbersome stipulations, with projected employment targets being out of touch with local labour market realities. Concerns were also raised regarding stipulations pertaining to identification of industry partners at the time of developing the ASEP program proposal which did not take into account changing labour market conditions upon program implementation. In this case an employment partner was unable to take advantage of the ASEP training subsidy because there were no business opportunities when the program was implemented, requiring ASEP coordinators to find loop-holes in the contract in order for them to pursue other business partnerships related to road construction.

A final source of contention involving exclusionary rule-setting involves credentialing policies. Aboriginal agreement holders considered credentialing to preclude many clients that have relevant demonstrable skills and experience, suggesting a mismatch exists between jobs and skills. The rationale behind mines enforcing credential requirements (e.g. Grade 12 GED) is for insurance purposes (I – 5), and yet it was also noted that credential requirements are not uniformly enforced by some companies, especially in times of construction booms (I – 4).

Jurisdictional Control and Shifting Alliances

A final component structuring the habitus of partners relates to jurisdictional control. Unlike resignation to the rules of the game, resistance confers a degree of agency that is manifested in the ability of partners with less capital to maintain and defend space encroached upon by the interests of groups endowed with a greater asset structure. The habitus of agents is therefore in part a function of their varying degrees of jurisdictional power and authority which is continually subject to the ebb and flow of changes to the VET field. Findings suggest that asymmetrical power relations produce ripple effects that are manifested in efforts to maintain, enhance, or defend agent’s power and authority. Sites of tension emerge across various loci within the subfield, producing shifting alliances between different partners.

In Wood Buffalo it was perceived that First Nations jurisdictional authority over training was threatened when the mine sponsor formed a unilateral alliance with a local training delivery agent (TDA). These events were precipitated by the failure of the previous ASEP program described in chapter 5, where communication broke down between the various partners. In the aftermath of the previous ASEP program it was perceived that the mine training program was created without due consultation or adequate involvement of First Nations:

> I was driving to work one morning and heard it on the radio, "Go see your local employment coordinator to sign up for this course." So they didn't inform us or myself – I don't know if ...there was miscommunication but I came into the office and called [TDA] up and said, "Can you explain this program to me because you're sending people to my office and I don't know what you're talking about?" [I – 4]

This same respondent also expressed frustration and resentment over what was perceived to be duplicitous attempts by the mine sponsor and TDA to undermine First Nations' roles in working with clients:

> You [corporations] still come to us – you still need to utilize our offices to get your clients to fill these spots, but yet when we were running these [ASEP] programs we didn't have the support that they're showing now. They're pushing, and saying, "Yes, like let's do this and get going." And yet when it was ASEP how come they weren't there and showing that much support then? I just think it's a duplication of what was already done. And leaving the ownership to the First Nations would have been a lot more rewarding for the First Nation communities; for the First Nation leadership. I think that sense of success and achievement would have been far greater appreciated if it was still done by First Nation individuals or First Nation organizations. [I - 4][106]

According to industry respondents, the new mine sponsored program was reportedly designed in conjunction with "aboriginal consultants" (I – 11), and was brokered directly with the local college, whose mandate the mine sponsor considered "is to prepare people in Wood Buffalo to qualify for jobs in the oil sands industry" (I – 6). In addition, the tribal council, local bands, and the Métis Nation of Alberta also contributed a portion of the funds to create the program. Therefore, aboriginal organisations knew about the program beforehand, suggesting internal lines of miscommunication occurred. Nevertheless, the "miscommunication" between First Nations and the mine sponsor cited in the previous passage indicates tensions over jurisdictional authority and due processes of consultation. Accordingly, it can be surmised that groups containing less economic capital prefer collaborative partnership approaches to training delivery, whereas economic producer groups like mines prefer working separately in order to achieve their objectives through enacted partnerships.

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[106] The tribal council runs its own youth "career camp," where "Oilsands 101" is taught, along with labour relations, workers' rights, resume writing, and career counselling. Sponsorship comes from the provincial government and local mining companies. The involvement with industry-related and funded career camps suggests that the council's primary motivation concerning partnerships involves jurisdictional control and coordination of clients as per the agreements with the federal government. ATC's pro-industry focus contrasts significantly with local bands that form part of the tribal council. For instance, public opposition to tar sands development is regularly mounted by the Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation

These occurrences reflect the on-going tensions and contradictions occurring with respect to the shifting neoliberal/postFordist positionality of partner groups. As partners, aboriginal groups in Wood Buffalo contribute financially to training programs and help administer the programs by recruiting and screening applicants. By naturalising mine training programs in both regional and (importantly) outlying communities where political resistance to tar sands development is staged, centralised aboriginal governments play a critical role in fulfilling a risk management habitus.

Hegemonic strategies of the risk management field inevitably erode the legitimacy and capacity of aboriginal governments both with respect to maintaining jurisdictional boundaries and control over training and clients, but also with respect to maintaining members' confidence that their interests are being represented and protected. When an official of the mine who sponsored the training program in Wood Buffalo stated that they are trying to get in at the "grass roots level," (I – 6) to access aboriginal trainees, we can infer that the mine is attempting to circumvent politicised forms of resistance, preferring instead to go through apolitical aboriginal umbrella organizations that enable a risk management field to be maintained. And while there was tension expressed at the tribal council level with attempts of the mine to develop unilateral programming with the college, this tension related to jurisdictional control over clients. By developing programs in this manner the mine sponsor fulfills two key objectives: procuring depoliticised racialised labour, and appearing to do so through "community engagement."

Inter-Tribal Control

While the previous passage indicates tensions and contradictions existing between aboriginal groups and industry, hierarchical differences between aboriginal groups were also noted to impact jurisdictional control over training. Colonially-imposed land dispossession settlements have resulted in differential capacity to convert symbolic capital into economic or social capital. Therefore, access to the rent circuit is contingent upon an aboriginal group's asset structure. Tensions, originally derived from interaction with the state, are now turned inwards and become embodied as dispositions of the VET field existing within and between communities.

Aside from colonially imposed structural power differentials existing between aboriginal groups, it was also noted that some leaders possess better negotiation skills, and also possess greater volume of social capital, or what was described as “political connections” (I – 24). As one respondent explained:

> [Aboriginal government name] always had more money and so they played on a different level. …Sometimes [they] would say we want this and [another group name] would say well that’s not our priority and we want this and who won would depend on who had the most money at the time. …There was give and take though. It was pretty collaborative most of the time. [I –28, BD]

In the Beaufort Delta, political differences stemming from different economic bases of support and leadership capacity notably became manifested in the ASEP society responsible for managing the program. As previously noted, the ASEP society was named Building Inuvialuit Potential Society (BIPS). This name reflects the fact that the society formed prior to Gwich’in participation in the project. In this case the Inuvialuit Regional Corporation initiated the ASEP application and the Gwich’in joined in once the program had been awarded to the region. How this process unfolded was never made clear during interviews. Nevertheless, the society name connotes differences in power occurring within the region. For instance, a respondent noted a tendency for one group to try and exert control of training delivery, which required the society managing the ASEP to keep partners at arms length in order to be perceived as fair and impartial (F – 5).

Hierarchical differences existing between aboriginal groups are also entrenched institutionally through stipulations in federal funding agreements. While the mandate of ASETS agreement holders is to support all clients who are of aboriginal descent, First Nation organizations are required to prioritize opportunities first to local First Nations clients, and then to non-local First Nations, or Métis registered clients (I – 4).[107] Training dollars are apportioned according to the number of registered members each First Nation has; the more members registered, the more funding received.[108] As previously noted, despite this funding formula, the largest Wood Buffalo First Nation did not provide the weekly $50.00 "top-up" allowance for their own students registered in the mine program – a significant grievance cited by VET participants affiliated with this First Nation.[109] Complicating matters are stipulations governing the disbursement of ASEP and ASETS funds which prevent agreement holders from counting the same client twice under different programs, thereby causing programs to compete for a small pool of trainable clients (I – 5).

The most significant inter-tribal differences impacting a shift in alliances in partnership agreements were noted to occur between Métis and First Nations in Wood Buffalo. Agreements entered into by industry and First Nations provide volumes of economic capital for First Nations that Métis are unable to access owing to their limited asset structure resulting from differentiated land dispossession, when Métis received cash settlements instead of treaty rights.

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[107] In this instance, the majority of active clients registered with the tribal council were non-tribal council members, requiring the employment coordinator to contact other employment offices (FN and Metis) on their behalf in order to procure funding.

[108] Membership in some local First Nations has changed owing to historic enforcement of Wood Buffalo National Park boundaries that stipulated which FN was required to have a licence to hunt in the park (McCormack, 1984). As a result, some FNs have more members due to the effects of colonial administration. Amendments to the *Indian Act* under Bill C – 3 have enabled women to get their Indian status back, which has caused the Métis population to decrease (I – 10).

[109] Councillors and chiefs of all five First Nations were not in attendance at either the welcoming or graduation ceremony for students in the program. The absence of both moral and financial support (as in the case of one FN) *may* indicate resentment of the program by some groups. One TDA employee informally noted their absence, referring to the graduation ceremony as a public relations stunt.

According to one individual, Métis locals receive a fraction of the funds that First Nations receive from IBAs owing to the fact that First Nations have more power to intervene in public hearings into proposed mining developments. Differences in the volumes of economic capital possessed by aboriginal groups leads to resentment and frustration by those unable to convert sufficient volumes of symbolic capital into economic capital. Significantly, brokerage of separate agreements with mines is now sought as a means to resolve asymmetrical power relations existing between First Nations and Métis locals.[110]

A perception existed that a Wood Buffalo community is comprised of the "haves" (First Nations) and "have-nots" (Métis), and that deep-rooted political differences prevent some groups from working together. As one Métis respondent explained, the only way to "get up from the bottom of the pool" is to sign agreements with local mining companies: "We deal mainly with the ones surrounding us in the zone. But they've helped us big time in training. We've signed a couple of agreements and they've given us funding to do some training" (I – 10). In this instance, agreements with mines were credited for funding the organization's political and administrative office.

Shifting alliances occurring between different aboriginal groups in Wood Buffalo reflects a transition from merchant capitalism (when Métis had more power during the fur trade) to postFordism, where aboriginal groups possessing a greater asset structure (on account of treaty settlements) enjoy preferential entrance onto the VET field by forging neoliberal partnership agreements with TNCs as part of impact and benefits agreements. The fact that a mining company is sponsoring a political and administrative office of an aboriginal group also illustrates the on-going tendency of mixing business with politics characterising northern aboriginal governance.

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[110] As described in chapter 5, Métis were asked to join the Wood Buffalo ASEP program as an after-thought in order to bolster numbers required to gain program funding – a situation that was resented by Wood Buffalo Métis locals, and may have contributed in forming their decision to pursue their own industry agreements.

These observations indicate the complexity of funding provisions, and also provide further evidence of the bureaucratic quagmire that accompanies and confronts aboriginal governance stemming from re-inscription of colonially imposed identities that continues to fragment local communities by encouraging communities and aboriginal groups to compete against one another. Consequently, a fragmented neoliberal training field now characterises a postFordist restructuring of labour structuring the habitus of the VET field.

Conclusion

Far from representing “fields of dreams,” findings indicate that VET partnerships are instead played out on fields of struggle. These struggles reflect both historical and on-going tensions that become embedded within the dispositions of partners. Together, partners’ dispositions collectively structure the habitus of each VET field.

Findings indicate agency and structure, respectively categorized as partners’ priorities and capacity, are cyclical and synergistic features of the field, meaning that one continually shapes the other. Consequently, delineating these components into neat thematic units robs the analysis of the relational and dynamic features animating the VET field, especially considering how emotional dispositions become embedded in the habitus of the field. And so, while the unifying principle of the VET field is labour, contested motives and priorities of agents result in jurisdictional competition for space that must continually be defended by less powerful agents in order for them to maintain a position on the field.

While it is possible to nominally essentialise partners into differentiated categories, the analysis has shown that a myriad of tensions and contradictions render a functional deterministic account of bounded group interests inadequate. Despite a common colonial legacy embedded in the habitus of the field, the positionality of partners have merged and differences have become less distinct, as evidenced in the creation of new alliances occurring between aboriginal groups and industry. These changes to the trajectory of the field and evolution of capital are consistent with a post-Fordist restructuring of labour.

While both case sites can be characterised as “enacted” public private partnerships, sources of economic capital structures the fields differently. The habitus of the risk management and numbers game fields relates to the priorities and capacity of partners to differentially mobilise and strategically convert species of capital in order to advance respective positions on the field. The industry, demand-driven partnership in Wood Buffalo resulted in high program accountability to procure apprentices. In this case the primary economic partner was also the primary client. However, because the main priority of the program involved risk management, program accountability occurred at the expense of building trust and communication for the groups these programs were targeting.

Accordingly, in Wood Buffalo private, for-profit interests distort the training field to the point that all agents and sources of capital are ultimately swept up into its vortex. Training has become increasingly fragmented, resulting in competition between and within aboriginal communities, as well as between delivery agents for funding provisions derived from multiple sources that aboriginal human resource agreement holders must navigate.

Conversely, in a numbers game field characterising the supply-driven federal training program in the Beaufort Delta, accountability and transparency is low on account of the rentier-like economic relationship embedded in the habitus of the field; low accountability is reflected in resistance by the principal employment partner whose habitus is a function of its location as a peripheral industry. Instead, an emphasis on procuring numbers of people participating in programs characterises the habitus of the field, whereby the priority of the funder (federal government) is to legitimise its presence under the pretence that it is actively engaged in supporting aboriginal communities through government programs. In this case, the priority of the funder is out of step with the priorities of the client (aboriginal governments).

Informal networks of communication provided enhanced ability to develop trust and communication amongst some of the partners, indicating that a smaller population size and the absence of the interests of domiciled capital provided a relatively level playing field for key partners to operate on.

Findings indicate that changes to funding regimes impact the way some partners are partnering. While there is more pressure for some groups to work together in order to meet federal funding requirements, institutional inertia and high turnover subverts transparency and accountability of monitoring and reporting. Consequently, efforts on the part of some partners to communicate and collaboratively pool resources to deliver programs is hampered by an absence of coordinated and integrated sources of data and analysis required to effectively inform policy. Reflected in the absence of reliable data sources to inform policy is the ad hoc approach to training delivery tied to speculative development and short-term, “band-aid” piecemeal operations.

How then do processes impact outcomes? In other words, how does the nature of partnerships shape affordances for learning as well as transitions into the world of work for those that these programs are intended for? And importantly, how does the structure of the field, structure vocational habitus? Answering these questions provides further insight and evidence into the regulation of labour occurring on the VET field.

CHAPTER EIGHT

CHALLENGING TRANSITIONS

Introduction

Capital conversion strategies of partners inevitably intersect with the capacity to convert symbolic capital of racialized bodies into a universalized currency of transferable skills. Herein resides the central limiting factor of northern VET fields – the capacity to produce aboriginal skilled labour in order to meet the priorities of different partners.

How the logic of the VET field becomes embodied as the logic of VET participants is the subject of this chapter. Just as the habitus of partners differs with respect to the two case sites, so too does the habitus of participants. Yet, unlike the habitus of partners, which is shaped by the structuring effects of institutional solidary cohesiveness vis-à-vis the competing interests of other agents, vocational habitus is formed instead by subjecting personal dispositions to the "collective predispositions shaped by class, race, and gender" (Colley, et. al., 2007, p. 477). Vocational habitus simultaneously impacts and is impacted by career trajectory, which in turn is influenced by social networks, institutions, and opportunities occurring in a given field. Hence, it is more useful to think of VET participants in terms of agents with similar dispositions (part of which is constitutes similar career trajectories), rather than a body of individuals acting in concert to maintain or advance a position.

Vocational habitus is explored through the learning-to-work (LTW) transitions occurring in both case sites. A comparison of LTW transitions returns the analysis to consideration of capital conversion strategies. As racialised bodies occurring on the VET field, case site training programs attempt to convert symbolic capital into cultural capital in order that economic capital can be gained. VET programs, after-all, are targeted for a particular racial group, meaning that symbolic capital can be potentially mobilised and converted into transferable skills. By locating program participants as agents on the VET field, their role as bearers of symbolic capital that can be potentially converted into other forms of capital makes them pawns (i.e. *objects* of globalisation) in a larger political power play over economic and political resources. Navigating the VET field therefore implies a system of trade-offs contingent upon different forms of capital.

LTW transitions are unpacked from the perspectives of VET participants and other significant people in their lives, including educators, parents, and program stakeholders. Insights gathered during both the learning and post-learning/work program phases include participants' understanding of the learning and work milieu they are socialized in, and influences affecting career choice. These insights are further analysed by comparing responses in the two case sites and also by cross-comparing perceptions in the same regions. Connections to the overarching theoretical framework employed to understand micro social processes and the degree to which structural forces shape local agency provides an accompanying commentary.

As a means of anchoring findings to significant junctures, I begin by presenting outcomes and strategies pertaining to recruitment and retention along with coding maps that provide a social topography of the LTW transitions. In conclusion, a summary of key themes is personified through the story of one couple's arduous *journey* to *journey*.

The Topography of Transition

This section examines key junctures and outcomes accompanying the LTW transition occurring in both case sites. These include program recruitment, challenges facing participants, and fragmented transition pathways that participants must navigate.

As all participants during the first round of interviews were asked the same set of questions, responses gathered provide coding maps that can easily be compared (Appendices G & I). However, this was not the case during the second round of interviews as only Wood Buffalo participants had gained employment with a program partner at the time of interviews (Appendices H & J). Rather than providing an itemized account of each category recorded in the coding maps, I use these as a backdrop to guide the discussion around key findings.

Recruitment and Retention

Program recruitment and retention presented in Figures 4 and 5 supports LTW transition studies in general and northern training studies in particular, which indicate local demand-driven programs that tightly link training to employment are more successful than those where the linkages are not so clearly defined or require participants to relocate away from home to larger centers to gain training.

Figure 4. Wood Buffalo Program Participant Numbers

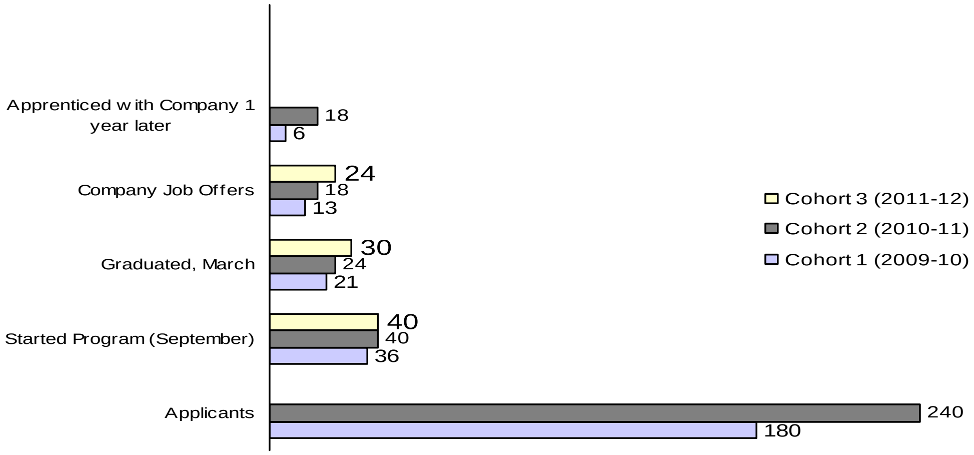
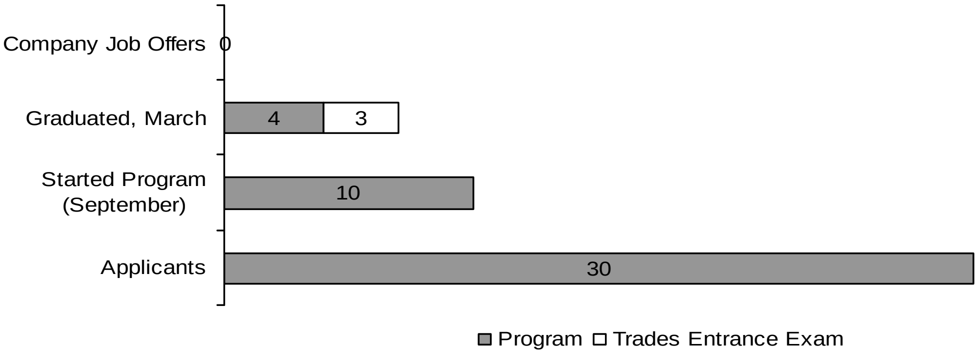


Figure 5. Beaufort Delta Carpentry Preparation Program Numbers



Taken over the 3-year duration the Wood Buffalo program was offered, both program and apprenticeship recruitment increased while attrition decreased. These trends indicate an institutional capacity to improve program delivery based upon lessons learned from previous years. Cohort 2 (the cohort of students interviewed) indicates that high program attrition (from 40 to 24 students) is buffered by high apprenticeship retention as the same 18 students offered an apprenticeship continued to apprentice with the mine one year later. By way of comparison, the Beaufort Delta has a much smaller pool of candidates in the region to draw from. Of the 10 students that were accepted into the pre-trades carpentry preparation program, 7 graduated – of which 3 passed their trades entrance exam (only 4 of the 24 graduating students in Wood Buffalo had to re-write the TEE). At the time of spring 2011 interviews, employment with an industry partner had yet to occur for students who had completed the program.[111]

Program recruitment most often occurred through local advertisements, and encouragement to take the program occurred by word-of-mouth (friends, relatives, community educators). Other times, students were directly approached by ASETS coordinators and (as in the case in Wood Buffalo) mine recruitment officers. By spring 2011, it was noted that some Beaufort Delta students were being recruited to take other programs with the college in the fall. On one occasion I observed the ASEP work coach walking up and down the town’s main street recruiting pedestrians for upcoming courses.

These observations indicate the inordinate degree to which solicitation and recruitment of VET participants occurred in both case sites. And yet, significant differences in recruitment and solicitation also occurred. Whereas participants in Wood Buffalo had been screened through a scored selection process favouring pre-established skill sets, attitudes, and ethnic status sought by the mine sponsor, recruitment of participants in the Beaufort Delta were less formal as noted by the manner by which the ASEP work coach solicited participants. High attrition rates in the Beaufort Delta are due to the mismatch existing between curricula content and participants' knowledge, skills, and attitudes – as only 3 out of a potential pool of 30 applicants passed the trades entrance exam. This last observation supports the notion that in grants economies, programs are "more about services than they are about outcomes" (I – 28). Hence, an emphasis on programming outweighed the need to graduate successful participants.

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[111] The main ASEP partner was reportedly training 14 apprentices and has taken on over one hundred labourers. The local labour force participation is prevalently peripatetic and drawn from eastern Canada. As no labour force data was forthcoming, this last observation is based upon work site visitations, anecdotal reports, and statistics provided by various stakeholders.

Challenges

Rather than exhaustively recount program challenges (these have been amply documented in the reviewed literature), this section selectively focuses on barriers that were either observed or presented by respondents. Student coding maps and program partner interviews indicate that challenges to accessing education, training, and employment are clustered into three categories: 1) lifestyle (substance abuse, disciplined work habits); 2) finances (childcare, relocation, cost of living); and 3) skills (previous educational deficits). While categorized separately, a coordinated effort is required that holistically addresses barriers in a manner that draws on multiple jurisdictions and divisions (health, justice, *and* education).

Lifestyle

Lifestyle components impacting program success include family responsibilities and substance abuse, which in turn affect attendance and punctuality. Attendance and punctuality remained a problem for some students, requiring instructors and program coordinators to issue stern warnings to students about missing classes. In some cases, truancy and tardiness were due to sleeping in; in other cases child care or substance abuse also impacted attendance.

Having children first and then returning to school to upgrade later is generally considered the norm in northern communities (F – 5). For instance, most students enrolled in the Beaufort Delta trades access program had children (I – 26). Child care responsibilities significantly add to the demands students bear when they enter into training programs. These demands were particularly noted by some female participants, who stated that juggling school work while caring for children added to time management pressures. In addition, while colleges offer childcare services, it was reported that these were not always available for students in Wood Buffalo. For instance, the service was temporarily closed at the time of interviews, meaning that they had to find additional care for the interim (F – 2, WB).

Drug and alcohol abuse remains a significant barrier for many students, both in terms of immediate conflicts with schooling, but also with respect to wider systemic issues relating to career choice and relocation. As one instructor in the Beaufort Delta explained, most of the students enrolled in the trades access program have "hit rock bottom," meaning that about half of them have some form of criminal record (break and enter, assault, drunk driving) – two of which were recently released from jail (I – 26).[112]

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[112] Social barriers to learning appeared to be not as dire in either the carpentry preparation program or mine training program.

What are some of the challenges of getting an education and a job?

My peers – our lifestyles; we have addictions, and that's something I have to overcome for myself if I want to succeed in my program. And I have to want it enough to overcome any obstacles that I face. And addictions are definitely one of them. Just a lifestyle in [community] – growing up around it. [F – 2, F, WB]

Oh my God! "We're [employer] going to test you for alcohol and drugs." Well guess what? You've just eliminated half your workforce! [I – 24, F, BD]

Substance abuse, related absences, or workplace accidents understandably represent concerns for employment partners, as time and money invested in training may be wasted if an apprentice the company has invested in fails to show up for work. Substance abuse became a significant problem for some students during the work placement phase of the mine training program in Wood Buffalo. Random drug testing, working in a team atmosphere with constant supervision, and long and regular work hours combine to preclude individuals struggling with substance abuse to work at a mine site (I – 11).

A parent of a program participant expressed concern over what she considered to be a prevalent drug and alcohol lifestyle that she considered was associated with a mining lifestyle. A lifestyle of substance abuse resulted in her son withdrawing from the mine program and instead choosing a different career path through training offered at a different college:

> But he does not want to go to [community], and he does not want to work with industry. I think it was a lifestyle that really scared him away. I think it was an eye-opener seeing how alcohol was affecting so many people that he knew; and it was affecting him. [I – 9]

Finances

In both regions financial constraints were cited as a key obstacle to accessing post-secondary education. In Wood Buffalo it was perceived that the $1,000 per month living allowance was not enough to cover the cost of living, especially when some students (n = 3F) had to pay for child care. A parent of a VET participant indicated that she had on occasion “emptied out her cupboards,” and stated: “I had a bunch of stuff [food] because I couldn’t afford to send money. And whenever I had extra, I threw it in a bin … and sent it to them so they could eat” (I – 9).

Financial barriers were not initially mentioned by participants during the first round of interviews in the Beaufort Delta. One respondent noted enrolment in programs represents a disguised form of welfare as it allows people to stay in cheap housing (I – 28). However, additional costs incurred during work experience placements were considered to represent a barrier. For instance one VET participant calculated that Student Financial Assistance ($700 per month) would leave him with $3.66 per day once tuition and food was paid for. This financial shortfall required him to be fed by relatives who fortuitously lived in the regional center where training was offered (I – 43). Complicating matters was the fact that an ASEP employment partner was not providing accommodation for out-of-town VET participants which its regular rotational workers received. This difference in policy was considered a discriminatory practice as labourers from communities had to maintain both a place in their home community and also pay additional rental costs (estimated to range from $1600 to $1800) or stay with extended family if they were to gain work experience (I – 31, 34).

Consequently, issues relating to structural unemployment in the region must be considered in order to understand attitudes of participants. Some of these dilemmas are captured in the following passage:

> It is difficult to motivate a person living let’s say in [Beaufort Delta community] to get a constant job with or without training. The cost of living up North is very high and if one is unemployed he/she qualifies for government subsidies. You get your house rent, heating, electricity, other utilities, food and clothing paid for by the government. If you get a job and let’s say you’re making about $4,000/month after taxes, well, it will cost you at least $3,500/month to get by with your monthly expenses. Once you are employed most of the subsidies are gone. The common question among the people up there is why get a full-time job and work when you can comfortably do nothing at home and get almost the same amount of money. (Funding Announced, 2010)[113]

Skills Deficits

Educational deficits were principally blamed on the school system where the current policy of “social pass” is implemented (F – 5, I – 5, 9, 24, 28, 29, 32; see also May, 2009). This policy allows students to be passed onto each successive grade based on age rather than skills acquisition. School officials, while acknowledging the policy, also indicated that it was a parent’s decision (and not the school’s) to decide whether or not a child could be passed on to the next grade level (I – 12, 30). It was perceived that by Grade 10 the policy resulted in a bottleneck effect; upon entering high school students are streamed into different abilities and cannot proceed onto the next level until they have passed each successive course. In turn, students begin to drop-out of school as they become disillusioned with their lack of success and limited options.

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[113] Similarly, Vodden (2001) notes that a single woman in the Beaufort Delta has to earn $62,000/year to make it worthwhile to get off of welfare (p. 57).

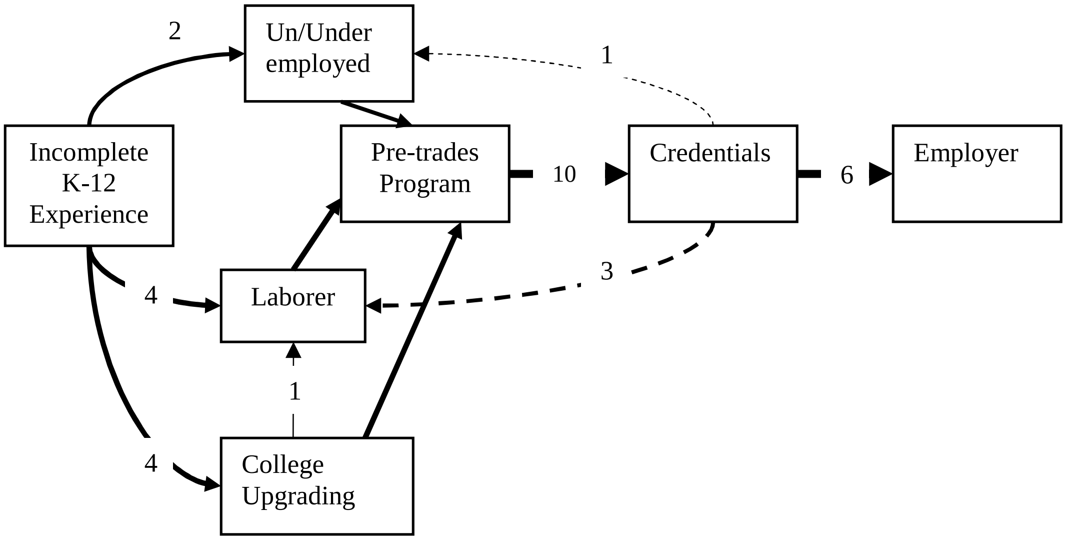
> Q: *So that means that students come 80% of the time here?*
>
> Principal: Yeah, so they are missing on an average two months a year. And if you think of eight or ten years of school, you've just missed two years of school – just by the math. So we're averaging 70% this year and the lowest attendance is in Grade 9. The junior high, Grade 7: 77, 74 [Grade 8], and 48% in Grade 9…87% which isn't bad for Grade 11's. [I – 12, WB]

Given these statistics, students graduate without the requisite skills to enter post-secondary programs. In another school the principal reported that half the students were below grade level (I – 30). These figures translate into a culture where "upgrading is considered the norm," meaning that the "transition from high school to the work force is the greatest challenge so that we're not retraining them" (I – 27).

Pathways

In addition to the recruitment and retention figures and challenges impacting participants, demographic analysis of transition pathways also provides insight into the learning and work field students must navigate.

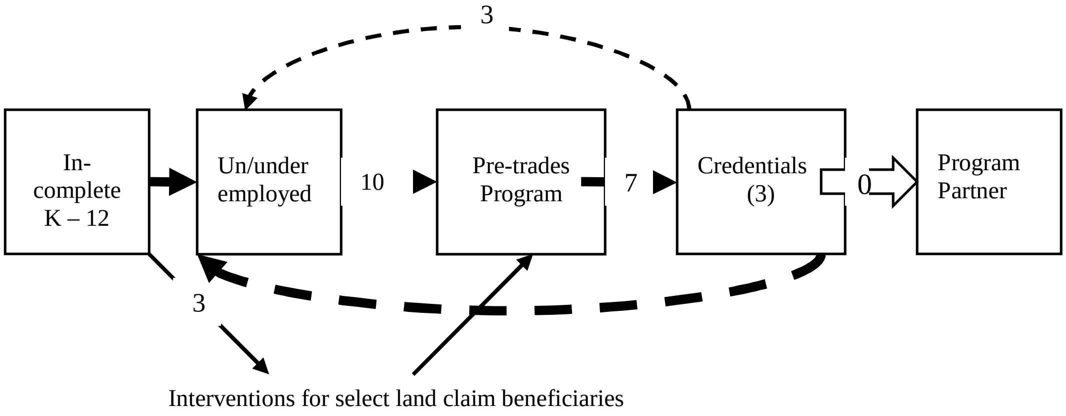
Figure 6. Wood Buffalo Program Participant Transitions[114]


2
Un/Under employed
1
Incomplete K-12 Experience
Pre-trades Program
10
Credentials
6
Employer
3
4
Laborer
1
4
College Upgrading

---

[114] Six male and 4 female students were interviewed in cohort 2. Of the sample, none of them graduated from high school with an advanced diploma – most dropping out in Grade 11. The highest levels of schooling reported by students include Grade 12 equivalency (2M; 1F); Grade 11 (4M; 2F); and Grade 10 (F). Only one student reporting a Grade 12 equivalency graduated from a local high school; the other two students reporting a Grade 12 equivalency had subsequently upgraded at the local college. Four participants upgraded at a local college; 4 were labourers; and 2 were unemployed before entering the program. Of these, 3 males and 1 female did not complete the program, while the other 6 students – half male and half female, gained an apprenticeship with the mine. Of the 10 students interviewed, only 2 initially resided in the regional center. Of the 6 students currently apprenticed, 3 are from the same remote community. Of the 4 students that dropped out, 1 is unemployed and 3 are labourers; all 4 live in their home communities.

Figure 7. Beaufort Delta Program Participant Transitions[115]



Beginning with a fragmented K – 12 learning experience, most students had dropped out of high school before intermittently re-entering the workforce as either casual labourers or returning to a local learning center to upgrade. Learning pathways are further fragmented by relocation to a regional center to earn credentials required to enter the workforce. Fragmentation also occurs for students that gained apprenticeships, as a learning divide existed between the in-class portion and on-the-job training.

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[115] Half the students reported work experience as casual labourers prior to taking the program; 1 student had already taken a course with the college. All students with prior work experience had been laid off prior to taking the program. Three students (2F; 1M) had participated in career development workshops that were sponsored by the land claim organization that they are beneficiaries of; the 2 female students had participated in a workshop put on by an Edmonton-based organization which allowed them to gain preferential entrance into the trades access program. The male student had participated in a leadership development summer program which included a trip to Edmonton to visit land claim organizations as well as post-secondary institutes. Three male students dropped out of the program due to poor attendance. Of the 5 students that remained in the program, 3 passed the TEE; 1 female student also passed and the other one was not sure. In spring 2011, students had not yet gained employment with an industry partner (3 indicated that they had sent in an application). Students were either unemployed or underemployed as casual labourers, and had returned to their home communities. Meanwhile some of these students were being recruited to take further trades program courses at the college in the fall. Nine students indicated a willingness to take further courses in the fall; of these, 8 students indicated further trades-related programs; and 1 female student indicated enrolling in an aboriginal languages instructor program.

> I dropped out in Grade 11; very close, halfway through.
>
> *Was it the children?*
>
> No, I didn’t have children until I was older. I was living with my mother and my two younger siblings at the time and my mum was out of work and you know a lot of personal stuff there. I had to work and go to school – then we needed more money at home. And so I quit school and just started working more.
> [I – 1, F, WB]
>
> I never did well in math that good from Grades 4 to 7; never went to school. Mostly stayed home and out on the land and went through a lot of trouble and got bullied at school and kept away from school and erased my opportunities to learn math and went back in Grade 8 and passed that and in Grade 9 …because of my age my teacher pushed me up to Grade 10…she told me in 3 years you can graduate…My confidence in Grade 10 [dropped] and couldn’t even find myself anywhere in those classes…kept getting kicked out of classes due to absences.
> [I – 41, M, BD]

While pre-program educational and life experiences of participants may be similar, LTW transition pathways differ once students enter their respective programs. Compared to a diffuse trajectory characterizing the Beaufort Delta transitions, the Wood Buffalo program trajectory is more linear. Different pathways suggest that the presence of an established and committed employment partner in Wood Buffalo alters both career trajectory and self-efficacy of a second generation of northerners who have grown up alongside industrialized bitumen mining activity.

While successful students can be readily absorbed into trades-related labour markets in both case sites, a synergistic effect arises in Wood Buffalo, whereby sustained megaproject development produces both strong “push” and "pull" factors that help ensure program success.[116] In Wood Buffalo push/pull factors relate directly to the initiatives of a committed and established employer in a field that is demand-driven. Industry pull is aligned with extra-economic push from parents, schools, and role models.

Greater population density in the region significantly increases the pool of program candidates. Other factors that increase the chances of program success include institutional capacity (as noted in 3 annual program cohorts), tight linkages existing between training providers and industry that have evolved over the past 50 years, and ability to develop and maintain a skilled labour force in the region.

In the Beaufort Delta, "push from behind factors" were more significant than "pull factors from in front." That is to say, without the presence of an employer motivated to training trainees, VET participants were taking courses with the intention of gaining skills that could potentially be put to use in a variety of work situations. Hence, there was a "push" to take programs that did not necessarily translate into employment opportunities. Consequently, push and pull factors do not translate into a linear career trajectory as they do in Wood Buffalo, but one that is diffuse and recursive.

The fragmented transition pathways and associated LTW challenges indicate the depth and degree to which social dysfunction impacts the ability to successfully transition into the world of work. These observations also support

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[116] Here, I refer to whether educational decisions constitute a "push from behind" (i.e. structural determinants such as family background) or a "pull from the front" (decisions as a result of intentional, rational behaviour such as pay rates) (cited from Lehmann, 2007, p. 19).

Kanu's (2008) findings that structural barriers remain the most significant barriers impacting educational achievement for aboriginal youth. Consequently, programs are more successful in regions where the link between work and learning is tangible, which significantly aids in producing a linear LTW trajectory. Taken from this perspective, the federal government's aboriginal labour force development strategy is out of step with the realities and needs of people in the Beaufort Delta region. The ASEP program thus represents a squandering of federal transfer payments that should have been directed towards raising the basic educational levels at the K – 12 level instead of funding students in programs that the vast majority were clearly not ready for. The failure of the program to develop skilled labour (i.e. "long-term sustainable employment") produces its own synergistic effect by contributing to a social topography of intermittent and incessant cycles of training and employment as unskilled labourers.

Fragmented Transitions

Apprenticeship training is organised into two components that are both physically separated and ideologically different. The in-class portion of training is where the theoretical component of programming gets delivered. This portion of the program is facilitated by TDAs. Conversely, the on-the-job work experience component is fulfilled by an employer, overseen by a mentor. While evidence indicates that TDAs are primarily motivated to gain students regardless of their capacity to pass programs; employers are motivated to procure credentialed and skilled labour power at the cheapest possible cost. Differences in training components and motivation create a disconnected LTW transition pathway that can be seen in the communication gaps existing between TDAs and employers.

In Wood Buffalo, different training locations resulted in poor communication between personnel responsible for instructing and mentoring program participants. Program instructors never got on-site, nor were they ever invited to (I – 7). By the same token, a training mentor stated:

> I wish I would have known a little more about their involvement was in the classroom with [TDA]. That piece of it I never really got informed what they learnt there prior to coming out here. I guess that would have helped me in just from my own personal perspective. [I – 13]

As mentors' feedback formed the basis from which to provide a recommendation to the apprenticeship board, mentorship is of central importance to successful LTW transitions. On-site mentorship was a voluntary position with an optional one-day training workshop provided by the sponsoring mine (I – 13). While it was stated that apprentices were not spending their time "pushing a broom around a shop" (I – 11), it was also perceived that experiences were not uniform as some got "cheated" because they were left on their own to "roam around with nobody to talk to" (I – 7). It was also reported that not all mentors were journey person certified (I – 13), and that some students received several mentors over the course of their work placement (I – 7).

Participants' fragmented transition pathways provide further evidence of challenges facing training partnerships in labour market economies. By maintaining supremacy of the partnership training field, employers are able to exert greater control over participants. Aboriginal-only training programs constitute highly politicised social formations considering they sequester students based upon race, with interest or ability remaining of secondary importance in selection criteria. Participants in these programs are therefore vulnerable and susceptible to inculcation of a vocational habitus aligned with the particular needs of capital designed to fulfill risk management. Accordingly, the structures of training pathways and provisions therefore serve to engender some dispositions while displacing others. The following section examines how training accomplishes its main task – socialising participants to be “right for the job.”

Socialization of Racialised Labour Power

As the participant coding maps indicate, learning and work are positioned between a series of “motivators” and “incentives” that relate to both extrinsic and intrinsic push and pull factors. Some of these factors are expressed in attitudes shared by respondents and get reflected in perceptions involving career aspirations, training, and the workplace, as well as larger features of the social milieu. Other attitudes reflect a hidden curriculum designed to socially regulate participants by affirming racial identity through the market.

This section examines social forces influencing participants’ vocational habitus. Taken from an ecological framework various loci are examined, including the multiple components producing participants’ social capital. Evidence of the structuring effects on formation of a vocational habitus are examined from participants’ commonsensical accounts of the world of work and career aspirations.

Social Capital

If we recall, social capital constitutes actual or potential resources linked to institutionalised relationships of mutual acquaintance, including family name and tribe (Bourdieu, 1986). Accordingly, social capital of VET participants includes a network of resources and systems of support that are available and can be drawn upon to effectively manage LTW transitions. Family support and social networks constitute the primary transitional locus of support for VET participants. The central importance of social capital in relation to career trajectory and socioeconomic background is supported by other sociological studies (e.g. Heinz, 2009; Furlong, 2009; Bourdieu, 1984, Lehmann, 2007).

Many family members at the time of interviews were, or are, labourers who possess trades-related skills. In Wood Buffalo family role models also had some connection to the sponsoring mine, either directly (having worked there) or indirectly through aboriginal organizations or family members. This last observation indicates the centrality of the oil industry in the lives of people in Wood Buffalo, suggesting that a *social economy of oil* structures social relations to the point that all other forms of capital – be they cultural, symbolic, or social – are ultimately swept up into the vortex of economic capital that has come to characterise the Wood Buffalo social field.

The following responses are indicative of the connection between career aspirations and family background.

> Graduated 2008 and then I pretty much chilled for a year and never really did anything – just odd jobs *here and there* [emphasis added] and last year – about a year and a half ago my uncle got a contracting business in plumbing and heating and he hooked me up with a job and I've been busy ever since. And that's why I'm kind of into plumbing – I know more about plumbing than this course – but I really need something under my belt. My dad's a carpenter himself – not a journeyman – but he's one hell of a carpenter and really had a big influence on me coming to this kind of trade. [F – 4, M, BD]
>
> Last year I wasn't really doing much. I built [community] housing shop; their new one. I was part of that for five months – start from ground up and got to November pretty well dry-walling, mudding; didn't have to work and so traveled on the land; worked different jobs *here and there* under the table; pretty well never finished school – just *a job here and a job there* [emphases added]. [F – 4, M, BD]
>
> Well my uncle is a welder and that's kind of why I want to get into it. He's a good welder. And I want my family to be proud of me. [F – 2, M, WB]
>
> I remember when I was younger, my Dad – he built our home...he put up the whole system for us; he gave us lights and everything. I was right along-side him helping him and so that's kind of why I picked that trade. [F – 2, F, WB]
>
> My dad worked there [the mine sponsor] for 30 years and he retired so why not keep it going? [F – 2, F, WB]

The importance of family connections to learning and work expressed by these participants underlines the importance of incorporating emotional dispositions into participants' vocational habitus. These passages illustrate how a combination of pride and security in continuing family traditions becomes embodied in worker identity. Participant responses also indicate that the precarious pull of wage labour as a driving force in the lives of participants contributed to the attitudinal refrain, *here and there*. This expression was used by several Beaufort Delta participants to describe their work and learning situation. Unlike the past generation of labourers, trainees are now required to enter into formalized schooling processes in order to gain credentials required to access the same work that previous generations of family members and workers did when demonstrable skills were considered the primary gate-keeping mechanism into wage labour. While some students wanted to improve their level of skill competence, a prevalent discourse of credentialing and course surveying (or what some have termed “professional course takers”) suggest that “training-for-the-sake-of-training” is part-and-parcel of a grants economy. Consequently, the episodic work – learning cycle becomes embodied in the dispositions and emotional responses of participants.

In addition to family members, role models and social networks also form mutually affective and instrumental domains that constitute participants’ social capital. For instance, a family member can be a role model, but also may be associated with a college program or aboriginal organization. Aboriginal organizations sponsored various career development programs for students, which included one for select land claim beneficiaries in the Beaufort Delta, and “career camps” coordinated in Wood Buffalo by the tribal council. These organizations also administered and distributed financial support to help students while registered in their respective programs.

In one instance, a Wood Buffalo First Nation did not provide the additional “top-up” allowance for band-affiliated program participants, whereas other First Nations and Métis locals did. While the actual funds were quite small ($50.00/week), the absence of financial support translated into a withdrawal of moral support, as it was perceived by several respondents to constitute a betrayal of trust, especially as reasons for withdrawing the funds were not forthcoming.

This situation illustrates that in addition to instrumental systems of support (money, programs, client assessments) aboriginal organizations also represent significant sources of moral support capable of instilling confidence in young beneficiaries' lives. Failure to provide the additional funds also suggests a tension existing between the interests of local bands and the tribal council. Opposition to tar sands development occurs at the local level, which may have (in this case) translated into a withdrawal of support for the training program, despite the fact that the tribal council supported the program. Consequently, intra-tribal tension resulted in mixed messages and moral support for participants who were members of this First Nation. VET participants were critical of their First Nation for failing to provide financial support. Instead, participants spoke in positive terms regarding the support received by the mine sponsor. This difference illustrates how "networks of support" are shifting within a postFordist regime. The situation also helps to explain why the mine sponsor changed its strategies to "get in at the grass roots level" (I – 6) rather than dealing directly with communities where relations can be "adversarial" (I – 6).

Aboriginal business/political leaders also provide critical networks of support to legitimise the contradictory notion that training (conflated as education) is the vehicle to "promote our culture." As invited and honoured guests, some aboriginal leaders and employment personnel (tribal council, Rupertsland Institute[117]), elders, and representatives from business were present at induction and graduation ceremonies; notably absent, were leaders from outlying communities. These guests offered words of encouragement to students to complete their education and fulfill their career aspirations with the sponsoring mine. Similar messages were reinforced through inspirational posters displayed at colleges during the in-class portion of training.[118]

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[117] Rupertsland Institute is the Métis employment and training services

> *Yours Mine Ours*
>
> The [college] has played a major role in assisting the [tribal council] and First Nations. By obtaining formal education our people understand and *promote our culture* [emphasis added] throughout the region.
>
> College classroom poster, Wood Buffalo

> *You can do it too!*
>
> … I am always trying to improve my knowledge, skills, and education in order to better serve my people. After leaving school at a young age to have a family I felt I needed to further my education as an adult. I enrolled in the Developmental Studies Program (ABE Upgrading) at [the local campus]. With the great support of the staff I was able to finish the developmental Studies Program and to continue on to complete the Office Administration Program. Throughout the years I have taken many courses in order to better myself. [The college] offers many courses relevant to northern issues, including health and wellness. I would encourage people to attend [the] College. It will be hard, but with a good support system, anyone can succeed.
>
> College poster, Beaufort Delta

How the above messages were perceived by students was not considered at the time of interviews. However, we can infer that the prevalence of the oil industry messages in classrooms alongside those of the tribal council (reinforced during induction and graduation ceremonies) as noted in caption of the first poster, indicates a uniform presence in the lives of Wood Buffalo trainees that accompanies youth from local to regional communities. Consequently, the social economy of oil constitutes a pervasive element of an indigenous mode of social regulation embedded in multiple institutions.

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[118] Differences in posters between the two cases reflect differences in the political economy. In the Beaufort Delta where oil and gas production has waned, the only motivational poster was seen in a campus hallway and featured a local leader’s testimony. In Wood Buffalo, a program classroom featured 4 posters from the sponsoring company and 5 college posters, including 2 specific to the program, and 3 featuring local aboriginal leaders. Mine posters featured smiling workers attired with hard hats and work-wear, and included the captions, “Achieve your goals,” “It’s very rewarding,” and “A great work environment.”

Messages received at training institutes align with messages students have received earlier on in the K – 12 school system. Students in Wood Buffalo have generally grown up with school career counselling closely tied to the needs of the oil industry, where aboriginal role models and industry presence primarily involves business people and occurs in regional centers (I – 3). On the other hand, outlying communities do not enjoy these same levels of support owing to a lack of resources, including career counsellors or role models and leaders in schools. Respondents in both regions indicated that the presence of aboriginal leaders and role models was important, as it was considered a significant motivator for students.

At one community school, oil company sponsorship logos adorned both the interior and exterior of the building. During my visit there, one teacher matter-of-factly remarked that elders no longer visit classrooms as the school cannot afford to compete with oil company honorariums that elders receive. Aboriginal human resource personnel and school employees in both regions also indicated that the process of increasing aboriginal presence in schools falls by the way-side as meetings never seem to occur on account of how busy people are (I – 9, 12, 30, 32). The school district that was able to articulate the tightest linkage between presence of aboriginal role models, liaison workers, career counselling, and employment, also had the highest aboriginal high school completion and attendance rates. In this case all the role models cited were businessmen deemed successful in the Wood Buffalo mining community.

These observations provide further evidence of the link existing between indigenous mode of social regulation and a vocational habitus tied to liberal-culturalism. The considerable overlap now existing between centralised aboriginal governments and their industry counterparts constitute the most significant "networks of support" existing outside of the home for VET participants.

The Importance of Resumes

Cultural forms of capital linked to a vocational habitus include the importance of resumes. As a principal form of gate-keeping, credentials serve as both mediator and broker – allowing employers to quickly assess whether or not a potential employee has been appropriately schooled and socialized in a manner that will sufficiently increase the likelihood of transforming symbols into skills. In essence, what was once the purview of demonstrable skills as a measure of proficiency has been replaced by amassing cultural capital in the denomination of credentials.

As a proxy to tangible employment, an emphasis on resumes pervaded several student responses. Unlike the faith of gaining lucrative employment prospects described by respondents in Wood Buffalo, federal grants economy programs, like a poor cousin, must instead inculcate faith in the doxa of credentials for the eventual hope that they too will be transformed into economic capital.

> I thought I would try it out and have another skill to learn, and have it on my resume. [F – 3, M, BD]
>
> ...maybe get interested in plumbing or electrician or something like that and get more trades under my belt so I can have a good resume. [F – 4, M, BD]
>
> There are a bunch of houses going up in [community] and you pretty well have to have your ticket and know what you are doing to be on the job site. I thought of getting a little more knowledge.…Instead of working labour I'll be getting a little bit more and know what you're doing so just wanted to check this course out til March and see what happens after that. [F – 4, BD]
>
> I'm actually taking this course for a little bit of knowledge in the trade because I did it before as a labourer – a trades helper – and I don't know it kinda made me look like a dumb ass and I really didn't like that. [F – 4, BD]

The Learning and Work Milieu

Far from constituting a site of counterculture resistance for marginalised or working class learners, as some educational sociologists have critically proclaimed (Deyhle, 2008; McLean, 1997; Ogbu, 2008; Willis, 1977), findings indicate that case site VET programs constitute significantly positive and pivotal experiences in the lives of program participants – providing choices, or what some students described as a "ticket out" or "good fall-back" (F –2) that otherwise would not be afforded if the training programs had not been offered in the first place. Most respondents considered the training opportunity as a way out of poverty.[119]

During classroom and worksite visitations a positive learning atmosphere was observed. Students appeared to approach their learning in an engaged and purposeful manner. Evidence of peer tutoring and use of humour, gentle teasing, and encouragement by instructors and students alike were also regularly observed. Students appeared to especially value the hands-on learning component that accompanied the carpentry preparation program. Students also valued the mine training lab facility and work-site experience component.[120]

In Wood Buffalo, students appeared to value on-the-job learning and apprenticeship more than the in-class portion of the program, which for many was regarded as a hurdle to be endured. Part of this problem was due to the bottle-neck effect of placing students in a mixed ability classroom, which was resented by those students who had previously mastered concepts and had to wait for others to catch up.

Aside from some students expressing frustration of being placed in a mixed ability class, most students spoke positively about the learning environment, including their instructors and works-site mentors. These sentiments were reciprocated by instructors, mentors, and other significant individuals (e.g. work coach) who appeared to take a personal interest and pride in working with the students in helping them achieve program success. Mine apprentices unanimously regarded on-site training as a positive experience, citing a high degree of camaraderie and mentorship support among team members. When specifically questioned about workplace culture, no apprentices identified sexual or racial discrimination or harassment to be experienced by them or other apprentices. Apprentices also felt that workplace performance was purely based on individual merit – an observation that contrasted with references some participants made about the in-class component being exclusively aboriginal. These responses regarding workplace culture appear to support previous northern training studies conducted in both regions (Abele, 1989, Hobart, 1981, 1984, 1986), but also contradict perceptions by an aboriginal human resources employment coordinator who claimed that many clients did not wish to be employed by mines as they felt uncomfortable working in a mostly non-aboriginal work environment (I – 4).

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[119] Similarly, retraining programs in northern Ontario for miners who had been laid off from work, indicate that while the main focus of adjustment policy is training, the programs did not provide a means to further employment for those who participated, however it did provide some social and psychological benefits for the unemployed (Leadbeater & Susching, 1997).

[120] In this case, some educators felt that aboriginal students learn differently, being capable of excelling in hands-on learning but faltering with abstract math-related concepts (I – 3, 23, 30).

While participants' perceptions of the learning milieu were mostly positive, observations made during what was termed a "cultural diversity" lesson, indicate *training* appropriates the language of emancipatory *education* without providing the process or content for developing a critical consciousness about the world of work and VET participants' location in it.· Here, I refer to lessons observed that were based upon a provincial government curriculum entitled "Cultural Competence." Nowhere in the curriculum was reference made to aboriginal people. Instead the program was targeted towards socialising new immigrants into the workplace. The intention of the curriculum indicates that efforts towards socialising aboriginal peoples into the mainstream settler state society remain (see Friedel & Taylor, 2011). However, unlike past attempts of assimilation, a liberal culturalist ideology is now embedded in training programs with the intention of transitioning aboriginal peoples into the market by emphasising a common group identity, while presenting an ahistorical account of culture – or in this case, completely ignoring any aspect of cultural differences relating to aboriginal peoples – which after all, was the original intention of the lesson. Interestingly, published communication about the training program indicated that a cultural training component of the course would be provided as a means of being responsive to local needs by tailoring the program to aboriginal youth. Whether this intention was to legitimise an aboriginal-only program in order to appease aboriginal and government stakeholders remains an open question. Nevertheless, the "cultural" program illustrates how contradictions of capitalism, including colonial dispossession, are effectively erased and delegitimized as a means of producing a docile labour force, while appearing to be responsive to difference.

Several problems associated with sequestering people into training programs based upon aboriginal ethnicity can also be derived from these observations. Firstly, despite the large number of applicants in Wood Buffalo, the pool of suitable clients to take these programs is extremely low. And while most students enjoyed the opportunity to be productive rather than idle, barriers to learning significantly hampered their opportunities to transition into the world of work. By sequestering students into aboriginal-only programs, participants are more susceptible to inculcation of a liberal-culturalist ideology. Yet owing to the heterogeneity of interests and abilities in each classroom, attempts to transition students on the basis of a common ethnicity rather than interest or ability held students who were more capable and motivated back – thus contributing to the sense of frustration experienced by the more educated, motivated, and intelligent participants (F – 1 & 2). In addition, ghettoizing aboriginal participants perpetuates racist stereotypes of being somehow incapable of achieving success in an ethnically mixed classroom. As several educators and instructors noted, aboriginal people are “hands-on” rather than “abstract” learners; they are able to do the practical components of the curriculum, but the math or science (I – 23, 26, 30). The fact that there is no evidence to support this contention suggests that sequestering people on the basis of race may do more harm than good.

Aside from the in-class portion of training, vocational socialisation primarily occurs when participants are on-site. As noted, divisions in training existing between TDAs and employers underscore different priorities. While basic educational qualifications were recognized as being important by the mine sponsor, an employer described training this way:

> It’s done on site with a teach, a show, working with a team. Team is very important to [employer]. It’s a team environment where you have peers that influence and help bring you along. You may have an individual that teaches a skill or a concept and a peer member is watching the individual to see if they really do get it. And they may not, and the peer will help the individual take it to the step of getting a satisfactory result. A lot of that is if we get it right is setting up the individual for the apprenticeship exam and the next sequence of training that goes off-site. We’re bound by Alberta industry and training in terms of the apprenticeship program that we follow. But certainly the majority of the training has to be done here. [I – 11]

Aside from fitting in as a team member, it was also perceived by the mine employer that a good apprentice was “keen,” “sincere,” punctual, “inquisitive,” and a fast learner (I – 13). These qualities are in keeping with studies that indicate “soft skills” (attitude, enthusiasm, punctuality) take precedence over “hard” technical skills (math, problem solving, skill with tools); the former being inherently more context dependent and subjective (Taylor, 2009; Wheelahan, 2010). It is assumed by virtue of the time spent on-the-job apprenticing that the employer provides the majority of training, and that the best training is done “on-the-job” (F – 5). Yet, as Meredith (2011) notes, workplace training is not regulated, and there exists “neither a pool of compliance data nor even any rubric for identifying or measuring inputs” (p. 327).

Vocational Habitus

What then were the effects of these socialising influences on participants' vocational habitus? Evidence of the formation of a vocational habitus can be gained from considering participants commonsensical perceptions of the world of work, career aspirations, and workplace attitudes.

Common Sense[121]

Wood Buffalo VET programs are implemented and promoted in a region where the environment is being rapidly and irrevocably destroyed by mining activity, resulting in pollution that directly impacts local communities. Despite these glaring contradictions participants' responses failed to reflect tensions associated with the training program. Instead, participants expressed a common sense worldview:

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[121] Here I refer to Gramsci's (1971) differentiation between good sense and common sense, the former referring to developing one's own conception of the world that is critically arrived at in order to “take an active part in the creation of the history of the world” (p. 323), compared to the commonsensical and externally imposed “incoherent set of generally held assumptions and beliefs common to any given society” (p. 323).

> I like that it's [the mine] *giving us* [emphasis added] an opportunity to get the training and qualifications we need to get a career. [F – 1]
>
> [I am] ridiculously thankful for [the mine] for paying for school and then paying me on top of that.... [F – 1]
>
> I *don't want to rock the boat too much* [emphasis added], but what I like most about the program is that [the mine] does recognize that they are the heart of industry on aboriginal land and that they are taking steps to try and increase the level of aboriginal workers in the workplace, and that they're actually doing programs like this to bring in young aboriginal people to train them to get them out there and potentially make them lifers out on site, which I think there needs to be more aboriginal people out on site. [F – 1]

Pressures to conform to established codes of conduct peculiar to company towns were described this way:

> ...you kind of learn the *ways of the town* [emphasis added] and everybody works somewhere and you really have to be careful of what you say as well. You could be at dinner somewhere and you overhear someone complaining about [a local mine]…there's just so much you pick up over time. [F – 1]

Attitudinal modification becomes embodied in students' commonsensical relation to capital; simultaneously not wanting to "rock the boat," given the "ways of the town," but showing gratitude by being "ridiculously thankful" to the mine sponsor for "giving us this opportunity…to get a nice career" (F – 1). A liberal culturalist vocational habitus is thus capable of inspiring both fear and awe, and conformity and submission to the logic of the risk management field.

Commonsense pragmatic fatalism does not mean to suggest that some students or community members were unaware of the contradictions embedded in the program they were in. In one instance students were overheard sharing perceptions that cancer-related deaths in the community were directly caused by industrial pollution, “yet they see people in the community – relatives and friends – who are making big money and have a nice lifestyle and they want that” (I – 7; see also Cooper, 2010). A parent who had worked for the same mine indicated that he recommended to his daughter that she take advantage of the training program offered by the mine before the job is taken by another “Newfie.”

Several people during the course of the fieldwork perceived being pushed out of the labour market by workers from the Maritime Provinces. This observation suggests competition between two different proletariat diasporas fetishizes dispossession, as frustration is displaced from the point of production to a competing source of labour power.

A final insight concerning commonsensical understanding relates to employment status. Company hierarchy existing between core and peripheral employers was noted by several VET participants who considered the sponsoring mine as the preferred employer on account of better benefits, wages, and safety standards. One respondent claimed he had received another job offer; however, his goal was to get hired by the sponsoring mine (F – 2). Another program participant who had worked at a different mine put it this way:

> I never thought I’d be able to make it out there.
>
> Q: *Is that the prize place to go?*
>
> That’s the prize place.
>
> Q: *Why is that?*
>
> Everything there is so great – everything they offer: the money, the benefits; everything about it. [I –1]

One student commented on the differences between a contractor owned by the band she is affiliated with and the sponsoring mine. In this instance, company hierarchy was perceived to be related to employee safety; the safer the mine site, the more highly regarded it is by employees. The student described how the band-owned contractor got "kicked off site…for their lack of safety and issues and the amount of things they had on there like damages to equipment and things like that could have been avoided" (I – 2). The student did not want to return to work for the contractor, but was instead seeking employment with the sponsoring mine as she perceived the working and safety conditions to be of a higher standard. These matter-of-fact unsentimental perceptions indicate student choice of employer is motivated primarily by workplace reputation rather than whether the company is aboriginal-owned.[122]

Career Aspirations

While similarities in transitions were observed between the two regions, differences included the degree to which VET participants in the Beaufort Delta attributed greater importance to the social economy.[123] While, participants in Wood Buffalo intimated values attributed to an urbanized work culture, several participants in the Beaufort Delta cited participation in traditional subsistence or cultural activities that they participated in when they were not employed.

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[122] Distinctions between companies that were either aboriginal or non-aboriginal owned were also made by a stakeholder who indicated that being aboriginal was no guarantee of employment with aboriginal-owned businesses (I – 4). A cursory examination of work site visits in the Beaufort Delta supports this observation.

[123] Two male students reported subsistence related activities, and one female student indicated a change in career that would allow her to teach traditional cultural activities. During the second phase of interviews when participants were under/unemployed, half the respondents reported participating in subsistence activities (fishing, geese hunting, trapping). By way of conjecture, the presence of an established employer most likely would result in a marked decrease in subsistence activities owing to relocation as well as the ability to purchase store bought foods.

Differences in participant responses occurring between the two regions may be due to the fact that store bought food are more expensive in the Beaufort Delta. And owing to a weak economy, many people have little choice but to subsist on country foods. Traditional subsistence activities are also more likely to occur in regions where the majority of the population is aboriginal considering non-aboriginal values associated with wage labour are not as pervasive. Consequently, differences in attitudes towards work may be linked to the degree to which VET participants participate in hunting, trapping, and fishing.

For the participants interviewed, career choice is an admixture of intrinsic motivators that get rationalised through a combination of affective and instrumental factors, including past family employment, wage earnings, and relocation. As the Wood Buffalo program screened applicants using a points system that rewarded responses articulating specific trades required by the sponsoring mine, responses relating to career trajectory had already been pre-determined. And so, while students in both regions made “rational choices” with respect to career goals, their choices were impacted to varying degrees by a combination of intrinsic and extrinsic factors that played out differently depending upon whether the employer was an active or absent partner.

In Wood Buffalo, applicants were attracted to the lucrative wages they can earn at the sponsoring mine, as well as the direct transition the program provided to work for an employer of choice. These aspirations appeared to remain throughout the course of the transition from learning-to-work. At the time of spring 2011 interviews, several apprentices had already performed over-time shifts. As one apprentice reasoned, by working statutory holidays like Christmas Eve, Christmas, Boxing Day and New Years, he can earn an extra $10,000 dollars, which he can then put towards a truck (I –16). Another apprentice cited the signing bonus with the mine which amounts to $80,000 towards a home mortgage for 10 years of service (I –19). The mine sponsor also offers a fly-in fly-out program for employees who want to return to their home community on their days-off. At the time of follow-up interviews, 2 of the 3 students interviewed from the same community were currently returning home on the fly-in fly-out program; however, these students indicated that they may later relocate to the regional center as it is tiring to make the regular commute to and from their home community. From these accounts, it can be surmised that mobility patterns shift with mine employment, which in turn impacts values as apprentices begin to relocate to Fort McMurray. And while this observation can be made with employment in most jobs, the shift associated with mine employment for aboriginal people is pronounced considering the abrupt changes in lifestyle and cultural dislocation once individuals relocate away from family and social networks and into a mainstream urban culture.

Beaufort Delta participant responses articulated program motivators that were less extrinsically tied to wage earnings than their Wood Buffalo counterparts. This observation most likely relates to students being less sure of future employment prospects. However, it is also reasonable to suggest that unlike Wood Buffalo where resource extraction has considerably exacerbated the income gap between those employed in mines and those who are not, participants in

Beaufort Delta intimated less materialistic values as they were not exposed to the same levels of enticements that mine employment offers.

The absence of extrinsic motivators most likely impacted career trajectory. Beaufort Delta participants were noncommittal when asked about why they took the program; half the students interviewed in the carpentry preparation program indicated that they intended on becoming carpenters, and only one student was able to clearly articulate who he intended to apprentice with (in this case the student did not complete the program due to poor attendance). Three respondents described the program as a "stepping stone," meaning that they would take the program, work for a while, and then take another program. Only one respondent indicated he would take further courses in carpentry (this respondent did not complete the program due to poor attendance). Seven students indicated that they wanted to continue taking more courses once the program they were presently in was completed. Similar attitudes were also expressed in the general trades access program. Of the two female students interviewed, one switched career paths and completed an aboriginal languages and culture instructors program instead.

Considering that many Beaufort Delta participants lacked the necessary pre-requisites to gain academic success, the above observations indicate the folly of soliciting participants to enrol in pre-apprenticeship training programs where the emphasis is to upgrade skills in order to pass trades entrance exams. The discrepancy between prerequisite skills and program offerings also indicates that in a federal grants economy, training is more about services than outcomes. This is because, despite the economically unproductive nature of the region, those receiving grants to administer services must depend on a regular stream of new program participants in order to maintain their programs and staff. Hence, the ASEP and its primary training delivery agent, was recruiting and accepting into pre-trades programs students that had significant educational and employability deficits, many of whom could not pass the trades entrance exam even with repeated attempts. From this perspective, the college serves to absorb and temporarily retain a lumpenproletariat whose skills and knowledge deficits consign them into a perpetual and intermittent state of “upgrading.” Consequently, there may have been push from schools, parents, and other role models, but these forces did not align with requisite knowledge, skills, and attitudes, or employer pull required to successfully overcome the LTW transition.

The attitudes of program participants concerning career trajectory capture the more elusive qualities of a federal grants economy that become ingrained in the habitus of partners and participants alike. As the culture of “training for the sake of training” becomes embedded within the habitus of schooling institutions receiving federal grants, a rentier mentality inevitably filters down to participants that gets expressed and manifested in a career trajectory that fatalistically accepts welfare dependency through intermittent work and institutionalised training cycles. These dispositions come to reflect the larger economic relationship characterising the boom and bust nature of the economy which it serves.

Journeying to Journey

If the end goal of pre-apprenticeship training programs is to *journey*, then what does the journey look like for those who have made it? Here, I recount one couple's personal testimony that helps capture the challenges in transitioning to what ostensibly is the ultimate end goal of these training programs – the attainment of journey person status. For purposes of this discussion I shall use pseudonyms to convey the experiences of the people involved as told through the narrative of Alice (I – 29), the wife of Jordan.

According to Alice, Jordan was the top student in the trades access program he was registered in. When it came time to being apprenticed, several large employers wanted Jordan to work with their oil company. As Alice recalls, "They picked Jordan as the first person they wanted to apprentice. They went around the table like it was a draft and he picked [company] as he considered it more promising for him." However, this was only the first step in what proved to be a long and arduous career and life transition path. After making the momentous decision, the couple relocated with their young children to a large regional center in northern Alberta for six years.

Alice and Jordan struggled to adapt to their new way of life – far removed from the "comfort zone and support" of their community with its tightly knit network of extended family and friends. Alice felt that the company had put them into an environment where people "don't give a shit"; requiring them to adjust to a life most people take for granted, including having to live by schedules, take transportation (the couple had to learn how to take a bus rather than paying for expensive taxis), and placing their children in childcare where they did not know the caregivers. Jordan and Alice eventually moved to a neighbourhood where there were more aboriginal people and aboriginal students in the school. Alice also met “aboriginal student help workers” who visited her in her home and who she still keeps in touch with.

As for work, Jordan awoke every morning at 5 a.m. and drove to the company gas plant for an eight hour shift; returning home by 4 p.m. each day. Meanwhile, Alice registered at a local college to train as a carpenter but was not successful owing to child care responsibilities that eventually caused her to drop-out of the program. Adding to her decision to drop-out was a perception that the trades were an uninviting prospect, as it is “difficult for a woman to get into a man’s world” because women are “considered a distraction” on worksites.

The couple eventually separated. Alice returned home and is employed with a local band office. When the gas plant laid workers off Jordan also returned North, taking a government job as a journeyman in the nearby regional center.[124] According to Alice, Jordan comes home “to do the family thing” on weekends.

While the transition was a significant life-changing event in the young couple’s lives, it also instilled a sense of confidence and entrepreneurial spirit. As a certified journeyman, Jordan is now working on his Red Seal and plans on getting dual ticketed. Owing to his past contacts, Alice thinks that he will be able to start up his own company if oil and gas development occurs in the region. Alice also plans on returning to college to study political science. Aside from career aspirations, the transition also changed perceptions of their local community and region. According to Alice, Jordan “has never taken anything from the [aboriginal government] regarding money or entitlements, or student financial assistance, and now they want to use him as a role model." In a region with few success stories and role models like Jordan, efforts to profile him are understandable. However, there is a degree of cynicism reflected in Alice's comments as she feels that a culture of entitlement pervades the region, which partly stems in the home with parents not holding their children accountable to get their children out of bed and off to school. As she matter-of-factly asserts, "You want it – you work for it." In a similar vein, Jordan considers the apprentices he now mentors to be "kind of lazy." When he gets his Red Seal the couple plan to move out of the region to a larger center where they feel that there is better education for their children.[125] In this instance, the issue of social pass – popularly scorned as setting students and communities up for failure – was mentioned as contributing to the region's low educational achievement. To reinforce this problem Alice points to a picture on her office wall of the most recent graduating class in the community. Of the 15 students in the photograph, 12 of them have returned to their home community, with only 3 students enrolled in post-secondary courses.

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[124] According to another respondent, Jordan experienced a “subtle racism” at the work-site, which is why he quit and returned home (I – 24).

While the testimony of Jordan and Alice captures some of the challenges associated with northern aboriginal transition pathways, the story also yields important insights into how partners relate to their investments in human capital. By chance, later that same day, I happened to converse with the same oil company that had apprenticed Jordan. The party of three was in the region visiting a local community during an annual spring celebration where they had sponsored some of the festivities. Through a mutual acquaintance the company bought us dinner.

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[125] Denigration of local schools was made by several respondents who relocated to larger centers on account of perceptions that regional schools offered better education (F – 5, I – 4).

During our conversation inquiries were made about Jordan: What was he doing? Where was he living? What were his plans? One member of the group mused out loud that they should get in touch with him to see if he would be willing to set up a company if development in the region proceeded.

Jordan and Alice's story illustrates how oil companies constantly mine regions for capital – be it mineral or human. While constituting a small but significant segment of the LTW story, the experience of Jordan and Alice provides insights into the arduous journey to journey for aboriginal northerners, as well as the political nature by which successful aboriginal trades people are situated as pawns in a larger power play over resource development. In this case, Jordan became a "poster boy" adorning walls of various government and industry office buildings; an emblem to hang both the collective pride and partnership angst on; to in effect legitimise TNCs regional presence and proclaim: "*We* did it; *we* partnered – *we* created a *successful* aboriginal person!"

Conclusion

Drawing from case site interviews, this chapter has examined both the challenges associated with successfully navigating the learning to work transition, as well as the forces and outcomes that this significant transitory juncture has on the socialisation of participants. Mediating the link between learning and work is social capital. As networks of support, social capital acts as both a bridge to transition across, as well as the site of socialisation that structures the habitus of participants. Aside from the family milieu where many participants gained values and emotional dispositions associated with skilled trades, other key networks of support include aboriginal groups and industry.

Despite similar structuring effects, it is not possible to speak of, or assume, a unitary vocational habitus. For instance, exposure to the work culture during the apprenticeship phase with the mine was not uniformly considered to be a positive experience. Evidence also suggests that family (as the primary network of support) served to bridge LTW transitions. However, for some participants family also served as a buffer against intermittent wage labour, as noted by some Beaufort Delta participants returning home to assist in traditional subsistence activities which serve to reinforce and strengthen communal relations. Meanwhile, the prospects of gaining lucrative wages in mine work constituted a primary incentive for Wood Buffalo participants to transition into skilled trades identified by the mine.

Formation of a vocational habitus is most clearly seen in Wood Buffalo as perspectives were gathered during both the learning and work phase. In this case, the social economy of oil effectively aligns subjective learning and work dispositions to capital, which notably became manifested in participants' commonsensical accounts of the world of work. Domiciled capital's naturalised presence enables the regulation and discipline of bodies, including ethnic status as a source of competition to gain entrance onto the VET field.

Regulation of the racialised worker is coordinated principally through the mine (as role of bourgeois benefactor) and centralised aboriginal governments (subordinated to the role of program facilitator). As bearers of symbolic capital, both groups provide moral authority to maintain the risk management field. And yet, like a gambler who must hedge his or her bets against the house, conversion of capital remains a system of trade-offs for aboriginal individuals and the groups they represent, as it is the “house” that is guaranteed to eventually accumulate the lion’s share of capital. Operating within a postFordist restructuring of capital and labour, the foundations have shifted: no longer the nation state, but rather a fragmented state emasculated from its nation; no longer a centralised government, but rather a decentralised system of governance; and no longer the worker in relation to capital, but rather the depoliticised worker in relation to the corporate tribe.[126]

In the absence of domiciled capital, inter-agent stakes are reduced. Insignificant economic pull occurring in the Beaufort Delta produces insignificant transitions for participants, leading to a fatalistic and noncommittal “here and there” trajectory of work and learning cycles that come to characterise the regional economic relationship. As reflected in the topography of transition, Beaufort Delta pathways were not linear, but rather diffuse and recursive. Unlike the employer pull of lucrative wages drawing students into Wood Buffalo’s world of work, the tug of employment is replaced by incentives to return to college, consigning participants to intermittent cycles of upgrading as a form of welfare dependency.

While both case site programs were dedicated to training aboriginal participants, identification of ethnic differences by participants received relatively insignificant attention during interviews. Mention of ethnic identity occurred in

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[126] Elizabeth Rata (2000) makes this last argument with respect to the New Zealand context.

Wood Buffalo, which may be due to the fact that most students in the Beaufort Delta that attend the local college are of aboriginal descent, and so sequestration based upon race was less obvious. Although during the apprenticeship phase in Wood Buffalo, participants intimated a “color blind” absence of racism impacting their work experience. From these accounts, issues relating to race appeared not to impact the vocational habitus of participants. However, given responses by aboriginal human resources personnel concerning racism in the workplace, participant perceptions may indeed change with time as apprentices become full-time employees.

CHAPTER NINE

CONCLUSION

Chapter Introduction

Using a comparative case site methodology this dissertation has examined training programs in a manner that gathered a variety of perspectives in different locations and time-frames. In order to bring closure to the research I return to the original questions posed as a means of identifying, organising, and reflecting upon key findings and their contribution to both scholarship and policy. Findings are subsequently analysed and contextualised by considering both limitations and contributions of the methodological and theoretical frameworks developed. Implications of the research findings are discussed in terms of policy recommendations as well as consideration of future areas of research that could further add to and build upon the work already done.

Teasing out the nature of aboriginal training partnership programs in northern Canada leads to the original questions posed: Who partners and why?; and, What do partnerships tell us about the shifting nature of aboriginal-industry-state relations, including the inter-connections occurring within and between these key partner groups? Furthermore, examination of the experiences of participants in these programs as they transition from learning to work, including outcomes and the manner by which participants are socialised must also be considered in order to provide further context and understanding of the current provision for northern education, training, and employment. Deliberation of these questions and considerations provides a context to consider whether or not VET programs intended to train a targeted, marginalised, and ethnic group achieve parity of participation for aboriginal northerners in key local industries.

Research Contribution

Both practitioners and academics will find this dissertation useful for a variety of different reasons. Findings will be of use to aboriginal and human resource policy makers interested in improving training programs. Implications of the dissertation for improving education, training, and employment are considerable, especially considering that the research endeavours to increase parity of participation by breaking intergenerational cycles of intermittent and insecure unskilled labour for a marginalised and vulnerable sector of the Canadian population. The dissertation has also developed novel methodological and theoretical frameworks that contribute to our understanding of capital and labour, and aboriginal-industry-state relations in particular. What follows is a discussion of these areas of contribution.

Numerous aspects of aboriginal policy have been the focus of extensive research. Yet, research examining training-to-employment programs is scarce and limited; and scarcer still is research examining VET programs targeting aboriginal people. Furthermore, despite increased attention on northern megaprojects, there remain few studies that examine the socioeconomic impacts from the standpoint of public-private partnerships that emerge from these developments. These lacunae are surprising considering that related policy has received enormous attention and funding, and ostensibly represents a priority area for both governments and industry.

Dissertation findings occur at a time when northerners and policy makers are raising critical questions concerning benefits of public-private partnerships, including aboriginal VET programs.[127] Increased attention and emphasis on public-private partnerships relating to resource extractive industries, the state, and aboriginal governments suitably requires an equally vigorous focus on related research which this dissertation provides.

Pragmatic policy analysis presented in this dissertation includes analysis of program expenditures and outcomes. Considering that governments neglect to publish useful and reliable data on training expenditures and outcomes, this dissertation provides a valuable source of information and analysis that can be used to improve the current provision of training policy. While training figures are alarming in terms of actual expenditures and apprenticeship outcomes, they nevertheless represent tacit knowledge of program stakeholders and partners. Therefore, the contribution lies in publishing research so that the implications of present policy can be considered and deliberated upon in a wide policy arena. This source of empirically-based data will also provide the necessary evidence required to stimulate and guide discussion by policy makers and community members concerning present funding provisions and how these funds may be redirected in order to maximise community benefits of current and future programs. In addition, chronicling of northern aboriginal training and employment trajectories developed in the first part of this dissertation provides a valuable resource for policy makers and academics to draw upon as there are few resources readily available that have compiled these historical events.

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[127] At the time of submission of this second draft, I was contacted by a CBC news reporter (May 15, 2013) regarding my research for a special report that the broadcaster is doing concerning outcomes of northern aboriginal training programs.

As the cost-benefit analysis of training presented is conducted in relation to both industry- and federal government-driven training programs, a comparison of both programs is also significant, especially considering the current policy trajectory favouring the former over the latter. And because the Beaufort Delta was examined during a preparatory stage of resource development, lessons learned from Wood Buffalo may aid in planning future training programs that will occur once megaprojects come on stream in the region. Other regions that are implementing self governance agreements, are in the preparatory pre-project phase of megaproject developments, or are in some combination of the two, may also find the case studies applicable to their own circumstances.

As we have seen, barriers and successes to northern training programs have been amply documented since the early 1970s. To a lesser extent, experiences gathered from the perceptions of those participating in northern training programs have also been documented. However, previous accounts provide us with no real insight into lived experiences accompanying this significant transitory period in the lives of young northern aboriginal people when they enter the world of trades work and beyond. There is also a tendency in VET studies to either focus on the partnership component of training, or on participants’ subjective experiences. In either case, data are usually gathered during a specific time frame. By anchoring the research to a LTW transition, perceptions of program participants, partners, and stakeholders were gathered longitudinally, which enabled the research to gauge shifting attitudes accompanying transitions, as well as triangulating and verifying findings by returning to the same case site numerous times. By organising the research in this manner, the methodological approach taken was able to extend the case study through theory reconstruction by considering how the transition from learning to work impacted program participants' perceptions.

In addition to providing a useful pragmatic policy analysis of pre-apprenticeship training programs, the dissertation has also used empirical findings as the substrate from which to theorise the wider restructuring of both labour and capital as understood through the shifting terrain of aboriginal-industry-state relations. As I have amply argued and shown, most approaches applied to both VET and aboriginal political economy do not adequately consider the full range of social relations of a given local context. These problems relate to weaknesses associated with the methodological and theoretical frameworks chosen. Consequently, new and novel approaches were developed in order to accommodate and make sense of empirical findings.

The methodological approach also involved conceptually framing research findings as extant social relations of production and consumption occurring within a diachronic regulatory framework of late capitalism. This approach required the combination of regulation theory and Bourdieuian theory. While both frameworks are not new or novel, the combination of the two *is*. By combining these two theories conceptual space required to make sense of empirical findings was created. Within this context, Bourdieuian concepts of field, capital, and habitus were metatheoretically extended to accommodate a postFordist regime of accumulation. In doing so, new language was either developed or broadened, to include the concepts of a risk management and numbers game field, as well as the ideological conditions of regulation – including liberal culturalism and an indigenist mode of social regulation. In addition, analysis of postFordist capital conversion strategies in order to elucidate partner strategies and trade-offs that impact training. Other novel approaches included linking the training field to the local economic relationship in order to elucidate impacts of socialisation on training participants.

Bourdieu's social theory provided a useful heuristic device to consider social formation and stratification, while also serving to delimit the analysis to one particular field – training programs. Nevertheless, there is a tendency to rigidify habitus while ignoring the complexity of multiple identities and past experiences that agents possess. Consequently, theory was extended to include the emotional dispositions structuring the habitus of the field.

In addition to theory reconstruction, the framework also provided a critique of training programs from two vantage points. Firstly, the critique of neoliberal training partnerships presented supports recent related studies, thereby providing further evidence of how public-private partnerships in Wood Buffalo contribute to fragmentation of communities. However, sui generis critique of neoliberal partnerships is inadequate to position the research. Importantly, a trenchant critique of training programs was extended to expose conceptual weaknesses embedded in post-foundational discourses. These orthodox accounts, I have argued, fail to adequately examine the full range of social relations occurring within and between communities, including the formation of class interests that serve to regulate a postFordist restructuring of both labour and capital. In this sense, the dissertation extends analysis of social relations beyond tendentious application of colonialism rooted in Fordist governmental discipline. By troubling assumptions that are generally neglected or tendentiously applied and taken for granted in the academic literature, the dissertation presents a truly critical analysis.

By considering larger, overarching questions relating to globalisation, capitalism, and new social formations embedded in these local-global transformations, the methodological and theoretical approaches developed in this dissertation constitute a significant contribution to the academic research community. Moreover, the utility of the approach extends beyond the bounds of educational policy studies to include other disciplines in the social sciences as well.

While the theoretical and methodological framework chosen for the research has coloured the analysis, findings have been sufficiently triangulated to warrant the prerogative of the approach chosen. Triangulation of empirical findings occurred through public presentations, during which time feedback was provided from community stakeholders. Triangulation also occurred by formulating a theoretical framework that most adequately explained empirical findings. By drawing evidence from two case sites (rather than one) triangulation of the theoretical framework was strengthened. By extending the inquiry over the course of the year, I was also able to continually check for understanding by returning to the same case site numerous times.

Key Findings

While it is possible to make generalisations of particular VET fields examined, findings suggest that partnerships comprise complex and contradictory sets of social relations. Bearing in mind this caveat, the key finding of this dissertation is that training fields are regulated within a postFordist regime of accumulation resulting in the interests of key partner groups becoming increasingly aligned. Implications of these shifts in partnership relations include increased fragmentation and competition within and between communities for resources relating to education, training, and employment. At the individual level, implications include formation of a vocational habitus aligned with liberal-cultural values. These findings indicate that economic conditions significantly structure the habitus of the field both socially and individually.

Particular case site findings are organised both empirically and theoretically. Empirical findings generally align with studies cited in this dissertation, including program outcomes and the sociology of partnerships and LTW transitions, although the research did reveal some unexpected results that previous studies did not present. Interpretation of empirical events is abstracted through theoretical constructs emerging from the research. Reconstruction of theory represents a second set of research findings that serves to inform the research questions posed.

A review of case site VET programs indicates the following characteristics. Programs tend to be short-term, ad hoc, and fragmented – both in terms of funding provisions and in terms of agreements reached between industry and aboriginal groups. Partnerships that are demand-driven and involve a committed employment partner are more likely to lead to successful LTW transitions for program participants compared to regions where training is supply-driven, and where programs lack clearly defined outcomes, roles, and responsibilities for partners. Graduation and/or employment figures are used to bolster political claims that economic development, including megaprojects, will provide direct benefits in the form of training that produces transferable skills and long-term employment for local aboriginal people. Yet, programs have only marginally achieved their stated outcomes. Reports that fail to indicate actual graduation and employment outcomes are thus misleading and present a false impression of local benefits. Issues relating to inaccurate reporting of program outcomes are particularly significant considering that public funds are used to support these programs.

Differing levels of trust and accountability were manifested in tensions existing between partners and also between and within communities. Tensions are reduced when the playing field is more level which allows partners to work together to achieve a common goal – training a local labour force. Conversely, tensions are exacerbated when inter-agent stakes increase, as noted in Wood Buffalo when training programs transitioned from ASEP to the mine sponsored program. This shift in strategies resulted in the playing field being substantially tilted in favour of the interests of the employer. Tensions over competing interests occurred within and between aboriginal communities; and also between employment partners, training delivery agents, and human resources personnel. Contributing to intra-group tensions were differential access to information and freedom to express personal opinions for employees working within the same organisation.

In terms of the training programs themselves, findings indicate that in addition to providing basic skills and education, pre-apprenticeship training programs also place significant emphasis on soft “employability” skills. Students particularly valued practical and mentoring components of programs. Programs increased status through attainment of credentials, wages, and recruitment by employment partners for some participants in Wood Buffalo. Barriers impeding transitions are attributed to educational deficits, lifestyle, location, and finances. Social networks, primarily linked to family were significant in helping students successfully manage LTW transitions.

As the review of training programs presented in chapter 2 indicates efforts to increase devolution of control to the local level have always been framed within discourses that have increasingly sought to integrate aboriginal peoples into capital accumulation regimes through the rhetoric of partnerships. Neoliberal policies promoting and governing public-private partnerships in education remain an on-going concern. VET programs can be considered to represent components of what Billett and Seddon (2004) have characterised as both “enacted” and “new” as they are the product of bureaucratic institutional structures that tend to:

1) be directed by pre-specified goals initiated outside of communities; 2) exhibit compromised communication networks; and 3) are subject to fluctuation caused by changing political and economic factors. “Skills” deemed necessary by employers align with the rhetoric of “demand-driven” training, and are given priority and granted legitimacy by partners. Yet, linkages between skills and what is considered to be demand-driven training, remain dubious, thus indicating a disconnect existing between TDAs and employer needs.

Findings do not indicate that an “elite” has conspiratorially relegated VET programs and trades labour to “lower-classed kin” in order to maintain their privileged position. However, the rentier-like conditions structuring a post-land claims grants economy and the ideological conditions regulating these conditions are conducive towards exacerbating class formation.

One may well wonder what northern regions would look like if they did not receive massive federal government support through forms of welfare assistance and social services. In many respects standards of living and educational achievement rates have increased considerably in a relatively short period of time. Statistics also indicate that aboriginal people are increasingly becoming employed in the resource sector as well as gaining trades certification. However, taken from a more critical perspective, VET partnerships have not transformed social relations to the point that institutions have become more democratic by increasing parity of participation. Given the system of trade-offs that aboriginal groups are required to weigh, findings support the notion that a postFordist restructuring of labour does not provide net benefits to communities by linking matters of recognition with redistribution; rather they serve to regulate the opposite effect – misrecognition and maldistribution. Considering few participants gained apprenticeships and employment, program objectives were only partially fulfilled. That is to say, programs can be considered a qualified success in assimilating aboriginal people into the workforce. However, if we consider assimilation as a *process*, then programs did fulfill their task owing to the institutional forms of socialisation that occurred.

At the heart of the assimilating process resides ideological conditions of liberal culturalism which serves to problematically furnish inexorable expansion of capital concealed behind the mask of identity politics. By tying training to ethnicity, programs contribute towards the depoliticisation of workers. This is because the first selection criterion is group membership which is hierarchically determined on the basis of blood-line. Consequently, racial identity is privileged over worker identity. While acknowledging that the reasons for privileging race lie in colonially-imposed historical agreements, the notion of "rights" has become problematically co-opted by liberal-culturalist ideology.

Liberal culturalism is especially adept at inculcating a racialised and marketized vocational habitus as it emphasizes a doxa of individual accountability mediated through the romantic conservative rhetoric of racial identity; failure to transition from learning to work is ultimately the responsibility of the individual (rather than the market) – the solution of which is to develop a reified sense of cultural identity while simultaneously embracing the logic of the market. In other words, programs socialise participants by affirming agency (the human capital approach) while displacing historical and structural forces which are the cause of limited asset structures that makes these populations vulnerable to embodying dispositions of docile racialised labouring subjects.

Findings also indicate that consideration of the full range of social relations and practices governing a training field requires that the concept of habitus must go beyond instrumental or aesthetic dispositions to also include ethical and emotional ones as well. Emotional and ethical dispositions factor significantly into structuring aboriginal – non-aboriginal relations, as well as the hierarchical divisions existing within and between aboriginal groups. For instance, resistance to the rules of both the risk management and numbers game fields indicates that agency for groups possessing less power exists at the partnership level, while VET participants also possess (bounded) agency that shape and determine rational decisions impacting outcomes of LTW transitions. Hence a dynamic and dialectical interplay of agency and structure produces the habitus of agents – be they partners or participants.

Reconstruction of the VET field therefore requires consideration of agents' interaction with modes of social regulation and also with respect to the choices individuals make within a given field. And so, while agents may be compelled to play by rules of the game, convert or conserve different species of capital to maintain their field position, and are oriented by dispositions germane to particular social locations, individuals also possess varying degrees of agency that exist beyond narrowly prescribed roles as bearers of particular species of capital. Rather than being reductively consigned to ascribed roles (be they partners or participants), agents possess dispositions that potentially contribute to courses of action that are not economically pre-determined.

Bearing these caveats in mind, socialisation of program participants was especially evident in Wood Buffalo. Findings indicate that industry control of education depoliticizes workers by removing critical space to consider trajectories of capitalist relations, which get replaced with ahistorical reified conceptions of social change. As a result, both individuals and communities become isolated agents competing on the training field. From this standpoint, the industry demand-driven approach may have been more advantageous compared to the federal ASEP program in terms of program outcomes and expenditures. However, the incalculable costs associated with the long-term impacts to communities and program participants outweigh the short-term benefits. By the same token the Beaufort Delta ASEP program is also problematic in the sense that the political intentions of the program was designed to give the appearance that something is being done about the “Indian problem,” when in fact the status quo is maintained.

Limitations

Two sets of limitations impact the findings presented. The first set of limitations involves methodology employed and relates to practical considerations. The second set of limitations relates to privileging the theoretical framework chosen to frame findings. Embedded in both sets of limitations is researcher bias, which, when not recognized, represents a third limitation.

Access to information is impacted by both the nature of case site research, as well as the political nature of conducting VET research in the case sites chosen.

Of the case site methods chosen, participant observation is considered the most significant method for understanding social processes. However, multiple case site analysis runs the risk of spreading resources thin, thus reducing the chances of gaining access to rich data. While access was not a factor per se in detracting from the research objectives, further follow-up of VET participants would have been enormously beneficial, especially considering that VET research tends to neglect longitudinal LTW transition studies, and that much of the utility of this research was derived from the experiences of VET participants. Moreover, considering that program participants were not being tracked by partners in the programs investigated, more in-depth participant ethnography would have further supported the findings and assisted in supporting policy recommendations.

In particular, research findings in the Beaufort Delta were impacted by the failure of VET participants to apprentice with a key employment partner. As a result, workplace findings were limited to mine apprentices in Wood Buffalo. Further insight into the post-learning phase of Beaufort Delta participants would have been especially useful to gain greater insight into the relationship existing between the social economy of the region and wage labour. Experiences associated with apprenticing with a peripheral construction employer would also have provided richer insight into differences existing between the two case site programs.

Whether or not access to additional documents or interview participants would have been gained if I had stayed longer in a particular region, or whether there would have been greater community "buy-in" remain counterfactual speculations. During the course of the research only one partner refused to grant me an interview, and only two students (both female) declined to be interviewed a second time during follow-up interviews. Outcomes of these events would most likely have been the same regardless of my duration in communities. In the case of the partner who declined to be interviewed, I was threatened with litigation if findings based upon what others had shared were published. This incident revealed the highly political and sensitive nature of the research, which in-and-of-itself was insightful.

A second limitation associated with multiple case site analysis is cost. Doing research in the North is prohibitively expensive. Consequently, frequency of case site visitations is limited considering availability of funding provided by research granting agencies. This constraint remains an on-going concern for northern researchers and is subject to fluctuating political interests and priorities.

A third methodological limitation relates to the political nature of conducting northern research. Research ethics remain poorly defined and understood in terms of what exactly constitutes an “aboriginal community,” and what constitutes appropriate protocols for conducting research. While I was fortunate to experience mostly positive relations throughout the inquiry, the research nevertheless occurred in a milieu that uncritically accepts community research needs as political needs. This is especially a concern in the NWT where aboriginal organisations grant research licenses and have the power to revoke licences should the research be deemed not in the interests of the community. Consequently, there is added pressure to produce research that becomes politicized advocacy work which tends to sanitise or avoid sensitive issues or develop theoretical frameworks that may disturb the local order. However, the research contained in this dissertation is not beholden to the interests of any one particular partner or political granting body.

As an exhaustive account of interview responses and associated literature would not have been possible or worthwhile, biases towards privileging certain perceptions over others resulted. As the coding maps presented in the appendices indicate, responses were purposely delimited to various themes in order to tie partnership findings with those of LTW transitions. As the interview maps show, the dissertation could have veered off in other directions; some of these directions will serve as future research considerations. For instance, while recognising that vocational habitus is in part constituted by gender, I did not sufficiently delve into differences between the two sexes interviewed other than to indicate some of the additional challenges and barriers faced by women.

While recognizing a bias towards sympathetically aligning my own normative stance with those of some of the perspectives presented, I endeavoured to appreciate competing perspectives. For instance, I was particularly fortunate in gaining candid insights from oil industry employees, and in the process I gained greater appreciation of these perspectives. Generally, however, industry perspectives were treated less sympathetically than testimony shared by respondents who worked for aboriginal organisations. This bias is most likely attributed (or at least reasoned) to the enormous power imbalances existing between the different partner groups. Normative interpretations of empirical findings may be contested by some as presenting a narrow reading of the local context, for being overly critical, and ignoring extra-economic factors. For instance, arguing that aboriginal governments are conditioned by rent-seeking behaviour, or linking a comprador element to the interests of transnational capital may be construed by some as an attack on aboriginal governance and self-determination. These analyses coincide with accounts of government and industry motivations impacting a numbers game and risk management habitus. Here, the intention is not to recklessly cast aspersions on the efforts of those working for partner organisations, but rather to seek to uncover the motivations that structure the habitus of the training field so that these dispositions are brought to light in order to improve the current provision and outcomes of programs intended to benefit aboriginal northerners.

Methodological limitations have to be weighed against the many benefits of conducting multiple case site research. The case site methodology employed is especially useful in remote and sparsely populated regions owing to the necessity of maintaining confidentiality and anonymity amongst interview respondents. Furthermore, multiple case site analysis provides an important means to consider larger over-arching questions that a single case site is unable to elucidate. At a pragmatic policy level, this includes being able to consider the trajectory of the VET field by comparing regions experiencing different stages of the resource extractive development cycle and their associated political and economic relationships which impact partnership agreements. By undertaking the research in the manner adopted the research fulfilled a key criteria of comparing regions experiencing different stages of the resource extractive cycle so that lessons learned could be shared between regions.

Benefits of the approach taken became evident during a northern governance and economic development conference hosted in Yellowknife in October 2012. During the conference, former territorial premier and keynote speaker Stephen Kakfwi indicated that he did not want to see the Northwest Territories become “another Alberta.” This comment was based upon concerns he had with respect to the relationships being forged between aboriginal groups and industry. During my presentation where research findings were shared, I mentioned Kakfwi’s comment in reference to the rationale for doing a comparative analysis between the two regions; my presentation was able to generate a lot of discussion and interest amongst participants – some of whom represented different aboriginal organizations.

The Ambulance and the Guard Rail

Whether or not education policy should be directed towards preventative, “guard rail,” or reactive, “ambulance” measures are quandaries that serve to focus the following sets of policy recommendations. Clearly pre-apprenticeship VET programs constitute ambulatory care in the sense that they are both costly and reactive measures designed to bridge the gap between large educational deficits and labour market needs. In addition, they are also likely to be implemented in a manner that calls public attention to their presence. And like real accidents, all the state’s horses and all the industry’s men cannot seem to put the pieces back together again. Complicating matters are the social relations that have formed between guard rails and ambulances. What follows are various recommendations concerning the adequate use of ambulances and guard rails to promote parity of participation both with respect to increasing skilled northern labour and also with respect to improving partnership agreements.

Recommending that training partnerships shift from being "enacted" to being driven by the needs of the "community" remains an ineffectual platitude unless coupled with specific structural changes that must occur on the training field for this to happen. Given my predilection to analysing findings using a conceptual framework that borrows from Marxist traditions, the research runs the risk of failing to offer practical suggestions for practitioners. After all, how can VET programs increase parity of participation in a capitalist world system, when it is the "system" that fundamentally needs to be changed? Moreover, if readers are not sympathetic towards the chosen theoretical framework, then what benefit do the recommendations have for them? As is common in the literature, recommendations often get notched down to those derived from neo-Weberian analyses where changes to institutions are given priority; yet, these recommendations are also problematic in the sense that they tend to ignore the capitalist relations that animate fields, thereby contributing to liberal culturalist discourses that serve to reproduce the existing order by naively endeavouring to create a "kinder and gentler" form of capitalism for aboriginal groups. Bearing these caveats in mind, I present general and pragmatic policy recommendations which are divided into three areas: 1) re-appraising the philosophical nature of the programs; 2) structurally transforming governance; 3) and community empowerment through education. The first two sets of recommendations relate ambulatory care of VET programs, while the last set of recommendations involves erection of educational guard rails.

Philosophical changes are first required in order to lay the foundation for implementing structural changes. Three areas of recommendations relating to the philosophy of training programs include: 1) re-directing programming to difference in status rather than ethnic identity; 2) tying training to committed employers; and 3) emphasising general educational knowledge and skills that can be used in a variety of contexts.

In keeping with Fraser's redistributive concept of social justice (2003), ghettoizing training participants into programs based upon hierarchical racialised categories is problematic as it emphasises a social justice of recognition based upon identity. By instead redirecting programming needs to ameliorating status subordination, programs would be made available to all people regardless of race. And yet, reframing access in this manner would not significantly change the demographic composition of participants, as the vast majority of people entering these programs would still be aboriginal. Therefore, most students would still be immersed in an aboriginal milieu where they would receive the support and understanding from their peers and instructors. However, self-perception of both participants and partners would begin to change as a system of entitlements shifts to a system of justice based upon redistribution of wealth through education and skills commensurate with the rest of the Canadian population.

A second related benefit to redirecting redistribution to recognition of status subordination, involves restructuring the VET field. Indeed the training field would begin to change as the impetus behind procuring racialised labour through either risk management or a numbers game would no longer occur.

However, these provisions alone are insufficient to reorient the training field to a more just system of redistribution. In addition, funding regimes must also shift towards proactive training measures. In particular, funding tied to speculative training is clearly problematic, especially considering some programs have been formed on the assumption that people should be trained in preparation for future megaprojects that never developed. Such an approach to training constitutes an egregious mismanagement and squandering of public funds designed to gain community buy-in of megaprojects. Regions that have an established resource extractive employment partner are also not immune to problems associated with speculative training owing to the inevitable turbulence of global market vagaries as well as changes resulting from the revolutionizing of the means of production.

Rather than developing training around perceived labour market needs and narrow skill sets, programs should instead emphasise general education and skills, especially considering the majority of training is done on-the-job. It is also essential that programs are developed in a manner that identifies committed and willing employers. These provisions may include initiating support through government programs and departments, especially in regions where established industrial partners are either unwilling or unable to commit. Two reasons support this proposition. Firstly, regional governments have the capacity to offer stable and predictable training opportunities, and secondly, there is no guarantee that employment partners in the private sector will commit in good faith once programs are established. As momentum begins to gather other employment partners from the private sector may want to partner once they see the value of the apprenticeship program that has been put in place. This approach is more practical and realistic than coercing reluctant employers into agreements that get made and then reneged once contracts are awarded, which then leads to resentment, perceptions of racism, and fatalism by aboriginal partner groups and program participants. Establishing a stable government employer will also help ensure that training is local, thereby off-setting the need for trainees to relocate.

A third required philosophical shift relates to separating education from training. Clearly, re-appropriation of education into the public domain is required in order to maintain democratically robust institutions. The current emphasis on private – public educational business partnerships marketizes education into narrowly defined skill sets. And because these narrow skill sets are subject to market vagaries, trainees are susceptible to job insecurity. Consequently, within the present approach labour power needs remain poorly defined as the target is always shifting. Therefore, the needs of the market (however defined) must be subordinated to individual needs which include general educational knowledge and skills. A general education is required to provide a solid foundation to transition participants into transferable skills that transcend the narrow and short-term needs of a particular development. Additionally, tighter linkages must be made between employers and TDAs in terms of what the actual needs and capacities of each respective institution are, and what can reasonably be offered.

Philosophical changes to how training is implemented require changes to the structures by which training is supported and governed. Two key areas involve funding and governance. These reforms are intended to ameliorate “program amnesia,” which Abele (1989) aptly characterised northern training programs as suffering from. The fact that program amnesia continues to characterise training and employment programs in northern Canada indicates a dire need to improve the current system. Increasing the success of pre-apprenticeship LTW transitions requires long-term, stable, and predictable funding. Financial commitments therefore must not be subject to changes in government policy. By improving funding regimes capacity to partner increases as programs are allowed to develop in a manner that ensures continuity. This improvement will help reduce frustration and burn-out experienced by partners, help increase employment tenure of partners, and help restore trust and communication between partners. In particular, building capacity to meaningfully partner requires ensuring that measures are put in place to retain qualified aboriginal human resources personnel.

Stable and predictable funding regimes are also required to structure the governance of training programs. While training societies were created in both regions, findings indicate that several problems hamper the capacity to effectively partner. Training societies that were developed to oversee particular programs were short-lived and dismantled once programs ended. Societies and managing bodies administering programs also represent a duplication of services.

A central governing body such as a regional training committee should oversee all aspects and components of training impacting a region. Duties include program coordination, administration, and evaluation. The composition of these bodies must include people in a particular region who have developed knowledge and expertise in education and training, including unions, aboriginal groups, employers, and training delivery agents. These groups and individuals should be recognised for their expertise, including their knowledge of local regions, the linkages between the different partner institutions, and their capacity to overcome political differences.

While regional training committees are already composed of the representatives described, differences in how the committees operate and communicate are required. A role of the committee would be to ensure that program participants are appropriately screened so that the likelihood of program success increases. A centralised training body would increase trust and accountability by serving as a repository to house publicly available records, including labour pool analyses and program evaluations that provide detailed descriptions of graduation and employment outcomes. In doing so, partner roles and responsibilities would be clarified. This initiative would also allow programs to be tracked and evaluated in a manner that allows partners to learn from previous programs in order to improve future ones. Finally, creation of a central training agency would increase access to information by off-setting the tendency of different groups to duplicate services and gather proprietary information.

These reforms will be largely ineffectual unless simultaneously coupled to the implementation of proactive measures. Here, I specifically refer to erecting guard rails targeted towards improving educational achievement in the K – 12 school system. Two important initiatives must occur for this to happen. Governments must adequately fund education in order to raise the deplorably and unacceptably low achievement levels so that they are commensurate with the rest of Canada. Secondly, aboriginal governments and parents must play a greater role in their children's education.

With respect to the first measure, the reason why governments and industry prefer to fund aboriginal VET programs is that these programs provide an opportunity to mount public relations campaigns that promote the notion that something is being done about the "Indian problem." When governments fund these programs, they are fulfilling their "fiduciary" responsibilities, while simultaneously maintaining sovereignty of northern regions by establishing a presence there; whereas when core oil, gas, and mining industries are the main drivers and funders of training programs, they are primarily fulfilling risk management in order to assert a larger shareholder stake on the field. As I have argued, both situations are duplicitous and problematically maintain the status quo of maldistribution and misrecognition. I have also shown that these programs have a dubious track record of success in terms of developing skilled labour.

Considering the cost analysis presented, it appears that programs bear extremely high costs when considered against program outcomes in procuring skilled labour. While this is indeed the case, the calculated cost of training presented in this dissertation is miniscule compared to the actual cost required to appropriately fund *education*, which is where the root of the problem and ultimate source of the solution lies. Governments – not industry – must take control of the root of the problem, which will require *massive* educational funding to hire skilled teachers and develop programs that meet learner needs. Given the enormity of the task, including the level of resources required to properly fund education, governments must increase revenues through taxation. Taxes include royalties on mining, oil and gas development. And because governments have subordinated the interests of citizens to the market, royalty rates remain inordinately low. Accordingly, we are left with public-private partnerships that serve to maintain the interests of capital, while placing the onus of responsibility (and blame) on the individual. Politically, citizens must therefore pressure governments to discipline capital so that oppressive conditions impacting marginalised and impoverished groups can be ameliorated once and for all.

However, money alone will not remedy the problem. A cornerstone for achieving self-governance that must become a priority includes a greater role for parents and aboriginal and school leaders in education. The current tendency of placing blame on the educational system for failing aboriginal students has done little in the way of improving educational achievement levels. While there are variables that are initially beyond the control of communities (e.g. high turn-over rates of staff, teacher quality, location) there are also areas where communities can begin to take control of education. Signs that aboriginal governments are beginning to assume greater responsibility in education can be found in The

National Strategy on Inuit Education (*First Canadians*, 2011). This document serves as a foundation for northern governments to develop stronger community links to education, which begins in the home with parents; the document also correctly notes that interventions during the early and middle school years of a child's education are especially critical. In effect, the document has emphasised erecting guard rails rather than paying for expensive ambulances.

Findings indicate that most aboriginal government personnel interviewed were unable to articulate a clear education action plan, including engagement and presence in schools, or strategies to encourage and increase greater parental involvement. Similarly, most educational staff indicated that engagement with aboriginal leaders and role models was limited. Ultimately, aboriginal governments and parents must take the lead role in reclaiming schools as an integral part of their communities if the deplorable and unacceptable achievement levels that continue to marginalise and impoverish youth are to be changed. This includes maintaining an established and visible presence in schools.

One may well query what the future would look like if the vast majority of aboriginal youth were able to successfully achieve a Grade 12 education. While there has been ample literature concerning improving educational achievement levels of aboriginal youth, little in the way of *visioning* what this would look like in terms of implications for communities has been considered. While education and educational qualifications remains the single most significant determinant of social location and life chances, changes in educational capital also have implications for society as a whole. Indeed the structural relationship existing between guard rails and ambulances would change as education would empower people to participate in all sectors of society – dismantling and reforming some institutions in favour of erecting others.

Structures of training partnerships would also change. For instance, a sizeable portion of college budgets that get devoted to up-grading (40%) could instead get redirected towards developing localised trades programs. Money saved on relocating students to distant campuses to gain training could be spent instead on developing local programs. The existing roles of aboriginal human resources personnel would also change. On the one hand, employees may have fewer "clients," but on the other hand, their jobs would be far more fulfilling and less stressful, thus decreasing the likelihood of job turnover which erodes their capacity to meaningfully partner.

Changes to training have implications for the habitus of partners and participants. Risk management strategies would diminish as there would no longer be a need to procure racialised labour through separate training programs. Federal training programs would also change as there would no longer be a need to fudge numbers in order to legitimise programs. An education extending beyond the bounds of instrumental knowledge and skills would also enable a clearer distinction to made between education and training. Accordingly, the vocational habitus of participants would transform as new horizons and opportunities would begin to emerge.

Lastly, broader implications of education for society as a whole must also be considered. Liberal-culturalist promotion of governance reform uncritically equates “devolution” to “decolonisation,” which obscures the “hegemonies within hegemonies” of northern communities. An educated public would help foster citizens possessing the skills and confidence required to demand greater accountability of their political leaders and help ensure a clearer division is maintained between the political and economic sphere. Indeed, community members should demand access to information, and a greater say in how their affairs are being managed. This would include pressuring schools and newspapers to provide critical space for engagement, which in turn would create a positive feedback cycle; as more robust engagement in civil society occurs, new expectations and norms would take root. At present, case site communities remain oppressive undemocratic spaces.

Future Research

Given the dearth of empirical research relating to aboriginal VET partnership programs, further studies are required to corroborate the findings and recommendations contained within this dissertation. Additional research would also help shed light on what is, and what is not, germane to the experiences of northern aboriginal communities and program participants. Corroborating research findings would therefore benefit from case site research that employs different variables than the ones chosen for this research. Possible changes to the nature of case sites chosen include socio-economic contexts, funding regimes, programming, and ethnicity. For instance research comparing federal government programs, programs operating in the same geopolitical region, or programs that did not specifically target aboriginal trainees, would be useful.

Aside from additional research that manipulates case site variables differently, there is also a need to extend LTW studies in particular areas of study identified in this dissertation relating to gender, status, and social networks. For instance, a comparative analysis of Métis and First Nations experiences in training programs would shed light on impacts that different support structures have on participants. This research holds particular significance and relevance considering recent constitutional changes to aboriginal status. Similarly, more in-depth analysis examining the experiences of female participants also holds particular relevance given efforts to increase female participation in the trades. Examination of social capital attributes including role models and family in supporting effective LTW transitions would also be useful. Further research examining the interplay of identity and ethnicity in shaping vocational habitus would provide additional insight into the relation existing between ideology and colonial-capitalist relations. Particular attention to mobility patterns that accompany LTW transitions would also help identify how community capacity changes as individuals gain education and training. While there have been interesting studies conducted in other circumpolar regions on education and mobility, there does not appear to be similar research conducted in northern Canada. Considering that many land claims beneficiaries do not reside in land claims regions, this research would be useful in identifying how education impacts location in both case sites. In addition, intra-group differences based upon wage earnings would also shed additional light on social stratification occurring within land claims groups.

Additional research examining aboriginal-industry-relations is also urgently required. In particular, research examining outcomes of impact and benefit agreements on education, training, and employment holds particular significance and relevance considering the impetus to develop energy resources through aboriginal industry partnerships. Further research examining specific outcomes of these programs is required so that governments and communities can begin to learn from past experiences.

Finally, development of the conceptual framework presented in this dissertation would be useful. Additional theoretical analysis that locates VET from the standpoint of sociological relational models occurring within a postFordist regime of accumulation would support the framework developed in this dissertation.

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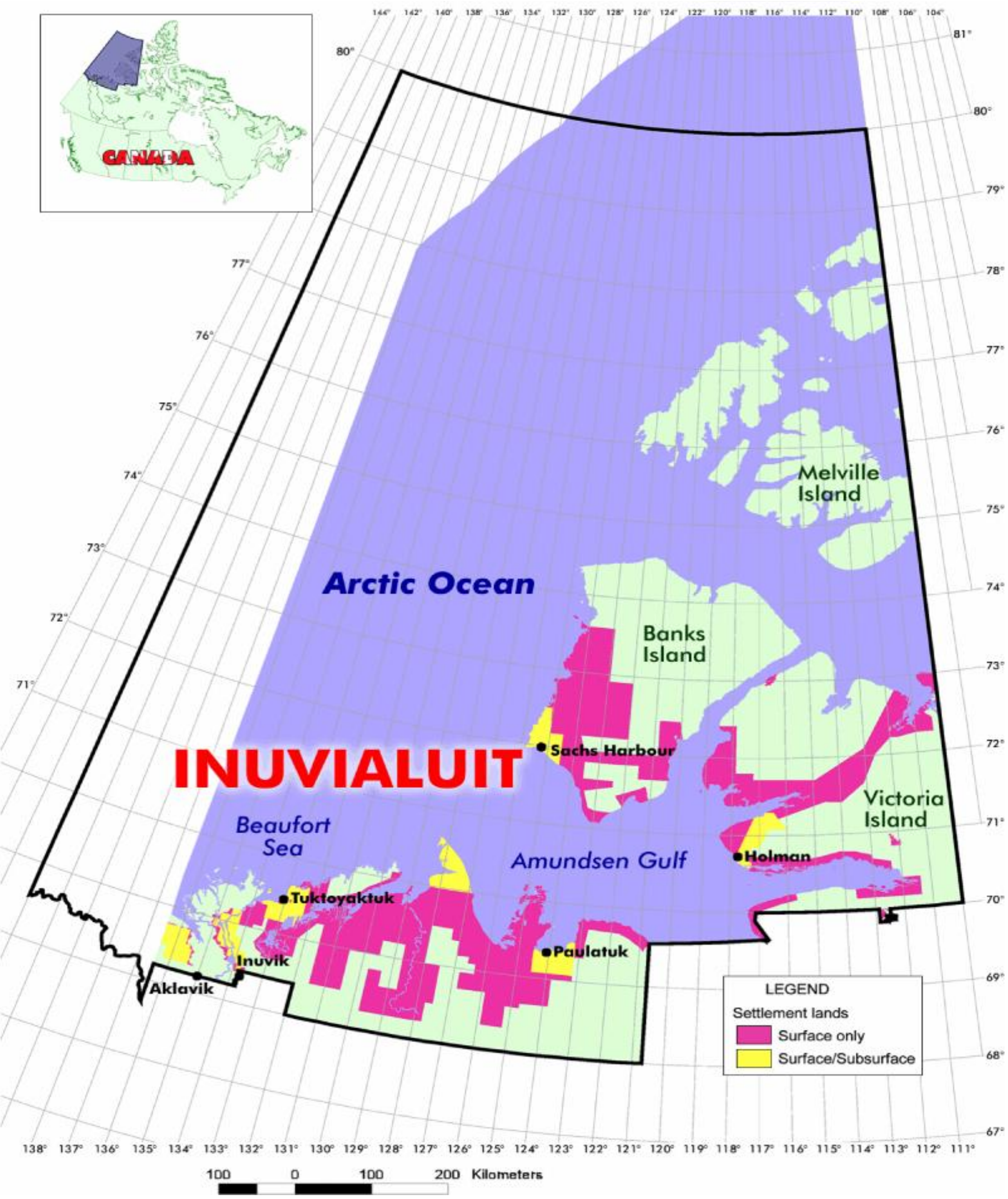
APPENDIX A

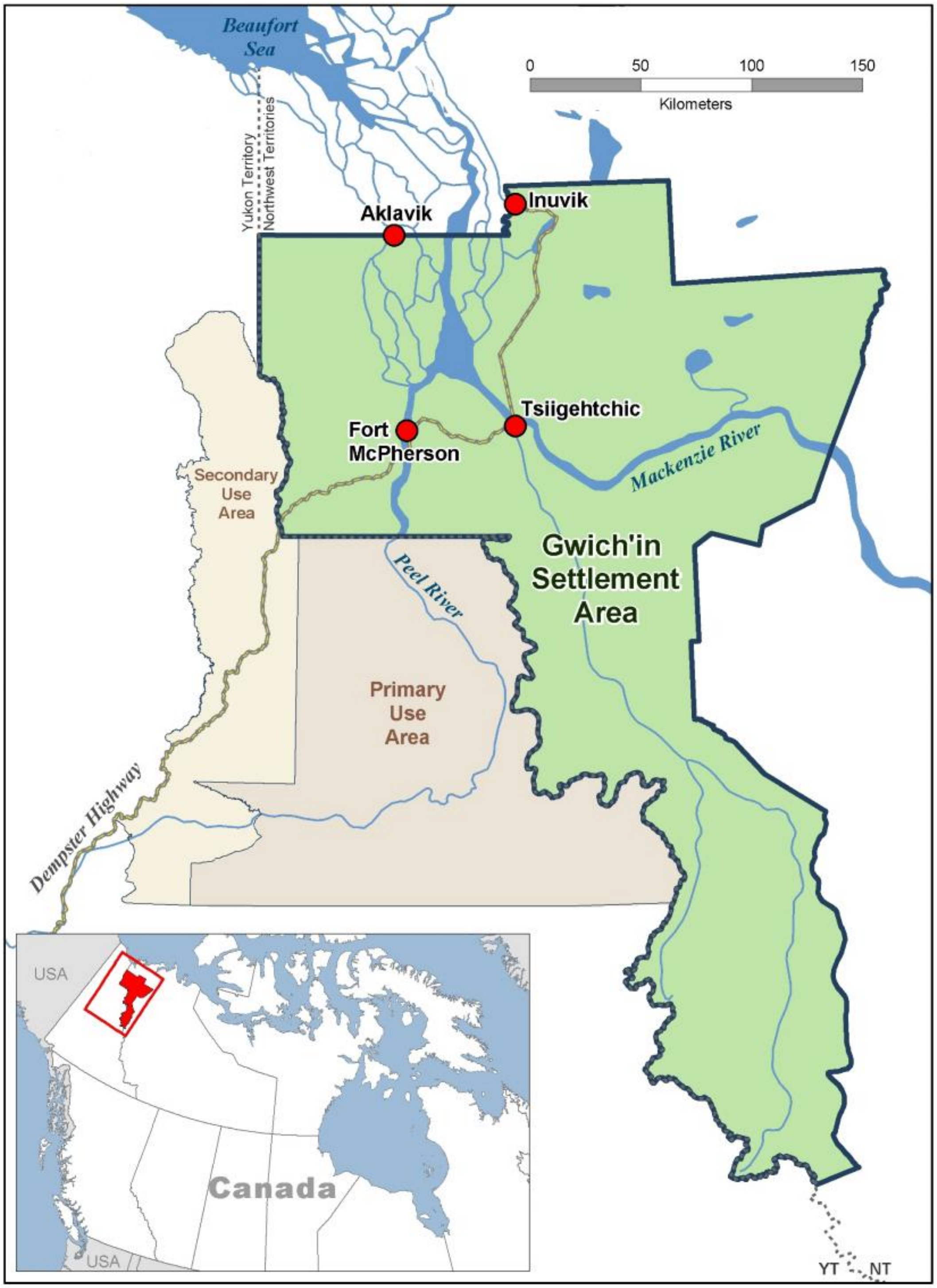
The Inuvialuit Settlement Region


CANADA
INUVIALUIT
Arctic Ocean
Beaufort Sea
Amundsen Gulf
Banks Island
Victoria Island
Melville Island
Sachs Harbour
Holman
Paulatuk
Tuktoyaktuk
Inuvik
Aklavik
LEGEND
Settlement lands
Surface only
Surface/Subsurface
100 0 100 200 Kilometers

Source: Aurora Research Institute (n.d .)

APPENDIX B

The Gwich'in Settlement Region

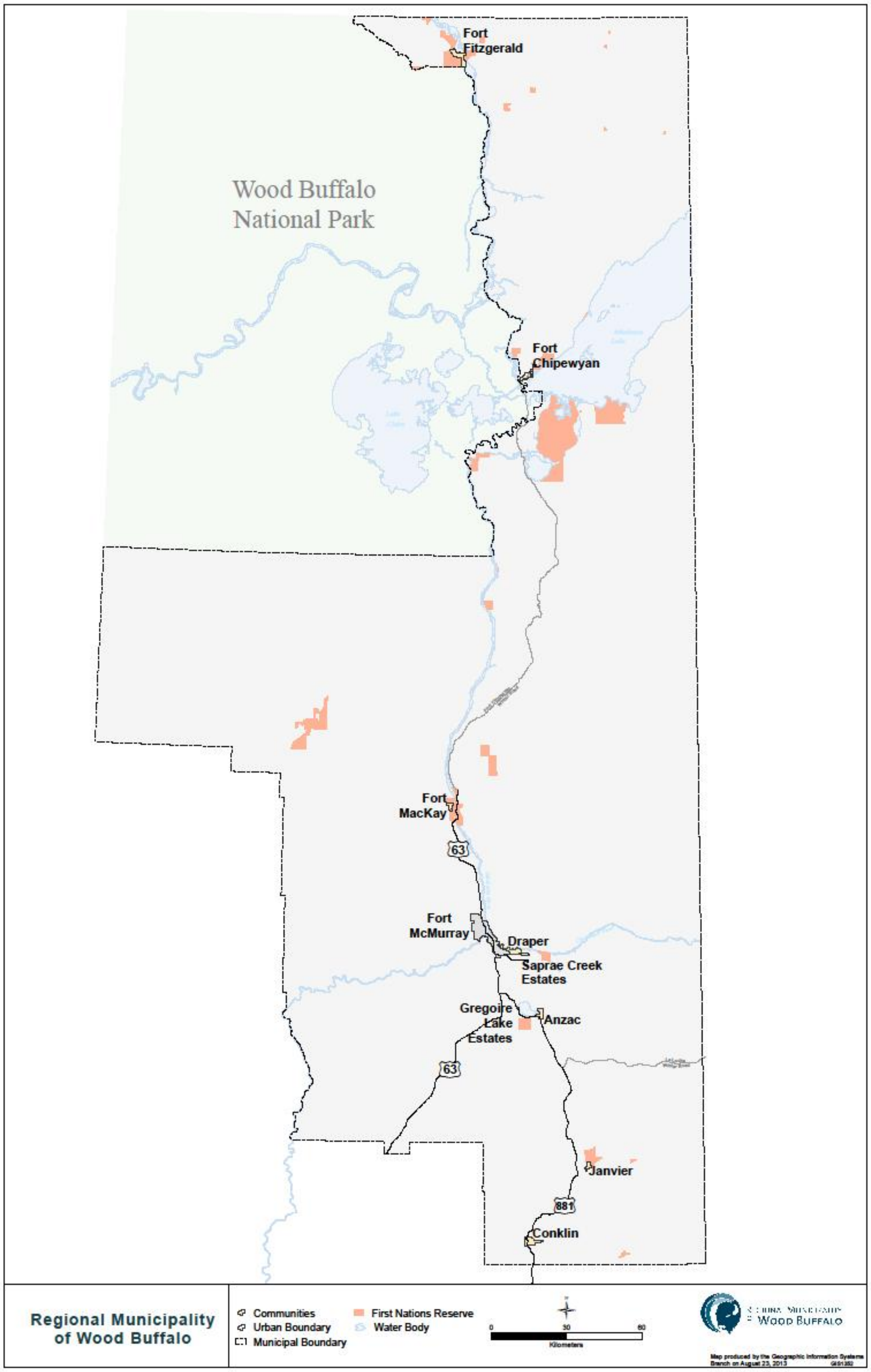


Beaufort Sea
0
50
100
150
Kilometers
Yukon Territory
Northwest Territories
Inuvik
Aklavik
Tsiigehtchic
Fort McPherson
Mackenzie River
Secondary Use Area
Gwich'in Settlement Area
Peel River
Primary Use Area
Dempster Highway
USA
Canada
USA
YT
NT

Source: Gwich'in Tribal Council (2013, August 19)

APPENDIX C

The Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo


Fort Fitzgerald
Wood Buffalo National Park
Fort Chipewyan
Fort MacKay
63
Fort McMurray
Draper
Saprae Creek Estates
Gregoire Lake Estates
Anzac
63
Janvier
881
Conklin
Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo
Communities
Urban Boundary
Municipal Boundary
First Nations Reserve
Water Body
0
30
60
Kilometers
Wood Buffalo
Map produced by the Geographic Information Systems Branch on August 23, 2013

Source: Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo, August 23, 2013

APPENDIX D

Interview Participants

Wood Buffalo		Beaufort Delta	
Fall 2010			
F-1	Students (3M)	F-3	Students (3M)
F-2	Students (3M:2F)	F-4	Students (5M)
I-1	Student (F)	F-5	Aboriginal Organization (1M:1F)
I-2	Student (F)	I-21	Student (F)
I-3	School Board (M)	I-22	Student (F)
I-4	Aboriginal Organization (F)	I-23	School Board (M)
I-5	Organized Labour (F)	I-24	Organized Labour (F)
I-6	Organized Labour (F)	I-25	College (M)
		I-26	College (M)
		I-27	Territorial Government (F)
		I-28	Territorial Government (F)
Spring 2011			
I-7	College Instructor (F)	I-29	Aboriginal Organization (F)
I-8	Provincial Government (F)	I-30	Secondary School (M)
I-9	Aboriginal Organization (F)	I-31	Aboriginal Organization (F)
I-10	Organized Labour (M)	I-32	Aboriginal Organization (M)
I-11	Secondary School (M)	I-33	Aboriginal Organization (M)
I-12	Organized Labour (M)	I-34	Territorial Government (F)
I-13 – 20	Students (5M: 3F)	I-35 – 34	Students (8M: 2F)
Sub Total	28 (15M:13F)		34 (23M: 11F)
Total			62 (38M: 24F)

APPENDIX E

Information Letter and Consent

Dear Participant,

The following information is provided in order to help you make an informed decision regarding participation in the research. At no time will your name be connected to responses in discussions held during the study or in writing. Permission to use direct quotations in written publications will be first sought by the quoted individual. After completion of both sets of interviews, a series of community presentations will be made in order to share a summary of the findings, and gain further feedback and clarification.

All interview data will be transcribed and sent to you shortly after the interview in order to verify the accuracy of the transcript. At this time any further clarification or changes to the transcript you feel are required will be made.

Your participation in the research is strictly voluntary and you have the right to withdraw at any time. Notification of a decision to withdraw without having your interview used in the research is required within two months of receiving a copy of the interview transcript.

Interpretation of findings is the prerogative of the researcher and will be done through thematic analysis once all data has been collected. Differences in interpretation of data between those of the researcher and participant will be noted in the research.

This study has been reviewed for its adherence to ethical guidelines and approved by the Research Ethics Board (REB) at the University of Alberta. Any questions regarding participant rights and the way the research is being conducted, contact the Chair of the Research Ethics Board at (780) 492-2614. The following people may also be contacted: Doctoral Supervisor: Dr. Alison Taylor (780-492-7608); Graduate Coordinator: Dr. Frank Peters (ph. 780-492-7607); Research Ethics Board Member: Dr. Jerry Kachur (780-492-4427).

Please complete the statement of consent and return it in the self-addressed envelope provided. A second copy of this letter has been included for you to keep as a reference.

Statement of Consent:

I _____________________________ acknowledge the above conditions and have had the opportunity to discuss questions or concerns with the researcher regarding my participation. I give my consent to being interviewed for purposes of providing data for a Doctorate Degree in Education.

____________________________ _______________

Signature Date

APPENDIX F

Sample Interview Questions

A. Students

Phase One (fall 2010)

1. Why are you interested in taking this program?
2. What sort of career planning advice have you received, and from who?
3. What does it mean to get a "good education"?
4. What sort of job would you like to get after this program?
5. Are there difficulties in getting an education? If so, what are they?
6. What previous education did you have before getting into the program?

Phase Two (spring 2011)

1. How have things changed since we met last October when you were just beginning the program? Obviously you are on to the next step. Have your decisions changed since we talked last. For instance have any of you changed your career paths in terms of the trades you want to get?
2. Money was mentioned as a challenge. Does that remain a challenge?
3. Was the program challenging enough? Many of you mentioned that there were too many mixed abilities in one program?
4. How about other challenges…TEE?
5. What supports do you need to complete this program (money, housing, SFA, etc). Is your band supporting you?
6. What person or event has most inspired you since beginning the program?
7. What so far is the best part of the program?

8. Describe the rest of the journey: level 1, 2, 3, 4. Where and when will you do this?
9. Describe your day at the mine:
    a. When do you arrive, and leave?
    b. What is the best part of your day?
    c. How much do you get paid? Are there other benefits?
    d. What do you do on your days-off?
10. Describe the relationship with your mentor and also other people that you work alongside with. Was that person assigned to you? Are people friendly? Are they helpful? Where do most of the other workers come from?
11. Did the program teach you about worker's rights….unions, filing grievances, pay, discrimination, sexual harassment, etc.?
12. Do you experience sexual or racial discrimination in the workplace?
13. If you are on a fly-in fly-out program, describe if this arrangement is working?

B. Educators

1. What is your role and how does this relate to serving the community?
2. Have industrial developments to the region impacted programming? If so, how?
3. How are programs created?
4. How are programs evaluated?
5. What do the words "education" and "vocation" mean to you?

6. Is there a tension between the training needs of communities and the programs being provided?
7. Are there programs that you would like to see offered in this community?
8. Should adult educators be in the business of upgrading?

C. Employers

1. What are some of the key challenges in operating in this region with respect to recruiting learners?
2. What is your company's philosophy towards hiring northern workers?
3. Is the current funding commitment to VET programs by stakeholders fair?
4. What are the key training and hiring needs for your company?
5. Who should do the training?
6. Is the current provision for training and employment effective? If not, how can it be improved?
7. Does training prepare learners for the world of work?
8. Does your company provide career counselling?

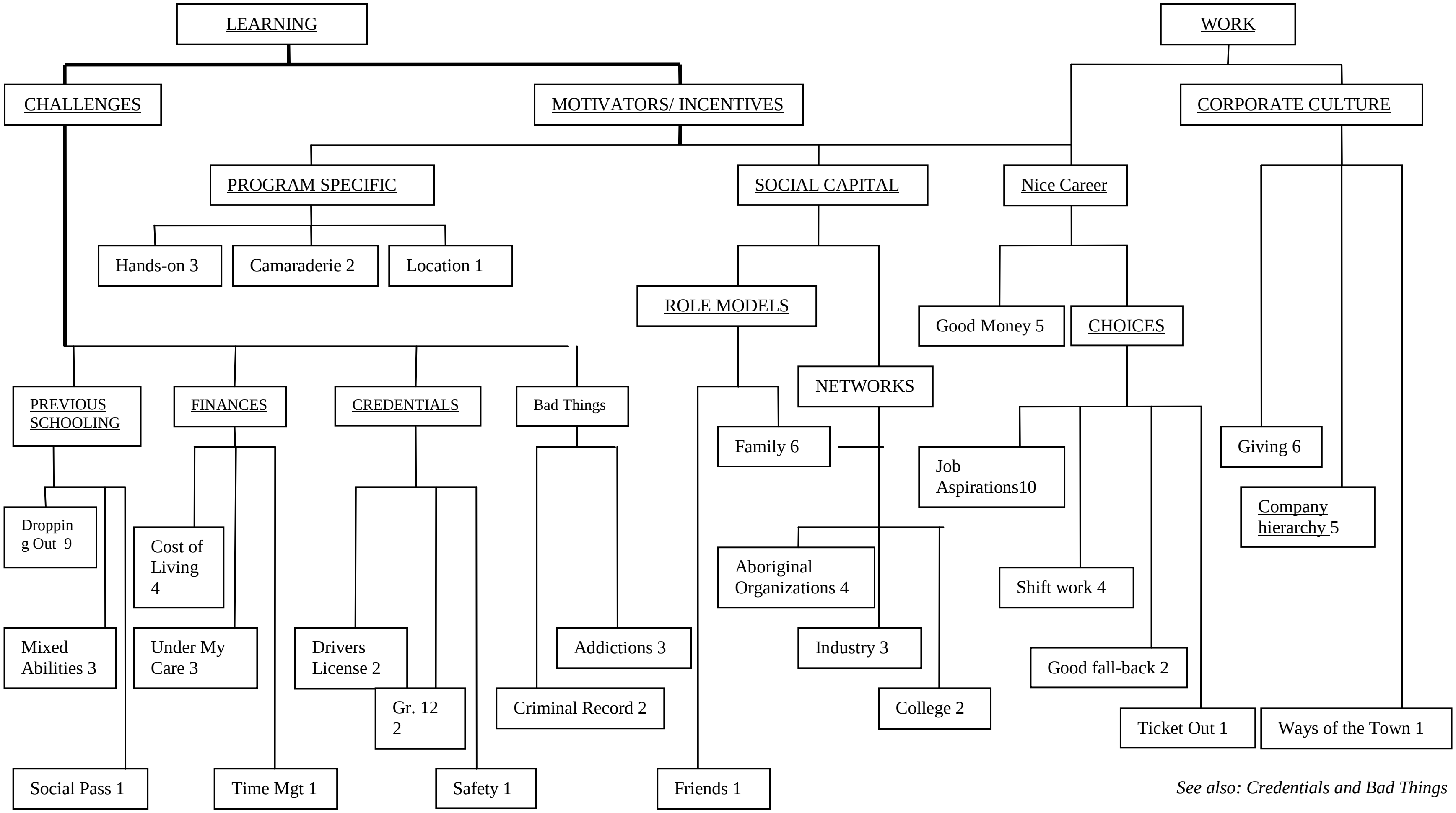
D. Aboriginal Organizations

1. How long have you worked for this organization?
2. Describe your role?
3. How has education changed over the years in this community?
4. What does education mean to you?
5. What do you think are the greatest challenges for education and employment?
6. What are the greatest challenges for young people in this community?

7. What do you see are the benefits and challenges to large-scale mining development?
8. What advice can you give to me as a researcher, new to this community?
9. What do you see are the differences between AHRDA and ASETS programs?
10. What is your working relationship like with the other partners (industry, education)?

APPENDIX G

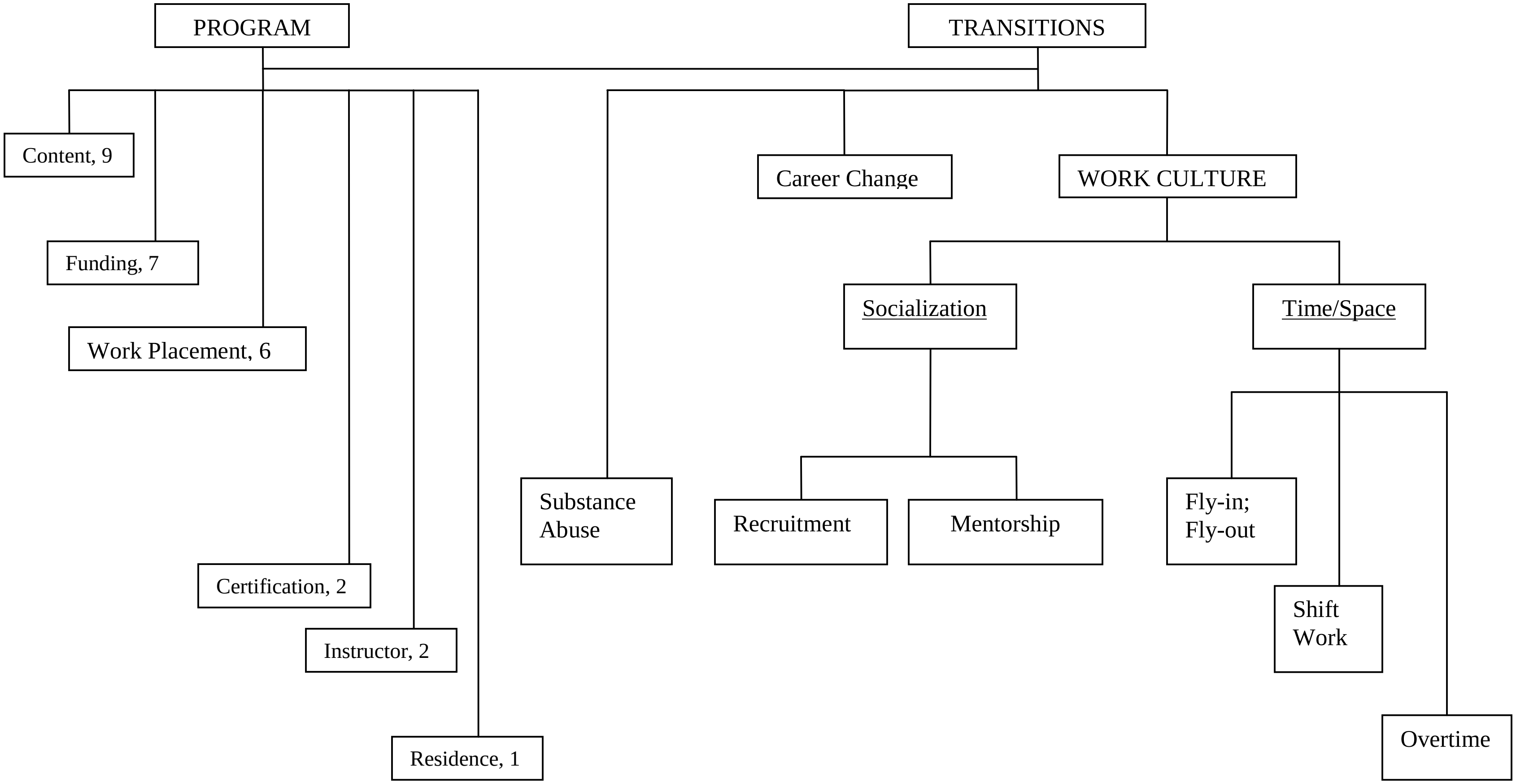
Coding Map: Wood Buffalo Participants, Fall 2010


LEARNING
WORK
CHALLENGES
MOTIVATORS/ INCENTIVES
CORPORATE CULTURE
PROGRAM SPECIFIC
SOCIAL CAPITAL
Nice Career
Hands-on 3
Camaraderie 2
Location 1
ROLE MODELS
Good Money 5
CHOICES
PREVIOUS SCHOOLING
FINANCES
CREDENTIALS
Bad Things
NETWORKS
Family 6
Job Aspirations10
Giving 6
Droppin g Out 9
Cost of Living 4
Company hierarchy 5
Aboriginal Organizations 4
Shift work 4
Mixed Abilities 3
Under My Care 3
Drivers License 2
Addictions 3
Industry 3
Good fall-back 2
Gr. 12 2
Criminal Record 2
College 2
Ticket Out 1
Ways of the Town 1
Social Pass 1
Time Mgt 1
Safety 1
Friends 1

See also: Credentials and Bad Things

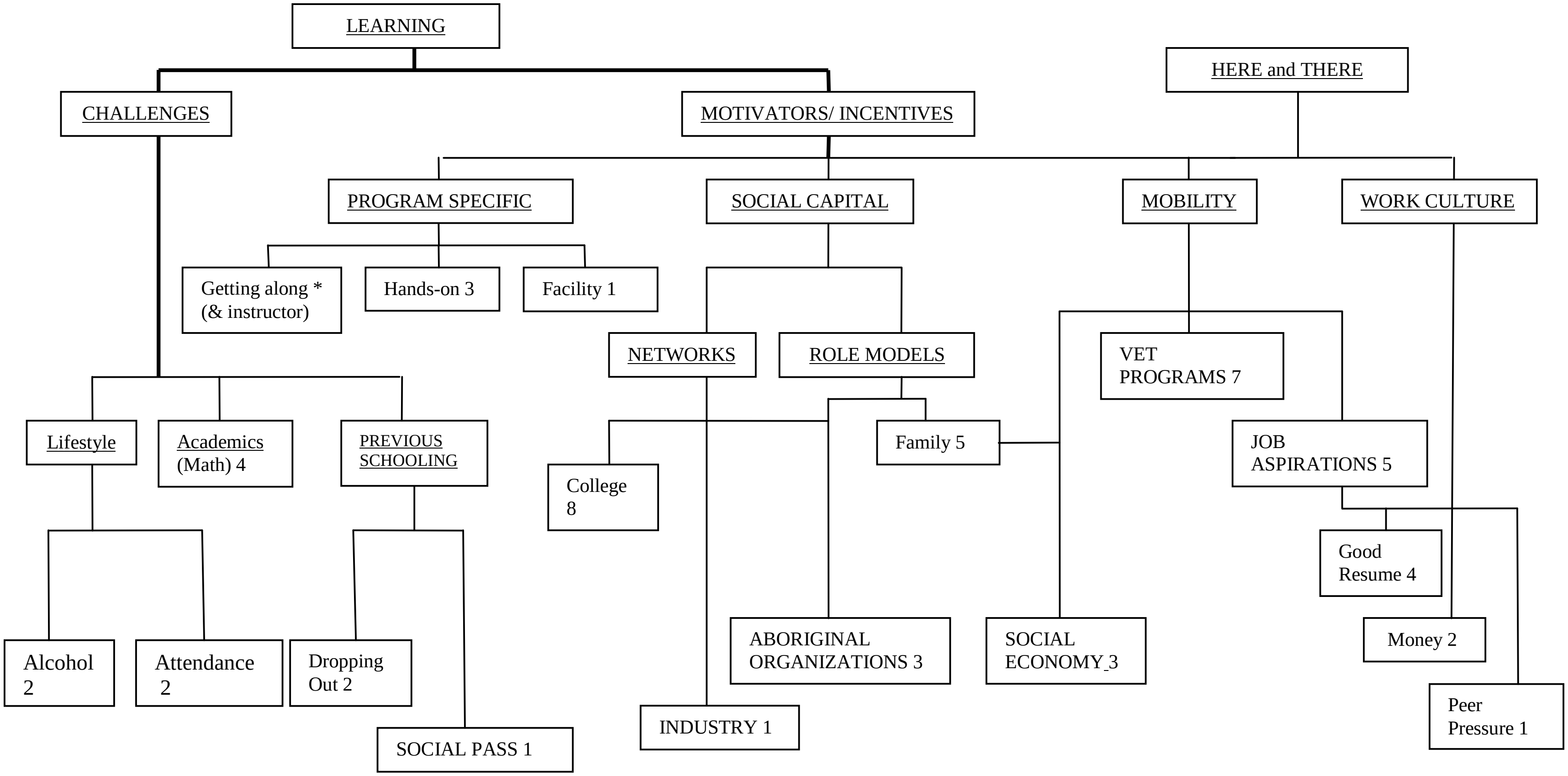
APPENDIX H

Coding Map: Wood Buffalo Participants, Spring 2011


PROGRAM
TRANSITIONS
Content, 9
Funding, 7
Work Placement, 6
Certification, 2
Instructor, 2
Residence, 1
Substance Abuse
Career Change
WORK CULTURE
Socialization
Time/Space
Recruitment
Mentorship
Fly-in; Fly-out
Shift Work
Overtime

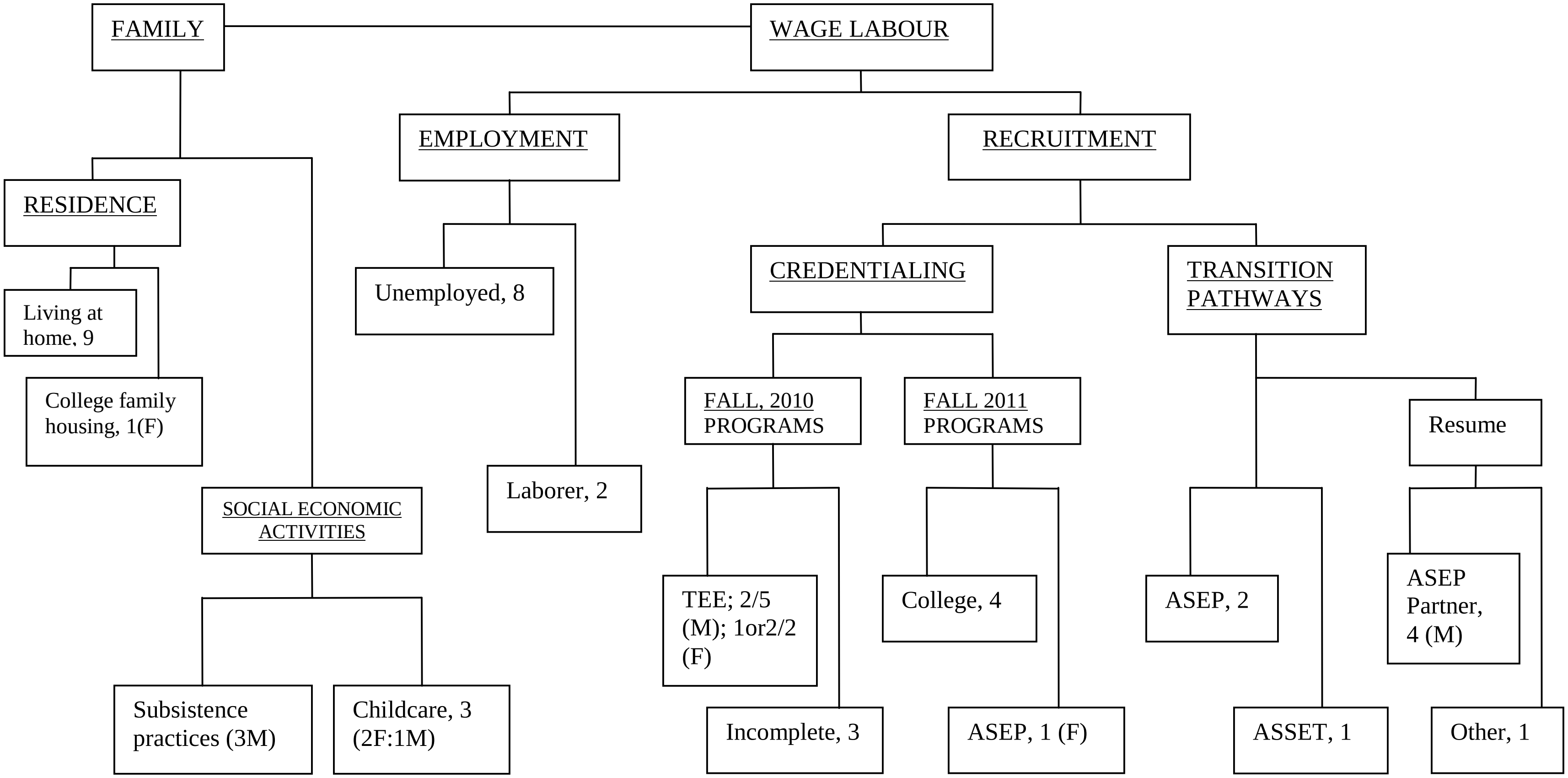
APPENDIX I

Coding Map: Beaufort Delta Participants, Fall 2010


LEARNING
HERE and THERE
CHALLENGES
MOTIVATORS/ INCENTIVES
PROGRAM SPECIFIC
SOCIAL CAPITAL
MOBILITY
WORK CULTURE
Getting along * (& instructor)
Hands-on 3
Facility 1
NETWORKS
ROLE MODELS
VET PROGRAMS 7
Lifestyle
Academics (Math) 4
PREVIOUS SCHOOLING
College 8
Family 5
JOB ASPIRATIONS 5
Good Resume 4
Alcohol 2
Attendance 2
Dropping Out 2
ABORIGINAL ORGANIZATIONS 3
SOCIAL ECONOMY 3
Money 2
INDUSTRY 1
SOCIAL PASS 1
Peer Pressure 1

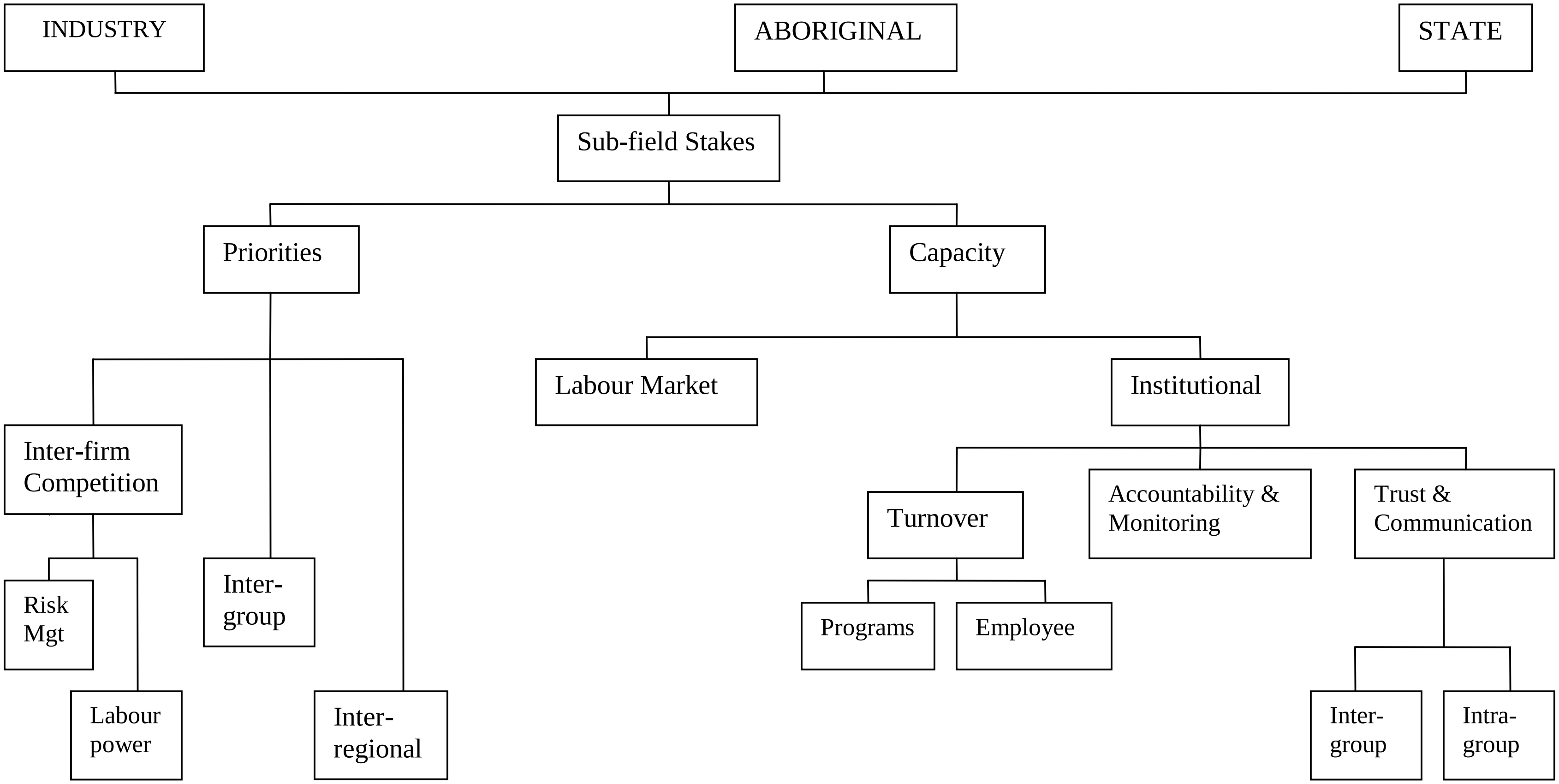
APPENDIX J

Coding Maps: Beaufort Delta, Spring 2011


FAMILY
WAGE LABOUR
EMPLOYMENT
RECRUITMENT
RESIDENCE
Living at home, 9
College family housing, 1(F)
SOCIAL ECONOMIC ACTIVITIES
Subsistence practices (3M)
Childcare, 3 (2F:1M)
Unemployed, 8
Laborer, 2
CREDENTIALING
TRANSITION PATHWAYS
FALL, 2010 PROGRAMS
FALL 2011 PROGRAMS
TEE; 2/5 (M); 1or2/2 (F)
Incomplete, 3
College, 4
ASEP, 1 (F)
Resume
ASEP, 2
ASSET, 1
ASEP Partner, 4 (M)
Other, 1

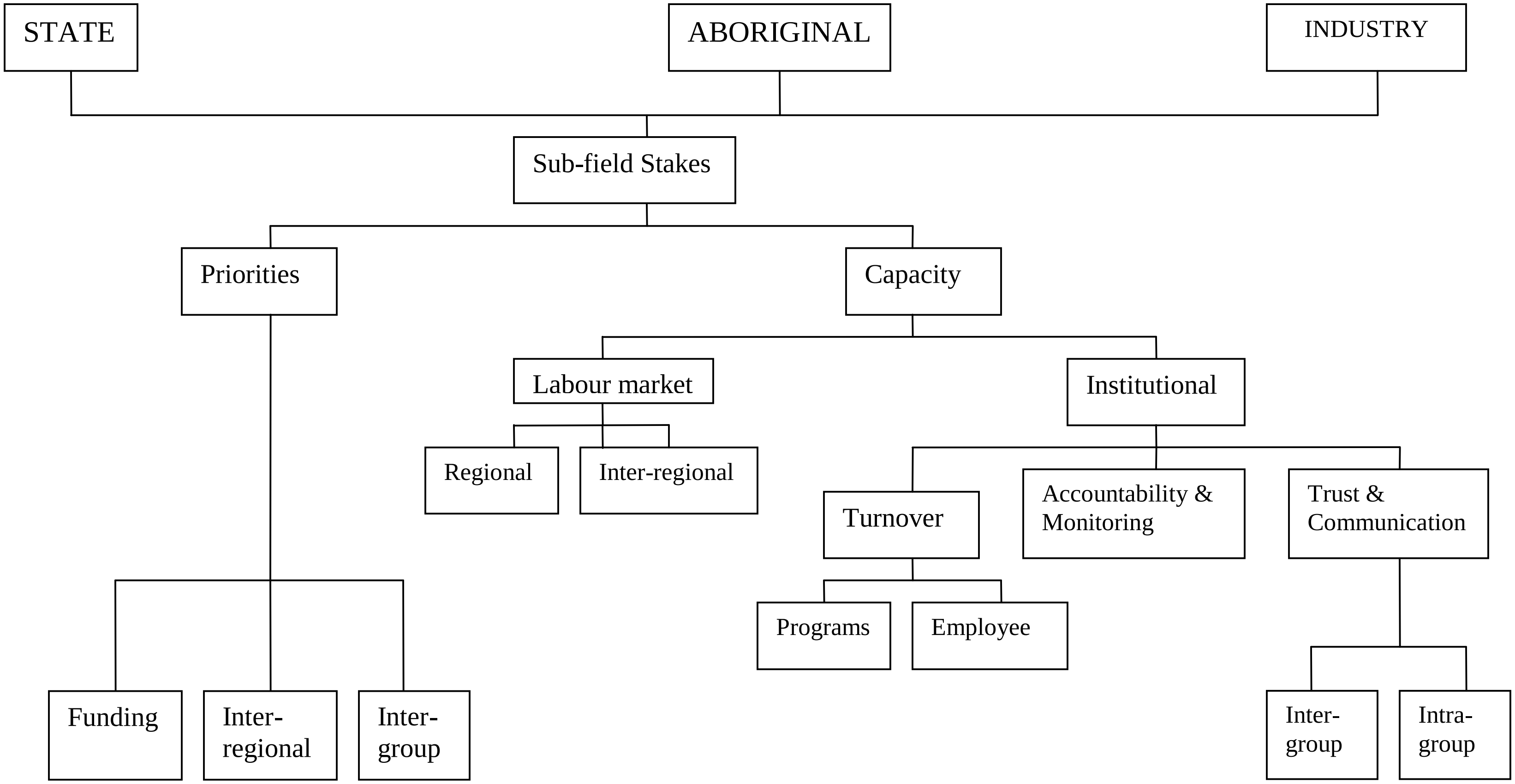
APPENDIX K

Coding Map: Wood Buffalo Risk Management Field


INDUSTRY
ABORIGINAL
STATE
Sub-field Stakes
Priorities
Capacity
Labour Market
Institutional
Inter-firm Competition
Inter-group
Inter-regional
Risk Mgt
Labour power
Turnover
Accountability & Monitoring
Trust & Communication
Programs
Employee
Inter-group
Intra-group

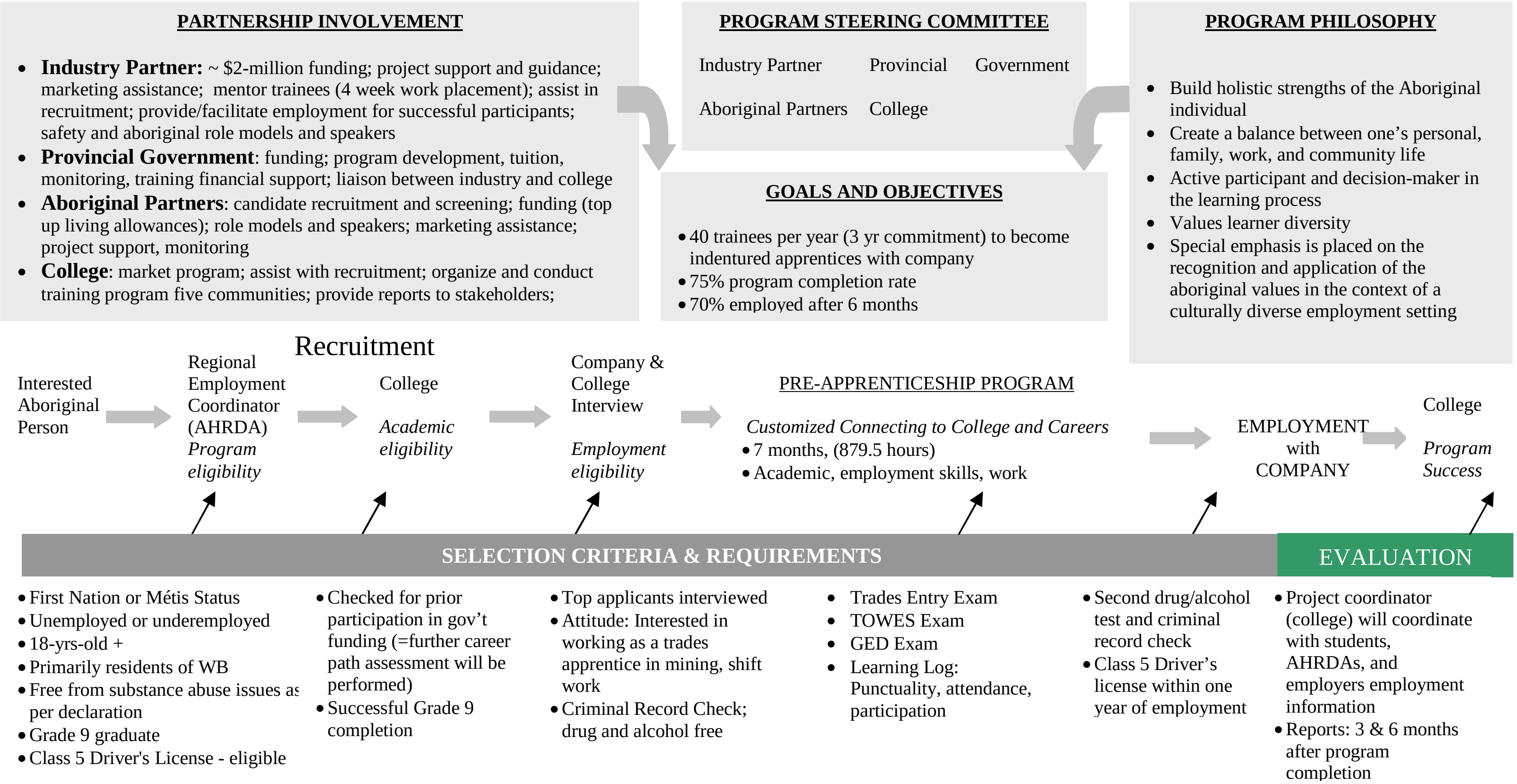
APPENDIX L

Coding Map: Beaufort Delta Numbers Game Field


STATE
ABORIGINAL
INDUSTRY
Sub-field Stakes
Priorities
Capacity
Labour market
Institutional
Regional
Inter-regional
Turnover
Accountability & Monitoring
Trust & Communication
Programs
Employee
Funding
Inter-regional
Inter-group
Inter-group
Intra-group

APPENDIX M

Wood Buffalo Program Map



PARTNERSHIP INVOLVEMENT

- **Industry Partner:** ~ $2-million funding; project support and guidance; marketing assistance; mentor trainees (4 week work placement); assist in recruitment; provide/facilitate employment for successful participants; safety and aboriginal role models and speakers
- **Provincial Government**: funding; program development, tuition, monitoring, training financial support; liaison between industry and college
- **Aboriginal Partners**: candidate recruitment and screening; funding (top up living allowances); role models and speakers; marketing assistance; project support, monitoring
- **College**: market program; assist with recruitment; organize and conduct training program five communities; provide reports to stakeholders;

PROGRAM STEERING COMMITTEE

Industry Partner

Provincial Government

Aboriginal Partners

College

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

- 40 trainees per year (3 yr commitment) to become indentured apprentices with company
- 75% program completion rate
- 70% employed after 6 months

PROGRAM PHILOSOPHY

- Build holistic strengths of the Aboriginal individual
- Create a balance between one’s personal, family, work, and community life
- Active participant and decision-maker in the learning process
- Values learner diversity
- Special emphasis is placed on the recognition and application of the aboriginal values in the context of a culturally diverse employment setting

Recruitment

Interested Aboriginal Person

Regional Employment Coordinator (AHRDA)
Program eligibility

College
Academic eligibility

Company & College Interview
Employment eligibility

PRE-APPRENTICESHIP PROGRAM

Customized Connecting to College and Careers
- 7 months, (879.5 hours)
- Academic, employment skills, work

EMPLOYMENT with COMPANY

College
Program Success

SELECTION CRITERIA & REQUIREMENTS

- First Nation or Métis Status
- Unemployed or underemployed
- 18-yrs-old +
- Primarily residents of WB
- Free from substance abuse issues as per declaration
- Grade 9 graduate
- Class 5 Driver's License - eligible

- Checked for prior participation in gov’t funding (=further career path assessment will be performed)
- Successful Grade 9 completion

- Top applicants interviewed
- Attitude: Interested in working as a trades apprentice in mining, shift work
- Criminal Record Check; drug and alcohol free

- Trades Entry Exam
- TOWES Exam
- GED Exam
- Learning Log: Punctuality, attendance, participation

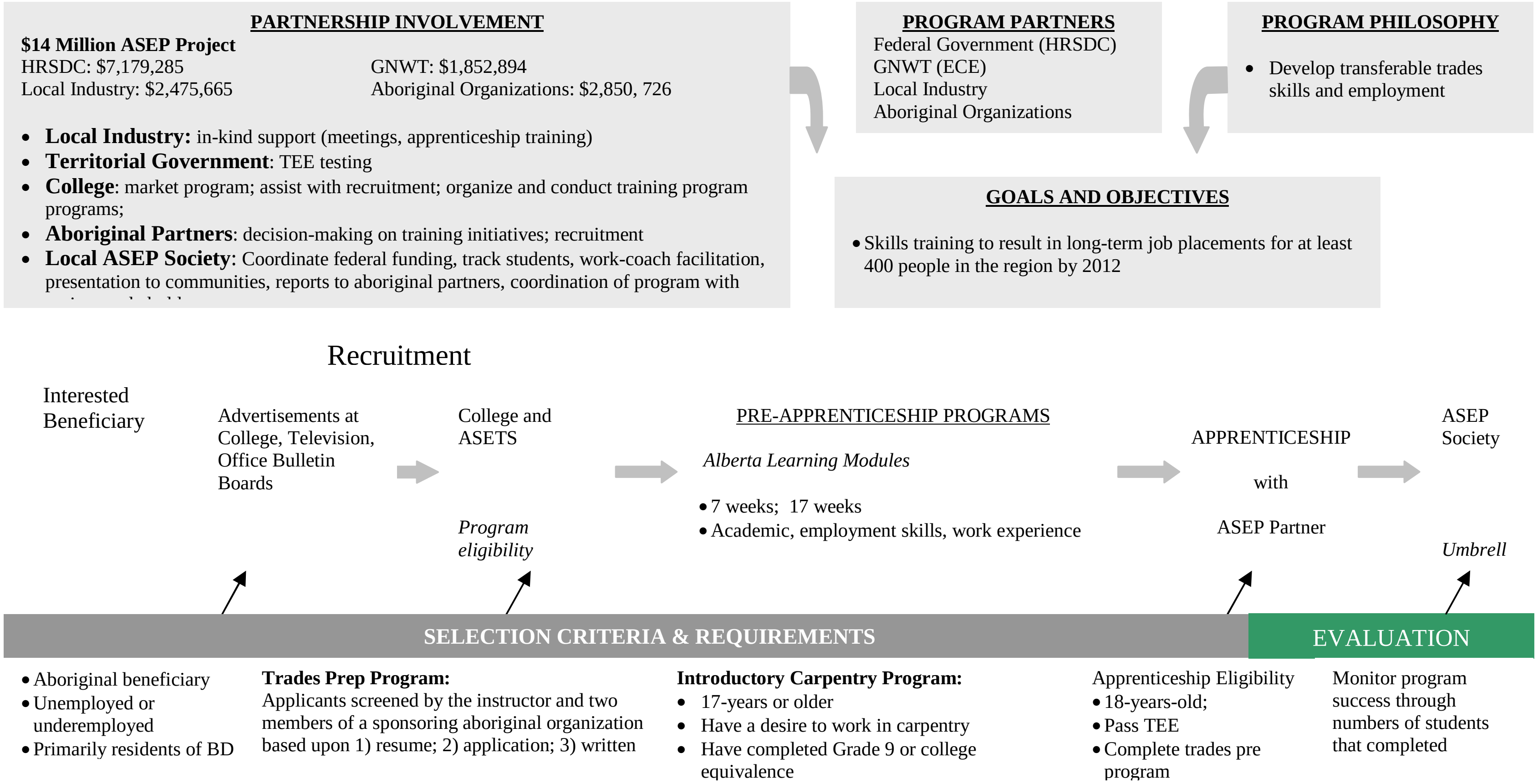
- Second drug/alcohol test and criminal record check
- Class 5 Driver’s license within one year of employment

EVALUATION

- Project coordinator (college) will coordinate with students, AHRDAs, and employers employment information
- Reports: 3 & 6 months after program completion

APPENDIX N

Beaufort Delta Program Map



PARTNERSHIP INVOLVEMENT

$14 Million ASEP Project

HRSDC: $7,179,285	GNWT: $1,852,894
Local Industry: $2,475,665	Aboriginal Organizations: $2,850, 726

- **Local Industry:** in-kind support (meetings, apprenticeship training)
- **Territorial Government**: TEE testing
- **College**: market program; assist with recruitment; organize and conduct training program programs;
- **Aboriginal Partners**: decision-making on training initiatives; recruitment
- **Local ASEP Society**: Coordinate federal funding, track students, work-coach facilitation, presentation to communities, reports to aboriginal partners, coordination of program with

PROGRAM PARTNERS

Federal Government (HRSDC)
GNWT (ECE)
Local Industry
Aboriginal Organizations

PROGRAM PHILOSOPHY

- Develop transferable trades skills and employment

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

- Skills training to result in long-term job placements for at least 400 people in the region by 2012

Recruitment

Interested Beneficiary

Advertisements at College, Television, Office Bulletin Boards

College and ASETS

Program eligibility

PRE-APPRENTICESHIP PROGRAMS

Alberta Learning Modules

- 7 weeks; 17 weeks
- Academic, employment skills, work experience

APPRENTICESHIP

with

ASEP Partner

ASEP Society

Umbrell

SELECTION CRITERIA & REQUIREMENTS

EVALUATION

- Aboriginal beneficiary
- Unemployed or underemployed
- Primarily residents of BD

Trades Prep Program:
Applicants screened by the instructor and two members of a sponsoring aboriginal organization based upon 1) resume; 2) application; 3) written

Introductory Carpentry Program:
- 17-years or older
- Have a desire to work in carpentry
- Have completed Grade 9 or college equivalence

Apprenticeship Eligibility
- 18-years-old;
- Pass TEE
- Complete trades pre program

Monitor program success through numbers of students that completed