IMPLEMENTING
INDIAN CONTROL OF EDUCATION
IN
SANDY LAKE, ONTARIO

A Thesis
Submitted to the College of Graduate Studies
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the degree of
Master of Education
in the
Indian and Northern Education Program
College of Education
University of Saskatchewan

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ABSTRACT

Sandy Lake, a reserve in North-Western Ontario, wished to assume control of its educational system, as many Canadian Indian bands had done since the federal government adopted the policy presented by the National Indian Brotherhood in 1972 calling for Indian Control of Indian Education. That policy advocated parental involvement in education and control of education for Indian children by Indian people.

This research focused on the requirements for successful implementation of Indian control of Indian Education. It reviewed implementation in two other Indian Bands and investigated the current state of readiness of the Sandy Lake Band, through interviews with community residents. It analyzed the positive forces within the community that could assist Sandy Lake Band in the take-over process as well as the negative forces that must be overcome.

Some members of the community were interested and anxious to take control of education. They were confident that Sandy Lake Band members had the required desire and ability to do so. Generally, there was increased community interest in having children do well in school, and parental support for improved and locally run school services. Several Indian teachers
on staff had proven beneficial as role models, and
their presence had increased community satisfaction
with the curriculum, programming, and daily
administration of the school on the Reserve.

However, the majority of community members could
not perceive the magnitude nor implications of the
change to Indian control of their education. Residents
had limited comprehension of the present system and a
scarcity of skills required to make the change. There
was no agreement on the purpose of education and long
term goals were not defined. Those residents
interviewed were uncomfortable with the lack of local
financial stability and saw the negative impact of
mixing politics with education. Sandy Lake's isolation
from other reserves and other support systems hampered
steady progress towards take-over of the education
system.

Implementation will require a firm commitment from
the community to proceed within a specific time frame
and commitment from dedicated individuals to ensure
completion of this project. Stringent work plans,
financial controls, and accountability procedures will
have to be created. A community philosophy of
education and long and short term goals will have to be
developed. A dramatic increase in communication within
the community is imperative. Community members will need to contribute their time, energy, and wisdom in order to make this change a success.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The positive side effects of doing this research were as beneficial to me as working through the process itself. I valued the time, knowledge, and friendship that people offered; they went beyond what was requested of them.

My senior advisor, Dr. Cecil King, always found time for me when I needed it. He taught me when to laugh at myself, - a wonderful skill to have. Professor Audie Dyer, a non-Indian elder in the true Indian sense, had that wonderful overview that kept my daily world in perspective. Dr. Earle Newton, the "Change" man, gave me concrete skills useful in my personal life, as well as in my career. Dr. Del Koenig rescued me from a number of lethal situations. Dr. Werner Stephan extended his support most freely.

Above all, I thank the people of Sandy Lake for their patience and cooperation and for being themselves. My biggest challenge in life is to give to them as much as I have received from them over the years. Indeed, the community and its aura has been a great and rewarding influence on my life.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ABSTRACT</td>
<td>i</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACKNOWLEDGMENTS</td>
<td>iv</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I. INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purpose</td>
<td>05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Definitions</td>
<td>06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assumptions</td>
<td>09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delimitations</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limitations</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Interpretation of &quot;Local Control&quot;</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluations of Locally Controlled Education Systems</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local Control at Tobique</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Success of Chapel Island</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Major Difficulties for Bands Desiring Local Control</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Process of Change</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III. THE SITUATION AT SANDY LAKE</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV. PROCEDURES</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nature of Inquiry</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methodology</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Interviewees</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conduct of Interviews</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Summary ................................................. 67

V. FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS ............................... 68
Changes in the Last Decade ......................... 68
The Meaning of Local Control ..................... 82
Local Discussion of the Issue ..................... 83
Support for Local Control ......................... 83
Advantages of Local Control ...................... 84
Problems Anticipated with Local Control .... 85
Maximizing Strengths and Neutralizing Weaknesses ......................... 91
Characteristics of the Change .................... 92
Summary .................................................. 102

VI. SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS .................. 103
Background ............................................. 103
Purpose ............................................... 103
Method ................................................. 104
Indian Control in Other Locations .............. 104
Findings .............................................. 106
Insights .............................................. 110
Recommendations .................................... 110
Additional Research .................................. 114
Conclusion .......................................... 115

APPENDIX ................................................. 116

REFERENCES CITED .................................... 120
INTERVIEWS ............................................. 123
FIGURES

1. Relationship between Provincial and Local Education Systems .......... 13
2. Relationship between Federal Government and Indian Education ........ 15
3. The Client and the Traditional Public Bureaucracy ...................... 17
4. The Democratized Bureaucracy ............................................. 19
5. INAC View of Local Control ................................................. 20
6. Indian Control Parallel to that of a Provincial School System ........... 21
7. A Simplified Overview of the Change Process .............................. 43
CHART

1. Force Field Analysis .......................... 93
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Sample Time Frame</th>
<th>112</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

x
Chapter I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter introduces the rationale for the study. It presents a statement of the problem, the purpose of the research and the parameters under which the work was conducted.

For a long time, Indian people of Canada have wanted to regain control of their destiny. Their request for self-determination was most audible during the talks preceding the signing of the Constitution Act in 1982 and the Federal-Provincial Constitutional Conferences in the ensuing years. The "Penner" Report released in November 1983 by a special parliamentary committee on Indian self-government had major ramifications for Indian people across the country. It supported the concept of Indian self-government, and in doing so, strengthened Indian peoples' desire to govern their own affairs. The people of the reserve in Sandy Lake, Ontario were monitoring these developments to discern the implications for their own future.

While the demand for Indian control of Indian education in Canada became vocal after 1972, the desire had been present for a much longer period of time. One of the events that led Indians to call for local control was a design formulated by the Federal
government in 1948 entitled "A Policy for Liquidating Canada's Indian Problem." The thrust of this plan was to "abolish the separate political and social status of the Indian; to enfranchise them and merge them into the rest of the population on an equal footing" (INAC, 1983, p. 10). This process would be facilitated by having the education system of the day abolished and "Indian children placed in the regular Provincial schools, subject to all Provincial regulations" (p. 11).

Over the next twenty years, the government proceeded to gradually implement this policy. In education, they undertook action to sign Capital and Tuition Agreements with Provincial School Boards. There was little or no input from the Indian communities involved.

The impetus for local control of education had come from events both north and south of the ten Canadian provinces. In Arizona, U.S.A. in the late 1960s, the Bureau of Indian Affairs of the government of the United States had transferred operating funds to a local corporate Navajo group which was given "total responsibility for running the school as they wished, without accountability to anyone else" (King, 1978, p. 38). The result was the formation of the Rough Rock
Demonstration School in Chinle, Arizona. This was a first effort towards local control of Indian education.

Also during the late 1960s, a change in the government of the Northwest Territories of Canada led to altered patterns of schooling. A new set of policies allowed a local community to assume the same type of responsibility as the Rough Rock group had acquired. In 1973, Rae Edzo became the first Canadian Indian community to assume control of its schooling (King, 1978).

Indians did react with a strong vocal response to the announcement of the "White Paper" in 1969. This government policy proposed repealing the Indian Act, transferring responsibilities for Indians to the provinces, and dissolving the Government department responsible for Indian people (Federation of Saskatchewan Indians, 1975). It appeared that the 1948 policy was in fact being enacted in the 1969 government plan.

Indian opposition to the educational aspects of the "White Paper" culminated in the paper "Indian Control of Indian Education" (National Indian Brotherhood, 1972). The basic position of this paper called for a return to parental responsibility for Indian education and identified a need for local
control of education. The paper was presented by representatives of the National Indian Brotherhood to the Minister of Indian Affairs in 1971 and was adopted by the Government of Canada in 1972.

Although agreement was achieved between the National Indian Brotherhood (NIB) and Department of Indian and Northern Affairs (DIA) to work towards Indian control of Indian education in 1972, adequate policy definition, procedural structures and funding channels were not developed. Guidelines were initiated during the mid 1970s for INAC staff to clarify policies, but final drafts did not materialize (INAC, 1982). A large gap formed between expectations and reality (Audit Services Bureau, 1979). Bands who moved ahead in piloting local control did so with a minimum of expertise, meagre awareness of how to implement change, and unrealistic expectations of the results. In consequence, the degree of success of local control varied greatly across Canada.

In the Sioux Lookout district of Northwestern Ontario where Sandy Lake is located, as of June, 1988, only one of the 23 Bands had taken control of its school. Several Bands took control commencing September, 1988. A few more were considering the implementation of local control in 1989.
In June, 1984, Sandy Lake formed a committee to investigate the possibilities for assuming control of the staff and program at its local school, Thomas Fiddler Memorial School, (formerly Northern Star School). The committee was instructed to research advances made by other Bands and to take preliminary steps to determine the advisability of local control for Sandy Lake. Over the years, the membership of the committee fluctuated as members became involved in other activities. The committee’s activities centred on the discussion of issues. There was limited contact with other Bands who had taken control and limited inquiry into procedures necessary for take-over. There were few role models of other Bands similar in size or degree of isolation who had taken control of their education systems. The lack of experience by all Sioux Lookout area Bands made the process of assuming control more difficult. Sandy Lake had limited awareness of the current educational and community situation that would influence implementation of local control and there were few guidelines to follow during implementation of local control.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this research was (a) to determine
the positive and negative factors affecting the implementation of local control in Sandy Lake, (b) to analyze the factors in order to derive maximum benefit from community strengths and to minimize the impact of weaknesses, and (c) to devise a strategy that Sandy Lake could use to implement local control of education.

Definitions

Some terms used in this study had a specific legal definition, and yet were commonly used with an alternate connotation. Where indicated, terms were clarified in an operational sense as used in this research.

**Indian.** An Indian is a person who "is registered as an Indian or is entitled to be registered as an Indian" (Government of Canada, 1985, p. 2). Nearly all the people living in Sandy Lake were Treaty Indians. INAC assumed financial responsibility for education of Indian children. Education was also supplied for the child who, through adoption, might not be registered, but whose adoptive family was under the auspices of INAC.

**Band.** A Band is "a body of Indians for whose use and benefit land, the legal title to which is vested in her Majesty, have been set apart before, on, or after,
Indian Education. For purposes of this study, Indian education is the process of learning that occurs during the period of formal instruction, usually occurring in a school setting.

Indian Control. In an operational sense, the term "Indian control" means control of education locally by Sandy Lake Band.

Local Control. Meaningful local control includes not only financial control but also, and more importantly, managerial control.

Administrative control. For purposes of this study, administrative control is largely financial control where the Band receives money to administer a program.

Managerial control. Managerial control is considered to be where the Band (a) sets its own goals and objectives, standards, and criteria, (b) has a means of evaluating results, (c) can analyze shortcomings, and (d) can take corrective action on the above (Audit Services Bureau, 1979).

INAC. Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, formerly the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs (DIA or DIAND) is the Federal Department responsible
for the education and general welfare of Canadian Indians.

**AFN.** The Assembly of First Nations, formerly the National Indian Brotherhood (NIB), is the organization representing the majority of Canadian Indians at the Federal level.

**NNEC.** Northern Nishnawbe Education Council is the organization representing amalgamated School Committees in the Sioux Lookout district of Northwestern Ontario.

**Adoption.** Adoption is a stage in the process of take-over of education. It is the time leading up to, and including the decision to assume local control.

**Implementation.** The implementation of local control includes the proceeding with activities that would make local control become a reality. It is the period of time between when the Band adopts a resolution to proceed with local control and when local control becomes an integral part of the educational system. This period requires from one to three years to complete.

**Success.** In an operational sense, the concept of "success" encompasses the positive feelings of the Indian people towards their own educational system and whether or not it was meeting the community's needs and expectations, and the scrutiny of INAC.
Force Field Analysis. This is a method of analyzing the strengths and weaknesses of a situation which would reflect on attempts to bring about change. The goal of utilizing this technique is to offer suggestions on how to maximize positive forces and minimize negative ones.

Assumptions

In conducting the study reported here, the following assumptions were made:

1. It was assumed that local control of education would be a positive alternative to the traditional non-native method of educating Indian people.

2. It was assumed that local control would be a desirable alternative as one step towards self-determination, a state recognized as being essential to improve Indian people's quality of life.

3. Because local control was a concept advocated by the National Indian Brotherhood, a group considered to be at the time the broadest voice in Canada for Indian people, it was assumed that Sandy Lake would, in its own time, choose to implement local control of education.

4. In addition, it was assumed that the respondents involved in the study were adequately
representative of community members.

**Delimitations**

1. This study was delimited to describing the impending transfer of education from the current INAC jurisdiction to local control in Sandy Lake, Ontario.

2. The information gained from interviews pertained expressly to the community of Sandy Lake, Ontario.

3. Implementation of local control was proposed only for those grades already in existence in Sandy Lake.

4. Literary research centred upon information about two Canadian Indian Bands with similarities to Sandy Lake who had assumed local control of education.

5. The focus of investigation was on the managerial aspects of local control as opposed to either the administrative or financial aspects.

**Limitations**

The study was limited by:

1. the amount of time that the researcher was able to spend gathering information within the community;

2. the financial constraints which limited
visitations to Sandy Lake and other relevant communities;

3. the small number of interviews with community members;

4. the abilities of a non-Indian researcher to precisely interpret and analyze the information provided by respondents of Indian background.

Summary

For over a decade, various groups have agreed that self control is a vital step toward improving Indian education across the country. Sandy Lake, Ontario is a reserve that has not yet attempted the challenge of implementing local control but is anticipating this change soon. This research was an attempt to increase the knowledge available about the community itself and the process necessary to ensure successful implementation of Indian Control of Indian Education.
Chapter II
REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This chapter reviewed the literature in terms of the difficulties a Band could anticipate in assuming control of its educational system, which procedures had been utilized by other Bands in preparing for local control of education, the degree of effectiveness of these procedures, and the positive and negative outcomes of taking control of education.

The Interpretation of "Local Control"

According to Bargen (1977), there were two meanings for the term "local control". In the political sense, it meant "the right or condition of self government" (p. 5). In the philosophical sense, it referred to "ethical self determination of the will - the power of self control, independent of external influences" (p. 6). Bargen argued that the philosophical sense of the word was inapplicable in terms of educational governance, because that would mean freedom from others for financial support and freedom from interdependence with other groups. For example, the people of Sandy Lake, Ontario, recognized that because they wanted their school graduates to continue at a higher level in the provincial system.
the local curriculum could be changed only to the extent that it manoeuvred within provincial guidelines (P. Goodman, 1985).

Local control of any educational system under provincial jurisdiction was a matter of degree. While it might appear that a community, town, or city had control of its own education system, there were extenuating factors. At the local level, citizens elected representatives to a local school board. Citizens financed the local portion of school costs through income and property tax. The Board of

![Diagram](image)

**FIGURE #1**: Relationship between Provincial and Local Education Systems (the author).
Education members were accountable to the electorate for their policy and financial decisions (see Figure 1).

Similarly, citizens elected the provincial members of legislature. The Legislature oversaw the Department of Education, whose activities were financed through provincial land and income taxes. The provincial Department of Education policies were outlined in the Education Act.

A town or city received educational funding through grants from the provincial government and through collection of local taxes. To obtain these grants, a school jurisdiction had to abide by the regulations provided within the Education Act. The amount of local control over education was therefore limited to movement within provincial education guidelines.

Proponents of Indian self-government were debating whether Indians were accountable for federal education funding. Some considered that money allocated for education was part of the rent money negotiated by Indians and the government through the Treaties, and was therefore not liable to governmental scrutiny. Others felt that under the British North America Act, the Federal government was responsible for Indians'
welfare, including their education (see Figure 2).

Figure 2. Relationship Between Federal Government and Indian Education (the author).

Since the money to run INAC programs came largely from taxes collected from the general populace, parliament, as the representative decision making body of the government, was accountable to the electorate for policy and financial decisions. If this view were accepted, an Indian community could not have total local control of education until it had an economic base solid enough to raise its own financial requirements (Connors, 1984).

The degree of autonomy of a local Band had been challenged in the case of the Fort Alexander Band in Manitoba where the Band refused to comply with a
Federal Department of Labour ruling declaring that four teachers were unjustly released from their duties and must be reinstated. The Band did not appeal the Labour Board ruling because the Chief and Council felt that by appealing the ruling, the Band would be accepting the fact that the Labour Board had some authority over Band decisions. The Band considered that the Department of Labour had no control over the Band (Moloney, 1984). The educational aspect of this issue became a pawn in the area of local self-government with Band members attempting to gain sovereignty and control over all aspects of their own lives, including education (Martin, 1984).

The Indian concept of Indian control of Indian education was stated in the National Indian Brotherhood position paper of 1972. According to this document, INAC affirmed that the local education authority was responsible for (a) establishing educational priorities and budgets, (b) hiring of staff, (c) developing and directing the program, (d) administering on-Reserve physical plants, (e) evaluating programs on and off Reserve, (f) providing counselling services, (g) reviewing existing agreements and negotiating new agreements with provincial or civic authorities, and (h) being involved in staff training processes (Indian
and Northern Affairs Canada, 1982). According to the Federation of Saskatchewan Indians (1975), a problem arose because Governments changed at the wish of the electorate. The process of coming to acceptable agreements and understandings between Bands and INAC would often have to be repeated as new politicians and
staff entered positions of power in governmental circles.

The Indian people understand what they mean by each article of the policy, but they do not know if the Government and Department officials understand what they mean" (p. 6).

Previous to 1973, the structure of INAC could be described as a typical bureaucracy, where Parliament ratified the policies set forth by a Federal Department. These policies were disseminated to a similar department at the regional level which in turn supervised the district level in implementing the policies for the people or clients at the local level (see Figure 3).

Although Jean Chretien, the Minister of INAC in 1972, adopted the NIB Policy Paper in total, there were some questions as to how he and INAC interpreted what he was adopting. He made such comments as:

The Department desires to work constructively with Indian communities on a partnership basis . . . which places the majority of responsibility for educational decisions and directions in the hands of the Indian community (FSI, 1975, p. 69).

What INAC was agreeing to may be compared to a bureaucracy with an element of democratization added. The people for whom the service would be intended would have some input on all levels of government either
through advisory boards or direct representation. However, they would not control any levels in the organization (see Figure 4).

From Indian and Northern Affairs General Transfer Policy (INAC, 1987), it appeared that INAC might even relinquish the majority of control to form its
"partnership" basis, with the Department acting in an advisory capacity and eventually maintaining a monitoring role as self-government became a reality (Figure 5).

There was no indication in the original NIB policy paper that Indians wished to be involved "on a partnership basis" with INAC. Nor did Indians indicate that they would like to assume only "the majority of
responsibility for decisions and directions in education" (FSI, 1975, p. 69). There was, therefore, some difference in interpretation between the Indian version and the INAC version of "Indian control of Indian education".

![Diagram of Indian Control Parallel to that of a Provincial School System](image)

Figure 6. Indian Control Parallel to that of a Provincial School System (the author).

The current perception of INAC was explained in its 1982 paper which stated:

"Indian control" or "local control" is a concept which acknowledges the right of Indian people to determine the nature of their distinctive education systems (a) in a manner similar to that enjoyed by all Canadians, and (b) using a process analogous to the relationship which exists between a Provincial Department of Education and a Local School Board (p. 29).
If one considered the locally controlled education authority to be parallel to a Provincial School Board, it might be assumed that INAC would be similar to a Provincial Department of Education (Figure 6). This model would provide for policy making at a variety of levels, but would not assure policy control at the local level.

According to the Federation of Saskatchewan Indians, Indian control should not mean either Indians running INAC programs or the Federal bureaucracy being extended to the Band level. However, this often appeared to be the case. While Bands seemed to have had partial or full control of their schools, conducting such activities as paying teachers, ordering supplies, and running the school on a day to day basis, they were simply administering services through "arrangements" signed by the Band Council and INAC (Federation of Saskatchewan Indians, 1984). The Audit Services Bureau revealed that responsibility and jurisdiction still remained with INAC. Program objectives were often set by INAC, and program delivery was monitored and evaluated by INAC. There was no funding available for Bands to explore or develop philosophies or practical alternatives to their educational systems. Further, Bands used INAC
financial reporting forms, indicating their accountability to INAC. The role, therefore had been administrative where the Band looked after programs created by INAC, rather than managerial, where the Band created and ran its own policies and programs (Audit Services Bureau, 1979).

Kirkness (1976) affirmed that "Indian people were/are permitted involvement but not control" (p. 7). She added, "What Indian people referred to as Indian Controlled Schools soon became known by the Department of Indian Affairs as Band-operated schools" (p. 8). She differentiated between operating a school and controlling it. To operate meant to manage or to keep in operation. To control was to have power over, or to exercise direct influence on something. The difference was important in understanding why communications broke down between INAC and Indian Bands and why implementation of local control moved at such a slow pace.

Evaluations of Locally Controlled Education Systems

There have been few thorough evaluations conducted of Indian Band controlled educational systems in terms of how effective the implementation process was, and to what extent the new system was meeting the Band's
needs. Two studies with relevance to the Sandy Lake situation were done by Hamilton and Owston on Tobique Reserve (1982) and Chapel Island Reserve (1983).

Local Control At Tobique

When the Chief and Council of Tobique Indian Reserve in New Brunswick requested that an evaluation of their school be conducted, the school was in a state of disarray. In 1975, the Band had enthusiastically assumed control over its education system with a new school building as one of the bonuses. By 1977, authority for the school had been returned to INAC. The Band had been unable to effectively exercise control. Hamilton and Owston (1982) explored why local control had failed and offered alternative directions for the Band to pursue if it wished to resume control over the educational system. Initially, it appeared that the people of Tobique had qualities that would be an asset to them in their desire to assume control of education. "The people of the community are thinking people, tending towards individualism, not all of whom have been content to settle for whatever type of educational establishment happened to emerge in their midst" (p. iv). The propensity of not being satisfied with someone else's programs, and desiring something
better soon became a liability as the community members became so individualistic that they were unable to agree on solutions to negative situations that arose. "It got to the point where questions were answered with threats" (p. 14). People were unable to resolve personality clashes; strong differences of opinion dominated education meetings.

The Chief and Council took the brunt of the blame for the conflict. They had the decision making power, with the School Committee being mainly a liaison between the school and the Band Council. The general feeling of parents, teachers, and Band members interviewed was that the Chief and Councillors abused their power. One person commented that the Chief was "totally irresponsible and thoughtless" (p. 16) about how he used his power. People reiterated that one-man management was not positive, that the Chief was not interested in education, and that politics and education should not be mixed.

Communication between all factions was limited. Teachers reported that the principal had no opportunity to voice opinions. The principal at the time of the evaluation reported that letters that he sent to the Chief and Council remained unanswered. His advice was rarely sought, and when he volunteered ideas, they were
ignored. The principal was not invited to attend School Committee meetings; nor was he included during staff hiring procedures or budget preparation.

The situation was jeopardized by the first principal under local control who abandoned his post without leave during the first year of operation. The turnover of principal and teachers from that time until 1982 was abnormally high. Respondents in Hamilton and Owston's study felt that this was due to unsatisfactory hiring practices, and to internal factors once the staff was in school.

Hamilton and Owston (1982) observed that lack of communication extended to the general public. The people in the community apparently did not understand the school system and no attempt was made to rectify this situation. The school closed at the end of the school day; community use of the school after hours was not encouraged.

Hamilton and Owston (1982) recorded a variety of complaints from community members about the operation of the school itself. Community members cited lack of discipline, a weak administration, lack of specialist services and equipment, and poor academic standards within the school. Respondents to the Hamilton and Owston (1982) inquiries felt that the teachers had low
qualifications, although at the time of the survey all eight of the full-time teachers on staff had Bachelor of Education degrees, and six of the eight were Indians.

To express their discontent and lack of confidence in the school, parents removed nearly half the children and placed them in the near-by school under provincial jurisdiction. This withdrawal compounded the problem because the number of students diminished to the point where it was no longer economically feasible to operate the school.

In voicing their opinions, the teachers commented to Hamilton and Owston (1982) that they felt the parents lacked confidence in the school. They maintained that many parents were hypercritical of the teachers, especially the Indian ones, while other parents appeared unconcerned about their children's education. The teachers admitted that they tended to form cliques and to communicate poorly. They felt insecure and discouraged, and recognized their need for more professional assistance.

Hamilton and Owston (1982) observed that in retrospect, community members realized that a lack of preparation time in assuming control had been a mistake. Band members lacked qualifications and
expertise to assume control so quickly; little time was spent on training participants for the new roles that they were to assume. As a result, problems appeared more quickly than they could be resolved. People requiring decision making skills did not have the opportunity to develop them.

The philosophy of education that had been developed on the Reserve before the opening of the school was unrelated to the Band's capabilities. Emphasis in the philosophy had been placed on the school being "an instrument for restoring pride in culture and for expressing and preserving the Maliseet heritage" (Hamilton and Owston, 1982, p.3). At the time the philosophy had been created, some people felt that "'Indianness' was taking precedence over basic education as a curricular priority" (p. 50). However, the dreams of making the school the Band's "meeting place of its past and its future" (p. 3) as stated in the original philosophy seemed to the authors somewhat utopian. In 1982, there was not even a cultural program in the school.

During Hamilton and Owston's (1982) research, members of the Tobique band made a tour to Eskasoni Reserve, Nova Scotia, where take-over of education had been a satisfying experience. Tobique residents noted
that the Eskasoni take-over had been implemented "in a studied methodical way. "It had been$ effected under the supervision of a professional employee of the Department of Indian Affairs ... on secondment to the Band as Band Education Director, and "it had$ involved the negotiation of a detailed written agreement between the Department and the Band which is available as a reference document to any other Band" (p. 11). The Tobique participants in the tour felt that if this approach had been followed in their own take-over planning, the chances of success might have improved.

During the course of the evaluation, Band members also visited Alkali Lake near Williams Lake in British Columbia where a Shuswap Indian Band had effective control over its own school. The guests noted that:

....the Band Education Authority (or school board), which functions independently (de facto) of the Chief and Council, has operational responsibility for curriculum, staffing, budget, and the development of education policy; that effective communication and maximum community participation are achieved goals of the Authority; and that the Principal of the school is the main interlocutor among pupils, parents, teachers, and the Education Authority (p.11).

This success reinforced Tobique community members' decision to request that no direct involvement in school affairs be played by the Chief and Council, even
in setting the school budget if the Band were to attempt another transfer to local control.

Hamilton and Owston recommended that a proposed new board be:

....an elected board, the membership of which would include the Chief of the Band (or his designate) as an ex-officio voting member and a designated number of other members elected from among the eligible candidates offering for office, none of whom, however, could be full-time employees of the Board or members of the Band Council while also serving on the school board (p. 41).

There were other areas that Hamilton and Owston (1982) felt that the Band should review before it attempted to take control of education again. Their recommendations included (a) that extensive training be conducted with the Chief and Council, the school staff, the School Committee, Band members wishing to become qualified to serve on an elected school board, and other interested Band members, and (b) that the public be educated about the planned take-over before the Band committed itself, so that an informed vote might be taken to determine whether or not the community wished to assume control. It was recommended that a team of people be trained to discuss implications of education take-over on a door to door basis throughout the community.
The Chief, Council, and members of the Tobique Band were commended for allowing outside evaluators to assess their educational system when it was not in a satisfactory condition. They allowed other Bands across Canada to read of their experiences so that the pitfalls that they encountered might be avoided.

The Success of Chapel Island

To counterbalance the disappointing experiences of the Tobique Band was the experience of the Chapel Island Band in Nova Scotia. This Band assumed control of a new school housing grades 1-6 in September, 1981. By the end of the first year, the Band was so enthusiastic about what it had accomplished that it requested an evaluation in order that "the factors contributing to our success should be clearly identified so that what we may have struck upon to some extent by chance or instinct can be perpetuated through sound planning for the future" (Hamilton and Owston, 1983, p. 19). The positive tone of the request indicated one of the strengths of the community; it tended to expand on areas of positive growth rather than dwell on weaknesses or inadequacies.

When Hamilton and Owston (1983) evaluated the situation in the community, they found an independent
minded group of people. "adamant concerning their rights, and ... determined to acquire (through education) 'the tools of the oppressor'" (p. 8). There appeared to be a greater degree of self-respect and determination than was sometimes found in similar situations. Although high unemployment and social assistance were as prevalent as in other communities, the area had retained its dignity by not succumbing to the negative effects of alcohol or violence. The importance of the family structure had been maintained, and there was a spiritual strength that united people in common goals.

The community had high expectations for its children and their education. A community profile written in 1977-78 indicated:

Education is highly stressed in the community, and sanctions are brought to bear on students who either drop out or fail to achieve satisfactory academic progress. Education is recognized by the majority as a means to improve the calibre of native life-style in future generations, and this attitude in turn influences children on the Reserve, who enjoy a high level of academic achievement in comparison with general Indian academic progress (p. 10).

The community had spent some time thinking about its priorities and had come to some degree of consensus on common goals.

Hopes for children's futures had been keenly
articulated in a philosophy determined before the take-over of education had been implemented. "Most parents appear to want the Mi'kmawey School to prepare children for life off the Reserve" (p. 33). At the same time, people indicated that they expected the school to introduce the Micmac language and culture so that it gained a degree of significance. It was reported that these wishes were positively interpreted by the staff. Teachers took the position that:

...in order for children to be ready to move beyond the borders of the Reserve they must be fully at home at Chapel Island. This means that they need to feel comfortable working and playing in two languages and in two cultures (p. 156).

By consolidating community aspirations, articulating them ahead of time, and supporting teachers in their efforts to implement the community's wishes, the members of Chapel Island had insured that their wishes would be incorporated in the school program as a continuing process.

This aura of self confidence was also a reflection of the adult population. The adults chose to amplify the positive aspects rather than beleaguer the negative, as indicated in their initial request for an evaluation. This was also illustrated in their initial preparations to assume control. Although interviews
with individuals indicated a lot of dissatisfaction when the children were attending the near-by provincial school, arguments advocating local control expressed in the community profile were all positive ones.

The Band Council had found a satisfying compromise of obtaining an Education Authority that would represent the priorities of the Band Council, and yet would give community members some direct power to choose representatives. Its policy stated:

The Education Committee will be comprised of (5) members who reside on the Chapel Island Reserve; two (2) members to be appointed by the Band Council, three (3) elected by the Band members (p. 194).

The open communication that existed at Chapel Island was reflected in the way in which those in power requested input from community members.

The Band expressed particular concern in knowing the career and life expectations the parents have for their children, the role language and culture should play in curriculum and instruction, and the community view of discipline (p. 31).

Personnel at the school made a conscious effort to involve parents in happenings at the school by inviting them to special events and leaving an open door policy. However, the evaluators noted that, while communication between home and school was very open, the actual amount of real involvement of parents was limited. As
parents indicated that they were interested in becoming involved, administrators were challenged in the report to utilize parents to a greater degree.

When community members were interviewed, they were generally satisfied with the staff at the school, and although some people indicated they would have preferred an Indian coordinator, it was more out of principle rather than any specific dissatisfaction with the individual involved. It was generally apparent that, because the Band council was committed to the project, because the staff cooperated, and because community members supported attempts that were made, the resulting school system was most successful. Everyone acknowledged that the system was not perfect, but felt that attempts were being made to make a good thing even better, and to determine ways of insuring that the momentum would not be lost.

Hamilton and Owston (1983) did find that only limited job descriptions had been set down on paper, and no rules and regulations for the school personnel or for conduct of the school had been finalized. This omission led to the possible confusion between, for example, the responsibilities of the Chairperson of the Education Authority and the Coordinator. The authors of the evaluation recommended the development of a
handbook that would set down the rules and regulations for the school.

In addition, Hamilton and Owston (1983) recommended that some contacts be maintained with the provincial system to insure that provincial standards were maintained, and to act as a support system. They also recommended that INAC sponsor an educational leadership training program on the Reserve for those involved in educational matters.

**Major Difficulties for Bands Desiring Local Control**

The situations at Tobique and Chapel Island as analyzed by Hamilton and Owston illustrated the problems encountered by two specific bands. In addition, there were broader issues causing concern to the majority of bands anticipating the change to Indian control of education.

**Legality.** The Indian Act limited the Minister of Indian Affairs in entering agreements to transfer responsibility for Indian education. He could enter into agreements with provincial governments, public or separate school boards, religious or charitable organizations, but he was not authorized to transfer educational responsibility to Indian Bands. The current authority under which Indian Bands administered
education funds came from the Treasury Board Minutes. The current legislation in this area did not enable a Band to write its own Education Act, determine its own philosophy, goals, objectives, or policies (Kirkness, 1976).

**Funding.** Problems with funding had been the most contentious issue between INAC and Band education authorities. When the 1973 policy was approved, it was done on the basis that no additional costs would be incurred during or after implementation (INAC, 1982). Federal funding levels for education had traditionally been lower than similar provincial levels, despite additional handicaps due to geographic isolation and economic hardships. This fact established an impossible situation for Bands attempting to create programs on a par with provincial standards (Filipovich, 1985). Bands were forced to agree to funding on a federal formula tied to policies of fiscal restraint, rather than related to the actual cost of services essential in a quality education system.

**School Size.** Problems associated with limited funding were compounded when schools were small and isolated. Band school enrolments in Sioux Lookout district ranged from 30 to over 400 students. When Indian and Northern Affairs operated the schooling
system, it could recruit staff and order supplies more cheaply due to economy of scale (Connor, 1984). However, when Band schools under local control individually did the same activities, the cost was considerably higher.

Small schools also meant a challenge to communities which wished to offer high school grades and additional options in the home community. In northern Saskatchewan, small schools under the provincial school system ranged from 358 students with 22 teachers teaching Kindergarten to Grade 12 in Sandy Bay, to 81 students with 5 teachers teaching Kindergarten to Grade 10 in Stony Rapids (Saskatchewan Education, 1984). Parents wanted their teenagers at home rather than in an urban environment for their high school years. However, this meant stretching dollars and expertise to meet the needs of relatively small numbers of high school students.

School buildings and facilities. There was a fear of Bands inheriting inadequate utility systems and physical facilities at the time of take-over. Construction standards had not been on a par with provincial standards. Maintenance management systems were not in place. Capital project money was running 10-12 years behind requirements; in many areas, repairs
were abandoned because of impending Federal Provincial joint school agreements (Kerr, 1986). An additional hurdle was how to get facilities up to par, especially when maintenance and construction were not controlled by the education section of INAC.

**Tuition costs.** In the past, some agreements had been made between the Federal government and provincial government whereby students attended a provincial school off-reserve. Where these joint tuition agreements had been in place, they took priority over needs for funding at the Reserve school. The Band Authority had only the money remaining after tuition costs for students attending school on the Reserve, and in the past, allotments to various Bands differed (FS1, 1975).

**Lack of transfer methodology.** By 1982, no transfer process had been created to assist Bands in taking over control or to assist INAC officials in relinquishing control (INAC, 1982, p. 39). No operational parameters existed, and Indian educational organizations had not been supported or developed to assume control. It was only in 1986 that Ontario Region produced an outline of the take-over process (INAC, 1986). There had been little consultation between the Bands and INAC officials; what had occurred
often ended in stalemates (INAC, 1982). The frustration felt by Indian people was reflected in remarks accusing INAC of "using deliberate stall tactics and creating an atmosphere of mistrust" (FSI, 1975, p. 72).

**Indian Control.** It is a challenge to interpret the meaning of the words "Indian control." According to the official view, "Indian control was not defined" (INAC, 1982, p. 3), and "perceptions of the nature of Indian control vary widely" (p. C8). When Indian people commented on this problem, they reported:

There is a gap between the level of Indian control over Indian Education, which was promised by Jean Chretien, and the degree to which the ... school can exercise independence from DIA influences (FSI, 1975, p. 73).

Decision making functions of the Council had been frustrated and blocked by the Departmental education officials (p. 81).

The ... Reserves are experiencing difficulties securing the autonomy they require (p. 89).

At the Reserve level, varying interpretations of the term "Indian Control" became a major concern. Frustrated Indian education authorities saw the problem as "the manner and nature of civil service interpretation of the policy" (p. 72), and "a lack of decision-making by the Department" (p. 88). The
discord prevented the formation of constructive solutions in determining an acceptable definition.

Bargen (1977) stated that Indian control becomes a reality for any Canadian community within the limits of our constitution when the local board can (a) hire and fire all personnel, (b) set goals and objectives, (c) determine curriculum and resource materials, (d) establish attendance zones and enrolment policies, (e) establish standards for promotion, (f) control and run the physical plant, (g) establish examination and evaluation procedures, and (h) have full control of budget decisions. Although his thinking concerned non-Indian communities, his ideas appeared congruent with desires expressed by Indian people. However, he said that all of the above concepts were ideals rather than reality.

For some Bands, local control did not mean actually running the day to day school system. Different Bands had differing needs and philosophies. In Caughnawaga, a Reserve close to Montreal, the Band had not indicated any intention of assuming control of the public school. The Band had achieved a satisfying relationship with INAC officials. Local people controlled the activities of INAC personnel and felt that INAC responded positively to their desires.
Caughnawaga felt that it controlled its educational system without running it (Deer, 1985).

Definitions of local control were, therefore, diverse. The term became defined when it met with the satisfaction of individual Bands.

The Process of Change

Change that was not initiated by local people has a more limited chance of being successful. According to Marris (1975), when change came from external sources, "whether the change is sought or resisted ... the response is characteristically ambivalent" (Fullan, 1982, p. 25). Furthermore, Marris noted, "the reformers have already assimilated these changes. If they deny others the chance to do the same, they treat them as puppets" (p. 25). It was therefore dubious as to how much benefit could be placed on transfer guidelines created by INAC for generalized use by a variety of Bands. INAC recognized this dilemma when it stated, "Goals...can not be set by others, but must spring from the community" (INAC, 1982, p. 5). As an alternative solution to generalized guidelines, INAC was then committed to supporting Sandy Lake and similar communities in their efforts to initiate and individualize the process for transfer.
The change to Indian control of education was a process requiring continuation over a period of time. There were various segments to the course of action. Zand and Sorenson (1976) described these stages as "unfreezing, moving, and refreezing" (Newton, 1983, p. 7). This view reflected a period of challenging traditional practices and contemplating changes, making the changes, and ensuring that the changes became a permanent part of the program. Fullan (1982) described the three main phases in the change process as being adoption, implementation, and continuation. The adoption stage was the time leading up to, and including the decision to assume local control of education. The time of implementation was the first two or three years of putting into practice the ideas formulated during adoption. The period labelled continuation was the refreezing period when an equilibrium was struck as the new concepts were internalized and became part of the permanent structure of the system (see Figure 7).

![Diagram of change process]

Figure 7. A Simplified Overview of the Change Process. (adopted, Fullan, 1982).
In the process of making a successful change to local control, the actual decision to adopt the change was a relatively simple procedure. It basically required a concrete indication from the Band Council, with assurances of a supportive community in agreement with the decision to proceed. The biggest challenge occurred during the implementation phase. "Desirable goals and good intentions are not sufficient. Plans and details of implementation are frequently unattended to or their importance underestimated" (Fullan, 1982, p. 22). Detailed actual processes of implementation became the important thrust to insure that the desired change became internalized. The education system for Indian students had been in existence for many years. The philosophy, goals and expectations of that system were deeply ingrained in the parents, many of whom had also experienced similar schooling. Teachers and children who were currently immersed in the system knew only that system. "The status quo is full of fixity which leaves little room for change" (Fullan, 1982, p. 37). Although people might have desired change, it was not easy for people totally immersed in one tradition to imagine an entirely different system.

Change was threatening and confusing. Fullan reiterated Marris' view when he stated that "all real
change involves loss, anxiety, and struggle" (p. 25). Both positive and negative losses could result from a single change. For example, the arrival of television in Sandy Lake, Ontario meant that parents knew where their teenagers were in the evenings, but it also meant a curtailment of square dances and other social functions vital to the traditional fibre of the community.

The anxiety involved was the fear of the unknown common to all changes in one's life-style. The struggle was that of the individual and group settling a new situation to their own satisfaction; this was a necessary component of real change.

The confusion experienced during change seemed inevitable. Fullan added that according to Schon (1971), "All real change involves passing through the zones of uncertainty ... the situation of being at sea, of being lost, of confronting more information than you can handle" (Fullan, 1982, p. 25). If there were sufficient support systems in place to insure that the process continued beyond the confusion stage, the change would become integrated into the system.

During this period of confusion, participants were prone to revert to patterns which were familiar and more comfortable. "There is a strong tendency for
people to adjust by changing as little as possible" (Fullan, p. 29). In Northern Ontario, this fear could periodically became transformed into the adage "When in doubt, do nothing". King (1981) observed this phenomenon in an INAC school switching to local control. When lacking concrete courses of action, the school returned to formerly despised routines. When consensus could not be reached on a new direction, "tendencies were to revert to known organizational patterns" (p. 65). In local control, this attitude could result in Indians running INAC programs, and at the same time considering that they had local control, while not obtaining maximum benefits that would accrue if they assumed managerial control.

A lack of expertise was a weighty handicap. Fullan (1982) noted that:

"....commitment to what should be changed often varies inversely with knowledge about how to work through a process of change (p. 82).

Large plans and vague ideas make a lethal combination (p. 102).

This tendency had been verified by Ross (1981) in his evaluation of people involved in Indian control of education across the country. He found that:

"....everyone - Band membership, Band council, education management, education administration, student teaching staff,
school support staff, and even students—required preparation in order to make local control of education a viable program (p. 36).

Ross's solution was to have many INAC personnel become knowledgeable in Indian control. INAC (1982) commented that "There has been no special effort by the Department to develop, train or employ staff with expertise in the process" (Annex F, p. 6). In addition, there was limited money available for Indian groups to train additional personnel. In some places, non-Indian INAC employees were working on secondment for Bands and administering Indian control of Indian education. This situation could not be rectified until Indian people were trained to fill the positions of responsibility.

Sarason (1971) viewed change from the standpoint of the teachers, the ones who must implement the desired changes. He noted that those considering adopting a change should clarify the current situation first.

Those who attempt to introduce change rarely, if ever, began the process by being clear as to where the teachers are, that is, how and why they think like they do (p. 197).

The result, he noted, was that teachers thought they were wrong and stupid. Defensiveness could soon
follow; if people felt defensive, they might be unwilling to encourage or implement genuine change.

Flexibility was paramount to successful change. Fullan (1982) noted that:

....innovators need to be open to the realities of others: sometimes because the ideas of others will lead to alterations for the better in the direction of change, and sometimes because the others' realities will expose the problems of implementation which must be addressed and at the very least will indicate where one should start (p. 82).

Ross (1981) verified this statement in regards to local control when he stated:

The key to good planning for a take-over process is that it must be flexible, it must be reviewed frequently and it must be changed when necessary (p. 37).

INAC agreed in theory. It advocated unique approaches by Bands to the take-over process, despite policy restrictions that prevented the implementation of these approaches (INAC, 1986).

Because change was a process, a time frame was needed to initiate new outcomes. Fullan (1982) commented that even moderately complex changes took from three to five years when one considered the time from initiation to institutionalization. He reported that, generally, changes incorporating longer time frames were more successful than those with short time
frames. In the changes studied, the median length of time for the period between the decision to adopt and the decision to start up was very short, indicating that often little time was spent planning for implementation. He noted that success appeared greater when more time was allotted for implementation to occur.

Any group contemplating change needed to decide whether change was to be implemented all at once or gradually. Fullan's (1982) sources generally agreed that gradual change had a better chance at success. "It is essential to concentrate on more manageable portions of the problem" (p. 103). Ross (1981) encouraged Bands to develop "an overall plan for the process of take-over which contains stages of achievement within established time frames" (p. 27). Sarason's (1971) experiences echoed this finding. He queried, "Why all at once?" (p. 215). Zoccolo (1983) acknowledged that the trend was to initiate local control gradually rather than incorporate large doses simultaneously.

Fullan (1982) maintained that there were ways of increasing the chances for successful change, even in initial stages of development. It was important that people who were affected by and involved in the change
believed in the expected outcome of the change and agreed that it might be an improvement over the current system. Community members needed to understand the process of change itself, the meaning of change, the stages of change, and the basic tenets of obtaining success. If these tenets were applied to the specific situations at hand, an overview of what was being attempted would become more clear to those involved. This approach would assist people in determining ahead of time in what way the contemplated change would be beneficial.

Fullan recognized that in some cases:

....the most responsible action may be to reject certain innovations which are bound to fail, and work earnestly at those which have a chance to succeed (p. 90).

In addition, people who were involved in the change might act to influence the factors that could not be manipulated at the local level. Ross (1981) summarized those ideas in relation to the current issue by stating:

If the community wants Indian control, if the community understands it, if the community is involved in it, and if the community feels a responsibility towards it, then control of the education program will work and will be successful (p. 33).

The challenge, he concluded, would be not only to
determine the desires and needs of the community, but also to estimate the realities of the situation in terms of capabilities and potential.

Summary

Bands anticipating taking control of their education systems had a number of obstacles to overcome. There was little agreement regarding the meaning or implications of the term "Indian control". Legal structures were not in place to allow Indian Bands to have the degree of control that they desired. Funding was considered to be inadequate. Facilities were often sub-standard. Schools in small isolated Reserves were hampered in producing cost-effective programs and options that would be common in urban settings. There was limited knowledge among those involved on how to implement an effective change.

Chapel Island had successfully taken control of its education system; Tobique Reserve had attempted a take-over and had failed. When the analysis of how change takes place was positioned beside the examples of Chapel Island and Tobique, intricacies of a lengthy process emerged. Comments from sources cited indicated that local control could be facilitated by (a) having a set of procedures that would minimize the inherent
turmoil during the change, (b) allowing for input of all those interested and involved in the process, (c) retaining flexibility as the needs and desires of the community fluctuated, (d) providing training that would insure that people were comfortable fulfilling their designated positions, and (e) allowing for the change to be internalized over an extended time period. If those suggestions were followed, a Band could considerably increase its chances of successfully changing the education system.
Chapter III

THE SITUATION AT SANDY LAKE

Sandy Lake, Ontario is a community of 1500 Cree speaking Indians and a dozen non-Indians living on a 17 square mile Reserve. It is located 35 miles east of the Manitoba border and 125 miles north of the closest road at Red Lake, in Northwestern Ontario. Standard "government" houses and a few traditional log cabins sprawl along a seven mile peninsula where the Severn River flows into Favourable Lake. Originally, there were three residential areas. The "Ghost Point people" settled there in the early 1900s. The "River people", an offspring of Manitoba Red Sucker Indians, arrived in 1928. The "R.C. people", predominately Roman Catholic, moved to work at the Favourable Lake gold mine 38 miles away, and then returned to the Reserve in the late 1940s when the mine closed. Increased population had created "The Centre", a melting pot of homes, school, band office, nursing station and radio station. However, the original sectors remained religiously and politically divided. In 1985, 350 of the "Ghost Point" people formed a new band named "Keewaywin" and intended to create a new Reserve 30 miles away.

By southern Canadian standards, the pace of life in Sandy Lake is slow, and yet societal changes had
recently significantly altered a traditional life style. Within the last fifteen years, the community had experienced for the first time (a) standard telephone service, (b) hydro, (c) local and CBC radio, (d) live district radio programming in Cree, (e) CBC television, (f) T.V. Ontario, (educational television), (g) satellite television, (h) an internal road system, (i) cars, (j) a winter road into the community, (k) two new religions to make a total of six, (l) local police officers, (m) a jail, (n) an air strip, (o) scheduled daily air runs, (p) daily transportation for school children, (q) a school gymnasium, (r) a baseball and hockey league, (s) periodic imported wrestling bouts, and (t) bingos with $1500.00 jackpots. These changes that had evolved over many years in southern Canada had all arrived in Sandy Lake in just over a decade.

Years before, when hunting and trapping had no longer been viable life styles, social assistance had become the economic norm. At the time of the research, full-time jobs were limited to work at "The Bay," the nursing station, the school, and make-work projects at the band office. Seasonal or part-time employment in construction, road maintenance, saw mill operation, and school transportation augmented family assistance, or insured a period of unemployment insurance benefits.
Few attempts at private enterprise had been successful over a long period of time. The Band Council was preoccupied with creating an economic climate where people could become self sufficient.

Before the first day school had been built in 1961, children had been "sent out" to residential schools for their formal education. The first schools on the Reserve were Roman Catholic and United Church day schools. By 1973, INAC had assumed responsibility for their administration. In 1979, INAC added ten classrooms and a gymnasium. Portable classrooms were also used for the 450 students from grades K4 (Kindergarten for four year olds) to high school. Grade 9 and 10 accredited courses were being offered. Students were encouraged to remain in the community and attend Grades 9 and 10 at home rather than go to a city high school.

For the previous several years, over half of the nineteen classroom teachers had been Indian; the four teacher aides, Native language instructor, and the social counsellor were local people. While Indian personnel had provided role models and a boost to morale, the school dropout rate was still high. The level of academic achievement was questionable, age grade displacement was common, and in some classrooms,
25% of the students were considered to be slow learners (Mamakeesic, 1984).

Changes instigated from outside the community often lasted only as long as an outsider was running the project. In the mid 1970s, people endorsed the school year book, the school dark room, and the yearly senior class trips to a large city. However, when the non-Indian personnel involved in those pursuits left the community, the programs faltered. The community even tended to avoid giving back-up support to non-Indian programs with trained Indian personnel. For example, when the Provincial Police were centred in a southern community and only came when needed, control of many small policing matters was absorbed by community members. If someone who was intoxicated came to a dance, that person would be quietly engaged by several people at the dance and, at the first opportunity, escorted home. As soon as local constables were trained and stationed in the community, the general populace would no longer deal with the unwanted guest, other than to phone the police, who would be expected to come and remove the offender.

For generations, non-Indian educational specialists made all decisions regarding children's education. Suddenly, parents were being asked for
input and were expected to make decisions in areas where they had limited knowledge. There may have been many factors in people's backgrounds and situations that prevented them from expressing their views, including frustration with the system, personal insecurity, bad memories of earlier schooling experiences, or lack of awareness of school matters. The fact was that many were reticent to come forward and express their desires for the children's education.

Education was not a community priority (Goodman, 1984). Unemployment was over 80%; the community thrust was for jobs. It was only the economic elite with full time jobs who had the luxury of being able to concern themselves with future education; the rest concerned themselves with present survival. The Band Council was expected to be the authority over all aspects of the Reserve, including education; yet, sometimes, when a joint meeting between Band Council and School Committee was called, so many councillors were checking out their other areas of responsibility that a quorum was not present and pertinent decisions could not be made.

Those people with the full time jobs were the ones with the skills and abilities to initiate changes in the system, but they were over burdened, and their time was severely limited. At the same time, those without
jobs were not idle all day. Survival with limited income in a physically harsh environment meant time consuming work. School Committee members resented doing volunteer work while their house did not have enough wood to heat it. People expected to be paid for their services, including that of planning for future education.

When new programs were introduced without adequate public awareness, they sometimes faltered, as the community lacked a perception of possible outcomes. For example, years before, telephones had become the norm within the community. The first phones were only a local exchange and had soon become a vital communication link in a community with, at that time, no radio network and no road system. The only long distance link available was one high frequency radio telephone hookup. That was acceptable for emergencies but did not replace spasmodic mail service. Suddenly, the community obtained telephone service similar to city users. The mail service continued to be limited, and so the telephone became the main medium of communication for a people who did not write English as a first language. No one recognized the cost involved until their bills became unmanageable and their phones were disconnected. After that, relatively few people
had telephones. Animosity arose between those with and those without telephones; phone bills were a constant area of contention. Innovation that should have been beneficial to the community had created extensive dissension.

Despite the apparent rapid changes in the last decade, a traditional life style was still ingrained, and subtle change was difficult to instil. Within the previous five years, the community had elected its first young Chief. The Chief's role had traditionally been to make all major decisions, to mediate all disputes, and to solve all crises. As the community enlarged, this became a formidable task. The young Chief gradually encouraged his Councillors to take responsibility for their own portfolios. This policy allowed the Chief to deal with political concerns related to contacts outside the community. However, Band members found this change difficult to grasp and often were dissatisfied with both Chief and Councillors when they did not fulfil their traditional roles.

It was clear that the community was not content with the current educational system and yet was in a state of flux in determining its future direction and how to obtain its goals. Change would continue to take place. Those in authority had the desire to see that
positive changes ensued, while avoiding the syndrome of having a generation of children suffer from poorly planned and implemented policies.
Chapter IV

PROCEDURES

This chapter describes the methodology used in conducting the research and explains why specific methods were used in the study.

Nature of Inquiry

Because of the individualistic nature of Bands across Canada, a specific band was chosen for development of intensive analysis. This research was a case study specifically involving the situation at Sandy Lake Reserve in Northwestern Ontario.

In this small community, most of the inhabitants spoke limited English. There were few people with extensive formal education, and few people who were considered to be comfortable expressing their opinions in writing. The Chief advised the researcher that mass questionnaires would likely evoke limited results. Because of these factors, a method of qualitative inquiry was chosen where information could be obtained through more intimate contact with respondents.

Methodology

The primary method of investigation was semi-structured intensive interviews. Interviews were
considered superior to researcher observation, as it was important to obtain respondents' perceived views of the current community situation, as opposed to obtaining the perceived views of the interviewer.

The questions asked of respondents at Sandy Lake (Appendix, p. 116) were designed to encourage a spontaneous introductory response from interviewees. Some questions required specific answers. Other questions were open-ended, encouraging respondents to expand their views. Where appropriate, supplementary questions were included to encourage further elaboration.

The information acquired from local respondents was supplemented with input from interviews conducted with the district superintendent of education for Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, and with the director of Northern Nishnawbe Education Council (NNEC), both in Sioux Lookout, Ontario. At the time, INAC controlled most of the education system in Sandy Lake. NNEC was responsible for all high school and post secondary students attending school off the reserve. In addition, part of NNEC's mandate, as stipulated by its board of directors, the Sioux Lookout District school committee chairpersons, was to assist area bands wishing to assume control of education. NNEC
monitored education systems in all Sioux Lookout district communities.

The researcher maintained further informal communication with community members throughout the time that the study was being undertaken. These contacts included several social visits to the community, conversations with community members, and regular phone calls with Band members.

The interviews were transcribed. Analysis converged on the strengths and weaknesses of the current system, the community, the community members, and the desires for the future in the area of education programming.

The information gathered was categorized into a force field analysis. This was a compilation of the forces that would assist the community in implementing Indian control of education, and the factors that would hinder the process. A force field analysis provided a simplified directory explaining what community members viewed as community strengths that could be utilized during the education takeover process, and deficiencies that would inhibit the operation. The force field analysis was to be a condensed account of what local people could expect to encounter during the take-over of education. From this appraisal, methods were
suggested which the Band might use to accentuate the positive elements of the situation, and minimize the effects of negative conditions.

The Interviewees

The Chief and Council granted permission to conduct semi-structured interviews with residents of the community, and provided suggestions on who might respond openly to a question session. Interviewees were chosen from those considered to have views and opinions on a variety of community issues. Those chosen were either involved directly in the education system, involved in the organization of the community, or respected by other community members for their thoughts on community matters. All but two of the interviewees were also parents of children within the school system. Twelve interviewees were selected from across the community.

The current Chief had a good overview of community happenings. He knew which people had key educational views and which methods of interaction were most acceptable within the community. As the first young Chief in Sandy Lake, he had the unique perspective to meld tradition with change and was able to guide the Reserve into an innovative era.
The two elders who were interviewed had both the wisdom of years and a long history of school and educational involvement. Both had been active with the School Committee for many years and had been on the Band Council intermittently. At the time of interviewing, they were both members of the School Committee.

The Band Counsellor interviewee had been the school social counsellor for over ten years. In that role, he had been involved in the school's plans geared toward change. As a social counsellor, he had been a liaison between the school and the School Committee. At the time of interviewing, he was also Band Councillor in charge of liaison with the School Committee.

The chairperson of the School Committee had also been chairperson of the board of directors of the Sioux Lookout based Nishnawbe Education Council for a number of years. In addition he had been a social counsellor, a teacher aide, and a special education coordinator. He continued to gather information and ideas for the impending take-over of education.

The principal of Thomas Fiddler Memorial School at the time of interviewing had taught in the school since 1973 and was a teacher aide before that time. He was
one of the first Indian teachers on the Reserve. As principal, he was considered by community members as an asset because of the importance Sandy Lake attached to having a local principal.

One of the teachers interviewed was an Indian from Sioux Lookout district but not from Sandy Lake. He had taught in his home Reserve before coming to Sandy Lake, and could compare the assets of these two communities.

The second teacher had taught at Sandy Lake for a number of years. As a result, he had depth to his perspective of Sandy Lake. This was augmented by teaching experience elsewhere in Canada, as well as a non-Canadian cultural background.

An additional two interviewees were parents of children in the school system. Both had been peripherally involved in education. One was a school bus driver. The other had been involved in the Sioux Lookout District School Committee some time before.

The university student interviewed had obtained some schooling on the Reserve, and some at residential schools. He had completed high school in the city. Although a full time student at university, he kept close ties with Sandy Lake.

A senior elementary student was also interviewed. While most of his schooling had been acquired in the
community, he had attended a public school in a provincial school system for one year and was able to compare the two systems.

Conduct of Interviews

Most interviews were conducted in the evenings. The Chief and Band Councillor were interviewed in their offices while the remainder of interviews were conducted in the interviewees' homes. A local well-accepted translator assisted in the two elders' interviews and the remainder of the interviews were conducted in English. Interviews lasted between one and two hours. All interviews were taped.

Summary

Semi-structured intensive interviews proved to be a valuable tool in receiving meaningful information from people who do not speak or read English as a first language. Interviewees were encouraged to offer suggestions to improve the inadequacies that they perceived in the schooling system. Near the end of each interview, respondents were invited to ask the researcher any questions they wished. The exchange became a satisfying way of sharing thoughts.
Chapter V

FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

The findings from the semi-structured interviews administered to people at Sandy Lake are presented in this section. The headings are indicative of the questions that were asked.

Changes in the Last Decade

Interviewees were asked which positive and negative changes over the previous decade they had noted in regards to the school system. As responses did not always concur regarding the effects of a change, the results were grouped into specific areas of change. Positive and negative reactions to a change were then highlighted.

Indian Staff Members. The most prominent innovation in ten of the respondents' minds had been the hiring of Indian teachers and teacher aides within the school. Six people reported that Indian teachers had significantly increased the communication level between students and teachers, and between the home and the school. One person noted the differences between classes taught by Indian teachers where the children appeared comfortable and spontaneous, and classrooms with non-Indian teachers where the children tended to
become shy and withdrawn. Another person cited advantages of having Indian teacher aides to assist non-Indian teachers in the lower grades where students had limited English skills. Four respondents mentioned the advantage of having Indian teachers for the higher grades. With the Indian teachers having a background and culture similar to the students, they were able to explain things in terms that the children understood.

Seven of the interviewees commented that communication also improved within the community when Indian teachers worked in the school, as Indian speaking parents could speak directly and more comfortably with their child's teacher. Indian teachers were considered to have an edge in their ability to adapt the curriculum to include more meaningful experiences for the children. They also became immediate role models for the children, inspiring them to further their education, while proving to the community that it was possible for Indian people to run the school system effectively.

Some of the interviewees commented that their support for Indian teachers was not total. Two respondents felt less satisfied with the Indian teachers than the non-Indian teachers. One person
commented that Indian staff members "didn't know how to teach". Another lamented that there was no advantage in having Indian teachers unless they could pass on what they had learned from their grandfathers, and because they had been trained to be teachers in the city, they had not gained this facility.

Only one respondent considered that an all Indian staff would be an asset. Most felt that it was advantageous to have some outside input in educational matters, but that a staff with a majority of Indian teachers would best serve the community.

**Non-Indian Teachers.** Five respondents mentioned that the calibre of non-Indian teachers had risen. One person thought that teacher turnover was still high and lamented that the reasons for non-Indian teachers coming to the community were often suspect. He felt that many non-Indian teachers came because of relatively high salaries or to gain experience necessary for obtaining a job in the southern part of the province. Outsiders were unfamiliar with the community, and two people indicated that this lack of community empathy still caused problems in communication. An example was cited where students became resentful when they were punished for not attending school when they were needed at home. When
teachers from another culture were in the school, priorities of those involved in the schooling situation did not always mesh. Two respondents mentioned that those in charge had not devised a successful way of orienting non-Indian teachers into the Sandy Lake life style so that these communication barriers would be reduced.

Communication. Several respondents thought that the communication level between the school staff and community residents was still inadequate. Community people did not understand the reasons behind fundamental school program aspects. Numerous programs that had been attempted had faltered after their initiators had departed. Two people felt that programs started by non-Indians did not become permanent because Indian and white goals did not mesh.

Value of Education. Seven interviewees said that Sandy Lake's residents were increasingly recognizing the need for formal education "even for trappers" as one person commented. Two people mentioned that especially the younger people were realizing the importance of remaining in school. Some parents were starting to see the value of teaching children to become accustomed to doing homework, especially if they planned on attending southern high schools; however, it
was still a contentious issue, with many parents feeling that the school day was long enough and that homework or staying at school after the regular school day infringed too much on family life.

Parental support. Parental support for high school students in attendance at city schools was increasing. Parents no longer simply said "yes" when a child asked to return home in the middle of a semester. At the same time, some people interviewed felt that there was not as much support from parents in Sandy Lake as there appeared to be in other communities within Sioux Lookout district.

Band Council and School Committee Relations. Six respondents reported that there was increased support on the part of the Band Council for the activities of the school committee. The chairperson of the school committee reported that the Chief and Council backed all decisions made by the school committee and were supportive of its endeavours.

Control of the Educational System. The interviewees maintained that the Chief and Council still had the authority for the educational system, and five respondents found such a situation a handicap, especially when education was not a community priority. Although a better working relationship had evolved
between the Band Council and the education committee, not all people saw the situation as being satisfactory. The following comments were made:

The Chief and Council has authority (for education) and I don't like that.

It always comes back to the Band Council. It doesn't matter where you start; it ends up being with the Band Council.

I think the Band Council has too much power.

The Band Council wants to do everything, and they want to take credit for everything that happens within the community.

Traditionally, the Band Council had full control over all activities, but when there was a younger man as a Chief, there was a different style of leadership. The Chief commented that change was difficult to implement. He wished to delegate more authority. It was unclear whether or not the community was really willing to accept that challenge.

Community Involvement. Community involvement was increasing, according to both the Chief and the chairperson of the school committee. Although it still appeared somewhat difficult to get the elders to come into the school without some sort of remuneration, community members between the ages of 25 and 35 were showing more willingness to share in classroom activities. Sixty to seventy percent of the parents
had attended an open house during the previous year, and other school events were increasingly well attended. Five respondents wanted to see community participation extend into curriculum adaptation and some type of additional support for high school students attending school in the cities.

**Curriculum.** Increased community participation stretched to curriculum development and revision in some areas. Four interviewees complimented the school on its vibrant syllabics program. They cited examples where a conscious effort had been made to include culturally relevant material in the curriculum and saw this as a positive step.

At the same time, eight of those questioned felt that the curriculum was not adequate. There was no agreement on what should be taught or which subject areas should take priority. Some people wanted English stressed; others felt that the amount of Cree used in the schools should be increased. Some wanted their children taught northern survival skills; some wanted children prepared for formal southern education. Some wanted their children to spend time in the bush, while others refused to allow their children to go on excursions for fear of what might happen to them. One respondent wanted parity with southern schools but was
opposed to children being given homework or being kept late after school. The topic of what to teach provoked strong opinions from all respondents, but there was little agreement in opinions on the matter.

**Degree of Indian Control.** Two respondents reported that the school committee had evolved so that it had extensive decision making influence in a variety of situations. The school committee had input into all capital projects cited for Sandy Lake. One respondent, a member of the school committee, mentioned that the members valued the fact that contracts could not be awarded by Indian and Northern Affairs without local approval. At the same time, he indicated, members of the school committee were eager for more control and felt that some sense of ownership over the school property would boost morale and pride in the buildings. Daily problems had long time repercussions. One interviewee cited an example:

> As you know, we have been talking about trying to fix the (water) pump for the last three years now. And, we still haven't got the pump fixed. And because people know that we don't really have any control over the school system, there isn't that much concern for people to try to get things done, because they know they can't get it done anyway. Everything that we decide to do, we have to ask for, and sometimes those things that we think are important don't get done because they don't get approved, and those other things that are done are not the ones
that we think are important.

This example verified that although INAC had to ask Sandy Lake's approval before it undertook projects, Sandy Lake still had to gain Indian and Northern Affairs' approval before the community undertook any projects. This fact severely limited the amount of real control that the community had in making its own decisions or setting priorities on projects.

Someone from the school committee was always present during hiring of teachers, and this procedure was believed to be one of the main reasons for the improved calibre of the teachers over the years. However, hiring was still done using Indian and Northern Affairs' standards and procedures, and members of the school committee who were interviewed indicated that they wanted control rather than just input on such matters.

School Bussing. The school committee was in charge of bussing, and bussing had improved drastically, from being non-existent, to having winter transportation by snowmobile for the younger students, to having all weather bussing for all grades living at a distance from the school. Four interviewees commented on the positive aspects of this program. Attendance had increased and, with it, improved marks.
and educational standards.

School Committee Time Management. The price for bussing in terms of school committee time had been expensive. One person reported that the school committee had to spend nearly all its time on bussing and construction matters. As a result, little time remained to consider curriculum concerns, define a philosophy of education, or determine goals and objectives. As mentioned, some input had resulted in positive cultural programs, but curriculum involvement in areas other than traditional skills had been almost non-existent.

The time that the school committee spent together was limited. Regularly scheduled meetings were held only once a month, with additional meetings called when necessary. The pay for a School Committee member was $25.00 a month, regardless of the amount of time invested. Two members who were interviewed felt they could not afford to do extensive work at the school without some remuneration. The limited funding available from Indian and Northern Affairs Canada dampened enthusiasm and concrete involvement.

Academic Standards. Four respondents commented on how the academic standards had improved in recent years. "Our young people are getting smarter", the
Chief grinned. The school committee chairperson and the social counsellor, recognizing that they could be replaced, noted how much higher the students' marks were than when THEY attended school a decade before.

At the same time, 11 of the interviewees expressed concern that the academic standards were not up to par with provincial standards. One cause or effect of this was that there was no consistent promotion standard. The results of lack of parity appeared in a variety of ways. Until very recently, nearly all graduates of grade nine in Sandy Lake had had to repeat their year when they arrived at a provincial school. One person saw this situation as a major reason for the high school drop out rate. As he explained:

All the kids have gone to continue their education outside, and then they find themselves coming back in one month or a couple of months, and then when they come back and they're not doing anything here. One of the main reasons they come back is because they are made to repeat the same grade that they've completed here.

Another person felt that the standards caused Sandy Lake to lose good teachers and gave people at the school an inferiority complex. One person noticed that:

The non-Indian teachers that come here tend to stay for a number of years, and then when they have kids, they move out. It seems to me that they don't want to raise their kids
in this level of schooling. It's OK for our kids, but not their kids.

The administration was aiming for parity with the south in three years. Two people commented that this had already been a goal for a long time.

**School Facilities.** There was generally an air of resignation when the question of adequate facilities was broached. Most felt that there were no major problems or building concerns at the time. Two respondents mentioned at the same time that the foundations of the portable classrooms, the ones that were to have been taken out of use in the late 1970s, needed replacing. The previous year, the school had been closed for two months in the fall because repairs had been started in late August; as a result, the first grade nine students scheduled to receive provincial accreditation had lost it. The library had been reduced to half a classroom because of space limitations. In fact, a new teacher was due to arrive at the time of interviewing to ease the pupil/teacher ratio, but there was no classroom space available. An addition was scheduled for the future, but another community's school had burned down, and that put Sandy Lake's request back three years. These were considered to be minor concerns in comparison to the roof of the
new gymnasium which had leaked even before its official opening and had not been fixed for several years.

**Professional development support from INAC.** The staff members interviewed were highly appreciative of Indian and Northern Affair's increased support from district office staff in assisting teachers to improve daily classroom programs and management. They praised the work of itinerant teachers who maintained the role of consultants. Teachers appeared to value the curriculum guidelines and implementation plans that had recently been placed in the school.

**Administration of School.** There was little concern regarding the day-to-day running of the school. Nearly all the respondents were content with the current administration. It was the larger issues, the basic premises of the educational system, that people questioned.

**Provincial Accreditation.** Nearly all the respondents were enthusiastic about the new grade nine and 10 provincial accreditation. Eleven interviewees saw value in having the students remain in the north for at least those grades. Four respondents observed that children were graduating from grade eight at a younger age, and parents were hesitant to send 13 year old children into a city situation. The only people
that could see value in children attending school in the south were the teachers, who cited the advantages of broadening one's horizons, being able to choose one's areas of specialization, and taking advantage of a city's resources.

Location of High School. Out of the eleven respondents who were not anxious to send high school students to the city, three would have preferred to see some sort of district high school. The remainder appeared satisfied with the prospect of having grades nine and 10 at Sandy Lake, although several had reservations as to whether in reality a local program would be able to attract sufficiently qualified teachers or to maintain parity with the south.

The respondents mentioned that there was little community interest in having students remain in Sandy Lake for grades 11 and 12. The community people had concluded that the resources available in the community were inadequate for a senior matriculation program.

The Meaning of Local Control

When respondents were asked the meaning of the term "local control", there was a wide range of views. Three respondents perceived it as taking over the "whole education program" which, to them, included creating a school board, developing curriculum, hiring
the teachers, running the school, and being in charge of the finances. Two respondents recognized that local control was not absolute. One commented:

It should be a more accommodating phrase than "local control'. You don't have 'local control'. I mean you can't. In order to get certification you have to follow certain criteria.

Another respondent felt that it meant controlling what was taught, and "not letting the provincial curriculum overrule what the local people want". Five respondents indicated that they had difficulty conceiving the meaning of the term. One of the respondents who was considered in the community to be highly informed and knowledgeable said, "I have a little idea, but I don't really understand what it is myself." Eight interviewees concurred with that sentiment.

Local Discussion of the Issue.

Ten respondents reported that talk of local control in the community had been limited and strictly on an informal basis. A committee had been struck in 1984 to investigate the possibilities of assuming control of the school in Sandy Lake, but the group had been relatively inactive. One respondent who was a participant of the committee noted that the committee had not reached the point of defining what local
control meant. Four interviewees outside of that committee commented that they had heard the term mentioned occasionally, but only in vague generalities.

Support for Local Control

Nearly all interviewees answered cautiously when expressing how they felt about Sandy Lake proceeding with local control. Some comments were:

That's what we are hoping to get and what we are asking for.

It should be good for Sandy Lake. Sandy Lake can learn from other communities' mistakes.

I know it's coming.

We're just taking it slowly. Step by step. We're not trying to rush.

I wouldn't want to rush into that sort of thing and find out we have to back track.

It's going to take time. Lots of time. I think they should hold off for a while.

Although a new system appeared inviting, interviewees seemed wary of moving too quickly into the change.

Advantages of Local Control

It was difficult for people to foresee the advantages of instituting a move of which they had limited understanding. In spite of this, each person interviewed could see some potential on which the new
An Indian Policy. One interviewee summarized five respondents' views when he stated, "It is an Indian policy. It is not Indian Affairs being shoved down our throats."

Another respondent felt that the major advantage would be that "decisions would be made locally instead of them going clear across the province."

Aspirations and Achievement. Three respondents thought that local control would promote a pride of ownership, provide an incentive to work harder and realize local objectives and, in turn, improve the self concept of the entire community.

Pride of Heritage. Four of those interviewed saw local control as an opportunity to increase Indian content in all subject areas, including the legends in English, and pertinent local history. The respondent with the greatest concern about the current state of cultural retention was the single non-Indian in the interview group. He commented:

I'm not sure that they are aware of what they are losing. Being here has made me aware of what I have lost from my own culture. As a result, it has made me strive harder to ensure that the local people maintain what they have. But sometimes you wonder if you are trying too hard to make them keep what they have. And sometimes you say to yourself, "Well, I guess only when they realize what it is that they have, and what
they are losing, and when they themselves want to do something about it, the time will be right".

Problems Anticipated with Local Control

Respondents foresaw a continuation of the current problems in education as well as additional problems peculiar to local control.

Comprehending Local Control. Seven respondents commented that a basic problem was understanding the concept of local control in the first place. There was little recognition that local control for Sandy Lake would or could be what Sandy Lake wanted it to be. Most interviewees seemed to be searching for someone to come and tell them what local control was. None of the respondents mentioned discussing all the possibilities for local control and then reaching agreement on its definition. There was uneasiness among several respondents who felt that many members of the community would identify only with the financial aspects of control. Those respondents had a perception of the broader managerial role of the Band education authority, but no two respondents were consistent in defining that role.

Methods of Decision Making. Sandy Lake had traditionally handled decision making through
consensus. Four interviewees questioned the advisability of consensus as a method of decision making in controlling a large program such as education. Those four respondents did feel that the school committee was cohesive. This feeling in itself was an achievement because custom demanded a careful balance in choosing committee members representing elders, younger members, and representatives from various geographic sectors of the community. However, one respondent feared that when consensus was used as a method of decision making, a round table discussion was often inconclusive, and the final decision was then made by someone in charge. This procedure encouraged abuse of power, and decision making falling into the hands of one or a few people. This respondent considered formal voting more suitable for the event when the Band undertook a massive project such as education.

The Decision Makers. Little mention was made of who should be involved in the major decision whether the band should assume local control of education. The Chief mentioned the importance of parents being involved in the process; however, other respondents alluded to having a few people making that decision. One respondent stated that no information had been
given to the parents because even those in charge were not yet familiar with the mechanisms involved. The underlying feeling was that a few people should become well informed regarding how local control would work, and they could then share the information with the rest of the community.

Decisions Required. Respondents saw major dilemmas that required intensive decision making once the decision to assume local control had been made. Two interviewees recognized the importance of creating a philosophy of education before other areas of local control were attempted. Four others suggested the necessity of a set of goals and long range objectives as a foundation for the new system.

The other issue for the same respondents was the curriculum. As long as there was no agreement on whether the school should emphasize traditional skills or academic qualifications, or to what extent each should be stressed, the school remained without a focal point. Several respondents were aware of the dichotomy of this situation and the need for a compromise solution; there was no indication that efforts were being made to resolve this dilemma.

Roles of Band Council and Education Committee. The most universal concern expressed by respondents was the
relationship between the Band Council and education committee. This struggle evolved around power and money. Those respondents directly involved in the education system resented the traditional decision making power of the Chief and Council, even though the current Chief and Council clearly supported all school committee decisions.

All of the respondents who were directly connected to the Band office indicated that they did not foresee any great problems with handling the funding for local control. All of the respondents who were NOT connected with the Band office indicated major concerns about having the Band maintain jurisdiction over educational funds. Comments were made such as:

I don't have a positive view of the Band running the funds.

The people have said to me, "if you get some of the control in the Band office, then it is not going to work".

During expanded questioning regarding how the Band handled its finances, it became apparent that the struggle over funding was based on mistrust stemming back many years. Three respondents wondered whether the community was ready to handle large quantities of money regardless of which committee had control. "I think they would have problems", one interviewee
stated. "They would be taking some of it for themselves. It happens sometimes." Another added, "We couldn't have all the money here, because somebody will be spending it. And you won't even have control of all your money." Although the same person agreed that he had not heard of any shortages of funds for over a year, he was not yet convinced that the improvement was permanent.

The teachers who were interviewed felt that most of the staff members were experiencing some discomfort over any impending change. They feared being left uninformed when decisions were made. They felt that communication with the Band on these matters was limited. In addition, they had fears of their own inadequacy. "You kind of hope that the school wouldn't fall apart," one person observed. His concern was for the integrity necessary for such a large undertaking.

Community Involvement. Feelings were mixed as the respondents regarded the amount of feasible community involvement. While some respondents felt that community involvement was difficult to obtain (especially unless people were paid for their services), an equal number felt confident that people would become involved as enthusiasm and knowledge was shared within the community. "Once people know they
are controlling the school or the curriculum, and that they can change a few things, they'll get involved" one person emphasized. "Even I will come out of the woodwork", he quipped.

**Capabilities of Community Members.** One thing that was NOT perceived to be a problem was obtaining local people capable of implementing any new program. While it was emphasized that involved community residents would require training, assurances were repeatedly made by the majority of respondents that suitable people were readily available. Two interviewees lamented that people with local expertise kept leaving the community to go back to school. Another stated, "There simply isn't enough of me to go around." However, generally, those interviewed were confident that Sandy Lakers had the necessary capabilities to undertake such an endeavour as local control.

**Anticipating Potential Concerns.** When respondents were asked about the strengths and weaknesses of the current educational program, they were able to supply numerous concrete comments. However, when asked about foreseeable problems when local control became a reality, their perspective appeared limited. Each respondent focused on one or two concerns. Few respondents anticipated the same problem areas; no
interviewees were able to perceive a broad spectrum of potential difficulties. Some readily commented that they could not visualize the whole situation clearly enough to imagine what the challenges might be.

Maximizing Strengths and Neutralizing Weaknesses

A Force Field Analysis was compiled as a synopsis of the findings (p. 93). This tabulation identified which forces could be an asset during the change to local control of education and which negative forces would have to be neutralized in order to minimize their impact. The dominant feature in favour of Sandy Lake proceeding with take-over was the belief by those involved with education locally that the take-over of education was a good idea, and that there was the potential man-power and will within the community to execute such a change. The main concerns were whether there was adequate fiscal management, and whether community members would rally to the necessary extent in support of the school and the take-over of education.

Characteristics of the Change

It was to the community's advantage that Indian and Northern Affairs and the local residents of Sandy
Lake both recognized that the change to local control was a process that required individualized approaches in order to meet community needs. This recognition allowed for immense creativity and ingenuity, and for a system shaped specifically to meet Sandy Lake requirements. However, so that the community would recognize this advantage and utilize this situation to its fullest, the people had to be fully aware of the process, and be willing to prioritize their requirements and gain access to methods that would show them how to obtain what they wanted. In order to discover the potential of local control, residents of Sandy Lake would have to read the literature that was available, visit other Reserves, learn of the alternatives, and share the information and their thoughts with others. To avoid the problems of authoritarian control as experienced by Tobique Reserve residents, the people of Sandy Lake would have to refuse to allow a few local people or some outsiders to tell them what they wanted in local control of education. To prevent new programs from faltering during implementation, the residents of Sandy Lake would have to make a commitment to continue implementing local control for an extended period of time. Because the funding was limited, the community would have to set priorities and concentrate the
Table 1

**Force Field Analysis**

**Factors Influencing Implementation of Local Control of Education, Sandy Lake.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Advantages</th>
<th>Disadvantages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Characteristics of the Change</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Was an Indian proposal rather than an INAC idea</td>
<td>Complex and complicated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Once established, needed only local approval to initiate</td>
<td>Difficult for residents to perceive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Had potential for being shaped to suit Sandy Lake</td>
<td>The term &quot;local control&quot; was laborious to define</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Could be made flexible</td>
<td>Some inflexible obstacles, e.g. funding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Characteristics at the Community Level</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increasing recognition of need for education</td>
<td>No concurrence on sense of philosophical direction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased acceptance of parental responsibility</td>
<td>Support for students and programs considered insufficient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increasing educational involvement</td>
<td>Limited knowledge of system</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of volunteers increasing</td>
<td>Involvement currently considered inadequate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Many people with ability available</td>
<td>Many people wanted to be paid for their services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Limited understanding of concept</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
People lacked necessary skills to manage program

Desire to keep teenagers on Reserve

Limited numbers of students restricted feasible program options

3. Characteristics at the Band Council Level.

Chief and Council supported all school committee decisions

Education not a priority

Chief willing to delegate authority

Method of choosing Education Authority inadequate

Authority lines between Band Council and school committee not delineated

Power struggle between Band Council and school committee

Financial accountability improving

Band Council hesitant to relinquish financial control

4. Characteristics at the Education Authority Level.

Past programs successful

Not familiar with planning and decision making

Not familiar with educational programs other than cultural ones

Increasingly taking control

Crisis management orientation

Unstructured decision making

Solid working group

Power struggle with Band Council

Belief in the concept of local control

Lack of comprehension of the concept
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Confident of future success</th>
<th>Lack of necessary skills</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Optimistic of community support</td>
<td>Limited communication with community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Awareness of task size and perspective</td>
<td>Limited perception of time frame</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5. Characteristics at the School Level.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Increasing Indian staff</th>
<th>Community had undelineated staff expectations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High calibre of teachers</td>
<td>Extensive teacher turnover</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers receptive to change</td>
<td>Teachers feared the unknown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High tolerance level among staff</td>
<td>Limited internal and staff-community communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisfying day-to-day administration</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student academic parity nearer a reality</td>
<td>Obscure plans for obtaining parity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provincial accreditation near reality</td>
<td>Curriculum not satisfactory to community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Well established cultural programs</td>
<td>Long range program financial support inconsistent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Facilities inadequate</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6. Characteristics External to Sandy Lake.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Moral support from INAC</th>
<th>Limited practical support in transfer methodology</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Limited funding available</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Co-operation from provincial education department</td>
<td>Provincial system goals in conflict with desires of Sandy Lake</td>
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</table>
funding that they received on clearly delineated goals and objectives.

Aspects at the Community Level. As noted during interviews with Sandy Lake respondents, Sandy Lake residents were beginning to recognize the need for education. If this trend were to continue, parents and students had to see the immediate benefits of remaining and succeeding in school. In communities such as Chapel Island where a reward system had been implemented, students and parents had responded by becoming more dedicated to striving for success and completion of school programs.

If the Band was to have local control, this concept would require extended community involvement in education. Research indicated that the Band must find ways of increasing the number of people directly involved in educational matters so that local control would not mean transferring control from a non-Indian bureaucracy to an Indian bureaucracy with a few Indians running the system.

The community as a whole would have to strive harder to meet educational goals. If it had high expectations of itself and of its students, as did, for example, the people of Chapel Island, a self-fulfilling prophecy would take hold, and standards would improve.
While Sandy Lakers had traditionally been less competitive than their non-Indian counterparts, an individual competing with himself might be a more acceptable form of striving. The result might parallel the success at Chapel Island in improving an individual's quality of life.

The community would have to reach an agreement on a purpose for the educational system. Questions regarding what kinds of skills were desired, and whether retention of language and culture was a priority remained unanswered. In order to avoid the pitfalls of a system which was unrealistic or had no purpose, as was experienced at Tobique Reserve, it was imperative that Sandy Lake as an entity create for itself a purpose and sense of direction.

The question remained whether a compromise between traditional skills and academic parity could be reached without diluting the effectiveness of both thrusts and having graduates who were adequate at neither. If the issue of traditional education versus academic parity became contentious, alternatives would have to be sought to accommodate a large dissenting minority.

While community members at Sandy Lake believed that a full high school on the Reserve was not feasible, they continued to want their teenagers on the
Reserve. Northern Saskatchewan had full high schools in similar circumstances. Sandy Lake would best consider the Saskatchewan model and possibly adapt it to meet their own needs.

The Band Council level. Because education was not a Band Council priority, it was fortunate that the Chief at Sandy Lake favoured delegating authority. The Band had not found a reasonable method of obtaining a band education authority that would satisfy the community's need for representation, the school's need for informed decision makers, and the Band Council's need for co-operation without the fear of the education authority usurping the Chief and Council's authority. An education authority that was appointed would be considered as a pawn of the Band Council. A committee that was elected from the community at large could simulate a popularity contest with little view to potential decision making abilities necessary for the job. Chapel Island had effectively used a compromise of these two methods to acquire an effective education authority.

Bands such as Tobique who had not separated educational funds from other funds had incurred severe problems. Sandy Lake's current system made it possible to transfer funds in and out of the education account.
to other accounts. It was imperative that the Band prevent the possibility of this happening by keeping education funds in a separate account with separate signing authorities.

The Education Authority Level. This study showed that those people involved were optimistic and enthusiastic about the future direction of education for Sandy Lake. Their bright outlook would continue if they remained as positive as the people in Chapel Island, who dwelt on the good things that were happening, knowing that they had the self confidence and capabilities of handling their own problems. At the same time, it would have benefitted the Sandy Lake education authority members to hone their decision making skills. To do this, the members would require opportunities to improve their skills. The school authority needed to identify its training requirements in communicating with other people in the community, hiring staff, developing programs, organizing initially as a working group, delegating authority, and assisting in negotiations with outside authorities. As soon as a lack was identified, the education authority needed to arrange for a consulting team to assist them. In some cases, this could mean hiring a person from outside the community for an extended period of time. However, if
the goal of the community was the eventual managing of
the system. A training component would have to be built
into each facet where an outside person was hired so
that local people were being groomed at the same time
to eventually assume the responsibilities.

It was a good thing that people were being
cautious about assuming control too quickly or before
the community or the people were ready. In this way,
community members would have the chance of learning
from Bands such as Eskasoni Band in Nova Scotia, where
Tobique residents discovered that successful take-over
had been completed in a calculated manner. At the same
time, it would have been a good idea for Sandy Lake to
forthwith develop a proposed time frame with some
commitment to it to ensure a sense of accomplishment
within a reasonable time. While implementation of a
change of such magnitude was often considered to take
three to five years, changes that took much longer ran
the risk of losing their sense of purpose indefinitely.
Those involved needed to make a commitment to complete
the tasks expected of them so that the project as a
whole could progress at a steady rate.

The School Level. The satisfaction of having
Indian staff members was tempered by undelineated
expectations making it impossible for Indian teachers
in their personal and professional lives to satisfy the community. To prevent loss of these valuable people, the community needed to state their expectations of their teachers. At the same time, it was imperative for the Band to expect some commitment from incoming teachers regarding how long they intended to stay, or their willingness to be involved in long term change.

Teachers' perceived fears of inadequacy could be overcome by a combination of intensive orientation, on-going workshops and training sessions, and open communications between the school, the education authority, and the community. Where teachers had been involved in formulating plans for change, reception to proposed changes had improved.

**External forces.** Indian and Northern Affairs Canada could, in its advisory role, support the Band in its attempts to take control of its education system. Because INAC had indicated that it was committed to the concept of Indian control of education it could therefore be expected to support the Band's attempts.

It was in the provincial education department's best interests to involve itself in Sandy Lake's system because Sandy Lake's graduates would become involved with the provincial system. Arrangements were needed with the provincial system to share expertise in areas
such as library services, audiovisual loan programs, and professional development. As was identified in the situation at Chapel Island, Sandy Lake would benefit from interaction with other Bands who had taken control of their educational systems.

Summary

By analyzing the successes and failures of other Bands across the country who had assumed Indian control of education and by analyzing the current state of Sandy Lake, it was possible to recognize the potential within the community that would assist it in successfully assuming control of its educational system.
Chapter VI
Summary and Recommendations

This chapter summarizes the procedure and findings of this research. Recommendations are made regarding the implementation of local control of education at Sandy Lake.

Background

Indian control of Indian education had been the policy of Indian and Northern Affairs Canada since 1972, when the government adopted the National Indian Brotherhood position paper on that subject. However, implementation of the policy had seriously lagged in Northwestern Ontario. The community of Sandy Lake had expressed interest in assuming control of its own education system but had not committed itself to making this change.

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the people and structures present in Sandy Lake that would accelerate or hinder the transfer of educational control and, through interpretation and analysis, to make recommendations regarding Sandy Lake implementing Indian control of
Indian education.

Method

The method used in the study included a series of semi-structured interviews with members of the Sandy Lake band. Twelve interviews were conducted with a variety of people including the Chief, elders, Band Councillors, school committee members, the principal, teachers, parents, and students. Information from these interviews was analyzed and tabulated to create a Force Field Analysis, an identification of the strengths and weaknesses of the community which would reflect on attempts to implement Indian control of education.

Indian Control in other Locations

A review of some evaluations of take-overs conducted at Chapel Island, Nova Scotia, and Tobique Reserve, New Brunswick, provided insights into successful and unsuccessful methods of implementing the change to local control. Tobique Band had experienced severe problems during its take-over; these had eventually led to control of the education program being returned to INAC. Tobique's strengths had become weaknesses. Its desire for something better and a
fiercely independent spirit had become liabilities when the people could not agree among themselves during decision-making time.

The Chief had led his people to the extent that community input was eliminated, and he had become the sole decision-maker. The resulting lack of community involvement had been paralleled by a lack of communication between the Band Council, education authority, school personnel, and parents. Because there had been limited communication, there had been no outlet for parental concern about the running of the school. Parents had had expectations of teachers about which the teachers did not know; the teacher turnover rate had been high.

In retrospect, Tobique Band had recognized the need for extensive training during an extended implementation period. It had noted the success in other Band take-overs where there had been: (a) delineated roles for the Band Council and education authority; (b) a detailed negotiated agreement with INAC; (c) a planned, methodical take-over period; and (d) outside expertise utilized until local people could be trained for specific roles.

The take-over at Chapel Island had been a success because of the basic outlook and encouragement of
community members. People thought positively. There was a high degree of independence, self-respect and determination among individuals. Community members expected their children to do well in school; adults supported and acknowledged the children's efforts. The Education Authority gave the school staff a sense of direction by providing a framework through a statement outlining their views on the purpose of the educational system. The members supported the programs that the staff developed. There was good rapport among the teachers themselves and between the staff and the Education Authority. There was much direct community involvement in the school.

The evaluators suggested that teachers might more effectively utilize parental help. They also recommended that a policy manual containing job descriptions be created and that on-going training be established for local educational leaders.

Findings

In Sandy Lake, people were growing more attentive to educational concerns. They were becoming increasingly aware of the necessity of formal education as a means of improving their quality of life. However, the Sandy Lake residents were divided on
determining what should be the focus of the formal education system. There were loud proponents of academic parity and equally loud advocates of skills in traditional pursuits.

Community involvement in educational matters was increasing. People preferred to be paid for the time they contributed attending school functions or making decisions on school matters. Although support for students and program endeavours was increasing, it was still considered insufficient to effectively implement the change to local control, where substantial community involvement would be a basic ingredient for success. Some of the lack of involvement stemmed from a shortage of comprehension of the current schooling system. Some was a result of a limited perception of what a system of local control would entail. Some was the result of those in charge not considering that community involvement was imperative, and therefore, not encouraging it.

The Band Council's priorities lay in areas such as economic development rather than in education. Although the Chief and Council were supportive of the school committee and of all the decisions it made, the Band Council retained much of the decision-making power in educational matters. There was confusion over
roles, and a struggle for power between the Band Council and school committee. The method of choosing the school committee was insufficiently defined. The Band Council did not have a clean financial audit in some areas of administration, and while the education account audit was acceptable, the Band Council was reticent to relinquish financial control of education.

There was general community dissatisfaction with the current curriculum. The struggle for academic parity with provincial schools continued. Some cultural programs were firmly in place; however, community members who wished the emphasis to be on traditional pursuits considered the cultural programs inadequate. Those who wanted their children prepared academically faced time shortages in school. There was no consensus on where the emphasis in curriculum should be placed.

The school committee had good internal rapport, and it had several successful programs to its credit. Total take-over of programs was hampered by a lack of knowledge among community and school committee members about the current school system, the perception of the change to local control and the skills required to transform the current system. Members were aware of the difficulty of the change to local control and they
were confident of their abilities to make a new system successful. They knew that it would require a long period of time to implement; however, the group had not committed itself to a time frame to make this happen.

The community was proud to have several Indian teachers. The number of teachers considered by parents to be "good teachers" had improved in recent years. The teachers were generally receptive to change, although they wanted more input in impending decisions. Community members were generally satisfied with the running of the school, although teacher-teacher and teacher-community communication was limited.

Interviewees were enthusiastic about the basic premise of the change to Indian control because it was considered to be an Indian concept rather than an INAC imposition. People saw the advantages of an arrangement where decision-making was local and education could be tailored to community needs. At the same time, community members had difficulty visualizing the details of the system required to provide this local involvement.

The community could expect some outside help from Indian and Northern Affairs. The provincial department of education was willing to support the change, although provincial curriculum guidelines limited
adaptation and administrative procedures did not mesh with traditional Band methodologies.

Insights

Although there had been a marked advancement in community attitude and expectations towards matters in education, there were extensive obstacles impeding successful take-over of education at the time of research. The key players' lack of knowledge about the process, lack of commitment to a time frame, avoidance of community involvement, and shortage of dedication to financial accountability were far-reaching barriers that would require a different mind-set to ensure success.

Recommendations.

(1) It is recommended that if the Sandy Lake Band is going to commit itself to taking control of its education system within the next decade, that it do so immediately and state a date of intended take-over.

(2) It is recommended that the Band Council determine a method for acquiring a suitable education authority, and proceed to obtain members. The Band Council should delineate its own powers and that of the education authority. The Band Council should create a
mechanism for regular liaison between the education authority and the Band Council.

(3) It is recommended that the Band Council provide the education authority with a sense of direction through a statement of the philosophy of education on the reserve. The philosophy would be in conjunction with an overall long range comprehensive plan which determines needs, aspirations and priorities of the community.

(4) It is recommended that the education authority ensure an immediate massive information and public relations program. The entire community must be made aware of the importance of education for future living, how the present system runs, and the possibilities for local control. The importance of having informed decisions made from the community level can not be overemphasized.

(5) It is recommended that the education authority formulate a work plan. Its activities would include hiring personnel to ensure that the requirements of the planning phase of take-over were completed in the allotted time frame. Two key positions would be that of director of education, and administrator. A suitable action plan and time frame is outlined in Table 1.
TABLE 1

SAMPLE TIME FRAME

ASSUMING LOCAL CONTROL OF EDUCATION

SANDY LAKE ONTARIO

IMPLEMENTATION

<table>
<thead>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Community Discussion/Involvement</td>
<td>*</td>
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<tr>
<td>B.C.R. Intent to IMAC</td>
<td>*</td>
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<tr>
<td>Request Stage 1 funding</td>
<td>*</td>
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<tr>
<td>Develop philosophy</td>
<td>*</td>
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<tr>
<td>Establish Education Authority</td>
<td>*</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hire Director, Administrator</td>
<td>*</td>
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<tr>
<td>Training</td>
<td>*</td>
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<tr>
<td>Development Management Framework</td>
<td>* *</td>
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<tr>
<td>Long range planning</td>
<td>* *</td>
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<tr>
<td>Teacher Liaison, Lay-off/Transfer</td>
<td>* *</td>
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<tr>
<td>Goals, Priorities, Year Plans.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Request stage 2 funding</td>
<td>*</td>
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<tr>
<td>Develop Policy Manual</td>
<td>* *</td>
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<tr>
<td>Staffing, office personnel</td>
<td>*</td>
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<tr>
<td>Staffing, principal, teachers</td>
<td>* *</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assumption of school programs</td>
<td>* *</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dev. Curriculum Committee</td>
<td>* *</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
(6) It is recommended that the education authority insure the creation of a management framework under which the new system will operate, indicating the personnel required, the role of each, the evaluation and operational procedures, employee policy and contractual arrangements, codes of discipline, benefits and responsibilities, and organizational structure. The education authority should determine program priorities and develop a mechanism for reviewing programs.

(7) It is recommended that the education authority develop long range goals for the system. These goals would evolve from the philosophy as stated by the Band Council, and the information gathered from community surveys and input. The goals should be prioritized. The education authority should agree to an action plan and time frame for implementation of these goals.

(8) It is recommended that the education authority identify training needs and initiate training programs. It should develop mechanisms for liaison with the Band Council, the school personnel, and the community.

(9) It is recommended that the education authority initiate a system of financial and managerial
accountability to the Band Council and to the community.

(10) It is recommended that Sandy Lake affiliate with an association such as a tribal council or Northern Nishnawbe Education Council which represents the interests of several bands. This group could supply such services as professional development, curriculum development, special education, and other areas that could be provided more expediently on a shared basis. The Band should monitor potential support from the provincial department of education.

Additional Research

Because Indian control of Indian education has been implemented across the country in small disconnected ways on limited budgets and with limited expertise, there is a scarcity of up-to-date information available on the topic. Sandy Lake Band would benefit from data or evaluations done on other Bands who have assumed control. These assessments could indicate the effects of the change to Indian control on (a) the overall performance of all individuals involved, (b) the self concept of students and community members, and (c) the success rate of students in Indian controlled schools.
It is highly recommended that additional studies be conducted relating locally controlled education systems to other aspects of community life including areas such as health, housing, and economic development, and to the concept of self government generally.

Conclusion

The arrival of Indian control in Sandy Lake is exciting and challenging, but at this point, also intimidating. In the north, the pace of life is relatively slow, and yet, when change comes, it is often immediate and intense. Community members will benefit from this drastic change if they immerse themselves in the planning, remain flexible, and adapt to each new challenge as it arises.
Appendix

Outline for Semi-Structured Interviews

Introduction

I am doing a project for my school work. In it, I am looking at the school system at Sandy Lake. I am trying to see in which direction the school may be heading and the problems that people here may have in trying to get schooling the way that they want it. I hope to make some suggestions regarding what to do in order to improve the system.

Questions

1. a) What are some of the good things that you have seen happen to the schooling system here over the past ten years?

   b) (To expand the above.) Do you think it has helped the school to have:
      i) elders involved in the school,
      ii) native teachers
      iii) a syllabics program,
      iv) native curriculum,
      v) a gymnasium?

2. a) What areas of education are you concerned about, or not happy with?
b) (Expansion). How do you feel about:
   i) the amount that the kids are learning,
   ii) the subjects that the children take,
   iii) the teachers that are hired
   iv) the buildings,
   v) the dropout rate?

c) How do you think that the problems mentioned above (taken one at a time) might be improved?

d) Where do you think would be the best place for your kids to go to high school? Why?

3. (If the term "local control" has already been mentioned): What do you mean by the term "local control of education"?)
(If the term has not been mentioned): Some of the schools in Sioux Lookout are taking over control of their own school. What do you think the term "local control" means?

4. a) Have you heard much talk here about the possibility of Sandy Lake going "local control"?

b) (If the answer is yes): How do you feel about that possibility?
(If the answer is no): How would you feel about the possibility of Sandy Lake going "local control"?

5. a) What advantages do you think that local control would have?

b) (Expansion). Do you think that local control would:

   i) encourage more parental involvement.

   ii) create better communication among parents and school staff,

   iii) help obtain more relevant curriculum.

   iv) increase self esteem among the students and community members.

   v) lower the dropout rate?

   vi) improve the quality of teachers?

6. a) Where do you think the community might have problems in making local control work?

b) (Expansion). Do you foresee problems in:

   i) lack of funding,

   ii) local ability to handle money,

   iii) lack of interest and participation of people,

   iv) lack of qualified people,

   v) lack of training available,

   vi) political appointments.
vii) the acceptance of change and doing things differently.

viii) role shock (King, 1981)?

7. a) Does this conversation help you to express what you feel about the situation?

b) What is the most effective way for community members to communicate with each other regarding school concerns?

8. Do you have any other comments that you wish to share with me?

9. Do you have any questions that you would like to ask me?
REFERENCES CITED


Interviews


ADDITIONAL REFERENCES


