

**First Nations Leadership and Spirituality within the Royal Commission  
on Aboriginal Peoples:  
A Saskatchewan Perspective**

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by

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## **Abstract**

This study investigated First Nations leadership and its connection to spirituality within the context of the hearings held in Saskatchewan for The Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples. The questions that guided the study were as follows: 1) In what way is leadership constituted and conceived for the First Nations of Saskatchewan, 2) What does the concept and practice of spirituality encompass for the First Nations of Saskatchewan, 3) What is the imputed understanding of the relationship between spirituality and First Nations leadership?

The literature review investigated the characteristics and attributes of First Nations leaders, then progressed to the exploration of the holistic nature of First Nations leadership and the contrasting relationship it has with western leadership, and finally, identified the importance of spirituality for the First Nations people. Because of its encompassing nature, spirituality was inevitably linked to First Nations leadership; it was identified as a pervasive worldview or belief and a source of strength for leaders.

The study used The Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP) hearings held in Saskatchewan as the primary source of data collection. Approximately 3 000 pages of the Saskatchewan hearings, in transcript form, were analysed. Although there were some structured hearings, generally the RCAP hearings were fairly open and provided rich description and a vast amount of valuable information.

The predominant themes that emerged in relation to First Nations leadership included: leadership that was accountable and trustworthy, leadership that embraced the

treaties and self-government, positive leadership, and leadership and the youth.

However, spirituality is a term that appears throughout the hearings. Spirituality was associated with healing, culture, and education, but was not clearly defined by the participants. The themes that emerged in relation to spirituality included: spirituality and its connection to healing, and spirituality and its connection to culture. The data indicated that spirituality was clearly an important aspect of First Nations life and should encompass leadership. Apparently for First Nations people spirituality is “in-grained” and an “ever-existing” aspect of life that does not require repeated explanation.

It was not surprising to see the close connection between spirituality and First Nations leadership when one reflects on the First Nations holistic perspective on life. The inter-connectedness speaks to the importance of an emphasis on spirituality in any First Nations leadership education.

## **Acknowledgements**

I recall a motivational lesson that I did with my students a few years ago. We came up with “P” words essential for success. Those words included: preparation, planning, practice, persistence, perseverance, patience, and prayer. I had stretched the “P” rule by adding “em-powerment.” These past two years, in the process of obtaining my Masters degree in education, I have had to put these words into action in ways I could never have imagined. Ultimately, I have achieved the success by achieving a goal, and, in turn, have become empowered.

I do not believe that dreams are realized alone. I have had many people believe in me and support me emotionally and spiritually throughout this wonderful, but challenging, experience. They have exhibited the extraordinary qualities of patience and love.

At this time I would like to express sincere and deep appreciation for the people who have encouraged me to “be the best that I could be.” Dr. Vivian Hajnal has graciously offered her encouragement, understanding, and wisdom. I am grateful for the opportunity to have had Vivian as my advisor. I would like to thank Dr. Keith Walker and Dr. Sheila Carr-Stewart for joining me on this mission and for providing their knowledge and expertise. Special thanks to Denise Larson for being my external advisor, and to Larry Sackney for being the chairperson. Their efforts have made this thesis a stronger document.

My family has been unbelievable throughout this process. My husband, Pat, has never once doubted my ability to finish this task. He has talked with me, walked with

me, and listened to me. He is my partner in every essence of the word. My precious children, Cole and Shawkay, were and are a never-ending source of inspiration. They add balance and joy to my life. My children studied while I studied, and I learned to play when they played. I am blessed with a warm and caring family; this accomplishment is as much theirs as it is mine.

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I feel that I have been stretched, challenged and filled in many different ways. I have learned not only more about myself, but also to appreciate and cherish those around me, and life, to a greater extent.

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## **CHAPTER 1**

### **THE PROBLEM**

The rapid change that would accompany European contact with North America was unforeseeable for the First Nations people who had occupied the land for thousands of years. Sadly, the unwelcome change was to the detriment of the people and their way of life. Peoples who were proud, and with an established way of life, were forced to become subservient to a generally unsympathetic dominant culture. In a shockingly small amount of time, First Nations people's lives became monitored, restricted, confined, and filled with foreign standards. Timeless migrating lifestyles were eliminated, boundaries were set, customs, traditions and ceremonies were made illegal, language was made shameful, and children were taken from caring communities. In addition, traditional roles changed. For instance, historical leadership roles became meaningless and powerless. Because of colonization, a culture was diminished and almost all together extinguished, generations of lives were shattered and lost, and identities were stolen.

Today, First Nations people are again experiencing "life-altering" change - this time for the better. First Nations people are using and exercising their "voice" to regain control of their lives and destiny. Dynamic, aggressive, yet culturally sensitive leaders are emerging among First Nations people with the intent of embracing change and using it to the advantage of the people. These leaders are being noticed and taken seriously. First Nations issues are gaining attention. The leaders who represent the First Nations

people are urging Native communities across Canada to unite. They are calling attention to inherent rights, treaties, injustices, and a better, healthier way of life. In essence, the spirit of First Nations people is awakening with the help of leadership and spirituality. Leadership, after all, entails “mission, direction, inspiration” (Fullan, 1991, p. 157), and the opportunity to stimulate change. It is in times of accelerated change that leadership is an integral and crucial element in determining outcomes (Fullan, 1991, p. 144).

The importance of effective leadership for First Nations people is apparent. After all, leadership affects every aspect of First Nations life, including education. In addition, on a local, national, and international level, First Nations leadership is being recognized as a force with which to be reckoned. This leadership is also being criticized and scrutinized; hence, it is important to examine of historical and current First Nations leadership, and, more specifically, effective First Nations leadership. This study examines First Nations leadership, the spirituality of the First Nations culture, and how the two intersect within the context of the Royal Commission of Aboriginal Peoples.

### **Researcher's Story**

For as long as I can remember I have been an inquisitive observer. I have watched people around me and wondered what was the story behind their actions. I have watched people important to me take on significant and challenging roles and responsibilities because they had to do so, or because they had the ability to do so. Essentially, these were leadership roles and responsibilities. In a First Nations community there is no shortage of leadership opportunities. The leadership examples range from the obvious and prominent, such as my father's role as chief and coach for

many years, to my mother's more subdued, but just as important, role as mother and transmitter of values and knowledge. Jules (1988) comments that "as Native Indian people have taken control of their affairs, positions of leadership have arisen; more and more Native Indian people are taking leadership roles in many areas, including education" (p. 4). An awareness of the demand for effective First Nations leaders and personal experience have led me to become intrigued by leadership in general. I consider it a privilege to examine First Nations leadership and to discover how it can positively influence and change another passion of mine, First Nations education.

I value education, in general, because my parents valued it and were, during my childhood and presently, passionate about education. Education, from this perspective, would include schooling in a "town school" in addition to the learning that comes from the subtler, everyday lessons of life and living. I grew up in the small Saulteaux reserve of Fishing Lake. Prior to entering kindergarten at age four, I spoke only Saulteaux, as did most everyone in my community. My parents spoke English only when required. I remember being surrounded by and feeling connected to my family and the community. As a young child I did not realize that we were not financially wealthy. It was the only way of life I knew. I was cared for and loved enough not to be impeded by the sometimes unhealthy physical, emotional, and spiritual conditions around me.

My parents maintained high expectations for their six children. They did not give their children any other option but to attend school regularly and excel at whatever they tried. My parents were involved in our schooling; my mom attended parent-teacher interviews regularly and was available to teachers first thing in the morning and at the end of the school day. This was made possible by my mom's occupation - she drove our

school bus. Having parents who made themselves available and who encouraged excellence in schooling may be more of an occurrence in the dominant society, but it was not as evident in the environment and times in which I grew up.

In my area First Nations students often felt defeated before they got very far in their schooling; therefore, they succumbed to the many pressures associated with leaving their community and culture and simply dropped out. In many cases parents did not encourage them to go back to school; perhaps it was because they too had trouble enduring the daily pressures of living outside the reserve. Further, if students were sixteen or older, teachers usually did not make the attempt to bring them back to school. Ultimately, the First Nations students with whom I grew up did not see the value in attending school because I believe that they felt the system did not see value in them.

Consequently, from grade ten to twelve, I was the only First Nations student in my classroom. Even then I knew that it was not because I was more intelligent than the friends from my community. It was because my parents gave me no choice but to complete high school. They felt, as I eventually did, that I was capable of obtaining my grade twelve diploma. Again, this task was not as regular an occurrence in our community as it was in the dominant society; therefore, my graduation was a time of celebration, not only for my family and me, but also for the community as a whole. To add meaning to the graduation ceremonies and to pronounce pride in who I was, with the support of my family and my classmates, I graduated in traditional dress - white buckskin dress with beaded accessories and adornment. I felt that if I could reach this goal, anyone from my community could. In my opinion, the barriers had been crossed.

I tell this story because I have discovered that this story not only belongs to me, but to other First Nations students - even today. The obstacles and frustrations that I experienced during my many years of schooling are not unlike the obstacles and frustrations experienced by other First Nations people. As a result, like my parents who took responsibility for my health and well-being and were active in my education, I have chosen to encourage not only First Nations children, but children in general, to reach their potential intellectually, physically, and spiritually.

I have ten years of teaching experience and during that time I have also had the opportunity to take on various administrative roles. Over the years I have discovered from experience and through literature that leadership, whether on the ball field, in the classroom, or in the home, has the ability to elevate or deflate a child's or adult's potential. In addition, I strongly value good and meaningful education and have learned that good and great leaders throughout the world also perceive education as the key to freedom. Nelson Mandela, as cited in Winfrey (2001), believes that "no country can develop unless its citizens are educated. Any nation that is progressive is led by people who had the privilege of studying. Educating ourselves [is] a way to give ourselves the most powerful weapon for freedom" (p. 224).

As a high school student I knew that various freedoms, and with these freedoms familiar and unfamiliar obstacles, awaited me once I obtained my grade twelve diploma, then later my education degree, and now, my Masters degree. From my perspective, meaningful education should be culturally relevant and should attempt to include and balance the elements of a student's intellectual, physical, emotional, and spiritual needs. Historically and currently, in most cases, western education has excluded the emotional

and spiritual aspects of a child's development. For a First Nations student, this may take the significance, purpose, and meaning away from learning. The high dropout rate among First Nations students indicates that school systems are not effective and, one can conclude, not meaningful for First Nations students. In response, education needs to change positively, and leadership needs to change direction and embrace the needs of the whole child.

I had the wonderful opportunity to be principal of a small high school for one term. This high school catered to First Nations students. The goal of staff was to work as a team, to work collaboratively, and share decision-making with collegiality and effective and constant communication. Students were required to set realistic short and long term goals, to be actively involved in their education, and to be positive role models for their peers and for younger students from their community. Staff members set high expectations and tried to make the learning meaningful. Essentially everyone, teacher and students together, took on various leadership roles and shared responsibility. The students often said that they felt a sense of belonging and significance. This school experience was contrary to their experience in larger school settings where they felt detached and unimportant. Native people, even today, feel a need to connect and belong to a community. It is almost as if they are born with an ingrained sense of "interconnectedness" with community and with all of creation.

It is with this experience, understanding, and interest in education, leadership, and spirituality that I read and analysed the results of The Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples Public Hearings.

### **Focus and Framework**

To gain an understanding of First Nations leadership and spirituality, one has to examine both the culture and its epistemology. While First Nations people are diverse people, different in many ways, there are threads of similarities that bind First Nations people together. Traditionally, First Nations people were spiritual and perceived the world holistically; it was important for the people to be one with the land, nature, and their Creator. Second, Elders were valued; and, third, First Nations people worked as a community. Finally, in terms of leadership, leaders were and are an important and essential part of the community (Bryant, 1996; Jules, 1999; Hanohano, 1999; Muskego, 1995).

Leaders are important in First Nations communities for many reasons. Leaders ensure that the culture of the people is protected. Because leaders represent culture, one has to examine both culture and leadership. Jules (1999) notes, "Before one can be a leader, one has to know one's culture" (p. 20). Further, Bryant (1996) believes that "culture is at work both inspiring and constraining conceptions of leadership" (p. 9). Bryant continues by stating, "scholarly literature has not yet interpreted our expectations of leaders as culturally derivative" (p. 9). From this perspective, leaders are defined by cultural values, rather than culture being defined by leadership.

Until recently, First Nations leadership has been suppressed within Canadian society. First Nations people, as a whole, have been suppressed, as was their culture - primarily due to colonization. The repercussions are great. Hosted (as cited in Bryant, 1996) explains that "the export of ideas in other countries without regard for the values context in which these ideas were developed... is not only limited to politics, but it can

be observed in the domains of education, and in particular, management and organization” (p. 9). In terms of leadership, Bryant (1996) believes that instead of assimilation, dominant cultures should develop a match between “western conceptions of leadership and local culture” (p. 9). This would require commitment to co-operation and to understanding one another’s cultures and perceptions on issues, such as leadership, on the part of First Nations people and the dominant culture.

Leadership reflects the values of a people. One can surmise that a leader’s success depends upon his knowledge and facilitation of these values. Garrett (1996) lists twenty traditional values that First Nations people generally embrace. These values include: cooperation, group harmony, modesty, autonomy, silence, patience, generosity, reciprocity, moderation in speech, avoidance in eye contact, careful listening, careful observation, imagery, view of time as relative, present time focus, veneration of age (wisdom comes with experience and age), respect for nature, spirituality, importance of family, and a holistic view of health. Garrett views humility as an integral value as it “is essential to a harmonious way of life where the emphasis is placed on relation rather than domination” (p. 15). One can conclude that humility, rather than domination, is a value that First Nations leaders should cultivate, internalize, and exhibit in order to live in harmony with the community (Jules, 1999; Keyes et al., 1999; Bryant, 1998; Garrett, 1996).

Over time a leader, organization, and people can become known for their values. According to Sioui (1992), these values essentially define the culture, and he suggests (as cited in Hanohano, 1999), “The portrait of a culture depicts the ideas that are most important to its people. The hierarchy of priorities is called a scale of values; culture,

therefore, is fundamentally a question of values" (p. 217). Begay (1997) states that a leader "may not be the person best able to communicate with [other groups] or the most highly educated, but he is someone who meets the group's culturally shaped expectations" (p. 44) and value system. Essentially, a leader reflects the values important to his people, or culture. Therefore, it is important to examine these values when contemplating leadership; otherwise, one might find oneself in a similar predicament as the French general who exclaimed, "There go my people. I must find out where they are going so I can lead them."

Leaders help provide vision and direction. Leaders seek answers to problems their communities are encountering. In the area of education, strong leadership is the key to effective reform and change, and also the key to effective schooling (Fullan, 1991; Ranchman, 1999). In general, one can surmise that leaders have the ability to generate cause for hope and optimism.

Traditional educational practices were an integral part of First Nations communities in the past; today, formal education is becoming as valuable. Leaders have voiced that value. The Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations Chief Perry Bellegarde actively and passionately promotes education. He can often be heard quoting Ahtahkakoop, "education is our buffalo." In addition, at the 1988 Assembly of First Nations, as cited in *Tradition and Education: Towards a Vision of Our Future*, George Erasmus stated:

The future of our people in Canada and the survival of our cultures, languages, and all that we value are directly linked to the education of our children. I believe that the wealth of information contained in these reports will enable us to construct an educational system that truly reflects the needs and desires of the First Nations. Furthermore, I believe that these systems, once established, will

help us to restore the health of our communities and empower us in our efforts to implement self-government. (p. 6)

Thus, for Plains First Nations people education is replacing the buffalo as the modern means for survival and health. The Assembly of First Nations in its national report, *Tradition and Education: Towards a Vision of Our Future*, declares the value and essence of education:

First Nations education focuses on the well being of the students. It is a holistic approach that prepares First Nations students for total living. Modern First Nations education is consistent with traditional First Nations education. Both incorporate a deep respect for the natural world with the physical, moral, spiritual, intellectual, and life skills development of the individual. First Nations language and cultural values are taught and enhanced through education. First Nations language education develops qualities and values in students such as respect for Elders and cultural tradition, modesty, leadership, generosity, resourcefulness, integrity, wisdom, courage, compassion for others, and living harmoniously with the environment. (p. 6)

First Nations leaders have clearly recognized the importance of education, and that leadership is required to facilitate the vision of education.

### **Research Questions**

The focus of this research is to investigate First Nations leadership in general, and more specifically, the spiritual aspect of First Nations leadership within the context of the hearings obtained from The Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP). Because of the enormity and vastness of the information in RCAP, the First Nations leadership and spirituality investigation was confined to Saskatchewan. The questions that guided the research pertaining to the Royal Commission on Aboriginal People Saskatchewan hearings are as follows:

1. In what way is leadership constituted and conceived for the First Nations of Saskatchewan?
2. What does the concept and practice of spirituality encompass for the First Nations of Saskatchewan?
3. What is the imputed understanding of the relationship between spirituality and First Nations leadership?

### **Significance of the Study**

The primary purpose of this study was to gain insight, understanding, and meaning of First Nations leadership, to investigate spirituality, and to examine the relationship and impact that spirituality has on First Nations leadership. Begay (1997) notes, "research for Native leadership education is scarce" (p. 7). This attempted to ameliorate the scarcity of the research on First Nations leadership. First Nations leadership, and First Nations people, in general are at a time in history in which real, positive changes can be made. It is an exciting time for First Nations leaders. It is also a time of great responsibility. Begay stresses that it is the responsibility of First Nations leadership to confront the current issues facing First Nations people and their communities (pp. 1-2). The challenges of re-building nations is great and the residue of the oppressive history of First Nations peoples does not assist in the healing and strengthening of a people. Begay (1997) quotes Thorton and Standard to outline the history that precedes First Nations leaders and the history that greatly affects First Nations leaders' ability to lead today:

As the twenty-first century approaches, Native America is looking back on the past 500 years of European and Euro-American contact with a mixture of ambivalence, bitterness, and strength. Native American history is replete with

accounts of oppression similar to what has occurred in other countries and societies that have experience colonization. Atrocities of tremendous proportions, such as land piracy, forced political reorganization, cultural deprivation, and economic devastation have been documented extensively. (p. 1)

The effects of colonization did not only occur to First Nations people in North America, but to other indigenous peoples throughout the world. These indigenous groups have united and work together to find solutions. From this union, these indigenous groups are provided with strength and hope because of the shared history they bear.

In addition, by providing information on First Nations leadership and its importance in promoting, enabling, and realizing positive change, not only for First Nations education, but also in all aspects of life, this thesis makes a contribution. In understanding First Nations leadership from various perspectives, one can then provide the necessary support and education for First Nations leaders holding various positions. An eventual result might even be a program that would offer First Nations leaders the opportunity to connect, confer, share experiences, and learn about First Nations leadership.

The document, *The Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples* (completed in 1994, published in 1995), was the data source for this study. The hearings provide rich, descriptive, and authentic viewpoints, issues, and stories of First Nations people throughout Canada in the form of transcribed interviews. RCAP could be examined, analysed, and used as a decision-making tool by First Nations leaders and organizations for decades to come.

### **Assumptions**

1. It was assumed that the participants in the RCAP hearings held in Saskatchewan were forthright in sharing their perceptions of the phenomenon under study.
2. It was assumed that RCAP participants of the hearings had experience and knowledge in the area of leadership and spirituality.
3. It was assumed that the Saskatchewan RCAP's hearings would provide sufficient information on First Nations leadership and spirituality.

### **Delimitations**

1. The study was delimited to the hearings found in The Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples document where data were collected between 1991-1994.
2. The examination of leadership was delimited to the hearings held in Saskatchewan.
3. The examination of spirituality was delimited to hearings held in Saskatchewan.

### **Limitations**

1. The research is limited to the interviews provided by First Nations people for The Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples.
2. The researcher's experience, opinions, and knowledge of First Nations culture influenced the interpretation of the data.
3. Data collections were limited by the perceptions and information offered by the voluntary participants in interviews.

4. Some interviews were interpreted from an Aboriginal language to English; therefore, meaning may be compromised or slighted.
5. The researcher could not probe the participants for greater understanding of issues, topics, and presentations due to the nature of a document analysis.

### **Definitions**

For the purpose of this study, the following terms are defined:

#### **Aboriginal, Native, Indian, Indigenous, First Nations**

First Nations refers to the people who first occupied the land prior to colonization. The body of people with mixed ancestry (European and First Nations) became known as Metis. The researcher and the interviewees use the terms interchangeably. The term used is usually the personal preference of the speaker.

#### **Culture**

Refers to the values, beliefs, attitudes held by a group of people, allowing people to communicate, interpret behavior, and to attach meaning to behavior and events that are shared. Shared events and behavior lead to shared knowledge, skills, and customs (Shein, 1985).

#### **Leadership**

Leadership is defined by the Webster's New World Dictionary (1994) as, "1) the position or guidance of a leader; 2) the ability to lead; 3) the leaders of a group" (p. 767). The author examined leadership with the understanding that leadership belongs to everyone, to the community, to the group. In other words, we all have

leadership capabilities and skills that stem from our areas of expertise, gifts, and talents from which society can benefit.

## Spirituality

In relation to this study, spirituality does not relate to religion. Spirituality embodies life and is essentially a way of living. Spirituality stems from the spirit.

Oladele (1999) believes:

Spirit is the heart of meaningful education. Spirit is the spark of life that resides within every human being; it is the connection to the fabric of all life and to the source of all creation, and it is the essence of what it means to be a human being. Spirit is a gift from ... the Creator. (p. 62).

The participants of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal People do not attempt to define spirituality; hence, in respect to its many different and personal meanings, the author also does not confine the term to one specific definition.

## Organization of Thesis

Chapter One outlines the problem of the study. Chapter Two includes a review of the literature pertaining to effective leadership characteristics and explains the connection of leadership and spirituality. The methodology used to conduct the study is described in Chapter Three. The findings of the research are presented in Chapter Four. Lastly, Chapter Five presents a summary of the research study, a discussion of the findings, and recommendations for further research.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE**

This chapter provides a review of scholarly literature within the construct of First Nations leadership and First Nations spirituality. The chapter begins with a summary of the importance of effective leadership in relation to change and leadership styles. Next, First Nations leadership characteristics and attributes are examined. This is followed by a comparative investigation of Western and First Nations perspectives on leadership, spirituality, and world-view. Spirituality is then defined and examined, as is leadership's connection to values. The chapter concludes with thoughts on the relationship between leadership and education and the potential that these two elements have in causing positive, second-order change in the First Nations community.

#### **Leadership**

The researcher has chosen to examine the role of leadership in stimulating long-term change in First Nations communities for various reasons. First of all, there is a need for First Nations education to change or re-focus, and the greatest motivators for change are leaders (Fullan, 1991, p. 76). Bass and Stogdill (as cited in Bhindi and Duignan, 1997) stress that "leadership made 'the critical difference' in the success or otherwise of organizations across the whole spectrum of life: education, church, business, military, politics and the government" (p. 117). Ramnarayan and Rao (as cited in Bhindi and Duignan, 1997) continue:

The lasting tribute to leaders is that the culture, institutions and practices set in motion by them persist long after their own departures from the organizational scene. Whereas the organizations move on, *the imprints of these leaders continue to inspire them.* (p. 117)

Leaders also voice and reflect cultural values, such as spirituality.

This study examines literature pertaining to First Nations leadership, along with characteristics and attributes that would characterize an effective leader - one who should be able to promote effective, efficient change in education, among other things. Leaders, for the purposes of this paper, take many forms and responsibilities. They could be a director of a school board, a principal of a school, a teacher leader, an education committee member, or a student leader.

Leadership styles have shifted and changed with the demands of time. There has been a significant shift away from traditional hierarchal forms of administration and leadership to more lateral, collaborative forms of leadership. In today's leadership, decisions are shared, responsibilities are shared according to individual strengths and interests, and, in most cases, culture and values are considered. Presently, there are more examples of transactional and transformational leadership than in the past. Transactional leadership as defined by Burns (as cited in Wren, 1995) is characterized by "an exchange of things" (p. 101). People may separate after the exchange, as there is no lasting purpose. Transformational leadership as defined by Burns is different in the sense that there is a common purpose that binds people together. Burns comments that "Leaders and followers raise one another to higher levels of motivation and morality" (p. 101). Decoux and Holdaway (1999) believe "the effective principals use both transactional and transformational leadership styles in building healthy school relationships" (p. 80). In

this respect, leadership may have become more complex and, perhaps, situational. In essence, leadership is everyone's responsibility - it belongs to the community as a whole.

Research and literature indicate an effective organization requires strong leadership (Fullan, 1991; Reihman, 1999). Fullan comments that "all major research on innovation and school effectiveness shows that the principal strongly influences the likelihood of change, but it also indicates that most principals do not play instructional or change leadership roles" (p. 76). Fullan continues by noting that "principals' actions serve to legitimate whether a change is to be taken seriously (and not all changes are) and to support teachers both psychologically and with resources" (p. 76). Keyes et al. (1999) builds on the work of Rossman, 1992; Stainback and Stainback, 1991; Van Dyke, Stallings & Colley, 1995, and supports the concept that "effective leadership is essential in the development of successful inclusive communities" (p. 204). Keyes et al. also comment that Sergiovanni and Schein "described critical components of effective leadership behaviour that empowered staff toward successful restructuring efforts, as directly related to the amount of congruity between principal talk and principal behaviour" (p. 205). Essentially, a principal should "walk his/her talk" and be willing to support his/her stated beliefs and values. This research is not specific to Native education, but to education in general.

### **Characteristics and Attributes of First Nations Leaders**

One can find sufficient research that lists the characteristics and attributes that presumably are synonymous with effective, strong First Nations leaders. Begay (1997) believes that leaders need the following nine personal abilities: morality, spirituality,

sound judgment, sense of humanity, emotional stability, diplomacy, authority, physical health, and cultural knowledge and assets (e.g., language). Jules (1999) identifies six qualities and behaviours of traditional leaders:

1. A leader does not become isolated or separated from the people, nor is a leader above the people, the people are seen as a support system.
2. A Native Indian leader's characteristic – wisdom, was thought to be an important characteristic.
3. A leader possesses humility.
4. A leader serves rather than bosses.
5. To continue as a leader, one must possess personal integrity and practice honesty.
6. A leader is a person capable of directing people, without giving the impression that they are being told what to do – a facilitator. (pp. 19-20)

I find it interesting that Jules' list echoes Robert Greenleaf's (1977) concept of servant leadership. Jules and Greenleaf view leaders as servant leaders – committed to those they serve. In essence, leaders are sensitive to the needs and wants of the collective. Bryant (1998) argues that Greenleaf's view of leadership differs from First Nations leadership perspectives. However, I would not entirely dismiss Greenleaf's concept of leadership as being dissimilar to aspects of First Nations leadership. Urion (1993) describes Verna Kirkness, former editor of *Canadian Journal of Native Education*, as a leader of compassion, and a leader who serves and is aware of the "connection between people." Urion (1993) claims leadership is an "example of service" (p. 1). Greenleaf (1977) claimed that "the only authority deserving one's allegiance is that which is freely and knowingly granted by the led to the leader in response to, and in proportion to the clearly evident servant stature of the leader" (p. 49). There are definite parallels between Greenleaf's view of leaders as servants and the role that many leaders take in First Nations communities.

On a similar note, Block (1993) advocates leadership as partnership and empowerment. Block, as well as Hanohano (1999), also advocates an end to paternalism. Bhindi and Duignan (1997) label the practice of service and stewardship as “authentic leadership”; whereas, Covey (1992) calls this “principle-centered leadership.” Finding these connections and similarities of leadership concepts leads to more meaningful and grounded understanding of what leadership is and how it functions. Investigating meaningful connections and similarities is a spiritual act. This leads one to contemplate spirituality. Essentially, spirituality is attaining an understanding and appreciation of the inter-connectedness of all things, including leadership.

Brunner (1996) states that leaders, like warriors, possess leadership characteristics of efficacy, strong support, and strong personal traits such as “being extremely bright, not openly ambitious, workaholics, ... and are exceptionally skillful” (p. 12). Brunner’s seven warrior/leader principles of leadership are:

1. Warriors choose their battles... A warrior never goes into battle without knowing what the surroundings are.
2. Discard everything that is unnecessary.
3. Aim at being simple. Apply all the concentration you have decided whether or not to enter into a battle, for any battle is a battle for one’s life... A warrior must be willing and ready to make his [her] last stand here and now. But not in a helter-skelter way.
4. Relax, abandon yourself, and fear nothing.
5. When faced with odds that cannot be dealt with, warriors retreat for a moment. They let their minds meander. They occupy their time with something else. Anything would do.
6. Warriors compress time; even an instant counts. In a battle for your life, a second is an eternity; an eternity that may decide the outcome. Warriors aim at succeeding, therefore, they compress time. Warriors don’t waste an instant.
7. A stalker never pushes him[her]self to the front.. This is power that stresses collaboration, inclusion, and consensus building. (pp. 14-23)

Brunner states that applying these principles brings about three results. First, leaders learn not to take themselves seriously. Second, leaders learn to be patient. Last of all, leaders learn to improvise. They learn to make do with the material at hand or to do things creatively. Brunner's study focuses on women leaders; however, this knowledge would be beneficial to all leaders.

Muskego (1995) presents an extensive list of qualities that characterize effective First Nations leaders. Her research indicated that a First Nations leader should be: trustworthy, culturally sensitive, people-oriented, sensitive, warm, outgoing, caring, honest, flexible, open, self-analytical, adaptive, dedicated, committed, creative/innovative, energetic, a risk taker, an initiator, tolerant of ambiguity, maintain a sense of humour, humanistic, supportive, and have an open-door policy. In addition, First Nations leaders should have common sense and be: educated, positive, community oriented, consistent, fair, friendly, confidential, patient, enthusiastic, a team player, a motivator, accountable, calm, a thinker, empathetic, sharing, a good observer, discrete, innovative, assertive, responsible, understanding, strict, direct, and considerate of others' feelings. This list is all encompassing and thorough, but is it realistic?

Muskego (1995) goes on to list "variables" which a leader must understand in order to enhance his/her knowledge and skills of leadership: native culture, tradition, kinship, native teachings and learning styles, language, Indian-white relations, development of Indian policy, concept of self-government/sovereignty, and First Nations politics and needs. In addition, Muskego presents the following:

The following abilities and awarenesses [are] helpful to the effective administrator: to act as a facilitator, coordinator, or a mediator; to accept the Indian school as a unique entity; to see self as Indian educator, and as a unique person (specialist); to understand specific tribal needs and expectations; to believe

that the Indian student can succeed; to set high expectations of Indian students and self; to understand the nature of change process; to understand human behavior; to establish and maintain well-defined structures; to utilize people's talents, interests, and efforts; to communicate openly in all directions; and to encourage others. Awareness of the following areas were also acknowledged as being important to the administrator: awareness of loosely structured environment; importance of being a part of the community; and awareness of hidden curriculum, and recognition that the school community was a highly complex political society ... The following strategies were identified as being helpful to the effective administrator: being able to utilize a participatory decision making process (consensus); and being able to utilize a clear problem solving process. (pp. 81-82)

One can argue that these characteristics are also not specific to the First Nations leader, but to all leaders, and that focusing on traits of a leader is not feasible, nor will it promote any lasting change. However, it is important for all leaders to be aware of the virtues that a culture values. Perhaps the importance for a leader does not lie in possessing all or most of the valued leadership characteristics, but in learning the abilities and strategies listed by Muskego, or the seven-warrior principles presented by Brunner (1996).

Sealy (1985) comments that leadership, prior to the 1930s, was an "inherent characteristic." People believed that a leader was blessed with leadership characteristics and qualities. This was later titled the "Great Man Theory." Hersey and Blanchard (as cited in Sealy, p. 15) state that the trait theory was an approach to leadership and research at this given time based on physical size, intelligence, self-esteem (self-confidence), and ambition.

Studies have also tried to identify universal characteristics of leadership in order to identify potential leaders. Their efforts were futile. Intelligence seemed to be the only consistent characteristic. Sealy (1985) concludes that "evidence seems to indicate that there are probably no personality trait or characteristic that consistently distinguish the

leader from the follower. There is, however, some evidence to suggest that the leader probably cannot be markedly different from his subordinates if he is to be followed" (p. 16). This statement supports the concept that leaders reflect culture. The trait theory gave way to the "situational approach", the proponents of which stressed that different situations often require different types of leadership" (p. 16). Mary Parker Follet (as cited in Shafritz & Steven Ott, 1996) emphasized making decisions in relation to the situation. Basically, she was referring to worker empowerment. This may be an area of investigation for First Nations people. It may be more appropriate than to focus on the characteristics of leadership. The focus should be on other aspects of leadership. Moving away from trait leadership would add more depth and meaning to leadership.

The idea of a leader for certain situations is not a new one. Prior to the Indian Act and mandated elections for chief and council, leaders were not elected but "emerged from natural order and laws of nature as people who attracted followers" and traditional selection criteria (Irwin, 1992, p. 10). Malloch (1984) believes that "leaders emerged from among those who demonstrated exceptional skill and understanding grounded in their experience of life and the natural order" (as cited in Irwin, p. 10). Manuel (as cited in Irwin) emphasized the importance of language and leadership entailing both the worldly and spiritual realm of existence:

It is the people who make or break a leader. If he is giving voice to their souls they endow him with that status; if he fails to speak their minds he is forced out; if he encircles the people with confused zeal by running after every concern but their own, he may be tolerated but never respected or admired. (p. 10)

Manuel (1974) stresses that "a leader who stands no taller than the rest of his people stands in the center of a circle and speaks the voice of the minds and souls he

hears around him” (as cited in Irwin 1992, p. 10). Armstrong (1987) believes that traditional leadership originated from the “indigenous philosophy, which formed the spiritual basis for its preservation... As a result, the full human potential was tapped in the individual, including abilities that seem beyond comprehension” (as cited in Irwin 1992, p. 10). Because of the all encompassing influence, ability, role and responsibilities of traditional leaders, Deloria and Lytle (Jules, 1988) note “many non-Indians concluded that chiefs had some mystical, but absolute power over other members of the tribe” (p. 10). It is evident that traditional First Nations leadership required the leader to consider and utilize both the visible and invisible forces, the earth and the cosmos.

Begay (1997) has discovered that culture and language greatly influence leadership. He compiled, from fifteen different tribes, the titles used for leadership and their translation in relation to leadership. The findings presented different perspectives of leadership. The leadership roles and expectations range from (and can be compared to) authoritative, to transformational, to servant leadership. For instance, the Apache title for leader is *Nantan*, which is translated to *somebody who is boss, or somebody who tells you what to do*. Begay notes that it is important for the Apache leader to have the proper knowledge and traits to lead and oversee the people during particular activities such as hunting. Cornell and Kalt (as cited in Begay, 1997), adds that an Apache leader should be “convincing – able to exercise charismatic attraction – and to exhibit intelligence” (p. 44). Oratorical ability was, and still is, valued among the Apache people.

*Naataani* is the Navajo word which means *planner or thinking with them*. The Navajo people believe that leaders are endowed with four gifts specific to leadership. These include: 1) lightning located in the left hand, representing authority, 2) winter

thunder and light located in the palm of the right hand and tongue, representing honest speech, 3) sunlight located in the eyes, representing vision, and 4) rainbow, which represents short and long-range planning. The definition also suggests collaborative, shared decision-making.

The titles and definitions offer insight into the values of each tribe. These values are then reflected onto the leader. The translation of *Ogeechitda*, the Ojibwa word for leader, means the *head one*, while the translation of the Mojave word for leader, *Bebadahan*, is a *magical person*, a person of charisma, almost a God. The Cherokee translation of *Adagewudi* is *beloved one*. It is clear from these examples that the title given to First Nations leaders defines the role and expectations of leadership within their culture. Despite the differences in leadership roles, Begay (1997) has managed to connect the definitions in the following five ways:

First, Native meanings of leader do not necessarily imply the accumulation of wealth (property and goods). Rather, there is an emphasis on position and role. Second, Native leadership terminology implies a proactive approach with the use of terms like “to direct” and “leads the people.” Third, a Native leader works with the people, rather than commanding or having power over them. Fourth, there is the recognition that leadership has male and female aspects. Fifth, the religious and spiritual aspects of leadership are important. (pp. 43 – 44)

Begay also contends:

Cultural mandates are explicitly established through knowledge, skills, and abilities demanded of Native leaders. These leadership demands give insight into the tribe’s political and social organization and institutional structure. And, since these definitions affect Native leadership identity, they have implications for how current Native leaders should be trained and suggested curriculum offerings” (p. 44).

Overall, culture and language play a major role in defining the expectations and roles of First Nations leadership. It is important not to generalize First Nations leadership under

one category; however, it would be beneficial for a leader to understand the differences and commonalities in leadership among various First Nations.

According to Begay (1997), along with knowledge and understanding of how language and culture influences leadership, First Nations leaders today should possess certain characteristics and be aware of the content and context of leadership performance. The content of leadership performance refers to a leader advocacy of First Nations sovereignty and inherent rights. Overall, Begay concludes that a successful leader excels in the following nine areas: 1) advocating for Native sovereignty and rights, 2) having excellent communication skills, 3) establishing an effective and efficient system of tribal government operation, 4) maintaining integrity, 5) maintaining a reliable support network, 6) understanding and use of culture, 7) exhibiting admirable qualities of leadership, 8) being aware of the people, and 9) achieving development (p. 131). Begay strongly believes that leadership education in the area of characteristics, context, and content is required to help First Nations leaders become more knowledgeable, effective, and efficient.

### **First Nations and Western Perspectives**

To achieve an understanding of Native spirituality one has to examine the common values that First Nations peoples share and how these differ from Western culture. Hanohano (1999) believes that studies examining Western education and culture are not meant to “denigrate” or pass “judgment”, but to “point out that even its ardent supporters denote a crisis” (p. 206). Purel (as cited in Hanohano, 1999) “describes the crisis in education as a moral and spiritual crisis, preferring the word crisis to problem or

issue or concern” (p. 206). The process of examining and contrasting First Nations and Western views on leadership may seem critical, but inspection and analysis of the two perspectives can provide insight that can then lead to second-order changes that are healthy, positive, and lasting. It is, after all, important to confront problems head on, rather than to avoid or mask them.

When contemplating Native spirituality one has to view all aspects of Native life because they are inter-connected. Examining the epistemology of Western and Aboriginal cultures may provide insight into elements of First Nations spirituality. Hanohano (1999) describes the epistemology as the “branch of philosophy that deals with the nature and attainment of knowledge” (p. 6). Education is central to epistemology because it involves the transmission of knowledge. Hernandez (1999) states:

Knowledge of Native epistemologies would allow educators to move beyond the ‘what’ to the ‘why’ Native students leave school. Increased knowledge of the philosophies that underpin Native students’ perceptions and actions in school is necessary if research is to move beyond the level of description and ascription to a more accurate representation of Indigenous students and the role culture plays in their schooling experiences. (p. 3)

It is becoming more apparent that Western and First Nations attainment of knowledge differ greatly. Ermine (as cited in Hanohano, 1999) believes that the prime difference lies in First Nations and Western views of the universe. Western science perceives the universe through “atomism” - viewing and measuring the universe objectively and fragmentally (Cajete, 1999). Fragmentation leads to appearances and feelings of isolation and the belief that the universe is separate and disconnected from humanity. It is not surprising that this view of the universe invades other aspects of Western culture. Relationships are disconnected and self-centred as people entertain the thoughts of “what’s best for me?” rather than “what is best for us all?” Consequently,

there is also a desire to own and accumulate as many fragmented pieces of the universe as possible, and, like the universe, this outward quest is infinite and unquenchable.

The First Nations people view the universe from a different perspective. (This philosophy will be discussed in the past tense, as these views were more pervasive in the past, though its influence can be found in the present.) First Nations people looked at the universe from a global perspective. Generally, they sought their purpose in relation to the whole of existence. Hence, their sense of place and power is derived from the total environment. Nature and the universe are connected and giving entities, so people should be. Therefore, there is no desire to accumulate material riches, but to share and give.

Malloch (as cited in Irwin, 1992) explains:

In the traditional way of life, people governed themselves largely in accordance with the laws of nature, which had been made known to them as a result of living on the land for generations. At the same time, social order and the survival of the people were ensured through harmony and order not only in the relationships amongst [themselves] but also in relationships between the [people] but also in relationships between the [people] and the land and the spiritual world. (p. 9)

The view of “interconnectedness” and harmony lends itself to valuing community. Jules (1999) lists values significant to First Nations communities as “cooperative behaviour and the greater good of the tribe over individual wants” (p. 7).

Elders were a valuable, essential, and integral part of the community. They were viewed as the “keepers of the world for the unborn” (Jules, 1999, p. 11). In Native communities, Elders were valued because of their wisdom and perceived closeness to the Creator. Archibald (as cited in Irwin, 1992) reports:

The Elders were the most respected teachers; important things such as values and higher levels of knowledge about history and environment were told through their stories and private conversations with children. The Elders also undertook a

major responsibility in preparing the younger generation for specialized roles. (p. 9)

Berger (as cited in Jules, 1999) notes that young leaders today still seek guidance and knowledge from their Elders in their “contemporary struggle for survival” (p. 11). Irwin (1992) describes the traditional learning and teaching process as holistic. Jules comments, “Elders traditionally were the teachers in our communities (1999, p. 11). Elders kept certain values alive through stories and by ensuring that certain ceremonies were not lost (Hanohano, 1999; Garrett, 1996). Today, Elders from T’suu T’ina First Nation (Sarcee) urge young people to utilize their intelligence, gifts, and talents by “staying in school” (Elofson & Feldberg, 1990) and keeping healthy in mind, body, and soul. They scold the young for their lack of ambition and for succumbing to abuses, and they are concerned for their future and health. The Elders interviewed from T’suu T’ina believe that education is one step in improving conditions and regaining the hope of a people. Fishing Lake First Nations Elders also believe that leadership, of many forms, is required to lead the younger generations to a better, healthier way of living – this includes schooling. Jules suggests that First Nations communities should resist the temptation to isolate Elders in institutions, but should rather bring them to the forefront of community building and decision-making.

Bryant (1998) believes that there are some “American understandings of leadership” (p. 8). He remarks that “if we grant culture a major role in defining the values underlying leadership, it is clear that what educational administration has defined as leadership is tinted by American culture” (p. 8). Bryant identifies the following four

American cultural values regarding leadership as defined by the National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP) Assessment Centre material:

1. Leadership is important. Leadership is seen as vital and the success of an enterprise rises and falls according to the quality of leadership.
2. Leadership is defined as moving the group toward the attainment of an objective. ... leadership means being focused on getting something accomplished.
3. Time is a precious commodity to American management theorists and practitioners. A leader is aware of the external pressures of time.
4. American leadership encourages individual behaviour. (p. 8)

Bryant also indicates that leaders have the appropriate mix of “initiating, task-oriented characteristics and consideration, people-oriented characteristics” (p. 9). This means that a leader must have a “goal, a focus, a vision, and objective” (p. 9), and make sure that his/her followers attain the same end product. Bryant refers to the caring of people and the driving of the same group of people toward a certain product as the “two faces of leadership” (p. 9). This could also be referred to as the “paradox of leadership” (Eden, 1997).

In contrast, Bryant (1998) identifies the following six First Nations leadership themes that emerged from his research:

1. Leadership is decentralized. Every person has a role, and each person’s role is important to the whole. Contributions made to the whole differ. The total contribution is an “organic” whole that can only be understood over life cycles.
2. Immanent value of all things influences leadership. Leaders grow and eventually are accepted as leaders. The foundation of respect for a Native American leader rests on that person’s knowledge and interpretation of how things work.

3. Native American leaders have a responsibility for the welfare of the collective. A leader practices non-interference with the notion of trusting the choices, actions, and abilities of those in the collective.
4. A leader does not seek image projection. In other words, a leader does not stand out, does not seek advancement, and does not manipulate image in self-aggrandizing ways. Leadership is a position of honour requiring humility, wisdom, and self-depreciation. This also requires the leader to be an exemplar – a role model.
5. The Native American leader has a deep connection to the present. The traditional Native American leader has a strong spiritual component that seeks to understand the lessons provided by daily experience. The present is viewed as a time to be appreciated and enjoyed.
6. Decisions are made as a group. Decision-making is a collective behaviour, consensually, in which all participate, with no one standing out as a leader.

Throughout the article, Bryant contrasts the dominant cultures views on leadership to the six First Nations themes of leadership. It is evident that researching leadership from different cultural perspectives is valuable and necessary in understanding the intricacies of different cultural groups. It also provides insight as to why certain organizations, such as First Nations education, are struggling.

### **Spirituality**

First Nations people are spiritual. Most First Nations children were taught to be keenly aware of their surroundings (seen and unseen), to be grateful for all life, and to

rely on the Creator. Garrett (1996) notes that “Native American children develop a heightened level of sensitivity for all the relationships of which they are a part and which are a part of them, for the circular (cyclical) motion of life, and for the customs and traditions of their people” (as cited in Hanohano, 1999, p. 216). For First Nations parents, grandparents, and ancestors spirituality was and is a way of life. Hanohano remarks, “The spiritual permeates all aspects of Native life” (p. 210), and that “the most distinguishing feature of Native culture and language is its spirituality” (p. 211). Garrett (1996) comments, “For many Native American people, spirituality is not a part of life, it is life” (p. 29). Begay (1997) explains that spirituality involves work, vision, and commitment if “Indian philosophy and traditional way” (p. 137) are to be maintained.

Spirituality is not only an important educational concept for First Nations education, but it is a topic of discussion for many educational researchers. *Educational Leadership* (December 1998-January 1999) devoted an entire issue to spirituality entitled “The Spirit of Education.” It is important to note that, in this paper, spirituality is not synonymous with religion. Religion is but a small part of spirituality. Spirituality is much more than understanding religious practices; as mentioned, it is a way of living (Montgomery Halford, 1999). Oladele (1999) believes:

Spirit is the heart of meaningful education. Spirit is the spark of life that resides within every human being; it is the connection to the fabric of all life and to the source of all creation, and it is the essence of what it means to be a human being. Spirit is a gift from the Source, what some people might call the Creator. (p. 62)

Palmer (1999) defines spirituality in the following way:

The ancient and abiding human quest for connectedness with something larger and more trustworthy than our egos – with our souls, with one another, with the worlds of history and nature, with the invisible winds of the spirit, with the mystery of being alive...Spirit questions are the kind of questions that we, and our students ask every day of our lives as we yearn to connect with the largeness of

life: “Does my life have meaning and purpose?” “Do I have gifts that the world wants and needs?” “Whom and what can I trust?” “How can I rise above my fears?” “How do I deal with suffering, my own and that of my family and friends?” “How does one maintain hope?” “What about death?” ... When people ask these deep questions, they do not want to be saved but simply heard; they do not want fixes or formulas but compassion and companionship on the demanding journey called life... As a teacher, I have seen the price we pay for a system of education so fearful of things spiritual that it fails to address the real issues of our lives – dispensing facts at the expense of meaning, information at the expense of wisdom. (pp. 7-8)

Likewise, Garrett (1996) suggests, “A way of seeking harmony within ourselves is to ask ourselves the following questions as posed by Four Directions, and to balance the answers in whatever way is comfortable to us” (p. 19):

East: Who or what am I a part of; where do I belong?

South: What do I enjoy doing, or do well?

West: What are my strengths; what limits me?

North: What do I have to contribute or share? (p. 19)

Garrett (1996) continues:

The traditional way emphasizes the necessity of seeking harmony within oneself, with others, and with one’s surroundings. It emphasizes active relationship between the physical and the spirit world and the necessity of seeking harmony and balance in both. (p. 19).

Staratt and Guare (as cited in Keyes et al., 1999) state that “spirituality is a way of living ... spiritual persons tend to bring that depth and sensitivity and reverence to all or most of what they do...respond[ing] to other people and situations with an openness, acceptance, and reverence” (p. 230). They go on to explain that spiritual leadership “implies the belief that one can elicit in others the belief in their own power for goodness...[a belief] in the essential possibility of human greatness” (p. 194). Bolman and Deal (1995) comment that spirituality involves “reclaiming the enduring human capacity that gives

our lives passion and purpose” (p. 6). They also suggest that leaders can reclaim the “soul of leadership” in the following four ways: reclaiming your soul, leaning into your fear, expressing your spirit, and following the cycle of the spirit. Block (1993) defines spirituality as “living out a set of deeply held personal values, of honouring forces or a presence greater than ourselves” (p. 48). Block implies that this lifestyle is necessary to find meaning in our life. Keyes et al. (1999) explain that “behaviours described as ethical, caring, humble, patient, and loving” were connected to a spiritual leader. Keyes et al. discovered that “the empowering principal’s behaviours in an inclusive school are under-girded by a spirituality in six beliefs: the value of personal struggle, the dignity of all people, a merger of the personal and professional, confidence that people are doing their best, the importance of listening, and the importance of dreams” (p. 233). Keyes et al. goes on to state that “spirituality ungirds and weaves through the various dialectical processes of support, facilitation, and actualization evidenced in a community that values each member equally” (p. 233).

First Nations people view spirituality as the essence of living and of life. Spiritual living promotes balance and harmony. Saulis (as cited in Hernandez, 1999), a Mali sleet educator, explains:

A universal sense among native people exists in regard to spirituality and that it coexists in all aspects of life. It is not separate but integral, it is not immutable, it is not replaceable, it resides in the essence of a person, and it is not always definable. It is in the community and among the people; it needs to be expressed among the people. (p. 40)

Whitt (1995) shares a similar view with Saulis. She states that “since the human, natural, and spiritual worlds are tightly interwoven within Indigenous cultures, spirituality is a

pervasive dimension of natural existence” (p. 241). Whitt then elaborates with a quote from Andrew Grey:

[For Indigenous peoples] knowledge of the environment depends on contacts with the invisible spirit world which plays its own crucial part in ensuring the reproduction of society, culture, and the environment ... Among many Indigenous people, particularly of the rain forest, specialists establish a technical prowess in production activities and curing illness from their relationship with the spirit worlds. (p. 241)

Traditionally, First Nations people viewed the natural and spirit world as one. They sought knowledge from both dimensions.

Hanohano (1999) believes:

Spirituality is the fundamental principle that Natives have been searching for in their university experience. It is a search from within that will give Aboriginal and other students the harmony and balance that is needed to meet the demands and rigors of [life] and lead them to discover their true selves. And it is this search for truth that leads us to consider Native education. (p. 211)

Hanohano believes that restoring essential spiritual knowledge into First Nations education will bring “harmony and balance back into Native people – thus education for meaning” (p. 211). Jules (1999) believes that the growth of First Nations education is “accompanied by the surge to maintain our Native Indian identity and spirituality” (p. 6). Jules (1999) believes that First Nations peoples have fought to maintain both identity and spirituality despite efforts of assimilation (p. 6). Spirituality for First Nations people would be, as Battiste (1999) would phrase it, an “autumn seed” that longs for re-birth, for revitalization.

The problem of avoiding or not recognizing the importance of spirituality in education is not exclusive to the First Nations situation. Starratt and Guare (as cited in Keyes et al., 1999) believe:

The problem is that... in administrator preparation programs, we find no mature handling of the spirituality of teaching or the spirituality of leadership. One of the main reasons, of course, is that education is considered an applied social science. The language of science does not admit, or at least was not used to admitting, the language of spirituality. (p. 196)

Bolman and Deal (as cited in Keyes et al., 1999) also believe that “most management and leadership development programs ignore or demean spirit” (p. 232). Comments such as these suggest that spirituality is somewhat neglected but is essential in education.

The Assembly of First Nations 1988 Report on Education states the importance of the “well-being” of students and their desire for a “holistic” style of education that would prepare them for “total living.” The question now is, “How are educators going to achieve holistic education?” Hanohano (1999) believes that this could be achieved by integrating spirituality, culture, and education (p. 207). Hanohano emphasizes that “the spiritual is prevalent in Native cultures” (p. 207). He stresses that “the quest now becomes one of finding how faculties and institutions can incorporate the wisdom and spirituality of our communities and Elders to increase and enhance the harmony and balance that is so essential to fulfillment on their educational missions” (p. 218).

### **Leadership and Values**

We move mountains by first moving ourselves, and the way we educate makes all the difference in the world. The choice is ours. We make the difference. It is we who decide to live, or not to live, our visions. We are the creators of the world and realities we live in. We are the ones who must choose the path of our own learning. (Cajete, 1994, p. 68)

Ultimately, the quest for the awareness and attainment of leadership qualities and spiritual wisdom begins with an inner journey. A part of this journey requires value identification. Greenfield (1985) and Silver (as cited in Marshall, 1992) believes that

school administrator education often “neglects questions of values” (p. 368). Marshall notes that there is a need “for increased attention on values and purposes” (p. 368).

Literature has indicated that a leader reflects the values and culture of a people (Schein, 1985; Firestone & Seashore Louis, 1999; Jules, 1999). This implies that a leader truly believes and internally and externally incorporates the values and culture of the people. With this in mind, to be effective and genuine, it is imperative for a leader to examine and understand oneself before taking on the role of leader (Begley, 1999; Leithwood, 1992; Covey, 1997). The convergence and intertwining of a leader’s belief and value system with those of the people he/she serves could prove to be a dynamic, pro-active, and powerful exercise. However, according to Hodgkinson (1991), a matching of a leader’s values and those of the people he serves may not be possible. Hodgkinson (as cited in Leonard, 1999) states, “there is never perfect value harmony across or within levels; value conflict is the nature of human activity” (p. 30). Hodgkinson implies that value conflict is a necessary and unavoidable part of leadership. On the other hand, Sergiovanni (1996) believes that leadership becomes effective and meaningful if the community shares ideas, conceptions, goals, values, and vision. Sergiovanni labels the idea of common goals, values, and vision as “community of mind.” Max DePree (1989) labels this a “covenantal relationship.”

DePree (1989) emphasizes “a complete relationship needs a covenant ... a covenantal relationship rests on shared commitment to ideas, to issues, to values, to goals... Covenantal relationships reflect unity, and grace, and poise. They are expressions of the sacred nature of relationships” (p. 12). Sergiovanni and DePree’s idea of a shared value system closely reflects Tonnie’s (1957) concept of *gemeinschaft*.

Gemeinschaft focuses on community and steers away from the individual “I” to the more collective “we.” In addition, Sergiovanni emphasizes that leadership becomes meaningful when the community moves its focus from “whom to follow” to “what to follow.” Similarly, Gandhi claimed no followers. He urged people to follow that for which he stood. Gandhi passionately encouraged people to follow “what” rather than “who”, and he is often quoted as saying “it is enough to be my own follower.” Ovide Mercredi (1993) and Elijah Harper (1993), prominent and respected First Nations leaders, have also publicly promoted and demonstrated that people should follow a cause, preferably in a peaceful manner. Covey (1992) comments:

Now we work with fairness, kindness, efficiency, and effectiveness. We work with the whole person. We see that people are not just resources or assets, not just economic, social, and psychological beings. They are also spiritual beings; they want *meaning*, a sense of doing something that matters. People do not want to work for a cause with little meaning, even though it taps their mental capacities to their fullest. There must be purposes that lift them, ennoble them, and bring them to their highest selves. (pp. 178-179)

Before individuals can reach their “highest selves” they have to identify what matters to them – what provides them with meaning and purpose. Identifying individual, then shared, values may eventually lead to establishing individual, then shared, vision.

There is tremendous merit for a leader to examine and define his/her values as they fundamentally influence his/her actions and decision-making (Leonard, 1999).

Leonard posits, “Leadership, an important aspect of school culture, is also a ‘function of ... values’ (Hodgkinson, 1991, p. 16) and therefore manifested in different ways” (p. 31).

Bhindi and Duignan (1997) claim that in achieving “authentic leadership” a leader should “derive ... energy, purpose, and direction from: the discovery of *true self*, which is partly defined by meaningful and significant values; sensibility in relationships; from the

creation and maintenance of organizational structures and processes that are built on authentic values and standards” (p. 120).

Begley (1999) explains that personal reflection leads to value-added leadership. Value-added leadership is important in today’s world as “it is not enough for school leaders to merely emulate the values of other principals currently viewed as experts. Leaders of the future schools must become reflective practitioners in the sense that Donald Schon, Ronald Barth, Thomas Sergiovanni, and Christopher Hodgkinson have advocated for some time. The first step towards achieving this state is, predictably enough, to engage in personal reflection – familiar advice to anyone who has kept up with the leadership literature” (Begley, 1999, p. 19). Stephenson (1994) believes that “it may be difficult to get involved in discussions...if you haven’t had the opportunity to think deeply about your own personal dreams and plans. There is merit in carving out some time for yourself to reflect ... A personal perspective is vital to effective time management” (p. 91). Upon reviewing literature pertaining to values and leadership it becomes apparent that understanding your values and beliefs would help determine issues that demand a leader’s attention and commitment.

### **Vision Quest**

Barth remarks, “For a sailor without destination, there are no favorable winds” (p. 3). Thus, leaders help determine their future by understanding their essence of being and identifying underlying motives, purpose, and foundational values. In today’s world many tools have emerged to help one identify personal motives, values, and goals (Covey, 1997; Stephenson, 1994). For example, Ban Breathnack et al. (2001) guide people in

revealing and understanding their human and spiritual qualities with the goal of personal empowerment in the book *Unleashing Your Potential*. The purpose of the book is to help readers discover a “vision” for their lives. One would not lack resources for personal discovery and growth in today’s world. It appears that personal reflection is resurfacing after a long sabbatical.

Traditionally, inward reflection was encouraged, and sometimes expected, for identifying and strengthening purpose and vision among First Nations people. The Vision Quest was a rite of passage into adulthood. It also provided wisdom, purpose, and meaning to those who participated in the ceremony. The vision quest was an event one engaged in only with the Creator. Johnston (as cited in Hanohano, 1999) describes the essence of the Ojibwa vision quest:

Creation is, in the concrete, the fulfillment of the vision of Kitche Manitou (the Great Power)... Every being, whether plant, animal or rock [is] composite (material and immaterial) in nature...only men and women are endowed by Kitche Manitou with a capacity for vision; only man is enjoined to seek vision and to live it out... Vision conferred a powerful sense of understanding of self and of destiny; it also produced a unique and singular sense of worth and personal freedom. Vision, when it did come, was the result of one’s personal effort and maturation of the soul-spirit. As it was personal in terms of effort and as it represented a gift from the Creator, no one else was privy to it. There was to be in neither quest nor vision, interference... The vision, when it did come, marked the culmination of the preparation and quest and the beginning of a new order of life... No longer were the acts of a man or woman isolated deeds devoid of meaning or quality in the moral order. To life, there was purpose; to conduct, a significance in the fulfillment of the vision. No longer was true or applicable the dictum, “no man begins to be until he has received his vision.” With the advent of vision, existence became living... The Path of Life prescribed by vision was tortuous. Nevertheless, it was the mode by which men who received vision attained integrity, dignity, peace, fidelity, and wisdom. (p. 217)

Garrett (1997) describes the vision quest as:

A strict process of confronting oneself (and one’s fears) in a natural environment by spending four days and four nights in an isolated area...to receive “visions”

while fending for oneself, alone, relying only on help from Mother Earth and the “spirit guides.” After the Vision Quest experience, the individual (now considered an adult) emerges with the ability to demonstrate newfound knowledge, skills, and awareness for the benefit of his or her community. (pp. 23-24)

The vision quest was a powerful and effective means of providing purpose and direction. First Nations people were keenly aware of the interconnectedness of creation, and to discover one’s individual role and purpose in the intricate, intertwining “scheme of things”, the vision quest was performed to get in touch with self and the Creator. People usually emerged from the vision quest transformed and empowered. Feelings of fear, being overwhelmed, loneliness, humbleness, and a sense of peace and purpose would possibly accompany a quest. Because First Nations people are primarily people of community, it is not difficult to understand the fear of isolation that would accompany some participants. However, it would only be in solitude, isolation, and in personal reflection that one would get “in touch” with one’s soul and one’s Creator.

Perhaps discovering one’s vision and soul would help a leader understand his/her choices and would provide a leader with strength during difficult times. Bhindi and Duignan (1997) believe that “strong, clear visions can also provide direct psychological comfort in times of crisis and turbulence” (p. 125). Terry (as cited in Bhindi and Duignan, 1997) emphasizes that:

Vision is the heart of leadership because vision transcends political interests, testing the outer limits of the vested views that lock people into parochial perspectives, limit creativity, and prevent the emergence of new cultural and political realities. Vision designs new synergies. Vision challenges everyday taken for granted assumptions by offering new directions and articulating what people feel but lack the words to say. *Vision speaks the unspeakable, challenges the unchallengeable, and defends the undefendable.* (p. 125-126)

It is evident that the attainment of 'vision' is very much a spiritual process. It is also an essential element in producing dynamic change as Bennis and Nanus (as cited in Fullan, 1991) clarify:

All of the leaders to whom we spoke seemed to have been masters at selecting, synthesizing, and articulating an appropriate vision of the future...If there is a spark of genius in the leadership function at all, it must lie in this transcending ability, a kind of magic, to assemble – out of all the variety of images, signals, forecasts and alternatives – a clearly articulated vision of the future that is at once single, easily understood, clearly articulated, and energizing. (p. 82)

Careful contemplation and introspection of individual values and goals would lead one to a vision that is easily articulated, conveyed, and demonstrated to others. Values and vision are fundamental components of spirituality. It is apparent that spirituality permeates the internal and external aspects of leadership.

### **Education Models**

Education programs have emerged in response to the need and desire to improve First Nations schooling and First Nations administration. Once traditional models of schooling and leadership are addressed and exposed, changes need to be made to meet present and future demands and circumstances. The past, the present, and the future need careful consideration when advocating change. In addition, the concept of "change", its characteristics, effects, and outcomes have to be examined prior to the initiation and implementation of any proposed program or policy. Fullan (1991) believes that there are six key themes that change agents must consider when advocating improvement and change. These themes include: vision building, evolutionary planning, monitoring/problem-coping, initiative-taking and empowerment, staff development/

resource assistance, and restructuring. Community involvement in the planning process is critical to ensure success.

Fullan (1991) stresses that “change fails partly because of the assumptions of planners and partly because some ‘problems’ are inherently unsolvable” (p. 94). Communication and representation from all groups that would be affected from change is another key element to the success of the implementation of change. Fullan discourages change agents from making any assumptions in regards to another group, and in relation to the initiation, implementation, continuation, and outcome of the proposed change. Assumptions are “frequently hyper rational” (Fullan, p. 95). Assumptions frequently lead to problems in implementation and outcome of change; in the long run, they could lead to resistance to change. For example, the Canadian federal government made false assumptions regarding the care and future of First Nations people residing in Canada. The result is failure of programs, disheartened participation, resistance, and failure of assimilation. If successful change is to occur for First Nations people in terms of leadership and education, the elements of change and the process of change, and the symptoms of change have to be studied and understood prior to initiation and implementation.

Begay, Jules, Bryant, Hassin and Young, Cajete, and the Federation of Saskatchewan Indians have devised educational programs and models that may be important in the study of leadership. Jules (1999) believes that “before one can be a leader, one has to know one’s culture” (p. 20). Upon examining various models of leadership that are readily available, Jules concluded that there are “some aspects of non-Native Indian leadership models [that] are applicable to the Native Indian context” (p.

20). Jules notes that First Nations leaders are primarily facilitators. The one model that mentions the facilitative aspect of leadership is the manager style mentioned by Hall et al. The latter (as cited in Jules 1999) perceive leaders as colleagues, supporters, assistants, responders, and initiators of decisions and actions. Manager-leaders are more likely to share decision-making and establish a collaborative working atmosphere. Jules also notes that this model would be congruent to, and would enhance, First Nations behaviors and values. Jules suggests that various models should be explored collectively rather than in isolation.

Hassin and Young (1999) investigated the effectiveness of a self-empowerment program named the "Self-empowerment Leadership Focus" (S.E.L.F.) and community revitalization program. This program consists of the following interactive components: 1) a self-empowerment leadership training program; 2) interrelated and interactive collateral programs addressing Native American community health and social problems; and 3) intensive instruction in developing community projects. Hassin and Young (1999) explain:

The cornerstone of this leadership-training project is a self-empowerment program emphasizing cognitive, motivational, and behavioral processes directed toward an enhanced quality of life. During the process the individual becomes aware that there are two minds, or ways of perceiving, which are described as the *conditional mind* and the *unconditional mind*. *Conditional mind* is externally dependent; that is, the individual with *conditional mind* projects blame, anger, and guilt onto others in interactions, relationships, life situations, sickness, and so forth. In choosing the *unconditional mind*, the individual learns to accept one's self as both observer and decision-maker, accepting responsibility for how one perceives and interacts with others. Exercising this process also enables the individual to exercise leadership skills and to interact with others in a more constructive manner, empowering others to strive to accomplish goals. (p. 266)

The empowerment program is designed to help individuals deal with life's challenges personally and communally. It encourages both individual-based and community-based exercises. The goal of the program is empowerment and self-sufficiency in every aspect of a person's life, including the community level. At the community level, self-sufficiency is defined as the ability to motivate others to participate in community affairs and to assist them in accomplishing their goals. Hassin and Young (1999) conclude that the program was successful at a personal level. The participants felt that the program helped them become aware and responsive to their mental, physical, and spiritual needs. On a community level, the program was less successful. The participants did not transfer their "tools of empowerment" to others. Hassin and Young conclude, "This dichotomy between action and inaction suggests that there is a need for a self-empowerment program to address the problem of transferring self-sufficiency from the personal to the community level" (p. 285). The success of the program at a personal, individual level is impressive and should be commended. Perhaps this is all that should be expected and accomplished after a two-week program. Many factors (e.g. position in community) would affect community transference and this type of transference would take time, patience, persistence, and confidence. It is important to note that one's circle of influence starts with one's self, then expands to those closest to the individual.

Begay (1997) believes that an education program for leaders should include the context and content of leadership, along with the characteristics of leadership. He notes that until recently, First Nations leaders have been "leading by chance, not choice." Begay suggests that leadership education should include nation-building, executive administration, and cultural leadership curricula. Nation building curricula includes: 1)

understanding and advocating political sovereignty, 2) analyzing and developing constitutions, 3) analyzing and developing policy, 4) understanding politics, 5) negotiating, 6) developing economies, 7) building alliances, 8) strategic planning, 9) relating to the public, 10) making decisions, 11) understanding diplomacy, 12) knowing about political and legal relations, and 13) knowing how to communicate as head of state.

Executive administration curricula include: 1) implementing programs, 2) managing personnel, 3) managing and organizing office procedures and operations, 4) understanding how to plan strategically, 5) managing finances, 6) developing and overseeing tribal organizations, and 7) knowing how to communicate as an administrator.

Cultural leadership curricula include: 1) knowing tribal history, 2) understanding and speaking the Native language, 3) knowing the cultural and religious practices of the people, 4) knowing how to be available to the people, 5) knowing how to communicate cross-culturally, and 6) knowing how to communicate with a diverse group of people.

Begay (1999) posits, "For existing programs this means a partial shift away from the theory of policy-making and strategic planning to a more practical, real world context" (p. 157). Begay's program is thorough, but does it consider the two-year time constraint that some leaders experience under the mandated election act?

### **Conclusion**

It is exciting to find that research on First Nations leadership and First Nations education continues to grow in depth and in volume. This has been a wonderful journey through research and literature; although, I do believe that it is far from over. Examining First Nations education from a leadership and spiritual perspective has unraveled some

very interesting, yet crucial elements. It was necessary to move beyond the superficial elements of First Nations education and leadership into First Nations epistemology and philosophy. Understanding how traditional First Nations people view and experience life helps one to understand why many First Nations people do not adjust to and experience collective success in Western society. Traditionally First Nations people were spiritual. It is no wonder that young First Nations people today look at their parents and grandparents as if something is missing, and parents and grandparents grieve to see what their children are lacking. Literature, though somewhat limited, has indicated that leadership reflects the values and culture of a people. Therefore, for effective and meaningful leadership, it is imperative for a leader to carefully consider the values important to the people he/she represents. For instance, First Nations leaders should exhibit genuine humility and patience to receive respect and cooperation from their community. This “give and take” denotes the “law of reciprocity” that Garrett (1996) refers to while explaining the balance and harmony of interdependence.

The majority of studies on First Nations leadership only “scratch the surface,” and consequently necessitate a move from the identification of leadership traits and characteristics to the identification of the essence of First Nations leadership. The evolution of strong, balanced First Nations leadership would positively impact the First Nations community. Therefore, it is important for leaders to seek a balanced and healthy life. Scott (as cited in Bhindi and Duignan, 1997) notes that leaders cannot reserve “the spiritual for the private realm and leadership for our professional and public lives” (p. 127). Doing so would rob leaders of “a whole view of life” (Bhindi and Duignan, p. 127). Kanungo and Mendonca (as cited in Bhindi and Duignan, 1997) “claim that a

spiritually-guided leader engages in ... socialized rather than personalized power” (p. 127).

I am apt to agree with Hernandez (1999) when she states:

A more useful approach to investigating the cultural differences in schools between Native and non-Native beliefs and values would rely less on cultural conflict in the educational literature and more on work in Indigenous philosophies, practices, beliefs, and values of Indigenous cultures. (p. 7)

I also agree with Skinner (as cited in Hernandez, 1999) who argues that “no program, no matter how well funded or staffed, can succeed if it fails to incorporate and reflect the values of its own community” (p. 5). Solutions to problems, reflection on history and issues, and healing should not only be an individual effort but a community effort. Perhaps this effort may begin by re-visiting individual and collective spirituality.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The chapter begins with a reiteration of the research questions and an explanation of why the Royal Commission on Aboriginal People data were selected. The chapter proceeds to an explanation of the process the Commission undertook to determine research procedures in order to fulfill their mandate, and a discussion of various components of the research process. Qualitative research and qualitative interviewing are defined and elaborated. Next, data collection procedures and data analysis theory and techniques are presented. Lastly, ethical dimensions pertaining to this study are discussed.

#### **Research Design and Rationale**

The primary purpose of this study is to gain insight, understanding, and meaning of First Nations leadership and spirituality, and to examine the relationship and impact that spirituality has on First Nations leadership. One might have conducted interviews with Aboriginal leaders; however, it was decided to use data from The Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, which is widely available but under-utilized. The Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples hearings offered rich and substantial information on both leadership and spirituality; therefore, the data orientation, collection, and analysis solely utilized the RCAP document, making the research design a document analysis.

The following were the questions that guided the research using the RCAP document:

1. In what way is leadership constituted and conceived for the First Nations of Saskatchewan?
2. What does the concept and practice of spirituality encompass for the First Nations of Saskatchewan?
3. What is the imputed understanding of the relationship between spirituality and First Nations leadership?

### **An Overview of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples**

The Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples is an extensive document rich with information on Aboriginal history, concerns, and issues related to Aboriginal People today. The Commission members, along with those people involved in the process of collecting data, made great efforts in obtaining information that was “authentically” Aboriginal. They traveled extensively and made communication with the Commission readily available. The hearings in RCAP are original transcribed interviews of the people by academic researchers. The hearings format allowed the people to voice any concerns and time was generally not restricted. The Commission used a “sympathetic ear” as they sought to understand Aboriginal people across Canada, and through the process, to develop a positive relationship with the people. The document contains valuable recommendations, many which have not yet been implemented. The federal government has not officially responded to the RCAP study. The RCAP document was made

available to the public generally through academic institutions; however, it remains an untapped resource.

On August 26, 1991, the federal conservative government mandated The Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples. The mandate came into existence during an interesting time of “ferment” in Canadian history. The Canadian Constitution was a “heated” and seemingly urgent issue that had to be dealt addressed. After countless hours of preparation, work, persuasion, and anticipation on the part of the Progressive Conservative government, the Charlottetown Accord was unsuccessful. To the surprise of many Canadians, the Meech Lake Accord failed because of one man – Elijah Harper, a First Nations Member of Legislative Assembly from Manitoba. Essentially, Harper refused to accept Meech Lake because of the country’s historic treatment of its “original inhabitants.” Harper’s “no” was resounding and powerful, and it left a lasting impact on how Canada viewed its First Nations people.

The Royal Commission also came into fruition after the very public confrontation and violent protest that the Mohawk people exhibited against the federal government at Kanesatake (Oka) in the summer of 1990. First Nations people across Canada were no longer willing to remain silent participants regarding their future. For some First Nations people, The Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples represented a hope that their voice would finally be heard. Jim Bouroque (RCAP) vividly expresses the awakening and rebirth of strength and hope among Canada’s First Nations people:

The geese migrate because they have responsibilities to fulfill at different times and in different places. Before they fly they gather together and store up energy. I believe strongly that our people are gathering together now, just like the geese getting ready to fly. I am tremendously optimistic that we will soon take on the responsibilities we were meant to carry in the world at large. (p. 1)

Chief Justice Brian Dickson shares Bouroque's sense of optimism and anticipation:

As an ordinary Canadian I feel deeply that this wonderful country is at a crucial, and very fragile, juncture in its history. One of the major reasons for this fragility is the deep sense of alienation and frustration felt by, I believe, the vast majority of Canadian Indians, Inuit and Metis. Accordingly, the process of change and reform in Canada – whether constitutional, economic or social – should not proceed, and cannot succeed, without aboriginal issues being an important part of the agenda. (p. 1)

Sentiments and hope such as those presented by these men from different cultures will become a reality only if these perceptions venture into the broader Canadian mindset and value system. Progress in First Nations issues, such as health and lifestyle, will first occur by bringing to the surface the sometimes horrific, historical injustices. Once inflicted, these pains need compassionate and understanding attention. One can use the notion of an infection as an analogy. An infection has to surface with all its pain and ugliness and be tended with care so it can exit the system, but – one has to remember – a scar will remain as a reminder. Northrup (1998) provides a fitting metaphor:

Any surgeon knows that the treatment for an abscess is to cut it open, allowing the pus to drain. When this is done, the pain goes away almost immediately, and a new healthy tissue can re-form where the abscess was. (pp. 55-56)

Essentially, RCAP allowed the pain to surface for many Aboriginal people across Canada, and hopefully with this cathartic experience, one could anticipate healing.

The RCAP mandate was enormous, comprehensive, and “extremely broad” (p.

1). The commission stated that RCAP was:

Possibly the broadest in the history of Canadian royal commissions. We were asked to look at virtually every aspect of the lives of the First Nations, Inuit and Metis peoples of Canada – their history, health, education; their aspirations for self-government and relations with Canadian governments; their land claims, treaties, economies and cultures; their living conditions in the North as well as cities; their spiritual well-being and, more generally, their situation in Canada relative to that of non-Aboriginal Canadians. (p. 1)

All together, in the RCAP mandate, there were sixteen points of investigation that cover governance, lands and economy, social and cultural matters, and the North. Any one of these points could have been the focus of a royal commission.

The Commission was comprised of four Aboriginal and three non-Aboriginal members. The Commissioners were selected to represent the partnership between the two cultures. The appointed Commissioners included the following: Paul L. A. H. Chartrand (Professor of Native Studies at the University of Manitoba), Honourable Rene Dussault (Co-Chair and Justice of the Court of Appeal), George Erasmus (National Chief of the Assembly of First Nations from 1976 to 1983), J. Peter Meekison (Professor of Political Science and Belzberg Chair at the University of Alberta), Viola Marie Robinson (former president of the Native Council of Canada), Mary J. Sillett (former vice-president of the Inuit Tapirisat of Canada), and the Honourable Bertha Wilson (Justice of the Supreme Court of Canada). It was the intent of the Commission to view the mandate in a holistic, rather than segregated, manner. The Commission felt the issues were “interrelated issues requiring the holistic approach that is fundamental to the Aboriginal view of the world: the sense that the many facets of human life and the natural world are interconnected, that problems arise from interrelated causes, not just a single cause, and that solutions must therefore be holistic and multifaceted as well” (RCAP, p. 1).

The first priority of the Commission was to consult with Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal leaders across Canada. The consultations involved one hundred Aboriginal organizations, provincial premiers, and the provincial and federal ministers in charge of Aboriginal affairs. Another priority of the Commission was “not to set any limits on the issues that could be raised” (p. 2).

The Commission's goal was to reach as many people as possible. They advertised extensively and, as much as possible, went wherever they were invited. A toll-free line was made available for people who wanted to reach the Commission. Callers could convey their message in Inuktitut, Cree, Ojibwa, French, and English. It was imperative for the Commission to reach the "grassroots" people; therefore, extensive travel was destined to be a critical aspect of the Commission's work.

It was decided that the first public hearing would be in Winnipeg for a number of reasons. First, Winnipeg is the geographical center of Canada and of Turtle Island - many First Nations people refer to North America as Turtle Island. Second, Winnipeg has a large Aboriginal population. Third, Winnipeg was historically a gathering place for trade between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people. Lastly, one of the reasons that the province of Manitoba joined confederation was because of Louis Riel, the Metis leader. Women and men, youth and Elders, Metis, Inuit, and First Nations, Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people were represented at the initial hearing.

Between April 1992 and December 1993 the Commission traveled the country for eighteen months. Three teams worked at covering a vast area. An elder was encouraged to sit with the panel as the "Commissioner of the day" at each hearing. The purpose of the first round was to listen for overriding concerns, issues, and themes. In the rounds that followed, people were asked to discuss certain themes. Overall, there were four rounds of hearings between April 1992 and December 1993. Considerable time, energy, and financial cost was spent on this project, as RCAP states:

We had visited 96 communities (some of them more than once), held 178 days of hearings, heard briefs or statements from some 2 067 people representing organizations, communities or associations or speaking on their own behalf, generated 75 000 pages of transcribed testimony. At the conclusion of each round

of hearings we published an overview that was widely circulated to Aboriginal communities. We also received close to 1 000 written submissions from presenters and other members of the public. (p. 3)

In addition to the investigation in Canada, the Commission traveled to the United States to confer with the Dineh, Apache, Dakota-Lakota-Nakota Nation, and the Pueblo peoples. The Commission also visited Greenland to investigate the “home rule” of the Indigenous people. The purpose of extending the perimeters of the study outside Canada was to “consider the experiences of Indigenous peoples in other countries” (p. 4).

The work went beyond the hearings. The Commission funded 241 projects, receiving 228 completed reports. There were 350 research projects which were categorized under four themes – governance, lands and economy, social and cultural matters, and the North. Experts, scholars, and professionals were invited to attend round tables on health issues, education, justice, urban issues, and economic development. Concerns raised at the hearings led to special consultations on suicide, the 1950s relocation of the Inuit from Inukjuak and Baffin Island to the High Arctic, and the impact of residential schools. Historical mission church representatives met with the Commission regarding injustices incurred by Aboriginal children during the residential school era. The hope of the Commission was that the research and information would “be relevant for policy making, leading to policy advice and recommendations” (p. 6). The information gathered from the many sources was undoubtedly extensive.

In the fall of 1993, the policy process to prepare the final report was started. All together, fourteen Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal policy teams were involved in the process. In the fall of 1994, the Commission and the policy teams started drafting the final report. This group completed the draft in August of 1995. The final report

encompassed five volumes. Volume 1, *Looking Ahead*, focused on the history of Aboriginal people and their relationship with Europeans and then eventually their relationship to the federal government. Volume 2, *Restructuring the Relationship*, examined the significance of the treaties. Volume 3, *Gathering Strength*, addressed the impact policies and recommendations can have on Aboriginal health, housing, education, language, culture, self-reliance, and self-government. Volume 4, *Perspectives and Realities*, highlighted “the diversity that characterizes First Nations, Inuit, and Metis people” (p. 4). Volume 5, *Renewal: A Twenty-Year Commitment*, outlined a plan for implementation, education, and estimation of the financial cost for implementation of the recommendations. Overall, there were 3 200 pages in the final report, and the project cost fifty-eight million dollars.

The Commission felt that if the results would lead to positive change for Aboriginal people, then the effort, time, and cost would be worthwhile. The Commissioners concluded:

Chief Justice Brian Dickson’s recommendations for our mandate stand out like inuksuit, the Inuit stone landmarks that have guided travelers through the ages. They indicated the direction we were to travel, though perhaps not all the peaks and valleys we would encounter along the way. As we embarked on this voyage of discovery, we were guided by a vision of the renewed relationship that is possible between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people in Canada, and this is what we hope will continue to guide Canadians as they read our report, digest our recommendations, and decide on how best to forge our common future together. (p. 10)

The value of RCAP lies in the spirit of the intent by those who mandated the Royal Commission, those who supported it, and those who set out to gather and make sense of the tremendous amount of information provided by everyone from the grassroots people to the scholars. Never before had the federal government endeavored to understand

Aboriginal people – their history, issues, and concerns – to this extent, with the intent of making positive change and improving its relationship with the First Nations of Canada.

### **Research Orientation for RCAP**

As this study involves an analysis of The Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples Saskatchewan hearings it is important to gain an understanding of the principles, ethics, and process that the Commission underwent to establish research design and data collection. In order to fulfill their mandate, the Royal Commission members chose a qualitative research method to collect data from Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal participants. The primary method of collecting data was through interviewing. Further, information was obtained through scheduled and planned round tables, consultations, hearings, and intervener briefs. Also, existing public policy on Aboriginal peoples from 1965 to 1992 was studied, in addition to conducting case studies and commissioning current research to “fill in the gaps” on existing Aboriginal research data.

Research was organized under four major themes: governance, land and economy, social/cultural affairs, and the North. The Commission asked approximately 110 researchers and scholars to help determine the direction and design of the RCAP research by commissioning them to submit research data and papers on the subject of Aboriginal research. A majority of scholars indicated that authentic Aboriginal “voice” and perspective was lacking in research on First Nations people prior to The Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples. One of the researchers commented “The result of separate development and lack of dialogue has been the creation of political and economic systems that ignore concepts inherent in Aboriginal cultures” (Hamelin, p. 35,

Appendix B). Stevenson, on the other hand, pointed out “the imbalance in power that existed between the two and the wilful imposition of non-Aboriginal discourse in colonial relationships, which continue to shape behaviour even when the overt symbols of oppression have been removed” (p. 35). Brant, Castellano, and Hawkes believe that despite recent efforts to correct Native history, “The motivations, perceptions, societal relations, and adaptations to change as defined by Aboriginal peoples themselves” (p. 36) have been overlooked. The Commission made it a priority to give “voice” to First Nations peoples by ensuring that the RCAP’s mandate was well advertised and that the RCAP teams traveled to numerous locations (urban and rural) throughout Canada, making RCAP teams accessible and available to the public.

Another theme that occurred throughout the papers was the “necessity of parallel development” (p. 36) between cultures. Hamelin explained the concept:

There is symbolism in the train that enhances its value - added by using two rails that are independent yet associated for the task. Writers will think of independent canoes moving along the same body of water without colliding. Still others will envision a dog sled team on the tundra, each animal using its own track to jointly pull the sled. These metaphors imply that the mutual regime would include both independent and communal traits. (pp. 36-37)

Rather than “indigenize” the research, the Commission decided to utilize the idea of parallel cultures and development. The idea embraced co-existence and celebration of differences rather than assimilation.

In essence, the Commission’s on-site research was qualitative in nature. Although it is difficult to confine qualitative research into one definition because of its complexity, Denzin and Lincoln (2000) present a “generic” definition of qualitative research:

Qualitative research is a situated activity that locates the observer in the world. It consists of a set of interpretive, material practices that make the world visible. These practices transform the world. They turn the world into a series of

representations, including field notes, interviews, conversations, photographs, recordings, and memos to the self. At this level qualitative research involves an interpretive, naturalistic approach to the world. This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or to interpret phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them.

Qualitative research involves the studied use and collection of a variety of empirical materials...that describe routine and problematic moments and meanings in individuals' lives. (p. 3)

The objective of the Commission was to understand Aboriginal people in a holistic manner from different perspectives and locations, and to investigate and make recommendations on sixteen specific First Nations issues. The Commission could present recommendations regarding issues once sufficient understanding and information had been obtained, compiled, and analyzed.

Qualitative inquiry was adequate for a study of this type for numerous reasons. First, qualitative research methods tend to be "flexible, interactive, and continuous, rather than locked in stone" (Rubin & Rubin, 1995, p. 43). First Nations people transmit knowledge, values and culture orally; therefore, a less structured manner of collecting data is conducive to familiar First Nations means of sharing information. Further, as mentioned, First Nations people perceive their surroundings as a whole. Alasuutari (1995) believes that "in [qualitative analysis], the data are often considered as a totality; they are thought to shed light on a structure of a singular whole" (p. 11). Hence, a qualitative research process was sufficient for their study.

### **Research Orientation for this Study**

Specific to the RCAP hearings, qualitative interviewing was a tool used for collecting data and information. From an epistemological perspective, qualitative

interviewing and research is not based on the positivist philosophy of “objective quantifiable data, with the prediction and control of the behaviour of others as the goal” (Kvale, 1996, p. 11). Kvale notes that there is a shift to qualitative research that focuses more on obtaining an “understanding by means of conversations with the human beings understood” (p. 11). Basically, Kvale defines interviewing as “conversation[s] that has a structure and a purpose” (p. 6). He elaborates by stating that “inter view, is the interchange of views between two persons conversing about a theme of mutual interest” (p. 14). Intense listening and careful questioning is important in this process. The researcher may be in control by defining the situation and by choosing the topic and the questions. During the interview itself, open-ended questions and probing are used to entice meaning, clarity and depth (Ely, Azul, Friedman, Garner & Steinmatz, 1991).

The metaphors of a miner and of a traveler that Kvale (1996) uses to describe interviewing are contrasting, appropriate, and memorable. The miner metaphor sees the interviewer as a person who unearths valuable, uncontaminated information that can then be used for quantifying of “essential meaning” (p. 3). Knowledge of “pure experiences” (Kvale, p. 3) is given to the interviewer providing the questions are not leading. On the other hand, the traveler metaphor sees the interviewer as a traveler on a journey in an unknown, foreign land. The traveler gains insight, knowledge, and familiarity with the land and the people through immersion and conversation. RCAP researchers can be depicted as both miner and traveler. Their goal was to unearth valuable information in a familiar, yet unknown land.

Rubin and Rubin (1995) list specific approaches to hearing data. They include: topical oral histories, life histories, evaluation interviews, and focus groups. The topical

oral history seeks to explain a particular historical event or era, usually through narration. Life histories are usually told through stories or narration. They deal with experiences and feelings during specific stages of life and time. Helling, Watson, and Frank (as cited in Rubin and Rubin, 1995) determine that life histories “interpret the past and make it acceptable, and important” (p. 27). Next, evaluation interviews examine projects or programs. The interviews determine whether they are meeting expectations. Finally, focus group interviews consist of a group of people who discuss “changes of a shared impression” (Rubin and Rubin, p. 27). Topical interviews answer who, what, where, when, and why. It looks at a particular process or event. In contrast, the cultural interview is broader in scope. Its goal is to understand the values, norms, and behaviour of a group or society. There is no particular agenda and the climate is relaxed. Elements from the four interview approaches can be found in the RCAP hearings.

### **Data Collection**

Because this inquiry focuses on the hearings from The Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, this study can be classified as document analysis as defined by Gall, Borg, and Gall (1996). Gall, Borg, and Gall identify textbooks and other written documents as *documents* that can become objects of study (p. 357). They explain, “Documents and records rely primarily on language to convey meaning” (p. 362). Hence, because “qualitative researchers believe that the meaning of a text resides in the minds of its writer and its readers ... the meaning of a particular document or record can change from reader to reader and from one historical period to another” (p. 362). With this in mind, it is important to remember that the interpretation of the RCAP data belongs

to the researcher. Although a document may have the data a researcher requires for analysis, the major “draw-back” of document analysis lies in the fact that the researcher cannot interview the participants for verification, for clarification, or for elaboration.

The researcher implemented Seidel’s qualitative data analysis approach to analyse the hearings. Seidel’s (1998) qualitative data analysis contains three elements that work together in a concentric relationship: noticing, collecting, and thinking about interesting things. Seidel sites the following characteristics that are specific to the qualitative data analysis process:

- 1) Iterative and Progressive: The process is iterative and progressive because it is a cycle that keeps repeating... In principle the process is an infinite spiral.
- 2) Recursive: The process is recursive because one part can call you back to a previous part.
- 3) Holographic: The process is holographic in that each step in the process contains the entire process. For example, when you first *notice* things you are already mentally *collecting* and *thinking* about those things. (p. 2)

Seidel’s qualitative analysis process is analogous to piecing together a jigsaw puzzle. The pieces are there for the researcher to arrange into a picture, abstract or realistic.

RCAP hearings started with unstructured, open-ended interviews. Then, as themes emerged, the hearings became guided and structured, and probed toward certain topics and issues. Fontana and Frey (1991) state, “unstructured interviewing can provide a greater breadth of data than any other type, given its qualitative nature” (p. 652). On the other hand, structured interviews are less flexible, offer little variation and deviation from the question, and the interviewer controls the pace and time allotted for the

interview. The interviews that occurred in the last round of hearings were more structured for the purpose of eliciting specific information, but the Commission remained somewhat flexible in terms of time and topic.

The magnitude of The Royal Commission on Aboriginal People is enormous. The hearings themselves span approximately 75 000 pages. After examining the hearings for some time, the researcher felt it was necessary to narrow the area of inquiry. The examination of leadership and spirituality was confined to the hearings held in Saskatchewan. These hearings were held in the following locations: Regina, Saskatoon, Prince Albert, North Battleford, La Ronge, La Loche, Wahpeton, Ile La Crosse, and Buffalo Narrows.

The Royal Commission made extensive efforts to reach and hear as many people as possible, Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal. They traveled and advertised extensively, and made a toll-free number available for those people who were not able to attend a hearing. Although they were listening for specific issues and, at times, geared questions toward those issues, they did not limit the time or topic of a speaker. Participants were given the freedom to speak on whatever issue or concern they desired and they were generally given the time. Overall, the people responded with openness and honesty – they embraced the opportunity to be heard, some for the first time.

### **Data Analysis**

Janesick (1994) explains, “The purpose of these disciplined approaches to analysis is, of course, to describe and explain the essence of experience and meaning in participants’ lives” (p. 391). Analytic induction is a process conducive to qualitative

research. Gall, Borg, and Gall (1996) define analytic induction as “the process of inferring themes and patterns from an examination of data” (p. 753). Janesick suggests that Moustakis’ approach of inductive analysis is a “helpful” process of analysis.

Moustakis (as cited in Janesick, 1994) identifies five phases in inductive analysis:

First, immersion in the setting starts the inductive process. Second, the incubation process allows for thinking, becoming aware of nuance and meaning in the setting, and capturing intuitive insights, to achieve understanding. Third, there is a phase of illumination that allows for expanding awareness. Fourth, and most understandably, is a phase of explication that includes description and explanation to capture the experience of individuals in the study. Finally, creative synthesis enables the researcher to synthesize and bring together as a whole the individual’s story, including the meaning of the lived experience. These phases are similar to what the choreographer registers through the stages of preparation, exploration, and illumination. (p. 391)

The analysis process also requires “a balance between description and interpretation” (Patton as cited in Denzin and Lincoln, 2000, p. 391). In addition, Janesick (1994) stresses, “thick description makes thick interpretation” (p. 391), and that “analysis and interpretation effectively balance description” (p. 391). The analysis process requires careful thought, reflection, examination, and time from the researcher in order to gain understanding and meaning that is respectful and just to the participants who were open and honest enough to share their thoughts, feelings, and concerns.

An integral aspect of qualitative analysis is coding. Ryan and Bernard (1998) feel that “coding is the heart and soul of *whole-text analysis*” (p. 780). Coding is grouping the responses into categories of similar themes, concepts, or ideas. Coding forces the researcher to look at words in the context of categories. It “forces you to look at each detail, each quote, to see what it adds to your understanding” (Rubin and Rubin, 1995, p. 251). Coding forces the researcher to judge the data (Ryan and Bernard, 1998, p. 780). The tasks that are associated with coding are “sampling, identifying themes, building

codebooks, marking texts, constructing models (relationships among codes), and testing these models against empirical data” (Ryan and Bernard, p. 780).

Once the coding is complete, the researcher compares and contrasts information. The researcher may ask, “Are the concepts or themes related?” or “Can they be united under one theme?” At this point, it is the researcher’s responsibility to redefine concepts and themes “and link them together to create a clear description or explanation of a culture or topic” (Rubin and Rubin, 1995, p. 251).

For the final report, the researcher will use the themes to explain the study clearly and meaningfully. Rubin and Rubin (1995) also recommend considering the implication of the findings. How do your results compare to and differ with other research findings and theories? Rubin and Rubin encourage the researcher to ask “So what?” before writing the final report. It is at this point that the researcher reflects on the importance and value of the interpretation of data. After all, interpretation is the “threshold in thinking and writing at which the researcher transcends factual data and cautious analysis and begins to probe into what should be made of them” (Wolcott, 1994, p. 36). Effective and constructive recommendations, implications, and conclusions can be extracted from the analysed, reflected, and interpreted data.

### **Researcher’s Experience with the Data**

The work that was done was systematic and tedious. Before attempting to focus on the terms leadership and spirituality the researcher sought to become familiar with *For Seven Generations: An Information Legacy of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples* compact disc (CD-ROM). The disc was formatted using the Folio program.

Understanding the Folio program would prove to be a time-consuming learning experience. The CD-ROM provided, among other things, the history of RCAP, additional academic research and papers on Aboriginal issues, a section on methodology, guides for developing Native awareness curricula for high school and adult levels, thousands of pages of testimony from over two thousand people, and the Final Report. The CD-ROM provided a wealth of information. Many calls were made for assistance and clarification to Libraxus, an Ottawa company, who formatted the enormous amount of information onto compact disc.

The sheer amount of information that was contained in the hearings was overwhelming for the researcher. On the national level, the query for "leadership" resulted in 1 164 hits, the query for "leader" resulted in 534 hits, and the query for "leaders" resulted in 1 884 hits. Interestingly, the query for "chief" resulted in 17 170 hits. The query for "spiritual" resulted in 987 hits, and the query for "spirituality" resulted in 506 hits. The questions that arose at this time were, "What is the best way to deal with this information?" and "Is the scope of the project too large and unrealistic for one person?"

After consulting with the advisor and the committee, the decision was made to limit the research of leadership and spirituality to Saskatchewan. This was definitely more manageable, but still a considerable task. The Saskatchewan consisted of approximately 3 000 pages. From the researcher's perspective, moving from 75 000 to 3 000 pages was a tremendous improvement.

The computer program Atlas-ti was seriously considered for the valuable tools, especially in terms of coding, it provided the qualitative researcher. The benefits of using

a qualitative program such as Atlas-ti are many. The coding process would be more efficient, systematic and faster, enabling the researcher to spend more time on identifying themes and their meaning. The researcher spent a considerable amount of time learning the Atlas-ti program, only to find that the Atlas-ti program was not compatible with the Folio program. The researcher could not extract the "hearings data" in a form that would make Atlas-ti functional. This was indeed frustrating because the researcher had to change the manner in which the data could be analysed.

It was then decided that the data had to be taken off the *For Seven Generations* CD-ROM, put into 3 ½ inch disks, then printed off into hard copy. The data was then transferred to six four-inch binders. Once this was done, the researcher sought to identify and tag the terms of leadership and spirituality. Then a closer reading of the text surrounding the terms was done in order to gain an understanding of the context in which the terms were used. The text that was relevant to the study was streamlined. In other words, the text that answered the three guiding questions was taken out of the six large binders and moved into another large four-inch binder. Once the streamlining process was complete, the researcher re-read the text, then began the process of coding and categorizing the information. Throughout this process the researcher would continue to re-read the text to affirm that the coding, categorizing, and eventually the themes were correct and in line with the questions. The coding, categorizing, and thematic process was recorded in the computer for easy access and manipulation. The recording of page numbers and quotes into the computer was a part of this process. Overall, it was wonderful to see the themes emerge from the cyclical process of re-visiting, and re-analysing the text.

The analysis of the text and determination of the findings was the most time-consuming and character-building part of the thesis. The researcher was consumed with the text and information day and night for months. The move from the analysis to articulating the findings in Chapter Four was a welcome one.

In terms of “voice,” the researcher chose to view them all as equal. In other words, the information that the youth shared at the hearings was as important as the information that the adults and Elders shared. Further, the information that the non-Aboriginal participants shared was viewed as equally important in the analysis as the information that Aboriginal participants provided. The same standards were held for urban and non-urban Aboriginal participants. The value of RCAP was found in the richness and diversity of the “voices” that were eager and courageous enough to share their individual circumstances in order to shed light and understanding on the lives of First Nations people today. When things are viewed holistically, one understands that each voice, or person, contributes equally to the whole.

### **Research Ethics**

It is important to consider and address ethics or moral implications of a study.

The American Psychological Association (as cited in Kvale, 1996) urges researchers to:

Respect the dignity and worth of the individual and strive for the preservation and protection of fundamental human rights. They are committed to increasing knowledge of human behaviour and of the people’s understanding of themselves and others and to the utilization of such knowledge for the promotion of human welfare. (p. 109)

Although the researcher was not involved in the RCAP hearings process, it is the researcher’s intent to use the hearings information with dignity and respect for the

individuals who freely shared information. Likewise, the Commission developed stringent guidelines to ensure that “appropriate respect is given to the cultures, languages, knowledge, and values of Aboriginal people, and to the standards used by Aboriginal peoples to legitimate knowledge” (Appendix B, p. 29). Informed consent was obtained by all individuals and groups who participated in the research. Participants were also provided with information regarding the purpose and nature of research activities. There is a policy of “open public access” to the hearings and research reports.

The Commission wanted to ensure that the historical interpretation, or misinterpretation, of Aboriginal history would not be repeated. They discovered the following:

In the past, research concerning Aboriginal peoples has usually been initiated outside the Aboriginal community and carried out by non-Aboriginal personnel. Aboriginal people have had almost no opportunity to correct misinformation or to challenge ethnocentric and racist interpretations. Consequently, the existing body of research, which normally provides a reference point for new research, must be open to reassessment. (Appendix B, p. 29)

If future studies keep Aboriginal dignity and respect intact, the future of Aboriginal research is bright. A new dimension, depth, meaning, and understanding will surely be attained for all to appreciate.

This chapter gave insight into The Royal Commission’s, as well as the researcher’s, methods of design, rationale, analysis and interpretation. Qualitative research and qualitative interviewing techniques were chosen because the Commission felt that it best suited the Native culture and means of communication. In using the RCAP document for this study, the study became a document analysis. Gall, Borg, and Gall (1996) stress, “the same document or record can be analysed from different perspectives and for different purposes” (p. 363). That being the case, it is important to

remember as one reads the remainder of this study that the researcher has examined the Saskatchewan hearings for the purpose of answering the three guiding questions, and that the researcher has interpreted the data from one perspective, without the aid of RCAP's Final Report or RCAP's other published material. Others could analyse and interpret the document for different purposes or use an entirely different research approach (e.g., quantitative inquiry). According to the researcher, the qualitative research techniques chosen for this study were adequate and feasible for extracting information from the data.

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **ANALYSIS OF DATA AND FINDINGS**

This chapter presents an analysis of the data collected for this study. The chapter begins with a description of First Nations leadership and spirituality from a historical perspective and then moves to the current inspection of First Nations leadership and spirituality. This introduction is included to provide readers with an understanding of the historical context with which the data were interpreted. It is also important to gain understanding in how Elders depict life, leadership, and spirituality historically. The chapter will then proceed with an analysis of the data obtained from the Saskatchewan hearings of The Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples. Each research question will be addressed by a presentation and analysis of the data. The researcher's primary source of data is the hearings from the Royal Commission, making this study a document analysis. Quotes were used extensively to give the reader a "richer," more in-depth understanding of the meaning, spirit, and intent behind the participants' words. The chapter ends with a summary of the findings.

#### **The Context - First Nations Leadership and First Nations Spirituality**

Prior to European contact there was an established way of life for First Nations people. This life included a political, economic, and spiritual structure that promoted balance. Elder Peter Waskahat helps one to understand the First Nations world view and lifestyle from a dominantly historical perspective:

When you look at First Nations people on this land, in the past, even today, we are careful about what we are given to do. We were given the uses of everything on the land and Creation. We had ... our own teachings, our own education system, teaching children that way of life, and how children were taught how to view, to respect the land and everything in Creation. Through that, the young people were [educated about] what the Creator's laws, what were these natural laws. What were the First Nations laws. And talk revolved around a way of life based on these values. For example, to respect, to share, to care, to be respectful of people, how to help oneself. How to help others. How to work together...

And when the other people came, all other First Nations know of these teachings of this traditional educational system. Everyone had a role. Hunters, the Elders, grandmothers. Even looking for food, there were teachings for the young, for the adults, for the grandparents. A livelihood that was taught, that was what they had...survival of a people. In a lot of this, livelihood was taught...[to] many generations teaching from Creation. That is how they saw their world and understood their world. For example [we] Indians had our own doctors, our own medicine people.

[There are] a lot of teachings. Lifelong teachings that were passed on from generation to generation. They know sicknesses, they know the plants, and they knew how to treat our people of certain sicknesses. So we had our own system as well. We had our own leadership... very highly respected for a chance to lead their people. So we had all those things.

We had our own First Nations governments; we had our own life teachings on education. Even when a person had made mistakes in life, there were people that would counsel them. There was a process of reconciliation. It was done through the oral language. It was done through the Elders. There they talked about that person getting back into a balanced life and were made aware of how [to] focus [on] what was important in life.

And if that person had listened and took the appropriate guidance from those kinds of people and they would get back into a balance and be able to help them, to learn from these things. To become a part of the family, part of their nations.

That is how we/they looked at life. That's the Indian way of life, and all First Nations people had understandings of different customs, different traditions...that was their life. (Cardinal & Hildebrandt, 2000, pp. 15-16)

Elder Isabel McNab from Treaty 4 comments on the arrival of the Europeans:

The Indian people prior to treaty-making were not savages. They never were and they never will be. Because they knew God, they worshipped God and they worshipped His Creations, thanked Him for the things that God gave them. And it was told to me by my Grandfather, Old Gambler, he said ... that these old people were gathering and having a ceremony, spiritual ceremony and they had told their people that they had to prepare themselves, they had to prepare for something great that was going to happen. And they were told by the Elders, he

said, “there’s a stranger coming from across these waters that’s gong to take the land away from you, if you are not ready. And only God can do these things ... So the Indian people were always fearful and knew God and worshipped God in their own way. And they prepared themselves. (Cardinal and Hildebrandt, p. 12)

The Creator was the centre of every aspect of First Nations lives.

Cardinal and Hildebrandt (2000) stress that because of the holistic perspective of life that First Nations people have, it is difficult to look at leadership or spirituality in isolation. It is important to note that Cardinal and Hildebrandt found that the teachings and belief systems of the Saskatchewan Dene, Cree, Assiniboine, and Saulteaux “were similar and consistent with each other” (p. 9). Cardinal and Hildebrandt determined that “particularly among the Cree, Assiniboine, and Saulteaux Nations, the Elders pointed to the inter-nation aspect of their spiritual traditions, which enabled individuals from their respective nations to actively participate in different traditional ceremonies conducted by the different treaty nations” (p. 9). Elder Peter Waskahat continues, “We are all one voice” (p. 9). In working with Saskatchewan Elders, Cardinal and Hildebrandt discovered that “the Elders made it clear that, in their view, those who seek to understand Indian treaties [or Indian people] must become aware of the significance of First Nations spiritual traditions, beliefs, and ceremonies” (p. 1). During the interview conducted by Cardinal and Hildebrandt, Elder Jimmy Myo comments, “You cannot begin to understand the treaties [or First Nations people] unless you understand our cultural and spiritual traditions and our Indian laws” (p. 1). It is clear that progress, and perhaps unity, on any issue comes with seeking to understand.

Historically leadership, as was every aspect of life, was intertwined with spirituality. From a First Nations perspective it appears that everything stems from the Creator and one's spiritual being. Sakorarewate explains:

Everything is together – spiritual and political – because when the Creator ... made this world, he touched the world all together, and it automatically became spiritual and everything that came from the world is spiritual and so that is what the leaders are, they are both spiritual mentors and the political mentors of the people. (p. 12)

The Final Report of The Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples states:

Little understood today is the spiritual aspect of treaties. Traditional Aboriginal governments do not distinguish between the political and the spiritual role of chiefs, any more than they draw a sharp demarcation line between the physical and spiritual worlds. Unlike European-based governments, they do not see the need to achieve a separation between the spiritual and political aspects of governing. (p. 129)

One can surmise that traditional First Nations leadership depended upon the spiritual connection to the Creator and all creation. In essence, spirituality embraces leadership.

The Indian Act, the creation of reserves, and the sometimes rash means of converting the "heathen" changed the traditional First Nations spiritual and leadership practices. An attempt was made to extinguish First Nations spirituality, as well as to confine and define First Nations leadership. The First Nations leaders that the early Europeans encountered and with whom they made treaties were bold, respected, and accountable to the people and the Creator. They were chosen by the people and the Creator for the skills, knowledge, and wisdom they possessed and exhibited. In most situations, First Nations leadership was earned.

In contrast, and in most situations, the First Nations leaders that were appointed after the Indian Act were more accountable to the Department of Indian Affairs than to the people that elected them. This was a drastic change. No longer did First Nations

people have the power or courage to determine their destiny, let alone their day-to-day decisions, without outside intervention. First Nations people were expected to assimilate or disappear. First Nations leadership has adapted, as have the people. First Nations leadership, found in many forms, is re-emerging from a dark place, as a bold force with which to be reckoned. Perhaps it is because the spiritual connection to the Creator and His creation, and all the knowledge, peace, and wisdom that comes with this connection and relationship, has never been completely extinguished. The spiritual dimension of First Nations people has given them the courage to endure terrible times and now the courage to heal. The anticipation of the awakening of a people is exciting.

### **Findings to the Research Questions**

This section examines the three primary questions using the data. Extensive quotes are presented to provide the reader with added meaning and understanding of the participants' point of view.

#### **Question 1**

#### **In what way is leadership constituted and conceived for the First Nations of Saskatchewan?**

Aspects of leadership and issues pertaining to First Nations leadership can be found throughout the RCAP hearings. Some people mentioned desired characteristics and attributes of historical leadership that today's leadership could emulate or seek. Margaret King explains that leaders were representatives of the people. She states:

Part of the principles under our traditional system of government was that the leader does not have a voice in his own right. He has to respect the wishes of the people. He cannot make statements that are at odds with what the people believe. The only way that you can reintroduce that system of government is to allow people the chance to voice their opinions, and they have to have regular meetings; they have to have regular involvement. And they have to determine beforehand what the situation is going to be so that they can empower that leader with a sense of unity behind him and he speaks on behalf of the people. He does not go out there, get a mandate and then lead the people around without having any discussion with them as to what direction it is that they want to go in. There has to be regular involvement of people at the community-base level and what direction they want to see. What are the things that are important to them? The election system is not enough, in my terms. It has to be something more. (p. 147)

Bill Swimmer speaks of the differences between traditional and current First Nations governance: "If you didn't perform as a leader you were booted out. Because all the other systems or organizations in place within that structure supported you as a leader, you had to prove yourself as a leader. Under the Indian Act you don't have the opportunity to do that ... Everybody contributed within [the traditional] system" (pp. 60-61). Bernard Gordon, like Swimmer, also feels that the Indian Act changed the role of leadership dramatically. He explains:

The whole system of self-government must be changed from the Indian Act system to one based on the treaty rights of self-government. Under our treaties, which were nation to nation, the Crown promised not to interfere with our governing system. At that time we had Chiefs and headmen who were in the service of the people. These tribal governing systems worked well for the people because the Chiefs and headmen have to earn the trust and respect of their people to act in a leadership role. It was a true democracy because the leaders were in the service of the people. That was the kind of government we entered in treaties with the Crown. The imposition of the Indian Act changed all that. The Indian Affairs department and the Indian Agent worked to destroy our system of government and replace it with their own. They succeeded. We now have Chiefs and council who do not listen to their people but rule them instead through the Indian Act. Under the Indian Act, Chiefs and council are accountable to the Minister of Indian Affairs and his department and not their own people. (p. 225)

It is clear that traditional leadership had more to do with relationship and communication than dominion over the people. Bill Hanson stresses, "Nobody has control over someone

else, not even the chief. The chief has responsibility and accountability, but he has no power, because the spirits tell you that nobody has power over someone else” (p. 248).

Saskatchewan First Nations leadership has changed and a pivotal point, according to the hearings, was the Indian Act. The Indian Act, which was mandated by the Canadian government in 1876, regulated many aspects of Native lifestyle; it defined who was an “Indian” and how the leaders would be selected. Leaders were to be elected every two years. This caused division among the people, as leaders had to campaign to win votes. Indian Affairs policies had to be implemented by the elected First Nations leadership. In addition to other factors, this took the “voice” away from the people. Traditionally, in many cases, leaders were selected for their ability to represent the people, to be available, and to serve the people.

The analysis of the RCAP data indicated four dominant themes relating to leadership. First, leadership accountability is a recurring theme. In this study, accountability is related to a leader’s ability to sustain trust and communication with the people, a leader’s ability to unite people, and a leader’s ability to direct the people. Second, self-government and treaty rights are themes that often surface. Some people indicated that it was important for today’s leaders to understand the treaties and the inherent rights of First Nations people. The hope would be to maintain and fight for rights and freedoms that were, and still are, inherent to the First Nations way of life. The role of leadership is to seek and ensure a better, healthier, more independent future for the people. Third, there are many examples of positive leadership. Despite the struggles that First Nations leadership has had to endure in the past, there are encouraging examples of strength and determination. Finally, many people, including the youth that were

interviewed, were aware that leadership development has to start at a young age.

Leadership education is required for existing adult leaders, but leadership education for First Nations youth is also very important to ensure an even more positive future for First Nations people. The youth were asking for more responsibility and recognition from existing leadership. They were well aware of the issues that impede the social and political progress of First Nations people. While reading the findings, it is important to note that this leadership information is specific to Saskatchewan, and that RCAP's final report was not a source of this study's supporting data or information.

### **Leadership Accountability and Trust**

As mentioned earlier, the Indian Act was a dramatic change agent. It forced lifestyle restrictions and role changes that were foreign and basically opposite to traditional leadership. Leadership roles and responsibilities changed drastically in a short amount of time. Leaders (chiefs and headmen) were elected for two-year terms, and they became accountable to the Department of Indian Affairs rather than the people. Leadership roles were monitored and regulated by Indian Affairs agents. Indian Affairs also managed programs and funds. Further, decisions made by Chief and Council had to be approved by Indian Affairs before they could be implemented. In essence, leaders became agents of the government. The change of leadership roles and responsibilities would result in some personal and community conflicts and dilemmas. In most cases, leaders could no longer effectively represent the people. As a result, First Nations people became disillusioned with the whole bureaucratic system. For a period it appeared that

First Nations concerns were either lost or “pushed under the rug,” and that leadership was, in some cases, a sham.

The result of bureaucratic leadership (Department of Indian and Northern Affairs) was lack of trust and need for more accountability for the leaders that First Nations people elected.

Margaret King posits:

I don't think the governing structure as it exists now under the Indian Act has any emphasis on being accountable to the people. To cast a vote once every two years is not a system of accountability. They have to be accountable for their actions while they are exercising their roles as leaders in our communities. They are not accountable to the people for the money they spend. They are accountable to Indian Affairs. And that system bypasses the people. So we have to have some kind of structure that makes them accountable to the people, where people can access information and their governments. And the fact that they are not accountable to off-reserve people is that there are many Bands here in Saskatchewan who are under the Indian Act system and they do not allow off-reserve people to vote. (p. 142)

Lorna Standingready contends:

I think today that Indian leaders should seek their own Indian people out regarding concerns that affect them. Having witnessed and been part of the political process for over 20 years, I find that our Indian leaders are very much afraid and also our provincial leaders in the white man's government to open up a can of worms. (p. 286)

Bill Swimmer elaborates:

Here the government comes from the people who are put in place by the Department of Indian Affairs under the Indian Act to govern. They have no accountability or responsibility to the people on the reserve ... Prior to contact ...the government came from the people first. It moved up. Here the system comes down and goes back up; it doesn't come to the people at all. In democracies the government comes from the people themselves and it is not happening in the band. Our view is that government should come from the people, but Indian Affairs is saying that government stays right here and comes back to us. (pp. 57-9)

Bernard Gordon stresses:

The Chiefs and councils and the Indian organizations do not represent the rights the way they should ... Distortion and propaganda was used for over 100 years by non-Indians. Now, it is being used by our own Indian leaders and used against our own Indian people. (p. 232)

Georges Erasmus, a Commissioner and former Assembly of First Nations (AFN) leader, agreed that accountability was an issue (p. 145). He suggests that there be an investigation into utilizing different forms of government for First Nations people.

Erasmus summarizes the desire of many First Nations people, "The system of government I come from would have the people participating with leaders very much and the leadership representing the people" (p. 146).

People desired unity, direction, and communication from their leaders. Margaret King believes that unity among the people and leaders would positively change First Nations communities. She comments,

The thing that is happening in our Indian communities is that we are so divided and that we have allowed arbitrary distinctions placed upon us by a Canadian government to divide our people. Our governing institutions readily accept the labels that are put upon us as off-reserve and on-reserve people, treaty and First Nations, Bill C-31, and now they are instituting membership codes that further separate our children into other categories of rights ... The Indian Act has divided our communities for too long and we must remove ourselves from this oppressive legislation if we are to gain control over our destiny and that of our children. Our leaders have relied on the Indian Act and its Band election systems to give force and effect to their governments. To me they have created a false sense of security for themselves because the real power lies with the people. (p. 134)

Chief Lindsay Cyr believes that unity is important and that "all levels of government are obligated to the people and whatever the people need in terms of information and input into the specific things that happen to them on a day-to-day basis have to be heard loud and clear" (p. 59). The hearings make it clear that unity between leadership and the people, and perhaps change of leadership roles to match the people's expectations, is important and crucial for positive change. The research clearly indicated that leadership

under the Indian Act does not work because it does not encourage leadership to be accountable to the people. It essentially fosters division, suspicion, and distrust among the First Nations community.

The need for communication between leadership and their people has also surfaced from the document. Doug Anguish, MLA, states, "I see a lack of communication between leadership and those who live at the reserve" (p. 180).

Historically, Rodney Gopher explains, "consultation by the chiefs with their people was of central concern" (p. 279). Lillian Sanderson comments,

The only thing I want to say to you and to the people is that we must begin to seriously look at where we are going and that we work together. The petty politics that became involved in not being able to speak with one another because of certain issues, that I think as aboriginal people if we were to talk we all have the same concerns. I think we all have the same vision, to develop healthy communities, to develop healthy people ... that we need to work together. We can't continue to separate ourselves or continue to bicker with one another. (p. 51)

According to The Honourable Bob Mitchell, communication between the different levels of government has to improve. He notes:

It is a fact that we at the province – at the provincial level do not clearly understand what the federal government is doing through its Department of Indian Affairs. We don't know their plans. We don't know their objectives. We don't know what they are trying to accomplish beyond the obvious ... we don't know how they view their role with respect to the ongoing relationship between themselves and Indian and Metis people. So we cannot fit ourselves into those plans. We cannot understand in what way we should trim our sails or adapt our approaches to what the federal government is doing simply because we don't know" (p. 132). Mitchell proposes that the governments get together to discuss their future together, and "break down these barriers that have existed between the three levels of government to this point. (p. 133)

Consistent communication between the First Nations leadership and the people, First Nations leadership and the provincial government, and First Nations leadership and the

federal government would contribute to increased accountability, direction, and confidence in all forms of leadership.

As Lillian Sanderson explained earlier, First Nations people are looking for direction that is accountable from their leaders. On a similar note, Gerald Morin asks,

What is the next step and where do we go from here? I think people are looking for direction in terms of where we can go or how we can proceed with the outstanding aboriginal issues in the country. I think it is fairly unanimous throughout the country that the Aboriginal agenda cannot be put on the side burner for two years or three years or five years, that it has to be addressed. As Aboriginal leaders we will feel increasing pressure to have our issues addressed. (p. 169)

Morin suggested that violent confrontation is a radical strategy that can be used in order to be heard. It is clear that First Nations people demand to be heard and that their leaders represent them as they did historically.

### **Treaties and Self-Government**

Understanding of history, culture, values, treaties, inherent rights, and importance of self-government is considered by many First Nations to be a must for their leaders. It is only then that a leader can identify with and understand his/her people. The treaties that were made between the First Nations people and the Crown are important to many Aboriginal people. They represent a sacred agreement between three entities - the Crown, the First Nations people, and the Creator. Until recently, literature has offered only the government interpretation of the treaties. An emphasis on First Nations oral history regarding the treaties has dramatically added another perspective to the original one-sided account of the treaty process.

The oral history provided by the Elders describes the seriousness First Nations leaders brought to the talks. Under severe circumstances - disease, starvation, depletion of game and buffalo, increasing intrusion of settlers - the First Nations leaders of the time did the best they could for their people. They definitely were not passive and unintelligent participants in the treaty process. On the contrary, they were very involved and aware of the impact the treaty process would have on the present and future generations. They viewed the process as a nation-to-nation agreement, a government-to-government agreement.

There is evidence that the interpreters involved in the process were incapable of relaying the true meaning of the agreement to either side. Great language differences added to the complexity of the matter. For instance, most First Nations languages are verb-centred, in contrast to the English noun-centred language. Some First Nations languages do not have a word for surrender or sale of land. So, how did the interpreters relay the message of land surrender?

The oral history, passed down through the generations by the Elders, tells a different story. They say that the leaders did not agree to land surrender, that the people agreed to share the land, and that the treaties were viewed as treaties of peace. It is evident that both sides came to the negotiating table with their own understanding of what they wanted out of the agreement. Once the "X's" were signed on the treaties, the Crown had the power to impose its interpretation of the treaties on the First Nations people, leaving First Nations people confused, dis-empowered, and angry. Recently, Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal scholars have begun to document the First Nations interpretation of the treaty process. This has made the history behind the treaties more

complex. First Nations people are demanding that their voice, their perspective, be heard. Oral history has enriched the understanding of the treaties: it has provided a more rounded depiction of what was previously available, and it also has disclosed one reason for the distrust and anger the First Nations people feel toward the federal government. First Nations people strongly feel the federal government has violated the sacred intent and meaning of the treaties. Once again, trust between two peoples has been violated.

The treaties were, and are, sacred to First Nations people because it was an agreement between three entities – First Nations people, the Crown, and the Creator. Because the Creator sanctified the talks and the agreement, the treaties should not be broken. For this reason, it is expected that First Nations leaders continue to fight for existence and for the true meaning and intent of the treaties. Chief Lindsay Cyr mentions, “The positions that we have maintained since the signing of the treaty; inherent right remains intact, self-government, jurisdiction, systems of law, resource rights, distinct languages, culture and values” (p. 61). Treaties essentially were a means of developing a relationship with the Crown concerning every aspect of First Nations life. Hence, they hold tremendous importance for First Nations people. Margaret King states, “We feel that it was never intended for our people to be denied our cultural heritage for this formed the basic elements of individual empowerment, a solid foundation of cultural values and the knowledge of our history and traditions, [and] our basic needs in the development of any individual” (p. 136). Bernard Gordon elaborates on First Nations governance:

The whole system of government must be changed from the Indian Act system to the one based on the treaty rights of self-government. Under the treaties, which were nation-to-nation, the Crown promised not to interfere with our governing system. At that time we had Chiefs and headmen who were in the service of the people. These tribal governing systems worked well for the people because the Chiefs and headmen had to earn the trust and respect of their people to act in a

leadership role. It was a true democracy because the leaders were in the service of the people. That was the kind of government we had when we entered in treaties with the Crown. The imposition of the Indian Act changed all that. The Indian Affairs Department and the Indian agent worked to destroy our system of government and replace it with their own. They succeeded. We now have Chiefs and council who do not listen to their people, but rule them instead through the Indian Act. Under the Indian Act, Chiefs and council are accountable to the Minister of Indian Affairs and his department, not to their people. (p. 225)

Gordon also notes that Treaty Four was incomplete. The impression that the First Nations leader had was that the Crown was to return to complete negotiations. This never happened. He does not agree with the government interpretation of the treaties.

He posits:

There are more questions raised as to what was going on during those negotiations than are answers. The commissioner described either could not or would not record the true nature of what was discussed and what happened during those negotiations. We know what happened because we know our oral history. We must come to terms with what was agreed under the treaty in order to deal with issues such as jurisdiction for treaty Indians on and off reserves. We must also come to terms with what happened to share our resources. This is not our understanding of what was agreed through our treaty negotiations. (p. 227)

Gordon believes that it is the duty of First Nations leaders to “represent the [treaty] rights the way they should. We have a right to go directly to the Crown to prevent the violation of our rights” (p. 232).

The treaty rights issue is synonymous with First Nations self-government.

Rodney Gopher believes that self-government, self-determination, power, and responsibility are “inextricably linked and that citizenship and leadership are similarly tied to the issue of self-government and responsibility” (p. 276). Recognition of treaty rights as First Nations view them along with self-government is desired by many people in the Saskatchewan hearings (Gordon, Orgram, Cyr, Harding). These people expressed a desire to manage programs that directly affect Native people, and also a desire to

determine their own destiny. Self-government would put responsibility back into the hands of Native people.

### **Positive Leadership**

As the interviews have indicated, First Nations leadership has changed negatively since the intrusion of the Indian Act and the violation of the treaties. As a result, some First Nations leaders have found themselves pulled between the desires of their people and the bureaucratic demands of the federal government. In many cases, the federal government had greater influence, creating friction and discontent between First Nations leadership and the people. There are, however, many examples of positive leadership and contented people.

The Honourable Bob Mitchell states, "We really have very strong leadership among both Indian and Metis people in the province. It is an experienced leadership, and it is an active, aggressive leadership" (p. 138). Mitchell encourages cultural harmony, cooperation, and the establishment of new relationships between the three levels of government because of a shared destiny. He suggests a tripartite approach to decision-making to strengthen communication, relationship, and trust between the three groups.

Murray Hamilton wanted to encourage leadership. He asserts:

Despite all of the problems we face, I believe that the First Nations and the Metis people of this province have always been leaders throughout this great land. They have come up with some remarkable solutions and there have been a great many accomplishments that have taken place." (p. 272)

Bob Lacoursiere agrees with Hamilton. He states, "I realize that the leaders in the Aboriginal community...say, from FSIN [Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations] or the Metis Society ... are trying to get a lot done" (p. 189). Leaders and First Nations

organizations are commended for demonstrating positive leadership in the areas of agriculture and education (e.g., Saskatchewan Indian Federated College and Saskatchewan Institute of Technologies). Organizations that have been created and are managed by First Nations people are emerging and gaining credibility. With leadership encouraging healthy economic and social growth, the future for First Nations people is exciting.

### **Leadership and the Youth**

The youth were well represented and mentioned often, throughout the RCAP hearings. First Nations youth are viewed as the hope of the future, and the youth that spoke at the RCAP hearings accepted and, on one occasion, demanded more responsibility, recognition, and leadership training to prepare for the future. Jolene Wasteste reminded the Commissioners about Arvol Looking Horse's advise, "We must look back seven (7) generations and look forward seven (7) generations and realize that we are the balance. The holy buffalo always turns to face the wind whether it's hot or cold. It is time for us to learn from our relatives, the buffalo. It is time for us to turn and face the wind" (p. 139). Wasteste challenges the governments to join the youth and "face the wind together" (p. 140). There are many references to the youth holding the future. Wasteste quotes Sitting Bull, "Let us put our minds together and see what lives we can create for our children" (p. 136).

There is a belief that in order to provide a better future for First Nations people, leadership skills have to be taught to the young. Ann Hanson makes the recommendation for "government to educate those who want to be educated because it is those who will be

the leaders of the future, and we, as a nation within a nation, must strengthen that nation. We may not be the backbone, but we are one vital link” (p. 193). Margaret Samuelson encourages leadership education for youth. She suggests, “Teach them as you go along, and if you teach them right, they then will become role models and good leaders” (p. 182). The youth, who spoke at the hearings, demanded recognition and added responsibility. Cheryl Starr comments about youth and leadership education:

They wanted to become educated in becoming leaders. Everyone realizes that we are the leaders of tomorrow, but when we get into those leadership roles we don't want to be educated then. We want to be educated now. So when it is time for us to be leaders we won't be spending our time and energy on learning how to become a leader. We will already have those skills so we can be effective leaders when we get elected. (p. 198)

Raymond Laliberte echoes Starr's message:

We are the future leaders. Leaders are not born automatically to become leaders. They are trained. It's a long drawn out process, so the adult population has to respect the fact that we require training and they have to put us under their wing and they've got to protect us until we become leaders and we are prepared to go into the mainstream society to make some political statements or to become future leaders in economic development or social development. (p. 169)

Marlene Larocque shares Starr's and Laliberte's belief in youth leadership training. She strongly states, “I think that in Saskatchewan and all over the place we're tired of hearing, ‘You are the future leaders’ because what we're doing now, we are leaders now. We have valid ideas now and good solutions” (p. 276). It is apparent that these youth realize that leadership is learned, requires training, and time, and is made relevant with a cultural and spiritual element. With the youth voicing their desires for leadership training, First Nations people could be optimistic about the future.

How are the youth to be trained to be leaders? There was strong indication that leadership training requires knowledge and understanding of the First Nation's values,

culture, history, an understanding of social and economic needs, communication skills, contact with Elders, and a strong spiritual element (Beaudin, Campbell, Rutten, Blackstar, Shmon). The programs that were created for youth leadership training involved Elder contact and the teaching of values, history, culture, and spirituality (e.g., Saskatoon Leisure Centre and Friendship Centres). The spiritual element is to provide direction and a sense of purpose for the individuals involved. Essentially, youth leadership education would vary little from general leadership education.

### **Conclusion**

Saskatchewan RCAP hearings provide sufficient evidence as to what constitutes a leader. Although the major part of the information on leadership steers toward what the people desire from their leaders and are not getting, there are positive elements of leadership that many commend. In addition, the people look to the youth with hope. There is a belief that with each generation, the people gather strength and get stronger. For this reason, many people insist that the youth be prepared with leadership and spiritual knowledge and skills that can benefit them as individuals and the Native community as a whole. The youth representatives that spoke at RCAP appeared eager for recognition and responsibility. They adamantly asked to be recognized as leaders of the future and passionately asked for leadership and spiritual training. There seems to be a realization that First Nations leadership has been made irrelevant and lifeless for some Native people with the Indian Act mandate. Also, recognizing historical Native leadership and its pervasive awareness of the Creator, His creation, and His people (spirituality) would bring leadership back to a more balanced state for Native people.

Many leaders in the past, as did the people, viewed the world through a “spiritual lens.” But because of federal policies and regulation on the lives of Native people (the suppression of voice), it appears that some Native leaders began to view the world through a “worldly-materialistic” lens. Hence, some Native people began to feel frustration, discontentment, and anger toward their leadership. The imposition of foreign federal governance policies for First Nations communities did not help First Nations leadership or spirituality. The move from historical governance where people’s opinions and concerns were valued to a foreign, cold, bureaucratic form of governance proved to be devastating to First Nations people as a whole. The hope is that dialogue between the people, First Nations leadership, and provincial and federal government will help in fostering effective communication and in creating a more effective form of governance.

Preferred First Nations leadership qualities and conditions can be found throughout the Saskatchewan hearings. Many people insisted leadership be more accountable to the people. On many occasions, people identified trust, effective communication and dialogue, clear and strong direction, and unity as desired characteristics of leaders. Many First Nations people believed that it is important to revisit treaties (consideration of the First Nations perspective of treaties rather than just the implementation of the federal government’s documented treaties), along with inherent rights and self-government. First Nations leadership would advocate for the implementation of treaties and self-government. Positive examples of leadership and encouraging words for the progress of existing First Nations leadership can be found throughout the hearings. Thomas states that “growth and maturity” is apparent in First Nations leadership (p. 112). Mitchell believes that First Nations leadership is

experienced, active, and aggressive (p. 138). Despite the barriers with which Native leaders have had to contend, some people felt that there has been progress, and examples of strong Native leadership exist.

Lastly, people look to the youth for even stronger, more effective leadership, and the youth represented at the hearings were more than willing to take a leadership role in addressing the issues facing Native people. From the hearings held in Saskatchewan, one can conclude that people desired leadership which is accountable to the people, transparent, available, honest, that valued effective communication, that established vision and unity, and that was dedicated to creating stronger, more knowledgeable, skilled and prepared leadership in the youth. Many believed that leaders should work toward the establishment of the true intent and spirit of treaty rights, and the implementation of a form of governance that would involve the people. Leadership education for the youth, as well as for existing leaders, should include knowledge of First Nations history, values, culture, Elder involvement, and an overall spiritual component. One can conclude that people want to move from the oppressed state of leadership to a more active and meaningful state of leadership. It is essentially a shift back to the historic form of leadership.

## **Question 2**

### **What does the concept and practice of spirituality encompass for the First Nations of Saskatchewan?**

Saskatchewan RCAP hearings establish that spirituality is important to First Nations people. It provides a sense of meaning and purpose, a way of perceiving the

world, and a connection to the Creator. In answering this question, the researcher has determined that spirituality was, and is, a way of life for First Nations people in Saskatchewan - a way of life that was sequestered and severely disrupted by the federal government and the church. Many people expressed resentment and anger toward the government and the church for imposing foreign laws and policies on Native peoples for the sake of assimilation and conversion. The colonization of Canada's Aboriginal people caused harmful, rapid change. This change did not crush the spirit of Native peoples but did have numerous negative effects on their lives. For generations many Native people endured unspeakable abuses. The stories of abuses and poverty found in the hearings are almost unbearable to read; they greatly affected the reader. Until recently, many felt they have had to carry their burden inside. Many discovered that spirituality, as well as learning and maintaining one's culture, were associated with healing. Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people insisted that spirituality and culture be emphasized and maintained in educational organizations to promote wellness and a sense of worth. Overall, spirituality plays an integral part in restoring what has been bruised, crushed, or lost in the lives of First Nations people. Healing and spirituality is discussed further in this section.

### **First Nations Spirituality in Saskatchewan**

Spirituality, as well as leadership, was not clearly defined or explained in the Saskatchewan RCAP hearings, nor in the overall RCAP document. Perhaps it was because the audience, Commissioners, and participants were of Aboriginal ancestry, or the speakers could have presumed that spirituality is a basic understanding among First Nations people; therefore, it need not be explained because it permeates every aspect of

First Nations life and philosophy. However, the importance of the spiritual element in the lives of First Nations can be found throughout the Saskatchewan hearings.

The Creator is often mentioned in the document. Historically, the core of life stemmed from the Creator. People were very aware of His presence and His creation. Walter Stonechild notes, "Indian people...believed the Great Spirit gave us our minds and bodies" (p. 316). Barry Kennedy supports Stonechild's statement. He explains, "First Nations people always had a way of life, a life that was given to them by the Great Spirit. This was taken away by a document, by a piece of paper, by a government saying, 'No! This is how you have to live. In your own country, this is how you have to live'" (p. 217). Recognition of the Creator's presence can be found in every RCAP hearing as prayer opens and closes every session, and the presence and participation of Elders is evident in the process.

Spirituality is seen as a vital element to a balanced, complete life. Rick Favel believes that First Nations youth "need education, but as one of our wise people, James Iron, said that if you go out in the world with only education, you are half a person. You have to balance your life with spirituality ... Many of our students are hurting inside and we need to address their emotional and spiritual concerns ... there needs to be a link between our wise people and our young people who are wise in their own way" (p. 179). Robin Bellamy argues, "Ten million dollars won't help people here one bit. They've got to get back into their spiritual self. Then they will find their freedom" (p. 74). Lyle Daniels asserts, "Aboriginal athletes are good for so long, but because they are not prepared holistically and worked on the mind, body, spirit, and emotional side of him, that person doesn't last very long no matter where he is participating" (p. 187). Although

spirituality is not clearly defined, it is seen as a somewhat missing element, or an element that is not emphasized enough.

The suppression of Aboriginal spirituality is generally seen as the government's or churches' doing. Alongside the need for the assimilation of Aboriginal peoples came the need for converting them to Christianity. Both have caused the denigration and loss of cultural values, language, individual and collective identity, and Native people's pervasive spiritual connection to their surroundings, among other things. Resentment and anger was expressed by many toward the government and church. George Erasmus argues:

What has happened in Canada has been a strong imposition on Aboriginal people in relation to their spirituality. We now have Aboriginal Christians that feel it is very, very wrong for them to participate in Aboriginal activities like sweat lodges and traditional healing. They have been convinced that by being connected with the [church] that it is either devil worship, or activities that border on the black arts. It really wouldn't hurt for a positive statement to be made on Aboriginal spirituality by the church officially. I think it is time for the church to come out of the closet on that if the church is ever really going to say that Aboriginal spirituality does not hurt humanity. In fact, the spirituality that says all life exists everywhere, everything is important, whether it is the trees, the rocks, whatever, that kind of world-view had it been adopted when the European people came to North America, we wouldn't be having the kind of pollution problems we are having now ... there is a tremendous amount of damage that has occurred. There has not been a hearing that we have held where we haven't heard about the problems that have been passed down generation after generation. It is enormous, the problems that there are ... I really think that if there is going to be a healing between the church and Aboriginal people, there has to be some rectification, some remedy, in relation to what has occurred in the past. It really is not good enough for people just to say, "That happened in the past. We are not doing that anymore." It really is not good enough. (p. 168)

Jeff Baldwin, representative for the Canadian Catholic Organization for Development and Peace, affirms Erasmus' stance:

For the past 500 years colonialism, imperialism and capitalism have one after another subjugated native populations and ravaged the environment in favour of a mode of development that profits a minority. Today, as in the past, the law of the

strongest imposes its vision on the world. As Canadians and Christians, we must humbly acknowledge that we are an integral part of a society and a church whose attitudes have contributed to destroying the culture and the very identity of this continent's first inhabitants ... Development should aim at allowing human beings to live together harmoniously and seeks to reach them in all dimensions, whether it be economic, social, political and cultural ... Yes, I do believe there is ample room for a relationship between the different faiths, the spiritual beliefs, to find common ground. (pp. 154-60)

Lorna Standingready does not claim to have any solutions on this issue, but she heeds her grandparent's words, "No matter how many times the white man tells you something, listen to it again. Each time you get a deeper and fuller meaning of what someone is trying to tell you" (p. 287). She adds, "To the churches I say respect our way" (p. 288). The Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples has provided valuable information regarding church, government, and Aboriginal relations, and has opened dialogue between these groups to discuss the difficult issues relating to the First Nations people. Communication and dialogue is paramount in dealing with this difficult situation.

### **Healing**

Healing was tied to spirituality in the hearings. The term "healing" was mentioned with great frequency, and, because it is usually mentioned with spirituality, the researcher found it necessary to present some of the issues tied to healing. There was a strong desire by many First Nations people to heal individually and collectively from the many abuses that have resulted from colonization. Donald Favel argues:

When you talk about self-government, when you talk about economic development, if you don't have social development first, none of these will ever work, because if you don't develop people socially first, there is no way you can have economic development or self-government. You will have a very dysfunctional self-government, if you don't have social development first. (p. 74)

Lillian Sanderson believes that many Native people are dysfunctional because healing has not occurred. She urges leaders to become aware of Aboriginal dysfunctions and address them before collective progress can happen (p. 153). Donald Favel asserts:

If we could be recognized and heard as people and as people that could help our own people, I think the process of healing within our communities would be that much greater and that much faster and you would be able to start seeing the dreams of our leadership when our leadership talks about economic development and stability within our communities. You would be able to see this. All of it would be a reality. That is my understanding of social development. (p. 75)

Emile Bell would also like to see healing begin among First Nations people, and she would like leadership “to begin to address these problems” (p. 156). Many made mention of healing traditionally with the use of healing circles, sweat lodges, Elders’ help, and a return to spiritual connection with the Creator. As Erasmus stated, the healing that is required is tremendous. Many are in the healing process, and many are advocating proper and adequate healing institutions. One thing is for certain: the healing journey is well under way.

### **Culture and Spirituality**

The terms “culture” and “spirituality” appear to be intertwined or used interchangeably by many at the hearings. Today, the emphasis is on re-establishing culture and spirituality to their rightful places among many First Nations because they were denied for many years. Margaret King maintains:

We feel that it was never intended for our people to be denied our cultural heritage for this formed the basic elements of individual empowerment, a solid foundation of cultural values and the knowledge of our history and traditions, our basic needs in the development of any individual before he and she becomes a productive member of society. As an assembly we believe in the value of individual self-esteem and will strive to empower our people through the

development of culturally appropriate programs and services ... we hope we will be able to maintain and strengthen our cultures. We have lost quite a bit and it is a real shame to see the extent that we have lost our culture and traditions quite a bit ... We can't continue this cultural erosion that has been put upon our people. (p. 136-7)

Rick Favel adds, "Culture gives an identity to young people and builds their self-esteem ... makes them proud of who they are. You have to balance your life with spirituality"

(p. 178-79). RCAP Commissioner and former Premier Allan Blakeney elaborates on the recurring theme of culture and spirituality during the hearings:

We have been engaged in hearings for some months now and a recurring theme from Aboriginal people, one which I suspect you would agree with judging from your remarks, is that in order that Aboriginal people take their rightful place in North American society, Canadian society, it will be necessary for Aboriginal people to preserve their culture. We have heard this theme over and over again. There cannot be any appropriate relationship between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal cultures until Aboriginal people feel that their culture is not under constant attack, at least formal attack, and that they have some opportunities to preserve and possibly strengthen their culture. From there it is argued that this possibly means some additional emphasis on Aboriginal language and most certainly involves some additional emphasis on traditional spirituality. And they tell us that they regard the history of the past 500 years as a history of non-Aboriginal governments and the Christian church pursuing a policy of cultural oppression – other oppression but cultural oppression as well.

In this case, emphasizing spirituality and culture may mean the integration of these elements in leadership education and formal school education, and it does mean involving First Nations people in the definition, establishment, and implementation of their history, culture, and spirituality. Commissioner Viola Robinson asserts, "Let's start talking about the true history about Aboriginal people. There is a history in Saskatchewan. There is a history here of the First Nations" (p. 185). Increasingly, Elders are sharing history as First Nations perceive it, and they are eager for it to be heard and preserved, in some cases, in written form. Derek Brass contends, "The main thing is to find our lost culture and spirituality and traditional values as we once had" (p. 94). The

main thing is that First Nations people are now adamantly identifying their needs and concerns like never before.

### **Conclusion**

Altogether, spirituality is identified as the key to healing and to regaining Native identity and wholeness. Many organizations (e.g., Saskatoon Family Leisure Centre, Friendship Centres, penitentiaries, and school systems) are beginning to implement and find the relevance of incorporating First Nations history, culture, values, and spirituality as a part of their program. The fact that spirituality is not clearly defined may be for many reasons, including:

- 1) There is tremendous diversity among First Nations groups living in Saskatchewan (Saulteaux, Cree, Assiniboine, Sioux, Dene, and Metis); therefore, the definition of spirituality may vary.
- 2) Many First Nations people may assume that spirituality is ingrained in Aboriginal peoples; therefore, there is no need for a definition.
- 3) The audience was predominately Native and from the participants' community; hence, there was no need to define spirituality because the people basically understood each other.

Spirituality was connected to healing. It was also connected to culture and was stated as a necessary factor in creating effective leadership education. The interconnected and holistic world-view of First Nations becomes apparent as one examines the hearings. Spirituality seems to be a critical factor in achieving positive second-order change among First Nations people.

### Question 3

#### **What is the imputed understanding of the relationship between spirituality and First Nations leadership?**

Although for Aboriginal people there is a fundamental relationship between spirituality and leadership, it was not clearly stated in the Saskatchewan hearings. Perhaps it is because many Native people still perceive things from a holistic perspective; therefore, there is no need or desire to dissect cohesive, intertwined elements such as leadership and spirituality. However, where youth leadership education was discussed, so was spirituality. Kim Beaudin, City of Saskatoon Leisure Services representative, elaborates:

[An] area we are concentrating on is Aboriginal youth leadership. The Leisure Services Department believes that lack of leadership skills amongst Aboriginal youth must be addressed if the Aboriginal population is to live, work, and be a part of the community ... Our program content includes values of Aboriginal cultures, which would be spiritual growth, effective positive attitudes in daily living, recreation, positive use of leisure time, building leadership skills through the utilization of Aboriginal role models ... The Leisure Services Department believes that the enhancement of culture is very important in our overall program design. The Leisure Services Department is aware that the development of these programs ties into many objectives such as increasing pride, enhanced sense of belonging, improved self-esteem, improved self-worth and strengthened family ties. (p. 221)

The Saskatoon Leisure Services youth program indicates a connection between leadership and spirituality.

The second link in the association between spirituality and leadership can be found in the Elders. Elders are considered leaders in transmitting spiritual knowledge, values, culture, and history – skills pertinent to leadership. Elders are sought for wisdom because they are both leaders and spiritual guides, or spiritual leaders. Dawn Campbell

contends, “Aboriginal teens should be encouraged to seek answers to their problems through their own culture and spirituality under the guidance of community Elders” (p. 194). Elders are essential to maintaining language. Karen Shmon explains that Elders are connected to students to promote language and culture (p. 170). Elders are mentioned by many as vital in attaining spiritual health and healing and in teaching the essence of First Nations living.

### **Summary**

This chapter examined First Nations leadership and spirituality in isolation, then in association with each other using Saskatchewan RCAP hearings. The leadership themes that arose from the analysis of the transcripts were:

- 1) First Nations leadership should be accountable to the people. A leader should also communicate effectively with the people, establish unity, and provide direction for the people.
- 2) First Nations leaders should have an understanding of their people’s history, values, and inherent treaties and rights. Leaders are expected to reveal and defend the true spirit and intent of their overall history and those of the historic, sacred treaties. Leaders should also strive for self-governance.
- 3) First Nations leadership has demonstrated positive leadership. In spite of obstacles, progress is occurring because of “experienced, active, aggressive leadership” (Mitchell, p. 138).
- 4) First Nations youth are recognized as holding the “key to the future” – they are the leaders of the future. Leadership education for the “up-and-coming” leaders is

viewed as essential in creating leaders who are skilled, knowledgeable, and prepared.

It is apparent that many factors have greatly determined how First Nations leaders governed their people.

Spirituality was not directly defined, but it was associated with healing, culture, and a necessary element in First Nations education. Spirituality is viewed as a way of life, a gift from the Creator, and a relationship with creation. Because it is interconnected with many aspects of First Nations experience and philosophy, one can deduce that it is an essential part of life, and that it would be extremely difficult to dissect and analyze it in isolation.

There was little said about the relationship between leadership and spirituality. However, where leadership education was mentioned, spirituality was also mentioned. Spiritual awareness seems to be vital in developing strong, effective First Nations leadership. Although it is not mentioned directly, spirituality seems to encompass not only leadership, but also every aspect of First Nations life.

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND IMPLICATIONS**

Chapter 5 provides a summary of the study, followed by a discussion of conclusions and implications. The chapter begins with a statement of the research purpose and observations on the methodology. The findings are summarized and discussed in association with the research questions. Next, the implications for practice, research, and theory are presented. Finally, the study ends with the researcher's summary.

#### **Summary of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to describe and analyse within an historical context First Nations leadership, First Nations spirituality, and the relationship between them. The questions that guided the study within RCAP hearings are: 1) In what way is First Nations leadership constituted and conceived for the First Nations of Saskatchewan? 2) What does the concept and practice of spirituality encompass for the First Nations of Saskatchewan? 3) What is the imputed understanding of the relationship between spirituality and First Nations leadership? The purpose of this study was to gain insight, understanding, and meaning of First Nations leadership, to investigate spirituality as perceived by First Nations people, and to examine the dynamics and relationship between First Nations leadership and spirituality. In general, the researcher's intent was to contribute information, research, and understanding of First Nations leadership in general, and educational leadership where possible.

### **Literature Review**

The researcher has chosen to examine how First Nations leadership stimulates long-term change in First Nations communities because of the impact leadership can have on people. Fullan contends that the greatest motivators for change are leaders (1991, p. 76). Bhindi and Duignan (1994) quote Bass and Stogdill in stating, "Leadership made the 'critical difference' in the success or otherwise of organizations across the whole spectrum of life: education, church, business, military, politics and the government" (p. 117). Bhindi and Duignan maintain that leaders have a lasting effect on culture, institutions, and practices long after they are gone (p. 117). Leaders have tremendous potential in cultivating change in their communities. A residual effect from this study would be First Nations leadership education.

After investigating First Nations leadership characteristics and attributes for some time, the researcher concluded that leadership embodied more than certain characteristics and attributes of a person. The questions for the researcher became, "Why do leaders make the choices they make and where do these choices come from?" and "What is the essence of First Nations leadership?" After reading the article, "Spirituality? It's the Core of My Leadership," by Keyes, Hanley, and Capper, the answers became more obvious. As a result, the investigation progressed to spirituality and its relationship to leadership. Altogether, Chapter 2 outlines the discovery of leadership's essential connection to spirituality.

Traditionally, the spiritual dimension was an integral element of every day living for First Nations people. Literature on First Nations leadership describes characteristics such as humility, honesty, and respect as being important in working with the people, but

it is an awareness of the interconnected design of all things, and the role one has in the fabric of creation, that provides meaning, purpose, and strength in a leader's journey. Enhancing the spiritual element of leadership would produce the characteristics of humility, honesty, and respect. To be effective, a leader's journey should begin with an inner search of values, meaning, and purpose before it extends to the people a leader represents. This process can be perceived as "leadership from within" before evolving to "leadership of many." This approach toward leadership creates authentic leadership, a leadership that is less selfish and manipulative. This leadership style can be likened to servant leadership. Bhindi and Duignan (1994) quote Scott in maintaining that leaders cannot reserve "the spiritual for the private realm and leadership for our professional and public lives" (p. 127) and the benefit of spiritually guided leaders to engage in "socialized rather than personalized power" (p.127). People would respond positively to a leader that is for the people rather than for his/her own selfish motives. The literature revealed that leadership based upon a spiritual foundation was a dynamic combination.

### **The Literature Review and the Research Findings**

The literature review was valuable because it determined the direction of the study, and the knowledge gained from the literature review helped me understand the findings. As the analysis of the data progressed, so did the level of depth of analysis. At the outset, I sought only to identify the texts that were linked to the terms related to leadership and spirituality, but as the study continued, I began to read and analyze for a deeper understanding of the hearings. I frequently asked, "What is this person trying to say?" and "What is the essence of his/her message?" These questions were similar to the

one asked earlier regarding First Nations leadership, “What is the essence of First Nations leadership?” Eventually, this question led to the investigation of spirituality.

The findings from the analysis of the data were parallel to the findings of the literature review. The Saskatchewan participants of RCAP did not confine leadership to a specific set of characteristics and attributes, but instead asked that First Nations leadership return to the people. They asked for accountability, trust, and direction from their leaders. They asked for unity among the First Nations people. In addition, First Nations leaders should defend rights important for the people. These include inherent treaty rights and a move toward self-government. Many participants commended the progress of First Nations leadership, and many asked for leadership education designed for First Nations people.

In RCAP’s Saskatchewan realm, the information on spirituality was limited, but what was said, or not said, was valuable and contributed greatly to this study. Spirituality was mentioned in instances that concerned healing, culture, education, and history. Although its written frequency was limited compared to leadership, the “spiritual connection” was evident in the Elder prayers that started and ended each hearing. Participants of all ages, young and old, made reference to spirituality. I believe that there is a re-emergence of spirituality among the First Nations people, but also among the dominant culture. Because of increasing interest, literature on spirituality is increasing. I believe that more people are asking, “How do I become spiritual?”

The study began with the concept of First Nations leadership and ended with the importance of spirituality, not only within the realm of leadership but in every part of life - the literature review and the findings were consistent on that point.

### **Implications for Research – Methodology**

Qualitative inquiry was used for this study because it is “flexible, interactive, and continuous, rather than locked in stone” (Rubin & Rubin, 1995, p. 43). Moreover, RCAP hearings were intentionally designed to be “loosely” structured with open-ended questions, as the Commission wanted to encourage people to speak freely about issues and concerns. However, as the investigation progressed, the RCAP Commissioners did have hearings designed to gather information on specific issues such as residential schools.

As aforementioned, knowledge, values, and culture are transmitted orally among First Nations people; consequently, a less structured approach to collecting and interpreting data is more conducive to the First Nations means of sharing information. In addition, qualitative analysis requires data to be “considered as a totality; [in order] to shed light on a structure of a singular whole” (Alasuutari, 1995, p. 11). This resonates with First Nations holistic philosophy and world-view.

The researcher, engaged in the process of qualitative inquiry using the RCAP document, attended to examining and analysing the stories of the research participants. Because the researcher used existing transcripts from the Saskatchewan hearings found in the RCAP compact disk, this study is designated as a document analysis. The study included willing participants from the Saskatchewan hearings of The Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples. Permission to use the participants’ information for academic purposes was obtained by the RCAP team. Overall, this process allowed the researcher to

understand and interpret how Saskatchewan participants perceived First Nations leadership, spirituality, and to establish if there is a relationship between the two entities.

To begin the study, an overall search of RCAP was done to identify the participants who referred to leadership and/or spirituality. Because of the enormity of the task (RCAP hearings filled approximately 75 000 pages), time restrictions, and sheer exhaustion, the study was later limited to the Saskatchewan hearings that were held in Regina, Saskatoon, Prince Albert, North Battleford, La Ronge, La Loche, Wahpeton, Ile La Crosse, and Buffalo Narrows. This narrowed the data to a considerably more manageable 3 000 pages.

The speakers that referred to First Nations leadership and/or spirituality in the Saskatchewan realm were identified. Once this was done, the researcher sought to discover the context in which the terms were used. This lengthy process resulted in the content that was related to this study. Next, the remaining transcripts were read and analysed with the intent of extracting categories, then themes, on leadership and spirituality. Once the themes were established, they were recorded on paper and then on the computer for easy reference, along with the page number, name of participant, general topic, and/or relevant quotes. In addition, all relevant transcripts were moved to one binder, again for easy reference. This allowed the researcher to further analyse, then formulate findings and conclusions for the study.

At the outset of this study, the researcher did not anticipate the immense amount of time, patience, persistence, endurance, encouragement, and support that was required to complete this project. However, once the study was complete, the researcher was able to appreciate the benefits of the process. The researcher gained extensive knowledge of

The Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples documents, valuable knowledge about the issues and concerns facing “grassroots” First Nations people of Canada, an appreciation for the comprehensiveness and timelessness of the RCAP document, and a greater appreciation of the history, culture, language, strength, and undying persistence and endurance of Canada’s First Nations people in spite of tragedies related to colonization, foreign paternalistic governance, and the disorienting results of rapid change.

To transform the qualitative data, the researcher selected relevant information to provide “thick” description, then analysed the data by charting responses to each question according to question categories, and recurring responses in each category. This inductive method of analysis allowed the identification of potential themes, questions, and emerging theories. The information could then be easily organized in terms of question category and perspective themes. The researcher sought to further understand the three primary questions by first exploring the historical context of First Nations history and philosophy through Elder information.

### **Discussion of Findings**

The findings and discussion were addressed through the questions that guided the study. The questions were all related to Saskatchewan RCAP hearings. Prior to answering the questions, an examination of First Nations history and philosophy, through Elders’ perspectives, was conducted to provide greater background understanding and meaning. It is within this context that the questions were contemplated and then answered.

### **Question 1**

#### **In what way is First Nations leadership constituted and conceived for the First Nations of Saskatchewan?**

The characteristics of historical leadership were described by some participants of Saskatchewan RCAP hearings as a way of presenting desired characteristics that today's leaders could emulate. The characteristics of historical leadership included elements of servant leadership: a leader represents the people, is the voice of the people, is available to the people, actively listens to the people, and was in the position to earn the respect and trust of the people. Ultimately, the people are in control, and leadership had more to do with relationship and communication than dominion over the people.

The themes that emerged from the data pertaining to First Nations leadership were:

- 1) Leadership should return to being accountable to the people rather than the Department of Indian Affairs. The means of accountability included establishing effective communication, trust, unity, and direction for the people.
- 2) A leader should have knowledge of, and actively strive for, self-government and should actively defend inherent and treaty rights.
- 3) Although First Nations leadership changed dramatically because of treaties, the Indian Act, and reserve creation, examples of positive leadership are frequently highlighted.
- 4) Leadership education, especially for the youth, is essential for strong, effective leadership in the future.

Saskatchewan's First Nations know what they want and don't want from their leadership. It appears that many have contemplated historical leadership, and leadership as it is today, to determine how leadership should be in the future. First Nations leaders of tomorrow should be prepared, skilled, and knowledgeable of the people's history, culture, values, spirituality, and goals. First Nations leadership should embrace the people, be the voice of the people, and be the facilitator of positive, healthy, lasting second-order change.

## **Question 2**

**What does the concept and practice of First Nations spirituality encompass for the First Nations of Saskatchewan?**

Although it is not clearly articulated, the importance of spirituality for First Nations people is firmly established in Saskatchewan RCAP hearings. Spirituality provides a sense of meaning and purpose, a way of perceiving the world, and establishes a connection to the Creator and His creation. For First Nations people, spirituality provides balance internally and externally, individually and collectively, as it embraces and touches every aspect of life and creation. Therefore, it was not surprising to find spirituality connected, by the participants, to healing, to First Nations discussions on history, to health, to culture, and to education.

Organizations, including the Saskatoon Leisure Centre, Friendship Centres, correction centres, and school systems, have implemented First Nations history, culture, values, and spirituality into their programs. Many First Nations people feel the need to re-establish the beneficial aspects of historical living for the health of their people living

today and for those yet unborn. Elders are recognized as the spiritual leaders and are utilized for wisdom in both spiritual and leadership matters, which can be translated into advice for basically anything and everything, as leadership and spirituality touch every aspect of our internal and external being and experience.

Spirituality may not be explained in the RCAP hearings for the following reasons:

1. There is tremendous diversity among First Nations groups living in Saskatchewan (Saulteaux, Cree, Assiniboine, Sioux, Dene, and Metis); therefore, the definition of spirituality may vary.
2. Many First Nations people may assume that spirituality is ingrained in Aboriginal peoples; therefore, there is no need for a definition.
3. The audience was predominantly Native and, in most cases, from the participants' community, hence there was no need to define spirituality because the participants could have made the assumption that they were understood.

Nevertheless, spirituality is perceived as critical in achieving positive, lasting second-order change. Its presence, or lack of, seems to impact a person's life in a healthy, or unhealthy, manner.

### **Question 3**

**What is the imputed understanding of the relationship between First Nations leadership and spirituality?**

In the hearings, the relationship between First Nations leadership and spirituality is not directly explained, but it is more implied. There was not much data that referred to both terms together. Spirituality was seen as vital in leadership education for the youth,

indicating a critical connection between the two entities. In addition, Elders, as the holders of leadership and spiritual wisdom, are perceived as important members of their communities, indicating a connection between spirituality and leadership. Lastly, both spirituality and leadership were viewed as essential in creating lasting, positive, healthy, second-order change for First Nations individuals and First Nations communities.

### **Conclusion**

This study revealed that leadership and spirituality are important to First Nations people. Lack of effective leadership and spirituality, among other things, in the First Nations community has led to devastating effects – loss of family structure, loss of identity, poverty, high dropout rates, and low self-esteem. It is the belief of many in this study that re-establishing strong leadership and spirituality would aid in creating stronger individuals and communities. There is a strong desire for many in the study to heal, to become healthy beings physically, emotionally, mentally, and spiritually, and to construct healthy communities for their children. One woman suggested that social development is required before economic development can be achieved. I feel that there needs to be a balance of both – social development needs appropriate funding to create programs that foster healing and prevention.

I am reminded of Hernandez's (1999) use of Saulis' quote in describing spirituality for First Nations people. Saulis explains that spirituality is not always definable, but it is the essence of a person, and that it needs to be expressed:

A universal sense among native people exists in regard to spirituality and that it coexists in all aspects of life. It is not separate, but integral, it is not immutable, it is not replaceable, it resides in the essence of a person, and it is not always

definable. It is the community and among the people; it needs to be expressed among the people. (p. 40)

Indeed, spirituality was not clearly defined in this study by the participants, but the desire for expression was clearly communicated. Hanohano asserts that restoring essential spiritual knowledge will bring “harmony and balance back into Native people” (1999, p. 211). As a result, Hanohano believes that meaning and purpose will also be restored. I believe the spiritual journey is for everyone, especially the leaders.

As the data were repeatedly analysed, the importance of spirituality became apparent. It was connected to many things by the participants of RCAP – culture, healing, education, history, and leadership. This study reaffirmed that one’s spiritual core affects one’s decisions, beliefs, behaviour, and actions. Because of this conclusion, I came to realize that leadership is within the realm of spirituality, rather than spirituality being within the realm of leadership, as I first surmised. Sakorarewate explains:

Everything is together – spiritual and political – because when the Creator ... made this world, he touched the world all together, and it automatically became spiritual and everything came from the world is spiritual and so that is what the leaders are, they are both spiritual mentors and the political mentors of the people. (p. 12)

The Final Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples confirms:

Little understood today is the spiritual aspect of treaties. Traditional Aboriginal governments do not distinguish between the political and the spiritual role of chiefs, any more than they draw a sharp demarcation line between the physical and spiritual worlds. Unlike European-based governments, they do not see the need to achieve a separation between the spiritual and political aspects of governing. (p. 129)

It is apparent that traditional First Nations leadership depended upon the spiritual connection to the Creator and all creation. Saskatchewan’s First Nations participants of RCAP indicated the importance of strong, effective leadership, and also the importance

of balancing one's life using spirituality. From this study, I have come to the conclusion that spirituality embraces leadership, not the other way around.

### **Implications for Practice**

This study amplifies the need for First Nations leadership education that encourages accountability and spiritual awareness. First Nations people know what they want from the leaders of today and of the future. First Nations insist on accountability from their leaders – accountability that fosters fluent communication, direction, unity, and the defending and promoting of treaties and self-government. First Nations people want change - change in leadership and in emotional, physical, mental, and spiritual health. Leadership and spirituality seem to be the key motivators for this change. Effective change has to be well planned before it can be effectively implemented. This would be the goal of First Nations communities – to take time to carefully plan for change.

The implications of this study are as follows:

1. The findings of this study highlight the importance of leadership training for First Nations leaders.
2. Leadership training should include spiritual awareness training, along with exercises that deal with accountability, communication, establishing unity, direction, general knowledge of First Nations history and culture, and the history and cultures of the specific First Nations living in Saskatchewan. Training should also provide knowledge of the treaties and various self-government models.

3. If First Nations leaders are to effectively represent the people, they should first investigate and identify their own values, beliefs, and vision, and then investigate and identify the values, beliefs, and vision of the people they serve.

### **Implications for Further Research**

Investigating First Nations leadership is necessary to create second-order change in First Nations communities, and to create leadership programs designed specifically for First Nations leaders. Based on this study, it is suggested that further research could include:

- 1) A comparative study: provincial and national using RCAP hearings.
- 2) A study: regional, provincial, or national, without RCAP documents, using the three research questions to interview First Nations leaders and Elders in various roles.
- 3) A study on leadership education successes, struggles, and models.
- 4) A comparative study of this study's findings and the RCAP's Final Report.

### **Researcher's Reflections**

As I read the text and the themes began to emerge, I began to conceptualize the relationship between First Nations leadership and spirituality. I was reminded of the medicine wheel. The medicine wheel, among other things, encourages the balance of the emotional, physical, mental, and spiritual elements of life. Balance is important, but what happens when there is an imbalance? As I read and examined the findings, I found that many participants attributed the strength and health of education, leadership, culture, language, and individual growth to spirituality. Because of this information, I began to

visualize spirituality embracing the physical, emotional, and mental elements of life. Another interpretation would be spirituality embedded as the core, with the physical, emotional, and mental elements surrounding it. Whatever concept one chooses, spirituality is a critical element of life. Perhaps the emphasis of spirituality in the conceptualization is what happens when there is an imbalance. The need can be easily identified, which in this case is spirituality, and it can be established that there is an individual and collective longing for that need to be met.

I discussed my thoughts with a First Nations man who was knowledgeable of the Cree world-view. He listened intently to my thoughts then quietly nodded. He did not say my conceptualizations were wrong, but he did not say they were right. That was all I needed. I needed to know that I was not veering to a place that was wrong. Instead I felt affirmed by my quest to understand.

Senator Allan Bird asserts, "We are here for a very important reason; it is for our grandchildren so that they may have a good future" (Cardinal and Hildebrandt, 2000, p. 71). Ultimately, that is my wish. I hope that studies such as this will contribute to the healing and the creation of healthy First Nations individuals and communities. The purpose of this study was to discover how leadership could help in leading First Nations people to a better place. It became transparent that spirituality is a source that gently touches every moment and choice in life.

Chief Seattle (as cited in Jeffers, 1991) eloquently said:

This we know: All things are connected like the blood that unites us. We did not weave the web of life, we are merely a strand in it. Whatever we do to the web, we do to ourselves. (p. 20)

As the study progressed, I became increasingly aware of my connection to all of creation. I also became aware of the importance of those around me and began to understand, on a deeper level, their connection to creation and to the Creator. I believe, whenever one investigates spirituality, an appreciation for life is inevitable.

This study for me became a journey of healing, and of understanding myself along with a people I call my own. As I read the many stories that Saskatchewan's First Nations people presented to the RCAP Commissioners, I became moved and involved as I never had been before. I felt with the people. I laughed at the humorous stories, I was thrilled when tremendous odds were overcome, I was encouraged by successes, and I became angry and cried and grieved when I read about the horrendous stories of abuses. This I did not anticipate.

Cardinal and Hildebrandt (2000) encountered similar experiences while interviewing Saskatchewan Elders:

Many sessions that described the hardships and burdens that individuals and communities have endured in the era since the treaties were concluded. Often it was the older mothers, through tears, told of their experiences in coping with and working to heal those who were victims of abuse in residential schools. Emotions of frustration, anger, and sadness were related to those of us who sat riveted by accounts of the horror that so many experienced ... Elder McNab told the session that she felt the whole world had gone dark and that the sun wasn't shining anymore. Elder McNab spoke eloquently at a number of sessions about her people living in cities whom she referred to as the poorest of the poor. The plight of mothers and children living in destitution and third world conditions weighted heavily on her. Yet, despite her grim descriptions, she remained optimistic about the regeneration of those damaged by abuse and poverty. (p. 69)

Although the legacy of First Nations has been fraught with injustice, misinterpretations, misunderstandings, pain, and suffering since the signing of the treaties and the induction

of the Indian Act, it has also been a legacy of strength, endurance, persistence, courage, and hope. By this I am inspired. Of this I am proud.

I believe that First Nations are transcending “forms” that have been placed upon them. Huebner (1985) writes:

Hope makes possible patience and peaceful waiting in the midst of turmoil and unsettledness. With openness, love, and hope, new creation is possible. Old forms can be transcended. (p. 172)

Through the RCAP stories I developed an even greater hope for my people. I have been witness to incredible amounts of “patience and peaceful waiting in the midst of turmoil and unsettledness.” I believe now is time for a new creation. It is time to transcend the creation imposed upon the First Nations people; and time, again, to be actively involved in our destiny.

This study investigated First Nations leadership and spirituality, and gradually it became apparent that the two concepts were inextricably intertwined. It was difficult to segregate the two terms. This was not surprising as it reflects the First Nations holistic perspective of life.

Metzger (as cited in Brody, Witherell, Donald & Lundblad, 1991) surmises:

Stories go in circles. They don't go in straight lines. So it helps if you listen in circles because there are stories inside stories and stories between stories and finding your way through them is easy and hard as finding your way home. And part of the finding is the getting lost. If you're lost, you really start to look around and listen. (p. 257)

This beautifully articulates my experience with this thesis. I have had to listen intently and actively to stories within stories, and many times I have felt lost. I am glad, and sad, that I have reached a conclusion, but I know that I am still on my journey home. I hope that this story will help in someone else's journey.

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