

**THE INDUCTION EXPERIENCES OF BEGINNING ELEMENTARY  
TEACHERS IN THE NORTHWEST TERRITORIES**

A Thesis Submitted to the College of  
Graduate Studies and Research  
In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements  
For the Degree of Master of Education  
In the Department of Curriculum Studies  
University of Saskatchewan  
Saskatoon

By

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## ABSTRACT

This qualitative study involves five women elementary teachers who began their teaching careers in 2001 in various communities across the Northwest Territories, Canada. Semi-structured interviews at three stages during the year provide a window into their personal, professional and cultural experiences as they built on their pre-service identities and worked toward developing individual teaching styles. Phase one reveals initial impressions of their schools, community cultures and teaching assignments. Phase two presents a dynamic process of adjustment to the demands of teaching. In phase three, the five teachers reflect on their learning journey through pre-service education, learning through practice, and professional development. Finally they describe the induction supports they received and the areas where they felt they needed more assistance. The experiences of the five teachers are paralleled by the researcher's induction experience in Baker Lake, Northwest Territories in 1969. In addition to adjusting to the role of teacher, the five participants in this study describe their introduction to cross-cultural communities and the lessons they learned from the ambiguities of conflicting world views and outcomes of post-colonialism played out in their classrooms and in their communities.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First, I would like to acknowledge the wisdom and guidance provided by my thesis advisor, Professor Angela Ward, Curriculum Studies Department. Her constant encouragement, support and personal caring made it possible for me to complete this work.

Second, I would like to sincerely thank the five NWT teachers who took part in this study. Their generosity and openness provided me with a window into the complex and demanding lives of beginning teachers:

Finally, I would like to express my appreciation to my employer, the Department of Education, Culture and Employment, Government of Northwest Territories for the encouragement and support that made it possible for me to pursue this professional goal.

## DEDICATION

*Thank you Chuck, Charles and James for your encouragement, patience and love,  
and thank you mom and dad for welcoming me home each summer to be a student again.*

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## CHAPTER I - The Problem

*“Finding ourselves in unfamiliar places requires that we look around to understand what the situation demands of us, and that we look within to determine our abilities and willingness to accommodate those demands”.*

*(Schempp, Sparks, & Templin, ,1999)*

### **Introduction**

In 1999, I had the challenge of developing a program to support beginning teachers in the Northwest Territories. It became a labour of love, allowing me to reflect on everyday realities within classrooms across the territory as I searched for the best possible ways of welcoming new teachers. I hoped that this program would make the transition into professional life positive and supportive so that teachers would experience satisfaction and reward for their efforts, provide the best education possible for children, and be encouraged to stay longer in Canada's north. It also gave me an opportunity to reflect on the previous thirty years of my life as a teacher, principal's wife, mother and citizen of several NWT communities. This project brought with it generous support and encouragement from my employer and colleagues along with the necessary time, all precious commodities in the life of an educator. It also allowed me to combine research, advice from other educators and my own experience in a new way. The eventual result was the Northwest Territories Teacher Induction Program.



The Northwest Territories, one of Canada's three territories, is situated north of the 60<sup>th</sup> parallel between Yukon and Nunavut. Its southern boundary meets the northern borders of British Columbia, Alberta and Saskatchewan and its northern boundary is created by the Arctic Ocean. The Northwest Territories has a total population of approximately 42,000, fifty percent of whom are Aboriginal. The Aboriginal population represents three distinct groups - Dene, Metis, Inuit – who speak nine official languages in addition to French and English. The population is scattered across thirty-two communities ranging in size from the capital, Yellowknife with approximately 18,000, to Kakisa with approximately 30 people. Five Divisional Education Councils administer schools outside Yellowknife, and a District Education Authority governs each school locally. Schools in the capital city of Yellowknife come under the governance of the public, Catholic and French education boards.

Teachers in their first year of service in the Northwest Territories encounter a wide range of environments from small, modern cities with all the amenities found in southern Canada, to tiny, isolated communities accessible only by air. Teaching assignments parallel that range from large, multi-cultural modern institutions to one-teacher schools with homogeneous Aboriginal populations.

Each year, approximately fifteen percent of Northwest Territories teachers move out of the territory and are replaced by a new group of novices with varying degrees of experience, some of whom are entering the profession for the first time. Regardless of their educational or cultural backgrounds, they meet

challenges common to all beginning teachers, compounded, for most, by an initiation into an unfamiliar culture. The induction period is critical for these beginning teachers, since a positive first year may mean they will extend their term for another year or longer; however, a negative experience will send them away and will rob the system of some potentially valuable experience and educational continuity.

I discovered that as I worked through the developmental process of the induction program, the memories of my early teaching experiences were still vividly etched in my mind, constantly evoking a myriad of sounds, smells and emotions from a far away time. It occurred to me that during such demanding periods in one's life journey, circumstances stir up our senses to a condition of high alert producing memories that will last forever. In later years, following my own induction, I shared northern schools and communities with many beginning teachers, where I became fascinated by their varied impressions and reactions as they encountered their first year of teaching in the NWT. I was particularly curious about the qualities and factors that caused them to integrate the Northwest Territories into their own identities or to leave within a short time.

### **Reason for the study**

While developing the induction program, it became obvious to me that induction was not simply a block of time at the beginning of a teacher's career but rather a "...unique and personal journey" along which others can only "...help you find your way (by) helping you to develop a sense of voice..." (Featherstone, Munby, and Russel, 1997, p.13). I wanted to learn more about that sense of voice

and the signposts along that journey; therefore, a purpose for my research emerged. I would explore the factors and influences affecting beginning teachers' sense of identity during their first year in the profession. By interviewing teachers, I could gain a first hand understanding of the individual identities as they developed. I wanted to understand the personal, professional and cultural aspects of identity that had informed their journey so far, and subsequently sustained them through their induction year. I then wanted to understand the kind of supports teachers actually received and the degree to which the teachers found them helpful. Finally, based on the reality of lived experience, I wanted to know what could be done to further improve and personalize induction supports for beginning teachers in the Northwest Territories.

*In 1969, I arrived in Baker Lake, NWT, an Inuit community located inland from the west coast of Hudson Bay with a two-year Teaching Diploma from the University of Saskatchewan and one year of teaching experience. Following a weeklong orientation in Churchill, Manitoba, with my new husband, who would also be my principal, I stepped down from a DC3 aircraft in the community that would be our home for the next eight years. Upon our arrival, we were invited into the Settlement Manager's office along with another new teaching couple and informed that there was a problem with the housing – one house for two couples! There was, however, a "game cabin" until something else became available. Eventually, the decision was made that the principal should have the house and our lifelong friends graciously lived in a cabin until later in the fall.*

*With accommodation problems temporarily resolved, there were many memorable adventures and discoveries during those wonderful days of late summer when the tundra displayed its floral richness, and breezes from the lake brought ocean-like surf, scenes of incredibly elongated dusks, and ships bearing annual supplies. The community children began their visiting ritual and we connected with the rest of the community at the store, weekly movies and church on Sunday.*

*My grade two class, which seemed to contain an inordinate number of difficult students, brought some distinct challenges and eventually one of the other teachers described it as the class that no one else wanted. In those first months I discovered I had a great deal to learn. When the children wrinkled their noses or raised their eyebrows, I did not realize they were answering my questions. When one child spoke on behalf of another, I replied, "Let her ask for herself". When the children constantly helped each other with their work, I scolded them for copying.*

*Within a few weeks I encountered an entire range of challenges, which are not so different from those of NWT teachers today, thirty years later. Living conditions were not what I was accustomed to; the new environment required adjustment; I was teaching the "difficult class", and I was miscommunicating with my students. And yet, these challenges conjured up a sense of excitement and interest driven by a somewhat naive confidence that everything would work out. After all, this was our first home and it offered a lot of interesting possibilities. The environment was beautiful, presenting a combination of prairie*

*vastness and maritime-like activity. The “difficult class” was actually made up of very interesting individuals who demanded my creative response to alternate ways of communicating and learning.*

### **The Research Questions**

**What are the induction experiences of five beginning women teachers in Northwest Territories schools?**

DeBolt (1992) states that each individual who graduates from a teacher education program is a ‘work in progress’ who is expected to have an image of self as teacher along with the appropriate knowledge, values and skills for the job. The experience of the induction year, then involves teachers creating meaning by connecting their qualities and competencies with the varied realities found in classrooms and communities where they teach (Tickle, 2000). These are similar personal and professional experiences that all beginning teachers share; however, for beginning teachers in the Northwest Territories there is an additional dimension of cross-cultural experience.

**What are the current induction supports available to Northwest Territories elementary teachers? Do they meet their personal, professional and cultural needs?**

Tickle (2000) says for the majority of beginning teachers there is a tension between “...needing to learn more and become better at what they do, while being expected to perform to the highest standards possible”(p.5). During this dynamic period, each individual has specific needs that can only be met when the nexus of need and support are responsive, compatible and complimentary.

**What other induction supports do elementary Northwest Territories teachers suggest?**

Beginning teachers are in the ideal position to offer advice on teacher induction supports, particularly at the end of their first year of teaching. Although there will be some predictable common elements "...(i)t is in the dialectical tension between the external factors unique to the school and the internal factors unique to the teacher that one searches for his or her identity as a teacher" (Schempp, Sparks, & Templin, 1999).

**Need for the study**

The fortunes of the Northwest Territories ebb and flow on an economic tide that responds, in a large extent, to the exploration and development of natural resources. Gold mines close as the diamond industry enters its infancy. Oil and gas development promises employment and great wealth. Northern employment quotas ensure guaranteed jobs for everyone willing and able; however, the reality is that many of those jobs are not filled because a skilled northern workforce with the necessary education is not available to meet the demand.

A strong education system is built, in part, on committed, effective teachers who have the skills, knowledge and values necessary to guide their students through school to graduation. In order to create the most supportive school culture, there needs to be a stable teaching staff made up of teachers at various stages of experience with various areas of specialization. A stable, experienced teaching staff is dependent on teachers and administrators remaining

in positions for several years, thus allowing a school culture to develop where it is possible for school vision statements and school mottoes to become a reality.

Continuity is one of the most critical building blocks of a successful education system and yet it is an elusive commodity in many NWT schools where there is a high turnover of teachers every year. Continuity depends on a regional administration with a common vision, supported by principals who are committed to their schools and their communities. With the school as an extension of the community, parents and children develop trust in the education they receive. A school that provides a consistent and committed presence has a stabilizing effect on the entire community. A school with a consistent presence can literally become a community anchor which grounds children and families to purposeful activity focused on positive education with hope for the future.

In order to reach some ideal state of stability in NWT education, it is important to take a close look at the conditions that will encourage teachers to remain. Teachers who are satisfied with their teaching assignment will stay. It is important to examine the factors that would encourage them to stay longer and conversely the reasons for their leaving.

### **Description of the Study**

This qualitative study examines the experiences of beginning teachers in the Northwest Territories. Through in-depth interviews, at three stages during the induction year, the experiences of five beginning teachers were examined. The primary focus was on the personal, professional, and cultural needs of beginning

teachers and the types of teacher induction supports they perceived as responsive to their needs.

### **Importance of the study**

In the current climate of teacher shortages, it is becoming more difficult to recruit teachers to the Northwest Territories. Increased teaching opportunities in other parts of the country mean fewer teachers applying to teach in communities that require changes in lifestyle. Motivation for teaching in the north has changed over the years. Whereas a love of adventure, opportunity for involvement in community development and a desire to work for social justice led many young teachers to stuff their belongings in their backpacks and head north in the past, more recently expectations have changed. The nature of northern communities has also changed, so that social and political problems, perceived or actual, may discourage young teachers.

Teachers currently in the NWT come from every Canadian province and territory. From the 1970's to the mid 1980's, NWT teacher recruitment teams traveled across Canada each spring offering information sessions and face-to-face interviews in major centers. With the teacher surplus of the late 1980's and 1990's, abundant, unsolicited applications provided a wide selection of interested teachers, eliminating the necessity for the recruitment drives of the past. Also, in the 1990's larger numbers of NWT teachers graduated from community-based teacher education programs that were initiated by the Department of Education and the regional boards of education, and delivered by Aurora College. In 1991, the Department of Education set a goal that by the year 2000, half the teachers in



the Northwest Territories would be Aboriginal, and although some regions have reached forty percent, the overall Northwest Territories average in 2000 was nineteen percent. The pool of Aboriginal candidates at the community level is currently not adequate to maintain the community-based teacher education model; however, Aurora College has established regional deliveries at the three campuses in Inuvik, Yellowknife and Fort Smith. Since the NWT goal for Aboriginal teachers had not been reached and a teacher shortage appeared imminent in southern Canada, it became necessary in 2000 to again launch a pan-Canadian recruitment drive for NWT teachers.

The continued dependence of the NWT on teachers from outside the territory, results in issues and concerns around high turnover. Although some teachers will come and make the NWT their home, many more will consider their new environment a temporary opportunity to gain teaching experience and an adventure before returning to their home province.

This study provides insights from beginning teachers, which may assist the NWT schools in retaining teachers. Through an effective and responsive teacher induction program, it is hoped that more teachers will receive the support they need in their first year, thus making the transition to effective and satisfied teachers who will stay. The eventual and most critical outcome will be successful NWT students who will benefit to the fullest from their education and reach their potential as contributing residents of a wider community in the future.

## **Background to the study**

DeBolt (1992) notes that induction in the past was most likely to be the informal, often a reactionary and ritualistic socialization of new teachers. In fact, the Northwest Territories has recognized the necessity for some form of induction, mainly in the form of orientation, for many years. In 1959 a 2-week orientation course for all teachers who were going to the Canadian Arctic (present day Nunavut and Nunavik) for the first time was held in Ottawa. This course included presentations by experts in the fields of anthropology, sociology, geography, economics, health, linguistics, communications and curriculum. New teachers were strongly encouraged to be prepared to learn from the community and the people. At the same time a similar orientation was held in the Western Arctic for teachers moving to that part of the NWT.

Orientations continued up to the 1960's and were held in regional centers. By the early 1970's, teachers moving to the Keewatin Region in the Central Arctic were required to attend a summer school class in Inuktitut at the University of Saskatchewan. Later in that decade, an orientation was held in Yellowknife for all teachers moving to the Northwest Territories. Given the great distances and the enormous cost of travel that practice did not continue, and from 1980's to the present, orientations became the responsibility of individual educational jurisdictions. Some boards continue to provide rich experiences for new teachers in regional centers. On arrival in their new communities, some District Education Authorities (local education committees) provide cultural experiences where teachers go out "on the land" to experience traditional activities of the locality.

These events may be for one day or several. In addition to orientations, beginning teachers have always been supported to varying degrees by teacher consultants who visit the schools and provide professional support, while informal supports provided by other teachers and community members happen spontaneously.

In 1998 the NWT Standing Committee on Teacher Training recommended that a Teacher Induction Committee be formed. At that time, the committee included members from the contemporary regions of Nunavut and the Northwest Territories. A survey of beginning teachers was initiated in the spring of 1999 and completed shortly after the creation of the territories. That survey revealed important issues and trends affecting beginning teachers. Over the following year I developed the NWT Teacher Induction Program based on the results of the survey and on a review of programs offered in most Canadian provinces. This work continued to be guided by a committee representing teachers, principals, superintendents, the Northwest Territories Teachers Association and the Department of Education.

The induction program was composed of four phases: 1) Pre-Orientation, 2) Orientation, 3) Systematic Sustained Supports, and 4) Professional Development. One option under the systematic sustained supports included a formal mentorship program. As part of the 2000 NWT teacher salary negotiations, an allowance for mentors was included in the contract. The program was implemented throughout the NWT in the fall of 2000 and during that year fifty-two mentorships were formalized in territorial schools. In the spring of 2001, a survey sent to teachers, mentors and administrators provided two

significant recommendations, release time for mentoring pairs and mentorship training workshops, which were later realized.

## **Summary**

This thesis is made up of six chapters. Chapter one describes my interest in the topic of teacher induction and the broader reasons behind it including the need, the importance and finally the background for this study. Chapter two provides a look at the relevant literature on teacher identity development and secondly on the process of teacher induction. Chapter three describes the research design and rationale, data collection, data analysis, research ethics and includes an introduction to the participants in this study. Chapter four presents the findings from my research within three major categories which parallel the three phases experienced by the first year teachers: first impressions, adjustments to the reality and time to reflect. Chapter five provides an analysis of the data within two themes, finding an identity as teacher and teaching in the “border world”. Chapter six presents my conclusions.

## **CHAPTER II - A Review of the literature**

### **Introduction**

Chapter two examines the literature on teaching identity from the personal, professional and cultural perspectives and the process of teacher induction.

### **Teacher Identity**

Theories of teacher identity serve as an analytic lens for examining the experiences of beginning teachers. Gee (2001) prefers to avoid the more common 'race, class and gender' views of identity in favour of a perspective which forefronts more specific contextual influences. He explains that each person has many identities that are determined by their interactions in society. He views identity from four perspectives that are interrelated in complex ways creating a "certain kind of person". An individual's identity is determined then, by her performance in society within a certain context, and although one perspective may dominate at a particular time, the others may all be present to varying degrees. Using Gee's view as an analytic tool, the identity of a teacher can be considered within these four perspectives – nature, institution, discourse, and affinity. First, a teacher's "nature perspective" is a product of her biology or genes over which she has no control. Second, the "institutional perspective" identifies a teacher within the institution of the education district, the school and the classroom. The institution gives her the authority to carry out the roles and responsibilities of her

position. Third, her “discursive perspective” identifies characteristics of her identity that she develops through her own dialogue and discourse with society and these characteristics become reality through the recognition of other people. Fourth, the affinity perspective, involves membership in a group of people who share a very specific interest. According to Gee’s view, a teacher’s identity is determined by the context in which she finds herself. Her “institutional perspective” is set out by the school system which specifies “...laws, rules, traditions or principles of various sorts...”(p.102) which she must follow as part of the responsibilities of her position in the institution. The teacher’s “discursive perspective” forms as she interacts within her teaching environment with students, colleagues, administration, parents and society. For the purposes of this research, I will use Gee’s institutional and discursive perspectives that, I believe have the greatest influence on the development of teacher identity.

A similar view is held by Sumara and Luce-Kapler (1996) who say that identity “...does not really have a fixed location inside the body of the individual but, rather, is ambiguously located amid the human subject’s perceived and interpreted relations in the world”(p.69). In the context of becoming a teacher, a teacher’s identity changes as relationships and situations change and therefore, it is a perpetual process of forming and reforming based on lived experience while interacting with family, friends, students, colleagues, parents and society in general.

Schempp, Sparks and Templin (1999) say that teachers shape and sustain their identities through three interrelated elements: biology, establishing self in

teaching, and establishing the self in schools. They describe identity as a "...unique and personal phenomenon" for each person. They go on to say that beginning teachers bring with them the commonalities of pedagogical-type experiences, their own experiences as students and their pre-service education upon which they establish their identity as teachers within the context of the education system. "As teachers are required to perform particular tasks and meet the challenges of teaching, they must constantly call upon their personal resources, and test their knowledge, perspectives, and beliefs to accomplish their occupation mission. In this regard, knowing who one is cannot be disassociated from what one does" (Schempp, Sparks & Templin, p.147).

Schempp, Sparks and Templin (1999) also noted that teacher identity begins long before a student enters pre-service education. Within the context of the school, children watch the actions of their teachers and absorb the knowledge, skills and attitudes presented each day in the classroom as part of daily student-teacher interactions. Outside the school, children have pedagogical experiences, such as babysitting, coaching, life guarding, which help to shape their identities as future teachers. Friesen and Orr (1998) point out in a study of Aboriginal teachers, that their biographies were inextricably tied to their identity as teachers.

Using the notion that teacher identity is contextually formed, I will explore the process of teacher identity building within two of Gee's contexts: institutional and discursive. Within the context of the pre-service institution, student teachers build on their already existing identity as they are introduced to identity building activities initiated by the institution. They use discursive practices to construct

and sustain certain identities made up of the necessary qualities to fulfill their roles as teachers (Gee, 2001).

Pre-service institutions, however, support diverse ideologies for identity building, which McLean (1999) has formed into three broad groups - constructivist, practical and critical. First, constructivists view student teachers as the constructors of knowledge, actively at the center of any learning. In their view, continuous learning is central as they engage in a process of observing children, identifying problems and resolving those problems. Constructivist teachers build theories and use their own intellectual power to increase understanding of children and improve their teaching. Constructivist teacher education integrates knowledge and pedagogy followed by dialectic and dialogue to evaluate and reflect.

Second, McLean (1999) describes the practical perspective as it applies to pre-service education. This approach views teachers in a much more holistic way involving "...many interconnections among personal and professional understandings, self-images and lived experience" (p.67). Within the practical perspective it is considered important for teachers to understand themselves and their work and to continually examine the practical situations they encounter in order to improve their teaching. Emphasis is on reflective and collaborative practice; whereas, theory is de-emphasized.

The third perspective, critical pedagogy, places the emphasis in pre-service education on preparing teachers with identities that recognize education as a part of social and cultural contexts in order to address the needs of



disadvantaged groups of children who are dis-empowered by the education system. McLean (1999) says, "This discourse of teaching and learning is characterized by complexity, conflict, inherent ambiguities and contradictions" (p.69). This approach introduces student teachers to diverse realities in order for them to develop their ability to accept and embrace difference without feeling threatened.

Theories of identity form a basis for examining the experiences of beginning teachers within their personal histories. The influences of an individual's lived experiences meld together and combine with nature to create an ever evolving, unique and personal identity. Teachers combine pedagogical-type experiences, experiences as students and pre-service education along with their personal resources in order to meet the demands of their profession. The way they carry out their responsibilities will be influenced by their biographies, and the ideology of their pre-service education.

### **Personal Identity**

As part of the process of building an identity, researchers have identified particular qualities and characteristics that situate a beginning teacher for her future profession. In a presentation to pre-service education students, Wesley (1998) provides a list of "non-traditional" expectations for teaching as a way of life: empathize; create partnerships with families, administrators and other teachers; account to others; embrace adversity; practice the long view; demonstrate competency and interest; never quit; accept responsibility; reflect and contribute to reflection; admit mistakes and fix them; and wait patiently,

expectantly and intensely. It is worth noting that each expectation begins with a verb signifying active engagement of teachers. Wesley goes on to point out that through experience he has learned that the "...joy in teaching is often a matter of waiting... like planting and nurturing a seed.... Everything teachers do is related to planting, pruning, nurturing, and strengthening." He cautions us that too often teachers become impatient, thinking that we have failed and forgetting that every student is unique. In the final analysis, he says, "In the rush to meet standards and to perform well, it is sometimes furthest from our thoughts to wait with confidence, remembering that it is the nature of the seed to grow"(p.81). In order to achieve Wesley's expectations, teachers need to bring to their work a strong sense of self-image and a positive, hopeful outlook.

Lipka and Brinthaup (1999) pointed out that, "In teaching, what you think of yourself and how you feel about yourself is indeed crucial to 'doing a good job'"(p.226). Teaching is an intensely personal activity involving constant exchanges between teachers and students inside classrooms. These concentrated interactions are guided by a teacher's behaviour that is a function of her self-concept (Tusin, 1999). In order for these concentrated interactions to be successful learning experiences for students, it is necessary for teachers to understand and accept themselves. Tusin (1999) points out that the strongest commonality of the three teaching perspectives (McLean, 1999) is the need for self-reflective teachers, a process that builds on the development of self-understanding. Hamachek points out the impact that not understanding ourselves has on our students: "...in the absence of functional self-knowledge we lack the

ability to overhaul or to fine-tune those aspects of ourselves that may block our teaching effectiveness” (Tusin, 1999, p.8). In fact, Hamachek says that a teacher’s self is like a second curriculum in the classroom (Tusin, 1999). A strong self-image then, allows a teacher to have a positive relationship with her students as she supports them in developing their own healthy sense of self.

Within Gee’s concept of identity building, the pre-service institution becomes the context for student teachers to develop their self-concept. Tusin (1999) points out that there is a need to put more emphasis on the human dimension of teaching and learning by putting more emphasis on the self-development of student teachers. She says that it will require reflective practitioners to train reflective practitioners through a process of facilitating thoughtful growth and change in their students.

It is important when considering the personal qualities of teachers that the value of positive attitude is placed high on the list. A number of researchers have examined the influence of positive attitude on effective teaching and student success. In a comparative study of two school staffs, Garmston (2001) noted that positive teachers had confidence that if they worked hard enough and smart enough their students would learn, whereas, negative teachers, who were frustrated and stressed, were more likely to blame parents and students for low levels of achievement. Ginott’s (1972) timeless description of the effect of teachers on children presents a powerful argument for the creation of positive learning environments in schools:

I have come to a frightening conclusion. I am the decisive element in the classroom. It is my personal approach that creates the climate. It is my daily mood that makes the weather. As a teacher, I possess tremendous power to make a child's life miserable or joyous, I can be a tool of torture or an instrument of inspiration. I can humiliate or humor, hurt or heal. In all situations it is my response that decides whether a crisis will be escalated or de-escalated, and a child humanized or de-humanized (p.13).

Tienken and Gasparini (2001) reinforce the effect that a climate of trust, enthusiasm, love of learning and positive outlook can have on students.

They assure us that teachers can change attitudes with a smile or a positive comment. Quite simply, Tell (1999) says, "...being an educator and being a pessimist are incompatible"(p.17).

It is also important to consider teachers' personal characteristics as students view them. Teachers need certain attitudes and personal qualities in order for students to respect and want to please them (Good & Brophy, 1991). In more than one thousand interpersonal exchanges each day (Jackson, 1968) students expect their teachers to respect them as individuals and to establish credibility. In fact, Goodlad (1984) observed in his study that student motivation increased when their teachers were interested in them as individuals.

### **Professional Identity**

If a teacher's personal identity is strong it will provide a firm foundation for the knowledge and skills she will learn as she develops her professional

identity. Although we know it is not possible to fully prepare teachers for every classroom eventuality, Heuser (1999) points out that beginning teachers must learn to be collaborative, progressive, critical and reflective, with a broad repertoire of techniques and strategies which motivate students to learn. Walling & Lewis (2000) add that teachers must be rigorously prepared to manage classrooms effectively, have knowledge of the subjects, and make the most of every minute in the classroom. However, Wong and Wong (1998) conclude that “(t)eaching is a highly skilled craft that can be learned” (p. 9). Finally, Kingele (2000) expects beginning teachers to enter the classroom prepared to concentrate on student learning outcomes, actively engaging students in the learning process, and recognizing that there is more than one way to achieve desired outcomes. As part of their continuum of learning, teachers need a foundational philosophy to direct their teaching and their continuous professional development.

When student teachers enter their first year of teaching, the development of self-efficacy becomes essential to their continuously developing professional identity. Ashton & Webb (1986) describe self-efficacy as a “...cognitive mechanism that regulates behavior” and develops “...as an individual acquires a conviction of personal competence...”(p.8). Achieved through constant reflection, Han (as cited in Bolotin Joseph and Efron, 2001) adds that efficacy is a “...natural process that facilitates the development of future action from the contemplation of past and/or current behaviour” (p.86). Han considers reflection as an integral part of self-efficacy which refers to “...the ongoing process of critically examining and refining practice, taking into careful consideration the personal,

pedagogical, societal ...and ethical contexts associated with schools, classrooms and the multiple roles of teachers” (Bolotin Joseph & Burnaford, 2001, p.86).

According to Garmston (2001) studies show teacher efficacy brings about higher levels of achievement among students, increased positive relationships with students, administrators and parents resulting in reduced teacher stress.

### **Cultural Identity**

When considering the preparation of teachers and their developing identity for today’s multicultural classrooms, their cultural identity cannot be considered without putting on the lens of critical theory. By taking a critical view of education, teachers have an opportunity to adjust their paradigms in order to address the needs of large groups of children from cultures other than the mainstream, which are failing in the current education systems. Writers of critical theory point out that teachers need to understand education in a wide social and cultural context in order to address the complexities, conflicts, ambiguities and contradictions which are present in multicultural education. Preparing for these realities demands teachers who can accept cultural displacement and adapt to unfamiliar challenges, teaching environments and social contexts (McLean, 1999). According to Tell (1999), culture is a pervasive and ever evolving part of each person’s self-concept; therefore, before entering a multicultural classroom, Abt-Perkins & Gomez (1993) maintain that teachers must take time to examine their fundamental values, attitudes, dispositions and belief systems as they inform their personal perceptions. Teachers need to be aware that the cultural stance of their pre-service education (Lipka, 1991) and the invisible culture of their schools

(McAlpine & Crago, 1995) may represent mainstream North American middle class culture and not that of their students. For that reason, then Delpit (1988) asks teachers from the dominant culture not to assume that, as members of the 'culture of power', their beliefs represent one universal truth.

Every teacher is a product of her enculturation and membership in a particular culture, and so it is natural to apply old understandings to new contexts. In fact, Costa (1991) maintains that when we cannot explain new experiences, a discrepancy exists requiring the gathering and processing of new information in order for us to find a resolution leading to accommodation. Unfortunately, teachers who are unable or unwilling to embrace difference become confined by their cultural boxes and are much more likely to adopt racial stereotypes. In contrast, teachers who have the ability to go beyond their own cultural identity become critically conscious thus embracing diversity while reaching an understanding of the cultures of their students. Bouvier (2001) does point out, however, that love, truthfulness, respect for life, wisdom, hospitality, sharing, generosity and peace are values that transcend cultures.

Critically conscious teachers must find a way to become students of the culture and the environment. Taylor (1995) says, "To be successful, non-Native teachers entering Native communities must do so with an open mind, aware that life will be different and that different and new ways do not have to be threatening"(p.230). He cautions teachers to remember that, as visitors in the culture, they need to focus their attention on adjusting to the environment rather than falling into the all too common trap of blaming communities for their

differences. Battiste & Barman (1995) point out that teachers can integrate into the community by treating people respectfully and equitably, attempting to understand the cultural perspective and worldview, attending cultural events, observing every day life and asking questions to clarify cultural aspects they don't understand. However, Baldwin (1988) cautions that teachers who work to make their students think, talk, and act just like them, may be responsible for creating racial tensions. Instead of being 'colorblind', Baldwin pleads with teachers to be 'color conscious' thus recognizing and valuing difference. On a similar note, Delpit (1988) hopes to convince teachers that not all parents want the same things for their children and one approach to learning does not work for everyone.

Many teachers in Aboriginal communities are confused about the role they are expected to play, and although they may have a sense that there are different expectations related to the incorporation of language and culture, community participation, appropriate pedagogy, and assessment, very often these ambiguities are not clarified. Harper (2000) maintains that unfortunately, non-Aboriginal teachers in Aboriginal communities often find themselves working in a vacuum without any sense of the parents' hopes and goals for their children. Garcia points out that teachers in multi-cultural environments generally believe in the importance of high academic expectations and instructional innovation (1991), positive affirmation of students' cultural identity and first language, positive communication with parents, a strong commitment to the empowerment of students (Cummins, 1996) and development of concern for the social issues of the larger community (Ladson-Billings, 2001). Cummins (1996) recommends



therefore, that in order for teachers to make education more meaningful and empowering for Aboriginal students, they need to use critical inquiry as part of a transformative pedagogical approach, enabling students to relate curriculum content to their personal experiences by analyzing them in the broader context of society. Ward (2001) suggests that the role of teachers of Aboriginal children is an all encompassing one, where the teacher becomes engaged politically by being "...physically affirming, intellectually engaging, spiritually embracing and emotionally supportive"(p.40). Writer (2001) moves even farther into the political realm by adding the responsibility of becoming a change agent to the role of teacher in order to stop the historical and continuing efforts toward assimilation, which Battiste (2000) describes as cognitive imperialism. Finally, Huff's (1997) view of Indian education adds a heavy responsibility to a teacher's role when he says, "Indian education has as its goal the eradication of centuries of colonial ethos imprinted on the minds and souls of Indian youth and to replace that model with one of pride, respect, and knowledge of Indian nationhood"(p.182).

Haig-Brown (1992) describes Aboriginal education as a metaphorical "border world" where both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal teachers work in the midst of constant tension and struggle. Within this "border region" Aboriginal people work to recover from the results of past and present "cultural invasions" that have resulted in community disruptions. She recognizes that "...in the border world non-Natives feel the ever-present tension between being useful and being undesirable"(p.97) and describes her role as an ethnographer who builds relationships in order to work respectfully in the border world. McLaren (1994)

further expands this concept in his description of Giroux's border pedagogy which "...enables educators to affirm and legitimate local meanings and constellations of meanings that grow out of particular discursive communities but at the same time interrogate the interests, ideologies, and social practices that such knowledges serve when viewed from the perspective of more global economies of power and privilege" (p. 231).

Teachers who enter the realities of cross-cultural schools bring with them the tools and the lenses they have acquired during pre-service education; however, the context of the school may require them to look beyond their training in order to address the complexities and ambiguities of their new and unfamiliar context. Part of their challenge then is to find the most appropriate strategies for teaching that will work for their students. Ladson-Billings (2001) writes that teachers in these schools "...must be willing to travel new highways and byways of teaching and learning to ensure that all of the children they teach experience academic, cultural and social success"(p.9); however, she voices a concern that, although multicultural education is discussed in pre-service education, in her view, "no one shows (the students) how to do it"(p30).

In her observations of one Aboriginal teacher, Ward (2001) noted a number of culturally appropriate learning strategies that created a positive learning environment in an urban classroom. Strategies she observed included varied participant structures, a culturally appropriate discipline style, cooperative learning techniques, and talking circles in a learning environment where the observed teacher treated her class as a family and accepted the children's right to

be themselves. Cummins (1996) reinforces this teacher's holistic approach when he states that in multicultural schools "...human relationships are at the heart of schooling ... and adds, "(w)hen powerful relationships are established between teachers and students, these relationships frequently can transcend the economic and social disadvantages that afflict communities and schools alike in inner city and rural areas"(p.1).

In summary, stepping back from one's culture prepares teachers to become analytical and critical in their ongoing personal and professional development while constantly restructuring their perceptions to include different ways of knowing and believing. The constructivist theory, then, supports Ranier's (1999) stance that people create cultural awareness in the same way they create other forms of knowledge through interaction between existing knowledge or beliefs and the new ideas or situations they encounter.

### **Teacher Induction**

Teachers arrive at their first teaching experience with an identity that has been formed within particular contexts and as a result of particular discourses that they have encountered in their lived experience (Gee, 2001). They also arrive with a multi-faceted sense of identity combining the personal, professional and cultural understandings they have gathered on their journey. Upon entering the classroom, these identities are evoked as they step into the role of teacher. Each facet of this identity will be challenged and stretched to the limit as teachers experience the realities of the job, and although they will not fully "arrive" in their first year, they will experience the steepest part of the journey in which their

resources will be thoroughly tested. The way teachers respond to the demands will require all their resources and their ultimate sense of success and satisfaction will depend on how they make use of those resources.

There is a general consensus in the literature that induction is part of a process, a stage along the learning continuum that begins during pre-service and extends throughout the life of a teacher. Induction into teaching is a complex stage (Crozier-Smith, 1996; Tickle, 2000) of enculturation and socialization (Moir & Gless, 2001); in fact, it is "...the self-construction of the new teacher as a 'learning professional'" (Tickle, 2000, p. xi).

Moskowitz and Stephens (1997) describe teacher induction as a bridge or a period of transition for new teachers from students of teaching to teachers of students; however, Lortie (1975) suggests it is far more traumatic by referring to it as a 'broad and lonely leap'. In the larger context, induction introduces an employee to a new job through a period of apprenticeship, where tasks are phased in from simple to complex. This is not the case with teachers however, as they are expected to accept the same complex range of responsibilities as an experienced teacher. In fact, very often, beginning teachers are assigned larger classes, more difficult students and more instructional and non-instructional duties than long-term staff (Jensen, 1987). As a beginning teacher enters the induction phase, she needs to be prepared for "...multiple realities (which) are encountered and constructed, both in the interpersonal and intrapersonal spheres" (McLean, 1999, p.70). From a constructivist perspective, a beginning teacher needs to be

part of a community of learners where she can examine, evaluate and reflect in order to construct a personal teaching style (McLean, 1999).

### **Personal Aspects of Induction**

Meister and Jenks (2000) explain that all beginning teachers come to their first year of teaching with a sense of identity formed by family background, personal experiences, knowledge, attitudes and values that have been melded into a personal world view. Moving from the secure academic world of university life to the daily classroom realities can be traumatic, as beginning teachers adjust to new living conditions - financial responsibilities, new status as wage earner, new friends, new community - while at the same time experiencing the stress of separation from familiar places, roles, lifestyles and relationships (Good & Brophy, 1991; Jensen, 1987). Within the family, beginning teachers often experience added stress when responsibilities at home compete for their time and attention. It is not always easy for family members to understand the extra time required outside the school day to complete the demands of the job and as a result, beginning teachers feel torn between their personal and professional responsibilities (Gordon, 1991).

Borich emphasizes the "...absolute necessity for teachers to have work environments and significant others in their lives providing the facilitating conditions necessary for the promotion of a healthy, functional view of self as teacher." The absence of these support systems however, "...will undermine the efforts of the person who is trying to make the transition to 'teacher'" (Tusin, 1999, p.5). Gordon (1991) observed that if personal needs are not met, emotional,

physical, attitudinal or behavioral problems might surface in the form of physical exhaustion, depression, or feelings of failure. The outcome for the beginning teacher may then be lowered self-esteem and decreased optimism, making it very difficult to create ideal learning conditions in classrooms.

### **Professional Aspects of Induction**

Literature focused on the professional aspects of induction looks at the identity of the beginning teacher, the induction as a series of phases, and the major areas of concern for beginning teachers. The literature also provides reasons for teacher induction programs along with goals and cultural aspects to be considered during this period.

McAlpine and Crago (1995) observed that pre-service teachers see their professional responsibilities primarily as abstract theories and strategies grounded more in their own experience as learners, than in practical application. The challenge then, during the induction period, is to provide support while they shift that paradigm to competent practitioner as one includes "...the identity 'teacher' in one's own life"(Sumara & Luce-Kapler, 1996, p.65) Through a constructivist process, the sense of self changes as a beginning teacher integrates personal knowledge and beliefs with new knowledge and experiences (Rainer, 1999). It is essentially a role adjustment where the teacher realizes that classrooms are complex settings demanding constant decision making and application of general principles to particular situations (Good & Brophy, 1991). Unfortunately many beginning teachers feel that they are admitting to failure or incompetence if they

ask for help and instead, go to great lengths to cover up their problems forming a “...society of the silent in order to fit in” (Tusin, 1999, p.6).

In an attempt to better understand induction and provide effective supports for beginning teachers, several researchers have identified signposts in the process. They caution however, that although knowing about these signposts may help administrators, mentors and beginning teachers better understand the experience, they are not universal. Jensen (1987) describes the process of becoming part of any organizational culture as involving anticipation, reality shock, and membership. He says only those who adjust to the discrepancies between their initial expectations and the reality are equipped to move on to the final phase. Looking specifically at the induction of teachers, Moir (1990) identified five dynamic phases – anticipation, survival, disillusionment, rejuvenation and finally, reflection. However, given the dynamic nature of each phase, there is a risk that if teachers are unable to address the basic challenges of the classroom, they may reach a state of paralysis, resulting in a survival mentality that impedes professional development and sets a tone for the rest of their career. When teachers are in the survival phase, their concerns can best be described as self-centered or immature, focusing primarily on being liked by their students, respected by their colleagues and able to control their class. The next critical step then is to learn new strategies that will allow them to address their concerns in order to experience some success and move along to the next phase. Unfortunately, they may instead build up negative attitudes, experience reduced self-esteem and be more likely to blame others if they do not experience success.

In their teaching practice, they will probably become resistant to educational change and be more likely to use predictable, uninspired teaching strategies. Such behaviours are likely to impede beginning teachers from becoming student-centered, mature teachers who have student learning as their primary goal (Good & Brophy, 1991; Gordon, 1991).

This review has examined the personal and professional experiences of beginning teachers during their induction period and identified signposts or phases they are likely to experience as part of the process. These in themselves present a strong argument for providing induction programs for all beginning teachers. There are, however, other reasons why induction support is so critical in preventing unnecessary teacher attrition in the early years.

There is a common myth that attrition in the profession is simply a process of natural selection, eliminating teachers who are not well suited or not dedicated enough for the job; however, Jensen's (1987) study found that in the United States, many of the most capable teachers leave the profession; in fact, "(t)he higher the score on the National Teacher Examination (NTE), the less likely the teacher is to be teaching seven years after beginning" (p.30). He went on to say that fifteen percent of first year teachers leave the profession; ten percent leave in both the second and third years; five to seven percent leave in each of the fourth, fifth, and sixth years. The result then is that fifty percent have left teaching after six years; however, the most significant attrition rate occurs during the first three years of teaching. A study by Schlechty and Vance (1987) showed that, "... among teachers who have served seven or fewer years, almost two thirds of those



who had scored in the top decile in the NTE had left, whereas only one third of those scoring in the bottom decile had left" (cited in Jensen, p.30). This study points out that teachers with high academic levels are not as likely to remain in teaching and if education systems value them, they will have to provide support in order to encourage their retention.

Gordon (1991) identified six environmental difficulties which, if left unattended, may contribute to teachers leaving the profession:

1. difficult work assignment – teaching assignment the same as experienced teacher; inappropriate match between assignment, training and experience
2. unclear expectations – many school cultures are based on conflicting rules, procedures and philosophy
3. inadequate teaching resources
4. isolation – personal and professional
5. role conflict – extensive demands on the beginning teacher both personally and professionally
6. reality shock (p.2)

Moir and Gless (2001) suggest that the complex problems in the classroom, along with a lack of support, result in too many bright and talented new teachers leaving the profession. They contend that teachers leave because of the pressures experienced as they integrate professional norms, attitudes and standards into teaching practice for the first time, which can be a slow and painful process often experienced in isolation.

Meister and Jenks (2000) on the other hand, attribute the attrition of beginning teachers to the incongruity between pre-service and the first year of teaching. In a study of forty-two first year teachers, they set out to determine the strengths and weaknesses of pre-service education as it prepared teachers for the realities of teaching. The results showed three broad themes where teachers did not feel adequately prepared. First, beginning teachers struggled with managing the behaviour and diverse needs of their students. Many teachers in the study experienced complicated and sometimes volatile student behaviour, and yet their pre-service courses emphasized normal classroom management issues and positive learning environments. As pre-service students they had practiced various approaches to classroom management on their classmates; however, they had no exposure whatsoever to extreme behaviours either in theory or practice. Also, pre-service students had not encountered excessive classroom management problems during field experience that could be transferred to their practice because in practicum situations, they fit into expectations and routines that had already been established by their supervising teacher. Pre-service students therefore had not had an opportunity to try out principles and theories of classroom management in a controlled environment before implementing them in real classrooms. Also, first year teachers found that their course on exceptional children was very general and did not prepare them for the diverse needs of the students in their classrooms. Second, beginning teachers encountered challenges around time constraints and work overload. The amount of time necessary to plan, deliver lessons, complete paper work and reflect was overwhelming

requiring late nights, long hours at school and no personal or family time. They considered the models of reflection, introduced during pre-service education, impossible to follow because all available time was taken up with teaching duties; in fact, the study showed that many of these teachers had not grasped the purpose or the value of reflection in teaching. Third, beginning teachers were completely caught off guard by conflict situations with parents and other adults in their professional life. A general lack of the necessary communication skills to deal with conflict resulted in the beginning teachers experiencing anxiety and stress as they presented themselves in an adult role, often for the first time. In parent-teacher interviews, accusations and criticism by angry parents left them feeling emotionally hurt and unprepared. On another note, some beginning teachers, who expected to be part of ideal, team-oriented staffs, were disappointed when they discovered that they were teaching in a negative, isolating environment.

In order to address the support needs of beginning teachers, it is important to understand their most common concerns. Veenman (as cited in Good & Brophy, 1991) summarized the results of eighty-three studies and determined that the most common professional problems of beginning teachers were classroom discipline, student motivation, individual student needs, assessment and parent-teacher communication. Later, Gordon (1991) compiled the results of a number of similar studies between 1980 and 1991 and found twelve specific areas of concern:

1. Managing the classroom
2. Acquiring information about the school system

3. Obtaining instructional resources and materials
4. Planning, organizing, and managing instruction and other professional responsibilities
5. Assessing students and evaluating student progress
6. Motivating students
7. Using effective teaching methods
8. Dealing with individual students' needs, interests, abilities, and problems
9. Communicating with colleagues, including administrators, supervisors, and other teachers
10. Communicating with parents
11. Adjusting to the teaching environment and role
12. Receiving emotional support (Gordon, 1991, p.5).

Any effective program must be grounded in clear goals that will lead to attainable results and teacher induction is no exception. In Jensen's opinion (1987) the two common goals of all induction programs are the development of skills, knowledge, attitudes and values necessary to meet the expectations of an occupation and the creation of conditions in which new members can internalize the norms of that occupation. Huling-Austin (as cited in Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation, 1992), looking specifically at teacher induction, identified five goals:

1. To improve the teaching performance
2. To increase retention rate of promising beginning teachers
3. To promote personal and professional well-being by fostering professional self-esteem

4. To transmit the culture of the system to beginning teachers

5. To satisfy mandated requirements related to induction and certification.

She cautions, however, that such problems as mismatched teaching assignments, high teacher-pupil ratio, lack of necessary qualities for the profession, teacher status in society, salaries and working conditions cannot be overcome by teacher induction programs (Huling-Austin, 1986).

In summary, an effective teacher induction program must consider personal and professional aspects of a beginning teacher's identity within the context of particular phases, which most teachers experience. Upon a more in-depth examination, there are a wide range of reasons why supports are absolutely necessary to improve retention in the profession, some of which can be attributed in part to a disconnect between pre-service teacher education and practice. Also, through surveys, specific areas of concern have been identified that can be used to plan induction programs; however, no program can be successful without clear and achievable goals.

### **Cultural Aspects of Induction**

Teaching children of another culture, a reality in most Canadian schools, and a certainty in Northwest Territories classrooms, adds a third dimension to the personal and professional adjustment of teachers during the induction period, and although Legare, Pete-Willett, Ward, Wason-Ellam and Jessen Williamson (1998) point out the importance of reinforcing students' culture, they caution that it needs to go beyond material aspects to an understanding of a different world view. Without formal preparation, however, too often beginning teachers do not have a

clear understanding of culture and therefore assume that it refers to the “dress, dance and drum” stereotype. Meister and Jenks (2000) discuss the necessity for teachers to reflect on their own “...beliefs and values and to realize that what they think and believe may differ vastly from the people -- pupils and other adults—with whom they will work in the school. They need to articulate their biases, weaknesses, and fears so that they can work through them before they become an issue of contention in the classroom”(p. 10). This articulation and reflection on culture is best placed in pre-service education as part of the identity-forming process of teachers; however, Ladson-Billings (1999) cautions that additions in the form of workshops, institutes and courses will not bring about the necessary result. Instead, she says it requires a change in the philosophy and structure of pre-service education that would incorporate “...content integration, knowledge construction, prejudice reduction, equity pedagogy and empowering school culture”(p.222). If these elements are not present in teacher education, beginning teachers can benefit from in-service or professional development in this area and since cultural awareness is an on-going process, it is ideally learned in stages along a planned professional development continuum from the more global view to the specifics of the community. Moir and Gless (2001) agree, “...culturally and linguistically responsive pedagogy must be at the heart of every induction program...” (p. 112) in order for teachers to examine and respond to the unique needs of their students.

McAlpine and Crago (1995) point out, in a cross-cultural setting, it is the beginning teacher’s responsibility to become at least “...somewhat acculturated to

a new set of community values, customs, ways of interacting, perhaps even a new language” (p.404) because if they fail, they may create confusion in identity for the students, resulting in an inability to adjust to the school environment (Cummins, 1989). Erickson (1987) refers to this state of confusion, where the values and beliefs of teachers and students conflict, as cultural discontinuity.

It has been found that Aboriginal teachers may experience unique induction challenges both in Aboriginal and mainstream schools. St. Denis, Bouvier and Battiste (1998) found that Aboriginal parents questioned their qualifications, expecting them to prove themselves, while Legare, et al (1998) noted that Aboriginal teachers were “...caught between mainstream and Aboriginal expectations, with very little clarity about how one should be ‘an Aboriginal teacher’”(p.5). These challenges of role identity, according to Legare, et al (1998) were particularly difficult for Aboriginal teachers who had experienced marginalization and oppression in the past; whereas those who had a strong identity were more likely to feel successful and valued in their professional lives.

The process of inducting teachers into schools where children represent the changing multicultural nature of our national population demands some form of cultural awareness preparation. Ideally this would be a process that begins in pre-service education and is further developed and reinforced during the induction year. To be most effective, cultural awareness is presented through the lens of critical theory, allowing teachers to first examine their own cultural beliefs and then with suspended judgment, be introduced to other ways of viewing the world.

Cultural awareness must not be just for non-Aboriginal teachers, however, as it is equally important for Aboriginal teachers to understand their culture, their role in the school and the issues connected with cultural discontinuity experienced in Aboriginal schools.

### **Teacher Induction Program Models**

A teacher induction program, according to the literature, may use a variety of formal and informal approaches; however, there is no doubt about the need to support beginning teachers as they establish their complex identity.

An effective teacher induction program, according to Gold (1996) must be a combination of instructional and psychological supports most appropriately provided by both individuals and groups, preferably through face-to-face interactions; however, electronic networks may also serve a useful purpose. First, instructional support should be based on the individual professional needs of the beginning teacher and should address four primary areas: 1) understanding the structure and transference of knowledge; 2) developing the ability to represent ideas through illustrations, examples, explanations and demonstrations so that students can understand; 3) learning to teach at the required level and to use a variety of resources; and 4) nurturing the ability to reflect on one's own teaching. Second, psychological support attends to the personal challenges in a beginning teacher's life that most commonly present themselves as physical fatigue, stress, isolation and disillusionment resulting in reduced confidence and self-esteem. Contrary to common thought, such psychological needs demand considerably more support than an empathetic listener. Effective psychological support must



include: 1) awareness of individual needs; 2) knowledge of how to meet those needs; 3) learning specific strategies to change negative thinking and behaviour; 4) a personalized plan for change; 5) trained support individuals to guide and assist throughout the learning process; and 6) commitment to the process of change (Gold & Roth as cited in Gold, 1996).

Both professional and psychological support can be provided by either individuals or groups; however, the mentor teacher is the most common model within formal teacher induction programs. Feiman-Nemser and Beasley (1997) describe mentoring as assisted performance where an experienced teacher works with a beginning teacher face-to-face and close to the classroom for the purpose of providing support with intellectual and practical challenges of teaching. Within authentic teaching activities, a mentor scaffolds the novice as he or she gradually assumes more complex activities resulting in beginning teachers being able to perform at a more complex level earlier than if they were to learn through trial and error. Wise and experienced mentors will then gradually and judiciously withdraw support as the beginning teacher gains competence and confidence.

Group support is also valuable and provides an aspect of professional collegiality through a sense of shared concerns, common experience and security for the beginning teacher assuring her that she is not alone. Support groups are most effective when led by people with counseling skills as they can keep the activity positive and focused on learning (Gold, 1996). Finally, electronic networks provide another medium for beginning teachers to receive and invite support. Through new teacher websites, beginning teachers can post questions to

be answered by experienced professionals or exchange ideas and chat with others who are also in their induction year.

The Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation (1999) contends that orientation, mentorship and professional development are the critical elements of an effective induction program while the Northwest Territories Teacher Induction Program adds a fourth and vital aspect of northern and rural induction, pre-orientation. In the Northwest Territories model, phase one, pre-orientation refers to accurate and pertinent information provided to teachers immediately following hiring including a copy of the induction manual, information on the teaching assignment, NWT curriculum and resource lists and websites, school information, historical and cultural information on the territory, region and community and salary and benefits information. Phase two, orientation, provided both at the regional and community level includes an introduction to the regional education authority, the Divisional Education Council, the region as a whole, the community and the school. Cultural activities in this phase introduce beginning teachers to the local culture and community people. Phase three, systematic sustained supports include formal mentorship teams, if experienced teachers are available in the community; however, alternatives are recommended for small schools such as team planning, team teaching, experienced teacher observations, study groups, resource people, teacher networks and resource files. Finally, phase four includes professional development including workshops and courses that connect theory with practice (NWT, 2000).

efficacy. The cultural identity of beginning teachers is presented through literature that emphasizes critical theory as a way for teachers to first examine their own cultural stance and then develop skills as critically conscious teachers who will meet the needs of students from cultures other than their own. The literature explores the role of teachers in Aboriginal communities, described by Hiag-Brown (1992) as the “border region”. The second section of this chapter begins with an explanation of teacher induction by several writers. Personal, professional and cultural aspects of induction are then presented through the literature that point out the learning process of beginning teachers which affect all aspects of their lives. Finally, literature is presented on various kinds of teacher induction programs that support beginning teachers in their first year of teaching.

## **CHAPTER III - Research Methodology**

### **Introduction**

In this chapter, I describe the research design and rationale, data collection, data analysis, research ethics and introduce the participants.

### **Research Design and Rationale**

I wanted to learn first hand about the connection between teacher identity and teacher induction from people who were in the midst of that experience. I also wanted to learn in a way that would make my research come alive and become a real source of interest for me. For that reason, I chose naturalistic research which is defined as "...the in depth study of instances of a phenomenon in its naturalistic context and from the perspective of the participants involved in the phenomenon" (Gall, Borg and Gall, 1996, p. 545). This method allowed me to gather information and build insight into the phenomenon of teacher induction through the experiences and stories of five beginning teachers in the Northwest Territories.

As a qualitative researcher, I set out to identify beginning teachers who would be willing to tell their stories as they maneuvered through the complex maze of experiences that made up their first year in the profession. I was surprised to discover that my anticipated one-dimensional role as data collector grew into a multi-dimensional relationship with five women I came to admire greatly. In fact, according to Gall, Borg and Gall (1996), it is expected that the

qualitative researcher will become personally involved through interacting with the participants, and by using empathy and personal experience to discover themes and patterns in the data. This is exactly what happened.

### **Selection of participants**

In early September 2001, I sent a letter to the five Divisional Education Councils in the Northwest Territories and the Yellowknife District Education Authorities in which I described the nature and purpose of my research requesting their support. In the letter, I also requested a list of beginning teachers in their jurisdiction and permission to contact those teachers directly in order to invite their participation. By mid-September I had received permission and beginning teacher lists from six of the regions or districts. I was encouraged by their quick responses that were particularly positive and supportive. At the same time, I sent a letter to the NWT Deputy Minister of Education, Culture and Employment describing the purpose and process of my research and requesting her support. I felt this was important, because I work for this department and I wanted my employer to know that the results might serve to inform teacher recruitment and retention initiatives. I received a very encouraging and supportive reply.

By October 3, 2001, I had sent a letter to each of the 90 beginning teachers on the lists provided and within three weeks I had received twelve replies. Five of those who responded explained that although they were new to the NWT, they were experienced teachers and since my research would focus on beginning teachers, I replied immediately explaining that they were excluded by my criteria and thanking them for their interest in my work. Of the seven remaining, there

were three teachers in one community, two of whom were high school teachers. After removing the five experienced teachers and the two high school teachers, five beginning elementary school teachers remained, representing 5 different NWT communities. I immediately sent a letter to the respondents who were not chosen, explaining the final selection criteria and thanking them for their interest.

My original plan was to interview four participants, but since I had five teachers who were interested and who met the criteria, I decided to interview all of them, with the expectation that one participant might choose to withdraw during the year. It is a tribute to their generosity of spirit that all five remained part of this study through to completion.

### **Data Collection**

Data collection in this study involved an initial contact with each participant, followed by three semi-structured interviews that I tape-recorded. I then transcribed the recording to interview notes that I sent to the participants for their corrections and approval.

I made my initial contact with each teacher by phone, as I felt this would be more personal. Phoning gave me an opportunity to introduce myself, develop some common understandings and put them at ease. I was very aware of the time commitment I was asking of people I had never met and who did not know me. I also used e-mail to confirm interview times, telephone numbers and other details. When I spoke to them initially, I also asked permission to use a tape recorder and each teacher agreed.

I used a semi-structured interview as the method of data collection. This involved a list of questions (See example in Appendix A) that the participants received in advance to guide our discussions. The participants were free to elaborate or diverge as we went through the questions, and at the end of the interview I invited unstructured discussion. As a classroom teacher for many years and a colleague of many beginning teachers, I recalled the critical watershed times in the school year when time and circumstances created milestones for both teachers and students. Those times generally came around Thanksgiving, when the realities of daily classroom life had been established, February when the cold and dark required teachers to tap into their deeper resources, and June when the school year was complete. These times seemed ideal for conducting my interviews, so I planned a schedule around them.

I looked forward with great anticipation to meeting my five participants, as the interviews would connect me again in some small way with life in classrooms, something I had been missing in recent years. I hoped that I would be able to meet each teacher in person, at least for one interview, but given the realities of the Northwest Territories, I knew that might not be possible. When I weighed the advantages and disadvantages of choosing only people I could interview in person, I knew that being able to include teachers in remote communities would be far more beneficial to my research, even if we could communicate only by telephone. Over the course of the year, I did meet three of the five teachers in person. Although I had hoped to meet the others as they traveled through Yellowknife, in the end it was not possible.

I wanted to ensure that each participant was in a comfortable place for our interviews, which I anticipated would last between sixty and ninety minutes. If we were meeting face to face, we chose a mutually convenient place that would be quiet, away from possible interruptions and respectful of privacy. For our telephone interviews, I encouraged the teachers to find a similar arrangement, although of course, the location was ultimately their choice.

Our first interview in November began with questions related to personal background, history and pre-service education. Next we talked about their reasons for becoming a teacher and reasons for choosing to teach in the Northwest Territories. I was very interested in learning about their first impressions of the community, the school and the culture and the types of induction supports they had already received. Finally, I asked about the lessons they had learned so far and advice they would give to teachers considering a move to the NWT. In the February interview, I focused on the changes and adjustments they were experiencing within their personal, professional and cultural lives and the areas of professional development they felt would help them in this process. Finally, I asked them specific questions about their relationships within the classroom and the community. In our June interview, I asked each teacher to reflect on her own sense of identity as it evolved during the year and the processes and structures which supported her through the stages of induction.

Following each interview, during our unstructured chat, I asked the teachers if there was anything I could do to help them, as I felt so indebted to them for their candor and generosity. Several times I gave them specific advice



related to a challenge they were experiencing, but mostly I reassured them that they were not alone in the anxiety and stress they were experiencing, and I used the other participants as examples without jeopardizing their identity. I could tell that this gave them enormous comfort at times, just knowing that they were not alone. Three of the five participants who lived in the more isolated communities asked for teaching resources related to particular topics, and I was pleased to be able to help in that way. I was especially surprised when I received a thank you card for the resources I had sent and a gift from the class of one of those teachers.

Using a combination of in-person and telephone interviews presented some minor challenges; however, in each method, the teachers were extremely open and willing to answer all questions and to elaborate if they wished. I did find that the in-person interviews had some advantages, as they allowed me to see the participants and to observe aspects of their non-verbal communication while they could do the same with me. The personal contact, I believe, did allow me to develop a more lasting relationship with the three I met in person. I have met and chatted with each of them since the research was completed. The in-person interviews generally were longer than the telephone interviews as we took time to chat informally at the end. The challenge of the in person interviews, which took place in a relatively small community was to protect the anonymity of the participants by choosing private locations to meet.

Telephone interviews, on the other hand, were easier to keep private and the participants may have been more likely to speak freely because they could not see me or my reactions, so I was virtually a blank slate to them. However,

telephone interviews did present some limitations, as they were generally shorter and did not lend themselves as well to an informal chat at the end. Participants who did not have a conference phone were locked in the somewhat uncomfortable position for an hour or more, although sometimes the participants used a conference phone in the school after hours. One participant was babysitting during our interview and may have been experiencing some distractions. Two participants changed houses during the year and forgot to give me their new numbers, so their interviews were delayed until I found their new numbers.

In summary, both modes of interview were effective and enabled me to include teachers in remote communities; the advantages of hearing their stories far outweighed any minor disadvantages.

During each interview I recorded our exchange and took notes, following which I revised the notes and sent them to the participants for verification or revisions. They recommended very few changes, thus reassuring me that I was in tune with their realities; however, in several cases I did misinterpret their comments or had included some information that might reveal their identity. There were also several times they found that after reading the notes, they hadn't expressed a particular point correctly themselves. When I sent the interview notes, I included a Letter of Consent for Release of Transcripts which they were to sign and return with the approved notes. After each interview I sent a card or letter of appreciation to each participant. Three of the participants did not respond to the notes or return them for some time after our interview and I became quite worried that they had decided to withdraw from the project, so I wrote to them

again thanking them for their participation and enclosing another copy of their interview notes. All three responded quickly with apologies that they had been busy but had not forgotten.

With each interview, I could not help but develop a strong connection and empathy for each of them as they shared their experiences so openly with me. The extreme range of experiences and complex demands they confronted on a daily basis were overwhelming at times and I felt compelled to offer them advice, assurance and encouragement. Their challenges brought back memories of my beginning years and prompted me to ask myself how I had survived. It also made me realize that times and conditions have changed. One of the most comforting messages I could give them was that other participants were experiencing the same things, and it was an enormous relief for them to know they were not alone. I could tell them that things are always the most difficult when you are doing them for the first time without any reference point, and that I experienced many of the same learning experiences in my first year, more than thirty years ago.

### **Data Analysis**

My first task then, was to identify broad categories within my data. Fifteen categories emerged: personal background, preparation for teaching in the NWT, changing views during the year, induction supports received, induction supports wished for, advice for new teachers and teacher recruiters, professional development needed, teaching strategies that worked, phases of induction experienced, valuable lessons learned in pre-service, lessons learned through experience, characteristics of effective teachers, rewards, challenges, and end of

year conclusions. I reorganized all the data I collected from the three interviews under these fifteen categories by cutting and pasting on the computer. As I read and re-read the revised data within the fifteen categories, three major categories became very evident identifying three phases experienced by each participant: first impressions, adjustments to the reality and time to reflect. As I arranged and re-arranged the data within the three major categories, memories of my own teacher induction relentlessly bombarded my consciousness. Thoughts and images resurrected themselves from thirty years ago, bringing with them a curious counterpoint of past and present as I placed them beside the experiences of the participants in my research prompting me to weave them into my writing. After a great deal of writing, re-writing and reflecting, two themes seemed to encapsulate the experiences of the five NWT beginning teachers and were further clarified through my own personal memories. Finding an identity as teacher was the first theme which was further divided into two sub-themes, pre-service education and preparation and finding identity through practice. The second theme, teaching in the "border world", was sub-divided into cultural dimensions of teacher identity, role of teacher in Aboriginal communities, conflicting values, teaching in the post-colonial border world, and ways to teach in the border land.

### **Research Ethics**

Before beginning my research, I informed all the participants about the purpose of the research, the nature of the study and the method for presenting the findings. I kept the identity of the participants anonymous by giving each a pseudonym and I kept the interview note secure and confidential. Approval for

the study was granted by the University of Saskatchewan Advisory Committee on Ethics in Behavioural Sciences Research (See Appendix B for copy of approval letter). General ethics procedures outlined by them were followed with respect to consent for participation and release of transcripts. I also applied for and was issued a Scientific Research License by the Aurora Research Institute in Inuvik, Northwest Territories.

### **Introduction of participants**

The five participants in this research were all women who were in their first full year of teaching. Their ages ranged from early twenties to late forties. They taught in five different Northwest Territories communities and were employed by four different education regions or districts. Their biographies, motivation for choosing teaching as a career and their reasons for teaching in the Northwest Territories varied considerably. Each participant is identified by a pseudonym.

Amy grew up in southern Canada and had worked at a variety of jobs before she decided to complete a Bachelor of Science and an eighteen-month teacher education program. She chose teaching as a career because she had really enjoyed school as a child and thought it might be a rewarding career. Since she liked to travel she would have summers off and planned to teach for no more than five years. She said she did not come with lofty ideals such as a love of children or a hope to change the world; rather, her motivation was more by default than by design, since she had reached a crossroads in her life.

Beverley was from a small town in southern Canada and entered university immediately following high school graduation. She completed a Bachelor of Arts followed by an eighteen month Bachelor of Education degree. Beverley had experienced a mild disability when she was a child, but because of an exceptional elementary teacher, had learned coping strategies that allowed her to learn to read and eventually excel in high school. She was particularly interested in children with special needs and hoped to affect their lives in the way her teacher had helped her.

Colleen was born in the NWT and grew up in a small Aboriginal community. She left home to attend a regional high school but returned home before graduation in order to help support her family by working as a classroom assistant. She always wanted to be a teacher but marriage and raising a family took precedence for many years. While raising her family, she completed an Early Childhood Education program, which qualified her to teach kindergarten for several years, but eventually she fulfilled a lifelong ambition by completing a high school diploma. She then graduated from the Aurora College Teacher Education Program and finally completed a Bachelor of Education degree. Colleen chose teaching as a career because she enjoyed sharing the excitement children experience when they learn a new concept. She had always admired teachers who had so much knowledge and had the nerve to get up in front of children; she wanted to be like them.

Danielle moved to the NWT when she was very young, and she completed all her schooling there. She completed a Bachelor of Arts and a Bachelor of

Education at a university in southern Canada immediately following high school graduation. She had wanted to be a teacher since she was in elementary school because all her different teachers fascinated her. She liked the idea of continuing to learn and she enjoyed working with children. During high school she worked and volunteered with a variety of children's programs.

Emma grew up in an Aboriginal community in southern Canada and left home to attend college immediately after completing high school. She took a break from her education when she married and had her first child returning to complete a Bachelor of Arts after her second child was two. She subsequently worked as a classroom assistant, English As A Second Language assistant, a First Nations Assistant and an Aboriginal Liaison in an inner city school. Her husband, along with other teachers, encouraged her to become a fully qualified teacher with full benefits, so she completed a Bachelor of Education when her third child was in grade three.

### **Choosing to teach in the Northwest Territories**

Amy applied for teaching positions all over Canada including the NWT. She wanted an adventure and had always been interested in the north, so when she was offered a position in the NWT, she accepted. She had a large student loan to repay and expected such benefits as vacation travel assistance to come with the job. Beverley also wanted an adventure before she settled down and she also had a student loan to repay. She applied to teach in a number of locations across Canada and chose a small NWT community because she was a small town girl and she was offered the grades she preferred.

Colleen wanted to return to her roots in the NWT, so applied and accepted a position in a community where she could re-connect with her culture, her language and members of her extended family. Danielle also wanted to return to teach in the NWT where the environment was familiar and where she could have an opportunity to give something back to the place where she grew up. She had always admired other teachers who stayed in the NWT for a long time. Emma's husband had a dream of moving north and so she decided to go along with that dream while they were young and their children were young. She did not want them to have any regrets later in life about something they had not experienced, so she applied for and was offered a position in a small NWT community.

### **Summary**

This chapter provides a brief description of the qualitative research methodology that I used in this study. It also describes my method of data collection, the process for data analysis, my research ethics procedures and an introduction to the participants.



## **CHAPTER IV - Presentation of Data**

### **Introduction**

This chapter provides a window into the personal, professional and cultural experiences of five Northwest Territories beginning elementary teachers as they embraced their induction year. The statements are direct quotations and paraphrased comments taken from our interviews and grouped according to the three phases determined by our three interviews. In phase one, the teachers describe the preparations for their first teaching position and their initial impressions of the community, school and culture. Phase two introduces the dynamic process of identity building and paradigm shifting as the teachers adjust to the demands placed on all aspects of their lives. In phase three, the teachers reflect on their learning journey through pre-service education, learning by experience and professional development. Each teacher then describes her image of the effective teacher toward which she is working. Finally, they describe the stages of induction as they experienced them and the induction supports they received.

### **Phase One of Induction Year**

Phase one of the induction year began when each of the teachers was first hired and extended to the time of our first interview in November. In our first interview, either by phone or in person, I got to know the teachers on a personal level and told them a little about myself. I was immediately struck by their first

impressions, their struggles to deal with the complexities of teaching and their efforts to make sense of the enormous learning curve they were on – a learning curve which infiltrated every aspect of their lives. Each teacher came with her own storehouse of knowledge, experiences and world view, and each would be expected to step into her new profession accepting the same responsibilities as her experienced and seasoned colleagues.

### **Preparations for a new life**

I asked each teacher to tell me how she prepared personally, professionally and culturally before starting her first teaching assignment. Amy's move to her new community was particularly rushed, leaving no time for professional or cultural preparation, which she said later, could not have been done by reading books. Beverly had more time and felt that her small town background prepared her well. She said, "I know how small towns work – gossip, family feuds – and I know how to protect my privacy". Beverly prepared professionally by re-reading her texts, talking to other teachers, including several who had northern experience, and researching the culture and environment of the community. Colleen didn't mention any specific preparations for her move except to say that she looked forward to getting back to her culture and to sharing her love of the bush, land foods, camping and traditional activities with her future students. Danielle stated that she had been preparing for her teaching assignment since she was in elementary school and understood the realities of teaching, but on a professional level, she felt she could have used more time to familiarize herself with the NWT curriculum. She had grown up in the community where she would

be teaching and didn't expect any surprises related to culture. Emma talked to as many NWT people as possible, checked websites for professional information and spoke to a Dene friend about the culture of the community where she would be teaching.

*The months just before I moved to Baker Lake in 1969 were full of wedding plans. Thankfully, my husband's previous northern experience had guided us through all the initial paperwork that included ordering a government food ration, which would theoretically provide us with a nutritious, balanced diet for the coming year. With two weeks to store the majority of our wedding presents and pack just a few, we put most of our belongings in two trunks that would go on ahead by ship via Montreal. There was very little time for thoughts of pre-orientation except, of course, for the extremely positive and exciting stories continually flowing from my very new husband.*

*By mid August, we arrived in Churchill, Manitoba for a weeklong orientation. This is the part where my memory becomes very fuzzy, as I fear, in retrospect, I was extremely pre-occupied with the anticipation of our new home, our new community and our new life. The highlight of the week was meeting other young teachers who were also staying at the Churchill Vocational Centre student residence and who were also excited and anxious about the adventure that lay ahead in other Keewatin schools. Little did we know at the time that the common experiences that drew us together, would sustain friendships to last a lifetime.*

*The memories of presentations on curriculum, Inuit history and culture, salary and benefits and living conditions have long since faded; however, I do remember more experienced teachers asking more questions and collecting more teaching resources than me. In my naivety, I think I expected to find everything I needed in the school and I planned to figure things out as I went along.*

### **New Home: First impressions of the community**

I learned through our interviews that first impressions varied greatly as two teachers were returning home and three were re-locating from southern Canada. Amy and Beverley, both new to the Northwest Territories, had remarkably different first reactions. Amy, although excited about her new friends and great social life concluded very quickly that, due to some racial division between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal populations, it was difficult to "...break into the old community". She was struck by the high cost of living contrasted by a notable lack of customer service. She observed dysfunctions in the community where, in her view, many parents did not value education and many children were "undisciplined". Her conclusion in the fall was that the community needed to change from within.

In contrast, Beverley found her community very traditional, with hunting and fishing being an important part of the economy. People were friendly, welcoming her into all aspects of the culture, and although social events were limited, she had already attended a few feasts and visited most of her students' homes by our first interview. She was aware that there was an alcohol and drug

abuse problem in some families, for which she did not feel prepared, but she was generally enthusiastic about life in her new home.

*The town of Baker Lake stretched along the shoreline and in the refreshing air of late August, families were constantly leaving with empty boats and returning days later loaded with their harvest of caribou. Since we lived close to the Hudson Bay store, we observed people coming and going to examine longingly the sparsely stocked shelves. When the ship arrived, a sudden seemingly spontaneous bustle of excitement took over the beach as all able-bodied men and women came to hand the cases of supplies, chain-gang style, from the landing barge to the warehouse. As we watched the activity, we observed a party-like atmosphere as people laughed and joked in the camaraderie of handing boxes from one to another. The anticipation of re-stocked shelves gave me hope that I could find something other than our ample supply of canned and dried foods that already filled our pantry and as I recall, pizza mix was a very welcome discovery.*

*The people of Baker Lake were warm and welcoming, anxious to meet the new teachers and curious about whether the new principal would change things at the school. We began going for walks through town and as we went along, children would join in until we became a crowd. My initial concern that children were not telling their parents where they were going when they joined us soon disappeared when I realized that no one else saw this as a problem. We were in a very safe environment and everyone was always keeping an eye on everyone else.*

### **This is my school: First impressions**

Colleen and Emma's first impressions of the school were very positive. Colleen said, "The school staff works as a team. We have an excellent principal who has wonderful standards and values. Everyone works together and helps each other". Emma's early experiences were similar. She said,

The school community is very friendly, open, loving and caring. It is warm and welcoming to all visitors and everyone truly loves the children. The school wants really good relationships in the school and between the school and the community. Regular feast days are held at school for parents and the extended families and the children help with the cooking. The culture in the school is definitely Dene.

In contrast, Amy was struck by the high number of children with special needs, a large portion of whom, in her view, needed intensive counseling and therapy by highly qualified teachers. She noted that poor attendance and poor motivation contributed to student problems; however, she concluded that new teachers had very little opportunity to change things that were a result of social problems in the community.

Beverley was surprised to discover how difficult it was to explain concepts in the curriculum to her students because of their limited life experience outside their remote community. Poor attendance and heavy family responsibilities interfered with student learning and caused Beverley to become extremely frustrated. This frustration was compounded by the dynamics on staff as she observed:

There seem to be more politics in a small school than a large school because the personality of each person on staff can have a major affect. The school does not have a good working environment for all teachers. The principal doesn't have much experience – he insists on having things his way and does not consider the teachers' views.

Danielle's first impression was that although she had a straight grade, she had "...lots of kids who were not at grade level".

*The other teachers told me I had a very nice class, however, when I asked about particular students, I would get subtle messages that led me to believe that, being the new teacher, I had the class that no one else wanted. Most of the returning teachers seemed extremely knowledgeable, competent and somewhat intimidating, and it was quite some time before it occurred to me that the lack of resources in my classroom corresponded with the abundance in others. Nevertheless, I got busy acquainting myself with my students and gathering together all the resources I could find.*

*It seemed that my grade two students fit into one of two categories – very boisterous and jovial or very timid and quiet. They were all kind, generous and willing to do anything I asked, as long as they understood what I expected. Of course, that was my immediate challenge as I came to realize they had a limited understanding of English and they were not able, in many cases to read my non-verbal messages in order to anticipate what I expected of them. It had already been explained to me that the Inuit way of saying yes and no involved the raising of eyebrows and wrinkling of the noses, but there were so many more*

*communication subtleties I was missing. If I did not understand someone, I had a habit of raising my eyebrows, so when a child asked if she could go to the washroom in a very quiet voice I would raise my eyebrows as if to say, "Can you repeat that?" My students would immediately interpret this as a yes and I would be left wondering why they left the room without permission.*

*Teaching began to consume my days and nights as I struggled to keep one day ahead of my students. The reading resources that were so inappropriate presented all kinds of challenges since the stories had no connections whatsoever to the children's experience. My students were in their first year of English immersion and their experience with culture outside Baker Lake amounted to a weekly movie at the community hall. Each picture in the phonics workbooks, which we were expected to use, required an entire vocabulary lesson tied to such foreign concepts as farming, life in cities or families in middle-class America. It took me a while to realize that my students' restlessness and uncooperative behaviour, in some cases, was a signal that I had to change my approach.*

### **They don't see things the way I do: First impressions of the culture**

The teachers demonstrated their understanding of culture and their approach to their cross-cultural experiences through their answers to my questions. Amy and Beverley again had remarkably different perceptions of Aboriginal culture that, to some extent influenced their first impressions. Amy observed, "There is very little pure culture left in the community; just glimpses between the heavy drinking and social welfare. The arts and crafts are amazing". She felt it was unreasonable to expect new teachers to teach the NWT culture-



based curriculum after one half-day orientation; in fact, she was concerned that they might have a negative effect. She suggested that a one-week on-the-land cultural experience would be beneficial for new teachers if they were paid. However, she felt that local elders were unreasonable to expect payment for teaching culture in the school since they were the ones who wanted to preserve the culture.

In contrast, Beverley described her cultural experiences in the fall:

I am learning to speak the local language and my students are helping me. Understanding the language and getting to know the community helped me to gain control of my class within the first month of school whereas it has taken other teachers much longer. The community is very aware of my efforts to understand the language. I feel very lucky that I have had the opportunity to try all the traditional foods except one. If you want to be accepted, buy things from the community people. Show an interest and appreciation for their arts and crafts. This has helped me to gain the trust of an influential community member who is also a parent. I know that other teachers in the past have not appreciated the culture and I am trying to demonstrate that I do by learning the language and by going hunting. I am open to learning and this has opened many doors for me already in the community.

Colleen, as an insider in the community, explained, "Aboriginal people are really trying to get back to their traditional ways and are more accepting of other ways of life than they used to be when I was growing up". Emma observed that

in her school, the culture-based curriculum was followed, the Aboriginal language was taught and spirituality was an important part of the school culture. Danielle simply commented that all cultures were represented in her school.

*The things that struck me first about Inuit culture were the most obvious and observable arts and crafts – the carvings, prints and tapestries. Every woman with a baby wore an amautik (parka with pouch for baby), and once the snow fell, everyone in town wore hand made kamiks and parkas trimmed with fur. Although these were, at first glance, simply items of clothing, there was a whole culture built around them as sewing consumed a large part of every woman's life and the life of girls who were learning. Child rearing began in the amautik, so by observing mothers and babies, I learned a lot about the people. My awareness of more subtle aspects of culture came gradually because I was immersed in it daily. My husband and I were intrigued by relationships in the community and we very informally created mental family trees that allowed us to connect people until we could soon identify most members of extended families. This was very helpful in understanding the dynamics of the classroom, the school and the community at large.*

### **Paradigm Shift: Phase Two of Induction Year**

Phase two of the induction year included the period between our first interview in November and the third interview at the end of the school year. During this phase each teacher made personal, professional and cultural adjustments as they sometimes plodded and sometimes sprinted through the complexities of identity building and developing a sense of self-efficacy.

### **Personal adjustments**

Amy was very dismayed when she read the notes from our first interview. She said:

In October I was questioning whether I would even make it to January and whether I wanted to be a teacher. I am generally a pretty optimistic person and I could not have stayed in that state. There was not one particular point where my outlook changed but I am a survivor and I adapt to situations and there were some things I had to throw out and some things I had to find. Talking to you (interviewer) helped me get things off my chest and when I read the interview notes, I was shocked at how negative I sounded. I am not a negative person. I don't want to be a negative person and I have a personal belief that it is up to the individual in a negative situation to change things so I started to make changes.

Amy tried to focus on her strengths that she had identified in a pre-service course and reorganized her time by doing her preparation before and after school on weekdays, thus freeing up her weekends. She made a point of getting more fresh air and exercise and moved in with roommates to save money. She broadened her interest through newspapers, internet and friends. By February she was feeling more accepting, less stressed and she was making plans to return to the community for another year. Amy felt that as the year progressed, she became more assertive while learning to handle a variety of situations and more willing to express her views without fear of repercussions.

Beverley adjusted by making new friends and becoming involved in the life of the community. She set aside personal time when she read, meditated and watched movies at home; unfortunately she continued to miss her family a great deal and found it very difficult to adjust to being so far away from them. She said that she had adjusted to extended darkness and light. Colleen found that her new role as teacher in her home community soon became personally stressful because she felt everyone was watching and judging her. She said teaching became like a vocation for her. Being a role model was a heavy responsibility that caused her to gradually withdraw socially, eventually visiting only immediate family and the elders. Colleen found that she had to re-adjust to the isolation that was once an accepted part of her life.

At first I went about visiting but now I am staying more to myself. I go to community functions – dances, feasts, meetings, and church prayer meetings. I don't visit as much as I used to because I am afraid that whatever I say over coffee will get back to the community. The community likes to talk about things quite a bit.

Danielle found that every day and every minute of every day, she was thinking about teaching no matter where she was or what she was doing. She felt that she had become stronger and more confident in her abilities since the fall and although she felt drained at times, her energy and stamina were still the same. She learned to balance her time at school with her time at home working around her energy level and her partner's schedule. She did feel that her relationship with family and friends, who did not understand why she was spending such an

extraordinary amount of time in school, required the greatest adjustment. She wanted their unquestioning support and felt that they would understand if only they could have come into her school to “walk in her shoes” for a day.

Emma said that her self-esteem was low at the beginning of the year and she was scared of a lot of things. Later, she developed a sense of voice that made it easier for her to say no. Emma also realized during the year that she had become somewhat negative and worked to change that to a positive.

After Christmas I talked to my principal and she felt I needed to be more balanced in general. I set a tight schedule for myself by staying after school later to complete work and then going home to take care of my family. I also joined a choir because I needed to get out and do something for myself. I was frustrated with my husband’s free time but now I am doing other things and not just working or caring for the family all the time. I am trying to focus on work during the day and one day on the weekend when I do planning for the week.

Finally, she said she felt that she had to choose between teaching and her family and concluded that her family had to be her first priority.

*I had to find ways to balance my school and home life as there never seemed to be enough time for everything. I either went back to school in the evenings or took work home, but Saturday became my day and even though it usually included baking bread, housecleaning and laundry, it gave me a lot of satisfaction and a welcomed change of pace. I spent part of Sunday at school*

*preparing for the coming week, but I still made time for church in the morning and skidoo rides in the afternoon when the weather was good.*

*We never missed the two weekly movies at the community hall and knowing the title was quite irrelevant. It became an important part of the weekly routine for many people allowing a complete break from daily responsibilities and a chance to visit while the projectionist changed the reels. Part of being at the movie involved being together with the community.*

### **Professional adjustments**

In phase two, the job of teaching became more interesting for Amy. She discovered that as she came to know the students as individuals, she became more attached to them than she expected. She recognized that she was adjusting to taking into account the needs of others rather than just herself and even on weekends, found herself thinking about them. Amy made many changes to all aspects of her teaching. First, her approach to classroom management changed dramatically as the rules, which she considered strict in the fall, became secondary to understanding and respect in the classroom. She said,

The students now understand that as long as they get their work done, the rules are secondary. Rules around leaving the classroom to go to the washroom, for a drink, lockers, etc. are more flexible and the students know that they shouldn't go when I am teaching a lesson and (they) respect that.

She concluded that certain classroom management approaches work for some teachers and not for others. "You have to do things that you are comfortable with," she noted.

Secondly, to improve student motivation, she started a homework chart with stickers and although part of her questioned displaying each student's personal record publicly, it appealed to her students and brought about a very positive result. Thirdly, she used a variety of learning strategies including activity-based learning and in the process realized she had to tolerate a greater level of noise than she would have preferred. Fourth, Amy changed the organization of the classroom and seating arrangement many times and eventually reached a point where she allowed the students to choose their own places with the understanding that if she asked them to move, they would do so without argument. Fifth, she individualized her academic expectations saying, "I still have very high expectations that they do the best they can".

Finally, Amy made it a priority to have a positive relationship with her students. She let them know that she liked them, she joked with them, answered their questions and told them about her personal life. She came to realize that they were really great kids who were just growing up. She said, "They are going through what we went through at that age plus a lot of other stuff that we have never dealt with and we don't even know about because we don't share it". She discovered by developing a relationship with her students, she created a positive learning environment where she could be herself and teach in a more relaxed way.

As the year continued, Beverley continued to be motivated by a desire to help children with special needs but she also realized that she would have to adjust to the fact that she could not affect the life of every child in her classroom. She said, "It took a while to figure out that I could not help everyone with problems outside the school". She also made a discovery about herself: "I always thought I was a patient person, but change takes time and some days it is hard to be patient". Beverley found that she had to adjust to what she considered political decisions made by the principal, which had a major impact on her teaching. She said,

A behaviour modification program which I started was approved by the principal and it was working very well and the students were improving in a variety of ways and they were working for rewards. The principal later realized how it worked and told me to drop that approach because he didn't approve of it and he felt the parents would not approve of it. I fought this decision because the program was very popular at my university. Fighting against the principal was very hard on me. I dropped the program and I lost some of the headway I made with the students. I have now revamped the program and it is not as effective. The students were disappointed and in the end the decision was geared at pleasing the parents and the principal.

Beverley adjusted her teaching by developing strategies for her split grade which allowed advanced students to work independently and help younger students, thus freeing her to work with more dependent students. She used



thematic-based teaching strategies and gauged assignments and expectations to suite the different ability levels and learning styles of her students. For the children with poor attendance, she focused on the basics of math and language arts. She said that she constantly searched for things that worked for her class. She realized that she needed to teach in a variety of ways and be more flexible, but she said she still had not found her particular teaching style or identity. She followed her belief that the teacher must start with what is familiar to the students and so she invited community experts to her classroom and encouraged the children to incorporate words from their language into their poems.

Beverley created a positive learning environment in her classroom by establishing a truthful relationship with her students. She accepted that things in their personal lives often caused the behaviour of the students and, if they just needed someone to talk to, she would be there for them.

Colleen's desire to teach remained the same and she found that she continued to learn along with her students every day. She was very touched when she returned after being sick for two days and all twenty of her students gave her a hug. Colleen came to the conclusion that teaching was not the vocation it used to be. "Teachers used to be highly respected and were expected to live exemplary lives. Today a teacher has to change his or her lifestyle to adapt to teaching". In her community, teachers were also expected to help with fund raising in the evenings and this took time and energy, along with all the time spent on preparation. Since our first interview, Colleen had made a number of changes in her classroom. She set goals for her students, encouraged them to ask more

questions and expected them to read and write more. She concluded that there was not enough time for everything, so she focused more on language arts and math while integrating the other subjects. She continued to have high expectations for her students, looked for strategies that would work in her split grade and adopted a flexible timetable to allow for student interests and teachable moments.

Danielle's original motivation for becoming a teacher did not change and she kept going back to it when she was frustrated. She constantly tried to figure out what the children were capable of doing and sometimes asked them what they would like to learn. She explained,

I allow children much more time to complete assignments now; I had these big goals and objectives but I realize there is no way I can complete all those expectations with this class. I did not group my students at the beginning of the year because I thought they would all be about the same level. I have accepted that I will not cover everything in the curriculum.

At one point she had tried to teach to the lower end of the spectrum but found that many of the students were bored. She encouraged her students to take more risks in order to build up their confidence and eventually, she adjusted her expectations by setting achievable goals for each student.

Emma said her motivation for teaching had changed continually as she gained experience. She changed her academic expectations for some students, took a break from spelling, set up some centers and began a homework program. Her biggest expectation, she said was that everyone would participate. She

encouraged her students to be more open-minded and flexible so that they would try new things and worked on the area of self-discipline. Emma sometimes took the students' suggestions about what they would like to learn and if things were not going well, she sometimes changed her plans to suit the mood of the class. She learned that Monday was not a good day to start something new. Emma tried very hard to talk respectfully to the students when they were being difficult and rather than embarrass them, removed them from the class if they were disruptive. She said,

My priority for my students is to teach them to have respect for themselves and others and to be kind to people and to use their manners. I am teaching them to really think about what they will say before they speak so that they won't hurt someone else.

She adjusted her behaviour expectations a little in order to accentuate and reward good behaviour.

Emma began to focus more on the core subjects, language arts and math; however when she tried centers and activity-based learning, she found that the students couldn't handle the lack of structure. She reflected,

After trying centers and hands on activities, I found that most of my students couldn't handle these activities and so I had them do work sheets with brief instructions, everyone sitting down and coming up to the teacher for help as needed. ... I started out the year quite meek and passive and at the end of the year, I didn't really like the kind of teacher I turned out to be which I felt was kind of mean and strict but I felt I had to in

order to bring the kids in and get them to actually work. I think it did work but I didn't like talking in capitals all the time; I don't think that the children understood why I had to be strict since they thought I was mad at them. Maybe I was mad because they just didn't want to work most of the time.

*Adjusting to the learning needs of my students became all-consuming during my first year as I struggled to create the right kind of learning environment where they would be motivated to learn. I started a collection of pictures and visual materials and included more music and choral speaking in my teaching. I had to learn to be more patient and more accepting of the students who would not speak out in class and the ones that could not or would not work independently because, as I discovered, insisting on compliance was treading on cultural values which were different from my own. I later discovered the Arctic Reading Series and the Tendi Series which were stories with northern themes. I could create integrated themes around these stories and the children loved them. When I introduced project-based learning, I felt I had found the ideal approach because it allowed for a measure of independence, collaborative work and creativity that the students liked.*

*As I came to know the students and their families, the classroom atmosphere changed. We saw each other all around town and many of them came to visit us at home. At that point, there was a feeling of trust and mutual respect that I really enjoyed and as I gained confidence in my teaching, I became*

*more relaxed and so did my students. We could then put much more energy into learning.*

*I struggled with the fact that the Inuit parents gave their children so much freedom. Children went to bed when they chose and got up in the morning on their own, not always eating before they came to school. They were given a great deal of freedom but I discovered that their parents treated them with a sense of equality and respect. Because of this autonomous relationship with their parents and the rest of the community, they did not respond well to an authoritarian style of teaching and any attempts in that direction would be met with resistance and possibly defiance. Some children were named after highly respected relatives who had died before they were born and with the name they received the social position of their namesake. These children were used to a particular status in the community and when they did not receive the same privilege in school, they also resisted. These were cultural differences that tugged at our mainstream values and required us to step back and try to understand rather than being judgmental.*

#### **Adjustments to the community culture**

Amy's view of the community did not change during the year, although she did note that there were a lot of good things happening. She didn't feel she had gained any more insight into the community or the Aboriginal culture but she admitted that she had not made a huge effort to become involved, commenting that she did not feel overly welcome. She continued to believe that a lot of work needed to be done in the community, which should not be done by non-Aboriginal teachers.

During the winter, Beverley discovered that the community was not as idyllically family oriented and close knit as she had first thought; however, she continued to take part in community activities. In fact, she felt the community was taking advantage of her willingness to help. She said,

The teachers and the community have different values and beliefs. The community sees success as providing for the family; they are satisfied if their children complete grade six. Teachers want the children to go on to high school. Teachers believe that children should be allowed to have a childhood. Teachers can adjust by showing other options for success; you can be a successful hunter but there are other ways to be successful without losing traditions.

Colleen found that her view of the community culture changed during the year also. She said,

I have more appreciation for the culture. I used to think that people who are not familiar with traditional foods might think we do not have very good etiquette because we eat with our hands and sit on the floor. In the summer I enjoy fish heads and intestines cooked over the fire; I like moose head, nose and tongue and I used to think that people were going to think that it is gross but now I realize that this is okay because each of us comes from a very diverse culture. There are a lot of people in my community from Newfoundland and they have their own ways of eating so they are the same in many ways. Newfoundlanders have been subjected to a lot of racial discrimination also. They like fish and they go

fishing quite a bit like the people in my community. They live off the land and they set snares. They are wonderful people.

Colleen also talked about how her values were different from those of the community people. She said,

As a Native person who has lived out of town I have a great appreciation for other cultures and how other people live. The students haven't really experienced that. They think that the way of life in the community is the only way. They don't really see the value of university or of going anywhere. I talk to them about how the community is just the tip of the iceberg; there is a whole great big world out there and they can go anywhere. I teach the kids that there are other ways to live; I also teach them to appreciate their lives more, their Dene way of life as it was in the past and as it is now.

Although Danielle grew up in the community, she began to see it differently as a teacher. She felt that she was being watched and her lifestyle was being judged although she would have preferred to keep her life private and separate from her school life.

Emma felt that she had been accepted into the community to a certain extent and enjoyed attending the local drum dances. She understood the importance of preserving the Dene culture because so much of her own Aboriginal culture had been lost and she believed that in order to prevent further loss, some cultural practices needed to change. She was thankful that women were equally involved in ceremonial practices in her culture as this was an important

part of her spiritual life but was advised not to practice her customs when she first arrived in her school. She said, “I was surprised that the Dene women were not as involved but I understand that the school must respect the community elders”. In February, she said, “I am still not comfortable sharing my own culture in the school in case the community won’t approve”.

*The Inuit sense of time required a big adjustment for me when I first went to Baker Lake, as people did not have the same compulsion to arrive on time that I had. I could see how this cultural difference caused great stress for some non-Inuit and I was determined not to be one of them, so I adjusted my classroom timetable to allow for independent work first thing in the morning and again after lunch. At public gatherings, being on time just meant there was more time to visit before the business at hand began, often much later.*

*One cultural difference, which struck me soon after moving to Baker Lake, was what seemed at first to be a lack of commitment. When you asked someone if they would be in a certain place or complete a certain task they would usually reply, ‘Maybe’. This reply continued to confuse me until it was explained that a person could not say for certain what would happen tomorrow or next week because it was impossible to predict what would happen in the interim. I learned that people would always come if they could and were really very dependable.*

### **Phase Three of Induction Year: Time to Reflect**

In our last interview, I asked the teachers to reflect on their first year of teaching. I first asked them to talk about their pre-service education and reflect



on particular aspects that had prepared them for the realities of teaching. I then asked them about the lessons they learned from experience and the lessons they still felt they needed to learn through professional development. Next, they described the qualities of an effective teacher that, in fact described the identity for which they were striving. Finally, we discussed their individual experiences with Moir's five phases of teacher induction (1990) and the induction supports they received during the year.

### **Pre-service teacher education**

In Amy's pre-service program, individuality was stressed both for the teacher and the students with emphasis on relationships and the classroom as community.

Amy said,

I have a mobile I made in teacher training and I look at it every day and it reminds me every day to think about the strengths of individuals. I try to look at my strengths. I forget I have strengths when parents are complaining or the students, so it is good to be reminded of my strengths.

This was one of the best parts of my teacher training program.

Beverley considered behaviour modification the most valuable part of her pre-service education.

In pre-service I was taught many ways of coping with behaviour problems and given a number of behaviour modification programs that worked well with these kinds of students. Of course, they had to be adjusted to each child but that should come anyway.

She wished she had had more preparation for multi-grade/multi-level classrooms, as "...this was something that was in the text books but not experienced in practicums".

Colleen remembered pre-service as lots of hard work and lots of courses that were very helpful, particularly in the areas of exceptional children, lesson planning, long-range planning and motivation. Since her major was native studies, she commented, "I took a lot of Native Studies courses because this was my major but they are not useful to me in my teaching right now. They did help with my own identity." Danielle said that most of her education courses were not very helpful at all and she would have preferred more realistic courses. When Emma discussed her pre-service education she said, "I don't feel I got the preparation I needed to teach this first year effectively". She did, however, have a very difficult class in her final practicum and that experience proved to be useful.

#### **Valuable lessons learned through experience**

Amy learned to take time for herself and set limits in order to achieve a balance between her personal and professional life. It became very important to her that her students, their parents and her colleagues knew her as a human being as well as a teacher. Amy said that the "less is more" lesson that she learned from her mentor was of the greatest importance for her as it impacted everything she did. She realized she needed to do less yelling, less reacting and act more calmly. She said,

I learned to sit back before acting and use a quiet voice. It took me eight months to discover that...it worked better if I asked the students if they

needed help rather than telling them to get to work and be quiet. Getting away from nagging means reducing my stress and this is one of the most important things I have learned. Being calm, consistent and having consequences are the most effective classroom management techniques.

Amy expressed her satisfaction at the end of the year as she felt she had learned how to communicate with parents. She said,

I learned how to talk to them about their children, when it is appropriate to be tactful and when it is important to tell them exactly the way it is. I was really scared of parents but I am better at it now even if the message is negative.

Beverley learned the importance of keeping in touch with her family down south and she searched for a balance by scheduling certain times for herself that were removed from school and community. Professionally, Beverley learned that every child learns differently and looks at each subject through different eyes. She said,

I was surprised at the great effect student learning styles had on their learning. I had every kind of learner you could imagine in my class. If I was in a southern Canadian school, I would probably teach one way and not often stray away from one approach. With my class, I would explain one way and ask who understood. I would then know that I needed to explain it several ways for the students who had various learning styles. I found that I had to teach each topic several ways – visual, auditory, tactile.

It was limiting and hard because their reading ability did not allow them to read directions. They would only read the directions if I stood over them. On classroom management, Beverley said, "It depends on consistency and consequences related to the misbehaviour. When a classroom management strategy is in place and working, don't change it as it is very disruptive to the students". Beverley found that if you develop a relationship with each student, you know what they need and where they are so that you can accommodate their needs. You know that a certain lesson will be interesting and challenging for one student but will not work for another.

You really have to work on their confidence and self-esteem because if they don't have that they are not going to work for you. Having that relationship helps you build up their confidence in themselves.

Finally, Beverley concluded,

...not all school staffs work as a team; it is a good ideal but sometimes you have to accept that other factors stand in the way.... I am not a political person because I did not know how to manipulate situations to my advantage.

Within the culture of the community, Beverley found that when the teacher's values are different from the community, the teacher has to step away and not get so involved but it is acceptable to provide information and options so that students can make their own choices. "You have to see both sides of an argument and accept that the parents have different expectations for their children.

I had to learn to distance myself from my students and that was difficult because I am not that kind of person”.

Colleen discovered that she had come to enjoy aspects of the city life and needed to readjust to her traditional home. In school, she learned the importance of being persistent, consistent and strict at the beginning of the year in order to set the tone for the class. On the other hand, she found that it was important to be flexible at times in order to maintain the students’ interest. She learned the importance of thinking things through thoroughly in advance and trusting her own judgment. Finally, Colleen had struggled with student behaviour until she was advised to stop yelling and repeating herself and to take care to treat all her students equally. Colleen said,

I stepped back and reflected on my class and as a result, I realized I was favouring some students more than others. I discussed this with my class at great length. We talked about how, if I don’t treat everyone equally and the students don’t treat everyone equally, then some people will get hurt. I noticed that some students were being picked on and I suddenly realized I was not stepping in or didn’t quite see it. I was really angry with myself for not doing something about it so I talked to my students about the problem. We talked about our feelings quite a bit. All the students were afraid of one student and I was even shying away from him but we talked it over together as a class and everyone shook hands and we decided to start off new again as it was the beginning of a new month. I am sure it will work. I want inclusiveness for everyone in my class.

As Danielle talked about the lessons she had learned, she revealed her emerging sense of identity. She said,

I am very good at making my students know that they are all important as individuals and what they say matters in the class and I model that every day. I follow through on everything I ever say in class. I am very real. I have watched some teachers that stand up in front of the class and talk at the children and then give the children the message that they should get on with their work and don't bother me. I consider the classroom as our classroom. The children are just as much the teacher as I am. They like knowing that and I share the teaching role with them.

Finally, Danielle learned that it was okay to take short cuts and accept help from parents and other teachers when it was offered.

One of Emma's most valuable lessons involved finding ways to simplify her personal and professional life. She said,

I learned from experience that you do not have to make everything from scratch and it is okay to use short cuts and easier methods of making things. I choose (classroom) activities that are simple rather than complicated and at home I am using prepared foods and involving my family in preparing meals.

Emma realized that she could not pretend to be someone she was not and that it was up to her to find her own teaching style. She said,

I do not feel comfortable playing games with children but I do have fun reading to them and telling them stories. I think that I was a

disappointment to the children because I did not get down on the floor and play with them when I had extra curricular activities with my class.

Emma continued to struggle with classroom management to the end of the year and concluded,

I started out the year quite meek and passive and at the end of the year I didn't really like the kind of teacher I turned out to be which was kind of mean and strict. I felt I had to in order to bring the kids in and get them to actually work. I think it did work but I didn't like talking in capitals all the time. I don't think that the children understood why I had to be strict since they thought I was mad at them. Maybe I was mad because they just didn't want to work most of the time.

She concluded that not everyone is comfortable with the same teaching style and finally concluded that teachers can learn from their mistakes.

*At the end of my first year in Baker Lake, I was so aware of how much I had learned from my students and I wondered if they could possibly have learned as much from me. I felt that I now had a better understanding of how they thought and why they acted the way they did. I knew most of their parents and their brothers and sisters and their place within the community. I had tried various approaches to teaching and knew how I would approach my new class in the coming fall, but I was acutely aware that I was still searching for my own style and my own identity as a teacher.*

*I remember the feeling of satisfaction and excitement as we left Baker Lake for summer holidays. I thought with amazement about all the things that I*

*had experienced and learned and could not wait to share it all with our families and friends. On the flight between Winnipeg and Saskatoon, I sat beside a writer for Readers' Digest and as we chatted, mainly about my adventure during the past year, I was convinced that I was giving him unbelievable material for a feature article. Of course, he was probably on some specific assignment, but in my opinion anyway, I had had an incredible year.*

### **Professional development – What still needs to be learned?**

After the teachers had considered lessons from their pre-service education and the experience of their first year, I asked them to think about the areas of professional development they would pursue if they were given the opportunity.

Amy's first priority would be counseling skills so that she could learn more about puberty, dealing with cliques, and hierarchy in groups. Other areas of interest were project-based learning, working with gifted children in a multilevel classroom, stress management, and communication strategies. Beverley wanted to learn more about computer skills, special education, and multicultural education. She also wanted an in-service on the culture-based curriculum and local culture and history. Colleen's areas of interest were physical education, multi-grade teaching and student motivation. Danielle felt she needed professional development in the areas of special needs and basic literacy strategies and Emma wanted more information on Fetal Alcohol Syndrome/Fetal Alcohol Effects and children with behavioral and anger problems.

*At the end of my first year, I knew that I needed strategies in teaching English as a Second Language. My students were learning English, but I realized*



*that I needed to do more than expect them to absorb it from me. My concern was that they would develop incorrect habits and patterns that would be very difficult to un-learn later but with some specific strategies to explicitly teach English, I could help them avoid that pitfall. I also wanted to learn more strategies for teaching reading since it was so obvious that the prescribed readers and workbooks were not appropriate for my students.*

### **Qualities of an effective teacher**

According to Amy, effective teachers are caring people who enjoy their students and get to know them as individuals with unique qualities. She added, "Students will give an awful lot if they think you are doing it because you care". Effective teachers have the ability to reflect and to admit when they are wrong. Amy said that the qualities students appreciate most in a teacher are fairness, firmness and fun. They like teachers who have a good sense of humour and who care about them.

Beverley believed that effective teachers are flexible, understanding and have expectations for their students. They love and care for their students and get to know them as individuals. Beverley said that students respond well to flexible, happy, energetic teachers who make learning fun. Colleen thought that teachers who are effective are consistent, firm, friendly, calm and do not embarrass students. They are good planners, have lots of knowledge and use a variety of strategies while always having time for their students. She believes that students like it when teachers interact with them and when they use activity-based learning and learning games.

According to Danielle, successful teachers are patient, trustworthy and good listeners who keep their promises and give their time freely to their students. In the eyes of the students, Danielle believed that children love an energetic teacher who smiles often, keeps her promises and gives them choices. She also said students like teachers who are themselves in the classroom.

Emma believed that a successful teacher is a kind, thoughtful, caring, considerate, understanding, flexible person. She said it is important that a teacher not feel above her students. Emma thinks that students respond best to fun-loving, caring and generous teachers.

### **Induction Signposts**

In the final interview, I wanted to find out how each teacher saw her experiences in terms of Moir's induction model (Moir, 1990). Did they encounter times of anticipation, survival, disillusionment, rejuvenation and reflection? Did such a model help them to understand their induction journey? Was it a map of consecutive phases that all teachers experienced in their beginning year or simply a set of possible signposts?

Amy experienced Moir's five phases; however, she said she flipped back and forth between them and sometimes went through all five in one day. She said,

I was disillusioned first and at the survival stage in October I was angry. In disillusionment and survival you are not reflecting. I now reflect and get excited and rejuvenated by things that happen. I don't believe there is a time when you have passed through the stages and have arrived. You

are continually going back and forth. There are still days when I do not want to be in school but since November I have not had a day which I consider all bad; I have challenging moments but I would not describe a whole day as bad whereas up until November, I had very few days I would describe as good.

Beverley went through all the phases of induction except rejuvenation, spending more time in some than in others. She didn't feel she had gone through rejuvenation but yet the children's interest did motivate her to get excited at times about teaching a new unit. At the end of the year she felt very reflective. Colleen experienced each phase, but felt that she had gone back and forth with each of them. She said it was not a smooth path from one to another. Danielle also experienced all the phases and felt that she reached disillusionment just before Christmas when she questioned whether she wanted to be a teacher. She felt like quitting because she thought she was not doing a good enough job, but she continued because of the children. She became rejuvenated during the Christmas holidays and when she came back in January the students were "more than ready to learn".

Emma said she experienced all the phases except rejuvenation. She thought she may have reached rejuvenation but she was so busy trying to get her kids to work that she didn't have time to enjoy it. Her self-esteem was very low in the disillusionment phase in the fall but things got better. At one point she had wanted to quit every day, and when she reflected at the end of the year, she wondered how she had survived.

## **Induction challenges and supports**

The Northwest Territories Teacher Induction Program is made up of four phases: pre-orientation, orientation, systematic sustained supports and professional development. Pre-orientation, the period immediately following hiring to the arrival of the beginning teacher in her new school, involves a concerted effort to provide personal, professional and cultural information on the region and the school. This is followed by an orientation which provides a positive and comprehensive introduction to the education district and the school. Systematic sustained supports, including mentoring, provide scaffolding for beginning teachers through out their first year; however, since not all schools can provide a suitable mentor, team teaching, team planning, experienced teacher observations and study groups also provide sustained support. Finally, professional development that addresses the greatest needs of beginning teachers is provided as in-service sessions and conference workshops.

All five teachers received pre-orientation information from their school districts after they were hired; however, those that were hired well in advance of the school year were not satisfied with the quality of information received, particularly over the summer when regional and school staff were on holidays. Each teacher attended a regional orientation but again, with varying degrees of satisfaction. Amy and Beverley had been very frustrated by the lack of accurate information they received about the school system before they were hired; in fact, Beverley said,

Recruiters need to be honest; if they had been honest I would have come with my eyes wide open. People in the regional office were not helpful; only selected information was filtered to me; I would have preferred honesty about the situation.

Danielle also implied that NWT recruiters did not give complete information at presentations that were 'flowered up'. She said, "People should be told about the realities of the darkness, the cold, etc". Amy also felt that her regional office had not been straightforward and had given her only partial information.

Three of the NWT teachers were assigned mentors as part of the NWT mentorship program and their satisfaction with this program was mixed. Amy did not develop a strong relationship with her mentor but instead found a teacher on staff whom she considered her informal mentor. Later in the year, she did acknowledge some useful lessons she learned from her assigned mentor. Danielle considered her mentor very supportive personally, but poorly matched professionally. She appreciated the release time as part of the mentorship program. Later in the year she discovered that when she spent that time with a very experienced teacher other than her mentor, she understood how effective the program could be with the right match. Emma's mentor was in another school and had a very different assignment, but after some initial frustration with distance, she began to appreciate his help with resources and advice. Although Colleen did not have an assigned mentor, she was given release time to shadow two very experienced teachers who provided wonderful modeling. Beverley did not have a mentor either, and although she received some support from one

regional consultant, she mostly depended on the adult educator, social worker and community people, all of whom were outside the school.

Professional development included school based and regional in-service workshops as well as a territorial conference. The reactions seemed to indicate that in-service workshops were the most useful. One teacher commented that there was only one session at the NWT-wide teachers' conference that was useful, because most of the sessions seemed to be for experienced teachers who were updating their knowledge and skills.

### **Summary**

This chapter presents the experiences of beginning teachers in the Northwest Territories in counterpoint with my own experiences more than thirty years previously. Phase one describes their initial preparations after hiring along with their first impressions of the community, the school and the culture. In phase two, each teacher elaborates on her personal, professional and cultural adjustments between November and June. Finally, phase three connects each teacher's learning process from pre-service to learning on the job to professional development. Finally, each beginning teacher describes the ideal teacher from their perspective, relates Moir's phases of induction to their own experience and describes the induction supports they received during their first year of teaching in the Northwest Territories.

## **CHAPTER FIVE: Becoming a teacher in the Northwest Territories:**

### **Understanding the role of teacher**

#### **Introduction**

In this chapter I present the identity building process experienced by each teacher, connecting their varied lived contexts, initial motivation for choosing a career in teaching and their pre-service education. I then present each teacher's learning experienced through practice as they made adjustments, both professional and personal during their first year of teaching. Each teacher's developing sense of efficacy, of which reflection is a critical component, supported and sustained their constant adjustments which went together to further develop their identity as teachers. In this chapter, I also present the cultural aspects of teaching in NWT communities, described as the "border world" (Haig-Brown, 1992), including cultural dimensions of teacher identity, the role of teacher in Aboriginal communities, conflicting values, post-colonial issues and ways to teach in the border world. Finally, I present the NWT teachers' experiences with the induction supports that they received.

#### **Finding an identity as teacher**

##### **Pre-Service education and preparation**

Each of the five NWT teachers arrived at their first teaching assignment with a unique and personal sense of identity, formed and reformed over a lifetime within individual contexts through interactions with society. Institutional and

discursive perspectives (Gee, 2001,) built on their “nature” or biology, served as dynamic catalyses guiding each individual toward a career in teaching. The diversity of their backgrounds became a foundation for their identities during the induction stage while their personal and cognitive characteristics facilitated their transition from scholar to teacher (Jensen, 1987).

The two teachers who grew up in the Northwest Territories formed their early identities within northern institutions and discursive contexts and both shared a long-standing and enduring dream since they were children of becoming teachers and returning to the NWT. They both recalled watching the actions of their own teachers as they absorbed the knowledge, skills and attitudes that were part of daily student-teacher interactions (Schempp, Sparks and Templin, 1999). Colleen said, “As a child I was so intrigued by teachers who had so much knowledge and had the nerve to get up in front of children and teach. I thought it would be so wonderful to have such a storage of knowledge and to see everyone listening to the teacher...”. Her decision to return to the NWT following graduation she said, gave her an opportunity to return to her roots, reconnect with her family and allow her to use her language. Danielle also followed a life-long dream. She said, “I had some very good teachers throughout school. I just knew when I was very young that I wanted to be a teacher. I liked the idea of continuing to learn. I was fascinated with all the different teachers I had”. Upon graduation, she was excited about returning to the north which she considered to be “a really great place to grow up” and where she could be “...a northern teacher in a place where the environment was familiar”. She felt that she would not have



to go through an adjustment period if she returned to the NWT and looked forward to giving back to the community.

The other three teachers arrived in the Northwest Territories for the first time within days of starting their first teaching assignment, their identities having been formed in diverse Southern Canadian contexts. Beverley made a decision to become a teacher while she was in elementary school, whereas Emma and Amy made their decisions as adults. Beverley's motivation was deeply rooted in her own school experiences and a desire to help children with special needs. Emma, on the other hand, was guided by former colleagues who thought she should receive the benefits of a fully qualified teacher when she was working as a para-professional and Amy said she made her decision more by default when she had to make a career choice. Beverley and Amy came to the NWT for an adventure before settling down in Southern Canada, and Emma came with her family to fulfill her husband's dream of living in the north while they were still young. Beverley and Amy also hoped to repay student loans while in the NWT.

The two northern teachers demonstrated a strong connection between their personal identities as northerners, the experiences that motivated them to enter the teaching profession and their desire to return to the NWT to teach. The three teachers who relocated to the NWT, on the other hand, had formed their identities in other environments and explained that their motivation for teaching in the north was transitory and much less sustaining.

Institutions responsible for pre-service teacher education provide a context for the development of teacher identity, thus building on all that had gone together

previously to form an individual's identity. McLean (1999) describes three broad ideologies, constructivist, practical and critical, represented in pre-service institutions that influence student teachers. Tusin (1999) points out that there is a need to put more emphasis on the self-development of student teachers through thoughtful growth and change in a process that requires reflective practitioners to train reflective teachers. Self-knowledge, she adds, allows us to "...overhaul or to fine-tune those aspects of ourselves that may block our teaching effectiveness" (p.8).

Colleen was the only teacher who described her pre-service education as "very helpful" and alluded to its practical approach. She particularly recognized the preparation she received in the areas of exceptional children, lesson planning, long-range planning and motivation. She added that she helped some of the other, more experienced teachers on her staff with long-range planning, an area in which they needed some advice. Beverley's only comment about her eighteen-month pre-service program was related to various behaviour modification approaches that she considered very effective. Amy's program was more constructivist in nature, stressed individuality and classroom relationships. Student teachers were supported in developing their personal strengths and this proved to sustain Amy through some challenging times in her induction year. Finally, Danielle and Emma felt their pre-service programs did not prepare them well and lacked the practical aspects of teacher education that would have been more helpful; Danielle added that the courses she took needed to be more realistic. Danielle also alluded to the critical ideology perspective of her pre-service program when she

described a cross-cultural education course she had taken. Unfortunately she seemed to misunderstand its purpose. She said, "I took one cross-cultural course in my B Ed. It focused on Aboriginal students to point out prejudices and biases. The instructors taught it from an Aboriginal perspective that was a very narrow view. It implied that the non-Aboriginal population was the dominant group". The pre-service education received by each teacher represented elements of McLean's (1999) three ideologies; however, only Colleen considered her program to be particularly useful, although Beverley and Amy considered some elements to be helpful.

### **Finding identity through practice**

As beginning teachers move into their first year of teaching, they experience a role adjustment from that of student teachers who see their professional responsibilities primarily as abstract theories and strategies (McAlpine & Crago, 1995) to the complex realities of classrooms which demand constant decision making and application of general principles to particular situations (Good & Brophy, 1991). Developing the ability to fill this role comes about as a beginning teacher learns to be collaborative, progressive, critical and reflective with a broad repertoire of techniques and strategies which motivate students to learn (Heuser, 1999).

Each of the five NWT beginning teachers found it necessary to adjust their academic expectations, eventually realizing that the goals they set in the fall were in many cases unrealistic, making it necessary to have individualized goals for each student. They also discovered that the emphasis needed to be on the core

subjects, particularly for students who were having difficulty or who had attendance problems. Colleen explained her adjustment:

At first I was concentrating on the whole curriculum...now I am focusing more on language arts and math...this is a dramatic change...I was desperately trying to cover everything but then my principal said that forty percent of the curriculum is language arts and math and it is not possible to go into depth in the other subjects so I am integrating the other subjects more.

Danielle also adjusted her approach several times during the year. She began the year with the same expectations for every student, then taught to the “lower end of the spectrum” and finally concluded that she needed to set achievable goals for each student.

Each of the five NWT beginning teachers came to realize during the year that it was important to find their own personal teaching style. They described their search that required them to remain open to learning and accepting support through out the induction process in order to progress. Beverley worked very hard to develop strategies for her multi-grade class and the variety of student learning styles that were present in her classroom; however, at the end of the year, she recognized that she still had not found her particular teaching style. Emma also expressed some disappointment at not having arrived at the place where she would like to have been and at the end of the year said, “I didn’t really like the kind of teacher I turned out to be...” Both Beverley and Emma were very much aware that there was a great deal more to learn about teaching and that the process

of induction really required more than one year. Emma pointed out that she had tried to adjust her teaching style based on advice from her principal, but she was not comfortable with this approach. She concluded that she could not pretend to be someone she was not and that it was her responsibility to find her own style of teaching. Amy and Danielle however, ended the year with a level of confidence that they were satisfied with the stage they had reached. Amy concluded that she had learned a lot about what worked for her and what didn't.

Studies over the past twenty years have provided strong evidence that classroom management presents the greatest challenge for beginning teachers (Meister & Jenks, 2000; Gordon, 1991). The experience of the NWT beginning teachers also supports this finding and demonstrates the link between classroom relations and student behaviour. After a challenging fall, Amy decided it was necessary to make a lot of changes. By February, she said, "It is important for me that there be a good relationship (in the classroom) because if they don't like me then I don't like them and we're all human beings. My classroom management style does not work if they don't like me. I couldn't be that easy going if they didn't like me because they would walk all over me". She went on to describe her classroom atmosphere after this positive relationship had been established. She said, "Students understand that as long as they get their work done and get their homework done the rules are secondary".

The experiences of Beverley, Colleen and Danielle were remarkably similar. During the winter Beverley concluded that student misbehaviour was generally the result of events outside the classroom and that she would maintain a

truthful relationship with her students where she would "...be there for them if they needed to talk". When a behaviour problem in Colleen's classroom reached a difficult stage, she chose to discuss it openly with her students asking them to help in finding a solution. Danielle also discovered the importance of a democratic classroom where she worked to build up the confidence of each child in an atmosphere of honesty and trust.

By creating a positive learning environment the teachers found at the same time they addressed many of their concerns related to classroom management. This was achieved when the teachers stopped taking the student misbehaviour personally and accepted that often it was a result of circumstances beyond their control. This acceptance then allowed each teacher to build trusting, respectful relationships within their classrooms, thus creating a positive learning environment where the teacher had confidence that if she worked hard enough and smart enough her students would learn (Garmston, 2001).

Finding a balance between the personal and professional dimensions of one's teaching identity is another challenge which beginning teachers encounter and as the demands of teaching increase, personal needs may be overlooked or neglected. Adjustment to new living conditions and on-going personal commitments often result in additional stress outside school (Meister & Jenks, 2000; Good & Brophy, 1991; Jensen, 1987; Gordon, 1991); therefore, personal support is essential for beginning teachers to make a successful transition during induction (Lipka & Brinthaupt, 1999).

The NWT beginning teachers encountered similar challenges resulting from the overwhelming demands of the job in the early part of the school year. Each experienced stress and frustration leading to feelings of exhaustion as the never-ending tasks of teaching took over every aspect of their lives. Each concluded, based either on their own self-knowledge or on the advice of others, that she needed to make adjustments in order to find a healthy balance. As the year progressed, all of them made time for activities that they enjoyed which took them away from teaching for a while. Amy exercised and ensured that she got some fresh air; Beverley became involved in the community and set aside personal time for reading, meditation and movies. Colleen visited family and elders and attended community events and Emma joined a choir and involved her family more in housekeeping duties. Each teacher concluded that it was necessary to consciously make a schedule that allowed for specific times for schoolwork and some dedicated time for personal activities in order to stay healthy and complete the year.

The NWT beginning teachers demonstrated that the process of developing their identity as teachers involved finding their personal teaching styles, making continual adjustments, learning how to create a positive learning environment and balancing their personal and professional lives. Han (as cited in Bolotin Joseph & Efron, 2001) describes this process of constructing and reconstructing oneself as teacher as an "...ongoing process of critically examining and refining practice, taking into careful consideration the personal, pedagogical, societal...and ethical contexts associated with schools, classrooms and the multiple roles of

teachers”(p.86). This process, which can only be facilitated by a sense of self-efficacy, guides beginning teachers toward a conviction of personal competence (Ashton & Webb, 1986). Bolotin Joseph and Burnaford (2001) point out that reflection is an essential ingredient of self-efficacy requiring contemplation of past and present behaviour in order to decide what to do in the future.

All five teachers were aware of the value of reflection; however, they said they found very little time for it during their first year of teaching. They all agreed that our interviews provided a valuable opportunity to reflect which they would not have had otherwise and Amy recommended that such an interaction, in the form of confidential counseling, should be offered to every beginning teacher in the NWT three times during their induction year. Although they were not aware that they had been reflecting during the year, they showed considerable evidence of a developing sense of efficacy that could only have been a result of reflection. Amy made changes in the way she interacted with her students, adopted different teaching strategies, adjusted her academic expectations and reorganized her classroom many times. She noted in our second interview that she was adjusting to taking into account the needs of others rather than just herself and even on weekends, found she was thinking about her students. She concluded, “I have learned a lot about what works for me and what doesn’t”.

Beverley’s growing self-efficacy meant that she constantly searched for things that worked for her class, taught through themes allowing her to gauge assignments and expectations to suite different ability levels and learning styles in her multi-level class, and found ways to include the community context in her



teaching. Similarly, Colleen concluded that it was important to be persistent, consistent and strict in order to set a classroom tone but it was also important to allow for flexibility in order to maintain student interest. She said she learned the importance of thinking things through in advance and learning to trust her own judgment. All five teachers said they were constantly thinking about teaching and that such thoughts infiltrated every aspect of their lives and although they did not usually identify it as reflection, it was. This constant thinking they experienced was evidence of a strong sense of self-efficacy.

The beginning NWT teachers searched for their personal teaching identities throughout their first year of teaching. Their biographies included unique reasons for choosing a career in teaching and their pre-service education programs presented various ideologies. During their first year, the teachers adjusted to their new role, constantly making changes in every aspect of their teaching as they gained experience through practice while searching consciously or unconsciously, for their personal teaching styles. Their experiences supported the research that says that classroom management creates the greatest challenge for beginning teachers (Gordon, 1991) and as the year progressed, they each discovered that creating positive relationships within a positive learning environment addressed many behaviour challenges. The teachers found that they had to accept that they had no control over some factors that influenced their students' behaviour; however, within open, trusting and respectful classrooms, students would do their best.

## **Teaching in the border world**

Most Northwest Territories teachers teach in the “border world” described by Haig-Brown (1992) as a place where Aboriginal people work to recover from the results of past and present “cultural invasions” resulting in community disruptions and discontinuities. Life in these communities, to varying degrees, combines elements of traditional Aboriginal culture, mainstream Canadian culture and a transitional culture in an environment of constant tension and change. It is the responsibility of teachers to be prepared for this reality by entering with the necessary knowledge, skills and attitudes to fulfill their roles in these communities (Taylor, 1995). Teachers who are not prepared, McAlpine and Crago (1995) caution, run the risk of creating confusion of identity in their students. All five NWT beginning teachers experienced this community environment in which their school was situated and each responded to the challenge in a very personal and individual way. Their responses to this “border world” were grounded in their sense of identity and biographies (Friesen & Orr, 1998) formed within previous experiential contexts (Gee, 2001).

### **Cultural dimensions of teacher identity**

In order to live with the tensions and stresses experienced by people in the border world, Abt-Perkins and Gomez (1993) point out the importance of first examining one’s fundamental values, attitudes, dispositions and belief systems as they inform personal perceptions. For teachers, this needs to take place before entering the “border world”, ideally within pre-service education. Ladson-Billings, (1999) describes the ideal pre-service education as grounded in critical

theory involving "...content integration, knowledge construction, prejudice reduction, equity pedagogy and empowering school culture" (p.222). However, she points out that add-ons in the form of workshops, institutes and courses will not bring about the necessary result.

In my interviews with the five NWT beginning teachers, I wanted to find out about their cultural awareness and their preparation for teaching in the "border world". Colleen, an NWT Aboriginal teacher who had grown up in the territory had lived in southern Canada for an extended period and returned to the NWT for her first year of teaching. Her awareness of culture was evident as she described her lived experience outside the territory in mainstream Canada and her enthusiasm on her return to the NWT. She said, "As a Native person who has lived out of town for a long time and returning home this year, I have a great appreciation for other cultures and how other people live. My students haven't really experienced that. They think that the way life is in the community is the only way." Her appreciation of her culture increased during the year as she took the initiative to introduce the new, non-Aboriginal teachers to the community. She also observed that community people were more open to other ways than they had been when she was growing up. She also pointed out that Native Studies had been her major in her pre-service education and this had helped her form her own identity as an Aboriginal person.

Colleen's connection with the community, her respect for the culture, her knowledge of the language of the people and her comfort within the mainstream culture, gave her multiple advantages. She communicated with the elders in their

language, understood the cultural stance of the community and had already experienced the process of coming to terms with the stresses and tensions of the “border land”. Her pre-service education affirmed her identity and her life experience gave a cross-cultural perspective she hoped to share with her students. Colleen was in an excellent position to provide a model that promoted pride, respect and knowledge of Indian nationhood (Huff, 1997).

Emma was a southern Canadian Aboriginal person and, like Colleen, had lived for extended periods in both her traditional and mainstream Canadian communities and had first-hand knowledge of the “border land”. She was particularly proud of her traditions and was eager to share them with her Dene students; however, early in the year, she had been advised that her traditions might offend the local elders. She believed in the dynamic nature of Aboriginal cultures and their need to change but felt restricted, not free to be herself and in conflict with local values, particularly related to the role of women. She was comfortable in her culture and that of the mainstream, but confused about her role in her Dene community.

Although Emma was Aboriginal, she experienced cultural confusion similar to non-Aboriginal teachers that left her feeling afraid to be herself and practice her cultural traditions. Since she was very sensitive to community values, she wished only to share her traditions and not impose them but did not get the opportunity in her school.

Amy’s initial comment was that there was very little “pure culture” in the community but there were some amazing arts and crafts. She observed a racial

division in the community between the Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal population and concluded early that the community needed to change. Amy also described the Aboriginal population as the “old community” which was difficult to “break into”. When asked about the cultures of the students in her classroom, she said, “I do not actually notice which of my students are Aboriginal and which are not. I am asked all the time how many of each cultural group I have in my class and I say I don’t know and I don’t feel the need to know it because I am not judging or evaluating them based on their culture”.

Amy’s responses demonstrated her understanding of culture as limited to material aspects, something Legare, Pet-Willett, Ward, Wason-Ellam and Jessen Williamson (1998) advise teachers to avoid. Instead they point out the necessity of understanding the worldview of a community in order to understand that culture. Amy’s comments about the cultural make-up of her class revealed her “colour blind” outlook (Baldwin, 1988) rather than colour consciousness. This stance clearly indicated that Amy was not critically conscious and was indeed, as Taylor (1995) pointed out, more inclined to blame the community for its difference rather than recognizing herself as a guest who should attempt to adjust to the environment.

Although Beverley did not mention any cross-cultural elements in her pre-service education, she invested considerable time and energy before moving north in finding out about the culture of the community where she would be teaching. After her arrival, she immediately went out into the community, began to learn the language and visited with the parents of her students. In tune with Battiste

and Barman's advice (1995), Beverley treated community people respectfully, attended cultural events, observed everyday life and asked questions about cultural aspects she did not understand. Her greatest challenge came from her inability to understand the cultural perspective and worldview of the community whose values related to school attendance and children's responsibilities within the family were in conflict with hers.

### **Role of teacher in Aboriginal communities**

Many teachers in Aboriginal communities are confused about the role they are expected to play and although they may have a sense that they should do things differently, they are left to work out the differences for themselves (Harper, 2000). Lipka (1991) cautions that pre-service teacher education programs do have a cultural stance that may or may not be rooted in critical pedagogy. In some cases, such programs raise the critical awareness of student teachers but do not teach them how to address these issues in the classroom (Ladson-Billings, 2001). In Ward's view (2001), teachers in Aboriginal communities need to be "...physically affirming, intellectually engaging, spiritually embracing and emotionally supportive" (p.40). The challenge that presented itself to the five NWT beginning teachers was to identify their roles within their particular context.

Colleen immediately had the advantage of understanding many aspects of the community. She knew that the people appreciated her speaking her language and she enjoyed taking part in community events. She showed her comfort level when she said, "I feel very comfortable sitting on the floor and eating with people". Colleen believed that an important part of her role was to teach her

students that there are other ways to live outside the community. She said, "I also teach them to appreciate their lives more, their Dene way of life as it was in the past and as it is now. I also talk to the children about the combination of modern technology with traditional culture". Colleen did however, experience some confusion returning home in her new role. She said, "As a teacher, you have to conduct yourself with respect all the time because people are watching your example. It is different to have people watch you as an example". She became very anxious about being watched by the community and gradually began keeping to herself more and more. She said, "At the beginning of the year I was more carefree; now I am more like a recluse except for family". She was also frustrated that community people often tried to sell her art work or borrow money and she was unsure how she should respond. Finally, she began to question whether being able to speak the language of her students was an advantage or a disadvantage. She reflected, "I have been wondering if using the Dene language means that the students are too relaxed and treat me more like they are at home and less like they are in school with their teacher". Although, over all Colleen seemed confident in her identity and her role as teacher, she did experience some elements of confusion common to many Aboriginal teachers who find themselves caught between mainstream and Aboriginal expectations (Legare, et al, 1998) with very little guidance on how to be an Aboriginal teacher.

Beverley seemed quite comfortable with her role as teacher, accepting the responsibility as a non-Aboriginal teacher in an Aboriginal community, by becoming somewhat acculturated into the local culture (McAlpine and Crago,

1995). Her greatest confusion came within the school when her principal insisted that she discontinue her behaviour modification program. He said that the parents would not approve of this approach. This was very difficult for Beverley to accept, since she felt it was working very well with her students. Unfortunately, she was not able to understand or accept that she could not run her class the way she wanted and this caused considerable stress for her for the remainder of the year. This role confusion then resulted from different interpretations of what was a culturally acceptable approach to classroom management. A resolution might have been more acceptable for both the teacher and the principal if the local education committee was consulted.

#### **Conflict of values**

Legare, et al (1998) emphasized the importance of teachers of Aboriginal children understanding the world view of the community and not just the material trappings of the local culture; however, it is the invisible cultural characteristics – beliefs and values -- which are the most difficult to identify and understand. Delpit (1988) points out that not all parents want the same things for their children and cautions teachers that they should not assume that their beliefs are universal. This dichotomy in Aboriginal schools created a particular challenge for several of the NWT teachers whose basic values did not match those of their students and the community, and who found themselves struggling within a situation of cultural displacement (McLean, 1999) which was difficult to resolve.

Early in the year, Beverley became confused by decisions that were made by the principal and the other teachers who supported the wishes of the parents



and when these decisions did not support her educational beliefs, she interpreted them as political. She said,

I am surprised that teaching is so political. Quite a few problems come up but it is the best political decision; you make the decision based on who you want to please the most; not what is best for the students. I think I was naïve before because I thought that decisions would always be based on what was best for the students. Maybe it is just that way in a small community where it is considered better to please the parents rather than do what is best for the student because it causes less stress and is easier on you as the teacher.

Beverley also found it difficult to accept that some families placed such heavy responsibilities on their children and these responsibilities took precedence over their education, resulting in poor attendance and poor academic achievement. She lamented, “The community sees success as providing for the family; they are satisfied if their children complete grade six. Teachers want the children to go on to high school. Teachers believe that children should be allowed to have a childhood – not taking care of siblings ...”

Beverley was at first unable to explain these discrepancies within the context of her own lived experience, but gradually went through a process during which she experienced confusion and stress in an effort to find a resolution between her values and those of the community which were in conflict (Costa, 1991). Beverley gradually became aware of her differing values when she said, “I like to get very emotionally involved with my students but it is difficult to be that

way in this community because the students are from a different culture and I find it extremely difficult to see the hardships my students are experiencing in their personal lives. I find it disheartening to see the difficult life of the students and the huge responsibilities they have at such a young age". Later on in the year she concluded, "You have to see both sides of an argument; you have to see the parents' point of view as well as your own. You have to see that the parents have different expectations for their children ... I had to adjust by learning to distance myself from my students but this is hard for me; I am not that kind of person". Beverley demonstrated through her efforts to resolve her conflict in values that she was trying to adapt and it seemed evident that the process would require more than one year.

Amy experienced some differences in values that initially caused her considerable stress. The community's sense of time led her to say, "Everyone is late all the time – late for school, late for community events; a community feast started two hours late!" She also perceived that the community did not value education or encourage student attendance at school. She observed that her students did not demonstrate empathy for others and she concluded that the community needed to change. By February, Amy said, "Teachers who are coming north to teach need to know that they are not coming to an idyllic cultural community where the whole village raises the child because it doesn't even happen". As the year progressed, Amy's reactions changed as she began to build relationships in order to work respectfully (Haig-Brown, 1992) with her students and their parents. She began to notice the good things that were happening in the

community. Eventually she said, “I try to be tolerant with their values if they are different (from mine)”.

The most remarkable change for Amy then came as she began to know her students as individuals. By the end of the year she said, “I will really miss my students because I feel that it is the end of a relationship and I feel jealous of the teacher who will have them next year. I don’t want to give them up. I am hoping that with some experience, I will not feel this way”. Whereas Amy had really not demonstrated any particular effort to get to know the community culture, she had come to terms with some conflicting values by developing the relationships that are so fundamental to teaching in Aboriginal communities (Cummins, 1996; Haig-Brown, 1992). She came to like them and worked at having them like her.

### **Teaching in the post-colonial “border world”**

Teachers in Aboriginal communities must also understand the affects of cognitive imperialism that are present in the post-colonial “border world”.

Cognitive imperialism, sometimes referred to as cultural racism, is “the imposition of one world view on a people who have an alternative worldview, with the implication that the imposed worldview is superior...”(Battiste, 2000, p.194). The affect of cognitive imperialism is collective lowered self-esteem where people doubt their own self-worth and the value of their culture.

Dysfunctional behaviours may result in Aboriginal communities where people are unclear about their identity as Aboriginal people. An essential aspect of the teacher’s role then is to become a change agent in order to stop the historical and continuing efforts toward cultural assimilation (Writer, 2001). The five NWT

teachers experienced symptoms of post-colonialism in their communities and in their first year of teaching were confused about how to make sense of these symptoms and how to address them. In some cases, because of their lack of knowledge and preparation for this kind of environment, the teachers wondered if these symptoms were characteristics of the community culture.

When Amy was reflecting on advice for future beginning teachers in her community, she said, “Teachers also need to know that there are a lot of challenges with the parents because chances are the new teachers are non-Aboriginal and the majority of students are Aboriginal and this presents more opportunity for racist comments”. Her conclusion fits with Haig-Brown’s (1992) point that in some cases “...non-Natives (in Native communities) feel the ever-present tension between being useful and being undesirable” (p.97).

Amy, Beverley and Emma experienced some characteristics of post-colonial communities where drug and alcohol abuse, family dysfunction and racism were present. Emma commented, “I understand that many of the parents went to residential schools and they did not learn the parenting skills necessary for their children to be okay – healthy”.

### **Ways to teach in the “border land”**

The NWT teachers adjusted their teaching styles as they became more sensitive to the learning needs of their students and even if they were not yet able to articulate or fully understand the post-colonial context in which they taught, they gradually responded intuitively and pragmatically by taking into account the physical, intellectual, spiritual and emotional aspects of their students’ lives

(Ward, 2001). Emma worked hard to develop her students' self-confidence and described the strategy she used by first valuing their roots and their culture:

My students know more about the Dene language and the drum dance than I do; I like my students to know this and they like to show me how much they know. I ask my students to say certain Dene words and I try to practice with the children. I tell my class that everyone is a teacher and just because I am in the front of the class it doesn't mean that each student isn't also a teacher.

Colleen also recognized the importance of the emotional aspect of her relationship with her students. She said,

I talk about everything with my students. If there are any problems I talk to them one-on-one. I think about how I felt when I was a child and how embarrassing it was if a teacher berated me in front of the class. I have a very strong respect for each child and I expect my students to respect everyone regardless of race.

Both Emma and Colleen considered themselves role models as Aboriginal teachers and through their actions, validated the importance of an all-encompassing approach to teaching.

By the second and third interview, I noticed that all five teachers were referring to their students as "we" rather than "them" which told me that they were beginning to work together as family-like learning communities (Ward, 2001). Each teacher talked about the importance of caring, respectful relationships in the classroom where honesty was of high value and each teacher

was showing evidence that they were creating an environment of pride and respect. Several of the teachers expressed their belief in the social constructivist view that students acquire knowledge by building on personal experiences (Au, 1998) and they worked toward achieving this by incorporating culture, language, local knowledge and resources into their teaching.

### **Supporting teacher identity building in the NWT**

Traumatic and stressful experiences in their first year of teaching cause many bright and talented teachers to leave the profession according to Moir and Gless (2001); therefore, it is absolutely essential that induction supports be provided to help them find strategies for dealing with these challenges. These supports can best be provided through the collaborative efforts of school districts, unions and universities (Wasley, 1999; Chartrand, Moore & Lourie-Markowitz, 2000) along with the Ministry of Education. Although both formal and informal induction programs may take many forms over the years, the most effective model involves continuous reflection on daily practice and student learning (McAlpine & Crago, 1995; Valdez, Young, & Hicks, 2000; Rogers and Babinski, 1999) through a combination of orientation, mentorship and professional development (Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation, 1999). Support groups and activities, observations of effective, experienced teachers and customized staff development also provide opportunities for the identity building of beginning teachers.

The NWT teachers in this study benefited from many induction supports and yet their perception was that they needed more. Certainly their experiences

show that the supports they received did not achieve the ideal induction experience and it seems quite obvious that there is room for improvement, but it does cause me to wonder if any support is capable of achieving the perfect situation. After all, induction is part of the learning continuum and just as there is no ideal pre-service teacher education program that produces master teachers, there is no ideal induction program that meets all the needs of individual beginning teachers. Several of the teachers alluded to this discovery when near the end of the year they began to appreciate their supports more than they had at the beginning. I believe that Amy's discovery about how she learned during her first year applies to the limitations of any induction program. She said,

I don't think it would be possible to change this year if I was to start it again. A beginning teacher just has to work through the things that she has been working through since the fall. It could be better with more monitoring and counseling support based on how beginning teachers are doing. It can be overwhelming. If you are the kind of person who does not talk openly with others and keeps the stresses internalized, things could get to a desperate state. Counseling of the beginning teacher would help.

*On reflection, I believe that I was fortunate to have absorbed some aspects of cross-cultural awareness before I began my pre-service teacher education that served me well in the NWT. I was born in post-colonial Southern Ireland and attended school there until I was nine years old, and although I didn't understand it at the time, the country was involved in many efforts to recover its unique Irish*

*identity. Part of that recovery involved teaching the Irish language in school, an activity that was an integral part of the curriculum, and one that I enjoyed. My father was very pro-Irish and although we were part of the very small Protestant minority, we did not experience any of the religious tensions so commonly associated with Ireland. The experience of being part of a minority and part of the cultural recovery movement, I believe, had an impact on my early identity.*

*When I was nine, I immigrated with my family to a small town in Saskatchewan, Canada, and once again, experienced the challenge of living in another type of minority situation in a new culture. I was soon introduced to First Nations people from the neighbouring reserve, as they were my classmates and customers in my father's business. Both my introduction into Canadian culture and my first contacts with Aboriginal people were positive experiences, requiring me to try again to understand the ways that other people saw the world.*

*I do not recall any discussion of cross-cultural awareness during my pre-service teacher education; however, our teacher orientation in Churchill, Manitoba in 1969 did include historical and sociological information about the Inuit of the Keewatin Region, where we would be teaching. My most effective and influential orientation came from my husband's enthusiasm for life in the North where he had taught for several years before we met. Since the first time I met him, he had talked constantly about the wonderful children, the kindness and friendliness of the communities and the beauty and challenge of the environment. His love of history combined with his passion for adventure was extremely contagious and painted the most exciting of pictures for our future life. His*



*attitude was my orientation and his most positive view of life kept me focused on the positive also.*

*I came to teach in the NWT with a partially developed critical view of culture and some practical teaching strategies that I had learned during pre-service but the fundamentally important constructivist approaches came through experience. I consider myself very fortunate to have been involved in NWT education in the 1970's and 1980's when uniquely NWT curricula, rooted in constructivist theory, were being developed. It was also the time when the first Aboriginal Teacher Education Program in North America was introduced in Yellowknife in 1968, reflecting the de-colonizing view of the government at that time. These innovations influenced my identity as a teacher, which evolved during the years I taught in the NWT communities of Baker Lake, Pangnirtung and Iqaluit. I realize now, on reflection, that one's identity as teacher never "arrives", as there is always more to learn and new teaching assignments demanding new approaches.*

*From time to time I would question my role and that of the school in the NWT communities where I taught and I would worry about the effect we, as non-Aboriginal people, were having; however, I would conclude that I did not have the power to re-write the colonialistic, assimilationist efforts of the past and so must do my best in the present. Respectfully supporting the collective rebuilding of identity and independence within the community through empowerment and education was the best that teachers could hope to do through the involvement of local education councils and the increase of Aboriginal teachers.*

*I believe that the effects of post-colonialism have increased the challenges in many Aboriginal communities since I first came to teach in the NWT. Whereas Aboriginal values and traditions were still strong in many of the communities where I taught, those systems have broken down in recent years, affecting the health of everyone. Cultural discontinuity and cultural confusion are particularly difficult for children as they are caught between two world views; this confusion plays itself out in today's classrooms, presenting added stress for beginning teachers who are making so many adjustments all at once. No teacher today should enter an NWT school without thorough preparation in cross-cultural awareness and de-colonizing methodologies so that they can understand their responsibility for creating positive learning environments for students. These environments should be supportive and empowering, where children will not have to shoulder the blame and the burden of past inequities.*

### **Summary**

In this chapter, through the teachers' words and experiences, I presented the processes they followed to develop and construct their individual and unique identities as teachers, first in general terms and secondly within the cross-cultural setting. First, I discuss aspects of the NWT teachers' experiences that were similar to teachers in any setting where previous lived contexts were combined with their interest in teaching and their pre-service education to determine the kind of person each of them was as they entered their first school. Within their classrooms, then they began to reconstruct themselves through practice, constant adjustments and a developing sense of efficacy. Second, I described the aspects

of their identity building that were unique to the NWT where each teacher encountered the “border world” involved in teaching Aboriginal children who live with the uncertainty of a culture in transition. This setting presents many ambiguities and conflicts for children, communities and teachers, requiring teachers who are aware and prepared for the realities. I explored this part of the teachers’ identity building by probing their understanding of cultural identity and their role as teacher within the conflicting values and the post-colonial characteristics of the communities where they taught. I then describe some of the approaches to teaching that the NWT teachers found to be successful and their impressions of the induction supports they received during their first year of teaching. Finally, I reflected on my induction year in the NWT through the lens of the participants in this research.

## Chapter 6 - Implications

### Introduction

This research journey has been guided by three fundamental questions related to the induction of five elementary teachers who began their careers in the Northwest Territories:

1. What are the induction experiences of five beginning women elementary teachers in NWT communities?
2. What are the current induction supports available to Northwest Territories elementary teachers? Do they meet their personal, professional and cultural needs?
3. What other induction supports do elementary NWT teachers suggest?

Throughout this process, I met five beginning teachers from across the Northwest Territories who answered my questions and shared the experiences of their first year of teaching. I did not expect to be welcomed so generously into all aspects of their extremely busy and often overwhelmed lives, and I also did not expect that my own induction experiences would be evoked so vividly from the distant past. So many of their experiences were similar to those of beginning teachers everywhere (Lipka & Brinthaupt, 1999, Gordon, 1991; McAlpine & Crago, 1995, Tickel, 2000); however, they had a unique and particular NWT flavour which in many cases were reminiscent of my experiences more than thirty years ago.

I discovered that the unique induction experiences of these five teachers could not be separated from their own identities. Personal culture, family background, and experiences in school, go together to create the dynamic identity of a person who decides to become a teacher. The reasons for making that choice are varied in the literature and the NWT beginning teachers represented that variety also. Pre-service education also takes various forms and the NWT beginning teachers again were products of various programs and institutions rooted in various ideologies.

The transitional period, referred to as teacher induction, has been described in static terms as a bridge or in active terms as a long and lonely leap (Moskowitz & Stepfers, 1997; Lortie, 1976). The experiences of the participants in this research have confirmed that it is definitely not a period of gradual introduction where responsibilities are doled out sequentially from simple to complex (Jensen, 1987) but a total immersion into all the tasks of an experienced teacher. I believe that Moir's model (1990) encapsulates the induction experience of teachers, providing easily understood signposts for beginning teachers and their mentors helping them to understand where they have come from, where they are currently, and where they need to go. The teachers became aware that the phases were transitory and not necessarily sequential but that it was their responsibility to find ways of moving on. It was important for them and the people providing support to understand that if beginning teachers do not develop strategies to move through each phase of induction, they are less likely to address the needs of their students while running the risk of being stuck in a survival mentality without the

necessary professional growth to become effective teachers (Good & Brophy, 1991; Gordon, 1991).

The five NWT beginning teachers in this study described their initial impressions of the community, the school and the culture during our first interview in the fall. During the winter, they told me about the adjustments they were making to the realities in their classrooms and at the end of the school year, they reflected on the year behind them. They also described the induction supports they received, commented on their usefulness and made suggestions for improvement.

This study shows how five NWT beginning teachers came to their first teaching experience as a “work in progress”( DeBolt, 1992) with identities that were the result of personal experiences and pre-service education. They then entered the induction stage that involved the combining of the people they were up to that point with the realities they encountered. In chapter five, I identify two dimensions of the teacher’s identity – the generic personal/professional aspects and the cultural - so that I can show the importance of each as they come together in an integrated whole to create healthy, balanced and effective NWT teachers.

### **Implications**

In this qualitative study involving five beginning Northwest Territories elementary teachers several implications have emerged that may be used to inform teacher induction in the Northwest Territories.

1. Teacher identity lies at the heart of teacher induction; in fact, teacher induction is one major signpost along the journey that builds teacher identity.

Gee (2001) explains that each person has many identities that are determined by interactions with society and which work together to create in an individual a “certain kind of person” within a certain context. Using his institution and discourse perspectives, it is possible to determine the influences that shape the identity of a teacher and although the “teacher” identity can be removed from the individual, it is not possible to remove self-identity from the teacher. Therefore, the process of teacher induction involves the process of including the role of teacher within an existing individual’s life (Sumara & Luce-Kapler, 1996).

McAlpine and Crago (1995) explain that beginning teachers take on their professional responsibilities primarily as abstract theories and strategies grounded more in their own experience as learners than in application. Certainly, the five NWT teachers arrived with their own unique identities and during the year, worked through a process of reconstructing themselves as teachers.

2. Pre-service education cannot completely prepare teachers for the classroom, because there is a process that can only happen when a teacher is given full responsibility for the education of a group of children. Within the “...dialectic of problem setting and answering in the complex lived world of practice” (McAlpine & Crago, 1995), beginning teachers connect their biographies, their self-identity and their pre-service education with the daily challenges of teaching. Although the five NWT teachers questioned the adequacy of their pre-orientation information, the effectiveness of their orientations, the detail of the information they received during the year, the suitability of the

resources they were given, and the preparation they were given for parent-teacher communication to name a few, on reflection at the end of the year they concluded that most of their learning had to be a result of engaging in the practice. A great deal of this “learning on the job” came about as the teachers accepted the realities of their environment and the limitations of their experience at that stage in their career. Their learning evolved because they made adjustments toward a positive, hopeful outlook allowing them to put the emphasis on possibilities instead of challenges and barriers. Finally, developing a sense of self-efficacy by which the teachers acquired a “...conviction of personal competence...”(Ashton & Webb, 1986, p. 8) was an important part of the learning process where they planned and adjusted their teaching based on their reflection on past actions (E. P. Han as cited in Bolotin Joseph and Efron, 2001).

3. It is essential for all NWT teachers, both non-Aboriginal and Aboriginal, to be thoroughly prepared to teach in the border world of post-colonial, Aboriginal education. This preparation needs to take place in phases over time so that both universal and local aspects of culture can be introduced and examined. Within pre-service education, all teachers need to be introduced to the theory of critical pedagogy that presents education as a social and cultural construct (McLean, 1999). In preparation for possible cultural displacement in unfamiliar teaching environments then, teachers must take time, before entering the classroom, to examine their fundamental values, attitudes, dispositions and belief systems which inform their personal perceptions (Abt-Perkins & Gomez; 1993).



Since this first phase is universal in nature and does not focus on any particular culture, it is an obvious fit within pre-service education. The second phase involves specific information on the culture of the community and needs to be acquired locally. This local knowledge can be introduced during an orientation program, but needs to be built on through a series of in-service sessions that include local history, traditions, values and beliefs, language, communication patterns, community educational expectations, appropriate teaching and assessment strategies and cultural activities. This cultural awareness process will help to clarify teachers' roles, reduce cultural discontinuity, increase student success and improve teacher satisfaction.

4. Relationship is at the heart of teaching (Cummins, 1996) and although it can apply for all children, it is of greatest importance for Aboriginal children. In communities and schools where the effects of post-colonialism are present, teachers must first establish an ethos of respect and truthfulness between themselves and their students in order to overcome the lingering effects of assimilation processes. A relationship based on respect and truthfulness, values that transcends cultures (Bouvier, 2001), provides a connecting bond between teacher and students without which, there is no basis for effective communication. Problems of classroom management and behaviour issues usually exist in classrooms where these values are lacking. All five NWT teachers experienced student behaviour problems early in the year and all discovered that building an atmosphere of trust, respect and honesty with some measure of student autonomy transformed their classrooms into positive learning environments.

5. Reflection, a critical component of the teacher induction process, (Moir, 1990) must be valued, encouraged and nurtured. However, even when reflection has been an integral part of a pre-service program, teachers may not fully understand or recognize its value. Through this study, the five participants told me that they valued the opportunity to talk to me as an objective person outside their school system. They also remarked that reading the notes following each of our interviews gave them an opportunity to reflect on the topics we discussed and the answers they provided and this became a valuable tool for facilitating change in their own practice. Reflection, in order to be effective then, does need to be purposeful, guided by specific questions related to practice and facilitated by an experienced educator. It also meets the need for both instructional and psychological support described by Gold (1996).

6. There is an effective four-phase teacher induction program in place that can provide the supports needed by NWT teachers if it is fully understood and implemented. The first phase, pre-orientation, is of vital importance to all beginning NWT teachers, but particularly for the majority who relocate from outside the territory. Teachers need accurate, honest information at this time and they need someone who is available to answer their questions as they arise. For two of the teachers in this research, it was a source of considerable frustration that, in their view, they were only given partial information from regional offices and they could not access someone to answer questions over the summer when they were preparing for their move. One teacher said the presentations by the recruiting

teams were “flowered up” rather than realistic in the picture they painted for prospective teachers. Another teacher found it difficult to navigate the Department of Education website and as a result was unable to locate the NWT curriculum which she had hoped to read over the summer to prepare for her teaching assignment. All five NWT teachers experienced a regional orientation, which is phase two of the induction program; however, each teacher had a different view of the effectiveness of the event. Whereas three teachers found it useful, two considered it of little value. Phase three, systematic sustained supports provided scaffolding for the teachers through the mentorship program and other options. Elements of this mentorship program were effective for the three teachers who had an assigned mentor, but they made a number of suggestions for improvement. Mentors, when possible, would be more effective if they taught at a similar grade levels and if they had NWT experience. Mentors should understand their roles and this understanding could be achieved through mentorship training. Beginning teachers, mentors and principals also need to have a common understanding of the program and the purpose of the various components. If the mentoring relationship is not working, beginning teachers should be given an opportunity to change mentors during the school year. Finally, phase four, professional development is available at school in-service sessions, regional workshops and territorial conferences. The beginning teachers had differing opinions on the value of these opportunities but it was suggested that customized professional development was the most effective since beginning teachers had very specific areas of concern.

*The implications that presented themselves through this study have some parallels with my own induction experiences. First, I believe my parents' ability to live comfortably and respectfully as part of a minority in both Ireland and Canada, and their ability to adapt to a new culture and environment as immigrants, influenced my way of looking at the world. Second, the positive orientation and continued support of my husband helped me keep the best possible spin on any challenge that came my way during that first year in Baker Lake. He was always positive about all aspects of the North – the people, the students, the culture and history, the environment and all it had to offer. He was also interested in innovative approaches to education and totally committed to local control of education.*

*With such support, I built on the knowledge and skills acquired through my teacher education and, through trial and error, searched for the best ways to facilitate student learning. I began to discover that my students could develop new skills through familiar contexts and that language learning needed to be integral to every lesson. I discovered that it was necessary to have confidence in my own identity as a teacher before I could develop my own teaching style. I learned to be more flexible and accepting in order to be most effective in the classroom. I still had a great deal to learn, but a positive experience was imprinted during that first year and the excitement and anticipation engendered then continued well into the future.*

## Summary

These implications may help improve an effective induction program where the school administration ensures that the necessary supports are in place. Ideally, a mentor who is carefully chosen and well prepared can assume most aspects of induction; however, the preparation of mentors is critical to the success of the program. Mentors must ensure that they understand the process of induction and are prepared to use a variety of supports to scaffold the beginning teacher through this very vital period.

These implications connect with Gordon's (1991) six environmental difficulties experienced by teachers which, he suggested, might lead to teachers leaving the profession. It is hoped that instead, teachers will receive the support they need as they develop their sense of identity as NWT teachers who are well prepared to meet the diverse needs of NWT children.

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## **Appendix A**

### **Interview Questions**

#### **Interview One**

1. Please describe your background, history and education.
2. Why did you choose teaching as career?
3. Why did you decide to teach in your present community?
4. Please describe the setting – community, school, culture, region
5. How did you prepare personally to teach in your community? How did you prepare professionally to teach in your community? How did you prepare culturally to teach in your community?
6. What lessons have you learned so far?
7. What supports are you receiving?
8. What additional supports would be helpful?
9. What advice would you give to teachers who are thinking of coming to the NWT?

#### **Interview Two**

1. Please think back about your original motivation for becoming a teacher. Has this motivation affected your experiences so far this year? Has your motivation changed? How?
2. Has your view of the profession changed since the fall?
3. Has your view of the community changed since your first impressions in the fall? Has your view of the community culture changed?

4. Have you changed your teaching style/strategies since the fall? Have you changed your academic and behaviour expectations for your students?
5. Have your personal and professional priorities changed since the fall? How?
6. If you were recruiting teachers for next year for your community, how would you approach it? What specific information would you give to prospective teachers?
7. If you could have some time off for professional development, what areas would you pursue? In what order of priority?
8. How are your students' values and beliefs different from yours? Are there ways that teaches can adjust to work with different student values and beliefs?
9. What supports have you received since the fall? What supports do you wish you could receive?
10. As beginning teachers, we often hope to "change the world". If this is not possible in your first year of teaching, what are some realistic, manageable and achievable expectations for your first year?
11. If you could start the year again, would you do things differently?
12. Have you discovered ways of teaching which build on your students' knowledge and experience?
13. How can you develop a respectful relationship with your students, the school staff, the community?
14. How have you adjusted to cultural differences in your community?
15. What is meant by "Strong like two people" or "seeing with two pairs of eyes" and how does it apply to teachers, students, parents in a cross-cultural environment?

16. Have you found ways to adjust personally to the realities of your community? Ie.  
Isolation, housing, high cost, few amenities, etc.
17. Have you discovered ways of balancing your professional and personal life?

### **Interview Three**

1. Describe your pre-service training. How did it prepare you for your first year of teaching?
2. What were the most valuable things you learned in your teacher training that helped you with your assignment this year?
3. What did you learn that was most useful to you through in-service or mentoring this year? What would you like to have learned through in-service?
4. What were the most valuable lessons you learned through experience?
5. What do you think is meant by teacher identity?
6. Do you think that your own sense of identity changed this year?
7. It has been said that teachers must integrate their professional training with their own personality and teaching style to apply them to the teaching context. What does that mean to you?
8. Did you have a clear sense of your role in the school this year?
9. Did you use the teaching strategies you learned at university or did you revert to teaching the way you were taught?
10. Did you experience the stages of Teacher induction?
11. What approaches to classroom management were the most effective for you this year? How did you learn this?



12. What are the most important characteristics or qualities of a teacher, in your view?
13. What are the qualities in a teacher that appeal to students and motivate them to learn?
14. What is meant by "Relationship is at the heart of teaching?"
15. Cummins says all education is social and political. What does this mean?
16. Should cultural awareness be a requirement of teacher education?
17. What are the greatest adjustments you made this year? (personally, professionally, culturally)
18. What have been the greatest rewards this year?
19. What were the greatest challenges this year?
20. What would it take to improve teacher retention in your community?
21. Would you recommend that first year teachers be hired in your community?
22. What are your plans for next year?

## **Appendix B Ethics Approval**



**UNIVERSITY OF SASKATCHEWAN  
BEHAVIOURAL RESEARCH ETHICS BOARD**

<http://www.usask.ca/research/ethics.shtml>

**NAME:** Angela Ward (Muriel Tolley)  
Department of Curriculum Studies

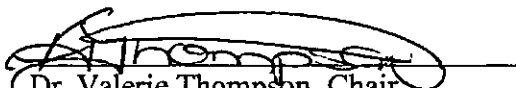
**BSC#:** 2001-160

**DATE:** May 28, 2003

The Behavioural Research Ethics Board has reviewed the revisions to the Application for Ethics Approval for your study "Teacher Induction in the Northwest Territories" (2001-160).

1. Your study was APPROVED on September 27, 2001.
2. Any significant changes to your proposed method, or your consent and recruitment procedures should be reported to the Chair for Committee consideration in advance of its implementation.
3. The term of this approval is for 5 years.
4. This approval is valid for five years on the condition that a status report form is submitted annually to the Chair of the Committee. This certificate will automatically be invalidated if a status report form is not received within one month of the anniversary date. Please refer to the website for further instructions: <http://www.usask.ca/research/behavrsc.shtml>

I wish you a successful and informative study.

  
Dr. Valerie Thompson, Chair  
University of Saskatchewan  
Behavioural Research Ethics Board

VT/ck