

**INFORMAL LEARNING THROUGH PARTICIPATION IN FRANSASKOIS
COMMUNITY-BASED GOVERNANCE**

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Valerie Catherine De Pauw, candidate for the degree of Master of Adult Education, has presented a thesis titled, ***Informal Learning Through Participation in Fransaskois Community-Based Governance***, in an oral examination held on December 13, 2012. The following committee members have found the thesis acceptable in form and content, and that the candidate demonstrated satisfactory knowledge of the subject material.

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Abstract

This research is a study of deputies' informal learning content and processes and how they see their learning applied to the benefit of the Fransaskois (French-speakers from Saskatchewan) community. Participants were volunteer deputies in the Assemblée Communautaire Fransaskoise (ACF), a francophone community-based governance organization in Saskatchewan. In the ACF, community members are elected to serve as "deputies", representatives who make decisions regarding initiatives and allocation of funds. Interviews with eight deputies were conducted using semi-structured interviews and resulting data were analyzed using thematic analysis. Participation in the ACF resulted in informal learning on the job or 'sur le tas'. Deputies learned to define their multiple roles and negotiate the system. In this way, they were able to become better decision-makers and increase the Fransaskois community's political capital.

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Dedication

To my mom and Marilyn. Thanks for keeping me going.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

This research explores informal learning by volunteers participating in the Assemblée Communautaire Fransaskoise (ACF), a francophone community-based governance organization in Saskatchewan. The ACF is an example of minority language community-based organization governed by a body of community representatives called “deputies”. The focus of this study is to explore the deputies’ informal learning content and processes and how they see their learning applied to the benefit of the Fransaskois (French-speakers from Saskatchewan) community. This study began as an interview with a colleague to learn more about the francophone community in Saskatchewan. My experience as a Franco-colombienne (French-speaker from British Columbia) growing up within a small Belgian community contributed to my interest in francophone community-based organizations and the minority Fransaskois experience. My interlocutor described her volunteering as a deputy in the ACF as a transformative and positive learning experience. Her story inspired my examination of deputies’ informal learning through participation in the ACF. For this research, I interviewed eight deputies using semi-structured interviews. In order to learn about the experiences and situations in which informal learning occurs, I employed a combination of open-ended and behavioural descriptive questions. To analyze the data I used thematic analysis (Boyatzis, 1998; Creswell, 2009), an approach that allows deconstruction of data through the use of thematic coding.

With experience, and by participating in community governance, people can gain political skills “that help them efficaciously contribute to social change” (Fischer, 2006,

p. 21). Minority language communities like the Fransaskois community face a double challenge of building community capital and preserving language and identity (Landry, 2005). Many western Canadian francophones fear of loss of culture through assimilation or other means. Recognizing and capitalizing on learning spaces like the ACF in francophone communities can mitigate that fear and strengthen the community.

As governments shift to devolution, decentralization and community engagement, research focusing on learning in community governance is gaining importance (Blake, Diamond, Foot, Gidley, Mayo, Shukra & Yarnit, 2008). As a result, learning through participation in community governance has emerged as a topic of inquiry in both the adult education and community development literature. According to Blake et al. (2008), communities are increasingly responsible for service provision and other public decisions. In her study of learning through participation in community-based organizations, Merrifield (2001) found that participation “provides experiences from which citizenship knowledge, abilities and dispositions are learned” (p. 9). Discovering what participants learn on their own can reveal any gaps in workshops and courses provided or mandated by the organization.

Context: The Assemblée Communautaire Fransaskoise

In a province where the rallying cry was “Une langue, une école, un drapeau”¹, or in other words the English language, English schools and the English flag, the desire to

¹ ‘One language, one school, one flag’ Source: Société historique de la Saskatchewan: Musée virtuel francophone de la Saskatchewan: Association interprovinciale.

validate the French language in Saskatchewan and thus Fransaskois identity inspired the creation, in 1917, of an association of school superintendents mandated to demand and protect francophone rights in Saskatchewan (Boulay, 1998). The association's purpose has evolved over the course of its history from solely protecting French language rights to promoting French language community development initiatives in a wide range of areas including arts, culture and communication. In 1999, the Association Catholique Franco-Canadienne de la Saskatchewan (ACFC) became the Assemblée Communautaire Fransaskoise (ACF) and adopted representative governance for decision-making. The change came about "to promote dialogue, cooperation and collaboration in the community" (Role & Responsibilities, 2006, p. 3). To correct the conflicts of interest and lack of transparency that had become the norm in the former organization, the ACF restructured. Today, it focuses on institutional completeness, which is "the ability of a community to have a complete infrastructure of services in every sector of activity that affects its development" (Deputy Handbook, 2008, p. 5). The ACF also prioritizes synergy in the Fransaskois community by working in partnership with a network and in conjunction with other community organizations. According to the organization's website, the ACF is a not for profit, non-governmental organization funded through the provincial and federal governments. They distribute funds to the Fransaskois community through a proposal process to contribute to Fransaskois community development.

The ACF website explains that the *assemblée des députés communautaires*² is made up of 15 deputies and a president who meet at least three times per year (Statuts & Règlements,

² The Assembly of Community Deputies

Article 12, Séances). Using representative governance, each of 12 districts elects a “député” who serves for a period of two years. In the Prince Albert, Saskatoon and Regina districts, two representatives are elected. According to Article 12 in the *Statuts et Réglements*, deputies come together to hear proposals, plans and problems from the community, and to make decisions. They are the governing body of the ACF, and they hold all authority. The ACF’s representative governance model depends on active participation from its elected deputies. The Roles and Responsibilities Manual explicitly gives suggestions as to what deputies can do to become more involved in the organization and in their communities. Deputies are expected to be organizational as well as community leaders. According to the ACF’s community development plan, the qualities of a Fransaskois community leader include integrity, open-mindedness, respect, transparent cooperation and competent, effective resource management. A Fransaskois leader should also adhere to the vision, mission, mandate, values, strategic goals and objectives of the Fransaskois community as embodied by the ACF. In addition to their participation in the *assemblée* and community events, each deputy is assigned a sector, or dossier, to work in: arts, culture and heritage, communications, economy, education, home and spirituality, law and politics, health, immigration and sports and leisure. Currently, the ACF is negotiating a code of ethics with other Saskatchewan-based francophone organizations in order to build a coalition that represents all Fransaskois.

Deputies are accountable not only to the districts that represent them but also to the ACF and the wider Fransaskois community. They are expected to be active community leaders

as well as specialists in their assigned sector of community development. To achieve institutional completeness, a synergy of Fransaskois services and community development initiatives, the ACF uses representative governance where community leaders are responsible for decision-making. Examining participation and learning by community members in community governance initiatives such as the ACF is a growing focus and point of intersection in the community development and adult education literatures. In this qualitative research study I explore deputies' informal learning through their participation as community member volunteers in the ACF. Discovering what and how deputies learn "on the job" and how they see their learning applied to the benefit of the Fransaskois community may increase understanding of the role community governance can play in the survival of minority language communities, particularly francophone communities.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

This chapter will review literature drawn from the fields of adult education and community development. The topics addressed include informal learning in community governance, community governance in a minority language context, building political capital through participation in community governance and learning citizenship and leadership. In order to explore what and how deputies learn by participating in the ACF, examining the literature related to informal learning in the context of community governance is important. Examining what is at play for minority language communities in the greater Canadian context and the challenges face is also relevant to this study as it centers on Fransaskois community governance. Building political capital is important for communities who need to work with other groups and those in power in order to access resources. As a result of participating in community-based governance, community members learn citizenship and leadership.

Informal Learning in Community Governance

Theories of adult learning focus on the learning capacities of adults outside standard teacher-directed classroom settings. Malcolm Knowles' (1970) individual self-directed learning and Paolo Freire's (1970) reflections on his initiatives in collective learning through dialogue are two early examples exploring how adults learn outside standard classrooms. Interest in informal learning increased as the terms "knowledge economy" and "lifelong learning" gained popularity and significance; however informal learning remains an understudied area. The literature of public participation also reflects a

growing interest in informal learning, though Schgurensky (2000) notes that further study is required.

Informal learning is “embedded in routine and found in the values, attitudes, behaviors, skills, etc. that occur during everyday life” (Tough, 2002, p. 73). Schgurensky (2000) and Livingstone (2012) also differentiate between informal learning embedded in routine and informal learning that is self-directed. Schgurensky (2000) claims that informal learning is mainly experiential and social and identifies three types of informal learning: self-directed, incidental and socialization. Self-directed learning is a type of informal learning that is consciously undertaken with a specific goal in mind. The context of self-directed learning is relevant to whether it is consciously undertaken and therefore recognized as learning. When it happens as “‘part of the job’, or a mechanism for ‘doing the job properly’, [it is] rendered invisible as ‘learning’” though it is consciously undertaken (Boud & Middleton, 2003, p. 195). Boud and Middleton (2003) examined the “couplings” or links between people in organizational learning networks by observing work groups in an organization over a period of three years. “Tightly ‘coupled’ networks resulted in close transmission of knowledge between members” (Boud & Middleton, 2003, p. 200). Marsick and Watkins (1990) also focused on informal learning in organizations. They characterize incidental learning as not always conscious learning:

Informal learning, a category that includes incidental learning, may occur in institutions, but it is not typically classroom-based or highly structured, and control of learning rests primarily in the hands of the learner. Incidental learning is defined as a byproduct of some other activity, such as task accomplishment, interpersonal interaction, sensing the organizational culture, trial-and-error experimentation, or even formal learning. Informal learning can be deliberately

encouraged by an organization or it can take place despite an environment not highly conducive to learning. Incidental learning, on the other hand, almost always takes place although people are not always conscious of it (Marsick & Watkins, 1990, p. 12).

Whether informal learning is consciously or unconsciously undertaken as self-directed or incidental learning depends on the context in which it happens. Self-directed learning may not be recognized as learning if it occurs as a byproduct of doing a job “properly,” for example. One of the most extensive international studies of skill formation at paid work concludes that learning-by-doing, while the most prevalent kind of work learning is also the most invisible and the least documented (OECD, 1993 as cited in Livingstone, 2012).

Tough’s (2002) early case studies found that well over two-thirds of most adults’ intentional learning efforts occurred completely outside institutionalized adult education programs. These case studies have been corroborated by other researchers such as Livingstone (2012), who found that virtually all adults are regularly involved in deliberate, self-directed learning projects beyond school and training programs. “Informal learning remains much more extensive [than formal learning] and may also have increased. Such evidence suggests that increasing appeals to the labour force to engage more intently in ‘lifelong learning’ are quite redundant.” (Livingstone, 2012, p. 410). In discussing his research, Tough (2002) concluded that most learning people do is self-directed, however “people just don’t seem to be aware of their own learning” (p. 1). He noted that in many of his studies, participants ended interviews by thanking him for having them reflect critically on their learning. Presently, the average amount of time

devoted to informal learning activities by all Canadian adults in four areas (employment, community, household, and general interest) in the 2010 survey of Work and Lifelong Learning (WALL) is 15 hours per week (Livingstone, 2012).

In their study of informal learning in a Toronto-based community governance model called the Seniors' Task Force, Schgurensky & Myers (2008) noted that learning was largely unintentional and unconscious because participants did not see the group as an opportunity for "learning" (as cited in Church, Bascia & Shragge, 2008). As Tough (2002) also found, critical reflection as a consequence of the interview process increased participants' awareness of their learning.

Social action, meaning visible demonstrations and initiatives that build awareness and empower communities, was popular in the 1960s and is regaining popularity today with, for example, the Occupy Movement. Today, however, the most common form of community development is through community-based organizations (Shragge, 2003). Fisher and Shragge (2000) differentiate community development and social action organizing "with the passing of time and shifts in the international political-economy ... community-based organizations create practices that blend with and succumb to the wider neo-liberal context" (p. 2). While they blend with the wider social context, community-based organizations empower communities within this context, especially when engaged in governance practices. "Community development believes in democratic participation by people to find solutions to issues and problems, but this is done within boundaries shaped by power relations..." (Shragge, 2003, p. 109). Community

organizations work to effect change by negotiating between community interests and those of a wider society. “Community governance institute[s] reason-based decision making and [empowers] ... [tying] action to discussion” (Fung & Wright, 2001, p. 7).

Community governance is a way to decentralize democracy and engage the community in decision-making about policy and service provision. Fung and Wright (2001)

characterize participative governance as interested in deepening the ways in which ordinary people can effectively participate in and influence policies that affect their lives.

According to Taylor (2007), “the context for community action has ... changed, with more opportunities to influence the system from within and to take control of services and policy initiatives” (p. 333).

Community-based organizations have adapted to the current context by changing their service delivery priorities and responding to the state’s need for cheap, equitable and efficient services. Opportunities for participation in community governance are increasing in the present shift to devolution, decentralization and community engagement. Community organizations that use participatory decision-making, such as the ACF, empower community leaders and develop the community’s capacity to take action.

Many community-based organizations work in parallel rather than in unison, developing similar, competing initiatives rather than initiatives that complement each other (Taylor, 2007). To replace parallel action with unified decision-making in community development, formalized organizations are needed (Caniglia & Carmin as cited in Taylor, 2007). This resembles the ACF’s goal of synergy in the Fransaskois community. To have

agency, mobilize and relate to external actors “organizations should strive to act as incubators of talent and collectors, disseminators of critical information” (p. 336).

Participation in democracy on a smaller scale can offer a safe environment in which to engage with trusted peers in order to gain skills, confidence and awareness necessary to act in a wider arena (Hamilton, 1992). Participation promotes a willingness and desire to understand rights and to have needs met. Creasy, Gavelin and Potter (2008) identify a number of reasons for supporting public participation in governance at the local level, from securing meaningful interactions between different groups, to empowering and building the capacity of particular individuals to become involved in local decision-making, or making local public services more transparent. Synergies created between the state and society through participatory reforms in local government “allow for a continuous and dynamic process of learning” (Heller, as cited in Gaventa, 2004, p. 33).

Participation in governance empowers community members as it offers them an opportunity to act as citizens: to make decisions, experiment with voice, take part in democracy and learn about political power and process. In an organizational context, characteristics linked to the potential for member empowerment include task focus, inclusive decision-making, participatory rewards, and mechanisms that foster inter-group cooperation (Maton, 2008). Many organizations increasingly use non-formal education such as courses, workshops and talks to raise awareness among volunteers and encourage participation (Levkoe, 2006). Formal education is when students follow a course of study at a recognized institution. “The term nonformal education has been used most often to describe organized learning outside the formal educational system.” (Merriam, Caffarella

& Baumgartner, 2012, p. 30). Nonformal learning can usually be found in local and community settings such as community-based organizations. The ACF, for example, has a deputy weekend where volunteers get to know each other and familiarize themselves with issues affecting the Fransaskois community.

Community Governance in a Minority Language Context

Linguistic minorities, by engaging community members and being seen to represent a cohesive community, can influence policy and service initiatives. The Canadian government has shifted from a language of multiculturalism “which reflected cultural retention and tolerance to that of ‘diversity and inclusive society’” (Frideres, 2005, p. 2). Gagnon and Iacovino (2005) believe the focus of multiculturalism is to incorporate newcomers into the larger political community with the aim of creating ‘a common public culture’ (as cited in Frideres, 2005, p. 3). Where multiculturalism once embraced cultural retention and tolerance by encouraging newcomers to participate in a greater ‘Canadian’ culture, the current language of inclusion and diversity embraces difference and pluralism and recognizes communities based on language and culture. French-Canadian identity in Quebec has given way to a unique Québécois identity. This has also led francophones outside Quebec to regionalize their identities. They have become Franco-Ontariens, Franco-Manitobains, Fransaskois, and so on. Landry (2005) believes that this fragmentation in identity “has led to isolation of francophone and Acadian communities that threatens their survival” (p. 80).

Minority francophone communities in Canada face considerable challenges to their

survival. One challenge beyond most communities' control is the influence of English. The more frequent and intense contacts with the linguistic majority, the more socially attractive the majority becomes. Landry (2005) referred to ignorance of this attraction to the majority language culture as "social naïveté" or the absence of 'social conscience'. Social naïveté manifests itself in two ways. The first way is as unawareness of social forces that contribute to subtractive bilingualism (when a second language replaces a first language). For example, minority language parents believe that educating children half the time in French and half in English will ensure bilingualism in their children when in fact English will dominate. The second way is as unawareness of the collective consequences of individual actions. For example, due to the fact that many minority francophones are bilingual, they accept the lack of public services in their language "without realizing that when this attitude is widespread, the French language becomes redundant" (Landry, 2005, p. 79). Social conscience can be enhanced by building awareness of factors affecting survival of minority francophone communities. Participation in the ACF as a deputy may increase social conscience in the Fransaskois community.

Participation in Community Governance: Building Political Capital

Developing a community's assets or "capacity building" is a way to improve a community's strength and to change members' roles from spectators to decision-makers (Schgurensky, 2009). The term "capacity building" refers to organizations or individuals developing skills and abilities to take action and lead communities through activities,

resources and support (Green & Haines, 2011). Capacity building represents an investment in capital (social, natural, cultural, physical or built, financial, human or political) and helps people find their voice as well as improving their ability and inclination to participate as active and engaged citizens across an array of different resources or capital (Greene & Haines, 2011). Investment in capital results in greater returns on the quality of community life (Greene & Haines, 2011). Individual and organizational capacity is built through community member participation in community groups, organizations and networks. Participation in community governance, like the ACF, is an investment in social as well as political capital.

In answering the question ‘why is public participation in community governance important?’, Schgurensky (2009) identifies how participation builds capacity.

Premièrement, parce que les questions traitées [au niveau communautaire] affectent la vie quotidienne des citoyens de façon directe. Deuxièmement, parce que c’est dans de plus petites unités de gouvernance que les personnes ordinaires ont le plus de chance d’être entendues et élues par leurs pairs pour servir dans des organisations gouvernantes. Troisièmement, parce qu’on ne peut apprendre comment s’exerce le pouvoir politique à une large échelle que si l’on a d’abord pratiqué le gouvernement populaire à une échelle plus limitée. (p. 23)³

Participation in governance offers community members an opportunity to become active citizens by taking part in decisions that directly affect their lives and, in the ACF’s case, directly affects the lives of the people in their district. These decisions are made in a small scale setting in which community leaders can engage with peers and gain

³ “Firstly, because the questions dealt with at [the community level] directly affects citizens’ daily lives. Secondly, because it is in smaller units of governance that ordinary people have the most opportunity to be heard and elected by their peers to serve in governing organizations. Thirdly, because one can learn how political power is exercised on a large scale through practice of popular government on a more limited scale.”

confidence to transfer the skills they learn to negotiate in a wider arena. “By... being involved in democratic practices, participants are able to directly experience, practice, and learn democracy” (Schgurensky, as cited in Levkoe, 2006, p. 95). Participation in community governance by community leaders results in a citizenry who understands and negotiates the system and is likely to seek opportunities for dialogue with each other and people in power positions, characteristics which are indicators of political capital.

Political capital as defined by Schgurensky (2000) is “the capacity for self-governance and for influencing political decisions” (p. 2). Communities with strong political capital are able to negotiate, put forward proposals and ideas effectively to people in power, mobilize community and resources and present a unified front. Flora (2008) identified seven indicators of increased political capital throughout her study: (i) organized groups working together, (ii) local people knowing and feeling comfortable around powerful people (iii) local concerns becoming part of the decision-makers’ agenda, (iv) a group’s power to disrupt or stop something from happening, (v) less group exclusion through increase of social capital, (vi) identifying allies that share a group’s vision, and (vii) increase in power of negotiation (p. 41).

Learning Citizenship and Leadership

Citizenship is a variable term without a universal definition. Merrifield (2001) sees it as taking part in decisions that affect people’s lives. She identifies a citizenship framework defining what citizens need to know to act rather than defining a “good” citizen. Three citizen attributes contribute to their capacity to act: knowledge, abilities and dispositions.

To make judgments, participate and have their voice heard, citizens need knowledge that includes an understanding of how government works, citizen rights, power and how to have an impact. To engage with others and deliberate, citizens need particular abilities such as an ability to negotiate and compromise, influence others, exercise leadership, communicate and collaborate. Finally, citizens' dispositions direct their knowledge and abilities. "Citizens need a 'democratic disposition' that includes valuing others... and speaking out against ordinary injustices" (Rosenblum, as cited in Merrifield, 2001, p. 6).

The Seniors' Task Force case study illustrates that participation in community governance can lead to learning citizenship (Schgurensky & Myers, 2000). In another example, Nesbit, Leach and Foley (2004) examined informal learning in an environmental campaign undertaken by a group of Australian residents. The authors found that as result of participating in the campaign, its members reported an increased understanding of the system and how government works. "The experience of the campaign challenged and significantly altered the campaigners' understanding of the world" (Nesbit, Leach & Foley, 2004, p. 78). Their understanding of government as infused with social interests and power relations changed their perception of themselves and the effects of their work. They experienced what Foley (1999) describes as "informal learning in social action" (p. 4). When community members become decision makers by participating in local initiatives they build capacity and confidence to act. Participation in collaborative, democratic governance promotes an understanding of democracy, citizenship and the system in community leaders.

Exploring leadership theory can help develop an understanding of community leader's roles while operating in organizational, governance, volunteer and collaborative context, such as that of the deputies of the ACF. The study of leadership has evolved from examining leadership traits and the behaviours of effective leaders to looking at the type of context that facilitates effective leadership (Horner, 1997). In an organizational context, an effective leader appears to be a person who can effectively manage culture and motivate and empower followers. Kirk and Shutte (2004) define leadership as process and they emphasize role relatedness. This definition is apt here because deputies have multiple roles as community leaders. Though no one reports directly to deputies they are still accountable to themselves, their district, the Fransaskois community, the ACF and the province. As volunteers, however, they still work with the challenges, opportunities, risks and constraints of the organization and the community. "Partners expect [leaders] to represent the partnership to the community, and communities expect them to represent their interests to the partnership" (Taylor, 2007, p. 342). Taylor's statement is an accurate depiction of the tensions that may be present in the deputies' multiple roles. Social change leadership theory (SCLT) provides an appropriate description of leadership in community governance and organizations like the ACF because it "focuses on the concepts of change, collaboration, and civic responsibility" (Crawford, Brungardt, & Maughan, 2005, p. 111). Social change leaders are followers who seek to make improvements and correct discrepancies between what is and what ought to be.

Chapter Summary

The majority of adults engage in informal learning without being aware they are actually learning. When participants are asked about their learning, it often comes as a revelation. Informal learning is often invisible as learning, and in an organizational context, it is “part of the job.” In the research examples I have cited, participation in community governance allows community leaders to develop an understanding of democracy, citizenship and how systems work. Community leaders build capacity and confidence to act, thus contributing to the community’s political capital. In a minority language context, experiences that encourage self-determination and build social conscience can affect a community’s survival. The ACF is an example of minority language community governance in Saskatchewan. This community-based organization is governed by a body of community representatives called deputies. With experience and by participating in community governance, volunteers can gain political skills “that help them efficaciously contribute to social change” (Fischer, 2006, p. 21). Minority language communities like the Fransaskois community face a double challenge of building community capital and preserving language and identity (Landry, 2005). Many western Canadian francophones fear of loss of culture through assimilation or other means. Recognizing and capitalizing on learning spaces like the ACF in francophone communities can mitigate that fear. Participation in community governance provides a space for ordinary community members to become active decision-makers. Examining the informal learning literature in the context of community governance and the literature on participation in community

governance is important to understanding how and what deputies learn through their participation the ACF.

Chapter 3: Inquiry Paradigm and Methodology

This chapter presents the methodology of my qualitative research study. I describe the methods I used to select participants and collect data. I follow with a description of how I proceeded to analyze my data and the criteria I used to establish my data's trustworthiness. In this qualitative research study of deputies' informal learning through their participation in the ACF, I explore what and how deputies learn "on the job" and how they see their learning applied to the benefit of the Fransaskois community. Eight participants were interviewed twice using semi-structured interviews. Interviews were then transcribed and analyzed using thematic analysis (Boyatzis, 1998; Creswell, 2009). In this chapter I describe my rationale for qualitative research and my methods. The description of my methods includes participant selection, data collection and data analysis. The chapter concludes with an examination of the trustworthiness of my data.

Rationale for Qualitative Inquiry

Qualitative inquiry is based on the idea that reality is socially constructed and subjective (Merriam, 2009). Kant argued that "humans cannot know the world 'in itself'...we can only know what the world is like for us as humans.... Our cultural context of personal experience may influence how things appear to us" (Van Rensburg, 2001, p. 8).

Qualitative researchers believe that few things are trivial and that multiple sources have the potential to illuminate our understanding of a particular phenomenon. Qualitative inquiry is descriptive and interpretative. Its aim is to understand experiences from a certain time and context from the teller's perspective. As Denzin (2011) points out, "we

study the way people represent their experiences to themselves and to others. Experience can be represented in multiple ways including... stories...” (p. 415). Choosing between the different ways of ‘doing’ qualitative research represents a challenge for new researchers. In the end I wanted to achieve Merriam’s (2009) interpretation of interviewing. Through detailed interviewing, participant observations and rich descriptions of the social world, qualitative researchers seek the participant’s perspective and try to capture his or her point of view (Merriam, 2009). Researchers want to understand the processes by which different people make sense of different or similar events. They do not attempt to generalize, predict or model research results. Data is collected in a natural setting with the researcher as a key instrument. Qualitative researchers recognize that their interpretation of data is not objective, that the researcher is an instrument of data collection subject to his worldview, a basic set of beliefs or assumptions. These assumptions are related to the nature of reality (ontology), the relationship of the researcher to what is researched (epistemology), the role of values in a study (axiology), and the research process (methodology) (Creswell, 2009). Qualitative researchers try to approach their studies with an awareness of their own worldview.

Description of Methods

Participant Selection

As the decision-makers for the ACF I invited all the deputies in the province to participate in my study. Once I received ethics approval from the University of Regina Ethics Approval Board (see *Appendix C*) I sent information letters out explaining the

nature of the inquiry and invited each deputy to participate. I also included a letter of consent (*see Appendix B*). I followed up with an email and a phone call to confirm receipt of the letter. As the deputies are spread out across the province, potentially affecting their decision to participate, I let them know at the outset that I would travel to interview those who agreed to participate.

Of the fifteen potential participants, eight agreed to participate. Due to ethical considerations with regard to ensuring anonymity and confidentiality I cannot describe the demographics of the participants in my inquiry in detail. However, both males and females were represented in the sample and resided in both rural and urban settings across Saskatchewan. The data was collected by asking open-ended questions in semi-structured interviews using an interview guide I had prepared and shared with participants before the interviews took place. I interviewed each participant twice. Participants were asked to choose a date, time and location for the first interviews and the second interviews were conducted by phone. All interviews were conducted in the deputies' working language, French. The first set of interviews occurred in person, either in the participant's home or in another appropriate location. The first interviews were in person in order to immerse myself in the data and gain participants' trust. As the deputies who volunteered to participate were from districts across the province, I traveled to interview participants in their communities. All the interviews except for one, due to equipment-related problems, were recorded using a digital portable recorder. For that one interview, I relied on extensive note taking. The second interviews were conducted by

phone as they took place in the winter when travel in Saskatchewan becomes more weather dependent. The second set of interviews was conducted through “Skype” using a call recording function.

Participants consistently communicated a concern that their identities be kept confidential and anonymous. I continued to reassure each participant of their confidentiality and anonymity throughout each interview. This concern may arise from the size of the Fransaskois community, which, though widespread, is quite small. Since each deputy represents a different community development sector or district, identification can be that much easier through the stories they told me as well as interpretation of their statements. Concern about being identified may limit the stories participants share. A degree of trust and familiarity with the community as well as flexibility in scheduling and mindfulness of the deputies’ physical and emotional comfort also helped alleviate concerns during the interview process.

Data Collection

To collect my data, I held semi-structured interviews with eight participants. Semi-structured interviews are in-depth explorations of lived experience which allow participants to share their stories by stimulating free and extensive description in their own words (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). At the root of in-depth interviewing is an interest in understanding the experiences of other people and the meaning they make of their experiences (Seidman, 2006). These types of interviews are usually guided by a set of issues relevant to the topic under study, as well as spontaneous questions that allow the

researcher to pursue information in whatever direction seems to be the most appropriate (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). As part of a qualitative interview process, these types of interviews encourage interviewees to share rich descriptions of their experiences. In addition, I used behavioural descriptive questions, or questions commonly used to elicit descriptions of situations. Eliciting rich and spontaneous description involves translating research questions into a colloquial form (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). There should be a focus on “what” questions, however, “why” and “how” questions can be used in moderation (Kvale, 2009). Holstein and Gubrium (2005) observe that specifying *whats* into *wheres* and *whens*, the places and times of learning, and relating these specifics to *how* and *what* learning is acquired, provides stakeholders with distinct bases for action.

While collecting data I used an interview guide to be consistent in the questions I asked during interviews. My goal was to hear stories of their participation as deputies in the ACF. However, the interview guide I had prepared asked participants specifically about learning experiences such as describing a time when learning took place. I had not taken into account the challenge of inquiring into informal learning and after my first interview I reconsidered how to go about my data collection. For example, during my first interview, when asked directly about a time when learning had occurred, the participant denied any learning had occurred. As a result, I revised my way of asking questions in order to elicit descriptions of experiences as a deputy rather than learning. When I asked about their perceptions of their roles and their responsibilities in the community I began to hear stories about projects or initiatives they participated in. These stories allowed me

to probe further into the skills and values learned in the context of the ACF and differentiate them from skills and values that existed prior to their appointment or election as deputies. Revising my questions and interview technique resulted in richer data as participants were encouraged to tell their stories through their experiences, facilitating the flow of information. This shift from hearing about their learning to hearing about their stories of being deputies also recast the deputies as the experts in the interview, while my early attempts had inadvertently cast myself as the “learning expert” (Hays & Singh, 2011). For the remainder of my data collection, my interview guide became just that, a guide for my interviews with participants (Appendix A). I began to ask about general participation rather than specific learning experiences to hear about unintentional, informal learning that occurred as deputies carried on with their duties and responsibilities.

Data were collected over a period of seven months as participants were interviewed twice. Interviews that were conducted in person lasted approximately one hour and interviews conducted over the phone lasted 20 minutes on average. All interviews were transcribed. Each participant received a transcript of their interview with the questions I would be asking during the second interview noted in the margin. Each in-person interview was on average 15-20 pages in length and each telephone interview averaged 8-10 pages.

Data Analysis

As my interviews were conducted in French, all interviews were transcribed then

analyzed in French. My analysis was translated into English for the purposes of this thesis. I began analyzing the transcripts immediately after the first of the first interviews. Using thematic analysis in six steps helped me manage my inquiry in a systematic way. Creswell (2009) created six generic steps for thematic analysis to guide the researcher, intending that they be blended with the specific research design. The steps are i) organizing and preparing data, ii) obtaining a general sense of data, iii) coding data by creating meaningful segments, iv) using codes to identify themes and patterns, v) discussion of themes and sub-themes and, vi) interpretation of data, using a researcher's individual understanding or that was gleaned from literature and existing theories. After each interview I would listen to and transcribe statements verbatim. Then I would code and categorize transcriptions, making note of questions for subsequent interviews. Codes have labels that typically consist of no more than two to four words (Creswell, 2009). As I went through each transcript, I identified the frequency of certain words or ideas and collapsed reoccurring codes into larger categories. I assigned a particular colour to each code according to the category they fell under as I went. For example, barriers and facilitators to informal learning were processes of informal learning and were coded in yellow and green respectively. From this process, I identified the content and processes of informal learning, what and how informal learning was taking place as deputies participated in the ACF.

The coding process completed in this study was not linear. Though my analysis moved through coding stages, my coding methods overlapped and I continued to use early

coding practices throughout the analysis. In each participant's telling of their experiences, I identified when and where "invisible" learning took place, as well as learning content and processes, in accordance with Holstein and Gubrium's (2005) observation regarding specifying the *wheres* and *whens*, the places and times of learning in order to inform *how* informal learning occurred. Codes and categories that appeared consistently in all or most interviews led to my development of themes and I constantly revisited and revised my themes as my data collection progressed. My analysis also revealed themes outside of my research question. According to Creswell (2009), there are several types of themes: ordinary themes, unexpected themes, major and minor themes. One example of an unexpected theme that emerged from my thematic analysis is generational differences. Following my coding and identification of themes, I translated themes for discussion and interpretation.

Trustworthiness

Guba and Lincoln (2005) propose four criteria to strengthen the validity of data: credibility, transferability, dependability and conformability.

Credibility

Credibility refers to the data's "truth value," establishing confidence in the "truth" of the findings (Guba & Lincoln, 2005, p. 196). The first criterion for credibility I used was prolonged engagement. Prior to beginning my interviews with participants, I tested the questions that I had formulated by conducting a pilot interview with a colleague and

former deputy of the ACF. I also conducted the interviews in French, the language of my participants, and traveled to my participants' towns to help establish trust. A second criterion for credibility I used was progressive subjectivity, which involves frequent articulation and examination of my biases or assumptions and how my understandings shift during the study to analyze how my interpretations of an interview might be affected. This is especially important in qualitative inquiry where the researcher is as much a tool of inquiry as the methods he or she uses. Being aware of the frames and lens through which I viewed my participant's words is essential to understanding the results my inquiry produces. Keeping a reflective log and conversations with my supervisor helped me to maintain an awareness of my assumptions and see beyond them to results I might otherwise not have been aware of or overlooked. I also wrote memos to myself throughout my analysis. The last criterion for credibility I used was member checking: I sent each participant his or her respective interview transcripts. My initial analysis, consisting of the main themes identified in the interview along with illustrative quotes, was also provided to participants. These measures give participants the opportunity to read and verify that my understanding respects the spirit of their statements and accurately reflects their interview.

Transferability

The second trustworthiness criterion I followed was transferability, also known as generalization. Transferability asks to what extent are findings applicable in other contexts. This is facilitated by the inclusion in the inquiry of "thick" descriptions of relevant individuals and pertinent experiences and organizational factors. This is referred

to by Guba and Lincoln (2005) as the database required for transferability judgments to be made. Thick descriptions maximize the range of information available to the researcher and readers, thereby facilitating comparisons with other contexts or participants.

The third criterion for establishing trustworthiness is dependability. This refers to how findings can be consistently replicated with the same (or similar) participants in the same (or similar) context. Following suggestions made by McNall and Foster-Fishman (2007) I kept a written audit trail of my decisions and shifts in processes. In addition, my data and categories were linked to subject identification codes in all documents.

Conformability

Finally, the last criterion of trustworthiness I used was conformability. It demonstrates how findings represent the views of participants rather than the biases, motivations, interests or perspectives of the inquirer. In order to do this, I kept a record of my collection of codes and categories, how I established the relationships between codes, the decisions I made regarding data analysis and my observations and emerging insights.

Chapter Summary

Through semi-structured interviews, participants shared stories of ACF initiatives and situations they had participated in and learned from. From my first interview, I realized I had to revise the way I asked questions and my tendency, at first, to adhere strictly to the questions I had prepared in order to elicit descriptions of experience as deputies rather

than denial of informal learning. Gaining experience as an interviewer helped my interviews flow. The stories I heard became richer with detail as my prepared questions guided rather than controlled the interviews.

Chapter 4: Analysis & Discussion of Findings

This chapter presents an analysis and discussion of the data obtained in the interviews.

Three major sections, learning content (what learning occurred as deputies participated in the ACF), learning processes (how learning occurred) and deputies' perception of their impact on the community are subdivided into themes and sub-themes. With respect to learning content, four broad themes emerged with sub-themes in each: 1) Informed and informing: the deputies' role in the community; 2) Democratic principles; 3) Leaders en herbe: cultivating political skills; and 4) Operational efficiency and funding

With respect to learning processes, five themes emerged: 1) Training; 2) Meetings; 3) One on one: peer interactions; 4) Sur le tas: learning through initiatives; and 5) Transformative learning.

Three major themes emerged with respect to perception of impact on the Fransaskois community, with sub-themes in each. These were: 1) Previous experience; 2) Motivation to volunteer; and 3) Learning barriers.

Each theme is illustrated with quotes from my data in French. They have been translated in footnotes. Following the six steps of thematic analysis (Creswell, 2009) I end this chapter with an interpretation of my main findings. In order to respect participants' wishes that their identities be kept confidential and anonymous, I did not use pseudonyms to present my findings. In quoting participants I was also mindful of removing all indicators of gender and context.

Learning Content

Informed and Informing: The Deputies' Role in the Community

The first theme that describes what deputies learned is how they understood their role in the community. As they interacted with their communities and each other, they learned to find balance between staying informed and informing both their region and the organization. An important part of their role is to represent their district in collective decision-making at a provincial level.

*On est censé représenter notre district électoral, donc interagir avec les représentants locaux de la communauté, sans vouloir imposer notre participation au niveau local, aux réunions et instances décisionnelles.*⁴

Deputies must get to know the electoral district and its players, to become engaged and aware of local issues and agendas but without trying to influence the latter. To do so, they invest a significant amount of time and emotion in creating and maintaining relationships. Building trust and representing a region is a responsibility deputies do not take lightly. *“Je suis venu à la défense de ma communauté, de ma région... c'était mon rôle en tant que député.”*⁵ The deputy's role has evolved as the ACF's scope has grown and the community has seen an increase in the number of groups and associations. *“On a un plus grand rôle de coordination à jouer qu'auparavant. Il y a beaucoup plus d'organismes et de nouveaux projets.”*⁶ Staying informed about what is happening in the community, in other organizations and in the ACF is a large part of the deputy's role.

⁴ “We're supposed to represent our electoral district, so interact with local community representatives, without imposing our participation at local meetings and decision-making.”

⁵ “I came to the defense of my community, my region... it was my role as deputy.”

⁶ “We have a bigger coordination role to play than in the past. There are a lot more organizations and new projects.”

Chacun des secteurs a un rôle à jouer dans le développement de projets. Comment coordonner ça? C'est vraiment une coordination au niveau provincial de toutes les interventions et de l'utilisation des fonds.⁷

Through participation in the ACF, deputies learn to value coordination of community development efforts among community groups. Being informed and avoiding redundancy in community initiatives contributes to creating synergy or cohesion in the Fransaskois community, which are both one of the ACF's goals and also an indicator of political capital.

Part of the process of defining their role is finding balance between multiple levels of responsibility and multiple levels of engagement. *"Il y a plusieurs niveaux de responsabilités comme député: je représente ma région mais en même temps je représente la grande communauté fransaskoise."*⁸ The deputy is a conduit, transmitting information between multiple levels and balancing multiple interests and tensions.

Activity and conflict with several groups has shaped the deputy's role: the province, the federal government, the ACF (the administration and other deputies), other NGOs and francophone community members. Deputies learn to temper local needs with provincial initiatives and vice versa.

On essaye vraiment de respecter l'autonomie et les besoins locaux et d'être accueilli par le comité local de façon à ce qu'on fasse le lien du provincial vers le local et non seulement de représenter le local lors des projets provinciaux.⁹

⁷ "Each sector has a role to play in project development. How to manage this? It's really a provincial level coordination effort of all initiatives and fund allocation."

⁸ "There are several levels of responsibility as a deputy: I represent my region but at the same time I represent the greater Fransaskois community."

⁹ "It takes a long time to learn your role, even with the training...to find a balance. We really try to respect local autonomy and needs and be welcomed by the local committee in order to make the link from the provincial to the local and not just represent the local on provincial projects."

The deputy takes into account and represents the interests of each group while sitting at decision-making tables. This means representing the community's interests to the province and the ACF and representing provincial and federal interests to the community and ACF at all levels.

Deputies are decision-makers who choose which initiatives to fund and in which direction to steer the ACF (Deputy Handbook, 2008). A deputy's position is therefore inherently political. Volunteers negotiate a position amidst tensions and misunderstanding with regards to their role in the Fransaskois community. One deputy reflects on the ACF's success and the challenges deputies face:

Notre niveau de réussite aurait été probablement plus élevé si on avait éduqué le reste du réseau associatif sur notre rôle. Ils sont toujours un peu en arrière. Ils ne savent pas tout à fait comment fonctionne l'ACF.¹⁰

Deputies described themselves in conflict with Fransaskois groups and associations due to competition for funding and lack of understanding of the ACF's mandate. As one deputy noted, "*c'est pas tout le monde qui sont d'accord avec nous*" (not everyone agrees with the ACF). Dealing with conflict is a barrier to participation that I will further discuss in the "Learning Strategies" section.

According to the deputies interviewed, an effective deputy is someone with a clearly defined role and will have an impact on the community, who gets involved and recognizes their representation of multiple interests. A deputy is also open and resourceful, a leader, a problem solver and a risk taker, someone who is present and

¹⁰ "Our success rate would have probably been higher if we had educated the rest of the associative network about our role. They're still a bit behind. They don't really know how the ACF works."

credible in their community, informed and passionate and able to work on long term projects with energy. In the words of one of the deputies:

Un député est quelqu'un qui est vraiment à son affaire, qui est patient, ne se laisse pas aller, discute. Il s'agit de plus que 'montrer sa face', il faut s'impliquer, participer et puis avoir une présence dans la communauté, avoir sa confiance et sa participation, mais aussi pouvoir se mettre la tête sur la bûche, prendre le risque et avoir la conviction et l'énergie de mener une idée au bout.¹¹

In summary, through volunteering, deputies learn what behaviours a 'good' deputy engages in and learn to define their role. Their community development experiences and interaction with the community shape the image of a constantly negotiating, participative and resourceful leader.

Democratic Principles

The second theme that describes what deputies learned is democratic principles. My data supports Merrifield (2001) that "participation in the organizations of civil society can provide experiences from which citizenship knowledge, abilities and dispositions are learned" (p. 11). Public participation encourages individuals to get involved by providing a safe environment in which to experiment with democracy and voice, promoting a willingness to navigate and desire to understand how to have their needs met. This was evident in some but not all of the conversations. Deputies learned to value other voices and how to practice good governance. According to the participants, such democratic principles allow them to act as informed citizens in a vibrant and responsible civil

¹¹ "A deputy is someone who is really on their game, who goes and talks, is patient, doesn't let themselves get walked all over, discusses. It's about more than 'showing your face,' you have to get involved, participate and have a presence in the community, have the confidence and participation of your community."

society:

*Quand tu es démocratique, tu consultes, tu négocies, tu détermènes les objections. Ça prend du temps... on a tendance à offrir des solutions qui ne sont pas nécessairement bien réfléchies. Il faut prendre du recul et le temps d'analyser les choses... apprendre comment sont les autres communautés. Elles ne sont pas tellement différentes des nôtres.*¹²

Deputies learned that a collaborative, democratic process takes time, patience and energy.

They also recognized that using resources and taking a step back before offering

“solutions” to perceived problems requires listening to other perspectives and realizing

that not everyone agrees. *“C’est pas tout le monde qui veut ce qu’on veut ... c’est pas tout*

le monde qui sont d’accord avec nous.”¹³ Deputies learned that not everyone is on the

same page as the ACF and that, in order to moderate conflict and truly work in the

community’s interest, taking the time to listen is key.

The following quotation illustrates the effort deputies make to share the ACF’s inclusive

vision with the larger community: *“On travaille avec l’ACF, on s’aide, on travaille*

ensemble mais je pense qu’ils ont une idée que c’est un organisme à part. Ça ne l’est

pas... c’est nous.”¹⁴ Inclusion is important not only for community cohesion, strength,

credibility and, ultimately, funding, but also for succession: *“C’est important qu’il y ait*

de nouveaux visages autour de la table aussi... parce qu’ils apportent souvent de

nouvelles idées.”¹⁵ Learning to value other voices and perspectives is important to the

¹² “When you are democratic, you consult, you negotiate, you determine the objections. It takes time... we have tendency to offer solutions that aren’t necessarily well thought out. You have to take a step back and time to analyze things... learn about other communities. They aren’t that much different than ours.”

¹³ “Not everyone wants what we want ... not everyone agrees with us.”

¹⁴ “We work with the ACF, we help each other, we work together but I think they have an idea that it’s a separate organism. It isn’t ...it’s us.”

¹⁵ “It’s also important to have new faces around the table...because they often bring new ideas.

survival of the francophone community by promoting inclusion and respect for other voices and ideas.

Through volunteering, deputies learned how to practice the values they hold. Having extensive experience in the Fransaskois community through work, volunteering, school and family, deputies have seen how other community organizations operate:

Il manque de la transparence, les gens manquent souvent de jugement, par exemple les gens ne viennent pas à la table ronde pour montrer que ça ne va pas. Si quelqu'un a un problème, on devrait en discuter, ensuite on peut faire quelque chose.¹⁶

Due to their experiences with other organizations in the community and the previous ACFC, deputies value democratic principles such as communication and integrity.

Though recognized as imperfect, “*c’est une œuvre en voie de construction*”¹⁷, the ACF provides a space for learning and a space for practicing standards of behaviour that is democratic and encourages equity, transparency, openness and a willingness to learn. Deputies learn to practice behaviours that encourage and promote a collaborative, democratic process. They learn informally as they act in accordance with their values.

Leaders en Herbe: Cultivating Political Skills

The third theme that describes what deputies learned is political skills. Deputies learned a number of political skills that contribute to effective community leadership. These skills are expressed as an ability to interact with stakeholders in their local communities and

¹⁶ “Transparency is missing, people often lack judgment; for example, people don't come to the round tables to show something is wrong. If someone has a problem, we should talk about it; then we can do something about it.”

¹⁷ “It’s a work in progress.”

decision-makers in government. From the data, I identified the following political skills:

1) negotiation and working the system and 2) communication (resolving conflict, listening, persuading and networking, partnerships and collaboration).

Leadership can be seen as a process of developing good interpersonal relationships through role relatedness as opposed to developing interpersonal relationships by having particular skills such as public speaking, for example (Kirk and Shutte, 2004). Role relatedness creates “distributed leadership” by pluralizing the leadership role among many connected individuals (Kirk and Shutte, 2004, p. 236). For example, the deputies’ role of social capital bridging, or networking, which is necessary to community development, exists outside the deputy. It is part of a role shared by many individuals. One part of what deputies learn is developing an understanding of their role in the community. They work with the challenges, opportunities, risks and constraints of the organization and the community. “Partners expect [leaders] to represent the partnership to the community, and communities expect them to represent their interests to the partnership” (Taylor, 2007, p. 342). The deputies provide a bridge between the community and the organization. The deputy’s leadership role in the ACF can be described as relational leadership (Drath & Murrell as cited in Uhl-Bien, 2006). This kind of leadership is generated through relational dialogue between “increasing numbers of increasingly responsible people and enhances a system’s capacity to accomplish leadership tasks at various levels of complexity” (Uhl-Bien, 2006, p. 663). Another leadership theory that describes the skills deputies learn by participating in the ACF is

social change leadership theory (SCLT). This theory “focuses on the concepts of change, collaboration, and civic responsibility” (Crawford, Brungardt, & Maughan, 2005, p. 111). Social change leaders are individuals who seek to make improvements and correct discrepancies between what is and what ought to be (Crawford, Brungardt, & Maughan, 2005). They see leadership as a collaborative social process, seek cooperation and are willing to share power. Social change leadership brings people together for collective action. Their focus is on promoting the good of the community and society and they believe in something bigger than themselves. In using a representative model of community governance that works with community members and groups to make decisions, the deputies, as community leaders, fit this description (Crawford, Brungardt, & Maughan, 2005). According to the ACF’s mission and role in the community leadership is a collaborative, social process. Their focus is to promote the synergistic development of the Fransaskois community.

Working the System

Some deputies have the opportunity to work directly with people in positions of authority and decision-makers in provincial and federal government, on province-wide initiatives that affect the larger Fransaskois community. Most of these deputies have volunteered with the ACF for five or more years and had experience in the sector they were assigned to through their career or previous volunteer positions. Supporting relational leadership theory, deputies enhance the ACF’s capacity to accomplish leadership tasks at various levels of complexity. In the context of the ACF, deputies work at different levels of

engagement: local, organizational, national (with other francophone communities) as well as with the provincial and federal governments. “*Ca m’aide à comprendre comment les choses fonctionnent avec les politiciens, surtout au niveau fédéral.*”¹⁸ Deputies learn how government works and how to negotiate the system for the benefit of the community as a whole. For example, learning where to go and how to obtain funding was part of deputies’ learning to work the system:

*Il faut aller chercher l’argent, notre direction générale était en communication avec Ottawa, qui avait un petit fond de tiroir de quelque 2 millions...on a pu aller chercher plus d’un million de dollars à la province.*¹⁹

Working in partnership was a way of learning negotiation for deputies: “*on s’est rendu compte du besoin et des avantages de travailler en partenariat.*”²⁰ Deputies learned to proactively seek out stakeholders and garner their support. “*Autour de la table, c’est des gens qui se sentent interpellés.*”²¹ Interviewed deputies spoke of experiences in which they learned “how things work” and the organization’s scope of work, in communities, in partner organizations and in government:

*Je ne savais pas autant que maintenant: tous les projets, l’envergure de cette structure culturelle et politique, les affaires qu’on gère avec le gouvernement. On établit les priorités... pas tout le monde veut ce qu’on veut, il y en a qui ne comprendront pas, qui n’accepteront pas, qui seront contre.*²²

Their stories revealed learning in how to negotiate, preparation and awareness of the human element that challenges change. Working with those who do not understand,

¹⁸ “It helps me understand how things work with politicians, especially on a federal level.”

¹⁹ “You have to go get the money. Our directorship was in communication with Ottawa, who had 2 million at the bottom of a drawer... we were able to get one million from the province.”

²⁰ “We realized the needs and the advantages of working in partnership.”

²¹ “Around the table are people who feel affected.”

²² “I didn’t know as much as I do now: all the projects, the scope of this cultural and political structure, what we manage with the government. We establish priorities.... Not everyone wants what we want, some will not understand, won’t accept or will be against.”

accept or are against an idea or project requires an understanding of the system and an ability to discuss effectively in order to reach an agreement.

Communication

Communication is included under the “learning political skills” heading because according to the participants being a good communicator is equal to being a good leader. In relational leadership, dialogue is key. For deputies, important aspects of communication are negotiation and listening in order to engage in decision-making and conflict resolution. I discuss conflict resolution further as a barrier to learning in the Learning Barriers section.

Listening

Listening was the political skill most referred to by deputies interviewed. Listening to community members through community consultation is a value deputies learned through their participation. Listening to community members is becoming more prevalent in the ACF’s practice as projects that come out of community consultations garner success and increase the ACF’s credibility. *“Plus souvent que jamais, il y a une communication au niveau de la communauté. On va rencontrer la communauté et les écouter.”*²³

One reason for increased community consultation is the past history of the organization.

Previously, projects and initiatives were mandated in a top-down approach.

On veut éviter de répéter les erreurs antérieures où tout était imposé à partir du niveau provincial vers le local. C’est les localités qui en souffraient point de vue

²³ “More than ever, there is communication at the community level. We go meet the community and listen to them.”

*finances et ressources humaines.*²⁴

One deputy described how an idea for a marketing campaign came from speaking with community members about the challenges facing their levels of participation.

*[Le projet] a été conçu à partir des besoins des gens de nos petites communautés. Ils nous disaient, 'la participation à nos activités baisse, on a de moins en moins de bénévoles, nos gens sont de moins en moins fiers. Qu'est ce qu'on peut faire pour changer ça?'*²⁵

Ideas that come from the provincial level are sometimes met with incomprehension and resistance as people feel devalued and the work they have done in their regions ignored. Those initiatives described to me as most successful came from taking time to listen to the community.

Persuading

Deputies also learn how to communicate in order to bring about change in the community. Not all initiatives come from community consultation and some projects fail. In the case of one failed initiative where community resources were undervalued or ignored, one deputy describes what they learned as a result:

*On s'était mal pris, on n'avait pas préparé les gens de la région. [Maintenant] ils font plus d'études et de recherche pour présenter une idée de façon à ce que les gens puissent en voir le profit.*²⁶

While listening to community members is important, equally valuable is learning how to communicate with community members. “*C'est une question de prendre le temps, de*

²⁴ “We want to avoid repeating the errors of the past where everything was imposed from a provincial to a local level. Small communities suffered from a financial and human resources perspective.”

²⁵ “[The project] was conceived according to the needs of people in our little communities. They told us, 'participation in our activities is decreasing, we have less volunteers, our people are less and less proud. What can we do to change that?'”

²⁶ “We went about it in the wrong way, we didn't prepare the people in the region. Now we do more studies, more research to present an idea in such a way as to show people how they can profit from it.”

rencontrer les gens, d'expliquer la situation et d'essayer de communiquer un peu mieux."²⁷ As a political skill, persuasion is useful in community development when bringing about change and to move communities forward. In describing a marketing campaign, one deputy referred to the project as more than communication: "*C'est surtout du changement social, un changement d'attitude, un changement de culture que ce projet vise.*"²⁸ In aiming for social change and engaging in forward thinking, deputies balance what community members want with what they believe is good for the community.

Networking, Partnerships and Collaboration

Getting feedback from community members, taking a step back to analyze a situation, using resources are values all deputies expressed and were learned through participation in the ACF. These values lead deputies to expect and seek out the same treatment of decision-making at the government level. "*On essaie d'être impliqués dans toutes les décisions qui pourraient nous affecter*"²⁹. Deputies learn to expect consultation in decisions that affect the Fransaskois community.

Valuing inclusion and listening to other perspectives necessarily places importance on networking, creating partnerships and working collaboratively, also one of Flora's (2008) indicators of political capital. Deputies interviewed saw these skills as integral to a long term and large scale effect on Fransaskois community development.

Pour travailler en partenariat et identifier des projets qui sont beaucoup plus long

²⁷ "It's a question of taking the time, of meeting people, explaining the situation and trying to better communicate."

²⁸ "It's especially social change, a change in attitude, a change in culture that this project is aimed at."

²⁹ "We try to be implicated in all decisions that might affect us."

terme... il faut bien connaître les acteurs dans la communauté, les organismes, les grosses questions et les défis.³⁰

Au fur et à mesure qu'on procède, on va chercher des partenaires ... on s'est rendu compte que si on voulait vraiment avoir un impact, il fallait non seulement impliquer le réseau francophones... on est allé chercher les Canadian Parents for French, les postes radio anglophones, l'Open Door Society, la province, le gouvernement fédéral, le réseau provincial sur l'immigration.³¹

Deputies learned to collaborate with other communities and use different political forces at work in the province to support the francophone community. Deputies described working with Anglophone organizations, groups and neighbours as well as Métis and First Nations groups. Overall, this theme expresses the importance of credibility to the deputies.

On a gagné une crédibilité avec ce projet-là qui nous aide tout le temps, même si elle n'est pas aussi complète qu'on aimerait qu'elle le soit. Quand tu as une crédibilité, tu peux mieux représenter tes électeurs parce qu'ils te font plus confiance.³²

Building trust is a major factor in effective community development. "There is clearly a need to build new opportunities for social interaction that will generate trust..." (Green & Haines, 2011, p. 146). It seems to me that learning how to network and work collaboratively, as well as where to find and create partnerships built on trust increases personal and organizational credibility, not only in the Fransaskois community but also equally importantly, in the province. Working with many groups also increases the

³⁰ "To work in partnership and identify long term projects...you have to know the actors in the community, the organizations, the big questions and challenges.

³¹ "As we go, we look for partners... we realized that if we really wanted to have an impact, we had to not only involve the francophone network... we went and got the Canadian parents for French, Anglophone radio stations, the open door society, the province, the federal government, the provincial immigration network."

³² "We gained credibility with that project that helps us all the time, even if it isn't as complete as we'd like. When you have credibility, you can represent your community better because they trust you more."

organization's visibility, which in turn increases credibility.

Operational Efficiency and Funding

The last theme that describes what deputies learned is operational efficiency. Deputies learned through informal learning embedded in routine the skills, knowledge and behaviours that would ensure the smooth working of the organizational structure. This is an example of the incidental learning Marsick and Watkins (1990) refer to. Themes that emerged from the deputies' descriptions of their experience in the ACF and the community were: avoiding redundancy, relationship building, using available human resources and making a business case.

Avoiding Redundancy

Deputies expressed operational efficiency learning when describing the history of the ACF. *“Il fallait dégraisser un peu, pour éviter les dédoublements et les conflits d'intérêt, et mieux utiliser les quelques sous qu'on avait.”*³³ Significant changes to the organization's structure were made to increase the organization's efficiency allowing each funding dollar to be maximized. For example, in today's ACF, avoiding conflict of interest and redundancy forms part of organizational culture and deputies are socialized to abhor it as it is understood to block the efficiency of an organization. *“J'ai horreur du dédoublement. Évitions de gaspiller nos maigres sous en faisant tous les deux la même chose. C'est aussi une autre façon de régler des problèmes, des défis ou carrément des*

³³ “We had to streamline a bit, do avoid redundancy and conflicts of interest, and better use the few coins we had.”

gros conflits, des impasses.”³⁴ Avoiding work on the same types of projects can also promote community cohesion by minimizing competition and reducing insolvable conflict and impasses.

Building Relationships

Through informal learning embedded in routine, deputies learned that relationships with colleagues are an important factor in decision-making, as the following quote demonstrates. This is another example of incidental learning (Marsick & Watkins, 1990). Relationships are both a product and process of their informal learning, as deputies not only learn through their relationships with each other, but also learn how they affect their work in the context of the ACF and as deputies. Deputies recognize that other people and expert knowledge are useful in helping make informed decisions, and that trust is equally important:

*Comme assemblée des députés on a chacun notre dossier. On est moins connaissant des dossiers des autres mais on doit quand même prendre des décisions. Il faut faire beaucoup confiance à nos collègues qui mènent les dossiers.*³⁵

Trust is not only a key element of informed decision-making but also of working together in a collaborative, transparent manner to ensure the community’s needs are met.

Using Available Human Resources

A large part of the deputies’ informal learning was about informed decision-making. “*Il*

³⁴ “I really dislike redundancy. Let’s avoid wasting our few coins by doing the same thing. It’s also another way of solving problems, challenges or downright big conflicts, impasses”

³⁵ “As the assembly of deputies we each have a file. We are less knowledgeable of the others’ files but still have to make decisions. We have to place a lot of trust in our colleagues who are leading the files.”

faut connaître les détails des dossiers ou des projets des fois, avant d'être capable de discuter des réclamations ou des allumages."³⁶ Details and input from other sources is needed in order to make decisions. *"Il y avait pleins de réunions, pleins de contacts qu'il fallait faire."*³⁷ Using consultants positively also represents use of available resources.

One deputy gave an example of effective expert knowledge use during a marketing campaign:

*On a commencé à embaucher des consultants pour faire l'analyse de la situation, on a essayé de déterminer notre clientèle cible, notre branding. Puis on a établi des focus groupes.*³⁸

Using consultants to conduct an inquiry positively affects the quality of research and also allows volunteers to learn to "do" research, a useful skill for future projects and evidence-based practice.

Another type of resource deputies learned to use was other Fransaskois organizations. A central current running through my discussion with the deputies is valuing other perspectives. One deputy described their work on a committee comprised of community stakeholders. *"Il y avait une bonne représentation autour de la table de tous les partis intéressés. Il me semblait qu'on avait le pouls de la communauté."*³⁹ What this deputy appreciated was the opportunity to collaborate with other committee members and have access to a sounding board, sharing ideas and getting an immediate reaction from people

³⁶ "We have to know the details of files and projects sometimes, before being able to discuss complaints or funding"

³⁷ "There were a lot of meetings, a lot of contacts to make."

³⁸ "We started hiring consultants to analyze the situation, we tried to determine our target audience, our branding. Then we formed focus groups"

³⁹ "There was a good representation of all the interested parties around the table. It seemed to me we had the pulse of the community."

who represent a cross section of the community.

The last type of human resource mentioned were people who were invited to share information or their insights with the assembly: “*On invite les personnes qui peuvent nous donner une meilleur compréhension avant de prendre certaines décisions.*”⁴⁰

Learning from and using expert knowledge demonstrates the inter-connectedness between content and process.

Making a Business Case: Evidence-based Decision-making

Informed decision-making requires learning how to make evidence-based decisions.

Deputies learned, through incidental learning, that evidence-based decision making is useful in gaining trust and credibility with funding partners: “*On a gagné la confiance des bailleurs de fonds.*”⁴¹ This can also be considered part of learning the system, and therefore a political skill.

Evidence-based decision-making presents a barrier to informal learning about operational efficiency. This is due to the volume of knowledge needed to take part in informed decision-making that deputies described. Learning and retaining the organization’s vocabulary for meetings every three months also represented a point of difficulty for some deputies:

Il faut se rappeler de ce que veulent dire tous les acronymes, des mots qu’on n’entend que tous les 2- 3 mois lors des rencontres. Dans tous les différents secteurs de développements, il y a des comités. Ils commencent à parler de tous ces comités et si on n’est pas là depuis le début on ne connaît pas l’histoire de tous ces

⁴⁰ “We invite people who can give us a better understanding before making a decision.”

⁴¹ “We gained the funders’ confidence.”

*comités là, ce qu'ils font. C'est beaucoup d'information.*⁴²

Deputies who did not mention these barriers described their life situations as facilitating their participation and full-time immersion in the community and organizational culture. There is an element of “us vs. them” in the previous quotation, perhaps referring to those deputies who have made their position a full-time commitment compared to those who think of themselves as part-time volunteers in the ACF; those who think of the ACF and the Fransaskois community as indivisible, “*c'est nous*”⁴³ and those who see the organization as another entity within the greater Fransaskois community.

Learning Process

My inquiry set out not only to discover the content of learning, or what deputies were learning, but also how they learned, or their learning process. This section deals with two types of learning: non formal (learning outside a formal context like a university or college) and informal learning (incidental, self-directed and socialized learning). I coded for factors that helped or were a barrier to the deputies' learning in order to determine how learning occurred and what strategies participants used. Within these categories I identified the types of learning deputies engaged in. Learning was not exclusively informal, though incidental informal learning such as asking questions and speaking with peers or ACF employees was the preferred way of learning for most deputies. The themes in this section are organized by the following headings: Training, Reading, Meetings,

⁴² “We have to remember what all the acronyms mean, words we hear every 2-3 months during meetings. In all the different sectors of development, there are committees. They start to talk about all these committees and if we haven't been there since the beginning, we don't know the history behind all those committees, what they do. It's a lot of information.”

⁴³ See page 5

One on One: Peer interactions, Sur le Tas: Learning Through Initiatives and Transformative Learning.

Training

Deputies had access to information by way of manuals and documentation regarding their roles, dossiers and other information required. When the ACF began, workshops and information sessions were available to deputies. One deputy described their learning strategies:

De la documentation nous était fournie et au début, des séances d'information ou de formation du rôle des députés nous étaient fournies et auxquelles j'ai participé. Il y avait aussi évidemment toutes les réunions.⁴⁴

Ça prend longtemps apprendre son rôle, même avec les formations... de trouver un juste équilibre⁴⁵.

Meetings

All participants described the ACF meetings as learning opportunities. When talking about the meetings, participants would describe them as the most effective way of sharing information. Deputies learned incrementally by participating in meetings. According to deputies interviewed, learning is gradual; at every meeting deputies learn something new about the organization, the democratic process, the community:

On apprend au fur et à mesure qu'on y va ... l'apprentissage des dossiers, de certains principes de démocratie... il faut y rentrer pour apprendre... pour voir comment ça fonctionne.⁴⁶

⁴⁴ “There were those occasions where we had to learn our role. There was obviously documentation that was provided to us often... There was still at the beginning of the ACF some information sessions or workshops on the role of the deputy...that I participated in...There was also obviously all the meetings.”

⁴⁵ “It takes a long time to learn your role, even with training...to find the right balance.”

⁴⁶ “We learn as we go... learning the files, certain principles of democracy... you have to get into it to learn... to see how it works.”

Every meeting was an occasion for learning something new and deputies felt comfortable asking questions in that shared space due to the feeling of collegiality between deputies. *“Si une personne ne connaît pas la réponse ou a un problème, les autres vont venir au secours et vont aider autant que possible.”*⁴⁷ Becoming well versed in the information required to function as deputy was a time-consuming process. Meetings provided space and time to put the reading and training into practice. In assigning dossiers, the administration will at times take into account a deputies’ experience in order that their capabilities be used and that different perspectives are included. *“Les gens arrivent avec toutes sortes de background... mais il y a de la sagesse autour de la table... une autre perspective peut et doit colorier la décision collective.”*⁴⁸ *Assemblée* meetings last a weekend and are a good way to learn; however, in order to benefit from them, deputies need to put their learning into practice. Most deputies agreed that asking questions was the best way to learn. However, patience is required to work collaboratively. *“Ca prends du temps de s’entendre. C’est ça le défi de la démocratie.”*⁴⁹ Taking time to engage in a democratic process requires a time commitment.

One on One: Peer Interactions

The first deputies, elected in 1999, had the opportunity to co-create their role in the community and in the organization.

⁴⁷ “If someone doesn’t know the answer or has a problem, the others will come to the rescue and will help as much as possible.”

⁴⁸ “People come with all kinds of backgrounds, but there is wisdom around the table...another perspective can and must colour the collective decision.”

⁴⁹ “It takes time to understand each other. That’s the challenge of democracy.”

*Quand l'ACF a été créé, personne ne savait trop ce qu'était l'ACF, ou ce les députés devaient faire. Alors ils se sont donnés une façon d'opérer: être présent dans nos communautés et de développer une collégialité parmi les membres... et je pense que ça fonctionne bien.*⁵⁰

An atmosphere of trust therefore is important to the deputies' way of working, and is substantiated by other deputies. *“Ce n'est pas un gros groupe et on a la chance de parler, de se réunir et de jaser après les réunions. C'est plus fraternel, dans le temps c'était beaucoup plus business.”*⁵¹ Interacting with peers, both in the context of meetings and outside of them develops more informal bonds between deputies.

Sur le Tas: Learning Through Initiatives

Participants spoke at length about all they had done, learned and created through their experience. While each deputy described a different committee or project, the energy and passion that accompanied their descriptions illustrated that learning by doing is an important theme. *“En posant des questions, en fonctionnant, tu apprends sur le tas, à force de transiger avec les gens, tu apprends.”*⁵² By having the opportunity to participate in new projects and initiatives, deputies learned new ways of working and using new skills. One deputy gives an example of research conducted to inform negotiations with funding partners:

On avait développé une stratégie ...on avait fait une consultation populaire et on est arrivés à un document de base qui était notre point de départ pour les

⁵⁰ “When the ACF first began, no one knew what the ACF was or what the deputies were supposed to do. So they gave themselves a way of operating: to be present in our communities and to develop collegiality between the members...and I think it works well.”

⁵¹ “It's not a big group and we have the chance to talk, to get together and talk after the meetings. It's more fraternal, in the day it was much more business.”

⁵² “By asking questions, by working, you learn on the job, by dint of interacting with people, you learn.”

*négociations, pour savoir ce qu'on voulait.*⁵³

The process of developing a credible, community-informed starting point for negotiations, work on various projects, research, collaborative work on documents and strategies results in capacity building, or “the development of skills and abilities ... to take action and lead communities through activities, resources and support” (Green & Haines, 2011, p. 198). Experiences in projects and initiatives build participants’ confidence in their ability to take action and lead by exposing them to new situations, group work and other challenges, as a quote from another deputy illustrates: “*Le fait que j’ai eu, au courant des années, à transiger avec des fonctionnaires et des politiciens m’a beaucoup servi: je n’étais pas intimidé outre mesure par ces gens là.*”⁵⁴ Though referring to their experience with the government outside the context of the ACF’s projects, the quote illustrates the fact that exposure to these projects demystifies people in positions of authority. This builds the confidence of the deputies to work and negotiate with those in power, another indicator of political capital (Flora, 2008).

Transformative Learning

Transformative learning is an unexpected theme that emerged from my thematic analysis. Codes relating to transformative learning reoccurred often enough to include this theme as a learning process. According to transformative learning theory, learners need to understand and manipulate information, not simply acquire it (Cranton, 2006). The

⁵³ “We developed a strategy... we had consulted with the community and we developed a base document that was our starting point for negotiations, to know what we wanted.”

⁵⁴ “The fact that I had to, over the years, interact with government workers and politicians served me well: I wasn’t overly intimidated [meaning over-awed] by those people.”

individual able to critically examine their way of thinking can become aware of holding a “limiting or distorted view” (Cranton, 2006, p. 138). Opening up to alternatives and consequently changing the way the individual sees “reality” transforms how they make meaning out of the world. “As part of the process of learning content or attaining new skills, adult learners should also develop an awareness of assumptions—both their own and those of others, which they have hitherto taken for granted—and become critical of those assumptions” (Grabove, 1997, p. 91). Transformative learning aims to turn learners into autonomous, socially responsible thinkers who question their assumptions (Mezirow, 1997).

The deputies experienced transformative learning as a result of learning on the job:

Pour changer la culture et le paradigme, pour les changements sociaux, il faut une vision beaucoup plus large que le résultat immédiat. Donc il faut de la patience et une vision de 360 degrés.⁵⁵

Patience, a broadened scope and collaborative work on long-term projects are examples of products that reflection produces. Reflection shifted the way deputies thought about community development and brought recognition of how they work and what changes are needed. Reflection on changes in community values shifted how deputies continue to be “effective” in light of these changes:

On évolue d’une ère de bâtisseurs à une ère de consommateurs. Ce n’est pas mal, c’est différent. Il va falloir qu’on apprenne à travailler différemment.⁵⁶

Another shift in perspective about the way deputies’ work brought about by reflection

⁵⁵ “To change culture and paradigms, for social change, you need a much wider vision than the immediate result. So, you need patience and a 360 degree vision.”

⁵⁶ “We are evolving from an era of builders to one of consumers. It’s not wrong, it’s different. We’re going to have to learn to work differently.”

had to do with language and culture:

*Je pense que ça m'a ouvert les yeux par rapport à ce qu'on doit faire comme communauté pour que notre langue, notre culture changeante survive... parce qu'une culture c'est changeant, une langue, ça change aussi.*⁵⁷

Realizing that culture and language are perpetually changing is a key shift that affects the way this deputy views ideas and projects. Adapting to and accepting new ways of working to assure the survival of the francophone community will require flexibility and openness. One deputy described their perspective shift related to the skills and behaviours they use as a deputy:

*Je suis plus au courant de l'impact des choses comme le réseautage, aller aux événements, rencontrer les gens, écouter ce qu'ils ont à dire, sur ma capacité d'agir comme député et même au travail.*⁵⁸

A heightened awareness of their actions, the way they approach people and how their work affects their ability to act and have an impact on the community represents a change in their assumptions. Part of this perspective shift, too, is the realisation that their skills and ways of being deputies are transferable to other roles they hold, a key piece of adult education (Leberman, Macdonald & Doyle, 2006). Reflection brought about change in the deputies' awareness of the way they work, not only in the context of the ACF, but also in their other lives. *“Je sens que j'ai grandi avec l'ACF. Sans m'en apercevoir, j'approche les problèmes avec ma femme, mon entreprise, ma famille et mes amis différemment.”*⁵⁹

⁵⁷ “I think it opened my eyes with regards to what we have to do as a community so that our changing language and culture survives... because culture changes, language changes too.”

⁵⁸ “I'm more in touch with the impact of things like networking, going to events, meeting people, listening to what they have to say, on my ability to act as a deputy and even at work.”

⁵⁹ “I feel that I've grown with the ACF. Without realizing it, I approach problems with my wife, my

Change is not always conscious. While some deputies described a change in perspective or beliefs, others maintained that their participation had not changed them.

Transformative learning cannot be forced or taught. It is a product of reflection and examination of self and assumptions. Reflection must be spontaneous and entered into freely in order to transform. Some deputies thought about my interview questions and their experience. Their descriptions gained another dimension when relating their experiences, inciting a questioning of their previously held beliefs. They sought to understand and concretize how those beliefs had changed.

Perception of Impact on the Fransaskois Community

The third question I address in this inquiry is how deputies see their effect on the community. Deputies see themselves as having a positive impact on the community.

Their perceived positive effect on the community produces a higher sense of effectiveness, which encourages them to continue.

Pour avoir un impact comme député dans la communauté, il faut une certaine passion. Il faut être intéressé dans les dossiers et dans la cause francophone. [Les interactions avec les membres de la communauté] se sont améliorées au fur et à mesure que les fransaskois voyaient les députés fonctionner et voyaient leur niveau de sincérité et intégrité.⁶⁰

Working with sincerity of purpose, passion and integrity are characteristics common to all the deputies interviewed. As the quote suggests, deputies' perception of their impact on the community is linked with their personal characteristics. Not everyone will

business, my family and my friends differently.”

⁶⁰ “To have an impact on the community as a deputy, you need a certain passion. You have to be interested in the files and the francophone cause. [The interactions with community members] improved as Fransaskois saw deputies functioning and saw their level of sincerity and integrity.”

volunteer to be a deputy. The majority of deputies in this study are the same age and gender and share history, having lived similar experiences as they grew up speaking French. Examining factors that shape and drive deputies' engagement gives insight into the change they see themselves taking part in. The factors that affected how deputies saw their learning affect the community were previous experience and motivation. The components of previous experience are community history and community governance. Collective interest and personal interest are components of motivation to volunteer.

Previous Experience

All deputies described a long history of community involvement through volunteering. *“Je suis le type de personne qui aime être impliqué... j’ai toujours été impliqué dans la communauté d’une façon ou d’une autre.”*⁶¹ Volunteering is nothing new to deputies who participate in the ACF and contribute to knowing the community and its players intimately. *“A travers mes expériences, je connais les grosses questions et les personnes assez bien pour prendre le rôle de député.”*⁶² A history of community involvement helps deputies perform some of their responsibilities as they are familiar with the key players and challenges in the community.

Community History

The francophone community in Saskatchewan has a history of oppression and threats to

⁶¹ I’m the kind of person who likes to be involved...I’ve always been involved in the community in one way or another.

⁶² Through my experiences, I know the big questions and the players well enough to take on the role of deputy.

its' culture. The slogan “*une langue, une école, un drapeau*”⁶³ represents the province's values when the community was mobilizing for the right to school governance: the English language, English schools and the English flag. “Ils cessèrent de dépendre ‘émotionnellement’ du Québec et décidèrent de ne compter que sur eux-mêmes pour assurer leur futur”⁶⁴ (Boulay, 1998, p. 35). Their history fostered a tight knit, supportive community to which language and identity are inextricably linked.

*On s'est fait taper, appelé froggie, frenchie, une croix brûlée devant une église à Gravelbourg ou à Pontex. Dans les années 60, on parlait l'anglais avec un accent. Une fois taquiné, à la place de trouver de la force avec d'autres francophones, on veut être amical avec les anglophones. La mentalité devient: on a assez de français là, on veut pas fâcher les anglais parce qu'ils vont dire que ça coûte trop cher: 'frenchmen, votre programme coûte trop cher, c'est nos taxes.’*⁶⁵

The right to designate French schools was obtained in 1968 (Chronologie, ACF). This informs one deputy's description of their “conscientization”: when they became aware of the government's responsibility to uphold their language rights. Trudeau's implementation of official bilingualism in 1967 changed the francophone community.

Avec le projet de bilinguisme du Premier Ministre Trudeau on a eu des occasions de créer des comités culturels, l'ACF, la fédération canadienne française... il y avait beaucoup de comités nationaux pour le développement des communautés francophones hors Québec qui ont été mis sur pied. Ces comités appuyaient le développement de comités provinciaux et régionaux. On s'est beaucoup impliqué au niveau local et puis au niveau provincial. Quand je suis allé à ces rencontres là je me suis rendu compte que le gouvernement a des responsabilités. On est minoritaire ici mais il y a des francophones minoritaires ailleurs au Canada qui ne

⁶³ One language, one school, one flag.

⁶⁴ “They ceased to depend 'emotionally' on Quebec and decided to count on themselves to assure their future.”

⁶⁵ “We got beat up, called 'froggie', 'frenchie', a cross burned in front of a church in Gravelbourg or in Pontex. In the 60s, we spoke English with an accent. Once you're made fun of, instead of finding strength with other francophones, we want to be friendly with the Anglophones. The mentality becomes: we have enough French, we don't want to anger the English because they'll say we cost too much, 'Frenchmen, your program costs too much, they're our taxes'.”

*sont pas au Québec et qui sont fiers de leur français.*⁶⁶

Official bilingualism paved the way for action and change in the community. Groups began to fight for and obtain services such as education. People who were involved in this fight have a sense of pride in the community. *“Toutes les expériences du passé c’est un cumul d’apprentissage de sensibilisation et de conviction.”*⁶⁷ Most deputies were involved in community development at that time and have a heightened conviction that action is required for their language and community.

Community Governance

Deputies interviewed made the distinction between how the ACF operated in the past and how it operates today. Previously, community members did not have a voice in the organization, as there was no consultation. Participating in meetings was problematic due to time, distance and weather considerations. One deputy recalls the meetings, which contrast sharply with today’s smaller, more collaborative and sociocratic⁶⁸ meetings:

Je me souviens des grandes tables ...il y avait souvent au-dessus de 50 personnes autour de la table...parfois quelqu’un qui pouvait être bon orateur prenait la parole. Les réunions duraient longtemps, il semblait qu’il n’y avait personne pour mettre fin aux choses. Ce n’était pas facile de dire son mot. Il y avait tellement de monde autour de la table que tu te disais: ‘Si je commence à parler, ça va rallonger

⁶⁶ With Prime Minister Trudeau's bilingualism project we had the opportunity to create cultural committees, the ACF, the Canadian French federation... there were a lot of national committees for the development of francophone communities outside Quebec that were started. These committees supported provincial and regional committees. We really got involved at the local level and then at the provincial level. When I went to those meetings I realized that the government has responsibilities. We're a minority here but there are minority francophones elsewhere in Canada who aren't in Quebec and who are proud of their French.”

⁶⁷ “All the experiences of the past brought about learning, sensibility and conviction.”

⁶⁸ “A form of consent-based decision-making: a group of individuals reason together until a decision is reached that is satisfactory to each one of them.” (See Buck, John and Sharon Villines [2007]. *We the People: Consenting to a Deeper Democracy, A Guide to Sociocratic Principles and Methods*. SociocracyInfo Press.)

la réunion. ' On revenait tard à la maison, parfois la nuit, dans la tempête et il fallait faire des voyages à Regina ou autres endroits.⁶⁹

Deputies' descriptions of their experiences showed an awareness of several types of problems that affect democratic governance adversely: conflicts of interest, manipulation and intimidation, back-door lobbying, obstruction or refusal to dialogue, and coalition building. Some of these problems are strategies used in order to push one person or a group of people's interests forward. Though aware of what was happening, participants did not feel they had a voice or a safe place to express it in the previous organization:

Il y avait les problèmes de cumul de fonctions, et de conflits d'intérêt non déclarés. Les bénéficiaires de certains budgets ou de programmes proposés étaient évidents. Au lieu de se soumettre à la volonté de la table, les gens se préparaient à l'avance, puis faisaient de l'obstruction. Les gens étaient tannés, ils n'étaient pas d'accord avec la façon dont la communauté était gérée. C'était une sorte de révolution.⁷⁰

Those around the table had one or several vested interests in attending and making sure decisions were made the "right" way. Subsequent restructuring of the organization followed the recommendations of a committee made up of community members. Today's ACF represents a significant departure from the previous organization, though one deputy recognized that it was still in a process of evolution. In deputies who chose to continue to volunteer, the previous experience of unethical, conspiratorial and authoritarian governance fostered democratic values: electoral process, transparency, ethical procedure

⁶⁹ "I remember the big tables...there were often over 50 people around the table...sometimes someone who could be a good speaker would take the floor. Meetings lasted a long time, there didn't seem to be anyone to put an end to things. It wasn't easy to speak your piece. There were so many people around the table that you'd say to yourself: 'If I start speaking, it will prolong the meeting.' We would come home late, sometimes at night, during a storm and we had to make trips to Regina or other places."

⁷⁰ "There were problems of role overlapping and undeclared conflicts of interest. Beneficiaries of certain budgets or proposed programs were obvious. Instead of submitting themselves to the table's will, people would prepare in advance, and would obstruct. People were tired of it, they didn't agree with the way the community was managed. It was a kind of revolution."

and good governance. The result is value congruency and strong identification with the ACF, due to its comparatively collaborative, democratic and transparent way of operating:

Quand j'ai lu le rapport et j'ai vu le style de gouvernance que la communauté voulait ça répondait à ma vision : on amenait beaucoup plus de démocratie et une meilleure chance de participer directement. Essentiellement on a les mêmes objectifs, mais aujourd'hui, les députés n'ont pas 5, 6 chapeaux. Le bien de l'ensemble de la communauté est plus facile à voir.⁷¹

Though today's community development goals may be similar, the way of operating is very different. Many deputies who volunteer today were involved in one or more aspects of the community's history and governance. Deputies who share this history share a deep value of pride, language rights, democratic process and community development anchored in improving the quality of life of community members, both on a local and provincial scale. As one deputy noted, "*ce n'est pas du folklore qu'on essaie de faire.*"⁷² Deputies are invested in the community's future as they have fought for it in the past and these values form part of the junior members' socialization.

Motivation to Volunteer

Motivation to volunteer emerged as a theme in my analysis of the data. There were two types of motivation: working for the collective interest of the francophone community and working for personal interest. While all deputies expressed both to some extent, either one or the other would tend to dominate participants' role definition and

⁷¹ "We essentially have the same goals, but before several people around the table had ... interests with respect to their situation. Today, deputies don't have 5 or 6 hats. The good of the community is easier to see than it was with the ACFC."

⁷² "It's not folklore we're trying to do."

descriptions of experiences and learning. I chose to discuss them separately as they will have a bearing on the next theme I discuss, generational differences.

Collective Interest

In the analogy given by one deputy, an important element of being a good deputy is to avoid “going with the flow”:

Il y a beaucoup de gens qui disent [que la francophonie] c'est pas important...ce serait très facile de dire: « go with the flow », se laisser aller avec le courant. En canot, la meilleure façon de garder le contrôle est soit d'aller plus vite ou plus lentement que le courant. Si tu vas à la même vitesse que le courant, tu vas chavirer. C'est la même chose dans ma francophonie : parfois il faut aller plus lentement, mais la plupart du temps tu vas plus vite que le courant, ce qui permet de manœuvrer. L'ACF c'est le canot. Avec une équipe, tu essayes de diriger le canot autour des obstacles.⁷³

The image of the canoe and the group of deputies steering it around obstacles echoes the perception of the deputies' role I discussed earlier. “*Un député est quelqu'un qui ...ne se laisse pas aller*”⁷⁴ It speaks to the way deputies see themselves and their role - cool headed and objective, able to examine a situation from all angles.⁷⁵ In the canoe analogy, the deputies know where they are going and must work together to get there intact. Having a common motivation and a common goal is true of most deputies interviewed. In the analogy deputies have bought into the boat's vision and help it navigate.

⁷³ “There are a lot of people who say that the francophone community is not important... it would be very easy to say “go with the flow”, let yourself go with the current. In a canoe, the best way to stay in control is to either go faster or slower than the current. If you go at the same speed, you're going to capsize. It's the same thing in my francophone community: sometimes you have to go slower but for the most part, you go faster than the current, which allows you to steer. The ACF is the canoe. With a team, you try to guide the canoe around obstacles.”

⁷⁴ “A deputy is someone who does not let themselves go.” See page 3.

⁷⁵ “*On a tendance à offrir des solutions qui ne sont pas nécessairement bien réfléchies. Il faut prendre du recul et le temps d'analyser les choses*” (page 4).

All deputies who had known the previous organization, the ACFC, contrasted today's philosophy with the past: "*aujourd'hui, on travaille pour le bien de la communauté.*"⁷⁶ The shift in perspective implicit in this statement illustrates what motivates some deputies to participate: "*Je ne pense pas qu'une personne puisse failler comme député. On apporte nos compétences et tant qu'une personne a à cœur la communauté, c'est tout ce dont on a besoin.*"⁷⁷ Though not a French verb, in this context "failler" is colloquial use of the English "to fail". As volunteers, deputies bring their skills and knowledge to their position. If the community's interests are at heart, that is all a deputy needs to succeed. Simple altruism is not enough though. As one deputy's story of a member who eventually left their position in the assembly shows, buy-in to the assembly's vision and understanding of the Fransaskois community's needs is necessary:

*Il ne connaissait pas la communauté ni l'ACF ou les dossiers. Il mélangeait immersion et éducation francophone, parlait de multiculturalisme et voulait traîner sa communauté et l'ACF dans des foires multiculturelles. C'est le discours de quelqu'un qui a passé 3 ou 4 réunions à l'ACF. Ce genre de personne abandonne très rapidement.*⁷⁸

Thus, some deputies are motivated by "real" community development; a sense of efficacy and making a difference by providing services and positive change. For some deputies, the survival and development of the francophone community in Saskatchewan drives participation. "*On ne peut pas juste s'occuper de nous-même, de notre petit coin, pour*

⁷⁶ "Today, we work for the good of the community."

⁷⁷ "I don't think a person can fail as a deputy. We bring our skills and as long as a person has the community at heart, that's all we need."

⁷⁸ "He didn't know the community or the ACF or the files. He mixed up immersion and francophone education, talked about multiculturalism and wanted to drag his community and the ACF in multicultural fairs. That's the discourse of someone who has attended 3 or 4 ACF meetings. This type of person leaves quickly."

que la fransaskoisie survive... Il faut qu'on travaille sur un plus grand portrait."⁷⁹

According to Landry (2005), building social conscience and the awareness that individual actions can have collective consequences is an important element in ensuring the survival of minority language communities. This idea illustrates the realization that the survival of the French language on a broad scale is impacted by work in "our little corner". Deputies derive satisfaction from "*être capable d'aider la communauté à ne pas être assimilée.*"⁸⁰ Those motivated by ensuring the survival of the French language and working for the common good of the francophone community were also those that had experienced marginalization as a consequence of speaking French.

Personal Interest

Though the majority of deputies were motivated by the collective interest, some deputies also expressed motivation on a more personal level. These were usually the deputies who were not involved in the history of the ACF or significant events in the Fransaskois community's past such as gaining the right of education.

Satisfying and enriching work is a type of self-motivator that I found through my analysis. Deputies talked about interest in their work, the opportunity to visit new places, meet new people and learn new things:

Tu rencontres des gens comme toi, qui travaillent comme toi... ça ouvre l'esprit à d'autres possibilités. C'est surprenant et intéressant combien on peut apprendre. J'ai visité toutes les communautés francophones de la province. Je ne sais pas si je

⁷⁹ "We can't just take care of ourselves, our little corner, for the Fransaskois culture to survive. We have to work on a larger scale."

⁸⁰ "Be able to help the community not be assimilated."

*l'aurais fait si je n'étais pas député. Ça a été utile et très satisfaisant pour moi.*⁸¹

Another personal motivator some deputies referred to was language. They participated in order to have a place to maintain practice of their language, in order that it not be lost. As discussed in chapter one, language and identity are closely related. Deputies who are motivated by a forum for language practice are also seeking a way not to lose their francophone identity. “*Ça me permet de garder et même d’améliorer mon français, autrement je parlerais anglais toute la journée, tous les jours*”⁸². As their language can improve through participation, so too can their sense of identity. Deputies talked about the ability to express and increase pride in their francophone identity, lowering barriers such as self-consciousness and shame caused by experience in the community’s history.

*Je suis francophone du plus profond de moi-même. C’est un état qui est fragile en situation minoritaire. Ma fierté comme francophone s’est amplifié. Si tu es fier, tu es moins gêné, tu participes plus facilement. C’est une question de sortir un peu du complexe de minoritaire, de pouvoir dire ‘je suis francophone et je suis fier de ça.’*⁸³

The assembly provides a safe place that allows participants to express themselves, not only to ask questions and learn, but also to be francophone.

A third personal motivator was external pressure. Some deputies were not elected to their position but were asked by the ACF administration to volunteer. “*Il m’a demandé si*

⁸¹ “You meet people like yourself, who work like you... it opens your mind to other possibilities. It’s surprising and interesting how much we can learn. I’ve visited all of the province’s francophone communities. I don’t know if I would have done that if I wasn’t a deputy. It was useful and very satisfying for me.”

⁸² “It allows me to keep and even improve my French, otherwise I would speak English all day, every day.”

⁸³ “I’m francophone at my core. It’s a state that is fragile in a minority situation. My pride as a francophone has increased. If you’re proud, you’re less embarrassed, you’re more likely to participate. It’s a question of getting out of the minority complex, of being able to say ‘I’m francophone and I’m proud of that.’”

j'aimerais mettre mon nom comme candidat pour devenir député, comme personne d'autre ne s'est présenté."⁸⁴ Deputies who are asked to participate accept to act as deputy for whatever motivation but may feel a lack of commitment or interest compared with deputies who volunteered under their own steam. "*Je pense qu'on induit les gens en erreur. Moi-même je l'ai fait à d'autres, je me sens un peu coupable*"⁸⁵ As a consequence, some existing volunteers may be pressured into roles that do not interest them and leads to resentment and eventually conflict due to lack of value congruency.

The last personal motivator I found through my analysis of my data was a sense of belonging to a community. Knowing their community, what affects it and how they can contribute is a motivator for some deputies. "*Je connais bien la communauté francophone dans ses structures, ses personnalités, dans ses enjeux. Ce contact humain est absolument enrichissant.*"⁸⁶ As minority language speakers, especially in a rural context, francophones may feel isolated or alone, islands in an Anglophone province where sentiment towards French speakers is frequently hostile:

*Participer à la communauté francophone de cette région est de grande valeur pour moi, c'est un bon moyen de rester dans la communauté. J'ai appris qu'il y avait beaucoup de francophones qui aiment être impliqués et qui sont fiers de la francophonie.*⁸⁷

A sense of belonging to a greater community also contributes to a sense of pride in

⁸⁴ "He asked me if I'd like to present myself as a candidate to become a deputy, since no one else came forward. We have a lot of trouble finding people to fill the positions."

⁸⁵ "I think we mislead people. I've done it to others and I feel a bit guilty."

⁸⁶ "I know the francophone communities' structures, personalities and challenges well. The human contact is absolutely enriching."

⁸⁷ "Participating in this region's francophone community is of great value to me, it's a good way to stay in the community. I learned that there are many francophones who like to get involved and are proud of the francophone community."

language and identity.

Perception of impact is closely related to the volunteer's character, the experiences that shaped them and what drives them to become a deputy. As one deputy mentioned, to have a positive impact, deputies should be passionate, sincere and work with integrity. These are characteristics deputies, through previous experience and motivation, have come to see as necessary in order to make a change in the community.

Learning Barriers

Learning barriers are included under the perception of their role in the community because these themes relate to volunteer realities that prevent learning due to their effect on the deputies' perception of their role and impact on the community. Four themes associated with learning barriers emerged from my data analysis. This section is organized according to the headings of the types of barriers that emerged: dealing with conflict, time investment, duty overload and generational differences.

Dealing with Conflict

Diverse conflicts emerged from my analysis of the data, notably between deputies and the community, other organizations, and within the ACF. Conflicts resulted in a low sense of efficacy, which in turn, contribute to a sense of discouragement and decreased motivation.

C'est décourageant de collaborer, il y a toujours des conflits : [c'est difficile] de faire des partenariats [avec certaines organisations], il y a eu des désaccords, pas forcément sérieux mais ça pose des problèmes... c'est aussi un défi d'être entendu par les autres députés quand on est le dernier arrivé... les électeurs sont méfiants,

*ils ne nous font pas toujours confiance... on explique ce qu'on fait, mais il y aura toujours des gens qui ne comprendront pas, qui n'accepteront pas, qui seront contre.*⁸⁸

Dealing with other organisations that may not hold the same values or way of working presents a challenge for some deputies. Informal learning about resolving conflict on the job is through a process of trial and error as the deputy gets to know stakeholders. “*Il y a des personnalités avec qui il faut transiger, leur éducation que tu ne connais pas... leur passé familial, leur histoire que tu ignores*”⁸⁹. Deputies who talked about conflict talked about it as a work in progress; it was unavoidable, inevitable and inherent in their work. However not all deputies felt able to deal with conflict situations all the time: “*Avec certaines personnes... je peux voir que parler et discuter ne marchera pas, alors ... J'essaye d'envoyer quelqu'un d'autre... il y a certaines personnes qui ont le charisme ... qui peuvent aller faire ces choses-là.*”⁹⁰ Sending in someone with charisma is one way to resolve conflict. Another deputy described their conflict resolution strategy :

*Comme député, on peut essayer d'imposer une solution en utilisant le poids de l'assemblée. Ce n'est pas toujours positif comme résultat, mais des fois il faut le faire. D'autres fois il faut communiquer pour mieux se comprendre. On s'assied avec la personne ou l'organisme et on essaye d'ouvrir un dialogue: moi je comprends ceci, toi tu comprends ça, ou est ce qu'on peut se comprendre*⁹¹.

⁸⁸ “It's discouraging to collaborate, there's always conflicts: [it's difficult] to partner [with certain organizations], there have been disagreements, not serious but they create problems... it's also a challenge to be heard by other deputies when you are the latest to join...electors are wary., they don't always trust... we explain what we do , but there will always be people who won't understand, who won't accept, who will be against.”

⁸⁹ “There are personalities to deal with, their education that you aren't aware of, their family past, their story you don't know.”

⁹⁰ “With certain people ... I can see that discussing won't work, so ... I try to send someone else... there are certain people who have charisma...who can go do those things.”

⁹¹ “As a deputy, we can try to impose a decision by using the assembly's weight. It's not always a positive result, but sometimes you have to. Other times you have to communicate to better understand each other. We sit with the person or organization and try to open a dialogue: I understand this, you understand that, where can we understand each other.”

At times, conflict was aggravated by a misalignment of organizational and individual values, “*Des fois j’ai l’impression que l’ACF s’intéresse plus aux dossiers politiques qu’aux dossiers branchés aux besoins de la communauté.*”⁹² Some deputies feel the ACF is losing sight of community-based initiatives in favour of provincial or national interests. For example, deputies in rural communities may not agree with investment in immigration. Value misalignment can result in conflict between deputies and between the assembly and the ACF’s administration. They work in a highly politicized environment however, and there is not always a second chance to use the skills they learn this way. Though conflict resolution can be learned informally, the ability to learn from and value conflict cannot. Conflict is uncomfortable and typically seen as negative; however the ability to resolve conflict is important to being able to function effectively as a deputy.

Time Investment

A consensus among all deputies interviewed was that volunteering as a deputy takes time. Being a volunteer, having other interests and responsibilities, duty overload and time commitment required were seen as factors that could potentially affect the deputies’ level of involvement and the amount of time they could invest. Flexibility in private life was needed to volunteer:

Un des gros défis [du travail de député], c’est de trouver le temps et l’énergie ... on est tous des bénévoles et le travail de député, c’est une grosse implication, une grosse responsabilité ... il ne suffit pas d’aller à quelques réunions. Il faut être prêt à voyager et à s’impliquer dans d’autres comités et d’autres organismes, à régler des conflits entre deux organisations, à faire des interventions, des offres de services et [à passer des coups de] téléphone, à n’importe quelle heure de la

⁹² “Sometimes I get the impression that the ACF is more interested in political dossiers than in dossiers with the community’s needs in mind.”

*journée, de la nuit, de la soirée... et on a d'autres responsabilités, notre travail, et il y a des députés qui ont d'autres intérêts et qui ont besoin de se reposer... par exemple, ceux qui sont à la retraite... il y en a qui vont dans le sud pour quelques mois, surtout en hiver alors que c'est une période active pour les députés.*⁹³

Concerns about time did not refer exclusively to the amount needed to get the most out of volunteering. One description explains the sour and the sweet of volunteering as a

deputy:

*C'est un gros fardeau, une grosse implication et responsabilité. Il ne faut pas trop se prendre au sérieux, on est bénévoles, mais les défis qui vont arriver dans ton assiette sont intéressants, importants, accaparants... c'est un gros défi. C'est plus que d'aller à quelques réunions. Il faut y mettre le temps et je pense qu'on nous prépare mal pour ça.*⁹⁴

Working this way takes commitment and responsibility, but exposes deputies to enriching situations and encounters.

Duty Overload

The deputies' job description has changed since the ACF's inception. The system of governance continues to evolve as the administration and presidency changes and high turnover in other community organisations affects communication: "*La gestion des communautés change tout le temps, le gouvernement provincial et fédéral n'est pas flexible. Ça devient un fardeau de plus en plus lourd, il y a de plus en plus de*

⁹³ "One of the big challenges [of a deputy's job] is to find time and energy ... we're all volunteers and the deputy's job is a big commitment, a big responsibility... it isn't enough to go to a couple of meetings. You have to be ready to travel and get involved in committees and other organizations, to solve conflicts between organizations, to intervene, offer services and [make phone] calls, at whatever time of day, night, evening...and we have other responsibilities, our work and some deputies have other interests and need to rest, for example those who are retired... some go south for a few months, especially in the winter, an active time for deputies."

⁹⁴ "It's a big burden, a big commitment and responsibility. You can't take yourself too seriously, we're volunteers but the challenges that you get on your plate are interesting, important ... [and] it's a big challenge. It's more than going to a few meetings, you have to spend the time and I think we aren't prepared for that."

dossiers.”⁹⁵. The ACF’s focus has broadened, new folders added to the deputies’ scope of work. Volunteering as a deputy has become a burden. The volume of information and new “language” needed to work for the Fransaskois community on a provincial level, from a long term, big picture standpoint is at times overwhelming.

*[Comme députés] on avait des responsabilités, certaines sont décrites dans les statuts et d’autres sont des choses de fonctionnement... le fardeau [de responsabilités] est de plus en plus lourd, il y a de plus en plus de dossiers... pour pouvoir travailler comme député, il faut se mettre tous les 2 ou 3 mois dans le ‘mindset’ de l’ACF : le vocabulaire, les rencontres [avec les partenaires et la communauté]... le niveau de réussite [chez les députés] aurait été probablement plus élevé si on avait pu informer, éduquer le reste du réseau associatif... ce qui nous manquait c’était vraiment ...la chance d’éduquer le reste de la communauté sur notre rôle.*⁹⁶

The increase in dossiers is combined with lack of community knowledge about the ACF’s vision and goals.

Lack of Understanding

Some of the deputies interviewed believed that the rest of the Fransaskois community is ignorant of their role in the community.

*Je ne vais pas faire ça le reste de ma vie. S’il y a quelqu’un qui aimerait me remplacer, je suis prête à donner la chance à quelqu’un d’autre, mais plusieurs gens pensent qu’ils sont trop ignorant ou ils ont peur.*⁹⁷

Fear and lack of understanding of the deputy’s responsibilities and role fosters makes

⁹⁵ “The burden becomes heavier; there are more and more dossiers.”

⁹⁶ “[As deputies] we had responsibilities, certain are written in the statutes and others are related to functioning... the burden [of responsibility] is heavier and heavier, there are more files ... to be able to work as a deputy, you have to get in the ACF ‘mindset’ every 2 or 3 months: the vocabulary, meetings [with community partners] ... the success level [of deputies] would probably have been higher if we had been able to inform, educate the rest of the network of associations... what was missing was really... the chance to educate the rest of the community on our role.”

⁹⁷ “I’m not going to do this for the rest of my life. If there is someone who would like to take my place, I’m ready to give them that chance, but many people think they are too ignorant or they’re afraid.”

attracting and retaining new volunteers difficult. Deputies who leave are asked to find someone to take their place. “*On a beaucoup de mal à trouver des gens pour remplir les postes.*”⁹⁸ Lack of volunteers is a problem all community-based organisations face. It is felt keenly by deputies who started participating when minority language rights were beginning to be recognised and volunteers abounded.

Generational Differences

Generational differences in the ACF exist along two axes. There are junior and senior deputies and younger and older deputies. The differences pertain to differences in self-perception and how the community is perceived. Deputies can be motivated by several different factors; however, the majority of deputies saw themselves as Fransaskois first, proud and able to make a difference in their community. Their perception of themselves contrasts with the way they see the next generation.

The majority of deputies share a history of oppression followed by action against it and there was no shortage of people interested in furthering the community’s development. Foucault (1980) believed power is born from action and our interactions with others. Most deputies in this generation share a strong sense of power to make changes in the community born from past experiences. The result is pride in the community they helped form, the language and identity they helped protect. “*Les gens qui étaient impliqués dans ce temps-là ont préservé notre communauté. Il y a une certaine fierté d’être francophone*

⁹⁸ “We have a lot of trouble finding people to fill positions.”

*et il y a un désir de faire épanouir la langue.*⁹⁹ Without them and their work, the community as it exists today would not exist. This contributes to desire to see it continue and flourish. One deputy noted they felt satisfaction from volunteering at the ACF because, *“nos expériences quand on était jeune étaient semblables.”*¹⁰⁰ Thus, shared experience in social action is one generational difference that emerged from the data.

One way of seeing the community that can be attributed to generational difference is that the Fransaskois population is decreasing. Indeed, the Fransaskois community’s demographic has changed significantly since the 1960s and 1970s, when minority language rights were beginning to be recognized.

*Dans les années 60 – 70, on avait une population immense de jeunes, la majorité des gens était de l’âge d’école. Ca a beaucoup diminué. Les familles sont moins nombreuses, il y a moins d’enfants. Sans gens, comment peux-tu maintenir les activités.*¹⁰¹

Concerns over the decrease in Fransaskois population led to the creation of the committee on inclusion, which recommended that all French-speakers living in Saskatchewan may be considered “Fransaskois”. *“Les non francophones bilingues qui parlent français sont plus nombreux que les fransaskois de souche en Saskatchewan.”*¹⁰² It is interesting to note that deputies see the Fransaskois population as decreasing when in fact the change in definition has increased it.

⁹⁹ “People who were involved at the time preserved our community. There’s a pride in being francophone and a desire to see the language flourish.”

¹⁰⁰ “Our experiences when we were young were similar.”

¹⁰¹ “In the 60s and 70s, we had a huge young population; the majority of people were school aged. It has decreased a lot, families are smaller, there are fewer children. Without people, how can you maintain activities?”

¹⁰² “Bilingual non-francophones who speak French are more numerous than the root Fransaskois in Saskatchewan.”

A type of generational difference along the junior–senior deputy axis was motivation. Both junior and senior deputies talked about being motivated by collective interest; however only junior deputies were also motivated by language practice. Their lives are conducted primarily in English and participating in the ACF provides a place to speak French and be “francophone” that they don’t find anywhere else. A senior deputy remarked on a difference in identity among today’s younger generation that also pertains to language. *“Les moins de 25 ans se disent Fransaskois, mais ce n’est pas ce qu’ils ont dans le cœur... Ils sont canadiens bilingues.”*¹⁰³ In both types of “new generation,” identity is formed through language rather than through shared history. This finding is interesting as it applies to leadership in the community and what changes need to be made before passing the baton to the next generation.

Another way of seeing the community that I attribute to generational difference is changing priorities. *“Les gens aujourd’hui sont très pognés par leur vie, par le rythme, la vitesse de leur vie et semblent moins vouloir bâtir.”*¹⁰⁴ This difference can be attributed to the way people work today. One deputy commented that when they started volunteering, some deputies did not own a television. Fax or the telephone is still sometimes preferred over email. The use of technology plays an important role in our lives, which have sped up as a result. It creates and manages, develops invisible communities over large distances, something that was not possible in the past.

¹⁰³ “The under 25s call themselves Fransaskois, but it's not what's in their heart...they're bilingual Canadians.”

¹⁰⁴ “People today are very wrapped up in their lives, it’s rhythm, it’s pace and seem less inclined to build.”

Interpretation of Main Findings

Participation in the ACF resulted in informal learning on the job, gradually increasing with every document read, every question asked and every meeting attended. This informal learning contributes to forming deputies who are patient, communicative and ethical by increasing their political skills and their understanding of how to be democratic. Deputies remarked on the way the new generation of Fransaskois creates identity. Language is practiced and activities chosen for their capacity to provide social interaction and a place to speak French. Community remains important, but community development occurs through technology and cultural activity rather than being driven by social change as it was in the past. Deputies also remarked that community members may feel reluctant to participate due to lack of information or understanding about the deputy's role and responsibility, and that deputies are at times misinformed about the requirements and time commitment of the job.

Of the indicators of political capital Flora (2008) describes, three are reflected in the data of informal learning “sur le tas” (on the job) by deputies in the ACF. These are organized groups working together, local people knowing and feeling comfortable around powerful people, and local concerns being part of the agenda in the regulation and distribution of resources.

One indicator of political capital, organized groups working together is illustrated by participants' belief that working alone is not productive and that the ACF represents all Fransaskois community members. Participants expressed a need for dialogue rather than

competition with other Fransaskois community groups and organizations. The idea that community survival is not possible without working together and unifying community development efforts makes working in partnerships a priority for deputies. Learning to form partnerships and honing communication skills such as conflict resolution and negotiation helps deputies work with other organized groups. Though deputies face communication and conflict resolution challenges, the skills they use and the role they adopt as deputies in trying to promote community cohesion are important contributors to increasing the community's political capital.

Another political capital indicator that can be found in the data is local people knowing and feeling comfortable around powerful people. Deputies described their participation as having increased their confidence when working with people in positions of authority. However, some said they already possessed the confidence needed to work with powerful people due to previous experience. Learning how the system works, operational efficiency and what is involved in negotiating, increased the deputies' understanding of politics and how this affect the community.

When describing the deputy's role, some common values were listening to the concerns of community members, valuing other voices and entering into dialogue. Deputies described their role as information sharers, not only sharing provincial agendas with the regions, but also making local concerns part of the provincial agenda, the last indicator of political capital.

The implications of increased political capital for the Fransaskois community and the organization are that the community's capacity to be heard and to meet their needs increase. Increasing the Fransaskois community's capacity to be heard affects its credibility with key decision-makers. Especially in an environment of competitive funding, credibility can directly affect a community's survival.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

The focus of this study was to explore the deputies' informal learning content and processes and how they see their learning applied to the benefit of the Fransaskois (French-speakers from Saskatchewan) community. Eight deputies agreed to participate in semi structured interviews. A representative sample of deputies participated and the majority of participants have been involved in the ACF since its inception. From an analysis of the data, a number of interesting themes emerged related to informal learning content, informal learning processes and the deputies' perceived impact on the community.

Summary of Findings

Informal learning in the ACF happens in an organic and non-linear way. The deputies' information and knowledge comes from a variety of informal sources such as networking, personal research, their relationships in the community, other community organizations and colleagues. With every document read, every question asked and every meeting attended, they learned on the job. Deputies' skill in communicating and engaging in ethical and democratic decision-making was built informally by participating in committees and initiatives. These opportunities also increased their political know-how and understanding of the system. Participating in collaborative decision-making made deputies feel accountable to each other and the community they represented and motivated them to explore informal learning processes. The skills and roles that deputies developed in promoting community cohesion were important contributors to increasing

the community's political capital.

This inquiry supports the literature that participating as a volunteer in a community-based decision-making body such as the ACF builds political capital in the community by providing a space for community members to become decision-makers. In order to become decision-makers, community members learn democratic principles and political skills that allow them to negotiate with people at increasingly higher levels of authority. At a grassroots level, participants in this study all agreed that engagement and networking in their community is essential to their role as deputy. In this role, deputies learn how the system works both on a grassroots and provincial level. With an insider's perspective, they get to know the players, develop participation strategies and learn operational values. Deputies also experience a shift in perspective as a result of volunteering in community governance that became apparent as a consequence of the interview process. The ability to look back at their experience critically and pinpoint change in themselves was evidence of transformative learning. This type of learning seems to occur as deputies come to value other perspectives and learn about their place in relation to the community's survival. In the course of their work, deputies also constantly negotiate between their local community's needs and those of the community at large, between the community, the province and the ACF, and between the ACF and other Fransaskois organizations. Their negotiation levels illustrate the multiplicity of roles that the deputies adopt. Along with building an understanding of how the system works and the confidence to negotiate the system to ensure their voice is heard, through the ACF, deputies have an

opportunity to make a significant contribution to long-term, sustainable Fransaskois community development.

This study suggests that deputies already possess an inclination to be citizens and leaders, and participate because of it. The ACF provides a place for these Fransaskois community members to exercise their disposition and learn additional skills and knowledge necessary for action in a minority language context. As volunteers, deputies are motivated to participate to effect change in the community. The ACF unifies their experience and desire, turning that motivation into concrete action.

Implications for the ACF

Caniglia and Carmin's (as cited in Taylor, 2007) metaphor of the formalized organization as an "incubator" of community talent can be applied to the ACF. The ACF gathers citizens with skills and experience and provides them with an opportunity to make collaborative decisions. Participation in collaborative decision-making exposes Fransaskois community leaders to community development on a larger scale. They are also introduced to change-oriented ideas and people. Organizations like the ACF encourage individuals to flourish when their talents are recognized and used. Engaging them in decision making at the same time reinforces minority language community and identity and encourages the development of community survival skills such as citizenship and leadership. This is consistent with Landry (2005), who believes that encouraging social conscience and self-determination in individuals can overcome the dominance and inevitability of the linguistic status quo in minority language communities. Developing

social conscience through empowering experiences becomes essential for the survival of French in a minority setting. “Self-determination is favoured by ‘empowering and enlightening’ experiences that promote the satisfaction of the basic needs of all humans: the need to belong, the need for autonomy, and the need for competence” (Landry, 2005, p. 79). Participation in the ACF can build the Fransaskois community’s social conscience by involving community members in empowering experiences such as collective decision-making and using their talents to benefit the community. Knowledge of how to approach people in positions of power, negotiate power and be comfortable doing so are strong assets for community-based organizations who want to increase their community’s ability to participate in decision-making on a higher level.

As mentioned in the section on learning barriers, participation in the ACF can be challenging for new deputies. The volume of new information they receive, the time needed to assimilate into the organization’s culture and learn the new role and the lack of shared history between all deputies present as barriers to participation as deputies. As a result of these factors new deputies can experience a sense of isolation. A common history facilitates acculturation to the organization’s vision. The deputies in this study who had participated in the ACF over a number of years, and may even have participated in the ACFC, the original organization from which the ACF emerged, did not experience the same sense of isolation. Newer deputies as well as the next generation of deputies would benefit from measures that address these issues.

The majority of deputies in this study represent an older group of pre-retirement and

retirement age. Given the current demographics in this province, bringing up the next generation of leaders that represent the diversity of the Fransaskois community should be a priority for the ACF. As service delivery becomes more of a community responsibility, community survival depends on volunteers with the capacity to sit at the decision-making table. Measures to resolve the generational issue and recruit a diversity of community leaders is critical to the ACF's and the Fransaskois community's continued survival.

Development of a succession plan is one measure that could address some of the challenges the ACF faces in recruiting new volunteers. Though deputies learn to view their role in the community's development from a long term perspective, the absence of a succession plan affects the ACF's ability to do so. A lack of new faces and new ideas aggravates the role overload deputies currently feel. Additional volunteers are needed to relieve pressure felt by current deputies. The position of deputy is inherently political, and at times conflict driven, two factors that may result in recruitment difficulties. As the section in this study on motivation indicates, the majority of current deputies embody a certain type of Fransaskois. "Francophones de souche"¹⁰⁵ are less numerous than in previous generations and the community is ready to adopt a more inclusive definition of Fransaskois. Better communication and education about the deputies' role and responsibilities as well as the ACF's vision may result in more understanding and acceptance, not only from deputies but from the rest of the community. Succession planning can relieve pressure on current deputies to stay and contribute.

¹⁰⁵ A controversial term with multiple definitions, in this context I use it to contrast previous definitions of Fransaskois with the definition set out by the Commission sur l'inclusion. Being 'francophone de souche' denotes a francophone who is born to one or both French-speaking parents.

Mentorship is another example of a measure that could address some of the challenges the ACF faces in recruiting and retaining volunteers. A mentorship program that pairs more experienced deputies with new deputies can provide an opportunity for sharing the ACF culture and vision, best practices. This program may help to decrease the sense of isolation and role overload felt by some of the new deputies. The ACF provides experience in committees and projects that interest and inspire deputies. They inform themselves and others in order to be able to make a difference in their community. The positive results of committees and projects have reinforced the deputies' conviction that, though volunteering, they can have a positive impact on their community. Mentorship may turn the results of participation on these committees and projects into intentional learning and help reassure recently elected deputies of their impact on the community. It is an opportunity to intentionally build social conscience: the awareness that individual actions can have collective consequences.

A third measure that would address the challenge volunteering poses to new deputies is to form partnerships with high schools and universities to create an internship program. This has the potential to promote the involvement of the next generation in collaborative decision-making and encourage a sense of ownership of the ACF. Other experiential learning opportunities such as job-shadowing, service learning and practicums can lessen role isolation by allowing the deputies to share ideas, gain new perspectives and expand the community's understanding of their role.

An additional measure that could be implemented is the development of an online learning community. Due to the distance that separates deputies, access to online education and e-mentoring is a cost effective way of creating an intentional way of learning. Possible outcomes of access are increased visibility and preservation of language and identity. An online community may lead to co-creation of learning space and content to facilitate outreach to the next generation of leaders.

More outreach and awareness-building can develop social conscience in the community at all ages. Currently, the ACF's initiatives focus on delivering services in the following sectors: arts, culture and heritage, communications, economy, education, home and spirituality, law and politics, health, sports and leisure and immigration. Work in these areas is meant to develop the community's quality of life; however, a common observation by deputies is that they encounter resistance from community members and organizations due to perceived lack of transparency. Community members may be more motivated to participate if they understand the rationale behind ACF initiatives which are promoted through outreach and awareness-building strategies. Increased participation will promote the organization's growth and development and continue building the Fransaskois community's political capital.

Implications for the Fransaskois Community

Social action is no longer an effective way of having a voice as it was when minority language rights were first recognized by the government. Today, community organizations such as the ACF have learned to work within the system in order gain

credibility and access to funding. As communities gain a seat at the decision-making table and negotiate to fund projects and initiatives, building political capital becomes necessary. The ACF is an example of a community governance model that contributes to political capital as volunteers learn to function in the political arena, put forward proposals effectively to people in power, mobilize the community's resources and present a unified front to influence decisions.

Limitations of the Research

A qualitative research study of informal learning has some inherent limitations. Qualitative research is based on the researcher's interpretation of data (Creswell, 2009). Therefore, conclusions reached by the researcher are open to scrutiny by others. Demonstrating trustworthiness is vital to ensuring the credibility of findings. Exploring informal learning can also be based on the researcher's interpretation of data as most people are not aware of engaging in informal learning and do not readily identify cases of it. Exploring "the invisible" through interviews, where participants relate their experiences, depends on the researcher's ability to ask the right questions.

Other limitations that may influence the interpretation of results are time between interviews and the challenge of separating prior experience of informal learning through participation from experience deputies brought with them to the position. While seven months separated the first and second interviews, this time can also strengthen trustworthiness. The stories and ideas described in the first interview remained representative of the deputies' experience at the second interview. Separating prior

experience from new informal learning is another limitation. In examining situations of informal learning, I had to determine what participants brought to the position as experience and applied in a new situation versus what situations yielded new informal learning. Learning that occurred before volunteering in the ACF is difficult to separate from learning that occurred in the past or outside the ACF. Open-ended, reflective and behavioural descriptive questions can define the difference between prior experience and new informal learning. Most informal learning is a natural part of being good at a job.

Recommendations for Further Research

Informal learning that occurs through volunteering in community-based governance remains an understudied topic in the literature. This is particularly true in minority language contexts. Further exploration of the findings of this study with respect to informal learning that occurs in conjunction with other Fransaskois organizations would provide another perspective. Further research on informal learning through participation in community governance in a minority language context could examine how informal learning increases awareness of community issues. In light of the importance given to networking by the deputies, exploring the role of social capital in informal learning would be another potential area for further research. More attention needs to be given to examining the connection between the fields of adult education and community development with regards to the type of informal learning that leads to social action and change. Building awareness of language rights and outreach are two strategies that can help increase social conscience and the number of active citizens in the community.

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Appendix A: Guide de rencontre

1. Parlez-moi d'une occasion où vous avez appris quelque chose d'utile ou de grande valeur à votre fonctionnement comme député.
2. Parlez-moi d'une occasion où vous ne connaissiez pas la réponse à une question (ou la solution à une situation problématique) dans l'exercice de vos fonctions comme député.
3. Parlez-moi d'une occasion où vous aviez l'espoir d'apprendre quelque chose de nouveau mais cela ne s'est pas produit.
4. Avez-vous eu l'occasion de vous servir de ce que vous avez appris en tant que député en dehors de l'ACF, dans votre communauté ?
5. Avez-vous déjà appris quelque chose sans avoir eu l'occasion de l'utiliser ?
6. Comment le fait d'être député vous a changé ?
7. Quels conseils donneriez-vous à quelqu'un qui voudrait devenir député? Qu'est-ce qu'il devrait savoir ?
8. S'il existait une organisation telle que l'ACF dans une autre province dans laquelle vous étiez intéressé à participer, que feriez-vous pour vous préparer ?

English translation :

1. Tell me about a time when you learned something of value to your work as a deputy.
2. Tell me about a time when you did not know the answer to a question (or the solution in a problematic situation) while acting as a deputy.
3. Tell me about a time when you hoped to learn something new, but this did not happen.
4. Have you had the opportunity to use what you have learned as a deputy outside of the ACF, in your community?
5. Have you ever learned something without having the opportunity to use it?
6. How has being a deputy changed you?
7. What advice would you give to someone who would like to be a deputy? What should they know?
8. If an organisation such as the ACF existed in another province and you were interested in participating, how would you prepare?

Appendix B: Lettre d'information et de consentement

DATE: _____

ENTRE: _____ (député)

ET: Valérie De Pauw, étudiante deuxième cycle, Université de Regina.

Le / la député(e) soussigné(e) accepte volontairement de participer au projet de recherche intitulé :

Apprendre la citoyenneté et le leadership : l'expérience ACF

entrepris par Valérie De Pauw comme sujet de mémoire à l'Université de Regina.

Le/la député-e affirme avoir reçu et lu une copie de la présente « lettre d'information et de consentement ». Il/elle affirme également avoir eu l'occasion de discuter avec la chercheuse du projet de recherche. Enfin, il/elle affirme bien comprendre les informations se rapportant : au but du projet, à la nature de participation au projet et aux conditions particulières entourant le projet.

But du projet :

Le but de ce projet de recherche est de mieux comprendre l'apprentissage informel d'un député à travers sa participation à l'ACF.

Nature de la participation au projet :

Les députés participant à ce projet de recherche rencontreront la chercheuse individuellement à deux reprises. Ces rencontres dureront de 60-90 minutes chacune. Ces rencontres seront enregistrées, et retranscrites. Les questions données dans le « Guide de rencontre » (ci-joint) serviront de base de discussion pendant la première rencontre. Après la première rencontre, la transcription de votre entrevue vous sera envoyée pour que vous la révisiez et approuviez. Le sommaire d'une première analyse de la transcription de cette rencontre vous sera également envoyé. Lors de la deuxième rencontre, celui-ci fera l'objet de la discussion et, si nécessaire, les questions restantes du « Guide de rencontre » seront explorées.

Conditions particulières entourant le projet:

- ⚡ Vous avez libre choix d'accepter ou de refuser de participer à ce projet. Si vous acceptez, vous êtes libre de vous retirer en tout moment, si tel est votre désir, même après avoir signé cette lettre de consentement, vous n'auriez qu'à communiquer votre décision à la chercheuse ou à votre président, qui fera part de votre décision à la chercheuse.
- ⚡ Vous avez le droit de refuser de répondre une ou plus d'une question du « Guide de rencontre » tout en continuant à faire partie de ce projet.
- ⚡ Une fois la transcription de l'enregistrement de la première rencontre analysée, elle fera l'objet d'un sommaire bref qui permettra à la chercheuse de poser des

- questions plus précises. Ce sommaire vous sera remis, ainsi que la transcription.
- ⤴ Vous recevrez un rapport des résultats de ce projet de recherche.
 - ⤴ La confidentialité et l'anonymat de données fournies par les députés participant seront rigoureusement respectés. Des codes protégeront l'identité des députés participant, ainsi que leurs enregistrements. Certains détails (tel que genre) seront changés. Le chercheur seul aura accès à la clé du code et aux données de base (informations). Toute donnée sera protégée d'un mot de passe et gardée dans un lieu sûr.

Ce projet a été approuvé par l'ACF et le Comité d'éthique de la recherche de l'Université de Regina. Si vous avez des questions quant à vos droits ou sur la façon dont vous êtes traité en tant que participant, vous pouvez contacter le responsable du comité d'éthique de la recherche en composant le 585-4775 ou en envoyant un courriel: research.ethics@uregina.ca

J'accepte librement de participer suite aux conditions mentionnées plus haut.

Signé : _____

Date : _____

Votre participation est appréciée. Merci.

Questions ou préoccupations reliées au projet de recherche peuvent être dirigées à Valérie De Pauw (vdepauw@gmail.com, 306 565 0494) ou à sa superviseuse, Dr. Marilyn Miller (marilyn.miller@uregina.ca).

Appendix C: Ethics Approval Form



UNIVERSITY OF
REGINA

OFFICE OF RESEARCH SERVICES

M E M O R A N D U M

DATE: June 23, 2009

TO: Valerie De Pauw
2113 MacKay Street
Regina, SK S4N 2S7

FROM: Dr. Bruce Plouffe
Chair, Research Ethics Board

Re: **Citizenship and Leadership Learning: The ACF Experience (80S0809)**

Please be advised that the University of Regina Research Ethics Board has reviewed your proposal and found it to be:

1. APPROVED AS SUBMITTED. Only applicants with this designation have ethical approval to proceed with their research as described in their applications. For research lasting more than one year (Section 1F). **ETHICAL APPROVAL MUST BE RENEWED BY SUBMITTING A BRIEF STATUS REPORT EVERY TWELVE MONTHS.** Approval will be revoked unless a satisfactory status report is received. Any substantive changes in methodology or instrumentation must also be approved prior to their implementation.
2. ACCEPTABLE SUBJECT TO MINOR CHANGES AND PRECAUTIONS (SEE ATTACHED). Changes must be submitted to the REB and approved prior to beginning research. Please submit a supplementary memo addressing the concerns to the Chair of the REB.** Do not submit a new application. Once changes are deemed acceptable, ethical approval will be granted.
3. ACCEPTABLE SUBJECT TO CHANGES AND PRECAUTIONS (SEE ATTACHED). Changes must be submitted to the REB and approved prior to beginning research. Please submit a supplementary memo addressing the concerns to the Chair of the REB.** Do not submit a new application. Once changes are deemed acceptable, ethical approval will be granted.
4. UNACCEPTABLE AS SUBMITTED. The proposal requires substantial additions or redesign. Please contact the Chair of the REB for advice on how the project proposal might be revised.

Bruce Plouffe
Dr. Bruce Plouffe

cc: Dr. Marilyn Miller – Faculty of Education

** supplementary memo should be forwarded to the Chair of the Research Ethics Board at the Office of Research Services (Research and Innovation Centre, Room 109) or by e-mail to research.ethics@uregina.ca

Phone: (306) 585-4775
Fax: (306) 585-4893