THE IMPACT OF INDIAN RESIDENTIAL SCHOOLS ON FIRST NATION PARENTING IN SASKATCHEWAN

A Research Project Submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master of Social Work University of Regina

by

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ABSTRACT

The Indian residential school system in Canada is one issue that has been at the forefront of societal and cultural revitalization for Aboriginal people in recent years. The reason for this attention is the influence that this system has had on changing Aboriginal families and culture. Rueven Feuerstein identifies culture as "the process by which knowledge, values, and beliefs are transmitted from one generation to the next" (Feuerstein in Ballester, 1984, p. 32). Aboriginal people are attempting to reclaim the cultural losses suffered due to this system. One participant in this study stated, "do not deprive your children of their tradition, [let them] know their history and not be ashamed of who they are".

This study examined the experiences of twenty-five (n=25) Aboriginal Saskatchewan participants who had attended residential school in Saskatchewan. The over-all focus consisted of the impact of their experiences on parenting. Aspects in this approach included memories, traumatic events and resolution suggestions from the participants. The findings in this study support the over-all views found in the literature that purport First Nation parenting to be a central factor impacted upon by the role-models who cared for the children at residential school. The examples available to the students in the schools for the most part were lacking due to the substandard parenting and nurturing examples that Aboriginal children experienced. Most of these twenty-five students were raised without support from their family and community and subjected to a system that was riddled with abuse and lacked the healthy patterns that should prepare them for their role as parents.
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To the individuals who participated in this study. I hope the information that has been put to word represent the memories and experiences that each of you lived in residential school and is an expression for those who were not able to tell their stories.

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“memory building - importance of building positive memories with children; sometimes in life all other may be lost and a person may only be left with memories to go with: members are asked to close their eyes and think back to childhood and to a strong and positive memory, which influenced their life” (Stuecher, 1991, p. 27).

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DEDICATION

This Project is dedicated

To those individuals who attended residential school

and

To my dear friends Eileen Ross, husband Bernard (Jack) [in memory],
their children, Terri and Ryan [in memory]

and all their relations.
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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

Balance is the one word that I use to describe my life. Being deeply involved in academics, athletics, and culture, I manage to maintain a happy and fulfilled state of mind... Whatever an individual's dream may be, they must find a comfortable balance amongst the things that are important to them. For it is this balance that will be their foundation in making their dream a reality. (Redman, 1997, n.p.)

1.1 Introduction

In the above statement, Stephanie Redman reflects on factors that inspired her to achieve various goals in her life. As a First Nation woman, she speaks to the Aboriginal community as a role model. Redman "convocated with a bachelor degree in biology and a certificate in health sciences" on May 26, 2000 (Pacholik, 2000, p. A3). However, for the majority of Aboriginal children who attended the residential school system, the cultural component that Redman refers to was unattainable in the oppressive structures of the educational system.

In recent years, the issue of Indian residential school has emerged as a topic that generates intense discussion regarding ideology, policy and practice that were intrinsic to the residential school system in Canada. Noel Dyck who has studied the residential school system points out that "schools were established both on reserves and in off-reserve locations where Indian children could be removed from what was considered to be the deleterious influence of their parents... residential schools sought first to eliminate any trace of 'Indian' behavior... the chief difference being that Indian children eventually left these institutions, though not before having been subjected to unceasing critiques of their and their parents' Indianness" (Dyck, 1991, p. 81).
Furniss points out that "while the residential schools have now closed, the relationships that existed between First Nations, the church, and the Government, relationships that are central to this story, still persist today" (Furniss, 1995, p. 10).

Aboriginal people had their lives dramatically affected by the treatment they received in residential school. Former Grand Chief of the Assembly of First Nations, Phil Fontaine "was among former students who gave the issue of residential schools prominence in the early 1990s by going public with personal stories" (Andersson and Greenspon, 1998, p. A4). In Saskatchewan, one former student "concedes he is still dealing with a lot of anger...the victim says he suffers from crying spells, mood swings and became physically ill from the stress of disclosing the years of abuse. His wife and children...have suffered as a result of his emotional problems" (Sutter, 1996, p. A3).

In order to explore the residential school experience in Saskatchewan, a naturalistic model was used in this research. It is an exploratory design that is naturalistic in the sense that it seeks the subjective experiences and interpretations of former residents. Twenty-five (n=25) individuals participated in this study through a combination of snowball and self-selection sampling. This researcher in conducting face to face interviews used a questionnaire survey.

Following compilation of the data, a qualitative tool (The Ethnograph v 4.0) was used to extrapolate categories, sort and delineate experiences from the residential school participants. It is through this process that this researcher identified the main themes of "memories", "impact on First Nation parenting", "trauma", and "resolution" as critical experiences for the participants in this study.
1.2 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to explore the subjective reflections of Aboriginal adults and the perceived impact of the residential school system on their parenting. As young children, the participants relied on the training, modeling and role models that were available to them. According to Ballester (1984, p. 30), Rueven Feuerstein stresses the importance of these factors in the learning process. Feuerstein "suggests that the outcome of the learning process is largely dependent on the quality of mediated learning experiences between the primary caretaker and the child".

For generations, First Nation people were denied ownership over their experiences and not allowed to share what they went through. Derrick More is a therapist who has worked with survivors of residential school abuse. He points out that "there is a quiet rage among survivors today... people had to block their feelings in order to survive." (More in York, 1989, p. 39) For many former residential students, this form of survival led to a variety of problems. This study was designed to give ownership to the participants over their experiences in residential school and encourage these survivors to speak about them.

1.3 Significance of the Problem

On March 13, 1992 at an Aboriginal policy conference in Ottawa, former Prime Minister of Canada, Joe Clark, addressed the gathering concerning the issue of the residential schools. He stated:

there is another [history] and that is what the people who came later did to those who were here first. Intentionally or unintentionally with malice or without the identity and culture and confidence and dignity of Aboriginal people were ground down. There are people here tonight who were taken away to schools and were told to despise their language, their culture... Native children

were regularly taken away from their homes and put in residential schools where abuse was wide-spread and various... none of us who are not Aboriginal would accept that kind of systematic discrimination and indignity. (Clark, 1992)

In January 1998, Indian Affairs Minister Jane Stewart "expressed deep regret for past actions that hurt aboriginal communities. The Government specifically acknowledged its role in the residential school system that took native children out of their communities and placed them in training facilities where hundreds suffered physical, and sometimes sexual abuse" (Andersen and Greenspon, 1998, p. A4).

Today, major efforts are taking place to change the wrongs of the past and create a more just society for all Aboriginal people. One of these efforts is to understand the impact of the residential schools on Aboriginal people and the long-term impact on parenting.

Not all residents had a negative experience in residential schools. Phil Fontaine, a former student of the Manitoba residential school system and former Grand Chief of the Assembly of First Nations, shared the following perspective in 1995:

Some people think that residential school was the best thing they could have because it taught them to work, it taught them discipline, and it helped establish friendships. For those people, I think residential school represented an important part of their lives and one should not take that away from them. They deserve to remember residential school for the good things that it may have brought to their lives. But for the many others that remember residential schools for the hell-holes they were, they should be given an opportunity to re-examine those negative experiences so they can put them to rest. (Fontaine in Jain, 1995, pp. 54-55)

The importance of examining the experiences of Saskatchewan residential school students is to increase awareness and understanding of how it relates to parenting.

My hope and vision is that this information will help future parents understand the
need for culturally based techniques in their parenting and understand the impact of residential schools on the development of Aboriginal people.

1.4 Research Questions

The purpose of this research is to explore the perceptions of former residential school participants regarding their experiences at residential school and the impact on their parenting. To accomplish this goal the following research questions were asked:

1. What prominent memories do participants of residential school recall of their time in residential school?
2. What was the impact of residential school on First Nation Parenting as reported by adults who attended residential school in Saskatchewan?
3. Did the students of residential school perceive their experiences as "traumatic"?
4. In what ways do the participants find resolution to their experiences in residential school?

The students reported various experiences from their residential school experience. Chapter One reviews the purpose for this study and the significance of the problem of the residential schools.

Chapter two looks at the historical aspects of assimilation, the role of Elders, the efforts to re-socialize the children and psychosocial effects of abuse.

Chapter three discusses research methodology and focuses on the qualitative approach. A definition of the sample group is provided along with the data gathering process of questionnaire survey, sample selection, the interview process, ethical issues and limitations of the study.

Chapter four presents data analysis and findings. They include year of admission to residential school of participants, memories of participants at residential school, impact on First Nation parenting, situations participants identified as traumatic and what participants viewed as resolution to the residential school experience.

The final Chapter culminates in a discussion of future aspects related to Aboriginal parenting issues and the leadership principles pertinent to the process.

It should be acknowledged at this point that a single incident is not responsible for the overall negative relationship between student and the school experience. In fact, this study and other material on this topic show a cumulative effect occurring for participants of residential school. These situations took place for students in an atmosphere that failed to provide the necessary support and allowed the negative examples to go unchecked in the majority of instances. For residential school participants the result would become manifest through faulty parenting practices.

The historical approaches to Aboriginal assimilation into society were also fundamental in allowing societal attitudes to view Aboriginal people in a negative and stereotypical manner. Traditionally, Aboriginal Elders supported parents in the community to raise their children. They did this by transmitting values to the younger generations. However, their input was nullified by not being allowed to assist. This deepened the alienation that Aboriginal people experienced in their socially marginalized state.
CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

2.1 Historical Perspectives of Assimilation

There was a belief that First Nations would be assimilated into mainstream society. At the mid-point of the eighteenth century, Canadian artist Paul Kane demonstrates this assumption in the following "warning":

one must make haste to visit the Red Man...Their tribes, not long since masters of the whole world, are disappearing rapidly, driven back and destroyed by the inroads of the white race. Their future is inevitable...The Indians are doomed; their fate will be that of so many Primitive races now gone (Kane, 1859 in Francis, 1992, p. 23).

Anglican minister George Grant stressed that "little can be done with the old, and it may be two, three, or more generations before the old habits of a people are changed; but, by always taking hold of the young, the work can be done" (Grant, 1872 in Francis, 1992, p. 49). Milloy (1999) points out that "the vision was anchored to the fundamental belief that to educate Aboriginal children effectively they had to be separated from their families" (Milloy, 1999, p. 23).

2.2 Elders as Teachers

By separating the Aboriginal children from their traditional teachers (the elders), the youth were left with few cultural models. To Aboriginal culture, "the elders in a tribe were the vital link with the past... they were repositories of knowledge about how to behave suitably and honourably in every situation...through attendance at traditional gatherings such as sun dances, feasts, give-aways, namings, weddings, fastings, and lodge meetings, we were able to learn from our elders" (Sinclair in Hylton, 1994, p. 24). (For an introduction of Aboriginal cultural practices, see the Aboriginal and Community Policing Directorate, 1993.)

A Saanich First Nation elder recalls that "as children we learned from the very beginning, by teaching and discipline, and later on through lecturing, and also by example. We saw how elders lived, how respectful they were of one another, and how they loved each other. I used to see old people when they would meet after not seeing each other and tears would roll down their cheeks" (Medicine, 1989, p. 145).

For the participants in this study, Elders remain a primary influence in Aboriginal society. The knowledge and guidance these individuals provide to the community is invaluable. At residential school these relationships were nullified, as Elders were not involved in raising the children. The role models for residential school students were school staff.

One participant spoke about the importance of Elders in her life. She went on to say that grandmothers and Elders were important. Her "grandfather was a medicine man. This provided a foundation for the spiritual realm. That respect carried to relationships and individual growth. It created a balance".

Haig-Brown points out that "grandmothers...played a major role in educating the children. Traditionally, grandparents were teachers of the community as a whole and children in particular; to this day, elders are respected as teachers" (Haig-Brown, 1993, p. 41). By taking away the influence of Elders, Aboriginal children were faced with a disruption to their lifestyle and learning process. Children were taught cultural values, ceremonies and moral guidance from the Elders. One participant in this study spoke to this influence on his development. He recalled that "before going to school I spoke my language was given my Indian name and was taught my culture".

Elders are a traditional value in Aboriginal culture that provide support to parents by upholding the parenting responsibility and assisting by imparting respect in the children through ceremonies and stories. For instance, "old people [did] the
naming and the teaching, if the parents have trouble, then the aunts and uncles or someone in the family helped ‘till the parents got their life worked out. But no one ever took the kids away from their peoples” (Campbell in Jaime, 1993, p. 22).

There is no way for those participants who suffered loss of Elder influence in their lives to regain that intrinsic connection. Some renewal can take place, however; these efforts will not replace the elders significance. Aboriginal families still have to live with the reality that many did not have the opportunity to enjoy the tutelage of Elders in cultural activities and ceremonies.

2.3 The Re-socialisation of First Nation Children

At the time the residential school system was proposed, First Nations, teachers and government bureaucrats could not foresee the problems that would result. However, since the earliest days of the operation of the schools, complaints about treatment surfaced which signified that further evaluation at some of the schools was necessary. Reports surfaced that indicated the safety of the children was being compromised with regard to inappropriate treatment or discipline (Jaime, 1995; Bull, 1991; Furniss, 1995; Ing, 1991; Haig-Brown, 1993; Miller, 1996; Milloy, 1999). Prevalent complaints from the residents included “the absence of emotional support and nurturing by staff....bitter recollection of former students concerns food, the lack of it, and its inferior quality” (Miller, 1996, p. 290). With regard to the social impact as early as 1928, “the Meriam Report....condemned the practice of removing children from families because it operated against the development of wholesome family life....Further, the effects of this early deprivation of family life was apparent in the children as they were victims of an arrested development” (Unger in Ing, 1991, p. 74).

To most Aboriginal people, the schools represented a totalitarian system. The routine was static and well known (Jaime, 1995; Bull, 1991; Furniss, 1995; Miller, 1996). York points out that the “residential schools remained the most powerful institutions in native life” (York, 1989, p. 24).

York points out that the “residential schools remained the most powerful institutions in native life” (York, 1989, p. 24).

The schools were initially developed with certain goals and objectives. Lomawaima surmises that the schools were to “achieve far-reaching social goals, to civilise and Christianise young Indian people and to draw them away from tribal identification and communal living” (Lomawaima, 1993, p. 227). The Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples state:

The tragic legacy of residential education...included a justification for removing children from their communities and disrupting Aboriginal families...a precise pedagogy for re-socialising children in the schools (Royal Commission, 1996, p. 337).

The schools would be the primary vehicle used to socialise Aboriginal children. Miller points out that when loco parentis [in place of the parents] was invoked it “incurred a moral, if not legal, obligation to do better” (Miller, 1996, p. 423). Miller goes on to explain that the term loco parentis allowed residential school staff to function in the parenting role by making students “wards of the Crown” (Miller, 1996, p. 423).

Furniss points out that the residential schools initially received favourable reviews from Aboriginal society:

Native people supported the...schools, believing that a knowledge of English and agricultural and trade skills would enhance their opportunities, while at the same time enabling them to maintain their communities and traditional cultures in their changing circumstances (Furniss, 1995, p. 21).

However, as history has shown, the schools were successful in destroying many aspects of traditional culture without providing for skills to "enhance opportunities". It is important to consider the impact of the schools on the individuals who attended them.
2.4 Psychosocial Effects of Abuse in Residential Schools

As psychosocial scholars point out, the formulation of cognitive concepts will be the groundwork that people will rely on throughout their lives. Briere and Runtz state that, "cognitive and psychodynamic theorists generally agree that people make significant assumptions about themselves, others, the environment, and the future based on childhood learning" (Briere and Runtz, 1993, p. 314). Therefore, it is imperative that the experiences in childhood remain as positive as possible. These experiences are integrated into adulthood and may be based on situations of encouragement, problem-solving or positive modeling. They can also be based upon negative experiences of abuse, social isolation and a failure to thrive when required nurturing components are lacking in a child's upbringing.

Should the child encounter forms of abuse or trauma in their developing years, the results can be devastating. In regard to circumstances of ill treatment, Dodge, Pettit, Bates and Valente point out that physical abuse can lead to "conduct problems through social information-processing patterns" (Dodge et al. 1995, p. 640). With regard to sexual abuse this is especially evident. Finkelhor, (1990) points out that "following sexual abusive experiences, symptoms are reported in all domains of functioning including cognition affect, interpersonal behaviour, and psychophysiological responding" (Finkelhor in Gold et al. 1994, p. 12).

The study of abuse is now 30-40 years old to social research. Cicchette and Carlson, (1989) point out that:

...history documents that the problem of child maltreatment has existed since the beginning of civilization...unfortunately, our understanding of the etiology, intergenerational transmission, and development sequelae of this pervasive social problem has been the result of relatively recent systematic inquiry. Until a generation ago, modern society had refused to recognize the scope and gravity of child maltreatment. In fact, prior to the 1960s, many sectors of our society (e.g., medical personnel) failed even to acknowledge its existence (Cicchetti & Carlson in Sattler, 1998, p. 680).

Identification and response initiatives toward dealing with these issues have come into public attention only in the past 25 years or so. With regard to sexual abuse, Conte (1985) states that "systematic research efforts on childhood sexual abuse" only began in the 1970s. (Conte in Downs, 1993, p. 334)

Browne and Finkelhor (1986) state that it has only been since the 1980s that "systematic model-building in this area has been attempted" (Browne and Finkelhor in Downs, 1993, p. 334). Browne and Finkelhor (1986) identify some of the specific impacts of abuse:

- Short-term effects...occurring within 2 years of abuse include fear, anger, guilt/shame, depression, low self-esteem/poor self-image, physical and somatic complaints, sexual behaviour disturbances; and poor social functioning. Long-term effects have included depression, behavioural and social problems (e.g., prostitution, alcoholism, substance abuse), emotional disorders, suicide, low self-esteem, problems in interpersonal relationships, sexual disturbances, and revictimization (Browne and Finkelhor in Downs, 1993, pp. 331-332).

Any form of abuse can be traumatic and is capable of debilitating an individual, or creating social, emotional or physical damage to the victim. First Nation Psychologist, Dr. Claire Brant, illustrates the meaning of trauma by using Erick Erickson's definition. Dr. Brant goes on to state that:

Erickson distinguishes two kinds of trauma...the first is individual trauma and the second collective trauma...In disaster situations, it is normal for people to suffer deep shock... they...withdraw into themselves. Feeling numb, fearful, vulnerable and very alone... By collective trauma on the other hand...injuries act to damage the bonds attaching people to one another. To impair the prevailing sense of group cohesion... they learn that they are isolated and alone living in a kind of social wasteland with no one to turn to (Brant, 1992).

In regard to the issue of the residential schools, Phil Fontaine speaks to students...
from residential schools by stating:

I would tell them that this is far too important an issue and that it should not remain in the background...while we can have good memories, as I do, of residential school, I have far too many bad memories that need to be dealt with. 

Residential schools have been a collective experience (Fontaine in Jaime, 1995, p. 56).

Residential school students’ experiences included role-models who neglected to nurture and support them, placed them in circumstances that were abusive, and mostly failed to maintain the familial link that was so important in upholding self-worth and cultural teachings. These experiences were pivotal in the learning process of the children and it failed to provide them a social foundation to develop and grow. Feuerstein (1980, p. 384) purports that “the lack of mediated learning experiences affects the individual’s functional ability, his cognitive style and attitude toward life, rather than his organic substrata”. The failure of the residential schools is that it did not provide the students with a nurturing environment. In most cases it slowed or stopped their development into healthy adults. It is logical to assume that this inhibited growth would impact the individual’s ability to parent.

2.5 Failure to Respond

Any person examining the residential schools has to consider the historical and social implications of the process that may partly explain the inaction or default with regard to addressing concerns raised about the treatment of the students.

For the most part, many students who left school and returned to their communities encountered problems making the transition from residential to reserve life. Furthermore, they had developed minimal skills appropriate to reserve life. The failure of the schools went unnoticed by teachers, government bureaucrats and public officials. Veronica Abney is a clinical social worker in Los Angeles and deals with the treatment of abuse victims and survivors. She proposes one theory that might explain the nonchalant response! “Historically, there has been a tendency in the human sciences to explore cultural differences from either a perspective of cultural deviance or cultural relativism. This means that we are prone to view others from our own cultural perspective, either seeing our culture as superior or normal or seeing everything that is different in the other” (Abney in Briere, et al 1996, p. 410).

These educational officials who were responsible for native students ignored the signs of failure.

In the past, “the values and attitudes of Indian culture have been accused of being the cause of low school achievement, high unemployment, and poor health... Assimilation was thought to be needed in order to remove Indian children from a culture that was considered to be empty, meager, and non-adaptive to the modern world” (Brown and Hernsay in Powell, 1983, p. 44).

The inability to comprehend or examine reports of problems prevented advocacy or intervention that may have been meaningful. Caldwell’s 1967 study into the residential school system in Saskatchewan theorises the following:

The major impression in respect to control of the children is that the residential schools had very little trouble in this area... the project director was disturbed that in a group of 1612 children, control problems were so minimal. In terms of the consistency with which this was reported, it must be concluded that the reports were accurate. But why? Given a similar number of white children, the control problem would have been ten-fold those reported in the nine schools. Cultural differences were the common explanation given. Indian children are easier to handle (Caldwell, 1967, pp. 109-110).

One reason that such an oversight could have materialised is provided further in Caldwell’s report. He identified one problem as “no systematic gathering of data on the attitudes and opinions of Indian parents” (Caldwell, 1967, p. 145). In reviewing data
on the residential school experience, it can be inferred that the students were either afraid to bring their complaints forward or coerced into providing a compliant facade. The current literature on this subject and literature relating to the field of abuse support this premise. Secrecy is the foremost technique used to maintain the abusive relationship and create a view that all is well. With regard to Aboriginal people, it is evident that society did not include them as coequal shareholders in society and this dependant relationship further marginalized them.

Societal attitudes of apathy and lack of information appear to be factors responsible in maintaining an indifferent position toward the plight of Aboriginal children. These attitudes created a medium for inaction regarding the schools, treatment at the schools and safety issues.

Aboriginal people have asserted for decades that the reason their issues have not been heard or addressed is related to the manner in which mainstream society views them. Aboriginal groups have been depicted in a narrow and negative fashion.

Dyck states that "the presumed moral and cultural 'superiority' of first, European and, Euro-Canadian society over native peoples...was, of course, a by-product of economic and political ascendency of Europe... This constructed theory of Indian 'inferiority' provided the rationale for unilateral assumption of control over Indian lands, resources, communities and ways of life" (Dyck, 1991, p. 25).

There is no question that historical perceptions concerning Aboriginal people have been misrepresented and incorrect. The literature speaks to multiple accounts where First Nation and Metis people have been projected as anti-social characters or as half-witted persons. Hence, even though there were signs of serious harm to the children of residential schools public officials and church agencies carried on running them as "normal".

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

This chapter discusses the qualitative research methods used in gathering data to explore The Impact of Residential Schools on First Nation Parenting. The steps include definition of the sample group, questionnaire survey, sample selection, interviews, ethical issues and limitations of the research method.

3.1 Qualitative Research Methods

Over the years, qualitative research has emerged to the point where it offers an alternative to inquiry especially suited in the social science field. Zelditch notes that there are two criteria on which this approach is built. The first is "informational adequacy... will the strategy elicit the sought after information? The second criterion is efficiency. Does the plan allow adequate data to be collected at the least cost in terms of time, access, and cost to participants?" (Zelditch, 1962 in Marshall and Rossman, 1989, p 75).

The process of completing a qualitative research study is intense in the sense that various steps have to be taken throughout and in concluding the study. As Marshall and Rossman point out, qualitative analysis is more than "an unfocused, unplanned desire to go out in the world and hang out or muck around" (Marshall and Rossman, 1989, p. 12). Wolcott identifies some of these stages as "conceptualizing, conducting the fieldwork, and analyzing... these processes are virtually inseparable" (Wolcott, 1990, p. 11).

Meloy points out that "the conscious and tacit learning-thinking-researching-feeling-knowing and writing-the simultaneous and multifaceted processes of inquiry... ensure the integrity of the qualitative research effort... the workings are connected
and multiple rather than discrete and linear" (Meloy, 1994, p. xiii). "Each phase of
data analysis entails data reduction as the reams of collected data are brought into
manageable chunks" (Marshall and Rossman, 1989, p 114). As the researcher
achieves this task, revaluation of the material is continuous and time consuming.
The strength and success of a qualitative study is to "describe a setting, a process, a
social group, or a pattern of interaction which will be its validity" (Marshall and
Rossman, 1989, p. 145). This process is continual throughout qualitative study and the
researcher is striving to ensure that synthesis is achieved. Meloy identifies the
following six areas that are inherent to a qualitative study:

- **Verite:** is it consistent with accepted knowledge in the field?
- **Integrity:** is the design or research rationale logical, appropriate?
- **Rigor:** is there sufficient depth of intellect?
- **Utility:** does it make a contribution to the field?
- **Vitality:** does it have a sense of vibrancy, intensity, excitement of
discovery?
- **Aesthetics:** does it give insight into some universal part of my
educational self?

(Meloy, 1994, pp. 44-45)

This qualitative research strategy is an appropriate method of collecting data on
the subjective experiences of First Nation persons who have attended residential
schools. The conception phase included the idea to study the experiences of
individuals who attended a residential school in Saskatchewan. This was followed
by a proposal stage with the required approval to proceed with the study. The
development of the research methodology was on-going from the beginning to the
eventual completion of the study.

### 3.2 Definition of the Sample Group

The groups invited to participate in this study were identified in the following
manner. The term "Indian" that historically has been used will be replaced by the

contemporary name, "First Nation". Metis will refer to members of the Metis Nation who
have mixed ancestry. "Aboriginal" people will encompass both First Nation and Metis
people. (For a more thorough explanation of these groups see the Canadian Education
Association, 1984, p. 9; the Royal Commission Report, Volume 1, 1996, pp. 11-27 and the

### 3.3 Questionnaire Survey

Franklin and Osborne point out that a "sample survey is actually an inclusive
category encompassing both questionnaire surveys and interview surveys" (Franklin et
al 1971, p. 337). A questionnaire survey for face to face interviews was developed to
collect responses from the participants as it was considered the most suitable method
toward gathering the data.

In drafting the questionnaire survey, two aspects were considered. They were the
manner in which the questions were arranged and the related style of the questions
in order to address reliability. Therefore, to address reliability regarding the impact
of the residential school on First Nation parenting, questions 5; 5a; 6 and 7 were
worded to solicit responses regarding the impact on parenting. Question 5 and 5a
asked about the impact of residential school from the individual's experiences
whereas, questions 6 and 7 asked about the impact of residential school on the
collective experiences of participants. In answering affirmative to the individual
experience, it was expected that confirmation would occur in the next segment. I
operated on the assumption that if parenting areas are affected on an individual
level, it is probable that they would be affected on a collective level. Glaser and
Strauss (1967, p. 114) refer to this aspect as diversity and point out that "we mean
that each incident is compared with other incidents, or with properties of a category,
in terms of as many similarities”.

By using symmetry methods, minimization of ‘reactive effects’ was taken into consideration. This term refers to instruments which “are highly sensitive to systemic influence from a variety of sources...where instruments or researcher subject interactions bias responses” (Maslany and Weston, 1977, p. 41).

In completing a qualitative study, it is important to ensure that various steps are taken throughout the process to compensate for consistency and frequency in the responses. For instance, during questionnaire survey development compounding questions can be a problem for the participant when the participant is “forced to choose which question to answer” (Dooley, 1984, p. 255). Therefore, the researcher needs to ensure that singular questions are presented to the participant to preclude any confusion or multiple responses.

(questionnaire survey, see Appendix A.)

3.4 Sample Selection

In order to access and notify the Aboriginal community of this study, an introductory letter was faxed to 13 First Nation Bands and 3 Metis District offices surrounding the Regina area. This letter was also delivered by myself or faxed to numerous individuals who were interested in the study or who had approached me to participate in the study.

(See Appendix C for a copy of this letter.)

Prior to faxing the letter to the Aboriginal agencies, I had called to inform them that the study was proceeding. In most of the cases, I made strenuous attempts to talk with the Chief of the Band. The purpose for this effort rests on the fact that the Chief is an elected representative of the community and therefore, stands in the foremost position of leadership. When I was unable to communicate with the Chief directly following numerous calls, I spoke with the band manager informing her/him that the study was proceeding. In some instances, numerous calls were made to these agencies; however, due to the responsibilities and busy schedules of the band administrators, I was unable to discuss the matter directly with some of them. In these instances, I faxed the introductory letter Appendix D with the following modification “I had called and you were busy or out of the office” to the first sentence.

A toll free phone number was set up for participants to call concerning the study. Notification of this service and the toll free number were provided in the introductory letter, (Appendix C.) The toll-free number was in operation from the beginning of December 1997 to the end of February 1998.

Success in using a toll-free number in this research endeavour was limited as two individuals used the toll-free line. This is an important finding as it speaks to research in the Aboriginal community. It is apparent that face to face communication was successful in producing participant involvement. Regarding reluctance in using the phone line, participants may not have wanted to call for various reasons. For instance, the topic matter related to a personal and sensitive nature therefore, the individual may have felt uncomfortable in leaving a message; some individuals may have perceived the line as impersonal while other individuals may not have wanted to call for an interview.

As mentioned later in this section, self-selection and snowball sampling were two methods used to select participants.

No attempt was made to gather information during the Christmas holiday season. The holiday season is expected to be busy and participation would probably drop.

As the interviews were arranged and proceeded with following the holiday season, I travelled to the different communities to conduct the interviews. For this study, phone contact with the participant was the first route of communication at
which time an interview time was set. For this researcher, there was an air of necessity in facilitating the first meeting with the participant when considering the seriousness of the topic matter and the fact that discussion would involve personal matters. This researcher felt it was crucial to minimize obstacles that might create a difficulty for the initial meeting. Therefore, planning was a key to achieving this goal. Rescheduling an appointment with a participant was not considered an option as I viewed it as an inconsiderate gesture.

Self-selection and snowball sampling were two methods used in participant selection. This process is discussed further in the methodology section. Following availability of the toll free number, this researcher approached various individuals about participating in the study. Speculation about proceeding with this topic began a couple of years ago when I was in the process of completing my graduate class requirements. Upon deciding my subject matter, I began to mention the study to various individuals and asked these persons whether they would like to participate in the study. Some gladly agreed while other individuals told me to contact them when I began my interviewing.

I received an over-whelming response in regard to this study from the individuals I talked with. This feedback provided one element of motivation toward completing this project. When the study commenced, I recalled some of the names and approached these individuals for an interview. Following my meeting with some of these individual persons, another meeting was arranged to complete the interview. During my discussions with some of these participants, I was referred to other individuals who were interested in the study. On several occasions, I was told to contact a potential participant who heard that the study was proceeding. Upon

following up with a telephone call, a time was arranged for an interview. Twenty-five persons participated in this study.

3.5 Interviews

The interviews were not taped and were conducted using a structured format. Grinnel points out that "a formally structured interview contains specific questions and directs each participant to respond to each question in a structured predetermined fashion. This type of interview schedule is very much like a formal questionnaire" (Grinnel, 1997, p. 117). The purpose for conducting the interviews using this form was to neutralise any narrative that might develop prior or during question period from the participants. Some of the subjects wanted to engage in general or preliminary discussion preceding the interview at which time this researcher requested that the questionnaire survey be completed before any general dialogue occurred. It was important to have participants provide raw responses to the questions and not have the participants provide answers that they think the researcher is looking for.

Once the interview was underway, I had to be attentive to the emotional and mental state of the participants so that no additional stress was put on the participants that might overwhelm them. Considering the intense nature of the subject matter, I used various communicative techniques to facilitate the interviews and diminish the stress. It was important to understand what the participant was feeling, what they were saying and the manner in which they were transmitting their message. Failure to pay attention to these feelings would have created undue stress for the participants as the nature of the questions dealt with some very meaningful and personal experiences.

"Birdwhistell (1970) labels four channels in the communicative process: vocal, visual, olfactory, and tactile... [kinesics] is the study of body motion and its accompanying
messages" (Birdwhistell in Marshall and Rossman, 1989, p. 90). In using these channels, I was able to prepare myself for moments of distress or hesitation that would indicate to me that a participant was encountering strain. Overall, no major problem surfaced and most of the interviews went smoothly and without serious upset.

Two other elements of kinesic behaviour that this researcher concentrated on was sentence structure and transition from question to question. It was important for me to know what the participant was expressing and that the message was transmitted in an understandable and clear fashion. Unimpeded progression from one question to the next was also a major factor as this element demonstrated to me that the participant was relaxed and the study was proceeding in a satisfactory manner.

There was one participant, however, who was overcome with anguish due to recalling her residential school experience. This was compounded by some recent sad circumstances in her life. During the latter part of the interview, this woman broke-down and then left the room to compose herself. Upon returning back to the table, the participant was given the option of terminating the interview; however, she asked that it be completed.

Following completion of each interview, this researcher debriefed the participant. Each participant was asked about the manner in which they would handle any stress generated from the discussion. For instance, I pointed out to them there may be a possibility of negative feelings or flashbacks originating from past situations that might become unsettling or difficult to handle. All of the participants indicated that they had some form of support in their life or informed me that their residential school experience had been resolved. If anything new emerged, the participants assured me that they utilised ceremonies, sweat, talked to close friends or had a religious affiliation that assisted in dealing with stress or grief from their residential school experience.

3.6 Ethical Issues

Following development of the proposal, the application was submitted to the University of Regina Research Ethics Review Committee. Approval to proceed with this study was granted by the Research Ethics Committee on August 29, 1997. I received my approval letter (Appendix B) a short time later at which time the study proceeded.

It became apparent that confidentiality would be an important issue in this study due to the sensitive nature of the topic, personal discussion and recollections that would surface with participants. Therefore, before the interview proceeded I engaged each participant in discussion with the introductory letter. The principles of the study were outlined and the participant was told that their information would remain confidential as per the guidelines outlined by the Research Council of Canada regarding research with human subjects. Upon reviewing the purview of the study with each participant, the subject was requested to sign a consent form before the interview proceeded. This consisted of the introductory letter.

Along with the mentioned conditions that were incorporated into this study, ethical responsibility regarding any study is incumbent on the researcher. These standards are set forth by the Research Council of Canada and the (United States National Association of Social Workers.) The following provides the essence of the standards:

1. Obtaining the participant's informed consent.
2. Designing the study in an ethical manner.
3. Ensuring that others will be properly told about the study's findings.

(Grinnell, 1997, p. 31)

By maintaining these criteria, the researcher conducted the study in an ethical manner.
3.7 Limitations of the Research Method

This study is in-depth in soliciting the necessary information concerning the topic area, *The Impact of Indian Residential Schools on First Nation Parenting*. In order to gain a sample group from the Aboriginal population, twenty-five participants, (n-25) were chosen for this study. The evidence gathered in this study correlates to the experiences and findings found in other studies on the residential school experience. (Cariboo Tribal Council, 1991; Assembly of First Nations, 1994; Haig-Brown, 1993; Jaime, 1993; York, 1989)

There are certain questions that this study did not address. For instance, issues such as gender socialisation in the residential school system and educational comparison between Aboriginal students and their non-native counter-parts in the Provincial school.

CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS AND DATA ANALYSIS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the data findings from this study. The themes include: year of admission; memories; loss of Elders; impact of First Nation parenting; trauma; resolution and discussion.

4.2 Data Analysis

Once the data were gathered the responses from each participant were entered into the computer program (*The Ethnograph v 4.0*). Following completion of this task the data were examined for reoccurring words and phrases. Initially terms and phrases were made to correspond with the word mistreatment or abuse. This researcher attached code words that identified these terms and found extensive representation of this information. Each sentence also had a code attached so a frequency search could take place. A frequently search identifies the coded words and allow the researcher to compare the information for the most combined occurrences. Again, the overall references correlated to mistreatment or abuse. In order to find an objective method in identifying themes, (*The Ethnograph v 4.0*) was used to reflect the following themes: year of admission, memories, impact of First Nation parenting; trauma and resolution. Each theme is discussed in the upcoming sections.

4.3 Year of Admission to Residential School

This section presents the years that participants attended residential school. It also provides an indication of attendance per decade. The participants involved in this study were 16 women and 9 men. All respondents were First Nation persons. In reviewing the individual periods of attendance, it is important to remember that students were dismissed in the latter part of June and commenced the following
September. Each of these years represents 10 months of residential attendance.

Figure 1 and Figure 2 are provided at the end of this section. The years of individual attendance are depicted in Figure 1. The vertical axis depicts the total number of years for each participant (N=25). A horizontal line in the middle of Figure 1 depicts the average years of attendance for participants that is 7.9 years.

Figure 2 illustrates years of attendance per decade beginning with the 1910s and ending with the 1990s. The average years of attendance were 7.9.

As figure 1 shows some students attended residential school for an extended number of years. The reasons vary. Two students entered school at an early age due to the death of a parent. With no caregivers available to take the children, residential school was seen as the most suitable alternative for care of the child. These children started school at the young age of 3 years. One student who attended for 13 years reported that he had to repeat 5 grades.

The sample is spread over 9 decades. There are too few students in any one decade to make generalizations. The largest portion (10) of participants attended in the 1950s with a wide variance in the number of years attended by each participant. No clear patterns emerge from this sample.

The denominational breakdown pertaining to schools attended by participants is as follows: 1 student attended an Anglican School; 2 students attended a United Church School and 22 students attended a Catholic School.
4.4 Memories

The memories that a child takes into adulthood should be positive. These recollections should not be based on instances of abuse or situations where the person can describe a survival process on an emotional, physical or sexual level. However, for the majority of residential students, these negative experiences occurred too frequently. These findings parallels other work. (Cariboo, 1991; Assembly of First Nations, 1994; Haig-Brown, 1993; Jaine, 1993; York, 1989; Miller, 1996)

One female participant in this study recalled the loneliness at school. She went on to share that “looking out the window at night and seeing a hill that was in the shape of a W [near her reserve]. As long as I could see the trees I knew I was home. I was eight years old”.

Any memories the students could draw from their home environment only embroiled them in additional pain and turmoil as they were given conflicting messages at the school about their cultural and societal practices. These actions included the restricted use of Indian languages and cutting the hair of students upon admittance to residential school. First Nation people valued long hair due to the ceremonial significance it held. Upon admittance to schools, boys had their hair shaved and girls had their hair cut short.

In this section, 16 of the 25 participants responded with a memory that was abusive either to themselves or the participant was witness to mistreatment of other students. Some of these memories include the following: one participant recalled an incident at 12 years of age. “We went on an excursion to Fort San. On this occasion about 16 of us were lined up. The 2 students on the ends were given a wire and an electric shock went through the line. I do not know why it was done”. One participant recalled his first trip
to residential school as a young boy. "When the Priest came and picked me up and take me to school they did not say anything. A truck pulled up and in I went. I was alone. They did not take my coat. I did not know where I was going." Other participants recall the following experiences: "loneliness": "I was 9 years old when I was marched into the school at night by the RCMP. I could not speak English. The hurtful part was the next morning I saw my cousin. I spoke to her in Saulteaux and was scolded. After that I was spanked and yelled at for speaking my language. We were called pagans"; "given shoes 2 times small. We were strapped so many times"; "going hungry. We were not given enough to eat"; "the beatings. You were strapped right to the floor. It usually occurred after supper. The boys went out first and if you turned your head to look you would get slapped. I was going to the bakery on one occasion and had turned my head slightly to look at someone. A nun called me and lectured me. I responded by telling the nun that I have seen her slap girls night after night"; "there was one person in particular who was cruel. Someone who was to represent God. This individual would grab kids by the ear and drag them; "everything was bad. There was sex abuse. I was a victim at 6 years old. I was screwed in the ass by an older student"; "we were segregated".

Each of these incidents put the participant in a situation where they wondered at the time why it was happening. They had no support during or after the occurrences.

4.5 Impact on First Nation Parenting

"Atkinson (1988) conducted an interview with a former Kamloops residential school woman who specifically addressed what was at the heart of the [residential school] syndrome: that many parents had never been parented at residential school, so how could they parent" (Atkinson in Ing, 1991, p. 85).

The impact of the residential schools on First Nation parenting has been dramatic.

Aboriginal children in the schools were not provided the traditional influences that were to prepare them for community life. With regard to the influence at residential school, one participant in this study stated there were "no role models especially parenting models. I was not able to learn First Nation parenting or value systems. I had to relearn them. Another participant stated that "parenting never took place in the school. It took us away from our parents... I learned to parent on my own".

The impact of residential schools on First Nation parenting is the central focus of this study. Therefore, it has to be understood that parenting is one of the most sobering responsibilities that can be assumed. Those who undertook the responsibility to "raise" First Nation children through the residential school system had the obligation to provide an environment that nurtured the emotional, mental and physical well being of the children. Unfortunately they failed, resulting in developing adults who did not possess the knowledge and skills to raise their own families.

One resident pointed out that "the only time her father spoke about his feelings is when he was drunk". In most cases, Aboriginal people were not allowed the opportunity of guidance and support under the direction of their parents, extended family or other members of the community. These were individuals who could assist.

The foundation for developing parenting knowledge and skills are derived from ability to experience and learn from others. Wolfe (1987) states that the expression of anger, arousal, and coping reactions in adults... [are] cognitive-attributional processes that influence an individual's perception and reaction to stressful events, and emotional conditioning processes that determine the individual's degree of physiological arousal, perceived discomfort, and self-control under stressful
circumstances" (Wolfe in Finkelman, 1995, p. 325). These factors are present when a parent responds to situations of stress or multiple demands. If the individual lacks adequate training they may not have the knowledge and skills necessary to react positively in a situation such as this thereby, creating an unsafe environment for child. Drotar (1992) points out that "the parent's own preparation for this role (in terms of psychological and social resources, attributional style, modeling, and similar learning experiences from childhood) and his or her current style of coping... with the parenting role...are based on their own family of origin and preparation... those who are at risk of inappropriate childcare... neglectful parenting style in particular, we often see with a family background of deficient maternal-child interaction, lack of maternal availability and inconsistent parental affect and response to the child" (Drotar in Finkelman, 1995, p. 93). It is important in the child's development that the caregiver provides supportive, nurturing influences when the child is young as it teaches them how to handle situations of conflict. These positive elements were lacking in residential school and participants informed this researcher that they adopted the practices they were shown into their parenting styles.

One participant pointed out that when he did something wrong at home "his parents took time out to explain the errors. At school they received a lot of strappings and yellings that they used on their children". Another participant stated that "after she would hit her children, she would cry. I was mean to them until one day two of them hid on me. I could not find them and panicked. It woke me up and I had to re-evaluate my parenting practices".

Historically there were different approaches in parenting. Some of these practices instilled value that taught children survival skills and nurtured development. One of the eldest members in this study recalled that "a long time ago, boys knew how to cook. People did not drink in those days". Another participant pointed out that when correction was required his parents talked about the errors. The practice at the school he attended was strapping and yelling. "I did not know how to accept or express love. I learned to be cruel". It was only after growing into adulthood that this individual could see the harmful effects of his anger. This individual changed because he was tired of hurting people.

The inadequate role modelling and abusive situations that participants encountered at residential schools remained latent in their childhood. As these individuals formed relationships and families the negative experiences began to surface and the students modelled what they were taught at school. For those who attended residential school, parenting was complex, as there were no archetypes to follow.

The Aboriginal community is at a water-shed of change concerning parenting. By working with Aboriginal people the impact of the residential schools on Aboriginal parenting can be enhanced. As one participant exhorted, "not to deprive your children of their tradition. Know their history and not be ashamed of who you are". Aboriginal people have to take the initiative and lead.

4.6 Trauma

Trauma is one of the most challenging experiences to encounter due to the suddenness of the event and the emotions that follow. Beverley James is a clinical social worker who has worked with traumatized children for the past twenty-two years. James identifies "trauma as overwhelming, uncontrollable experiences that psychologically impact victims by creating in them feelings of helplessness, vulnerability, loss of safety,
and loss of control” (James, 1989, p. 1). Dr. Judith Herman has worked with trauma victims in a psychiatric setting for numerous years and has researched and taught on the topic. Herman points out that “traumatic events are extraordinary because they...overwhelm the ordinary human adaptations to life... traumatic events generally involve threats to life or bodily integrity, or a close personal encounter with violence... They confront human beings with the extremities of helplessness and terror” (Herman, 1992, p. 33).

Twenty (20) of the 25 participants in this study responded affirmative when asked whether they had experienced a traumatic event at residential school. The responses from the participants were spontaneous. This indicated to me that each individual was able to define the issue of trauma as it related to them. The examples of trauma that participants provided fell within the definitions by James (1989) and Herman (1992). Participants identified traumatic experiences such as individual and group strapping. One participant recalled the strapping received at school. “We were told to drop our pants to the ankles and get down on all fours. The adult strapped until he was played out”; “you hate your parents for sending you there. You learn to hate the system and teachers. A person goes through the system and survives by minimizing the abuse that came your way”; “the first week at school my grandfather dropped me off. My hair was cut short and my grandfather told them not to cut my hair. I covered my hair with my hands. A ruler was used over my hands and was broke. I would not stop talking about my hair. For punishment I was given a toothbrush and made to scrub the stairs”; “at 9 years of age I was really sick and forced to attend church. I can still feel how I felt. I was sweaty and had little yellow dots. The nuns were angry and made me clean the bathrooms. The nun scolded me for being sick. I felt it was wrong to be ill”; “on one occasion a boy had stole a locker key and taken 35 cents. There were 7 boys in our group. When we were disciplined the boy who stole the money had his arm grabbed by a nun while the other nun lit a candle. They held his hand over the candle and burned his fingers and hands. A Priest was brought in the next day and 2 of the boys were put over a chair and strapped. The rest of us were made to kneel and pray”. One participant recalled Christmas at 10 years of age. “One old man came to school to sing Pow Wow. It sounded good to me. After he finished the nuns took us to the playroom and explained that this person was drunk because he sang the song over and over”; “this experience happened about 3 months after I entered school. The nun put us into the shower. The water was hot and I refused to go in. A nun pushed me into the shower and I slipped on the water stop and fell back hitting my head. I was knocked out and woke in the infirmary. My ear was split, swollen and bandaged. My ear still has the scars.” I was assigned to clean the rooms and washrooms of the Priests. We had a time limit and it was done in the mornings. For 3 consecutive days a Priest was always on the toilet when I came to do my chores. I worked in the other rooms hoping that he would leave. One day a nun got after me for not finishing my chores. I explained why I could not and was moved to another area”; “the nuns gave me a beating following a visit with my mother on account of using make-up. I had big strap marks on my back and legs. It was a Sunday visit. As my mother was leaving she heard screaming from the open window and recognized my voice. Following the experience she took me out of school”; “when girls had a nightmare they were marched into the bedroom and made to kneel and pray. Sometimes the girls were forgotten about. One nun would grab the girls by the hair
and pull back. One 9 year old had incurred spinal damage and died." Almost all of the incidents occurred unexpectedly and left the participants yearning for an explanation regarding the treatment. The incidents reported are consistent with reports from students in other studies (Furniss, 1995; Assembly of First Nations, 1994; Haig-Brown, 1993; Jaine, 1993; Miller, 1996; York, 1989).

Trauma is especially difficult for children because their mental and emotional capabilities are developing. In a traumatic encounter a child may be unable to comprehend what is occurring until the experience has concluded. By then the child may feel a wide range of feelings and their trust in the perpetrator who usually is a caregiver is shattered. T. Rando (1984) is a grief counsellor who works with children and points out that "children are disadvantaged as grievors". He goes on to identify why children have difficulty handling harsh experiences:

1. They are immature in their thinking abilities.
2. They tend not to have the words to describe their feelings, thoughts, or memories.
3. They tend to take things literally.
4. They have little control over their lives.
5. They do not have the experiences to know that the pain will subside in time.
6. Adults often misinterpret their behaviour.

(Rando in Malfair, 1995, p. 18)

The trauma that participants faced as children was void of support. Students reported no consolation or affection from staff following the incidents. This approach by school staff further compounded their already vulnerable state of being taken away from their parents and communities. As one female participant recalled, "you were put there with no kind of loving. To the people there you were just another person. There was one staff at the school who was mean to me. I have shut parts of that out. I wonder why?" Another student recalled, "I showed a lot of violence toward my wife and children. If you run into a situation you address it with violence. You learn to beat people instead of talking".

Traumatic events in the childhood of participants did little to prepare them as parents. They did not have the support and nurturing necessary to assist in overcoming any difficulties. Participants spoke of the anger that evolved when they had their own families. In these instances, it was cycled toward their children and partners.

James (1989) points out that a traumatic event is dependent upon certain factors. James states that "the experience may, in fact, be a challenge to some children, who are strengthened by having met the challenge and coped with their situations. The child's constitution, temperament, strengths, sensitivities, development phase, attachment, insight, abilities; the reactions of loved ones; and the support and resources available...all contribute to how an event is experienced, what it means to the child" (James, 1989, p. 1).

For the majority of residential school students the supportive elements were lacking. Therefore, the students had to rely on defence mechanisms. Acocella and Bootzin (1998, p. 609) define defence mechanisms as "psychic stratagems that reduce anxiety by concealing the source of anxiety from the self and the world". A couple of these mechanisms include blocking out their experience, resignation to their circumstance, isolation, denial or projecting their anger to another person or object. (Acocella and Bootzin, 1988, pp. 32-33)

One participant shared, "you made damn sure you know where your tormentor is. It is a learned process. You do not know where the next blow will come from". Some of the participants stated that if the person they feared entered a room they were in, they
quickly moved out. One participant recalled an incident when two boys in a group of 30 had misbehaved. The whole group was strapped on the bare buttocks. He went on to say “you are in the back and you know you are going to get punished for something you did not do... you lose the love part of it and do not know what it means... they take you away from your parents and you grow up with all that hate”.

Another participant related “when you peel yourself or dirtied yourself they paraded you over to the girls side and hung your clothes and bedding up. When the girls returned and everything was dry they paraded you back to pick it up”.

Another participant recalled one of the most traumatic examples that I had heard during this study. He described a girl who was sexually exploited by a priest and became pregnant. He knew of this situation because it occurred to someone he knew very well. After the infant became an adult, he came searching for his mother and located her. The mother was unable to accept the situation and explain the circumstances to her son. Due to the shame and guilt, she killed herself.

The experiences that participants shared were traumatic. They may have occurred in childhood but the participants reiterated the lack of support during and after the incidents. By not coming to terms with the incidents the participants repeated the cycle of violence and negative parenting to which they had been subjected.

4.7 Resolution

There is no question that resolution to the residential school experience is necessary in order to create healthy communities. Herman identifies the following steps in seeking resolution for individuals who have encountered trauma:

1. the survivor tells the story of the trauma... This work of reconstruction actually transforms the traumatic memory, so that it can be integrated into the survivor’s life story.”

2. reconstructing of the trauma story begins with a review of...life before the trauma and the circumstances that led to the event... reconstructing

the trauma story also includes a systematic review of the meaning of the event... The survivor is called upon to articulate the values and beliefs that were once held and that the trauma destroyed.

(Herman, 1992, pp. 175-178)

Herman (1992) points out that “recognition and restitution are necessary to rebuild the survivor’s sense of order and justice” following a traumatic event. (Herman, 1992, p. 70) For the purpose of this study “recognition” and “restitution” are recognized as components necessary for resolution.

Herman (1992) identifies resolution as an effort to allow “the survivor to turn attention from the tasks of recovery to the tasks of ordinary life. The best indicant of resolution are the survivor’s restored capacity to take pleasure in her life and engage fully in relationships with others” (Herman, 1992, p. 212).

For participants resolution was an important part of their healing process. Some individuals had arrived at a point in their lives where they had come to terms with the residential school. Some of the older participants were resigned to living their life without the issue being addressed. These individuals felt that past efforts at dealing with the residential school issue were futile and they did not have the time or energy to commit toward this endeavour.

One female participant stated that she received an explanation by the priest and nuns regarding her mistreatment and this was enough for resolution. Other participants indicated that they had not come to terms with their residential school experience and at some time in their lives, it materialized in alcohol abuse and abusive relationships.

One female participant advised that many unresolved situations from residential school still persist and that First Nation persons have to “learn problems of the past
and changing parenting. First Nations need to deal with their own abuse because problems such as abuse of women and alcohol abuse still exist.

When the participants were initially asked about resolution to the residential school experience they exhibited some hesitation and perplexity about the issue. It appeared to this researcher that participants could not give serious consideration to the question due to past efforts that did not acknowledge the harm residential schools had created for Aboriginal people. As one elderly female participant stated, "anything like that you do not forget. If something was done after it happened it might have helped but now I am old". Another participant pointed out that he had visited a counsellor to seek closure however, "the counsellor did not have a clue as to what he was talking about".

Participants reported that they are still dealing with feelings of anger and shame due to the experience. As children, they had to go through a particular ordeal without support. In some situations, participants distanced themselves psychologically from an abusive experience by thinking of a good experience that occurred in the past at home. Despite these efforts, students continued to be faced with loss of their home life. Participant statements regarding resolution were the following: "I am not able to go back to what I lost. They took a lot out of my life". Another participant stated "the amount of suffering we went through, all of those people will just die with the experience they had".

It is important to give closure to those students of residential school who still require it. Those who attended the schools can provide direction and ideas in development of policy and programming. With regard to the question of resolution, participants in this study stated the following: "it should be up to the students to decide what and how the issue should be addressed"; "the Band is an important part. We focus on the youngest child and teach him traditional values"; "have former students share their experiences; "compensation would be a part of it but nothing can equal the amount of suffering we went through"; "I am trying to upgrade my training and education skills. I want to come back and help. I am getting better at talking about these things. Initially I cried whenever the topic was brought up".

With regard to the faulty parenting practices that were learned in the schools, one participant stated that resolution could be found by "learning problems of the past and change parenting".

Many participants found traditional approaches as a key to restoring some of the loss they encountered. However, Stuecher (1991, p. 15) points out that there are different approaches between Aboriginal and non-native culture. Stuecher states that "Indian and western models... represent a different way to look at similar contexts of childhood and parenthood from different cultural perspectives". The challenge will be to allow this variation to exist without interruption. After all, the formation of the residential schools was to "eliminate any trace of Indian behavior" (Dyck, 1991, p. 81).

4.8 Discussion

As the interviews proceeded it became apparent to me that the study would be intense for both participants and me. The disclosure of information and the stories that participants shared were sensitive and often personal. They provided me a glimpse of experiences in their formative years. Despite working in the human service field for over a decade, the silent suffering and lack of action to the generations of Aboriginal people in these situations were disturbing. It is one thing for me to research and read experiences such as these and it is another experience to maintain composure and emotional standing when a participant is telling me details of hardship, abuse or a traumatic event. As children these individuals had undergone a variety of experiences, some good,
but the majority lacked support and nurturing. These encounters left the children of residential school decimated in their self-esteem. These individuals also lost their ability to provide the necessary support and direction to their own children. The instances that participants shared in this study correlate to examples found in the literature (Jaine, 1993; Haig-Brown, 1993; Miller 1996; Furniss, 1995; Bull, 1991; Ing, 1991).

The governing bodies of the residential system neglected to adequately investigate reports of mistreatment or complaints concerning the schools (Jaine, 1995; Furniss, 1995; Miller, 1996). One participant in this study spoke about a situation that occurred when she was eleven years old. Her sister died at the residential school they were attending. "I did not know what was happening and was summoned to her room. We went into the room and the nuns were crowded around the bed praying. We could not get near the bed. We thought my sister was on the road to recovery". The family had concerns about the adequate level of medical treatment the daughter received.

Following the passing, the children's father reported the circumstances to officials in Ottawa. That school year, the child and her brother were “kicked out” of school without explanation. The following year at registration this child and her brother attempted to enrol for the following school year. The school would not accept them. The family was left without recourse and the children remained out of school, as they were only allowed to attend a native school.

There were those students who stated that they did encounter abuse, witness mistreatment or observe unacceptable practices at the schools. These students along with their parents felt powerless in raising the issues as many matters had been brought forward in the past to school personnel or other agencies. Aboriginal people lost confidence in the administration due to the dismal attention paid to the concerns.

As mentioned previously, there is no doubt that some of the experiences for the residents were adequate; however, the majority of students at the schools did encounter problems relating to their care. Some of these problems included: faulty role models, corporal discipline that was not a common practice in Aboriginal culture, and the lack of nurturing from caregivers. These elements had an impact on the development of the children and failed to provide the knowledge and examples for development of positive parenting skills.

One participant spoke to the issue of loss that her husband suffered due to the residential school experience. She went to tell me that her experience was positive overall. However, “it [residential school] affected my husband. He had bonding issues with our children. He did not know how to love, set an example or relate. The people who attended the schools are still carrying that baggage”. Another participant who had raised her family pointed out that she “did not know how to show affection, hugs or talk about feelings. It was easier to express feelings when you were angry”.

In October 1993, Manitoba First Nation leaders held their first conference on residential schools. Participants who attended came from a diverse group. Along with members of the public there were former students from Saskatchewan and Ontario, priests and federal government representatives. The purpose of the meeting was to provide those individuals who attended a residential school the following:

1. for students to share their experiences in a safe environment.
2. to enable students to embark on aardous journey of healing.
3. to support former students and provide confidentiality to those who wished to remain anonymous.

(Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs, 1993, p. ii)

For some individuals who have been victims of abuse or mistreatment, a period of sharing can create a moment of risk as the individual is recalling circumstances that are
unpleasant and personal. Therefore, support is a major element to the healing process. The themes that surfaced at this conference supported the existing data of latent social fall-out from the schools. The Conference report points out that "many former residential school students have witnessed a confused social, academic, economic, cultural value system. Statistics indicate that this has contributed to high destructive behaviour; 90 percent unemployment rate; 80 percent school drop-out; 44 percent illiteracy, and high rate of substance abuse and incarceration" (Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs, 1993, p. 4).

Bull points out that "in terms of student-teacher interaction, there was practically no reciprocal verbal communication" (Bull, 1991, p. 39). These findings are supported by the experiences of the participants in this study. One participant shared an experience from grade 2. "There was one boy they stuck at the back of the class. They gave him a box of bottle caps that he had to flatten. They spent no time with him".

As discussed at the beginning of this paper, the parenting of residential school participants was dependent to a large degree on the modelling of their caregivers. The modelling influences cannot be underestimated. The deficiency in these areas inhibited the learning process for Aboriginal people who attended the schools. The traditional approaches and use of culture that was available were never turned to. As one resident shared, "we were never able to establish what was known at home. They were just there to look after us". The sentiment shared by many of the participants was that despite learning life-skills such as doing dishes, making their bed, cleaning their room and having their life structured with routine on a daily basis, the school offered little enhancement or support especially in preparation for life away from school. The typical scenario was that once a student left residential school, there was usually nothing for them in society aside from additional challenges that were created by negative psychosocial development and a stereotypical profile.

In most cases, the students lacked employment skills and quality education. This created a situation where it was difficult to find employment. As they developed families these factors created additional burden as it was difficult to provide needs to the family. The adjustment phase from a regimented way of life to one with decision-making and freedom created enormous uncertainty. In most cases, a life of dependency was created.

At one residential school in Ontario, Father Oliver "undertook a study in 1945 of the school records from the establishment of the school in 1825. He found no record of a graduate of the school who had established himself in a business related to his interests or training, be it shoemaking, tailoring, swineherding, shepherding, milling, blacksmithing, chicken raising, dairy farming, canning, barbering, carpentry, plumbing or janitoring. Jean Barman also draws attention to the inequality of education received by Indians as compared to that of non-Native students" (Barman in Wharf, 1993, p. 142). This dismal account is common in the lives of most residential school students.
CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

5.1 Introduction

First Nations incorporated important parenting concepts in their approach. For instance, Stuechler (1991, p. 27) points out that "the importance of uncles and aunts take stronger roles than in typical non-Indian families and are given co-responsibilities in certain aspects of childrearing".

The residential schools profoundly affected the parenting skills of First Nations who attended. Had the Aboriginal community been consulted in the child welfare approach, the concerns that are evident today around abuse in the residential school and faulty practices adopted from the schools could have been minimized or averted.

5.2 Aboriginal Parenting For The Third Millennium

As Aboriginal people emerge from the residential school era it is important that they work toward strengthening their families and communities. Part of this success will come through understanding the impact that residential schools have had on their lives. The younger generations of Aboriginal people can be educated on the implications from this experience. Not only were the participants in this study taken away from their people but the schools also failed to prepare them for parenthood. The examples and treatment in the schools were negative for the most part and the students reproduced this behaviour in their lives. The influences on Aboriginal society also took place over an extended period of time through various methods.

The 1996 Royal Commission report provided an exhaustive and thorough analysis outlining the impact of the residential school system. The report stated that "non-Aboriginal society made repeated attempts to recast Aboriginal people and their distinct forms of social organization... interventions in Aboriginal societies reached their peak, taking the form of relocations, residential schools, the out-lawing of Aboriginal cultural practices, and various other interventionist measures...found in the Indian Acts of the late 1800s and early 1900" (Royal Commission, 1996, p. 38). These approaches had a definite influence in disrupting traditional ways of life.

Aboriginal people stand in the gateway of taking control over their lives by developing skills, resources and creating legal jurisdiction to rectify obstacles that plagued them from the residential school experience. In the area of parenting, Aboriginal communities can develop policy and implement programs toward meeting the needs of their communities whether it be addiction counselling, domestic violence programming or support programming to families.

The residential schools have been a life changing experience for Aboriginal people. Participants in this study and other literature on the topic discuss physical and sexual abuse experienced by students in the schools (Jaine, 1993; Haig-Brown, 1993; Miller 1996; Furniss, 1995; Bull, 1991; Ing, 1991). Future programming in Aboriginal communities will need to include these areas to allow victims the opportunity to deal with their victimization; otherwise, it will affect their parenting. Browne and Finkelhor (1986) list the following long-term effects when it relates to childhood sexual abuse: "depression, behavioural and social problems (e.g., prostitution, alcoholism, substance abuse), emotional disorders, suicide...low self-esteem, problems in interpersonal relationships, sexual disturbances, and revictimization" (Browne, et al in Downs, pp. 331-332). These issues need to be addressed through policy and programs to advance strong healthy communities.

Aboriginal leadership will also be a major factor in accomplishing this goal. One female participant in this study spoke to Aboriginal leaders and asked that they acknowledge and "share their experiences" of the residential school. The participant
stated that the experiences could be used as examples where personal strategies were applied in overcoming challenges. These principles could be used to teach children the appropriate manner in dealing with difficult or conflictive situations. The destructive experiences could be used to identify faulty approaches to parenting. Aboriginal leadership can also assist in maintaining accountability. Many people who attended residential school are parents and leaders in their own communities. Traditional values in these communities espouse honesty and commitment. Menno Boldt has studied Aboriginal issues for over twenty years. He points out that “leaders in the traditional Indian societies had to earn and legitimate their status and influence by establishing a reputation for generosity, service, wisdom, spirituality, courage, diplomacy, dignity and loyalty” (Boldt, 1994, p. 119). During the residential school era these values became skewed due to the negative examples. These influences provided the wrong type of instruction especially in the manner that children were treated.

Boldt lists the following steps for a paradigm that instill accountability in Aboriginal communities:

1. Sovereignty — inherent right to self-government means that the right derives from pre-contact and history as autonomous nations.
2. Strategy — establishment of Indian government is the assumption that Indians need to experiment, evaluate, and gain experience with culturally authentic self-government.
3. Authority structures — developing political and administrative structures and norms consistent with traditional philosophies and principles.
4. Individual rights — Indian cultures defined... The collective well-being of the band was placed above individual self-interest.

(Boldt, 1994, pp. 132-150).

Each of these points provides a sense of direction and restoration. They also act as guidelines for Aboriginal communities and allow for greater autonomy as Aboriginal communities recover from the residential school era. The points discussed in this section affect parenting to a large extent as they merge various concepts and structures. These elements provide the basis for a society and strategies for success.

As Aboriginal people continue to develop structures and programs to meet the needs of their people they have been encouraged by the support received in achieving this endeavor. During a 1984 visit to Canada, the Pope implored Aboriginal people to assert their right to guide and direct their people. He went on to exhort that “I affirm your right to a just and equitable measure of self-government, along with a land base and adequate resources necessary for present and future generations... you must be the architects of your own future” (Pope, 1990, C 10).

5.3 Implications for Social Work

This study has been important in that it has obtained the views of individuals who were students in the residential school system in Saskatchewan. The participants in this study provided information and experiences that directly affected their treatment and ability to provide positive parenting to their children. Many participants spoke about having to change the parenting examples they had taken away with them from residential school.

Individuals who work in the human service field need to know what happened in residential schools in order to work effectively in the Aboriginal community. This education can be used to attune their empathy levels. This education may also assist in the assessment of issues especially if family members have been through the schools and present issues related to their upbringing. Social workers need to attain a sense of the residential school system and the impact on Aboriginal families and communities.
5.4 Conclusion

Not only did the residential schools fail to prepare the children for adulthood, it also neglected to provide proper examples relating to parenting. These examples include: modelling, creating a safe and supportive environment to grow in and nurturing that is so important to a child’s development and health.

The themes of this study include, impact on First Nation parenting, memories, trauma and resolution. They are all important for participants as they affected the well being of the participants. Historically, a pattern of mistreatment can be seen in the schools. An environment was created where the concerns or mistreatment were silenced. This environment stifled appropriate intervention and maintained a system of abuse. It has taken years for mistreatment even to be acknowledged despite the litany of reported incidents. This oppression extended the pain, frustration of participants and in some cases continued the cycle of abuse and victimization. This was evident in this study and other literature on the topic (Jaime, 1995; Bull, 1991; Furniss, 1995; Miller, 1996; York, 1989, p. 24).

One of the greatest experiences that I have had is the opportunity to participate in this study. The participants shared their experiences, happy times and sad times from the residential schools. However, one of the final impressions I am left with is the positive work and influences that these individuals struggled through during their time at residential school despite the negative and challenging aspects in their lives. As they met the challenges, they prepared themselves as best they knew how to become mature individuals and members of their communities. Today, many stand as Elders in their communities with the knowledge to lead the younger generations. They show a willingness to assist future generations to develop and
maintain healthy communities by adopting positive parenting methods that encourage a child’s mental, emotional, spiritual and physical development and well-being. This is contrary to what they experienced in residential school.

This study provides a glimpse into the lives of those who attended residential school. Aboriginal parenting was an important factor impacted by this system. Parenting is an application of instilling confidence and self-esteem in a child. The influences of parenting, trauma, memories and resolution that the participants shared were aspects woven into their school experience. These Aboriginal people need to reclaim the parenting loss encountered from the schools. As they look for ways to accomplish this goal, parenting knowledge and the healing process are two elements in achieving this goal. By understanding the experiences of the residential school, Aboriginal people and mainstream society can develop approaches to improve Aboriginal parenting.

In closing, I would like to conclude with quotes from two individuals who have advocated for strong Aboriginal communities and stressed the need for development of self as Aboriginal people. Don McCaskill has worked strenuously on a personal and professional level in the area of Aboriginal issues. Diane Longboat is a member of the Mohawk nation and an educator in the First Nation community. She has authored various journal articles relating to Indian education.

McCaskill highlights the importance of culture. He states that "culture is everything, material and non-material... It includes the totality of a group's shared procedures, belief system, worldview, values, attitudes, and perceptions of life" (McCaskill, 1994, p. 155). Longboat exhorts that "a First Nation' person must first know himself, his clan, his nation and his responsibilities if he is to function as an Indian. An Indian identity provides a framework of values upon which one views life, the natural world and one's place in it" (Longboat in Barman, 1987, p. 153).
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The Ethnograph 4.0, Qualitative Research Management, 73-425 Hilltop Road, Desert Hot Springs, CA., 92240, USA.


The Impact of Indian Residential Schools on First Nation Parenting.

1. What First Nation do you belong to?

2. What residential school did you attend?

3. What years did you attend a residential school?

4. What is one of the prominent memories for you at residential school?

5. Has residential school impeded your parenting in any way?
   
   A. In what way?

6. According to your opinion, did residential school interfere with First Nation parenting? 
   Yes or No.
7. In what way did residential school interfere with First Nation parenting?

8. Did you experience any event in residential school that you would classify as traumatic?
   
   A. If you feel comfortable in providing an example, please tell me.

9. Name one way that resolution to your residential experience could be realized.

10. Have you been involved in any mental health services or social support services due to the residential school experience? If so and you feel comfortable in referring to it, please state it.

11. Name one feature of First Nation parenting that can contribute to sound nurturing of a child.
DATE: August 29, 1997

TO: Calvin Baxter Redman
    Faculty of Social Work

FROM: G.W. Maslany, Chair
    Research Ethics Review Committee

Re: The Impact of Indian Residential Schools on First Nation Parenting

Please be advised that the committee has considered this proposal and has agreed that it is:

1. Acceptable as submitted.
   (Note: Only those applications designated in this way have ethical approval for the research on which they are based to proceed.)

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2. Acceptable subject to the following changes and precautions (see attached):
   Note: These changes must be resubmitted to the Committee and deemed acceptable by it prior to the initiation of the research. Once the changes are regarded as acceptable a new approval form will be sent out indicating it is acceptable as submitted.
   Please address the concerns raised by the reviewer(s) by means of a supplementary memo.

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3. Unacceptable to the Committee as submitted. Please contact the Chair for advice on whether or how the project proposal might be revised to become acceptable (ext. 4161/3186.)

[Signature]

/cc: D. Durst, supervisor

(Excerpts from document)
Dear Madam or Sir:

I am presently enrolled in the Faculty of Graduate Studies at the University of Regina. I have completed the course requirements and am in the process of fulfilling my thesis. As part of my thesis assignment, I am undertaking the following study, The Impact of Indian Residential Schools on First Nation Parenting.

In order to complete the research, your cooperation is requested. Please share the information with other individuals whom you think might be interested in this study. Participation is strictly voluntary and the subject is free to withdraw at any time without penalty. Withdrawal will not jeopardize nor influence current class standing of the researcher nor any other element related to the participant or researcher.

In order to obtain the information required I have developed an interview guide that I will administer to persons who wish to participate in the study. The interview is anticipated to take between 20 minutes to half an hour. The participants will be required to have attended a residential school in Saskatchewan for 3 years. The purpose of the three year period is to allow the participant to be able to share their experience in an objective manner.

This project was approved by the Human Subjects Ethics Committee, University of Regina. If participants have any questions or concerns about their rights or treatment as research participants they may contact the Chair of the Research Ethics Committee at S85-4461.

The data will be archived for 3-5 years as general procedure. Should the data be utilized in this period it will only ensue upon consultation with Thesis Advisor, Dr. Douglas Durst and notification to the participant that the information will be considered for reuse. These precepts are in standing with the ethical guidelines governing research with human subjects as per the Research Council of Canada.

Confidentiality of the subjects will be strictly maintained. Following collection and analysis of the data, the information will be stored in a secure location and destroyed following the archival period.

If you require further information or have any questions regarding the study or you know someone who may want to participate, please feel free to call me at the toll-free number, 1-888-249-8769, or call my Supervisor, Douglas Durst at the Faculty of Social Work, University of Regina, S85-4577.

Receipt, an explanation and signature of the consent form implies approval to participate in the study.

Thank you for your anticipated co-operation and participation in this project.

Sincerely,

Calvin Redman
Social Worker, Researcher
108 Riter Avenue
Regina, Saskatchewan
S4T 6B3
Appendix D
Revised Introductory Letter