



Saskatchewan Instructional Development & Research Unit

**ABORIGINAL KNOWLEDGE AND
PERSPECTIVES: IDENTIFYING, DELIVERING
AND ASSESSING BEST PRACTICES WITH
MIDDLE YEARS STUDENTS**

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**Aboriginal Knowledge and Perspectives:
Identifying, Delivering and Assessing
Best Practices With Middle Years Students**

Final Report

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**Saskatchewan Instructional Development and Research Unit
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INTRODUCTION . . . A Prairie Drive

On a drive along Highway 10 through Saskatchewan's centennial splendor, the sun shines on rolling prairie sliced by the Qu'appelle Valley. Along the route, official brown signs point to items of historical significance. Partially because of the frequency and the importance of the signs, the Motherwell Homestead National Historic Site stands out. It is considered an historically significant landmark; an important part of our history.

There are other visions, however.

On a drive along the same Highway 10, through Ft. Qu'Appelle, no federal or provincial signage points to an event of historical significance, the signing of Treaty 4; indeed, one would drive right past the spot. Yet the lasting impact of this event, and its continuing effect on the development of the province, runs counter to the attention it is paid. Though not well-known, an alternate vision of the history of this province is on display, and the absence of official signposts speaks silently of another history.

It is not surprising to learn that a majority of the students participating in this research project knew almost nothing about treaties before the project began.

The only thing I knew before we started was, instead of calling them 'Native,' was like 'First Nation,' instead.²

Well honestly, I had no clue about treaties. I don't think I had heard the word before we started this.

Most students responded that they knew *nothing* or *very little* or *not much* before the teaching began.

I remember when we first did that little test . . . I just had no clue, and I put 'I don't know' for all of them – I think I knew what one of them was.

What sense can these students make of this province, its history, and the relationship between Aboriginal peoples and Non-Aboriginals? It is not surprising that, largely, our students do not know and cannot make sense of this place through the lens of *treaty*. There have been no signs there to instruct them, to direct their vision.

This research works to help students and teachers in the province to enlarge their vision to include the numbered treaties that cover Saskatchewan. It is an attempt to help all students make better sense of our history and enable them to integrate the realities of this province into their own lives. Ultimately, this different vision is about seeing the future of Saskatchewan in ways that will more fully include all who call this place home.

²The italicized text is either student or teacher quotes.

THE STUDY

Purpose

The purpose of this report is to describe and engage with the results of an action research project that looks into the use of the Office of the Treaty Commissioner's *Teaching Treaties in the Classroom Kit* (to be called the Kit) in Saskatchewan classrooms.

In response to a call for research proposals by the Aboriginal Education Research Network (AERN), SIDRU, in partnership with the Saskatchewan Professional Development Unit (SPDU), put forward a plan to research the effects and implementation of the Kit (launched by the OTC in 2002). The proposal was entitled *Aboriginal Knowledge and Perspectives: Identifying, Delivering and Assessing Best practices with Middle Years Students*. The two major questions that guided this proposal were:

1. How best to integrate the resources and content of *Teaching Treaties in the Classroom* into the existing curricula, and
2. How to plan for and assess student outcomes in terms of the attitudes and knowledge in both the immediate and longer term perspectives.

Some other guidelines considered in the development of this research included plans to:

- determine possible curriculum fit
- develop a bank of instructional strategies and assessment tools
- identify best practices and exemplars, if available
- identify additional supports and necessary resources and determine evidence, if any, of student growth related to treaty awareness, knowledge of Aboriginal issues, and student attitude.

These initial questions and guidelines must be qualified somewhat because all projects evolve. From AERN's acceptance of the proposal to the finalizing of the details of who would be involved in the project (May 2005), many nuances of the project shifted. The number of classroom sites had grown from two schools, to four, to six. The number of communities involved had grown from one city, to two, to four separate sites. The diversity of these sites had also grown from one mid-sized city to include a smaller urban area and two First Nations communities. The earlier scope of the project, which centered on middle-years classrooms, changed to include classrooms from Grades 7 up to Grade 12.

These multiple and varied sites both added to, and took away from, the initial conception of the project. Obviously, breadth was an important new dimension – breadth in ages/grades and in the communities represented. This breadth enabled a more varied/complex picture of how this material was taken up by students and teachers across grades (and the benefits/limitations of doing this work at these different ages). But, this breadth also took away from the comparative usefulness of the data in that we had smaller samples for each grade/stage (as opposed to 6 sites

of Grades 8 and 9). Also, we were able to comment more widely on more curriculum areas, but less able to focus deeply on any one area or grade.

Taking these changes into account, it is important to recognize that as this project has grown, the information that can be legitimately drawn from it has changed. The outcomes will clearly be more representative of a diversity of school situations, communities, and grade levels. The findings will also be more applicable to a wider audience of teachers. The data will be less comparable across this diverse spectrum of classrooms, and less able to uncover curriculum fit and practices for any particular grade level. The project, however, continues to build an excellent base of information for further research initiatives.

General Overview

To answer the questions, this project followed an action research model. The research team (four researchers and six teachers) identified, elaborated on, and worked to implement best practices for teaching treaties.

For the teacher participants, engaging in action research is about taking action and effecting positive educational change based on what they learn through the research process. In this case, the teachers committed to using the Kit to facilitate student understanding of treaties in authentic and engaging ways. As well, student questionnaires were developed to assess knowledge of, and attitudes towards, treaties and related issues - prior to, and following, the use of the Kit in the classroom. Students also participated in focus group discussions with researchers to provide additional information regarding treaty knowledge, attitudes and understandings.

Necessarily, action research is an emergent process. Research then, is not the domain of the experts, but of a community who investigates something together. The outcomes for this project are still in process and, although the guidelines have helped to shape this work, much has developed for which we could not have planned.

Action research is collaborative and participatory: As such, the whole research team was involved in the creation of goals and instruments. The final report was also collaborative, with the researchers and teachers shaping the material in ways that best reflected their processes and the outcomes of work in their classrooms. This research design tried to honour the involvement and experiences of the classroom teachers and students who participated in the study and endeavoured to create an ethical research space (Ermine, 2000) in which the involvement of Aboriginal peoples was integral to the research. Because of its collaborative and participatory nature, an action research model understands research as “an ongoing creative activity that exposes us to surprises along the way” (Mills, 2003, p. 2).

Research Sites

The locations for the study were varied. Without revealing the actual locations, some descriptive data may be helpful. The teachers and classrooms for this study came from the following locations:

1. A middle-years and high-school location in a larger urban centre. The high school was designated a Community school. Issues around Aboriginal peoples and treaties were not as obviously prevalent or pressing in these communities.
2. A middle-years and high-school location in a smaller urban centre. The middle-years school was designated a Community school. Issues of treaty land entitlement and the presence of a large number of First Nations people in the community meant that students came to the teaching with some ideas (both tacit and overt).
3. A First Nations middle-years school location.
4. A First Nations high school location.

Timeline

To get a sense of how the project unfolded, and to put the findings into some context, it is important to understand the actual events and timelines of the research.

1. May 26th, 2005, the research team met at the University of Regina for some teaching from an Elder (a reference committee member) and an introduction to action research.
2. Before summer break, the researchers convened meetings with each of the participating teachers at or near their schools. Building a sense of comfort for everyone with both the research design and the people participating was deemed very important.
3. Over the summer, the researchers established an Internet forum to facilitate the exchange of information and the posting of questions, progress, and resources.
4. September 8th, 2005, the team met on the Treaty 4 grounds to share their plans for the teaching and procedures for consent letters and pre-tests, as well as to build a sense of shared purpose.
5. Pre-tests were conducted with all students participating in the project. Each site conducted the tests just prior to teaching the material from the Kit.
6. Teachers proceeded to teach units of instruction using the resource material from the Kit. There was a lot of autonomy, with teachers choosing the best ways, times, and resources to fit their courses, their students and their own practices. This meant that some of the

teaching was conducted, and finished, in early October, while other teachers were not finished teaching until later in December.

7. Some time during the teaching (or shortly after it was finished), members of the research team traveled to each site and conducted focus group interviews with interested students. Students were asked to talk about their experiences of the teaching and what they remembered as being significant. They were asked a variety of questions to add depth to the results of the tests.
8. At the conclusion of the teaching, students were given a post-test, similar to the instrument used in the pre-test.
9. November 25th, 2005 the research team gathered in Regina. Focus group interviews were conducted with teachers, exploring their own processes and their emergent sense of what they were learning. Teachers shared significant resources, teaching strategies, and copies of journals and planning.
10. Future plans include another meeting to enable teachers and researchers to collaborate in making deeper sense of the data and to discuss the implications of the research for the direction and contents of the future handbook.

DATA COLLECTION

Data

The data for this study fall into four main categories: tests, student focus groups, teacher focus groups, and teacher materials.

Tests. A pre- and a post-test, comprised of two types of questions (Part 1 - open-ended, written responses; Parts 2 and 3 – Likert or summative-scaled questions), were administered to students and collected and coded by the researchers. Of the potential participants in the study, no student refused to take part.

Because of the nature of this project, teachers were able to do the testing and the teaching at their own pace, when best for them. Some teachers were able to concentrate their teaching in one intense week (inviting another classroom from Law 30 to also participate). Some started at the beginning of September and taught for a month or a month and a half. Two of the teachers were a little hesitant about the material and scheduled their teaching for later in the semester. Once these teachers got into the material and their students engaged in the learning, the teachers ended up spending more time than they had planned.

Student focus groups. Groups of interested students gathered at each site, usually without the teacher present. Each group session was audiotaped. Students were asked to comment on the teaching, what they enjoyed or did not enjoy, what they knew before, what they learned, and why

the teaching of treaties might be important. Other questions and conversations emerged from each focus group that seemed germane to the project.

Teacher focus groups. Similar to the students, teachers also spent some time responding to questions about their teaching, the experiences of their students, and their successes and difficulties in using the Kit.

Teacher materials. Teachers were invited to journal and record their experiences. Moreover, their planning, their activities, their samples of student work, and their lesson resources form a valuable source of information, especially in the preparation of the future handbook.

Findings

Test data

Part 1³

Treaty knowledge. The first questions invited students to record what they knew about treaties. The comparison between the pre- and post-tests reveal significant differences between what students (across grade levels) knew before the teaching and what they knew after. It can be shown that the teaching did, in fact, change the level of students' understanding, as they increased in both their knowledge of treaty data and in their facility with the language of treaties.

For each of the questions, it is significant that the number of students who in the pre-test answered they "did not know," significantly dropped for the post-test. Keeping in mind that this represents first exposure to this material for many students, and there are many Grades 7 and 8 students represented in these responses, the growth in comfort in answering the questions is significant.

What is a treaty? Student responses came down to variations of three answers (see Table 1). They thought that treaties were some kind of an agreement, or they didn't know, or they answered in a way that showed they did not understand the question.

Table 1

Student Responses to "What is a Treaty?"

| | Pretest % | Posttest % |
|---------------|-----------|------------|
| An Agreement | 50 | 84.85 |
| Don't know | 14 | 3.03 |
| Misunderstood | 36 | 12.12 |

³**Note.** One small group of student data could not be included in the survey findings because a post-test was not administered.

After the course of study from the Kit, 35% more students could say that a treaty involved an agreement of some kind.

Why were treaties necessary in Saskatchewan? Again, there was a range of answers including a significant percentage of students who thought that treaties were necessary because of something to do with Aboriginals themselves (their numbers, their protection). See Table 2.

Table 2

Student Responses to the Necessity of Treaties in Saskatchewan

| | Pretest % | Posttest % |
|--------------------|-----------|------------|
| Peace | 17.86 | 28.03 |
| Don't know | 32.74 | 12.12 |
| Land title | 14.88 | 39.39 |
| B/c of Aboriginals | 11.90 | 7.58 |
| Fairness | 7.14 | 3.79 |
| Misunderstood | 15.48 | 9.09 |

After the course of study, almost half the students (an almost 25% increase) were able to identify land title as a significant reason for entering into treaty.

Who signed the treaties? Responses to this question highlight the movement from “not knowing” or being comfortable with the question (38% did not know) to being very comfortable answering the question (7.6% did not know in the post-test). See Table 3.

Table 3

Student Responses to “Who Signed the Treaties?”

| | Pretest % | Posttest % |
|--------------------------|-----------|------------|
| Don't know | 38.10 | 7.58 |
| Aboriginals & gov't | 17.86 | 50.00 |
| Aboriginals and settlers | 11.31 | 22.73 |
| Aboriginals | 23.81 | 10.61 |
| Government | 8.93 | 9.09 |

After studying treaties, 50% of students knew that treaties were between Aboriginal peoples and governments, and almost 75% recognized that two major parties were involved.

Overall, it is clear, that students across grade levels did learn about the content of treaties.

Perceptions of the present. The second set of questions asked students to think about the effects of treaties on their own lives, in the present (i.e., are treaties important today?). Again, the number of students who responded with, ‘I don’t know’ decreased dramatically with the post-test (see Table 4).

Table 4

Student Perceptions of the Importance of Treaties Today

| | Pretest % | Posttest % |
|------------|-----------|------------|
| Yes | 64.88 | 84.09 |
| No | 11.90 | 8.33 |
| Don't know | 23.21 | 7.58 |

Eighty-four percent of students recognized that treaties are important today. The 20% increase, coupled with the drop in the number of people who thought that treaties were not important, belies a significant learning for these students.

Explain how treaties affect you, your family, your friends, your neighbours. Students struggled to answer this question. Some students responded with a perception of unequal treatment, in particular that Aboriginal people were getting some unearned benefit from treaties. Younger students also struggled with what this question asked. See Table 5.

Table 5

Student Perceptions of How Treaties Affect Them and Their Family, Friends, and Neighbours

| | Pretest % | Posttest % |
|--------------------------|-----------|------------|
| Don't know | 42.86 | 20.45 |
| No affect | 19.64 | 25.00 |
| Some affect | 29.17 | 49.24 |
| Perception of inequality | 4.17 | 2.27 |
| Taxation | 4.76 | 3.03 |

The decrease in the perception of unequal treatment and the overall recognition that treaties have some effect on students’ lives shows some development in their thinking.

What examples can you provide of the benefits of treaties to the people of Saskatchewan? The large number of students who could not answer this question (and the relatively small number who could not respond after the teaching) points to the success of instruction (see Table 6).

Students seemed to equate benefit with some monetary denominator (taxes, livelihood, land for farming, etc.).

Table 6

Student Perceptions of the Benefit of Treaties to the People of Saskatchewan

| | Pretest % | Posttest % |
|--------------------------------------|-----------|------------|
| Don't know | 55.95 | 22.73 |
| No benefits | 7.74 | 8.33 |
| Economic benefits for Aboriginals | 11.31 | 24.24 |
| Economic benefits for Whites | 1.79 | 6.06 |
| General benefits | 23.21 | 38.64 |

Sixty-eight percent of students could identify some benefit of treaties (compared to 36% on the pre-test) after the course of studies.

Again, overall, there seems to be some effect on the students' understanding of treaties. The change in language and the specificity of the answers in the post-test demonstrate that students across grade levels were able to use the material to make sense of present realities in some ways.

Parts 2 and 3

The second and third parts of the test were created using Likert scaling and, therefore, were compared with more statistical emphasis. Overall, there was a difference between how students responded on the pre-test and how they responded in the post-test.

Some of the questions on the survey asked students to rate their sense of the fairness of treaties and the actions of the Crown, as well as the perception of fair treatment in the present. Comparisons of responses to four of these questions from Part II showed some statistical significance:

1. I think existing Treaties are fair.
3. I believe the British Crown was fair to First Nations people in the treaty signing process.
4. I believe the Canadian Government fulfilled their treaty obligations.
5. On the whole, Aboriginal people are treated the same as other people living in Saskatchewan. (See Appendix D.)

Additionally, responses to certain questions in Part III (see Appendix D) showed statistical significance. The results are discussed in the following sections and displayed in Tables 7 and 8.

Comparing junior and senior students

Statistical significance showed up when comparing the responses of Grade 7 and 8 students with the responses of students in Grades 11 and 12. For the pre-test, these answers varied significantly (especially for Questions 1 and 5). The younger students tended to think that Aboriginal people had been treated fairly in the past and that fairness was being upheld in the present. Older students tended to think there was some unfairness in both the earlier treatment and in the present.

As a result of studying the material of the Kit, it is interesting to note that, by the post-test, these differences largely disappear, statistically. What was a pretty clear divide between Grades 7/8 and Grades 11/12 students becomes a more even response. Younger students move closer to the understandings of older students. It appears that what could be termed as *naïveté* on the part of younger students is challenged by an investigation of the Treaties. This is not uniform, but it would be surprising if the negotiation of a complex reality with younger students was uniform. This might say something about the complexities of engaging Division 3 students with this material.

Comparing the responses of males to the responses of females

A comparison between genders revealed statistical significance on roughly the same questions. Again, fairness and the perception of equal treatment are the focus of these questions. **Note.** The questions were coded using a six-point scale. The higher the number, the more desirable the answer (closer to 6) for the purposes of the test.

On the pre-test, female students tended to think that some moderate level of unfairness was present, males tended to think that little or no unfairness in treatment was present. These statistically significant findings disappear on the post-test as male students move closer to their female counterparts (see Table 7). It seems that exposure to this material can lead students to grow in their empathy towards others. While saying that male students exhibited a greater sense of empathy is in itself an important change, there is more going on with the female respondents in the post-test data.

The responses to these questions showed a statistical significance, pointing to an increase in both understanding and willingness to act on that understanding. Although this might say something about the ability of female students to empathize (compared to the males), it also speaks to the worth of this material in engaging students and increasing their empathy – both males and females.

Table 7

Comparing the Mean Pre- and Post-Test Responses of Males to the Responses of Females

| | Mean ^a | Mean ^b | t-Test Significance ^c |
|--|-------------------|-------------------|----------------------------------|
| On the whole, Aboriginal people are treated the same as other people living in Saskatchewan. | | | |
| Male | 3.49 | 3.55 | .011 - .29 |
| Female | 4.20 | 3.83 | |
| Events like the one described above are rare in Canadian history. | | | |
| Male | 2.92 | 3.57 | .037 - .55 |
| Female | 3.47 | 3.73 | |
| When I read about this event I feel badly. (this shows as a trend) | | | |
| Male | 5.08 | 5.33 | .060 (trend level) - .66 |
| Female | 5.46 | 5.42 | |
| I believe Treaty Land Entitlements are necessary. | | | |
| Male | 3.87 | 3.97 | .794 - .005 |
| Female | 3.94 | 4.60 | |
| Knowing what I know now, I will make an effort to learn more about First Nations people (only post test). | | | |
| Male | | 4.21 | .003 |
| Female | | 4.92 | |

^aPre-test. ^bPost-test. ^cPre – post.

Comparing responses of Aboriginals to the responses of Non-Aboriginals

Looking at those students who self-identify as Aboriginal people and comparing their responses to those who are non-Aboriginal provided the largest number of statistically relevant differences.

For the pre-test, on the questions dealing with the fairness of treaties and the Crown, Aboriginal students scored significantly differently than non-Aboriginals (see Table 8). Aboriginal students seemed to adopt a more laissez-faire approach to treaties, choosing to identify them as more fair to Aboriginal people than did their non-Aboriginal counterparts. The non-Aboriginal students largely had no difficulty seeing the historical treatment of First Nations peoples as unfair.

Over the course of study something changed. The post-test data reveal that Aboriginal students moved their responses to either more closely match the responses of non-Aboriginals (1 question) or to more strongly reflect a sense of unfairness (2 questions) (see Table 8). In fact, their responses to one more question - 'I believe the Canadian government fulfilled their treaty

obligations' - were also of statistical significance. As Aboriginal students (from all 6 school sites) were engaged with this learning, they became more able to articulate a sense of unfairness.

Table 8

Comparing the Mean Pre- and Post-Test Responses of Aboriginals to the Responses of Non-Aboriginals

| | Mean ^a | Mean ^b | t-Test Significance ^c |
|---|-------------------|-------------------|----------------------------------|
| I think existing treaties are fair. | | | |
| Aboriginal | 2.34 | 3.14 | .002 - .012 |
| Non-Aboriginal | 3.18 | 2.49 | |
| I believe the Crown was fair to First Nations people in the treaty signing process. | | | |
| Aboriginal | 2.85 | 4.00 | .022 - .019 |
| Non-Aboriginal | 3.50 | 3.29 | |
| On the whole, Aboriginal people are treated the same as other people living in Saskatchewan. | | | |
| Aboriginal | 3.19 | 4.00 | .003 - .102 |
| Non-Aboriginal | 4.22 | 3.48 | |
| I believe that treaty land entitlements are necessary. | | | |
| Aboriginal | 4.86 | 4.34 | .000 - .859 |
| Non-Aboriginal | 3.66 | 4.39 | |
| Past experiences like this affect us today. | | | |
| Aboriginal | 4.94 | 4.40 | .012 - .370 |
| Non-Aboriginal | 4.30 | 4.64 | |
| If I knew something like this happened today, I would want to do something about it. | | | |
| Aboriginal | 5.65 | 5.34 | .039 - .051 |
| Non-Aboriginal | 5.21 | 5.42 | |

^aPre-test. ^bPost-test. ^cPre – post.

The questions about Treaty Land Entitlement, past experiences, and the desire to act also show as statistically relevant in the pre-test. It makes sense that Aboriginal students would have stronger feelings about the necessity of treaty land entitlement, a deeper connection to this particular history, and a sense of agency in the face of racial injustice. It is interesting that non-Aboriginals change their answers in the post-test to reflect agreement as a result of the teaching they have undergone. The exposure of non-Aboriginal students to this material enables them to see these questions in a way that elicits a similar response to their Aboriginal counterparts (see Table 8).

It seems that the benefits of taking these materials in class cover multiple subjectivities in the classroom, enabling opportunities for Aboriginal students to adopt different attitudes towards the

way they have been treated historically, while inviting non-Aboriginal students to empathize and understand some of that history.

Student focus groups

With the exception of one classroom, students were interviewed in a secluded space, away from their teacher. Generally, there was a feeling of openness, and students responded with some enthusiasm to the questions. The interviews lasted between 30 and 45 minutes.

General themes

Treaty knowledge. Students identified a growth in their own understanding, evidenced by what they said they knew before and their ability to talk (at some length) about their new knowledge. The specificity of this language, across grade levels, was striking.

Grades 7 and 8 students displayed a lot of comfort with their learning which was reflected in their conversations. One class was asked what was a *treaty* and they responded:

A treaty is a signed settlement – a signed document.

It's like an agreement.

An agreement between 2 or more parties.

Yeah, but there's benefits and obligations on both parties.

The benefits were like the land entitlements.

And people could live in peace without having to be worried.

This completion of ideas and the building of a shared understanding of the definition of *treaty* demonstrate the effects of the content teaching. Students also remembered very specific details about the treaty signing process.

Grades 11 and 12 students also showed through their specific language use that they grasped the content. These students identified a dramatic increase in their content knowledge and understanding about treaties.

Pedagogy. Students also talked about their experiences in class. They were able to highlight things they found to be both enjoyable and stimulating. There was a strong emphasis on experiential learning.

One student, in talking about a trip to another school to see a dance troupe perform said,

I love everything about them; but sitting in the classroom and learning out of a book don't show you nothing, really. It's not even the real thing. You have to see the real thing by living it or being around it.

Another, in reference to a trip to Wanuskewin,

You don't really know exactly what happened – like there you are looking at a tipi and everything but it's more – not really a classroom setting. It's more interactive.

Some students talked about a treaty-mapping exercise, highlighting the process of coming to realize that all of Saskatchewan is covered by treaty. Students appreciated the active process of drawing on maps and the implications of the picture of our province that emerged.

Other students talked about a 2-day negotiation they underwent to simulate some of the demands and difficulties of making treaty. As the boys and girls tried to agree on how to divide up the classroom and the work, there was humour and also real insight into how hard it is to agree.

We'd have to think about what they want and put it together with what we want and put it together into one piece.

We had to make agreements.

We had to sit down with the counselors.

We had to decide if we wanted to share.

Our land – well, our classroom.

Many students, across grade levels, were touched by personal encounters: Story telling - from books, Elders or storytellers - was identified as important.

One middle years class was particularly impressed by their experience with one storyteller. Students were able to list stories told from weeks before. They remembered a lot of content, specific names, and definitions that were important to students' memories. The personal nature of some of the stories seemed to affect them as well.

Even the high school class made numerous references to this storyteller. One student put it this way:

When Mr. X came in, that was the biggest lesson I think we had, all the stuff that he taught us and the notes we took, all that stuff. I mean hearing it from a Native's perspective, it got more into our head than if a white person would say it.

Another student said, *If someone tells me, like when Mr. X was here, I remembered probably 95% of what he told me and now I use it in my history class.*

Importance of teaching treaties. Students were asked to identify the importance of learning this material. A majority of students interviewed believed it was important. Students felt that cultural understanding was important. *In order for us to get along with society, we have to know – we have to understand each other.* More than merely learning about the Other, students also saw some deep personal benefit to learning this material.

Really, you learn more about yourself by learning about others because it makes you think about where you are from... I know it made me ask my parents a lot of questions.

Students were able to make a connection between learning this material and their own ignorance. One student said that,

Before this unit, to me – as rude as it is – it was ‘Indians’; it wasn’t ‘First Nations.’ They were all like one. I didn’t even think about how it was different people – they were just ‘Indians.’

Another said,

I mean like before – there is no other way to say it - I think I was racist towards the Indian people, not intentionally, but it was just something . . . like I’d say ‘Indian’ people not ‘First Nations.’

Some Division 3 students were able to demonstrate the effects of this learning by seeing potential othering and acting on it, even in the ongoing conversation. A student interrupted a particular line of thinking to add,

This is a little bit off, but when I listen to us, even still, it’s like ‘them’ ... it’s almost like everyone says ‘them’ or like they are all one group, ... it’s something that I’m going to have to adjust to now that I’m thinking about it.

That students would take up this learning with such depth and rigour demonstrates the importance and effectiveness of this course of study.

Some students saw a need to expand the teaching of treaties to reach other students. More than personal learning, students felt it important that others experience and engage with this material. One Grade 10 student stated:

I think it should be mandatory for taking Native Studies, I really do.... those are just things they need to explain so that there’s not so many people being prejudiced over all this; so the next generation doesn’t grow up and discriminate against people based on colour.

Many identified a role for this learning in the dispelling of ignorance and racism. When,

more schools, like of this generation, learn about this stuff ... it will be a lot better, because if we all know this information and feel this way, then there won't be as much racism and prejudice.

Some Aboriginal students identified the importance of learning this material to better understand their treaty rights to education and health care. Many named these as the specific benefits of treaties. Some of the younger students also identified a connection between education and culture; somehow the right to education allowed for the continuance of cultural practices they deemed necessary.

In response to questions about how important these cultural practices are to them, the following discussion between some Division 3 students is particularly informative.

If we didn't have pow wows and round dances and everything, we'd be basically
(students interrupt)

It would be boring.

We wouldn't have no spiritual thing.

We wouldn't learn about our tradition.

And our culture.

And we wouldn't be able to celebrate it.

While the connection between treaty education and culture is not explicitly named, these First Nations students value their cultural practices and are thankful for the support and opportunities that First Nations schools give them for this engagement.

Racism. Student awareness of racism was quite high. Most students were able to relate personally witnessed/experienced racist behaviour. Some told personal stories. One white student shared a story about an Aboriginal friend and herself who committed some crimes together. Her Aboriginal friend ended up serving jail time, while she served no jail time, even though she had a record and the crimes she committed were worse. *I don't care what anyone says; it was all about colour.*

Students had these experiences, regardless of grade level. Most students were able to talk about racism in complex ways. A Grade 7 student told this story:

At the volleyball game, I went to the bathroom to wash my hands and hear them say, like, 'Oh yeah, did you see all those Indians? What are they going to do, sing a powwow before the game?'

Senior students were able to share and analyze the situation in their community – stereotyping, division, ignorance, and violence. Students showed a nuanced sense of how this unfolds. Far from being naïve, these students saw and dealt with the results of a racially divided community.

They were even able to trace that divide into the curriculum. One student (participating in a Native Studies class as part of his own Law 30 class for this teaching) questions the Native Studies teacher and struggles with the differences he sees between the history taught in the history department and the material taught in the Native Studies course. He says:

But history is very one-sided too. So like you're trying to find where to go and that's where I'm confused. Which was the right way? Which was the way it actually happened? Or is it both ways?

This student (and others from the class) traced this divide and wondered about having to tailor his answers to these issues, depending on which class he was in. It seemed like being in the Native Studies class caused him to question whose knowledge he was supposed to be learning. He continues:

We're actually having the knowledge from the Native's point of view and so that helps us understand it, but then you hear the History side of view and you're like 'Oh, that's different than from in Native Studies.' So what do you go by?

This depth of insight, connecting the disjointed and competing claims to veracity with a deep conflict in the value and production of knowledge, is very significant. Offering more Native Studies courses, teaching treaties in the classroom across grade levels, and working to integrate Aboriginal perspectives throughout the curriculum are necessary. At least in this school, this integration is not happening.

One Grade 7 class, in particular, shared at length their experiences of racism, but also their experience of community. After talking about a newer student who was using racial slurs to try and fit in, one student spoke against that behaviour and then added, *but then we've learned not to be racist and I think our school gets overlooked for that.* This room full of students, half Aboriginal and half non-Aboriginal (from a variety of ethnic backgrounds), attested to their friendships and the uniqueness of their choice to relate to each other in equality. Teaching treaties in this classroom provided an opportunity for these students to grow in both their understanding and respect for each other.

Aboriginal students and identity. Aboriginal students outside the reserve schools, though there were not many, offered some interesting information.

Well, I'm Native, and ever since I was little I was ashamed of it because everyone would always make fun of me for being Native. And then, actually just this year, people have actually started to like me for me ... I was ashamed of it for so long and now that I've been taking this unit it has made me change my whole perception on it. I like it now and I like to say that 'Yes, I am Native,' because they are so open with themselves.

Because you can't lie if you are full Native, so you got to be proud of it; but for me, I'm Italian, Native and French, so I stuck with the Italian and never told anyone I was Native because I got made fun of. It was hard. But this was really good because now, people, even learning this kind of thing would stop being racist a lot because it is so interesting.

Supporting Aboriginal students and their identity development is part of the overall aim of Native Studies courses in the province. The student quoted above was able to insert herself into the curriculum and engage with the content on a personal level in a way that supported her self-identification as Aboriginal. The content and processes of the class supported positive and accurate depictions of the history and development of First Nations people in the province.

Her revelation mixes some of the themes already discussed (racism and the importance of teaching treaties) and demonstrates the power of offering students opportunities to personally connect with the curriculum. Other Aboriginal students also talked about pride in culture and were able to connect with the emphasis in class in ways that seemed to support their sense of self.

Teaching treaties may be one way for teachers to honour and create spaces in the curriculum where Aboriginal students can feel safe and respected.

Teacher focus groups

The interviews were recorded on November 25th, 2005. The names that appear with the quotations are pseudonyms to protect the identity of the teachers and to honour research ethics commitments. The six teachers - Mary, Vanessa, Amanda, Carrie, Rachel and Jane - talked together about their experiences with the Kit in two different, taped interviews.

General themes

I want you to tell them that we use it, and we love it, and there's lots of stuff we pull from it. But there are a lot of teachers who close the door and walk away and never see it. (Vanessa)

It will be a white box that collects dust at the back of the resource room somewhere because it won't be used. I mean how many other resources do we have in the schools ... that sit there and may have been very teacher friendly – and they sit there. We know it's important to teach... we have this wonderful Kit in our schools – I don't know who teaches it. (Amanda)

The other one is in the library. It has this much dust on it. And it still has 'Dust me' where I wrote it – 'Dust me 04.' It's never been used. (Jane)

These comments capture some of the strong ideas that working with the Kit engendered. As Vanessa clearly states, teachers did enjoy working with the material. All were deeply interested and motivated to do this work with their students, and all found something rewarding. The test results point to the effectiveness and value of this content in the classroom: This resource Kit is valuable and valued.

These enthusiastic endorsements were also tempered with a sense of reality, however. Who are the teachers using this material? As Jane and Amanda point out, these resources are underused and collect dust in the resource rooms of the schools that have them. This ambivalence – a

strong sense of the worth, value and usefulness of the material in the Kit, and a strong sense that not many other teachers are using, or interested in using, the Kit – creates meaningful poles of the way these teachers saw their own engagement. Their articulation of their work offers reasons, both for their enthusiasm and for their questioning.

Remembering that each of these teachers was quite motivated to use these materials in the classroom, some of their hesitations around the materials are germane. The teachers were able to identify difficulties with the materials.

The Kit

Whether it is difficult to access, or not written in helpful ways, or not comprehensive enough to meet teacher needs, the Kit itself seems to present a barrier to teachers being able to use it.

Some cited a lack of information. Amanda was asked if there was enough in the Kit.

Not from my perspective of someone not knowing and having to learn the material – it's insufficient. If I wasn't exposed to this committee and hear these discussions and learn from them, if I wasn't self-motivated to read other material to help supplement; no – it's such a fragment of such a larger picture. In order to do it justice, I think we need more substance at varying levels.

There is not enough background information in there so you would have to read your own books or find people to talk to or get some help. (Vanessa)

If I didn't know anything about my treaties and my history, I would be lost. I would need more than just the binder. It's a good start. (Rachel)

Hear the ambivalence again, how Rachel, an Aboriginal woman, would need more than the binder and, also, how the binder is a good start.

Pedagogy

Some teachers struggled to fit their students' needs with their own preferred modes of teaching. Amanda quite comprehensively detailed the issues she experienced when using this material in her Division 3 classroom.

And it's not a middle years approach either – it's a lecture-centered unit, the Grade 7 the Grade 8 - it's all lecture centred. It's one style of teaching and it doesn't offer anything else than a lecture-centred approach.

We have the objectives, but where is the assessment? What's the product?

It's the activities. Give me some student-centered activities that I can build on. Give me some rubrics. Give me something because when it's new information, and I have the objectives, I need to see some outcomes – there's a process to this.

For some teachers, the material is set up in ways that are difficult to mesh with their own needs and approaches to teaching. Although there were comments from across the grade levels, it seems that Division 3 students, particularly, are not served by the way some of the materials are written. In reference to some of the information handouts that are offered in the material, Amanda shares some of her difficulty:

The scary thing is, is that if this is the only thing the teacher is using, it's not enough because... the extreme nature in which it is written is too hard for Grade 7s.

It's the level that it is written, again. I thought, 'Why am I setting them up for frustration and failure?'

Cathy echoes the same sentiments:

The technical information – and you can't teach this and give this to them because it's way above their level - and the amount of time it took. I've taken 2 months and I still haven't made it all the way through.

The thought of having to retranslate many pages of resources (that have already been packaged for teacher use) into language that actually meets the needs of the students in the classroom would be a barrier to a teacher. Ultimately, it is this lack of a sense of teacher accessibility that represents the biggest physical barrier to the use of the Kit.

Teacher friendly

Some of the contents of the Kit are very user friendly – the videos for example. One of the books, Legacy, is very teacher friendly and student friendly. (Carrie)

There were few positive comments about the accessibility of the resources. Aside from a couple of pieces that were easy to use, the teachers wrestled with how to make this resource work for them.

Personally, I found the binder not teacher friendly. It's very frustrating to teach the concepts as a whole because we are teaching 12 year olds. Their concepts and their vocabulary is limited, so when you are throwing out all this new terminology, you basically have to teach the terminology list and break it down. (Amanda)

We're not just information disseminators, we're doing everything else and so it needs to be very friendly for teachers to use it, and understand it, and learn it. (Amanda)

The less work they have to do because of the workload the teachers have in all subject areas ... if you can build packages and supplementary materials and say, hey, you can do this and this and this, and then the comfort level gets a little easier. (Amanda)

This sense of the workload of teachers, the need to not burden teachers with yet one more administrative barrier to actually using material in classrooms is important. These teachers were

really keen and picked by their school division for their interest in teaching this material. If these teachers are struggling with the time, support, and encouragement that the project offered, what about those teachers who do not feel the same way?

Mary cites the example of first-year or first-time teachers of the Kit:

I know when you are a first-time teacher, teaching something new, you tend to do it exactly the way they tell you, whether it's teacher friendly or not, that's the way you are going to try and do it.

Although she has taught this material many times, for this project she chose to try and 'stick with the programme,' following the binder and resources as closely as she could. She was frustrated by the experience. According to her:

It's a guide; it's a teacher's guide. Even our curriculum guides, you don't just teach the curriculum guide. You take it apart, you find your lessons and you plan for that.

Others echoed this sense of using the materials to guide/shape your teaching, but not getting stuck in the sequence or particular content.

Once teachers become more familiar with it – like now that I've taught it through, I'm going, 'Okay, I could put this part in the 'culture' and I could put this part in the 'government.' So that then once you become familiar with the information, then I think you can start spreading wings and integrating it instead of making it a separate entity. (Carrie)

This sense of fit and this sense of freedom and comfort with the material leads to another important theme from this conversation. The Kit is made alive through the teachers who are engaging with it. What they bring and how they approach it determine a lot the usefulness of the material.

Teachers

If I wasn't doing this, there's a chance that I'd avoid it. You look at the last unit and you think, I have to do this... and it's easy to avoid those things that you feel uncomfortable with. (Carrie)

Carrie identifies something at the heart of the ambivalence about this material. For lots of teachers, this material is difficult, too difficult, and it is something that they are able to avoid. Whether the issue is race and Aboriginal issues specifically, or merely a discomfort with new material, many teachers are able to avoid this material. The project gave Carrie a little extra incentive to do something she had been told to do earlier.

Comfort

One of the clearest outcomes of the project is the increased comfort level of the teachers who were involved. They have cited many times both the necessity of increasing their comfort with this material, and the fact that the work they have done has given them greater confidence.

It took me a month to get started and actually, I guess the good thing was there was that pressure – okay, I have to do this, I have to do this. And once I started actually reading and becoming more comfortable, then the pressure was off ... in order to get teachers teaching this, you have to get somehow comfortable with it. And for me, maybe it was the pressure. That I finally was doing this and thinking, okay I have to do this. (Carrie)

Even with the project to encourage her, Carrie still took a month to start. This speaks to the depth of that ability to avoid teaching things with which we are uncomfortable. To develop the level of comfort to the point where one could ask questions and share openly was important to the success these teachers achieved. For some of them, it would have been the first time they worked closely with an Aboriginal person. To come to the place where Mary could extend an invitation to Carrie and Vanessa to come to a feast at her school and bring their students, this level of comfort speaks to the possibilities, opportunities, and rewards of developing that level of comfort with this content.

Authenticity

Comfort in this case led to beginning to ask some difficult questions. In the middle of a conversation about Elders' different teachings, Carrie said:

You also talked about that, the difficulty, even for me to teach it is, I still haven't lived the life. So I'm teaching it from my perspective.

What can be said? Is it *Indian*, or *First Nation*? Teachers beginning to take this material up get caught in the politically correct swamp. What do I say? How do I not offend? Vanessa talks about teaching oral stories and being asked by a student, *If oral stories aren't allowed to be written, why are you reading it?* These questions around who can speak and what can be said are key barriers to some teachers ever stepping into these areas. Developing comfort is a necessary step in being able to answer some of these questions.

Network/Support

Given the personal/professional difficulties with teaching this material, it is not a surprise that teachers really valued the built in network of the project. Carrie said:

I could email or phone and somebody would be there. And that's what they need, teachers need some sort of support network to feel comfortable doing this.

More than a place to ask and answer questions, it was the working together on the material that seemed to offer the most tangible benefits. It was a place where teachers supported one another through collaboration.

We've been able to share ideas or by telephone we've been able to share resources because I've been teaching Native Studies now for 6 years and she just started so naturally she doesn't have all the resources that I have. (Mary)

Because she was the same way: What are we doing? What are we doing? And then all of a sudden, once we started sharing, it became that we could depend on one another and that again raises your comfort level thinking, 'Well, if I don't understand this, she will. She might have an idea.' And that's the whole thing about networking. (Carrie)

We'd overlap our lessons where she would bring her kids over or we'd all meet and go to a presentation together or do our talks about diversity. (Vanessa)

In practical ways (resources, workload sharing, shared vision, to name a few) teachers benefited from collaborating with their peers. The synergy created by some of these collaborations resulted in atypical learning experiences for students – senior students visiting junior grades, junior students attending events at the high school. These collaborations were not only for the benefit of the teacher, but also the students in their classrooms.

Pedagogy

Beyond the perception of being boxed in by the Kit, teachers also shared about the activities/approaches they took to the classroom. The future handbook is a better venue for detailing some of these approaches, but it is appropriate to briefly take up some things of note. Rachel spoke about her classroom build-up to teaching treaties.

My students were getting bored so I read them a little... I read them a little chapter in it about our chief and how he always told his people to love each other – above everything else, I want you to love each other – and that's what he said is love, love, love. So I would read them that and then we decided to make this treaty. ...So the treaty that we were making was boys and girls were making a treaty, a negotiation to share the classroom.

So they had to make a treaty and so they had to speak the truth and they had to take it seriously and they had to use their value of loving each other – so towards the end, their language was becoming so good. ...So we ended up with a nice little document that – and we still use it today. This is how we share our classroom. ...So I had to set up some conditions but every time they started to get bored with concepts we'd go back to our little treaty and we'd add to it and would go to our little camps – the boys had a camp and the girls had a camp. That was the thing [they] liked the best was making that treaty.

And I didn't tell them right off the top that it was going to be a treaty simulation, it was just that they were always complaining about this or that so I said, we have to come up with an agreement on how to share this classroom. So then we slowly lead into treaties.

Creativity, experiential/hands-on, Rachel captures much about the spirit with which teachers engaged the content. Some used lots of technology – smart boards and websites, others brought in storytellers, or told stories themselves. A lot of work went into creative and engaging ways to bring students into this material.

Personal value

Personally, I think I learned even more because coming into this not knowing or knowing very limited – that was the personal lesson. I mean there is still so much more I want to know. It might be over but I want more books. (Amanda)

Faced with some resistant students and parents, Vanessa found that the material was difficult. Sometimes these situations were rude and inappropriate. Not only does this speak to some of the larger reasons why this content is hard to teach, but it says something as well about the consequences of raising these issues with our students, in our schools. This material is risky. Vanessa learned,

That I shouldn't take everything personally. I shouldn't get so offended when everyone is not on board and happy because everybody is different.

More than resource issues or teacher issues, a last area to examine when considering the experience of teaching the Kit would be the students themselves.

Students

Students represent both possibilities and barriers to teaching treaties in the classroom. Their engagement in learning, the possibilities for their transformation and growth are what excite teachers to do what they do.

Values/Transformation

Vanessa shared a lot about her struggles with a couple of students and their outright resistance towards the content. Racism is hard to deal with, but she followed that up with a self-realization:

I am just sharing about the two kids who were[resistant] and I'm generalizing because I'm forgetting about all the kids who were interested and I got some great written responses and some excellent interest but I find that I am always gravitating towards that.

The success (evidenced by both the tests and the focus groups) of these classes in engaging students was an accomplishment. Vanessa had 50 other students who were participating, not acting out, writing for her and trying to engage with the material she was presenting. This is not a small thing. Vanessa talked about one, non-Aboriginal, at-risk student (failed English 5 times) who,

When I started this unit, she did backflips. She said, 'I'm so excited, I'm going to love this class!' She has a lot of First Nation friends all over because she's been to all these places. She just loved it. So she is staying in school and she's got a 67 average.

Amanda also talked about the transformations that this teaching brought to her class. Speaking specifically about the Aboriginal students in her class, she said,

I know intrinsically what those kids of mine gained when they are able to share stories about grandma or about their aunt or their mom and what they had gone through in their past and in their history and their life – you know what? – there were connections that were made and I think that itself was worth the time... the fact that they made a personal connection to something got them hooked...

This highlights the value of students making significant and personal connections with the curriculum. Especially for Aboriginal students for whom the curriculum has not often been a place where they were well represented, to make meaningful connections with the curriculum content is important.

Resistance by Aboriginal students

That said,

Just because your students are First Nations doesn't mean they are going to warm up to it. Some of them are not interested and they don't care...you get kids who come back who have never lived on a reserve, the treaties don't mean nothing to them, who cares, that kind of attitude. (Mary)

Some of my boys were saying 'Augh this is so boring!' or 'Why do we have to do this again?' or 'Can't we just go back and do what we did the other day?' ...This is our history and if we're not learning this or thinking it's important, then who is going to? (Rachel)

These are important questions, and they speak partly to the history of not including Aboriginal people in meaningful ways in the curriculum. These teachers who feel passionately about their subject matter, struggled to engage these populations. Just because a particular group is being represented does not mean that natural interest exists or that a few remedial courses can make up for years of underrepresentation.

Ethical space

We went into this project trying to create a sense of ethical space in which the involvement of Aboriginal peoples was integral to the research. After considering the conversations we had with teachers, this remains an outstanding question. How successful were we at creating a space where our Aboriginal partners could speak openly and with authority on Aboriginal education? Were there times when safety was not created in our meetings and deliberations? It is not

enough to hope or even to plan for this space. There must always be a recognition that differential power, reified over centuries, is still at work, and this entails ongoing attention.

It is no surprise, then, that these questions are important because it is clear there were instances of silencing. There were moments when these partners chose to be silent rather than to correct every ignorance. There were moments when the way in which something was shared said more than the content itself. It is clear that unexamined racial privilege was in operation. It is also clear that further work among teachers around issues of privilege and antiracist pedagogies is needed.

The chance to work together across this area of Aboriginal education offers exciting possibilities. Non-Aboriginals must go into this work as junior partners, with an attitude of humility and a deep concern for not repeating the superiority models of the past. We continue to learn how to honour that ethical space by engaging in it and being transformed by the encounter.

Re-Visioning: Placing New Signs

To come back to the image of the signs on the road, pointing to places of interest, the task of redirecting the gaze to other visions is a large one. That theme of ambivalence comes back: We can acknowledge the need and the importance of Aboriginal education and teaching Treaties in the classroom, but can we do what is necessary to make those important things happen?

This research goes a lot further than the original questions that started the project. Even though the findings here are much broader, some things can be said about these original questions.

1. How best to integrate the resources and content of *Teaching Treaties in the Classroom Kit* into the existing curricula.
 - a) Pedagogical approaches that involve students in meaningful learning appear to resonate with students. Using more experiential and interactive strategies engages students in this material in rich ways. Narrative, role-play, simulations, and arts-based learning are some examples that students referenced. More relational approaches and bringing in Elders and storytellers - people who embody and bring to life some of the teaching of the unit - seem important. Teachers identified the necessity of passion – that teaching this material demanded a passionate interest in the subject matter. This is true of any teaching.
 - b) The data collected for this study drew from student experiences in ELA, Native Studies, Grades 7 and 8 Social Studies (and others – art, English, etc), and Law 30. Across the curriculum, it is important and profitable for students to have material like this integrated and taught. This is especially true where resistance/indifference to this information is evident within some curricular disciplines. Whether teachers alone can bear the burden of this work is another question. It seems clear this is a lot to ask, especially when the excuses for avoiding this content to begin with are easily accessible.

- c) Integrating the resources and content of *Teaching Treaties in the Classroom* is a step towards combating ignorance and prejudice. Given the awareness and experience of racism identified by students participating in this study, teaching in ways that take this reality seriously seems important. *Teaching Treaties in the Classroom* represents a legitimate and necessary space from which to address the ignorance of both students and the communities of which they are a part, thereby enabling students to make better sense of the spaces they inhabit. This may not fall into a particular curriculum per se, but easily fits with the Personal and Social Values CEL, and should be encouraged as a focus, regardless of curricular fit.
 - d) Some of the material in the Kit is cumbersome. Either providing other resources to supplement that material, or enabling (especially beginning) teachers to come to a place of comfort with the material seems important. Acknowledgement should be made that some teacher reticence over using this material is motivated by the work required to make this material fit with both curriculum and student levels of achievement. There is more work to be done in this area.
2. How to plan for and assess student outcomes in terms of the attitudes and knowledge in both the immediate and longer term perspectives.
- a) The content/activities in the Kit do engage and increase student learning. Students know more at the end of the unit than they did before. Judging from the richness and comfort level of students, across grade levels, this content is both interesting and potentially transformative. Saying that, it seems that the more subjective components were important to this teaching. Teachers may need to find ways to broaden their scope to value the personal learning that this material engages students in.
 - b) Attitudes are affected. Empathy, as one example, can be increased through studying and attending to this material. The presentation of historically accurate and positive material about Aboriginal people opens up the possibility for greater respect and understanding across difference. Moreover, the encouragement of positive feelings and the creation of comfort within the curriculum for Aboriginal students (living both on and off reserve) can be accomplished through this material. Given the racially divided nature of some of our communities, targeting empathy and respect will be necessary for the growth of community.

Future Directions to Consider

Besides the parameters of these questions, there are other things that need saying as a result of this process of learning. It seems clear that if we are going to support the Kit, specifically, and Aboriginal education, in a broader way, that more needs to be done.

- ***Curriculum integration.*** To avoid the marginalization of this material, greater effort must be made to integrate the teaching of Aboriginal knowledge and perspectives within the very framework of the curricula. More than a mere addition of a unit here or some perfunctory

words, ‘how’ we think of this knowledge and these perspectives matters. Work must be done to make Aboriginal education part of the foundation of the provincial curriculum.

- ***Support curriculum.*** School divisions and principals need to find the money and the resources to fully support the curriculum initiatives underway. This should be both a matter of policy and practice. Divisions should develop policies that will support the adoption and development of more and better curricula and resources around Aboriginal education. If the specific resources of the Kit are seen to be cumbersome, school divisions should be at work adding, shaping and creating resources that better address the needs of teachers and students. Lest these wonderful new resources end up collecting dust on resource room shelves, divisions must also be seen to prioritize these matters in practice.
- ***Support teachers.*** Using this project as an example, finding ways to engage teachers in professional development that will allow them time to read, time to create, time to network and collaborate should be a priority. If the success and growth of these teachers is an indication, setting aside this time will be meaningful. Divisions can create networks of people with training, prioritize the sharing of information/strategies, and generate some organic ways to support Aboriginal education.
- ***Aboriginal education is not teaching treaties in the classroom.*** A lot of great things have been said about the value of the Kit, both its centrally important content and its usefulness as a largely comprehensive starting place. But it is only a starting place. Aboriginal education is much broader and much deeper. There is much more work to be done in articulating this to the broader educational community (who might see the Kit as a one-time inoculation, rather than the beginning of a much larger journey).

Any move towards valuing a different vision of the history of this province will be carried out on the backs, in the minds, and through the skills and hearts of teachers. The work that went on in these six classrooms - slowly, and powerfully, and painfully, and wonderfully - represents a step in that direction. It is creating a vision for Saskatchewan that makes better sense of our history so that more of our students can make better sense of where they are. It is in practice, in the negotiation of different ways of knowing and valuing knowledge, in the mutual discovery/creation of new ways of relating that change occurs. It is to these teachers (for their work) and to their students (for their willingness and the possibilities they represent) that this work is dedicated.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A
Teacher Consent Form

Teacher Consent Form

I, _____, hereby consent to be involved in the research project entitled *Aboriginal Knowledge and Perspectives: Identifying, Delivering and Assessing Best Practices With Middle Years' Students*.

I understand that:

- I may withdraw at any time without repercussions.
- I may refuse to answer one or more of the questions that emerge over the course of the research without penalty and may continue to be part of this study.
- All information gathered will be treated confidentially and discussed only with the researchers who have signed a letter of agreement to maintain the confidentiality of all information.
- Any information that identifies me or the institution I am associated with will be destroyed upon completion of the research.
- Neither the school/institution that I am associated with nor my identity will be disclosed in any documents resulting from this research.
- I will receive a report summary, which will come as a result of this study.
- I will receive a copy of this completed consent form for my own records.
- I will be notified of when and where the findings will be published and/or presented.
- This study has been reviewed and approved by the Research Ethics Board of the University of Regina. For questions or concerns regarding participant rights or treatment as subjects and ethical conduct of research, contact the Chair of the Research Ethics Board at (306)585-4775 or by email: research.ethics@uregina.ca.
- I understand that the results of this research will be used only in presentations and written articles for other educators.

(Signature of teacher)

(Date signed)

Appendix B
Parental Consent Form

Parental Consent Form

September 2005

Dear Parent or Guardian,

We are asking you to consent to your child's participation in our research study, *Aboriginal Knowledge and Perspectives: Identifying, Delivering and Assessing Best Practices With Middle Years' Students*. We are interested in identifying the best ways for teachers to integrate and teach Treaties in the Classroom.

The content of the in-class portion will focus on *Teaching Treaties in the Classroom*, a resource Kit created by the Office of the Treaty Commissioner. The Kit has been developed to assist students and teachers to learn about the importance of treaties to the peoples of Saskatchewan. It is also designed to foster positive attitudes amongst all people.

We are asking you to allow your child(ren) to participate in an anonymous questionnaire regarding their understandings and perspectives about treaties. Also, students will be using the material in the Kit over the course of a unit of instruction in their class. Students may also be asked to voluntarily participate in a focus group discussion with researchers.

For the purposes of the questionnaire, students will not be asked to identify themselves, nor will any attempt be made to determine the identity of the student participants. The teacher will administer the questionnaires and return it to the researchers. The students may choose to participate or not, and may withdraw from participating at any time without penalty. All information collected will be kept in a locked cabinet for three years before being destroyed, and only the researchers will have access to this information.

The researchers are:

- Dr. Michael Tymchak, Director
- Dr. Jennifer Tupper, Assistant Professor
- Michael Cappello
- Saskatchewan Instructional Development & Research Unit (SIDRU)
- Faculty of Education
- University of Regina
- Regina, SK S4S 0A2
- (306) 585-4309

This project was approved by the Research Ethics Board, University of Regina. If you have any concerns or questions about the rights or treatment of the research subjects, you may contact the Chair of the Research Ethics Board at (306) 585-4775 or by email: research.ethics@uregina.ca. If you have any questions about the research project, please contact the SIDRU office at 585-4309.

We thank you for your support. Please sign and date below to indicate your consent for your child to participate in this study.

Signature

Date

Appendix C
Student Consent Form

Student Consent Form

September 2005

Dear Student,

We are inviting you to participate in a study called *Aboriginal Knowledge and Perspectives: Identifying, Delivering and Assessing Best Practices With Middle Years' Students*. Your teacher will be using a resource Kit called "Teaching Treaties in the Classroom." This Kit helps teachers and students to learn about the importance of treaties to contemporary society and helps foster positive attitudes among all peoples of Saskatchewan.

We are asking you to participate in an anonymous questionnaire about your understanding and perspectives regarding treaties and their impact on life today. As well, you will be using the material in the Kit over the course of a unit of instruction in your regular class. You may be asked to voluntarily participate in one focus group discussion with the researchers.

Your name will not be used, nor will we make any comments in the report that might identify you. The questionnaire will take about 30 minutes to complete. Your teacher will administer the questionnaire and return it to the researchers. You may choose to participate or not, and may withdraw from participating at any time, without consequence. All information collected will be kept in a locked cabinet for three years before being destroyed, and only the researchers will have access to this information.

The researcher team is: Dr. Michael Tymchak, Director
 Dr. Jennifer Tupper, Assistant Professor
 Michael Cappello, Researcher
 Saskatchewan Instructional Development & Research Unit
 Faculty of Education
 University of Regina
 Regina, SK S4S 0A2
 (306) 585-4309

This project was approved by the Research Ethics Board, University of Regina. If you have any concerns or questions about your rights or treatment as a research participant, you may contact the Chair of the Research Ethics Board at (306) 585-4775 or by email: research.ethics@uregina.ca.

We thank you for your consideration. Please sign and date below to indicate your consent to participate in this study.

Signature

Date

Appendix D

Pre and Post Tests

(Identical except the very last question)

Pre and Post Tests
(Identical except the very last question)

Please do not write your name anywhere on the survey.

I am: male/female I am in Grade _____

I would describe my ethnic/cultural background as:

Part I :

Please answer each of the following questions to the best of your ability. There are **no right or wrong answers**. This is about your understandings. **Please attempt to provide a response to each question.**

1. What is a Treaty?

2. Why were Treaties necessary in Saskatchewan?

3. Who signed the Treaties?

4. Are Treaties important today? Why or why not?

5. Explain how Treaties affect you, your family, your friends, your neighbours.

6. What examples can you provide of the benefits of Treaties to the people of Saskatchewan?

7. What experiences and/or involvement have you had with First Nations cultures and ways of knowing?
8. Would you like to learn more about First Nations cultures and ways of knowing? Explain.
-

Part II

For each of the following questions, choose one of the possible six responses that best describes your understandings or perceptions. **Circle one** response for each question.

1. I think that the existing Treaties are fair

Agree Strongly Agree Moderately Agree Slightly Disagree Slightly Disagree Moderately Disagree Strongly

2. I think that the existing Treaties should be left alone

Agree Strongly Agree Moderately Agree Slightly Disagree Slightly Disagree Moderately Disagree Strongly

3. I believe the British Crown was fair to First Nations (referred to as Indians in the Treaties) people in the treaty signing process.

Agree Strongly Agree Moderately Agree Slightly Disagree Slightly Disagree Moderately Disagree Strongly

4. I believe the Canadian Government fulfilled their treaty obligations.

Agree Strongly Agree Moderately Agree Slightly Disagree Slightly Disagree Moderately Disagree Strongly

5. On the whole, Aboriginal people are treated the same as other people living in Saskatchewan.

Agree Strongly Agree Moderately Agree Slightly Disagree Slightly Disagree Moderately Disagree Strongly

6. I believe Treaty Land Entitlement settlements are necessary.

Agree Strongly Agree Moderately Agree Slightly Disagree Slightly Disagree Moderately Disagree Strongly

7. My knowledge of Aboriginal culture and history is limited:

Agree Strongly Agree Moderately Agree Slightly Disagree Slightly Disagree Moderately Disagree Strongly

Part III

Read the following narrative. Choose one of the possible six responses for each question. Circle the response that best describes your understanding or feeling. **Circle one** response for each question.

Regina Indian Residential School, 1894 A father returned to the school to inform his two sons that their mother had died and to take them to the funeral. The principal of the school would not let the children leave with their father. The boys cried so much, that eventually they were taken and locked in a dark room. They were shut away for eight days. After they were allowed to join the rest of the students, the eldest son tried to run away. He was caught in the bush by teachers and returned to the school where he was strapped so badly that his arms were bruised for a few weeks.

1. Events like the one described above are rare in Canadian history.

| | | | | | |
|-------------------|---------------------|-------------------|----------------------|------------------------|----------------------|
| Agree Strongly | Agree Moderately | Agree Slightly | Disagree Slightly | Disagree Moderately | Disagree Strongly |
|-------------------|---------------------|-------------------|----------------------|------------------------|----------------------|

2. When I read about this event, I feel badly.

| | | | | | |
|-------------------|---------------------|-------------------|----------------------|------------------------|----------------------|
| Agree Strongly | Agree Moderately | Agree Slightly | Disagree Slightly | Disagree Moderately | Disagree Strongly |
|-------------------|---------------------|-------------------|----------------------|------------------------|----------------------|

3. I feel badly that this happened to the people in the event described above.

| | | | | | |
|-------------------|---------------------|-------------------|----------------------|------------------------|----------------------|
| Agree Strongly | Agree Moderately | Agree Slightly | Disagree Slightly | Disagree Moderately | Disagree Strongly |
|-------------------|---------------------|-------------------|----------------------|------------------------|----------------------|

4. I would be very concerned if First Nations people experienced similar treatment today.

| | | | | | |
|-------------------|---------------------|-------------------|----------------------|------------------------|----------------------|
| Agree Strongly | Agree Moderately | Agree Slightly | Disagree Slightly | Disagree Moderately | Disagree Strongly |
|-------------------|---------------------|-------------------|----------------------|------------------------|----------------------|

5. Past experiences like this affect us today.

| | | | | | |
|-------------------|---------------------|-------------------|----------------------|------------------------|----------------------|
| Agree Strongly | Agree Moderately | Agree Slightly | Disagree Slightly | Disagree Moderately | Disagree Strongly |
|-------------------|---------------------|-------------------|----------------------|------------------------|----------------------|

6. Knowledge of past injustices helps us to see present day injustices.

| | | | | | |
|-------------------|---------------------|-------------------|----------------------|------------------------|----------------------|
| Agree Strongly | Agree Moderately | Agree Slightly | Disagree Slightly | Disagree Moderately | Disagree Strongly |
|-------------------|---------------------|-------------------|----------------------|------------------------|----------------------|

7. If I knew of something like this happening today, I would want to do something about it.

| | | | | | |
|----------|------------|----------|----------|------------|----------|
| Agree | Agree | Agree | Disagree | Disagree | Disagree |
| Strongly | Moderately | Slightly | Slightly | Moderately | Strongly |

8. If similar things were happening today, I would feel:

| | | | | | |
|----------|------------|----------|----------|------------|----------|
| Agree | Agree | Agree | Disagree | Disagree | Disagree |
| Strongly | Moderately | Slightly | Slightly | Moderately | Strongly |

Only on the Post Test

9. Knowing what I know now, I will make an effort to learn more about First Nations people and their histories.

| | | | | | |
|----------|------------|----------|----------|------------|----------|
| Agree | Agree | Agree | Disagree | Disagree | Disagree |
| Strongly | Moderately | Slightly | Slightly | Moderately | Strongly |