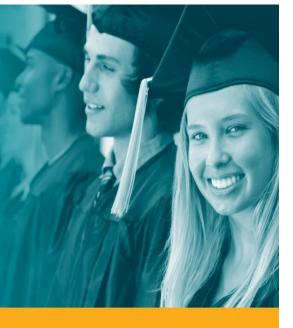Higher Education
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Preparing Bachelor of Education Candidates to Teach in Ontario's Northern, Remote, First Nations, Métis and Inuit Communities

Patricia Danyluk, University of Calgary
George Sheppard, Laurentian University

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Table of Contents

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Executive Summary

Between June 2013 and June 2014, 11 graduates from the School of Education at Laurentian University, most teaching in smaller communities scattered across northern Ontario, were interviewed about their recent experiences. The purpose of these interviews was to determine how well the concurrent education program had prepared these graduates for the realities of teaching in First Nation, Métis and Inuit (FNMI) remote and rural communities in the province. Five of the graduates' administrators or school principals were also interviewed to determine how thoroughly teacher training had prepared the graduates to work in the north and how the program could be improved.

A phenomenological methodology was employed to determine the lived experiences of graduates teaching in these communities. Data were triangulated using interviews, questionnaires, observations and document analysis to address the research questions. Wherever possible the researchers traveled to the communities in which the graduates were teaching to develop a better understanding of the experiences of the participants.

Findings from the interviews with recent graduates indicate that understanding the unique social dynamics of northern localities is often essential to a teacher's successful transition into the community. There are often significant gaps between the grade level and grade ability of students in these communities, and graduates need to be prepared to utilize creative assessment and teaching methods to address those gaps. At the same time, parents are often wary of new teachers, especially in communities that were a part of the residential school system. In some cases, local politics were seen to influence school decisions and graduates had to tread lightly to avoid offending community members. Sometimes graduates decided that the position or location was not for them and at least one had to leave a school because of political issues.

Several graduates reported that their willingness to move away from home to begin their Bachelor of Education at Laurentian had made them more willing to move again after graduation to seek work. The thought of moving away from their hometown to find work was less daunting because they had already left years before to attend university. Finally, while new teachers stressed that each community was unique, many still recommended that all pre-service students at Laurentian have the opportunity to complete a placement in a FNMI community.

During the interviews with administrators, some reported that new teachers with ties to the community – such as family members or a partner – were more likely to remain there to teach over the longer term. Understanding the community was also seen to be essential to an effective transition. Becoming involved as soon as possible by attending community events like feasts or sporting matches, or taking on leadership roles by coaching or volunteering were also seen to be essential to developing trust in smaller settlements. However, other administrators stressed the unique nature of each community and the fact that even though several of the settlements were relatively close to each other geographically, they could differ considerably with respect to housing, politics or culture.

These findings may have implications for Laurentian's concurrent education program. They emphasize the need to provide teacher candidates with knowledge of additional language acquisition techniques, to offer an understanding of the unique nature of politics in very small communities and to ensure that students have a suitable background to teach a multi-grade level classroom. Based in part on this research, the following changes to the concurrent education program have been implemented: 1) all students must now complete an Indigenous studies course, designed to provide them with a better understanding of the FNMI context; 2) more opportunities for placements in rural, remote and FNMI communities are being actively explored; and 3) English Language Learner (ELL) techniques will be a part of the revised program in recognition of the fact that English is not the mother tongue of many FNMI students.

Finally, results from our research suggest that the School of Education's most successful partnership in terms of longevity and reciprocal learning has been with a school in the community of M'Chigeeng. Future research on this topic at Laurentian should gather information from the principal and teachers in M'Chigeeng regarding their perspectives on developing new partnerships with other remote, rural and FNMI communities in an effort to identify best practices that could be reproduced elsewhere. It is our belief that developing mutually beneficial partnerships with FNMI communities – despite real issues involving travel costs and housing availability – would enhance Ontario's pre-service teacher education programs.

Introduction

The purpose of this project was to learn more about the experiences of concurrent education program graduates from Laurentian University who are now working as teachers in Ontario's northern, remote, First Nations, Métis and Inuit (FNMI) communities and to gather feedback from the administrators of schools in these areas regarding what might be done to better prepare new teachers to work in those locations.

The English-language concurrent education program at Laurentian is small in comparison to most faculties of education in Ontario. Largely because of a limited enrolment system, over the last decade it has graduated fewer than 500 new teachers. A previous study tracking teacher candidates who graduated between 2007 and 2012 indicated cohort employment rates ranging from 100% for the inaugural group of students to 75% for more recent graduates (Sheppard & Danyluk, 2014). These values are much higher than the provincial average. For example, according to the Ontario College of Teachers (2012), only 13% of all Ontario graduates from BEd programs found regular employment[1] in 2011. One reason Laurentian graduates may have been more successful than most of their peers in securing full-time employment is that about one-quarter of them were prepared to accept teaching posts in northern, remote, First Nations, Métis and Inuit communities. Given the potential significance of this advantage in helping graduates integrate into the labour market, the two researchers were led to investigate further how well recent graduates were prepared to work in these locations.

This research project gathered data through interviews with graduates and administrators, document analysis of school websites, and questionnaires and observation. When possible, we traveled to the community where graduates were teaching to conduct interviews and to observe graduates. As this study adopted a phenomenological methodology (Giorgi, 1997), the experiences of the graduates themselves were central to the investigation. Graduates were asked a number of questions related to their perceived level of preparation to teach in FNMI communities, challenges they had faced and recommendations both to improve teacher preparation and to help other teachers better adapt to the change in setting. School administrators were also asked a series of questions designed to elicit improvements to teacher preparation. Both sets of questions can be found in the appendices to this report.

Literature Review

The education challenges faced by many in FNMI communities have been well documented in the literature. At the turn of the 21st century, the Auditor General of Canada predicted that it would "take twenty years, at the current rate of progress, for First Nations students to reach parity in academic achievement with other Canadians" (St. Germain & Dyck, 2011, p. 16). In light of present conditions, that appears to have been an optimistic prediction. Currently more than one-third of FNMI students never complete high school and the trend is even more pronounced in remote areas (Lewington, 2011). In her 2011 report, Auditor General

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[1] Where 'regular employment' is defined to include "supply, long-term occasional, or full-time permanent work" (OCT, 2005).

Sheila Fraser noted that only 41% of First Nations individuals 15 years and older had completed high school, while for the Canadian population as a whole that percentage had risen to 77% (Office of the Auditor General of Canada, 2011). Recently Sherrill Sutherland, writing for the *Globe and Mail*, claimed that "A First Nation youth living on reserve is more likely to end up in jail than to graduate high school" (Sutherland, 2015).

In addition, retention and graduation rates for those who do go on to postsecondary education remain low. According to the Assembly of First Nations (2012, p. 3), "Aboriginal people aged 15 and over have a much lower educational attainment than their non-Aboriginal counterparts, with 43.7 percent not holding any certificate, diploma or degree in 2006, compared to 23.1 percent for the Canadian population." Although for decades chiefs and councils have ranked the proper education of indigenous children as their top priority (MacKay & Miles, 1995), the residual impacts of colonialism, especially the legacy of residential schools, have regularly impeded substantial progress. Other factors play a role too. As Pamela Toulouse (2013) recently stated:

> Residential schools, federal day schools, stereotypes, racism, oppression and poverty are only some of the shadows cast on Indigenous peoples. These shadows resulted in the culmination of living statistics on a Nation of people (i.e., high mortality, low graduation rates, increased diabetes, youth suicide among others). (p. 5)

These arguments are all the more problematic given that the Aboriginal population is the fastest growing in Canada.[2] Failure to address the issues involved with Indigenous education affects all Canadians, as poor education outcomes can result in reduced tax bases and restricted labour pools. Both of those factors can contribute to a massive economic burden placed on Canadian society as a whole (Kanu, 2005). To address these challenges, teachers must be prepared for the unique situation they might be expected to face working in FNMI contexts and taught the proper skills to respond to it in a culturally sensitive manner (Taylor, 1995).

Preparing Teachers for the FNMI Context

As far back as 1995 John Taylor observed that "ninety per cent of Native children in this country will, at one time or another, be taught by a non-Native teacher, and many of these children will receive most of their education from non-Native teachers" (p. 224). While researchers like Lorenzo Cherubini (2008) have argued that the preparation of FNMI educators is crucial to the ultimate success of Aboriginal education, the reality is that it is challenging to prepare thousands of Indigenous educators to teach in their home communities on the short notice required, since relatively few individuals from these communities are in a position to complete postsecondary degrees (Assembly of First Nations, 2012). While several education faculties across Canada have created Native teacher education programs (NTEP) to prepare Aboriginal teachers, a chronic shortage of qualified candidates continues to exist (Cherubini, Niemczyk, Hodson & McGean, 2010).

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[2] Statistics Canada has reported that from 1996 to 2006 the Aboriginal population grew at a rate of 45%, while the non-Aboriginal rate was 8% (Statistics Canada, 2010).

One viable alternative to existing NTEP programs is to better prepare non-FNMI students to teach in FNMI communities. New teachers arriving in FNMI communities have often been educated in a system that embodies colonialism and views FNMI individuals as somehow needing help or as "Noble Savages" (Frost, 2007). Godlewska, Moore and Bednasek (2010) suggest that the principal problem with Aboriginal education is Canadians' ignorance of Aboriginal peoples. Similarly, Frost suggests that this ignorance has led to a kind of "Pan-Indianism," in which Canadians think that "there is one way to be First Nations" and ignore the diversity of FNMI realities (2007, p. 70).

Writing on the impact of colonization on classrooms, Cote-Meeks (2014) suggests that most teachers feel ill-equipped to deal with the serious issues Indigenous students often face, seeing such work as the task of those in the helping professions. While teachers expect students to leave "their 'emotional baggage' at the door" and deal with it "in some form of counseling or therapeutic session" (Cote-Meeks, 2014, p. 40), this approach is inconsistent with the holistic view of education to which many Aboriginal peoples subscribe, which suggests that all aspects of the self – spiritual, emotional, physical, intellectual and physical – must be part of the teaching to make it meaningful (Cherubini et al., 2010).

Many authors argue that the key to engaging Aboriginal students is to incorporate their culture into teaching (Wimmer, Legare, Arcand & Cottrell, 2009; Frost, 2007; Doige, 2003; Goulet & McLeod, 2002). Winzer and Mazurek (1998) suggest that "children's conceptual frameworks (i.e., their learning and thinking processes) are deeply embedded in their own cultures and that difficulties in classroom learning and interactions arise when there is a mismatch between a child's culture and the culture of the teacher and the classroom" (p. 51). However, as Friesen and Friesen (2005) have noted, a lack of appropriate resources can make it difficult to incorporate a culture into teaching.

"Effective teaching for Indigenous students," note Goulet and Goulet (2014), "is about relations and connections – that is relationships between the teacher and the student, among the students in the class, and connections to the content and process of learning" (p. 78). And while new teachers often find themselves overworked in general, this is especially common in isolated communities where, according to Wotherspoon (2008), they necessarily take on additional roles. This chronic work overload regularly forces teachers to choose between meeting the curriculum and meeting the needs of their learners. The same author points out that although the workload of teachers in these communities is intensified, they can also experience more freedom in their teaching than they might in more populated centres.

Finally, of particular concern for instructors in more remote communities are language issues. First Nations English dialects are strongly influenced by their Indigenous languages (Ball & Bernhardt, 2008). As a result, children may be incorrectly diagnosed with speech-language impairments when in fact their dialect reflects remnants of their Indigenous language. In a study examining the literacy needs of teachers in First Nations schools in Ontario, Heydon and Stooke (2012) found that there was a dire lack of proper resources to teach English to First Nations students. Teachers were generally given little direction and made do with existing resources that were often inappropriate or cobbled together new items on their own. Similarly, Harper (2000) examined teachers in First Nations schools in Northern Ontario and found that many teachers felt ill prepared for English Language Learner training.

Laurentian University's Approach to Teacher Preparation

As recently as 2010, the Association of Canadian Deans of Education noted that the issue of preparing new BEd graduates to teach in FNMI situations remained critical. A 2010 accord drafted by education deans from across the county called for "opportunities within all teacher education programs for candidates to have authentic experiences in a variety of Indigenous learning settings, whether urban, rural, remote, band-funded, or provincially funded" (ACDE, 2010). But despite these goals, the situation across the country remains closer to the case described in the 2011 Queen's University report on Indigenous issues in postsecondary education. It concludes:

> Too often, however, elementary and high school teachers are ill-informed about the Aboriginal students in their classrooms; they lack Indigenous knowledge and approaches, and do not engage the Aboriginal students in their class. In remote communities, they often lack the educational experience or recourse to the meet the educational challenges of their students. (Kachuck-Rosenbluth, 2011, p. 16)

The concurrent Bachelor of Education program at Laurentian University has sought to address these challenges in several ways. In addition to actively recruiting FNMI students, the program has also incorporated Indigenous content into the curriculum. All courses include sections on Aboriginal cultures, ways of knowing or history, and candidates must plan each lesson with consideration for FNMI learners, regardless of where they end up practice teaching. Perhaps most importantly, the program has also sought to establish partnerships with FNMI communities to share knowledge and allow pre-service teachers to experience Aboriginal culture by completing six-week teaching placements. The most successful partnership in terms of longevity and reciprocal learning has been one with the M'Chigeeng First Nation. In their final year, all teacher candidates travel to the band-run Lakeview School to visit with Anishinabek Elders and to learn how the school incorporates Ojibwe culture into the curriculum. Six to eight teacher candidates are selected annually from a larger pool of applicants to complete long-term placements at that school (Glasby-Debassige, Payette, McColman, Buley, Buley & Danyluk, 2012). Associate or supervising teachers have been offered professional development to train them for their role, and the principal and teachers at the receiving school are closely involved in selecting candidates to participate in the program. This ensures a genuinely collaborative approach to the partnership. Establishing and maintaining such authentic relationships can require considerable effort. Changes in personnel, due to retirements at a school or sabbaticals at the university, mean that connections that took years to cultivate can easily be lost. Distance also poses a challenge. A recent study by the Certified General Accountants Association of Canada (2012) found that fewer young people are willing to move for work than in the 1980s.

The literature tells us that in order to improve FNMI student success, teachers planning to work in these communities must be well prepared. It is helpful for the teacher to know how to adjust their techniques to address Indigenous ways of learning and to be cognizant of their own background and the nature of the community in which they are working. If new teachers feel confident enough in their abilities and have the training required to be resilient when faced with inevitable challenges, they can enjoy the job and feel at home in the community.

Methodology

This research resulted from the findings of an earlier study that tracked 285 students who graduated from the concurrent education program at Laurentian University between 2008 and 2012. It was designed to determine their level of success in finding teaching positions. That study revealed that former students were often working in northern, remote or First Nations, Métis and Inuit communities (Sheppard & Danyluk, 2014). While this original study confirmed that Laurentian graduates were generally finding teaching jobs, it raised new questions about how well prepared they were for some of the challenging situations in which they worked. The follow-up study, the results of which are reported below, received ethics approval from the university in February 2013. Graduates who had responded to the original study and had indicated a willingness to be contacted for follow-up were e-mailed a description of this new investigation, as well as a consent form and a list of questions (see Appendices A and B). Once they had completed the consent form, we asked for their approval to contact the educational administrator from the band and/or the principal of the school where they were teaching. If they agreed, we e-mailed a consent form and a list of questions to the principals or administrators as well (see Appendix C). In two cases, administrators refused to participate in the study. All participants signed an informed consent form and were made aware that they had the final decision regarding what video and audio clips would be used in presentations and/or in the making of any video. In order to protect the identity of participants they have been assigned pseudonyms in this report and the particular school board or band school that employed them has not been identified. Demographic information about the various communities is included below to provide context. Finally, interviews were conducted in person by the researchers and were video recorded wherever possible. Questionnaires were used in three instances in which the participants felt uncomfortable or were unable to participate in an interview. All participants received the questions ahead of time by email.

As noted above, a total of 285 Bachelor of Education candidates graduated from Laurentian's concurrent program between May 2008 and May 2012. Ninety-three of those individuals completed the 2012-2013 online survey designed to identify where they were working. When queried again in a follow-up email in 2013 to confirm that they were employed in a northern, remote, rural and/or First Nations, Métis or Inuit community and willing to answer questions about that experience, a total of 23 (25%) responded in the affirmative. As of June 2014, 11 of those graduates had been interviewed or had completed questionnaires.[3] None of the graduates who participated were originally from the rural, remote or FNMI community where they found employment. Nine of the graduates participated in interviews, while two chose to respond by completing the questionnaire by e-mail. Four of the graduates were interviewed in the community where they were teaching, while the other five were interviewed at Laurentian. In addition, five Ontario administrators or principals have been interviewed or had completed questionnaires. Four of the five administrators were interviewed in the community where they were working. Interviews were semi-structured, with 14 questions for graduates (see Appendix B) and five for administrators (see Appendix C).

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[3] Another 11 were employed outside the province and one teacher was prohibited by their employer from participating in the study.

Table 1: Pseudonym, Location and Nature of Participation

Pseudonym	Position	Location	Interview	Video	Questionnaire
Jon	Teacher	Northern Ontario	X	X	
Leonard	Teacher	Northern Ontario	X	X	
Renate	Teacher	Northern Ontario	X	X	
Michelle	Teacher	Northern Ontario	X	X	
Valerie	Teacher	Northern Ontario	X	X	
Colin	Teacher	Northern Ontario	X	X	
Tammy	Teacher	Northern Ontario	X	X	
Marylee	Teacher	Northern Ontario			X
Danika	Teacher	Rural Ontario			X
Faye	Teacher	Northern Ontario	X	X	
Gord	Teacher	Northern Ontario	X	X	
David	Administrator	Northern Ontario	X	X	
Sherry	Administrator	Northern Ontario			X
Cheryl	Administrator	Northern Ontario	X	X	
Jennifer	Administrator	Northern Ontario	X	X	
Ben	Administrator	Northern Ontario	X	X	

As only the graduates themselves can explain their experiences, a phenomenological approach was adopted for this study to allow the researchers to get as close as possible to the lived experiences of graduates teaching in these communities. Several authors have described phenomenology as being well suited to educational research (Jackson, 1990; van Manen, 1995; Quicke, 2000; Mosert, 2002).

Phenomenology is a method of inquiry and a social theoretical approach that strives to discern the emotions and experiences of individuals as they live and experience them (Dowling, 2007). While phenomenology exists as both a research method and a philosophy, this study approaches phenomenology from the perspective of empirical descriptive phenomenological psychology, attributed to Giorgi (1997). The empirical descriptive approach was chosen for this project as its final outcome is a general structural statement that reflects the essential nature of the experience being investigated (Ehrich, 2005). From a phenomenological viewpoint, there is no universal truth; each individual has different and unique experiences, attitudes, beliefs and values. The meaning of human experience is taken exactly as it is given by the person experiencing and includes both feeling and thought (Ehrich, 2005).

Description of the Communities[4]

Graduates worked in 10 First Nations, rural and remote communities in Ontario. Populations of these communities ranged from a low of 485 to a high of 6,540. The percentage of Métis residents in these communities ranged from a low of 0.7% to a high of 6.2%. The percentage of First Nations residents ranged from a low of 1.1% to a high of 84%. The percentage of Inuit residents ranged from 0 to a high of 0.4%. Average 2014 income in these communities ranged from a low of $21,591 to a high of $41,260.

Employment rates for these communities averaged around 60%, which is roughly comparable to the Ontario average of 61.2% in July 2014 (Statistics Canada, 2014). However, average household income was just over $32,000, compared to an average of more than $40,000 in Ontario as a whole (Statistics Canada, 2014). So while many individuals work in these communities, the average level of pay remains low in comparative terms. It should also be noted that even within the communities that formed part of the study, income was generally lower in the smaller communities than in the larger ones (Statistics Canada, 2014).

Data Analysis Procedures

Giorgi (1997) outlines the steps of the phenomenological method as (1) collection of verbal data, (2) reading of the data, (3) breaking of the data into some kind of parts, (4) organization and expression of the data from a disciplinary perspective, and (5) synthesis or summary of the data for purposes of communication to the scholarly community.

Data collection occurred between June 2013 and June 2014, while the reading of the data occurred in June and July 2014. The two researchers determined the essence of the data separately before agreeing on themes. Following this, two student researchers reviewed the data to determine which data belonged to which of the 10 themes. According to Burnard, Gill, Stewart, Treasure and Chawick (2008), this type of inter-rater reliability can result in more rigorous research and reduced bias. Following this, the principal investigator organized the data from a disciplinary perspective, asking, "What does this mean in terms of our original question; i.e., what are the experiences of graduates now working as teachers in remote, rural and FNMI communities and what might be done to better prepare new teachers for working in such communities?"

Results

Summary of Responses from Graduates

We begin by summarizing participant responses before presenting data in detail, organized by theme, in the following section. Respondents could check as many responses to the questionnaire that they felt applied.

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[4] These descriptions are based on information available through Statistics Canada. Specific sources are listed as Statistics Canada (2014 a-k) in the reference list.

As a result, sometimes the number of responses might be greater than the total number of respondents. For the purpose of data analysis, this section summarizes the top three responses to each question.

When asked to describe their community, nine respondents described their location as northern, while eight described it as First Nations and four as rural. Four of the graduates learned about the position through a personal contact, three indicated that they learned about it from an education website, and another three through their own investigation.

When asked how well prepared they felt for teaching during the first few weeks, some respondents indicated that they might have been very prepared for teaching or lesson-planning but not for dealing with the remote nature of the community or for particular tasks like special education. Altogether, three graduates indicated feeling very prepared for everything and six of the graduates indicated feeling somewhat prepared.

Four of the respondents indicated that the biggest surprise was the social dynamics of the community (see theme "social dynamics"). Three of the graduates indicated that parental involvement was the biggest surprise, while another three found the discrepancies between grade placement level and grade ability level to be the biggest surprise (see themes "parental involvement" and "grade ability level").

Four respondents indicated that the best part of their work was the sense of community (see theme "sense of community"). Two respondents indicated that the best part was good student behaviour compared to previous experiences in the classroom. Two more identified the freedom to try new things and another responded that the simple moments with students were the best aspects of teaching in their new community.

Local politics were identified as the greatest challenge of living in the community for five respondents, while four indicated that student home life was a challenge (see themes "local politics" and "home life"). Three each identified a lack of parental involvement, lack of accessible resources, finding enough students for teams or clubs, students who were not at grade level, and education not being a priority for the students and/or families as challenges.

In response to the question regarding the most useful part of their BEd, responses overwhelmingly indicated that the placements were the most useful, with eight responses concurring. Four indicated collaboration on assignments and three each identified mini-lessons and reflections being the most valuable part of the BEd experience.

Finally, the questionnaire asked participants how the School of Education could have better prepared them for their teaching role. Suggestions included more focus on placements, specifically northern and/or FNMI communities, with five responses indicating that such placements were important (see theme "placements"). Four responses suggested more focus on FNMI history and culture (see theme "understanding FNMI communities"), four more emphasized resource collection/sharing and four identified sensitivity training related to northern, remote and FNMI communities. Suggestions from participants for

teacher candidates looking for jobs included applying for everything, even if they thought they were not qualified on paper, with five responses indicating this. Five more responses suggested getting involved with students and staff, while four indicated researching the community to get a feeling for whether they would be happy living there.

When asked if there was anything else they wished they had known before taking their job, participants provided a variety of responses. There were two responses each indicating that they wished they had known more about the location. Other participants mentioned Individual Education Plans, special needs or psychological assessments, or even how to write report cards. Two respondents indicated that they wished they had known not to expect praise, while another two indicated that there was nothing they wished they had known.

When asked for additional comments or thoughts, three respondents indicated that graduates should not be afraid to keep searching until they find a location that makes them happy. Three more indicated that they would have liked more information on new teacher induction or other government programs and three others stressed the importance of learning about the community's particular culture.

When asked what had attracted them to Laurentian University, six respondents indicated that they had moved away from home to come to Laurentian, although three had not moved far, and five others were from the Sudbury region. Three mentioned particular programs as an attraction and three others mentioned the university's bucolic location/extracurricular potential. When asked if attending Laurentian influenced the move to their current location, six responses indicated that it had, while three indicated it had not and another three said they were unsure.

Themes from Graduates

Ten distinct themes emerged from the interviews and questionnaires with graduates:
  a) Social dynamics
  b) Parental involvement
  c) Grade level vs. grade ability
  d) Sense of community
  e) Local politics
  f) Home life
  g) Placements
  h) Understanding northern, rural and FNMI communities
  i) Integration into the community
  j) The relationship between being willing to move for school and being willing to move for a job

Understanding the Themes

a) Social dynamics

Communities differed greatly in their success at creating positive environments for youth. Leonard, a graduate now teaching in northern Ontario noted, "There's lots of communities you really look forward to interacting with or teaching in those schools. Then there are communities [where] they still obviously value their children, but they struggle a bit more, the larger communities, might struggle a bit more with sort of the substance abuse and keeping the activity level up so the kids have something to do." Leonard also pointed out that the best and worst thing about living in a small community was the "closeness." That familiarity could often have a positive impact on a school culture but, during her year in a small northern community, Michelle also found that it fostered a lot of "jealousy and bullying" between students. Several graduates remarked that moving to a remote, rural or FNMI community provided them with the freedom and flexibility to be creative and take risks with their teaching. Valerie was offered the opportunity to take in-depth training in assessment. With this new expertise, she found herself sharing her knowledge with seasoned teachers. Others experienced personal growth and considered the experience to be life changing. Jon explained, "I think we learn the personal journey is a lot more rewarding than you know, a lot more rewarding than maybe sitting around for a couple of years, looking at supply lists and you know [thinking] that dream job is out there." He described how the challenges he had faced teaching had resulted in the ability to discern serious issues from "day-to-day annoyances." He eventually concluded, "This job definitely changed who I am as a person, it made me more self-reflective, definitely makes you more selfless, you don't have a choice in the matter."

b) Parental involvement

The legacy of residential schools and the resulting mistrust towards the education system had an impact on all the teachers who participated in the study. For some parents, encouraging further education could mean that their child would eventually choose to leave home. In Jon's remote northern community, grandparents were sometimes reluctant to encourage further education because of their own experiences. He also went on to comment that this situation was not universal: "Some of the elementary students are already questioning what education's all about and whether it's important, but then you have some parents that graduated high school and they see the importance."

In some rural communities, parents were very involved in the school and participated a great deal, while in those communities that had experienced the worst impact of the residential school system, parents were more reluctant to trust the school. Renate recounted, "I had one parent almost pull her kid out of school because of her experience with residential schools." Some parents are not only wary of schools but actually hostile toward the education system and those who work in it. Valerie found that many parents were unwilling to speak to her, even when she called home with good news. Colin also felt the impact of parental wariness on parents' nights: "It didn't seem that parents were taking a serious interest in the education. I had, out of 18 [students]… 2 or 3 of the parents come and so it was very difficult to get parents to come."

One respondent reflected on instances where students in class were parents themselves:

> It's definitely not uncommon for myself to have infant children in my class. At least they're coming to school. At least their parents are coming to school. If they have to duck out for whatever reason half way through class and come back, then at least they're still coming to school, you know, or having toddlers in my phys ed. class running around as well. You just, you just end up embracing that and be happy that their parents are coming to school. [Jon]

c) Grade level vs. grade ability

Some graduates were surprised to learn of the variety of grade levels in their classrooms. Renate went into her first teaching position believing that she was responsible for a grade six class; it took some time for her to realize that many of the students were simply not at that level at all. After teaching for a few months she came to the conclusion that reading abilities ranged from kindergarten to grade six. For some of the students, English was not their first language and this added to their difficulties in reading and comprehension. As she reflected:

> I think the biggest surprise was the level of my students. I went in to teach grade 6 and my students were anywhere from 11 to 14 and they were not at a grade 6 level … most of them were … about a grade 2 level with some of the them all the way to kindergarten level, some of them grade 4 or 5 level. But it took me a very long time to realize that, because there's a lot of masking techniques they use to hide what they can't do. Like refusing to do it, so then you don't know if they're refusing if they can't or they're refusing if they don't want to… so it took me a really long time to figure out their level, and by a long time I mean months to figure out their levels. [Renate]

Renate was responsible for teaching the Ontario grade six curriculum but had to find ways to make that curriculum accessible to many students who were not at the grade six level. As a result, most available resources were of little use. Fortunately for Renate, she had experience teaching French as a Second Language (FSL) and she used some of those techniques to appeal to students who were learning English. This meant developing some of her own resources and using a variety of the techniques – including graphics and phonics – she had used to teach FSL students. For many of her students, Cree was the language spoken at home and although her students spoke English they sometimes used it incorrectly. As Cree is mostly an oral culture, Renate found that her students placed little emphasis on reading. In her experience:

> They have Cree every day, like students down here have French every day and most of them can read their names in Cree. But Cree, it's more of an oral language, like your oral traditions with most First Nations cultures, because if you picture what they lived like 200 years ago, they lived on the land. They didn't have paper, they didn't sit around trying to figure out how to write... they were busy, living off the land, surviving. There isn't really a big written culture there. There is stuff written in Cree, but I think the focus of their Cree class is more culture, rather than learning to write in Cree and read in Cree. Most of my students speak Cree, to each other a lot, especially if they don't want you to know what they're saying.

For his part, Colin reflected on his approach to teaching and decided to try a new way to address the varying abilities in his classroom:

> I mean I had grade 8 students who were at grade 1 levels. Grade 7s who were really grade 2s. It's that huge discrepancy having to really teach five separate, completely separate groups of students in one classroom. That was something I had to learn how to properly do.... In the end I had to completely change the way I taught mathematics. I took on a center-based approach to teaching, which had huge results for me academically. If it wasn't for me doing that center-based learning, it would've been very difficult to teach these five different groups. There were students who were very, very high academically, even above their grade level and then students very far below. [Colin]

Similarly, Jon found teaching to a wide variety of grade levels in one class to be very challenging. Social promotion, whereby students were passed onto the next grade level without really meeting the requirements of that grade, was the norm. In his case, Jon found part of the solution to lie in the creation of locally based courses. As he explained, "We see a lot more development of locally developed courses, as opposed to some of the traditional, the standard, Ontario curriculum-based courses." Locally based courses could be tailored to students' interest while still allowing them to earn a credit.

d) Sense of community

For many of the graduates, teaching in a small community was the best part of their job. Being part of a small community meant that teachers, parents and students were often close. In some cases that familiarity meant that students were better behaved. Leonard suspected that part of the reason the students in his class were so well behaved was that poor behaviour in the classroom would likely reach the ears of parents even if the teacher did not call home. Tammy described running into parents and students when out in the community:

> Because it's such a small community you see them at the grocery store, you see them at the arena, you see them walking down the street, so you're constantly interacting with them so I think that's a huge thing and I think it's also very helpful in the classroom, because they know what's happening and if they have any concerns they know who to talk to, that sort of thing.

For her part, Marylee found that she could rely on fellow teachers to help in her first teaching job. "We're really close at sharing our resources as teachers and being mentors," she noted. "Having to use my peers for support really helps. It's really nice coming here and everyone's willing to ask for help. To learn from them, other people that have the experience, and have the knowledge, and have been doing this for a number of years." Four of the graduates found their significant other in their new community.

In some small communities, the school is a gathering place. Leonard remarked that, in his experience, "the community is really tied into the school, so you have a really good corps of volunteers for different school activities." He also described how being in a small community usually made parents friendly and more likely to approach him. "The parents of students, and I can only speak about the one school, I think they felt more

comfortable in interacting with the teachers there," he recollected, "where in Sudbury, I noticed there was much less interaction with the teachers." For Colin, meanwhile, volunteering made him visible to parents and helped him understand the culture and the community:

> I really coached every team there, whether it was basketball, volleyball, softball, everything. They kind of you know, left me the keys to do that, and it was fun to do that and be a part of community events and all of those things. Even to go on the cultural outings with them it was a learning experience the entire year for me too. You know, I am from Sudbury and you know I was a little bit familiar with Aboriginal cultures. I went to school with [First Nation] students. But it wasn't until you were immersed in the school and in the community that you finally start to learn something about their culture. So it was my favorite thing, learning something new about another culture and getting to know new people. Just finally getting the chance to work [in] the field I wanted. I had a huge break coming out of Teacher's College and I definitely didn't want to let that go to waste when I was there.

However, living in small, northern communities also meant that many students were often bused in from other locations. Busing meant frequent absences in cases of bad weather and or bad timing. Faye remarked, "You know they get one bus in and if they miss the bus then that's it, they're done, right. They can't walk, living thirty minutes off the highway and they can't get here."

e) Local politics and concerns

In small communities, local politics regularly take on increased importance. Teachers in remote, northern and small communities often report "living under a microscope" and there can be immediate repercussions for any misstep. Michelle described the politics of the community she taught in as a "vehicle from which the school was run." She eventually left her position in that community for a job elsewhere.

The financial benefits of working in remote, rural, FNMI communities can be enticing to new graduates. For example, salaries for teachers in James Bay are among the highest in Canada. However, those graduates living on reserves noted that they were not able to purchase a home and expressed frustration at the inability to reach one of the milestones that for them signaled success in early adulthood. The money, however, can be perceived as too enticing to some other residents, who feel that teachers only come to the community to make a "quick buck." Two teachers in northern Ontario reported being accused by students of just being there for the money and that they were not really committed to the community. One of them felt extremely hurt by the accusation, so much so that he assured them they would see him next year and the year after that.

f) Student home life

Graduates mentioned the importance of home life in many instances. "Family is more important when any big, big things happen," Jon remarked. "We'll see a lot of the students not coming to school because the family is all important. Also keeping family close and tight. Keeping everybody close and making sure everybody is taken care of and safe."

Many new teachers found that their students lived in an extended family and sometimes it was difficult to determine who was responsible for the child. As Colin explained, "Sometimes you have to talk to foster parents or social workers just to let them know how the student is doing, if they don't have parents around. I had one student who wanted to go to [a] track and field event but he kept being bounced around by all of his aunts so he couldn't get anything signed. I ended up going to his dad's house and knocking on his door and getting him to sign it."

All teachers encounter students with complicated home lives but in some isolated communities the cycle of poverty and the aftermath of residential schools has taken a dramatic toll on families. Renate observed, "Some of the stuff that happens to them, if it happened to me it probably would've been the end of my life." When one community experienced a natural disaster, two of the graduates were forced to evacuate. While one of them took on a leadership role as a liaison with the provincial government during the crisis, the other found herself assigned to teach temporarily in a nearby community. But after returning a few weeks later she was met with hostility from a number of her original students. She sensed that they felt she had abandoned them. For a week, some refused to speak to her and others even threw rocks at her.

In the end, many graduates reported being sympathetic to the complicated lives of their students and having worked hard to put these complications aside to teach in any way they could. Renate concluded, "The best thing we can teach them is coping skills for stuff going on in their lives, because we can't stop it and that's something you have to realize."

g) Placements

All graduates of the Laurentian concurrent education program have had at least 90 days of practicum in Ontario schools (more than twice the current provincial requirement). Participants overwhelmingly found their placements to be the most valuable part of their Bachelor of Education experience. Danika described the invaluable nature of a placement in this way: "My placements gave me that teaching experience that my employers were looking for." Placements were not only valuable in gaining hands-on experience but often led to connections with principals who might be in a position to hire in the upcoming year. For example, Leonard noted:

> Having placements prior to knocking on a principal's door and asking for supply work is, I think that was the best experience ever, because, you're already used to being in a school, you've been exposed to a variety of schools, a variety of principals and teachers who know you. You understand a little bit about how different ages of students [are] sort of managed and taught. Just that overall placement experience, I think helps when you first walk into a school, you're a little bit more adaptable to different levels of teaching and different age groups and stuff like that.

Several of the graduates had a placement at a school in the First Nations community of M'Chigeeng and spoke about the significance of the experience in preparing them for their own classroom. Three of the graduates who completed their placement in M'Chigeeng found employment in the same school after

graduation and, according to Valerie, "There definitely was a relationship then between doing your placement there and getting the job." The real-life experience that placements provide is useful not only for making meaning of theory learned in class but in providing student teachers with situations that cannot be simulated. Faye found traveling 40 minutes to her placement each day worthwhile in terms of experiencing a new environment: "Driving out and seeing a new school, a school that wasn't in Sudbury… I loved it!"

Valerie learned that teaching in a different culture meant different priorities. In remote locations students could miss a lot of school just by traveling to hockey games and they were also very likely to be absent during hunting season. She needed to adapt her teaching as a result. She explained the lessons learned in this way: "Do not plan anything important during those like couple weeks during hunting season ... [and] make sure like it's things that ... students can pick up on quickly because I was surprised that … when it's hockey time too, Fridays during hockey season half of your class will be gone, that was one of the things that's different because in Toronto that doesn't happen."

h) Understanding northern, rural and FNMI communities

The Laurentian concurrent education program has a strong Indigenous focus. Every undergraduate and senior course must include FNMI information and in the final "professional year" candidates normally begin the semester with travel to an outdoor education center where they work with Anishinabek Elders and community members. The next week, these students travel to a band-run school to learn how it incorporates Ojibwe culture into the curriculum. The program also requires every candidate to plan lessons that consider the culture of FNMI learners. And, as mentioned previously, about six teacher candidates compete each year for the opportunity to complete six-week placements at that school. In spite of this, some graduates felt that more could be done to prepare them for the realities of working in a FNMI community. One admitted, "I know we did a lot with First Nations... like we were told to differentiate lesson plans, but I think we needed more about the backgrounds of the different... communities that there are, just an idea... like I still feel like I'm not fully prepared for that." Still others recommended that a practicum in a First Nations school become a mandatory experience for all graduates: "I do feel that students should have an opportunity to have a short practicum in a First Nations community because it is better to experience what it will be like working in these communities," Michelle remarked. "Maybe integrate lessons on the realities of remote schools such as lack of money, no school board, cultural differences, social dynamics and sensitivity training."

Familiarity with the residential school experience provided a number of graduates with an understanding of why it took time to develop the trust of a community. As Marylee explained:

> Coming to a First Nations school... because I'm not First Nations, so it's another thing to consider. Students are very accepting and I think the hardest thing was getting the parents on board.... I didn't know it was going to maybe, be that much... of a concern... of having an outsider come in.

Graduates regularly reported learning classroom management strategies relating to the culture in which they were teaching. Teaching on Manitoulin Island, Marylee would gather her students to reflect upon the four quadrants of the medicine wheel intrinsic to the Ojibwa culture. When trouble arose in the classroom, she would ask them which of the four quadrants – spiritual, physical, emotional or intellectual – was out of harmony and why. She made it the students' responsibility to come up with suggestions for restoring harmony.

Jon, who was teaching in northern Ontario, referred to his approach as "management by compassion." He had learned that in his mostly Cree community the idea of teachers disciplining students was frowned upon. So he had developed a way of ignoring most misbehaviour and instead dealt with students as individuals since the all-encompassing progressive discipline approach he had been taught was not an option. Tammy, for her part, described the reasons why compassion was often necessary in order to keep students motivated: "Some of those kids don't have two parents that are around in the evening to read with them or do their homework with them, so we do have kids that are up all night and come in with their heads down so those things don't work to all students, some students do but I think we just need to take, or look at our teaching styles and making sure that we're showing them we care towards the students."

Leonard found that his students were better behaved than those in other communities in which he had taught previously. He theorized that children in his class would share incidents of poor behaviour in the classroom with relatives. In this way, the behaviour of the students was regulated by the close-knit nature of the community. Similarly Faye, also teaching in a rural community, was surprised by how respectful her students were. She attributed this to the diminished presence of technology. To her mind, "They're polite, they're very nice, many of them live out in the bush or on farms, away from the technology that we're seeing these days and it's kind of making them better kids."

Graduates regularly spoke about making connections with Elders by inviting them into the classroom to share cultural knowledge with students. Jon said, "We all try to incorporate their culture in everything that we do, all the courses that we do. Those are the two big ones though; the native language and the traditional harvesting are the two cultural based courses." Colin also described regularly inviting parents in to speak about their jobs or share other skills.

i) Integration into the community

Many graduates stressed the importance of becoming involved in the community as soon as possible. Valerie described attending sporting events as a sure way of getting involved. She noted, "Lots of them, not all of them, but a lot of them play hockey, and they had this tournament and they brought me a schedule and highlighted all their games on it. And they're like 'You're going to come right? You're going to come to our hockey game?'"

Graduates also often took on leadership roles within the community or school as a way of fitting in. Leonard, for example, assumed a position with the fall fair committee that has been a part of the community for over 100 years. Jon, on the other hand, introduced a brand new community-wide recycling project. It was while

organizing the recycling project that Jon had his first brush with acceptance. In the midst of taking material to a recycling centre, one of the students cried out, "Stop the bus! You have to stop the bus right now!" Then the students led Jon a little way into the bush. After walking for a few minutes they stopped to show him their goose camp. The students proudly explained how they tied down the trees to form a shelter but, once they were done, the trees were untied and allowed to return to their original position. The students had deliberately brought him to a place no outsiders were normally permitted to see and they wanted Jon to know that their traditional lifestyle inherently involved respect for nature too. Jon described feeling privileged during this episode. As he reflected, "Really what we strive for when we go to these remote communities, [what] we really look for the permission to be let in to what they do and let into their lifestyle."

For Colin, reflection was part of the integration process as he described how he sought to understand the culture of his new community:

> Seeing them in the different sports activities at the school… they're regular kids, you know. On any given day they're a regular grade 7 student wanting to hit the baseball or catch it. And so that's, that was sort of a learning experience in itself. Because it's a different culture, and you're not sure, when you first interact with them, you're not sure where they're coming from. And they're probably looking at you, you're from a different culture, as a Caucasian walking into the classroom, and realize that I don't know much about their lives and they don't know much about my life.

j) Moving for school and being willing to move for a job

There was also a relationship between relocating from outside Sudbury to attend Laurentian and being willing to move for employment after graduation. Those graduates who came to Laurentian from a community outside of the Sudbury area were much more willing to move for their first teaching job. Danika explained it this way:

> I believe wholly that the fact that I had to move to Sudbury made it entirely easier for me to move to this job. By the end of the program, I had been away from home for five years. Moving to new town was no big deal for me. I know for a fact that students who were from Sudbury and had a job opportunity elsewhere were hesitant to move away because they had never been away from home.

Summary of Responses from Administrators/Principals

In response to a question regarding the factors that lead new teachers to stay in or leave the community, four respondents concurred that having family close by is the primary reason teachers decide to leave or stay in a community. Three administrators mentioned the personality of the candidate and another three suggested personal concerns involving newcomers (see theme "factors contributing to likelihood the teacher will stay"). Four responses indicated that there was not a lot of turnover in their community, while another four indicated that they accept a lot of student teachers.

When asked whether there were things the education program might do to better prepare new teachers to work in their communities, two responses suggested that teacher education programs should encourage active participation (see theme "active participation").

In response to a question regarding what the education program might do to better prepare new teachers to live in the community, five respondents indicated that teacher candidates should research the community prior to an interview or before accepting the job (see theme "researching the community"), while three suggested keeping an open mind and two each suggested getting firsthand experience, getting involved in the community, and completing lots of additional basic qualifications and additional qualifications.

In terms of advice for our students, two administrators indicated that newcomers must earn the trust of the community by building relationships, that they need to understand the past, specifically the impact of residential schools, that they would become a teacher 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, and that it was best to learn the language or the culture of the specific community (see theme "advice for teacher candidates and the program").

Themes Administrators/Principals

Four themes emerged from the interviews and questionnaires with principals:

    a) Factors contributing to the likelihood the teacher will stay
    b) Active participation
    c) Researching the community
    d) Advice for teacher candidates and teachers

Administrators/Principals

a) Factors affecting the likelihood the teacher will stay

In Ontario, the competition for teaching positions is intense and administrators reported that there were many applicants for each position. One administrator in a First Nations community made it clear that he would prefer to hire someone from the community but that he would look outside the community if that was not possible. Being from the area or having family there was a factor that he felt increased the probability the teacher would stay. One administrator bluntly noted, "Most of the teachers at this school attended the school." Two administrators stressed the importance of emphasizing diversity and inclusivity in the classroom and suggested that graduates take professional learning courses, specifically in special education and/or in a Native language.

All of the administrators stressed the importance of the candidates' interest in enjoying a northern outdoor lifestyle. As one administrator explained, "You are surrounded by water and trees and some people are very much at ease with that, and some people aren't and it makes them uncomfortable." Another principal echoed this sentiment, saying, "New teachers stay in our community because they enjoy the lifestyle in a

small, quiet community." Teachers sometimes left because they "may find it hard to adjust to the isolation and limited access to amenities. They may find it hard to fit into a small community and feel more alone if they do not feel accepted by the community." Another explained that the outdoor lifestyle might not appeal to some young people looking for excitement. With larger urban centres often hours away by plane or winter ice roads, the social amenities many twenty-somethings expect (such as bars or dance clubs) are simply not available. As one administrator remarked, "We don't have a lot of young professional [types]." In other cases, new teachers may want to stay in the community but they get "bumped" by a teacher with more experience. If a new graduate wants to work in a specific community, principals suggested that she or he be open to other options but not to give up on their dream location and keep trying. One observed, "It's going through the process of being [patient] early in your career and trying to wait those years out so you can get where you want to be."

b) Active participation

Several administrators also stressed the importance of establishing a good relationship with parents early in the year. As one noted, "You're the new person, not the school and not the parent. They [parents] know their child better than anybody. So anything you can do to bridge that... I think that would bode well for when those things aren't going as smoothly as you like with a particular student."

One of the ways to establish relationships with parents was to be seen as a contributing member of the community. Cheryl explained what that meant for her:

> My advice would be to get involved in as many extracurricular activities as possible at the school level. This provides more opportunities to get to know families and their children in a more casual environment. In addition, attending social events such as students' hockey games, music recitals, contributing to local fundraisers, shows that you have an interest in the students and a vested interest in making their community a better place.

Another administrator concurred, saying, "Getting to know parents individually and inviting them in to share, just establish those relationships, invite people into your classrooms, not just in a general blanket invitation, specific, get to know your parents and put value in what they do and invite them in to share…. You've got parents that are IT-savvy, they can set up a blog or a Facebook page, keep it positive and allow parents to contact you." Sherry stressed the importance of learning to rely on one another in a northern community for networking and carpooling, while another principal said that it was essential to find a mentor in the school. As she put it, everyone benefits from having "someone you can go to if you need something."

c) Researching the community

Every principal interviewed agreed that understanding the socioeconomic realities of the community before going to an interview or taking a job is essential. As one administrator observed, even newcomers had to have a basic understanding of the community "and the implications for families and what that means for children in those families, contending with that on any given day." He continued:

Sometimes it's really shocking and it's not meant to discourage teachers, but if you're not prepared for that, if you don't know that that's coming, then that will change your outlook and it will change your practice and sometimes, that is for the worse. You don't become a better teacher, you become either jaded or you become pessimistic. I think that it's incredibly important understanding the truth of the situation.

Another principal stressed the importance of having an open mind and not generalizing about what a northern or rural community is like. "Each school is really different," Sherry observed. "So just not going in thinking that's what my life is going to be like in the school or in that community, because they're all extremely different."

One administrator from Manitoulin Island explained that trust was very important in First Nations communities and that gaining the confidence of residents began with an understanding of why they might be hesitant to rely on any member of the education system. This hesitancy is one of the residual aftereffects of residential schools. As he explained:

It is not about blaming the residential school system; it's about understanding why that system came to be, how it came to be, and really taking a look at the impacts of what was done. And it really was extermination right, and it was government policy to exterminate, our own government policy to do that. So, why should people trust that system? If you understand that perspective, you'll start to understand the significance of your role as a good teacher. [David]

d) Advice for teacher candidates and for the program

In addition to researching the community, one administrator stressed the importance of not just taking a university course to understand First Nations culture but actively participating in Indigenous life by volunteering or completing a placement in the community. Jennifer, who suggested that education programs should place more emphasis on longer placements, also stressed the need for FNMI placements. Another participant remarked that many First Nations students learn holistically so teachers need to teach holistically as well.

Earning trust in the community is essential to successful teaching in a smaller settlement. As one principal explained:

It's very easy to lose trust in somebody and very hard to gain it. And for new teachers that are coming into the system ... the lifestyle is different. You're young, you've got a new job, you're professional, and the lifestyle might be you know, maybe a little bit more flamboyant or maybe you are under a microscope. All of that has an impact on the trust in that community is going to put in you and in the school when you go back to work the next day. And I know, it's very clearly laid out in Professionally Speaking and at the College of Teachers level, what you do after school, but I've never seen it more so [than] in a First Nations community.

Another administrator concurred, saying, "I think it's important for new teachers to know that they are very noticeable in a small community. People are interested in their lives and will talk about them in the community. Keeping a low profile is probably a good idea and setting a good example in the community is extremely important." [Cheryl]

Discussion

Graduates explained how living in a small community brought a certain sense of closeness but sometimes also fostered jealousy. Being a member of small community meant that these teachers were always on duty. They conveyed the closeness of families, although parents were often reluctant to engage with teachers, possibly as a result of their own negative schooling experiences. New teachers in our study sometimes struggled with the wide range of abilities in each grade but found creative ways to address the challenges. Participating in community activities was essential to transitioning to becoming a community member. The opportunity to complete a placement in a First Nations community and to learn about FNMI culture through their Bachelor of Education program was central to many graduates' willingness to seek employment in FNMI communities. Principals also articulated how new teachers were more likely to remain in the community if they did research into the community before arriving and became actively involved during their first few months of residency.

Effective teaching in an FNMI community is about building relationships (Goulet & Goulet, 2014). It is clear that in order to integrate successfully into a community, graduates were wise to take on a variety of responsibilities in order to build these relationships. These ranged from volunteering on local boards to creating new initiatives, but graduates were more commonly involved coaching sports teams. The task of being a teacher in a remote, rural or FNMI community is often all-encompassing, as teachers take on the role of mentor, cheerleader, confidante and social worker. The literature tells us that most teachers take jobs in remote, rural and FNMI communities in order to pay off student loans or to gain some experience before heading back to the city (Bishop, 2007; Friesen, 2005). But the graduates in this study indicated quite the opposite. In fact, only two of the graduates interviewed had ever left their positions in these communities and for one of them it was in order to move to an even more remote community.

New teachers' decisions to leave may have less to do with culture shock and more to do with burnout. Most of the graduates interviewed appear to have been able to cope with the culture shock but a number were feeling the effects of being a teacher "24/7." Similarly, Wortherspoon (2008) described new teachers as being chronically overworked and susceptible to burnout in general. Thriving as a teacher in any small community means accepting that you are always on duty.

Graduates who attended Laurentian University from outside of the Sudbury area were much more likely than Sudbury residents to be willing to move to a remote rural or FNMI community for their first teaching job. The experience of being away from home for a five-year concurrent degree, coupled with the ever-present reality of the Ontario job market, meant that graduates were aware that their chances of finding

instant employment in their hometowns were fairly slim. And the strategy of moving to find work seems to have been successful. About one-quarter of our original study group from 2007 to 2012 had gone on to accept positions in rural, remote or FNMI communities and around 15% of our current graduating classes are heading overseas, mostly to England. Because they usually spend ten semesters acquiring a teaching degree and because almost all of them are unattached early "twenty-somethings," they have both a realistic idea of job prospects in their home province, as well as the ability to pack up and seek employment elsewhere (Sheppard & Danyluk, 2014).

Some graduates reported that part of what they had learned in their BEd program did not really prepare them to meet the needs of their students. Most of the graduates reported that the practicum was where they experienced their greatest learning. Those who had the privilege of doing a practicum at a First Nations School were inspired to apply the knowledge they had gained in their own classrooms. As one administrator reflected, practice teaching in any school like that has benefits. The culture, language and landscape may be different from where the graduates find long-term teaching posts, but they will have had the opportunity to interact with an FNMI community.

This study demonstrated the importance of the practicum and more significantly the impact of a practicum in a First Nations community. With that in mind, Laurentian's Faculty of Education is seeking to expand partnerships with rural, remote and FNMI communities. Recently, for example, two teachers in Kasheschewan have agreed to act as associate teachers. The difficulty with enacting this plan lies in the cost of travel and lack of accommodation for student teachers in remote, rural and FNMI communities. A second difficulty is gaining the trust of these communities in the aftermath of the residential schools experience.

The knowledge gained through this research project will aid the Faculty of Education at Laurentian University in preparing more students for the reality of the current educational job market. We have learned that many of these graduates secured employment through placement experiences. But a large number of our former students find employment in remote, rural and FNMI communities located elsewhere in Canada. It is disappointing in that regard that the College of Teachers will still permit Ontario pre-service candidates to complete practica outside the province but will not count it as part of the requirement for a BEd degree. In essence, we are graduating teachers in Ontario – some of whom will likely never find work in their home province – while valuable placement experiences in other provinces that might lead to employment are not considered acceptable for certification. In fact, one of the non-Ontario administrators who was contacted by the researchers suggested that generally student teachers should complete placements with her board before even considering applying for a teaching position there.

Conclusion

The employment landscape for work in rural, remote and FNMI communities has changed. There are declining turnover rates and more applicants seeking positions, so competition for jobs is becoming more intense. Certainly the graduates we spoke with seemed committed to staying in their rural, remote or FNMI communities. The respondents also provided evidence that institutions can more effectively prepare new instructors for teaching in Aboriginal communities.

Based in part on this research, all future students in Laurentian's concurrent education program will be required to complete an Indigenous studies course (as many graduates have gone on to teach in FNMI communities outside of Ontario, it is important that the program provide them with an understanding of FNMI groups across Canada). Education students can choose from the many Indigenous Studies courses available at Laurentian. In addition, ELL techniques will be a part of the revised program beginning in 2015.

The results of this study demonstrate the significance of building a relationship of trust with members of the community who may have had negative schooling experiences. In order to understand which classroom management techniques work best in FNMI communities, new teachers should have an understanding of both the residential schooling experience and the special nature of the community in which they are now living. New teachers need to develop an understanding of the unique political structure of the community and how local politics impact education. Graduates expressed a real appreciation for the opportunity to complete a FNMI-related practicum and suggested that this opportunity be available to more students.

A significant opportunity exists for the concurrent education program at Laurentian University to expand its partnership into remote, rural and FNMI communities. The partnership with M'Chigeeng is one of the real strengths of the program. Barriers to new partnerships include the reluctance of some communities to trust outsiders and the lack of funding to supplement travel and housing costs in remote locations. Even partial funding by government agencies or faculties of education for travel and accommodation costs in these remote communities would likely encourage greater number of students to complete a remote placement. Next steps in this research should include gathering information from the principal and teachers in M'Chigeeng regarding their perspectives on the barriers to new partnerships and how to approach other communities. As a result of this research we have already reached out to two other schools in Northern Ontario with a high percentage of FNMI students to discuss the possibility of partnerships. Additional research should be carried out to document the steps and outcomes of these two new partnership endeavors.

The process of developing a sufficient number of teachers from local communities to address FNMI needs will take many years. In the interim, it would seem essential that Ontario's faculties of education appropriately prepare graduates to teach in rural, remote and FNMI communities.

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