

CHANGING SCHOOL-COMMUNITY RELATIONS THROUGH PARTICIPATORY RESEARCH: STRATEGIES FROM FIRST NATIONS AND TEACHERS

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Abstract / Résumé

A crucial aspect of the National Indian Brotherhood's (1972) call for First Nations control of First Nations education was its significant recognition of parental responsibility in the educational decision-making process. The relationship between the school and the community has been part of the campaign rhetoric of the devolution of power from federal to First Nations communities. This paper concerns a participatory research study that examines school-community relations on a First Nations Reserve.

Un aspect crucial de l'appel lancé par la Fraternité des Indiens du Canada en 1972 en faeur du contrôle de l'éducation des Premières Nations par celles-ci était la reconnaissance de l'importance de la responsabilité parentale dans le processus décisionnaire en matière d'éducation. Les relations entre l'école et la collectivité ont fait partie de la rhétorique de la campagne d'attribution de compétences du gouvernement fédéral aux Premières Nations. Le présent article traite d'une étude de recherche participative qui examine les relations entre l'école et la collectivité dans une réserve des Premières Nations.

The National Indian Brotherhood (NIB) (1972; 1980) engineered the accelerating process of First Nations control of education in Canada as an integrated school reform process that gives the right to First Nations to control the education of their children by exercising parental responsibility (NIB, 1972). The local control concept has proven powerful enough to be adopted nationally as a concurrent model of school governance and self-determination for First Nations. The testimony to the attractiveness of the local control concept as an integrated school improvement process should be provided by the intellectual and material support given to the communities to control their own education. One starting point would be to ask: What does local control mean to First Nations community-school relations?

Many educational researchers interested in First Nations education believe that local control will provide opportunities for local people to have a say in school governance, restore to them the feeling that they are not powerless and are in control of their own schools (Matthew, 1990; Hampton, 1995). A basic purpose of local control is to move toward collaborative decision-making, involving principals, teachers, parents and students. Under Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC) there could be a significant degree of uniformity in school practices, procedures, and salaries, notwithstanding local disparities in the educational needs of students. Schooling could also mean cumbersome bureaucracy and an impersonalization of the needs of students and teachers and the federal government's monopoly of school functions could restrict parents from influencing the direction of their children's education. Therefore local control of First Nations schools should be more responsive to student needs and involve greater parent participation in the schooling of their children (Hampton, 1995; Matthew, 1990). The shifts in the loci of power to First Nations communities means that the education of First Nations children will greatly depend on the feelings and aspirations of their parents.

The importance of local control is widely recognized, although the nature of the control process is currently the subject of considerable debate. The expected outcomes of local control depend on the conditions that define the particular schooling environment and on the particular interests of the First Nations communities. For First Nations, local control of education is a crucial movement towards Native self-determination (Senese, 1991). As the National Indian Brotherhood (1980) asserts: "The possession and control of one's education is vital to the development and survival of a people. If Indians in Canada are to survive as people we must develop and control our own education" (p.5). The federal government or INAC and the local control systems can be different in

terms of the degree of decision-making authority wielded by INAC and local authorities, respectively. The consequential blend of decision-making power with respect of education functions, decision-making modes, and levels of governance are what lead to the description of an entire educational system as federally controlled or locally controlled. According to Fatini & Gittel (1973), "The concept of community control represents an effort to adjust existing systems to new circumstances and needs. It seeks a balance between public, or citizen, participation and professional roles in the policy process" (p. 113).

In some contexts of local control such as site-based management (SBM), the transference of power is designed to enable schools and communities to manage changes in education within a framework that fits the overall objectives, strategic plans, policies and curriculum initiatives of the provincial government and education authorities. In this context government and the central office determine key objectives and policies for education and empower communities and schools to work within a specific framework to provide education that is suited to each community (Spinks, 1990). Although teachers, parents, and principals may be involved in decision-making, the provincial governments assert more control and legitimacy over SBM schools. There are differences between SBM and First Nations control of education. In terms of First Nations control, decision-making authority is not merely distributed from the federal authorities to individual First Nations school sites. The devolution represents a nation-to-nation transference—that is, from the federal government to a First Nations government, each First Nations community representing a government. In First Nations schools, band councils assume the political control of the school and delegate the administrative responsibilities to a local education authority. A potential increase in school autonomy at the local level should raise questions about school-community relations, of how community resources are serving the interests of the school. The Report of the Royal Commission on Learning (1994) found school-community relations as the number one priority for school improvement and describes it as the "first engine" (p. 11). As the report states;

We explored several ways to implement this concept [of school-community relations]. We think every school should have a school-community council, led by the principal and comprising parents, teachers, and students responsible for bringing appropriate community resources into the school to assume some of the obligations teachers now bear alone (p.11).

This study utilizes a participatory research that draws on data col-

lected through workshops, interviews, observations and discussions recorded as field notes to ascertain viewpoints of community people and school staff about school-community relations. I present perspectives of Euro-Canadian teachers' as well as First Nations parents' viewpoints on community-school relations—parental involvement in schooling, communication between home and school, and teacher integration into the community. This paper concludes that both First Nations and school staff consider the extent of community involvement in education as a major factor for First Nations school improvement and suggested some strategies to deal with the problem.

Participatory Research as Dialogue for School Improvement

The approach and contexts to participatory research suggest that it is useful in helping dominated, exploited, and minority groups to identify problems and take action in solving them (Kemmis, 1991; Participatory Research Network (PRN) 1982; Maguire 1987). Hall (1981) defines participatory research as a social action process that interconnects the activities of research, education and action. From this standpoint, participatory research provides a ground for collective empowerment that helps to deepen knowledge about social problems and helps to formulate possible actions for their solution. By its imagery and power, participatory research provides a type of anchor for thinking about participation in an active context. Participatory research is increasingly tied to and powerfully influenced by the concern with power and democracy and provides important social learning networks that are critical to issues of gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, physical and mental abilities, and other social factors (Hall, 1993).

Kemmis (1991) studied Aboriginal and teacher education in the Northern Territory of Australia and found that participatory research with Aboriginal people resulted to some innovations that led them to maintain a central role in their own development. Maguire (1987) studied battered families in Gallup, New Mexico, U.S.A. and found women's participation in participatory research projects boosted self-esteem as well as the control and organizational power of women's groups. Jackson (1993) documents the significance of the specific role of participatory research in providing essential political infrastructures for land use claims for Canada's Aboriginal people in the 1970's. Horton (1993) has also written on how participatory research provided structures for changing the ownership and control of resources for the Appalachians in the United States.

Maguire (1987) asserts that participatory research goes beyond

merely interpreting and describing social phenomenon. Accordingly, the most peculiar aspect of participatory research is the direct link between research and action (Maguire, 1987; Hall, 1981). Thus, in this project, we did not merely describe social reality, but radically tried to change it by combining the creation of knowledge about social reality with actual action in that reality. Therefore, our objective of this project was to collectively build a group ownership of information as we moved from being objects of research to subjects of our own research process (Maguire, 1987). By using an alternative social science framework, we employed data collection processes that combined the activities of research, education, and action (Hall, 1981; Maguire, 1987; Kemmis, 1991). As an educational process, the project educated us by engaging in the analysis of structural causes of selected problems through collaborative discussion and interaction. As an action process, the project enabled the participants to take collaborative action for radical social change in both the short and the long run. The common ethos of the project consists of an emphasis on cultural education and the desire for an assertion of cultural knowledge in matters of educational concern.

So, unlike a study using an externalist position, this project did not intend merely to produce information about Aboriginal education and remain on the shelves. Moreover, the project was also unlike more latent interpretive forms of critical theory. Our method was to apply thinking processes related mainly to the development of strategies for problem solving and decision-making. These strategies laid special emphasis on the learning of all the activities, institutions, social groups and networks that First Nations have progressively developed over the years (Kemmis, 1991).

The participatory research at Yellow Pond concerned forms of educational theory and research aimed at transforming the works of First Nations schools – “forms of research whose aim is not to interpret the world but to change it” (Kemmis, 1991, p. 102) or “to transform the social environment through the process of critical inquiry – to act on the world rather than being acted on” (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 9). The design for this project drew on an alternative research paradigm approach, the method of critical education research described by Kemmis (1991) and Miles & Huberman, (1994) and the method of participatory research described by Hall (1975, 1981).

Community Profile

Yellow Pond is a relatively small isolated First Nations reserve in North-western Ontario, Canada. The reserve attained a band status with its own chief in 1970. The community is reached only by daily scheduled

flights when the weather permits or by a winter road during February and March. The main aircraft that ply the routes are Beech 99's and Cessna 180's. The community people also make considerable use of float and ski-equipped aircraft for trapping and hunting trips and traveling to other communities. About 2,000 kilometers from Toronto, the provincial capital, Yellow Pond procures its essential supplies of merchandise from the metropolitan centers of Winnipeg and Thunder Bay, which are each of about 700 kilometers away.

Before the coming of Europeans, Yellow Pond based its livelihood on hunting and gathering. There is a significant level of awareness of past traditions among the elders of the community although the young in general, are not knowledgeable on matters concerning past traditional beliefs, cultural patterns and expectations for First Nations. Nevertheless, data from elders strongly confirm that even though children are raised to speak the local dialect, Ojibwe, there is a comprehensive pool of information on local traditions that is virtually unknown to the young and the Euro-Canadian teachers of the children.

As with all cultures, the culture of Yellow Pond is dynamic, changing and adapting to new times. The establishment of band councils by the government of Canada to administer First Nations communities and enforce law and order has much to do with the demise of First Nations culture on some reserves to which Yellow Pond is no exception. Euro-Canadian Law has replaced First Nations and the values, customs and conflict resolution ideals of First Nations are giving way to Euro-Canadian ways.

The community's population has grown from 392 in 1986 to about 600 in 1995, an average annual growth of about 4 percent. The population lives in 85 households with about 55 percent under 20, and about 25 percent is at present in school in the community. While the population of the reserve continues to grow at a rapid rate, economic conditions have not kept pace with the population growth. Unemployment, alcohol and substance abuse, teenage suicide, broken families and starvation are serious problems in the community. The Band Council considers the improvement of the education system as one way of finding solutions to the social and economic problems.

The School Within the Community

The present premises that harbours the Yellow Pond School was built by INAC as an Indian Day School. The school with its teachers' quarters lies on a sandy, gentle slope in the north-eastern corner of the community facing a sprawling lake on the south. A fence clearly defines the boundaries of the school and its elite residents from the community.

Within the school and teachers' quarters are modern facilities of running water, showers, water closet toilets, and oil furnaces for heating. Until a few years ago, the school and its teachers' quarters were the only places in the community that had electricity from a small diesel generator. While the whole community slept in darkness, the lights from the school area illuminated the lake to the south and the coniferous forest that borders it to the north. Immediately beyond the fences are community houses with wood-stove heating systems, and little out-houses at the side of each of the homes. To the south of the community is the sprawling brown-water lake from which all community people acquire their water supply for all purposes all-year round. During winter months, when the lake is frozen, families bore holes in the thick ice to collect water for their household chores.

Community people told me that during the period that INAC controlled the school, they did not have anything to do with the confines of the school fence. Community people looked upon the school as an ivory tower and whatever happened behind the fences was the business of professional teachers. As an elder, 63-year old J.S. put it:

A bus would come round to pick our children to school in the morning and would bring them back after school. I knew they went to school but I didn't know exactly what they were doing there. They will be there, behind the fence until it is time for them again to come home (Interview with an elder in Yellow Pond).

Parents said they neither visited the school nor the teachers' homes either because they were never invited or felt that there was nothing they could do in those places. The comment by this 51-year old parent, K.J., below was instructive in regard to the perceptions most parents had about the school:

When there was no bus, we dropped the kids off at the gate. There will be one or two teachers waiting for them. We never went inside the fence except when there was something wrong with your kid then the principal will invite you to the office. We had one principal here who will visit the kids' home everyday after school to talk to their parents. I think he was an Irishman.... No, we never went to their [teachers'] homes (Interview with community member in Yellow Pond).

So, the present study explored whether the school still maintains the legacy as the fenced-in modern quarter of the First Nations reserve, that is, a community within a community or whether local control has changed the notion community people have about the school. Certainly the school has its own value systems, laws and regulations that are

entirely different from those of the community-at-large. The present study uses participatory research to ascertain viewpoints of community people and school staff about school-community relationships—parental involvement in schooling, communication between home and school, and teacher integration into the community.

Research Procedures

This study proceeded in five phases: 1) negotiating the research relationship; 2) identifying the most significant problems; 3) collective educational activities; 4) classification, analysis and 5) definition of action projects. Note taking and tape recording of interviews formed an integral part of all the phases of the search. Table 1 shows the research phases and activities initiated.

Phase 1: Negotiating the Research Relationship (September-October)

I arrived at the First Nations reserve of Yellow Pond during the last week of August to take up the building level administration of the school and at the same time embark on a participatory research study. The initial problem I encountered was how to establish myself, particularly, how to be accepted by the community people as a researcher and at the same time as someone closely connected with the school. I realized that being a person of minority origin and working in the school, I stood in a unique advantageous position as a researcher because my research was going to directly link school improvement compared with other researchers who community members might regard as outsiders that come to collect data for their own use and may not fully cooperate with them.

As soon as I entered the community I started gathering and analyzing information about the research area. This was a period I started establishing relationships with groups within the community and inviting these groups to participate in the research process. It was also a period, during which I tried to locate the research problem within the community. I identified the small groups within the community that were active in school affairs and formed an advisory or reference group for the project. Data gathering was in the form of journal keeping and note taking during interviews and dialogue with people in the community.

Phase 2: Identifying the Most Significant Problems (November-January)

By November, I started setting up a problem-posing process that

Table 1: Research Phases

Time	Phase	Activity
September-October	1. Negotiating Research Relationships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Gathering and analyzing information about research area b) Establishing relationships with groups c) Locating research problem within site d) Formed advisory group e) Journal keeping
November-January	2. Identifying Most Significant Problems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Setting up a problem-posing process b) Dialogue with groups and individuals c) Daily journal keeping and notes from interviews d) Workshops
February-April	3. Collective Educational Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Connecting participants' personal perceptions of issues b) Workshops c) Compiled themes for investigation d) Participants began to assume fuller responsibility e) Preparing for action
May-July	4. Classification, Analysis and Conclusion Building	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Information gathering, analysis and conclusion building b) Meetings with participants c) Workshops d) Development of theories and search for solutions e) Data gathering, classification and analysis
August	5. Definition of Action Projects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Deciding on Action projects b) Ongoing participation in school development

Table 1 shows the research phases of this study. It shows that in all, there are five phases. The sections that follow provide a more detailed description of the activities initiated during the phases.

enabled us to start identifying the community's most significant issues about schooling of their children. It was a period of ongoing problem-posing in the form of dialogue with groups and individuals, leading us to a more complex and critical understanding of the problems and issues as perceived and experienced by us. It became quite clear to me during this period that the community people were aware that problems existed in the school and were prepared to work together for the improvement of the school. I started collecting data in the form of daily journal keeping and notes from interviews and dialogue with community people.

In December, an idea came from a member of the Local Education Authority (LEA) to conduct a problem identification exercise for the school. We agreed at a general meeting that we would all submit lists expressing problems of the school. I received lists from classroom teachers, support staff, LEA members and community people. In total I received 36 lists from respondents. Some respondents provided causes of the problems and suggestions for their solution, while others merely listed the problems. The high standard of responses, the efforts that respondents put into identifying the problems of the school and the number of suggestions reflected the importance members attached to the notion of school improvement and participatory research.

We decided to hold workshops to discuss the problems raised by participants. According to the Participatory Research Network (PRN) (1982), "Group discussions are probably the most widely used method in participatory research. They occur throughout the process, and are often used together with other methods" (p.6). The PRN (1982) suggests small numbers of 8, 12 or 25 who meet to solve problems by sharing experiences, information and support. For this study, I targeted the small group of five people who form the Local Education Authority, who were active on school affairs, to act as an advisory or reference group for the project. Basically, this group advised on what to do in the course of the project.

The workshops were mainly group discussions that helped in problem posing, identifying causes, discussing possible solutions and evaluating actions (PRN, 1982). Group discussions also created circumstances under which people felt relaxed and free to speak. Researches and participants used group discussions to build a sense of trust, support and co-operation among community people who shared the same ideas or problems; group discussions maintained communication between researcher and community members, and also acted as productive interviews (PRN, 1982).

We held the first two-day workshop in January. The themes of the workshops reflected the viewpoints of participants in relation to the prob-

lems they viewed as most pressing to the school. In order to identify most precisely the problems that were common in the submissions, we, as a group, analyzed the submissions in two stages. First, we thoroughly scrutinized all the submissions identified by participants. Second, we subjected the submissions to a coding process. In coding the submissions, we categorized all the issues by using coloured stickers to reflect common themes expressed by the participants. We then rearranged the themes and came up with categories such as school-community relations, school governance, curriculum and staff development and traditional and cultural education.

Phase 3: Collective Education Activities (February–April)

In the third phase, I attempted to connect participants' personal perceptions of issues to the wider context of the community. Having increased their understanding of the issues it became obvious at this stage that the school and the community were ready to mobilize themselves for school improvement. We all felt mandated and committed to develop an effective school problem that would ensure students received high quality education.

In this way, by the end of this phase, we compiled the questions and themes for the investigation. Also in this phase, participants began to assume fuller responsibility for the project through further workshops that encouraged suggestions to deal with problems affecting the school. They also began to realize their potential and abilities to mobilize and act on school issues. It is important to note that as community people seemed to lack the literacy skills and information for critical analysis, we embarked on collective educational activities, such as showing videos and organizing open forums to which we invited presenters to educate us on various topics such as the role of the home and school in education, communication skills, and conflict resolution. For example, an educator from Sioux Lookout presented a workshop on the roles of teachers and parents in school discipline. Such forums helped participants to further examine their interpretations of issues.

Phase 4: Classification, Analysis and Conclusion Building (May–July)

During this phase, I involved participants, through various means, such as inviting them to regularly visit the school and talk to students and teachers, to gather information, classify, analyze, and build conclusions. That is to say, community people interacted in the school to observe what was going on and were free to ask questions and make

suggestions. Above all, we attended two public meetings apart from participants and researcher meeting two times in every month, to investigate problems posed in Phase 3. Public meetings formed an integral part of this phase. I used public meetings to inform community members about the research as it progressed and to provide a chance for them to contribute to the plan and implementation of action projects. I used them to involve more community members in playing an active part in the research project by joining small group discussions, interviewing people and allowing themselves to be interviewed. Since the balance between First Nations and Euro-Canadian conceptions of schooling may be important for the development of education in the community, I met with Euro-Canadian contract teachers and community people together at certain times and met them separately at other times. For example, questions that arose during meetings with the Euro-Canadian teachers concerned issues such as orientation of non-First Nations teachers into the community, e.g. What kind of orientation should new teachers be given by the community? How long should this orientation be? How can non-First Nations teachers integrate themselves into the community? Should they have host families? During these meetings, I encouraged teachers to write down observations in their own words while I jotted down notes on my observations about individual interactions, group activities, and statements by participants. I highlighted priorities in participants' comments and recorded overall reflections.

Phase 4 was a crucial period when participants began to develop their own theories and understanding of issues and began to find solutions for them. This phase was crucial to the study in that this was the phase where I put together information, classified, analyzed and started to build a thesis.

Phase 5: Definition of Action Projects (August)

The final phase, which at this time is still ongoing, has involved researchers and participants in deciding on what actions to take to address the issues they have collectively identified and analyzed. At this stage, community people have "moved from being objects to subjects and beneficiaries of the research" (Maguire, 1987, p. 51), I have become an involved activist in the school improvement program. Quite early at this phase, we designed some action projects that we implemented immediately. Taking a comprehensive view of the numerous issues that came up for us to address, it is inconclusive where we might be with our action projects a couple of years from the time of this study. In other words, although the process of the research has indicated direct imme-

diate value for us, one cannot determine the final results of the research, since phase 5 is still ongoing. We should realize definitive results of our participatory research efforts by the end of this phase.

Data Analysis

Like data collection, participatory research literature does not specify "one best way" of data analysis. As the data for this study came from the notes I took throughout the phases of the research process, submissions of participants, and the transcribed tape recorded interviews, I felt I had to analyze the data using qualitative approaches to research. However, Lather (1992) contends that data analysis of alternative research paradigms transcends the ordinary application of qualitative approaches because "their focus is the overriding importance of meaning making and contest in human experiencing" (p.91).

Miles and Huberman (1994) contend that because participatory research is an approach that aims at changing the social environment through a method of critical inquiry by acting on the world, data analysis should concentrate on description in the initial stages, and go through to the search for underlying concepts or ideals. While there are several ways to analyze data collected from interviews, discussions, field work and workshops, the data analysis of this study essentially utilized qualitative procedures with a focus on generating meaning within a particular setting (Lather, 1992).

There were two major phases of data analysis, namely, the collection phase, and the analysis phase. Owens (1982) contends that in the early stages of the study, the researcher devotes about 80 percent of the time and effort gathering data and spends about 20 percent of the time on the analysis and vice versa in the latter stages. During the collection phase, while I continuously referred to, and reflected on the data being collected, I also compiled some systematic field notes that might be useful to the study. The analysis period entailed classifications, the formation and testing of ideas, making connections among ideas, and relating concepts to emerging categories.

For the interviews, I prepared summaries of the fifty-eight interviewees for verification by respondents. First, I listened to each audiotape and made detailed notes or transcription of the interviewees' responses. I then subjected each of the responses to a coding system I developed to identify the respondent and the interview questions to which she/he responded. I separated each of the respondents/responses using as guidelines the research questions for the study. The objective was to categorize each of the responses according to common patterns, themes or ideas that fit into the research questions.

After reducing the interview data I searched for patterns, repeated themes or views that conform to categories such as school-community relations, shortcomings and priorities of schooling, and educational governance. As the analysis continued, I recorded theoretical memos about what the patterns possibly meant, and drew from research questions and the analytic insights and interpretations that emerged during the data collection. I then assigned the emerging ideas and patterns to categories. For example, first, I assigned pieces of information relating to school governance, budgeting, accountability and efficiency in the schooling system to the category of control; second, I assigned issues relating to parental involvement in schooling, teacher orientation into the community, communication between teachers and parents, to the category of school-community relations; and, the third, problems relating to curriculum, student attendance, school supplies, facilities, and so on were in the category of shortcomings of schooling.

In order to prevent incidents of single, possibly well-articulated or emphatic views of individual respondents from outshining the others, I counted the number of respondents who expressed a certain view or theme relating to a concept. Rather than considering the majority view of total respondents, the unit of analysis was each of the groups I invited to participate in the research. I considered groups such as the advisory committee, elders of the community, parents, teachers, and students as levels of analysis. To view a perception as a factor, a majority of participants belonging to each of the groups would have had to refer to it as an issue, and, therefore, deserving to be considered in the analysis and presentation of the results of this study. Apart from helping to shape meaning for the combined viewpoints of respondents, the counting also helped me understand the viewpoints held by the majority of respondents. Thus, data analysis at this stage essentially, involved coding and counting the data according to the categorized indicators and highlighting further indicators that became evident from the raw data (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Lastly, I verified the final conclusions by confirming and substantiating the interpretations that appeared in the data for their validity to establish some truth in the responses of participants. In order to establish and communicate meaning from the data, and, to provide conceptual consistency by grouping details under more general ideas, I identified and labeled emerging themes and patterns (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

As an alternative paradigm research, it is not the intention to present the results of the study with the purpose of making them more reliable and valid than those of dominant research paradigms. It would, however, be helpful here to draw upon some of Lather's (1986) approaches

used to validate alternative research paradigms to ensure credibility and trustworthiness of the study. Lather asserts that researchers should build into their research designs triangulation, face validity, and catalytic validity. First, Lather addresses triangulation as the inclusion in the research design of various data sources, procedures, and theoretical outlines that seek contrasting patterns as well as similarities. This research utilized various data sources, such as field notes, interviews, discussions, meetings and workshops. Second, face validity occurs by "recycling categories, emerging analysis, back through at least a subsample of respondents" (Lather, 1986, p. 78). In this study, after typing the interview summaries for example, I took the summaries back to participants in order for us to review them and make necessary modifications. I also presented all participants with workshop summary reports in order for them to read them and make the necessary corrections. Furthermore, because I had to employ an interpreter to translate the answers of community people who could not answer the interview questions in English, there may be a possibility for misinterpretation. In order to minimize this possibility, I subjected the tape recordings in Ojibwe to a second interpretation. In all cases, the second interpreter confirmed the translation of the first one. Finally, catalytic validity follows when there is "some documentation that the research process has led to insight and, ideally, activism on the part of the respondents" (Lather, 1986 p. 78). Catalytic validity should be crucial to this study, as its main purpose was to promote participants' understanding to their own capabilities and right to control decisions affecting them. The suggested fundamental and detailed strategies suggested for action address this concern. Accordingly, this study meets Lather's (1986) criteria for judging the trustworthiness of a participatory research.

Results

Results from this study indicated that most parents who participated in the study are informed of the fundamental principle of educational philosophy. That is to say, parents are aware that education should equip their children with the necessary tools for survival in both First Nations and Euro-Canadian society. Furthermore, parents believed that their children should be self-sufficient, competent, and should be able to confidently manage their lives and those for whom they are responsible.

Parental Involvement in Education

As in all cultural milieus, young First Nations children in Yellow Pond gain the basic concepts of the social order of traditional First Nations'

cultural knowledge, first, through interaction with parents and close family members, and eventually, others in the community, that is, peers and other adults that the child notices outside the immediate family. The data in this study suggest that community people feel that in some cases teachers and school officials completely overlook First Nations' cultural values. The present study pointed out that some teachers do not see the difference between the purpose of education for First Nations and Euro-Canadian children. Whereas teachers support a view that the education of the children is supposed to continue to augment and reinforce the cultural and social experiences that the child brings from home to school, parents feel that the school is different from the home.

Results relating to school-community relations generally revealed that parents and teachers do not work together for the improvement of schooling. Parents think that they should not involve themselves in their children's schooling. Although the school is under local control community people do not understand and are not aware of alternatives and how to involve themselves in choosing among them. Teachers I interviewed indicated that the most frustrating aspect of their job was lack of parental involvement. As one of the female teachers, H.S., commented:

I find the apparent apathy in the community towards education and providing recreational opportunities for the children and the lack of parental involvement the most frustrating aspects of the job. It appears that if the non-Native people in the community did not do things for the kids, nothing would get done. There appears to be a general expectation of the community that the teachers can do everything where the kids are involved (Interview with Teacher, Yellow Pond).

Parents on the other hand feel that teachers continue to assume that as soon as children enter the schoolyard, they are expected not to behave as First Nations, but as "civilized" persons and could only be First Nations after school. The comments by this 49-year old parent, and a former LEA member, A.W. presented below were typical of how a majority of parents felt:

The children don't behave well at school. They carry their behaviour at home to the school. Teachers shouldn't allow them to do that. They can do what they want to do at home but when they go to school, they should behave as school children. The other day X and I went to grade...classroom to see the teacher and the kids were swearing at us. They were calling us names. If they do that at home they shouldn't be allowed to do it at school (Interview with parent in Yellow Pond).

The above quotation supports the perception that the school is a fenced-in enclave, which is different from the home. The present study revealed that the change from INAC to local control does not change many of the notions community people had about the school.

Although community people I interviewed showed considerable interest in the affairs of the school and the improvement of the school system, they accepted that there was little parental participation in school affairs. Some parents did not know that there was a local education authority in charge of the school. They still entertained the notion that the school was under INAC control and they did not have anything to do with the schooling of their children. Also, some parents did not know that they could visit the school at their own will and talk to teachers about the progress of their children.

Perhaps the comments of a community member about the seclusion of the school from the community prior to the takeover from First Nations and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC) can provide a reason for lack of parental involvement. As 67 year-old, G.C. commented:

The only time we saw our children during school time was at recess when they played within the fence. Sometimes I would like to speak to my children during recess time but teachers would not allow them to cross the fence. They are all over the place guarding the fence and since I know that they don't want us to speak to the children, I don't want to offend them. Teachers know their job and we should leave them free to train our children (Interview with yellow Pond community elder).

While parents felt that they were not welcome in the school, teachers thought that it was necessary for parents to participate in their children's education. Another female teacher, M.C., in her late twenties remarked:

To improve schooling for students, parents and teachers must get to know each other. Parents should feel that the teacher has the best interest of the child in mind, and teachers should feel that they have the support of parents in carrying out their programs. Parents should become involved in the daily programs of the school. When children see their parents taking an interest in school, they may begin to develop the attitude that school is important (Interview with a Euro-Canadian teacher).

In soliciting ideas from community members as to how much participation is fitting or preferred by community people, I found that many people felt that it was the duty of the Local Education Authority (LEA) to encourage parents to urge their children to go to school. They felt that as soon

as the LEA gets involved in schooling, parents would also get involved.

Another requirement that community people most frequently stated in our discussions regarding parental involvement in schooling was the need for more effective communication and more understanding between community people and the Euro-Canadian school staff. Respondents indicated that community people do not want to get involved in school affairs because there is lack of effective communication between the school and the community. As W.T., in his 30's who worked in the school a couple of years ago stated:

Community people don't want to get involved. People are afraid to communicate. They need lot of public education. Teachers need to sacrifice their time to get to know people and try to gain knowledge from Native People. They need to establish trust and respect. Teachers should invite parents and ask them questions. They should establish friendship with parents. I have never seen a teacher going to visit a parent except report card day. Teachers go from their houses to the school; they never bother to know what is happening in the children's homes. As I said earlier, the most important thing is getting to know people (Interview with community member, ex-worker in the school).

As I personally found out during this study, it is difficult to communicate with First Nations people without getting to know them. This study has the benefit of establishing a direct contact between personnel from the school and community people. I found that the personal contact I introduced between me and community people went a long way in enhancing the image of the school staff. Many respondents indicated that it would take trust, friendship and understanding on the part of teachers to get parents involved in schooling. This comment from a parent confirms how important it is to get to know people:

If my people don't trust you, they'll have nothing to do with you. Some of them feel that their children don't behave well at school and teachers will find fault with them so they won't get near the teachers. Teachers have to open up to parents and make them aware that they're here for the welfare of the children. As I said earlier, the only way by which to do this is ...I guess, they should be friendly towards parents. Teachers should also learn to understand parents (Interview with a parent).

W.T. suggested that a major problem facing parental involvement in school matters is lack of effective communication between the school and the community.

Communication

One of the drawbacks cited as facing schooling was lack of effective communication between parents and teachers. I asked a middle-aged man working at the Band Office, O.R. to tell me the way by which school could become more effective for the children:

The main problem of schooling in this community is lack of communication between parents and teachers. All of you teachers are new to our way of life. You don't know what we do with our kids at home. Ask your teachers, how many of them have ever attempted to visit a parent and spend a weekend with him, and perhaps, go on the trap-line together and see what children and parents do over there. You are teaching children whose way of life you don't understand. You are just teaching them what you think they should know. It is only when teachers know about the home environment of the children that they can teach them well. I don't blame the teachers. It is poor parenting that brings about problems in the school. Some parents just don't care about what their children do. Teachers and parents have to work together (Interview with band worker).

The study revealed that teachers acknowledge the lack of communication between them and parents. Teachers believe that the school can build effective lines of communication with parents by hosting school events and inviting parents, visiting parents at home, and attending community events. They suggested that it is necessary for the school to create venues, where parents can meet and discuss school issues together. Teachers felt the necessity of becoming well acquainted with parents. As a female teacher, S.D., commented:

Teachers and parents can work together to improve schooling by communicating with, and supporting each other. When the school plans an event, parents should come out and show their support. When possible, parents should be included in the planning process and volunteer to help. That way, they will see the effort that goes into the planning by the teacher, and not just the end result. Teachers and parents should communicate with each other, not only when there is a problem with a student, but when there is good news also. I think a PTA would help because then parents would have an opportunity to get an inside look. It is good for the school to have an open door policy for parents. However, parents need to use it to come in. If an open door is not used, it only lets in the cold (Interview with Euro-Canadian

teacher).

Respondents I interviewed felt that what makes the problem of communication between teachers and parents more serious is that the language and cultural backgrounds of teachers differ from that of community people. Participants recommend that the initial necessity is for teachers to become acquainted with parents and develop a new footing of trust, agreement, and cooperation. It is clear from the present study that community people want to feel that Euro-Canadian teachers are reinforcing family values, that is, respect for parents, elders and First Nations culture, rather than teaching children only western values. I asked 38-year M.G., a mother of two, what she would recommend for teachers to teach in school. As she stated:

Teachers should teach children our values. We were taught to respect our parents but these kids don't want to listen to us as parents. The kids don't respect elders. They just do what they like. I think teachers should teach them things like respect for elders, and our culture too (Interview with a parent).

Respondents also indicated that in order to communicate effectively with parents, teachers needed to understand the cultural differences, First Nations' way to life, their problems and aspirations. As B.M. of the Band Office remarked:

Teachers are different from us and they've got the way they do things and we also have our own way of doing things. I know parents won't come to teachers if they don't go to them. Teachers have to show understanding of our way of life and our problems. If teachers invite parents and they come late teachers should understand that they're on First Nations time [laugh] (Interview with band worker).

Teachers believe that the problem of communication partly lies in parents' refusal to involve themselves in school affairs. Teachers expressed that all attempts they make to invite parents to school events prove futile. Thus, teachers feel that while they try all they can to keep an open door policy, parents would not make efforts to visit the school. As 30-year old male teacher, H.D. stated, when I asked the questions: How can the school build effective communication lines with the community?

I think this question is a reflection of the problem that now exists. The onus is put on the school to build effective communication. If you look at a relationship between two people, one person cannot make it work by him/herself. If one person is a great communicator, and does everything possible

to make the relationship work, yet receives little or no response from the other person, the relationship will eventually die. No matter how great a communicator you are, you cannot carry on forever alone. Quite often, teachers put a great deal of work into planning events to involve parents but they receive little or no support, and little or no turn out for their efforts. After awhile, they get tired of it, and they don't want to try any more because there seems to be no purpose. Nobody communicates anything good that is done, only complains when they don't like something. This is very discouraging for teachers. For a relationship to work, between two people, both partners must put effort, support, and communication into making it a good relationship. Each person has an equal responsibility. I believe for effective lines of communication to exist between the school and the community, each has to accept the responsibility of making this happen. Each has to work at making it become a reality (Interview with Euro-Canadian teacher).

Even though a number of parents said that teachers are unable to communicate effectively to parents, some indicated firmly that the problem of communication does not lie with the teachers because students convey messages of invitation by notes to homes. However, it is clear from the study that as many parents are illiterate and do not read as well as speak English, they have a problem of comprehending messages sent by teachers. Some parents feel that it is the responsibility of the LEA and the Band Council to be actively involved in school events, and draw the community into accepting to be part of the school. As 66-year old J.S. commented:

The Band Council should provide effective relationship to community people. The Band should communicate effectively with the people, for example, who are the teachers? What are they doing? What have they planned for school? How should community people support the plans for the school? The Band Council is unable to report about the school to us. They don't deal with the school properly. The Band doesn't inform us about what happens in the school. There should be a regulation that the LEA and the Band Council should report periodically to the people what the school is doing. They can communicate with the people through radio shows, community meetings or newsletters (Interview with community elder).

While a majority of respondents indicated that lack of communica-

tion was a major drawback for schooling, at the same time a few respondents blame parents for apathy. Those respondents felt that most parents do not care about the school and nothing could involve them in schooling matters. As an LEA member S.V. remarked:

The parents just don't care. They have other things bugging them and won't worry about school. (Interview with community member).

What this respondent suggested was that problems associated with deplorable living conditions, lack of job opportunities, lack of recreational facilities and adjoining problems of gas sniffing and alcohol abuse could contribute to parental apathy towards school matters.

Teacher Orientation and Integration into Community

Teachers felt that the two-day orientation they receive in Sioux Lookout before coming into the community is inadequate to prepare them to understand their students and parents. They recommended that they need two types of orientation: 1) prior to their arrival in the community; and, 2) after their arrival in the community. The first orientation should be at least one week long. It should thoroughly explain differences in culture; it should offer some training for teaching English as a second language; it should provide an information package of the community including pictures and videotapes; and above all, it should spell out teacher expectations. As teacher H.S. simply put it:

The orientation prior to arriving in the community should include suggestions as to how to 'break the ice' with the local people, what the community views as the role of the teachers both in and outside of the school environment; the duties and responsibilities of the Education coordinator and the LEA; administrative procedures/paper-work and brief synopsis of the Windigo Education Policy (Interview with Euro-Canadian teacher).

Teachers indicated that the orientation after they arrive in the community should be ongoing. They said they could use the first few days to familiarize themselves with community people and the environment. As teacher M.C. stated:

Once in the community the teachers could be taken on a walking tour of the place, to familiarize themselves with the layout; they could be introduced to the families. This could be done in one morning or afternoon. The potluck dinner this year was a good idea. It would be nice to have someone tutor the teachers for about half an hour once a week in Ojibwe, so we could learn some common greetings, expres-

sions and phrases (Interview with Euro-Canadian teacher). Some teachers also indicated that as part of the orientation process in the community, it is necessary for non-First Nations teachers and community people to discuss issues directly pertaining to the education of the children. As teacher S.D. remarked.

The orientation in the community should include: a discussion of the local goals of education; an introduction to local resource people of cultural activities, traditional values, and those willing to assist in the classroom and extra-curricular activities when needed; a list of community activities in which teachers could participate and a list of band officials and their responsibilities, and an introduction to these people (Interview with Euro-Canadian Teacher).

Teachers expressed the need to have families volunteer to prepare them for some aspects of community lifestyles, such as hunting, fishing, cooking and craftwork. These families could 'adopt' teachers and bring them up to know the First Nations way. Teacher H.D., in an answer to the kind of orientation to receive in the community stated:

If possible, various families in the community could adopt a teacher and invite them to go hunting, fishing, trapping and participate in their everyday life—hauling water, getting wood, and eating with the family. The teachers would gain valuable information and understanding of local life that would benefit them in teaching their children. This adoption would create a better rapport between the parents and the teachers and would promote cooperation. Teachers would be made to feel welcome in the community and would feel as if they were part of the community. A great benefit to the teachers would be first hand experience/assimilation into local way of life (Interview with Euro-Canadian teacher).

When I asked teachers about how much they thought they should know about First Nations before teaching their children, almost all of them agreed that it is important for them to understand the social and cultural realities in the community. They also indicated that they needed to have some understanding of the general learning styles of First Nations children and how they could adopt curriculum and resources to local needs. As one of the female teachers, M.C. maintained:

I think it is important to be aware of the realities that exist both socially and culturally in the community. We need to know what kind of behaviour is acceptable. Also, we should have an understanding of the general learning styles of Natives (Interview with Euro-Canadian teacher).

While community people felt that teachers are unwilling to learn about their way of life, teachers, on the other hand, indicated that they are willing to learn all that they can, provided community people are prepared to teach them. A majority of teachers expressed that it is the duty of the community people to find ways and means of imparting their culture to non-Native teachers. Teachers further indicated that as part of its involvement, the community should help teachers to learn the culture, language and history of the local community.

Discussions with the Euro-Canadian teachers revealed that most of them did not know about First Nations and their culture before arriving in the community. Teachers would have preferred to learn about First Nations people and their culture at the university. They felt that the university should play a vital role in improving the quality of teachers for First Nations children. As female teacher, S.D. remarked:

I believe all education programs should include courses on Native students. Some of these should be taught by Native people, and some taught by non-Natives who have worked with Native students. This would provide teachers with culturally relevant information, as well as information that will help prepare them for what they will face in working in Native communities (Interview with Euro-Canadian teacher).

Teachers stated that universities should devote research towards collecting material from First Nations communities for use in courses such as in sociology of education and educational psychology. Also, teachers felt that universities should organize seminars and give presentations in classes about First Nations education. H.D., whom I asked how much teachers need to know before teaching First Nations students put it this way:

The focus of knowledge, I think should deal with psychology. How Native children think is crucial to designing approaches to helping them learn and especially for classroom management and discipline. Teachers need to know a lot about children, their relationship with the community and how the community responds to the needs of children not as it was traditionally, but as it is today, or maybe both (Interview with a Euro-Canadian teacher).

When I asked another teacher, D.T., what he thinks should be the role of universities in improving the quality of teachers for First Nations children, he said:

With the help of Native organizations and committees, content can be collected and submitted to universities to use in conjunction with sociology and psychology course content;

otherwise, faculties of education should hold seminars, have presentations in classes, and hold a Native awareness day or week annually at the universities in order to kindle the interest of student teachers in Native education (Interview with a Euro-Canadian teacher).

Fundamental Strategy Suggested to Address School-Community Relations

Participants indicated that parents and teachers needed to work together to bridge the gap between the home and the school. They revealed the need for more understanding and better communication between parents, school staff and community-at-large. Participants also felt that parental involvement should be a strong impetus for student success.

One of the fundamental strategies suggested to address school community relations was the need to inform parents about the importance of active participation in school affairs. Participants suggested that parents should provide management goals for the education system and should participate in school activities such as open houses, professional development days, helping in the classrooms, sports activities, and so on. Participants also recommended that the Band Council should be actively involved in advertising school events to community people and should encourage them to take part in the events. Teachers should use various means such as the community radio and billboards to inform parents about school events and encourage them to attend. Parents and school staff should socialize at the beginning of each year and get acquainted with each other.

Specific Implementation Strategies for Dealing with Community-School Relations

As part of this study, participants sought the best possible ways to maximize parental involvement and the general relationships between the school and the community. Having established that community people are willing to communicate with teachers and involve themselves in the education of their children, and that teachers are also willing to learn the culture of the community, the participants deliberated issues concerning how to bring parents and teachers together to work for a common goal. In order to establish a continuity of parent-teacher cooperation, participants suggested that the following specific implementation strategies should be ongoing:

- a) Teachers should organize parent-teacher events in teachers' homes.
- b) Teachers should periodically invite parents to their classrooms to teach a skill or tell a story to the students.
- c) The school should maintain a school-community newspaper that reports both school and community news with teachers and parents on the editorial board.
- d) School should organize parent-teacher games nights; parents should submit a list of skills they can offer the school.
- e) The LEA should clearly understand issues arising in the school and should properly communicate these issues to the parents.
- f) Teachers should reach out in the community by visiting parents of their students at least one a month.
- g) Band Council should provide more social gatherings and make it possible for teachers and parents to meet outside the school.
- h) Teachers should make learning relevant to home conditions of student.
- i) School should involve children's extended family members such as grandmothers, uncles, aunts, and elder brothers and sisters in school affairs.

Discussions

This study went beyond simply locating problems about schooling. Identifying perspectives and suggesting solutions for the improvement of relations between the school and the community, First Nations and Euro-Canadian teachers sent a message that together, they can do a good job in school decision-making roles, if they are offered the opportunity to know more about each other. In other words, because community people and Euro-Canadian Teachers generally poorly understand each other's worldview, it is necessary for the teachers to have appropriate preparation for teaching in First Nations schools. DeFaveri (1984) and Hampton (1995) sum up the differences between First Nations and the Euro-worldviews. DeFaveri asserts that while the First Nations worldview symbolizes unity with creation, the Euro worldview symbolizes individualism and isolationism. Thus, while the First Nations worldview maintains that reality does not necessarily constitute related or connected components. For Hampton (1995), there is the need for a radical change because differences are not only in terms of ethnicity, race, values, personal differences in viewpoints, and socialization but also in terms of historical antecedents rooted in colonization.

One important theme that constantly emerged and guided participants' recommendations about school-community relations was the part

the school could play to rejuvenate traditional values in the school and the community. Suggestions implied that the school should be a repository and clearing-house for traditional values. This recommendation supports those of NIB (1972) and the Report of the Royal Commission on Learning (as will later appear in this paper). As the NIB (1972) paper states:

Indian children must have the opportunity to learn their language, history and culture in the classroom. Curricula will have to be revised in federal and provincial schools to recognize the contributions which Indian people have made to Canadian History and life (p.29).

Recommendations offered by community people in the present study suggested that the teachers need more training into First Nations culture. The present data also showed that Euro-Canadian teachers in Yellow Pond would like to have had exposure to material on First Nations culture and traditions while at the university. Drawing from responses among First Nations parents and Euro-Canadian teachers, this study reduces all the concerns to the central issue of training and orientation of teachers to First Nations culture. The results of the present study support the sentiment echoed by the Royal Commission on Learning (1994) and NIB (1972) about the need to prepare teachers of First Nations children. Recommendation 127 of the Report of the Royal Commission on Learning (1994) strongly advocates the inclusion of First Nations content in teacher preparation programs. As the report states: "That the province include its requirements for pre-service and in-service education a component related to teaching Aboriginal students and teaching about Aboriginal issues to both Native and non-Native students" (p.77). The National Indian Brotherhood (1972) also addresses the concern by stating:

Federal and provincial authorities are urged to use the strongest measures necessary to improve the qualifications of teachers and counselors of Indian children. During initial training programs there should be compulsory courses in inter-cultural education, Native languages (oral facility and comparative analysis), and teaching English as a second language. Orientation courses and in-service training are needed in all regions. Assistance should be available for all teachers in adapting curriculum and teaching techniques to the needs of local children. Teachers and counselors should be given the opportunity to improve themselves through specialized summer courses in acculturation problems, anthropology, Indian history, language and culture (p. 19).

While many universities in Canada offer a variety of courses in First Nations studies, these courses are mostly offered to students of First Nations origin. However, the irony is that First Nations schools are mostly made up of Euro-Canadian teachers (see Agbo, 1990; Canadian Education Association (CEA), 1984). The CEA Report (1984) indicates an almost classic failure of the Euro-Canadian teacher to attend to the needs of First Nations children. As the report states:

Too often, non-Native teachers have little or no professional understanding of the lifestyles, values and cultures of Native people. There is no doubt that Native education must recognize and respect these differences and obviously Native teachers and counselors are ideally suited to meet the needs of the Native student. However, the need for Native teachers is only partially being met and it is the non-Native teachers, often ill-prepared to deal with the cultural and linguistic differences who are responsible for providing the greatest share of Native children's education (p.75).

This issue of appropriate orientation into the community through proper training involves not merely one of theoretical knowledge or methods of teaching, but of acquiring the necessary tools for shaping and implementing a culturally- and socially-oriented concept of teaching that teachers can sustain from within, recognizing the community resources in context and reinforcing and maximizing their teaching and their own self actualization. Put simply, the training of non-First Nation teachers of First Nations children should develop the teachers' interethnic and intercultural skills in analyzing and finding alternatives in teaching and contribute to a complete education of the teachers by giving them the opportunity not only to better adapt themselves to the First Nations community but also to act on it.

The strength of the effect of this study was particularly noticeable in the high level of recommendations community people offered for the solutions of problems facing the school. Notwithstanding the present difficulties in understanding the different worldviews, these recommendations are a manifestation of the growing consciousness of community people's roles towards the organization of their school.

Conclusion

Local control of First Nations education owed much of its origins and spread to the need for parental involvement in schooling, no less than its political equivalent, First Nations self-determination. In fact, the National Indian Brotherhood (1972) bases the handing of schools over to First Nations bands on the claim that local control may yield consid-

erable parental input in school decision-making. This claim involves two basic expectations: 1) that local control will mobilize the community to create resources that the federal and provincial governments may not be able to generate; and, 2) that local control will support cultural education that symbolizes interests and values of First Nations (NIB, 1972). The concentration of ownership and management of the school in the hands of the community is therefore predicated upon the notion that parents are further moved towards the decision-making processes that affect their children. In fact, the NIB (1972) document set forth five purposes for *Indian control of Indian education* at the local level: 1) to incorporate First Nations cultures into the school system; 2) to foster greater involvement of parents; 3) to harmonize education with local development; 4) to make community people accountable for the education of their own children; and 5) to assert the right of First Nations parents to circumscribe the type of education necessary for their children. From the view of the NIB, the common ethos of local control consists of an assertion of the community will in matters of schooling and an emphasis on cultural education that fosters the identity and ethnicity of the First Nations child.

This aspect of "self-reliance" as part of the philosophy behind *Indian Control of Indian education* should enable First Nations schools to become less dependent on the Euro-Canadian system of education in their efforts to provide relevant education for First Nations Children. However, the school in Yellow Pond continues to bear all the hallmarks of the mainstream Canadian educational systems. Obstacles to effective school-community relations seem so much a problem handed down from the INAC era. From the standpoint of the Indian Education Paper-Phase 1 (1982), difficulties facing First Nations education authorities were inherited from federal agencies and became more aggravated as "Aboriginal education organizations were not supported or developed to assume functions associated with provision of quality of education" (p.3). Discussions with community people revealed that in contrast to the present local control model that emphasizes community involvement in schooling and encourages genuine community input into the conduct of school affairs, the INAC era tended to underscore the primacy of puppet school committees such as the Parent Teacher Associations (PTA) that had nominal influence in confined areas of the school programs and had no decision making authority. The concentration of ownership and management of the school in the hands of INAC and Euro-Canadian in-school administrators and teachers during the INAC period predicated upon the notion that all power belongs to INAC and its cronies, the school administrative and teaching staff while the PTA becomes merely a rub-

ber-stamp. There is thus a linkage between the present school-community relations and those of the INAC era. That linkage can perhaps best be understood in terms of a tradition of school-community relationships built over time and for the fact that the fence surrounding the school and the teachers' quarters at Yellow Pond remains intact, even during local control, it is not surprising that interviews and observations revealed that parents never liked to interfere with the school.

To conclude, developments in the long quest for a culturally relevant education, following First Nations disappointment with the Euro-Canadian educational system, have strengthened the need for effective school-community relations. The Yellow Pond community and Euro-Canadian teachers have exposed a whole range of opportunities for collaborating with each other for school improvement. Given the enormous disparities in the economic, political and cultural conditions of reserve schools, the local rather than the provincial or federal context provides an arena for school improvement. The present study reveals that the fate of the school is increasingly tied to and powerfully influenced by its relationships with the community. As First Nations communities are more familiar with local conditions and needs, effective community-school relations should help local people to pool together those local resources that are critical and relevant to school improvement. Apart from the numerous strategies suggested by parents and teachers for cooperation, it would, in addition seem reasonable for parents and for the community-at-large to have a substantial interest in knowing how the school system procures and uses its resources. It would also seem reasonable for them to know how well students are gaining the knowledge and skills that will equip them to function in their own society and the outside world (NIB, 1972). Likewise, it would seem reasonable to expect the education authorities and community people to have a substantial interest in how well particular students perform and the roles that teachers and parents are engaging in student learning and whether parents are satisfied with the results. Perhaps the most important thing for now is for the school to cease becoming a fenced-in enclave by tearing down the fence.

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