

**A HOLISTIC APPROACH TO ACCOUNTABILITY:  
MEASURING OUTCOMES OF ECONOMIC  
DEVELOPMENT FUNDING IN NORTHERN CANADIAN  
ABORIGINAL COMMUNITIES**

by

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## Abstract

Government funding targeted at the economic development of remote Aboriginal communities in northern Canada has historically taken a narrow view of accountability. While traditional financial reporting obligations invariably fall on recipients of government funding, this process gives little thought to broader notions of reciprocal accountability and the views of both providers and recipients of funding.

The present study used a combination of constructivist Grounded Theory and Aboriginal methodologies in interviews primarily with funding recipients and providers to draw on participants' (n=34) local knowledge of the socio-cultural factors influencing economic development in Fort Liard, Northwest Territories, Canada.

The results of this study demonstrate accountability processes based solely on financial reporting do not adequately reflect the complex social, cultural, economic and environmental outcomes that emerge from government-funded projects. A holistic approach to economic development accountability is needed to properly assess and measure the impacts of government funding in remote Aboriginal communities.

## Certificate of Authorship

The work contained in this thesis has not been previously submitted either in whole or in part for a degree at Central Queensland University or any other tertiary institution. To the best of my knowledge and belief, the material presented in this thesis is original except where due reference is made in text.

Signed: 

Date: 2 October 2015

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## Executive Summary

This research is an assessment of the processes and outcomes of government-funded economic development projects in Northwest Territories (NWT) Aboriginal communities. Its aim is to contribute to the development of a more efficient and reliable process for delivering this funding. The primary research questions addressed in this study were:

- Is there reciprocal consultation on the intended purpose and use of government funding in Aboriginal communities?
- Are measurements of the effective use of funds based on participation and reciprocal accountability?

The research was carried out with a focus on the interests and opinions of Aboriginal peoples. From this focus emerged not only the economic but also the sociological and cultural factors inherent to life in Aboriginal communities, which must all be considered in improving this funding process. Exploring these factors required giving a voice to participants and bringing their concerns to the forefront. Grounded Theory emerged as the best way to achieve this, as it allowed me to collaborate with participants to generate data for the study. My intention in using this bottom-up research method was to remain alert to Aboriginal perspectives that in the past “have been blinded by Eurocentric thought and practices” Hart (2010, p. 1).

The results of this research suggest that a holistic approach is needed to effectively measure the performance of program funding in Aboriginal communities in the NWT, Canada. Governments at all levels need to create an environment that encourages and nourishes not only economic development but also empowerment of Aboriginal peoples,

by using a fair and transparent reporting mechanism that matches the cultural values and expectations of Aboriginal peoples.

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## Glossary

**Aboriginal peoples** – are the indigenous people of Canada, which include First Nations, Inuit and Métis.

**Band, or Indian Band** – is a governing unit of Indians in Canada instituted by the *Indian Act, 1876*. The *Indian Act* defines a Band as a body of Indians, a) for whose use and benefit in common, lands, the legal title to.

**Band Chief** – is someone who is elected by Band members to govern for a specified term.

**First Nation** – has no generally agreed on definition. This can refer to a single individual; single Band; many Bands; an Aboriginal governing body, organized and established by an Aboriginal community; or the Aboriginal community itself.

**Hamlet** – a small village.

**On the Land** – Many traditional Aboriginal stories are set on the land, and it is also where traditional activities such as hunting, trapping and gathering take place.

**Treaty** – is an agreement between government and a First Nation that defines the rights of Aboriginal peoples with respect to lands and resources over a specified area, and may also define the self-government authority of a First Nation.

**Devolution** – is the transfer of powers from one public government to another, usually from a national level of government to a sub-national one such as a province or territory. Devolutions may transfer program responsibilities and budgets only or may include the right to create related legislation.

## Abbreviations

**AANDC:** Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada (now Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada)

**BDIC:** NWT Business Development and Investment Corporation

**CBC:** Canada Broadcasting Corporation

**FNIGC:** First Nations Information Governance Centre

**GNWT:** Government of the Northwest Territories

**IIRC:** International Integrated Reporting Council (previously the International Integrated Reporting Committee)

**JICA:** Japan International Cooperation Agency Evaluation Department

**NWT:** Northwest Territories, Canada

**NEDP:** Northern Economic Development Practitioners Conference

**P:** Participants in the research project (including community members, government officials, Chiefs and community support workers)

**UN:** United Nations

**UNESCO:** United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

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## Dedication

*In memory of:*

*my late father,  
Shri Piyare lal Chugh*

*my late wife,  
Mrs. Seema Chugh*

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## Chapter 1 – Introduction

### Introduction

This research is exploratory in nature; it is an investigation of the funding processes in place to encourage economic development within Aboriginal communities of the Northwest Territories (NWT), Canada. I became interested in this project following personal encounters with poverty in Canada's North. While initially I sought to explore the accountability mechanisms in place for dollars being spent on development in this area, I soon found a vacuum of achievements in the out-dated economic development processes aimed at eliminating poverty.

Much of this research focused on Fort Liard, NWT, a hamlet located near the northern border of British Columbia. Economic opportunities in the area are largely focused on resource extraction and the remediation of past developments, as well as more traditional activities such as trapping (Acho Dene Koe First Nation 2016). Self-government negotiations currently underway could result in the Acho Dene Koe First Nation taking control of settlement lands surrounding Fort Liard, and greater control over the development of industries including forestry, agriculture, tourism, and natural resources (Acho Dene Koe First Nation 2015).

This chapter (Chapter 1) is an overview of funding and reporting mechanisms considered in light of the changing demographics of Aboriginal peoples in Canada, their history as second-class citizens under colonial powers, and the ongoing issues of

poverty, low standards of living and social well-being. The Canadian constitution recognizes three Aboriginal groups – Indians, Métis and Inuit. These are the “descendants of the original inhabitants of North America” (Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada 2012, para 2). The term “Indian”, which some find offensive, is often replaced by “First Nation”, although the latter has no legal definition in Canada (Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada 2012). The term “Aboriginal”, which means “from the beginning” (Flinders University 1996, para 5) in Latin, is also used to describe Australia’s original inhabitants, in conjunction with the terms “Indigenous peoples”, “Torres Strait Islander peoples”, and the less appropriate “Aborigines” (Flinders University 1996).

It is no secret that governments direct a substantial amount of resources into programs that attempt to improve the socio-economic circumstances of Aboriginal peoples, and often governments are self-congratulatory and exaggerate the significance of their actions. Unfortunately, many programs fail to meet Aboriginal peoples’ expectations of an improved quality of life. The key element – the involvement of residents in fundamental decisions – is missing. It cannot be ignored that over the years, Aboriginal peoples have suffered greatly both socially and economically as a result of colonial expansion and shifting economic forces in favour of the encroaching populations. The small communities in the North continue to be left behind, and the gaps in population between bigger cities in southern Canada and smaller communities in the northern Canada keep broadening as little progress has been made on the provision of necessities such as housing, food and education. Deficiencies in these programs can be traced back to poor integration of local knowledge and a lack of grassroots support (Leo 2009). This

research seeks to gather experiences and perspectives, specifically from members of Northwest Territories (NWT) Aboriginal communities, to develop a deeper understanding of:

- How development funding is perceived by NWT Aboriginal community members;
- How satisfied the funding recipients are;
- How the funding was originally sought by community members and whether the purpose for which it was given matched the purpose for which it was understood to have been received; and
- How the funding was distributed and spent; in other words - did it meet the desired purpose?

In a nutshell, the importance of the present research is that it not only seeks an understanding of the accountability processes used in funding Aboriginal communities, but also identifies the basics of social fairness and cultural growth of the diverse regional, ethnic and Aboriginal populations of the NWT. These processes are of great importance to a wide range of parties, including government officials, researchers and policymakers, and above all, the Aboriginal peoples of Canada (Foster, Kim & Christiansen 2009). The findings of this study will serve as a tool for these groups in assessing economic development programs and initiatives to ensure responsibility, transparency and accountability. Presently, there appears to be a lack of understanding and unity regarding the economic development of Aboriginal communities, not only in

the NWT but all across northern Canada. The complexity and inconsistency of funding processes are most evident in smaller communities:

*The current plethora of funding arrangements in relation to Aboriginal service delivery is starkly highlighted at the remote community level where funding arrangements are complex and provided through numerous independent sources. These sources are difficult to trace, thus accentuating the fragmentation of service delivery, significantly hindering coordinated community development and financial accountability (Westbury & Sanders 2000, p. 9).*

Unfortunately, the various government bodies rarely engage in clear and concise conversations on funding strategies with the communities. As the types of funding for communities are not clearly defined, there is a lack of understanding between the parties on the purpose and the process for funding (Foster, Kim & Christiansen 2009). As a consequence, the outcomes are not sustainable as desired by the government or the community. Economic development funding processes need to consider the expectations of Aboriginal peoples and their governments, who are well-positioned to make these important decisions for themselves and take ownership of their futures (Abele et al. 2009).

Funding accountability mechanisms should also be scrutinized in the framework of how bureaucracies are organized and the manner in which bureaucrats answer to the wishes of the public (Goddard 2004, p. 546). It is equally important to “explore the links

between the declining confidence in government and the emergence of local responses” (Peredo 2004, p. 6).

If there is misunderstanding or miscommunication between the government and Aboriginal communities surrounding the purpose of funding, the results of the funding will differ from what both the parties anticipated. Such a mismatch opens the door to criticism of government funding policies and procedures. Improving the coordination and accountability of projects has been hampered by poor measurement of results in terms of meeting Aboriginal needs (Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada 2013). The values, cultures and development goals of local communities are not given enough consideration when governments determine funding accountability processes.

This study contributes to northern studies, reporting structures, funding strategies and policies on economic development, and political science literature, through the development of a model that will assist in subsequent analysis of government funding strategies on economic development. The research findings link economic development initiatives with social empowerment and cultural challenges faced by the communities in the NWT, concluding with a proposed process model to assess outcome of government- funded projects that are culturally appropriate and applicable to Aboriginal communities in the NWT. The study provides an assessment tool for other researchers to explore results-based funding in the context of economic development mechanisms. The results could also be used to facilitate the improvement of existing funding policies for economic development, and in the process, even identify innovative policies for

future development that will offer better results from the investments made by the government for the development of the NWT.

This thesis is organized into nine chapters. The first chapter (Chapter 1) provides an introduction as a means of positioning the study – outlining the aim and purposes of the study, background and justification, together with a brief contextualization of Aboriginal history, population and living conditions. This overview is significant and relevant for this study as the research is conducted in the NWT where the majority of the population is Aboriginal (Appendix A). Aboriginal peoples make up the largest share of the population of both Nunavut and the Northwest Territories (Appendix A). In Nunavut, they account for 86.3% of the total population and in the NWT they account for 51.9% of the population (Appendix A). If one looks at the demographics in smaller communities the Aboriginal population is much closer to 100 percent. Therefore, this research emphasizes, in particular, Aboriginal economic development.

## **Historical Overview of Aboriginal Canadians**

For an unknown number of centuries, Aboriginal peoples have inhabited Canada. Newhouse, Voyageur and Beavon (2004, p. 1) have argued, “the history of Aboriginal peoples in Canada has been told through the eyes and words of Europeans, mainly the British and French, who established a new nation-state in 1867.” Indeed, early European accounts of Aboriginal peoples dismissed their culture as primitive and inferior (Leacock 2010). The history of contemporary Aboriginal peoples is rooted in a colonial ideology defined by Métis scholar Emma LaRocque as “invasion,

dispossession and subjugation of peoples” (LaRocque 1987). As mentioned by Morrison and Wilson (2004), this colonial view of history has not seen much change in context of nineteenth century European imperialism, which gives political rationalization for justification and continuation of the status quo of Aboriginal-State relations in Canada. Orr, Weir and Atlantic Aboriginal Economic Development Integrated Research Program (2013, p. xii) argue that “since settler-Indigenous contact began, there has been a colonial view that did not accept that Indigenous societies were advanced, because colonial views of "advanced" were different from Aboriginal understandings.” While Canada is widely praised for its engaging diversity, its treatment of Aboriginal peoples is generally considered a national tragedy and an international disgrace.

There is much speculation about the origins of Aboriginal peoples. The recent archaeological discoveries provide direct evidence of prehistoric hunters in North America as far back as 13,300 years ago (Waters et al. 2015). Historians and scientists have advanced a number of possible theories. Although historians and scientists do not agree on the origins of Aboriginal peoples, there are indications to believe that they are genetically related to people in parts of Asia. Some historians believe that some Aboriginals settled in Canada came from Asia 30,000 years ago after crossing the Bering Sea between Siberia and Alaska (Marlatt 2015). “Prior to the arrival of Europeans in North America, Aboriginal peoples were organized as sovereign nations. They had their own cultures, economies, governments and laws” (Wherrett 1999, p. 6). Before European arrival each nation had its own system of land ownership and government. They exercised jurisdiction generally over territories marked with their

occupation of land. They owned the lands and resources on these marked domains, took care of the land in their area and shared it with other living beings. Aboriginals assert that these rights persist today (Wherrett 1999). They draw attention to the continuity of cultural traditions from past to present to demonstrate their enduring status as distinct societies within Canada.

The first European contact with Aboriginal peoples likely occurred in the 10th century (Official Languages and Bilingualism Institute 2011). This was later followed by European merchants, fishermen, and explorers. Eventually, countries funded larger expeditions to seize possession of the land (Official Languages and Bilingualism Institute 2011). It cannot be understated that “the arrival of European traders, missionaries, soldiers and colonists changed the native way of life forever” (Official Languages and Bilingualism Institute 2011, para 2).

In the 1600s, colonial governments began presenting Aboriginal communities with yearly payments, first in the form of clothing, ammunition and other goods (Neu 2000). Although there is little consensus over the initial reasoning behind these payments, by the 1800s colonial powers had openly acknowledged that such a distribution system provided them with a great degree of influence over Aboriginal peoples. This influence was ultimately put towards containing Aboriginal peoples on reserves and further increasing government control over their lives (Neu 2000). The Aboriginal economy passed through four phases over this period. At first, a pre-fur trade period of harmony existed, characterized by hunting, fishing, gathering and minor trade. After the arrival of Europeans, this shifted to a period of equilibrium during which these subsistence activities carried on alongside commercial trapping, hunting and wage labour. The shift



from subsistence to commercial activities eventually led to a period of scarcity, which the Hudson Bay Company addressed by importing food into communities. This ensured that even less time would be spent on subsistence activities, and the Aboriginal economy finally adjusted to an even greater focus on wage labour and dependence on outside corporate interests (Tough 1996).

Between 1871 and 1921, Canada's federal government entered into eleven numbered treaties with different Aboriginal groups that were ostensibly meant to define "relationship[s] and establish rights to land and other resources" (Government of Canada: Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada 2010, p. 1). These treaties contemplated issues relating to the land ownership and, hunting and fishing rights, as well as the establishment of reserves, and a system of annuity payments (McNeil 2007). The Crown and the Aboriginal peoples had dissimilar ideologies, philosophies and understanding while negotiating these treaties. Tough (1996, p. 85) points out:

*It is not uncommon to hear that the reason Indians gave up their land so easily was because they did not understand the concept of land ownership. Consequently, it has been assumed that during the treaty talks, government officials were the main players and that Indians were uninformed and agreeable. The idea that Indians were culturally incapable of making a treaty is largely an ethnocentric bias, not supported by historical evidence. This problem stems from a vagueness in the use of terms describing land use and occupancy, and, consequently, the unequal meeting of two property systems has not been well understood.*

According to Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada (2010, para 2), “the Canadian Constitution recognizes three groups of Aboriginal peoples: First Nations, Métis and Inuit.” Each group had its own unique cultural and educational background, and these differences left both groups with mistrust and conflict, thus questioning the spirit and intent of these treaties. Carr-Stewart (2001) agrees that this conflict is not only a symbol of misapprehension but also represents lack of mutual agreement. Aboriginal peoples have since been frequently dismissed as ‘problem people’ defined by their supposed refusal to discard the past in exchange for the realities of the present.

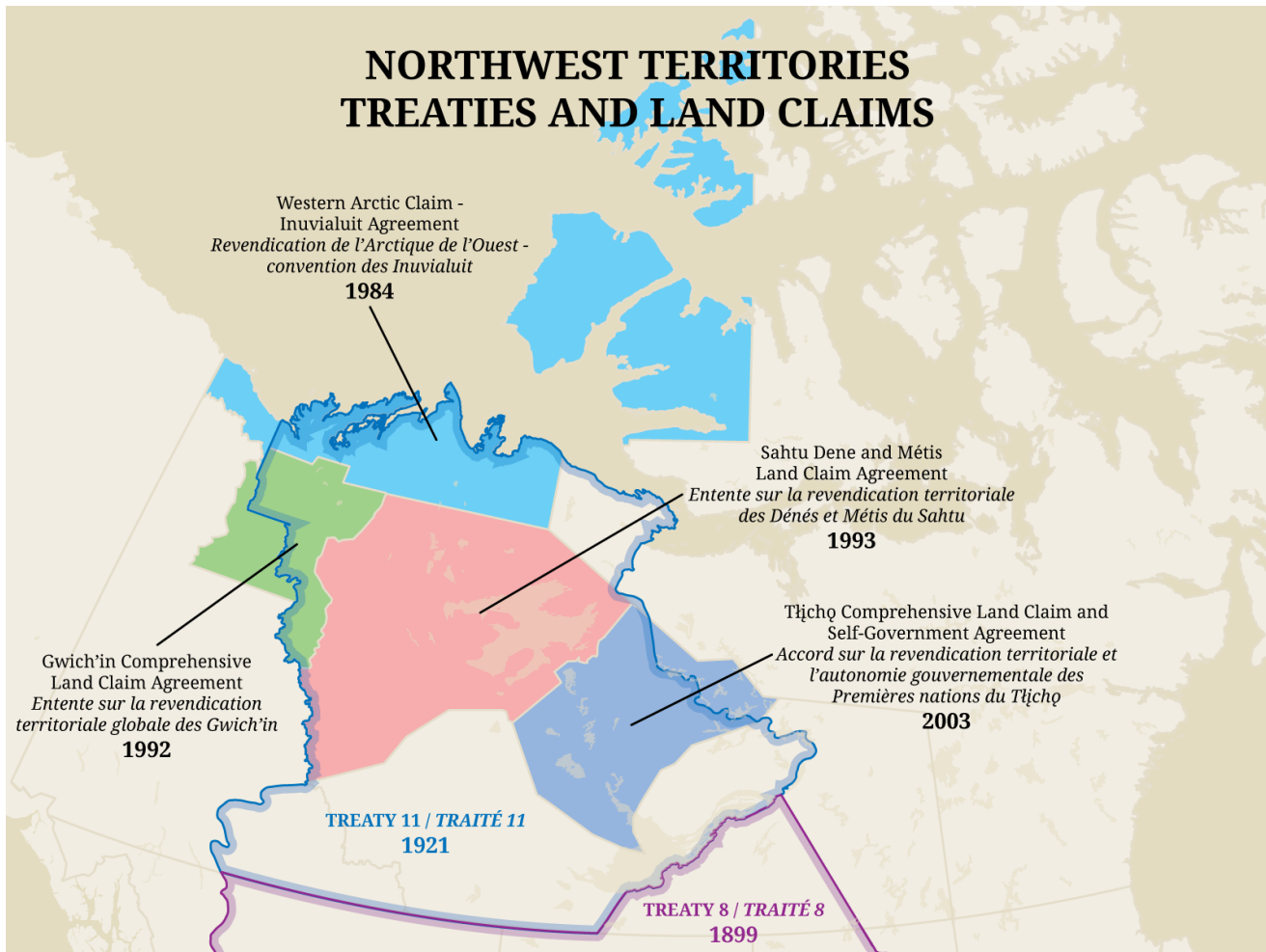


Figure 1: Northwest Territories Treaties and Land Claims (Prince of Wales Northern Heritage Centre 2010)

After the late 1940s, there was a shift, and “ordinary citizenship” began to gather momentum. Attempts at “mainstreaming” Aboriginal peoples had the catalytic effect of mobilizing them in protest against the ill-fated *White Paper* (Government of Canada 1969). Consequently, the federal government then shifted towards devolution: “the transfer of responsibility for service delivery to Native people themselves” (Abele 1991, p. 49).

In the late 1970s, the patriation of the Canadian constitution to create the *Charter of Rights and Freedoms* came to the forefront of Canadian politics. Aboriginal leaders sought at this point to gain legal recognition of Aboriginal and treaty rights, and this lobbying helped to accomplish the inclusion of Section 35, which enshrined these in the constitution. Section 35 in the *Constitution Act, 1982*, reads: “The existing Aboriginal and treaty rights of the Aboriginal peoples of Canada are hereby recognized and affirmed.” Section 35(2) also defines the Aboriginal peoples of Canada as including the “Indian, Inuit and Métis peoples.” Since 1982, this achievement has largely directed the political and legal discussion around Aboriginal rights. History shows that the Aboriginal peoples have long struggled to:

- Retain control over their traditional lands and survive as a culturally distinct population; and
- Resist and fight against the policies which make them dependent and hamper their development.

Historians have documented in abundance the impact of Canada’s colonization. As LaRocque (1987, para 2) points out:

*First Nation peoples (defined as Status Indians by the Indian Act) lost some 98% of their original lands through various legal means such as treaties and the Indian Act. Métis Nation peoples lost some 83% of their Red River lots through the Scrip program. The long-term result of such massive dispossession is institutionalized inequality.*

LaRocque (1987) further adds that this kind of invasion need not have involved military attack. Land was often taken through geographical intrusions in the form of violation of rights over land. In the case of the Scrip program, the government ostensibly guaranteed Métis peoples land grants in return for extinguishing their land claims. However, the Association of Métis and Non-Status Indians of Saskatchewan (1979, pp. 21-22) have called the program a fraud perpetrated by the government, and argue that:

*Although the government went through the motions of ensuring that everything was legal, its real objectives were not to protect the interests of the native people, but to get their land away from them in a way that was expedient, which cost the government little, and which would stand up in a British Law Court ... [S]uch action would create a cheap and surplus supply of labour necessary for development activities such as the construction of the railway ... One can only conclude that where the government was concerned with issues such as economics, settlement and development, these considerations took precedence over ethics and morality.*

The result of such intrusion has been the removal of large swaths of lands from Aboriginal peoples, which, as LaRocque (1987) notes, has had no different consequences than an armed offensive.

Generations of Aboriginal peoples have worked to reassert control over traditional territories through the Canadian legal system. (Neu & Therrien 2003, p. 4) point out that “issues of self-government, land claims, taxation and ownership of natural resources are

visible outcroppings of an unstable set of social relations between First Nations and other Canadian peoples.” In the landmark case of *Tsilhqot’in Nation v. British Columbia* (Supreme Court of Canada 2014, paras 73-74) The Supreme Court of Canada held that:

*Aboriginal title confers ownership rights similar to those associated with fee simple, including: the right to decide how the land will be used; the right of enjoyment and occupancy of the land; the right to possess the land; the right to the economic benefits of the land; and the right to proactively use and manage the land ... it is collective title held not only for the present generation but for all succeeding generations.*

This legal victory is significant on several levels, due to a legacy of colonization that is not just about the distortion of historical narratives – it is rooted in the theft of lands and resources which belonged to Aboriginal peoples. Early encroachments and dispossessions of Aboriginal lands were couched in colonial language that glorified the conquest of underdeveloped groups. Nadasdy (2003, p. 9) supports this when he states:

*Although on the surface land claims and co-management seem to be giving Aboriginal peoples increased control over their lives and land ... these processes may instead be acting as subtle extensions of empire, replacing local Aboriginal ways of talking, thinking, and acting with those specifically sanctioned by the state.*

Unfortunately, this practice continues even today through the use of neo-colonial terms such as “progress” “development”, and “the national interest”, while in reality Aboriginal peoples remain mired in Third World conditions:

*Sadly, our history with respect to the treatment of Aboriginal peoples is not something in which we can take pride. Attitudes of racial and cultural superiority led to a suppression of Aboriginal culture and values. As a country, we are burdened by past actions that resulted in weakening the identity of Aboriginal peoples, suppressing their languages and cultures, and outlawing spiritual practices. We must recognize the impact of these actions on the once self-sustaining nations that were disaggregated, disrupted, limited or even destroyed by the dispossession of traditional territory, by the relocation of Aboriginal peoples, and by some provisions of the Indian Act. We must acknowledge that the result of these actions was the erosion of the political, economic and social systems of Aboriginal peoples and nations (Notes from an address by Honourable Jane Stewart, Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development on the occasion of the unveiling of 'Gathering Strength - Canada's Aboriginal Action Plan as cited on web site of Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development 1998).*

Colonialism is not a simple act of acquisition of power and wealth from the Aboriginal peoples. As Said (1993, p. 8) puts it, “Imperialism/colonialism should be viewed as a set of processes and practices that make it possible for the colonizers to continue to dominate both the colonized territory and its inhabitants.” This notion of colonialism

relates to the present study because it highlights the mechanisms underlying historical and ongoing domination, both material and ideological (Said 1993). This can be seen in the relationship between the government and Aboriginal peoples in the context of economic development funding policies – these policies, when attached to strict fiscal responsibility requirements, can be used by governments to encourage action from a distance and maintain domination over remote communities (Sullivan 2009).

### **Canada's Changing Demographics**

It is important to highlight the changing demographics of Canada and its relevance to the economic development of northern communities in Canada. Since the 1960s, the population of Aboriginal peoples has steadily increased. In 1985, Bill C-31, "An Act to Amend the Indian Act" helped to increase these numbers, as people previously denied status were able to reclaim their identity (Trovato & Aylsworth 2012). While Bill C-31 increased the membership numbers of many First Nations communities, the funding allocated to these communities remained the same (Native Women's Association of Canada 2007, p. 1). In 2011, over 1.4 million people, or 4.3 percent of Canada's population, identified themselves as belonging to one of Canada's Aboriginal groups: 851,560 as First Nations, 451,795 as Métis and 59,445 as Inuit. (Expert Panel on the State of Knowledge of Food Security in Northern Canada 2014, p. 61). In 2012, there were 3,169 First Nations reserves, spread across Canada. In total Canada recognizes some 617 Bands, representing over 50 different nations and languages (Sawchuk 2011).



Canada is considered to be a developed nation by the World Bank (The World Bank 2011) and ranks in the top 10 countries of the world, when rankings are based on purchasing power (Appendix B). However, Canada, like other countries, is not immune to the challenges faced in delivering many government programs. The dependency on other countries in many industrial sectors, increasing demand for health care, the rising associated health care costs, and the aging population are a few of the significant challenges (Deloitte 2011). The Aboriginal population in Canada is relatively young with a median age for Aboriginal peoples of 28 compared to 41 for the non-Aboriginal population (Sawchuk 2011). While the non-Aboriginal population in Canada increasingly turns its attention to issues facing the elderly, the Aboriginal community is focused more than ever on securing educational and employment opportunities for youth (Sawchuk 2011).

There is a long-standing and well-documented disparity in socio-economic conditions between the Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal populations of Canada (Kendall 2001). According to a UN report, Canada's high ranking on the United Nations' human development scale would drop dramatically from 7<sup>th</sup> to 48<sup>th</sup> position (out of 174 countries) if the country was graded solely on the economic and social well-being of its Aboriginal peoples population. According to the report:

*Poverty, infant mortality, unemployment, morbidity, suicide, criminal detention, children on welfare, women victims of abuse, child prostitution, are all much higher among Aboriginal peoples than in any other sector of Canadian society, whereas educational attainment, health standards, housing conditions, family income, access to economic*

*opportunity and to social services are generally lower (Stavenhagen 2004, p. 2).*

White, Maxim and Beavon (2003, pp. 201-202) quote Former National Chief of the Assembly of First Nations, Ovide Mercredi, expressing the dire state of this disparity:

*The last thing we want to read is someone telling us that the United Nations has deemed Canada the best country in the world in which to live. It's not the best country for my people to live in ... Our young people should not be condemned to live in poverty indefinitely ... we should not have to be on welfare for the last 30 years of our lives. That is totally unforgivable in the wealthiest country in the world with the highest standard of life ... And people keep coming in here in great influx from all over the world to make a living, a good standard of life, which they do. In the meantime, we live in third world conditions. It's not just the issues of land and treaties that people are ignoring. It is practical issues like a job, a house, good health, a good education. These are things that are absent in our communities.*

The Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, of the United Nations' Economic and Social Council, has expressed grave concerns over the social and economic outlook for Aboriginal peoples in Canada. Limited employment, access to clean drinking water, health, housing and education were specifically highlighted, as they are considered vital to the pursuit of economic, social and cultural rights of Aboriginal peoples (Committee on Economic Social and Cultural Rights 2006). Phil

Fontaine, former National Chief of the Assembly of First Nations (AFN), has called it “a shame” that in a country as rich as Canada, there should be so much poverty among First Nations children (CBC News Canada 2011, para 4). In the words of George Erasmus, another former National Chief of the AFN and co-chair of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal peoples:

*Our people have been relegated to the lowest rung on the ladder of Canadian Society; suffer the worst conditions of life, the lowest incomes, the poorest education, and health; and can envision only the most depressing futures for our children (Erasmus 1989, p. 1).*

Poverty, lack of housing, limited prospects of waged employment, and rapid cultural transition have given rise to increased community dissatisfaction and disorder, and have caused an enormous drag on Canada’s economy (CBC News Canada 2011). This can be measured in terms of increasing dependence on welfare, unemployment, crimes against persons and property, family breakdown, school non-attendance and school drop-out rates (Gerein 1998). Frideres and Gadacz (2012) illustrate the sad state of continuing dependency of Aboriginal peoples by comparing dependency ratios between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples, over the span of 1924 to 2005, in the following table:

Table 1: Dependency ratio of Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal populations in Canada (Adapted from Frideres & Gadacz 2012)

Year	Population	Dependency Ratio <sup>a</sup>			
		Young		Aged	
		Indian	Non-Indian <sup>b</sup>	Indian	Non-Indian <sup>b</sup>
1924	104 894	62.9	56.5	11.5	7.9
1934	112 510	62.7	50.3	11.1	8.8
1944	125 686	67.0	42.4	11.8	10.2
1954	151 558	78.5	49.0	9.6	12.5
1964	211 389	95.0	58.1	8.6	13.1
1974	276 436	82.4	47.5	8.1	13.0
1981	323 000	68.4	48.8	7.0	12.8
1991	521 500	65.2	46.3	7.0	13.6
1999	604 400	59.2	29.4	6.3	17.9
2002	611 300	58.4	31.2	5.7	18.2
2005	748 371	43.2	29.5	8.5	18.4

- a. The dependency ratios reflect the relationship between the groups least likely to be involved in the workforce (i.e. the young and the elderly), and the working-age population.
- b. Data were not available for the corresponding year; the years represented are: 1921, 1931, 1941, 1951, 1961, 1971

Stavenhagen (2004), the Special Rapporteur of the United Nations Human Rights Commission, presented a troubling report on the circumstances of Aboriginal peoples in Canada. He argued that Canada has failed to achieve the socio-economic goals that it committed to under international law. These commitments originated over four decades ago, with the *White Paper* (Government of Canada 1969), which brought to light issues of socio-economic inequality and exclusion of Aboriginal peoples from Canadian society. The Indian Chiefs of Alberta then issued *Citizens Plus* (also known as the *Red Paper*), a detailed response that disagreed with the government's proposed solutions but reiterated the need for equal opportunities in socio-economic development (Indian Chiefs of Alberta 1970).

The Royal Commission on Aboriginal peoples further questioned the government's progress towards improving the conditions to which Aboriginal peoples are subjected, despite conducting large amounts of research on this disparity (Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples 1996). In *Gathering Strength: Canada's Aboriginal Action Plan* (Indian Affairs and Northern Development 1997), the government responded with a pledge to renew partnerships with Aboriginal peoples, strengthen Aboriginal governance and "build a new fiscal relationship, while also "improving health and public safety, investing in people and strengthening Aboriginal economic development" (Indian Affairs and Northern Development 1997, pp. 1-2). Salee, Newhouse and Lévesque (2006, p. 29) point out that despite this pledge, the government has not yet fulfilled the commitment to provide "adequate housing and clean water; access to education and training opportunities; the opportunity to participate in the economy and

earn a meaningful livelihood; and access to the health, social and cultural supports needed to ensure that people can remain healthy.”

## **The Debate over Reporting on Government Funding**

Such evidence begs the question—why are the governments still seemingly guessing at answers and tweaking policies rather than committing to significant solutions to improve the situation of Aboriginal peoples? Canada is failing Aboriginal populations and policy-makers continue to tussle with the social and economic divide between Aboriginal peoples and non-Aboriginal Canadians. Salee, Newhouse and Lévesque (2006) explored these issues in their analysis of research on Aboriginal peoples’ quality of life:

*Have the right questions been posed? Have all the issues been looked at? Have all the policy implications been examined? Has every angle of analysis been considered? Have the appropriate policies been proposed? The quality of life is ultimately determined and assessed in large part by the ability of the government to cope with broad economic, demographic, political and social trends and to adjust to the demands posed by their evolution. There are some analytical and interpretative variations as to what the ingredients of economic success for increased capacity are and how economic success should actually be understood (Salee, Newhouse & Lévesque 2006, p. 6).*

While such a complicated issue demands a unified approach, government agencies attack their mandated portion of "the problem", or its symptoms, with little understanding of the causal relationships between their mandates (Gerein 1998). Unity is essential and must be matched with increased attention to reporting processes (Ryan & Walsh 2004), but governments' predisposition towards traditional financial reporting has resulted in the use of resources without such unity. Thus, the government's present approach, to adopt measurements of successful funding based on expenditure, revenues and budgets for each separate department and agency does not provide significant or meaningful ways of determining success.

Hedican (2008) argues that the main reason behind Aboriginal peoples' poor socio-economic outcomes is their lack of access to various resources, skills, technology and capital. It is agreed that funding enables recipients to accomplish many worthwhile objectives based on needs defined by communities. The funding process can provide an incentive for community development organizations to define those needs for themselves. However paternalism still underlies an assumption in government that there is a need to modify community leadership. This paternalism is often accompanied by 'shell games' played with the pretext of funding by allocating significant amounts of money without proper consultations with the communities (Leo 2011). Together this activity results in lamentably poor communications with Aboriginal leaders that raises doubts over the true needs of communities (Leo 2011). Thus, the government is under increasing public pressure to account for the funds spent on development of Aboriginal communities.

The current criticism of government attempts to find alternatives to existing policies concerning Aboriginal peoples is that the focus remains confined to fiscal responsibility (Salee, Newhouse & Lévesque 2006). Traditional policies and financial reporting methods may still be relevant to a certain extent, but further action is required to find alternatives acceptable to all stakeholders. Structures need to be transformed to the point where Aboriginal peoples are comfortable and in agreement with their implementation. This should involve consulting Aboriginal peoples on how to eliminate impediments to real advancement and what specific actions are required. Governments should not only solicit their assistance but also offer them the resources they need to pull together desired economic development results (Leo 2011). It must be a collaborative process that includes the views and knowledge of a diversity of local people and results in meaningful, result-oriented development strategies (Boulding 1983; Lenihan 2011). Coordination is required at all levels of government; this will assist in promoting holistic development based on the knowledge and policies most effective for community development.

There are a number of indicators that can be used to track weak or undeveloped capacity for economic development. These include high incidences of family violence, suicide, psychological distress, substance abuse, poor individual health, labour market outcomes, substandard and unsanitary housing that is found in many Aboriginal communities. Policy makers should consider these social factors when measuring or reviewing policies on funding initiatives for Aboriginal economic development (Salee, Newhouse & Lévesque 2006). Giving proper weight to these factors within the overall



scope of economic development was the impetus for this current research towards consideration of a holistic approach. As Collins, D. (2007, p. 1) explains:

*In a general sense holism refers to any approach that considers the whole more important than its elemental parts. Holism is well established as a concept in science, sociology, medicine, religion, psychology, and philosophy. However, the concept of holism in economics or business has only recently emerged.*

Despite its recent emergence, this approach showed promise given the wide spectrum of factors in play, and especially so if done in a way that is compatible with Aboriginal culture and traditions. Once self-reliant Aboriginal populations have seen their communities suffer during a time of technological advancement and expansion of the borderless world economy, “what receives less attention, but is no less important, is the desire of many Aboriginal peoples to rebuild their communities on a traditional and culturally grounded foundation” (Anderson et al. 2004, p. 2).

## **The Economic Landscape of the NWT**

The economic landscape of the NWT is rapidly changing. The territory is working towards achieving the economic potential and financial independence of its people, hence lessening their dependence on the “business of government.” There are, however, barriers to overcome, such as limited human resources, infrastructure, and access to capital (The Canadian Chamber of Commerce 2012). According to a Canadian Chamber of Commerce report on “economic health” in communities, only seven

communities in the Northwest Territories were rated as being “developed”, a standard which includes adequate transportation systems, a significant private sector, and the potential to provide residents with jobs. Six other communities had “potential”, but the remaining 20 communities were classified as “underdeveloped” and with little or no economic potential (Frideres & Gadacz 2012). The following is a statistical overview of the situation in the NWT:

- Over 51 percent of the estimated total NWT population of 43,623 people is Aboriginal (Northwest Territories Bureau of Statistics 2014c).
- Almost 46 percent of this total population lives in the capital, Yellowknife, approximately 22 percent lives in three other major regional centres (Inuvik, Fort Smith, Hay River) and the remaining 32 percent lives in the other 29 small communities (Northwest Territories Bureau of Statistics 2014c).
- Approximately 54 percent of the Aboriginal population lives in these small 29 communities. The Aboriginal population outside of Yellowknife is 78 percent (Northwest Territories Bureau of Statistics 2014c).
- There are 11 official languages in the NWT, of which nine are Aboriginal (the other two being English and French). In 2009, only 38 percent of the NWT population spoke an Aboriginal language. This proportion is down from 55.6 percent in 1989 (Government of Northwest Territories 2010a).
- 19 percent of the NWT population were lacking core household needs in 2009 (Northwest Territories Bureau of Statistics 2010).

- Looking at traditional activity involvement in 2008; about 45 percent of the Aboriginal peoples hunted and fished, six percent trapped and nine percent produced arts and crafts (Government of Northwest Territories 2010b).
- There are an estimated 1,000 homeless women in the NWT (YWCA Yellowknife & The Yellowknife Women's Society 2007), and Falvo (2011) notes that shelters for homeless men in the territory are both overcrowded and understaffed, with one staff person at times handling up to 50 shelter residents.
- In the 29 smaller NWT communities, 25.7 percent of households have total incomes below \$30,000 while 17.7 percent of all NWT households have incomes below \$30,000 (Northwest Territories Bureau of Statistics 2012).

The NWT's many small, isolated, predominantly Aboriginal communities made it an ideal location for this study, as members of these communities are closely affected by the impacts of economic development funding. Their views on the desired and actual outcomes resulting from this funding are central to this study's examination of the appropriateness of accountability measures attached to that funding.

## **The Present Study**

Unfortunately, Aboriginal peoples are often subjected to unmanageable reporting requirements. Resources are spent on preparing reports on accountability to territorial and federal governments. While Aboriginal peoples should be partnering in government projects, accountability processes can hinder their ability to do so (Sullivan 2009). The academic literature suggests that accountability in development projects should be

culturally appropriate, reciprocal and focused on long-term development, building on the strengths of communities. It reveals the changes in the process of accountability that have been underway over the past two decades, and explores how active government funding authorities have been in implementing those changes.

In this context, government economic development funding must focus on decreasing welfare dependency, promoting socially and economically viable activities, while simultaneously accounting for dollars spent. When money does not flow to the areas where it was intended to be spent, there is often a disparity between the goals and the results. The resulting funding system is unaccountable, and a gap develops between intentions and results (Aud 2007). Too often, this results in unexpected cuts to programs. The focus of the current research is on Aboriginal economic development, using Aboriginal perspectives to examine the efficiency of current processes and the issues surrounding them.

Chapters 2 and 3 elaborate on the methodology followed throughout the research process. The constructive/interpretive paradigm was chosen for this research as development of more appropriate accountability processes requires an understanding of the viewpoints of both Aboriginal communities and government employees.

Accountability by its nature requires a full understanding of what is being attempted and how the desired outcomes can be achieved, and an acceptance of the responsibility for achieving those outcomes based on this knowledge and the desirability of the outcomes. Therefore any research which involves an examination of accountability for projects must involve an understanding of a reality from the points of view of both the government and Aboriginal peoples.

Chapter 4 presents my findings, and addresses the principal aim of the study—the formulation of the model through identification of factors for assessing process and outcome of government-funded projects in northern Canada Aboriginal communities. The overarching theme that emerged from the empirical data was a need for sustainable development, and a holistic approach to working on sustainable development. The traditional, western view of development applied by researchers, corporations and governments, is fragmented; “economy, society and nature are seen as operating independently from one another” (Sveiby 2009, p. 4). Rising to challenge this is the holistic view that “sustainable development can be achieved only when there is total harmony between social, economic and ecological requirements” (Sveiby 2009, p. 4).

Specifically, the following factors appeared frequently in participants’ responses: financial measurement, social measurement, empowerment of land and self, and preservation of culture. These constructs contribute to the holistic approach to sustainable development, as proposed by study participants. These four themes are discussed in detail in Chapters 5 through 8. In discussing the implications of the findings, the final chapter (9) provides a comprehensive reflection on the outcomes of the research and a deeper look into the application of a holistic accountability model for Aboriginal economic development in northern Canada.

It is clear that Aboriginal peoples do not enjoy the same standard of living as other Canadians. Loud alarm bells are ringing over the challenges faced by the government, policy makers and Aboriginal communities on the economic development of Aboriginal peoples. The history covered in Chapter 1 begs the questions: can the government and Aboriginal peoples come together to develop better understandings of the problems and

processes that created and still create these poor economic conditions? Can we learn from history and past mistakes and create working relations that will foster evidence-based policy making and thereby make improvements in the conditions faced by Aboriginal Canadians? Policy implications are manifest. Polls and anecdotal information indicate that the Canadian public is quite prepared to support spending on addressing challenges and disparities related to Aboriginal peoples' living conditions. They do, however, appear to demand accountability, both from the givers and receivers of public funds.

## Chapter 2—Methodology

### Introduction

Making a choice of research methodology for an academic researcher is not easy. Complexities in the research process exist which could very much be rooted in the values and beliefs of the culture of the participants as much as the culture of the researcher. The issue is potentially compounded if the participants and the researcher are not from the same culture. I must admit that I had not foreseen, and was thus not well prepared to face, the challenges associated with conducting such academic research within a cross-cultural research project. I believed an automatic choice for my research would be Aboriginal methodology, given the demographics of the NWT. However, it was not so easy or simple as the academic departments mostly prefer to follow western methodologies in research projects.

My observations directed me to a research methodology and experience that was not preconceived in any shape or form. While, in this chapter (Chapter 2), I focus on research methodologies that I have used in my work, it is important to describe why and how the research methodologies were chosen. In general, for a given research project one would commence academic research with a subtle consideration of available research methodologies and then follow up by choosing the research methodology to use in the context of the particular research topic.

For this study, that was not the case and so before I discuss the research methodology used, I begin with a brief description of my own self in the context of the topic, in

particular the significance of it to my research and the methodology used to carry out the research. In this chapter, I describe my initial steps to research, the chosen community and the subsequent shift to Aboriginal methodology and its integration with Grounded Theory as a means of generating data.

Further, I explore my study's methodology and provide a detailed framework of Aboriginal research methodologies and issues with past research into Aboriginal affairs, which were often disrespectful to Aboriginal peoples' culture and way of life. This chapter also highlights the participatory approach and illustrates methodological contexts with an Aboriginal research perspective.

Research in this study area was aligned with Aboriginal research approaches and methodologies. Aboriginal methodologies flow from history and Elders' knowledge, and are not particularly allied with common western quantitative approaches. Though differing in some aspects, qualitative methodology, such as the Grounded Theory approach, is commensurate of Aboriginal methodologies, for example using story telling as a research method.

## **My Background**

As the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of NWT Business Development and Investment Corporation (BDIC), I am responsible for guiding the BDIC in providing resources for the economic development of the NWT. In particular, I investigate and administer the funding requirements of small and medium-sized businesses in communities across the NWT. As part of my employment, I regularly visit communities in the Northwest



Territories. While on an official visit to the community of Fort Resolution, I was fascinated by the location of the community and the economic potential it had. I arranged for a community meeting with leaders, business people, Elders and the key stakeholders in the community. There was unanimous consent over the untapped economic potential of the community but I was surprised and somewhat disappointed that despite the recognition of economic potential, there was a lack of consensus among those in attendance on the projects that could be pursued for economic development of the community.

My interest in the potential for economic development and the visible lack of consensus from those in attendance on how to achieve such potential, prompted me to do some research on how the community could cultivate economic development projects. The impression I gained was that it was a governance issue and there was a difference of opinion on definition and extent of development acceptable between the Elders and the youth. The difference of opinion due to the generation gap intrigued me to do further investigation as a research project with assistance from professionals at a University. I contemplated a few topics on governance as I attempted to find supervisors who would be interested to accept me as a student and would assist me with the research.

Following the parameters set by Central Queensland University, I finalized the research which would be useful to my organization, the Government of the Northwest Territories (GNWT) and the community. As I initiated this process for academic research, I had no idea that I was stepping into uncharted waters. It was not as simple as finding interested professors in my topic of research. There were additional clearances required of the

project regardless of the topic or community chosen for research in the Northwest Territories.

Planning to conduct the research in an Aboriginal dominated territory required further clearances from the University Ethics committee and a research license from the Aurora Research Institute of Northwest Territories. The license involves a consultation process with indigenous leaders across the territory. Letters from affected community organizations can speed up this licensing process (Aurora Research Institute 2011), but were not used in the present study. The license was to be granted only if none of the communities in the NWT objected to the research. There was a struggle as both organizations required the approval from the other first. Ultimately, the Aurora Research Institute helped me out of the situation by giving a provisional acceptance.

## **The Research Site**

As I proceeded with the research, I found it hard to contact the community due to unavailability of people for various reasons: some were on the land, while some others had different travel commitments. Thus, there was a change in the location of the research and Fort Liard was ultimately chosen over Fort Resolution as the location of the pilot study. I had more contacts in Fort Liard that could assist me with approaching potential participants, and I was confident that the participation by local people would be better in Fort Liard due to these active contacts.



Figure 2: Community of Fort Liard Northwest Territories Canada (NWT Business Development and Investment Corporation 2015)

The community of Fort Liard also represents a good mix of traditional activities and modern economy based on oil and gas projects. Its traditional name is Echaot'l Koe, or “People from the land of the giants.” It is located in NWT’s Deh Cho Region, 37 km north of the British Columbia border, at the junction of the Petitot and Liard rivers, within Canada’s massive Boreal forest. It boasts an impressive collection of wildlife, including bison, moose, wolves, lynx, muskrat, porcupines, black bears, rabbit, caribou, and a diverse fish population including mountain whitefish, northern pike, walleye and longnose sucker (Taylor, Sanderson & Lafontaine 1998, pp. 14-15). The Liard River, which joins up with Canada’s famous Mackenzie River further north, is over half a kilometre wide as it flows by the community of Fort Liard. Many people in the Fort Liard region descend from nomadic Dene families that began settling permanently in the region in the 1800s after a trading post was established by the Northwest Company (Parks Canada 2013).

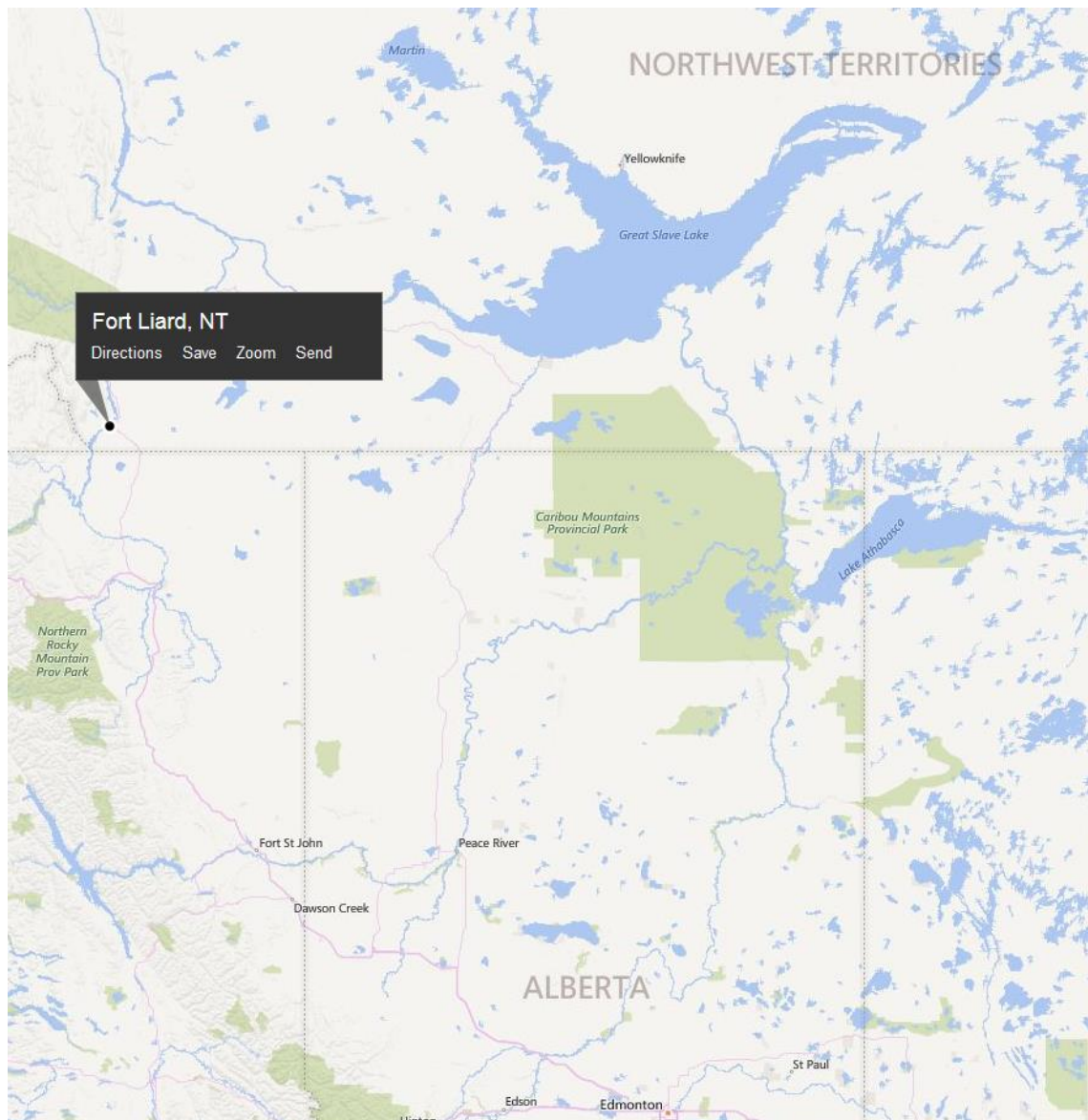


Figure 3: Location of Fort Liard (Bing - Microsoft Corporation 2015)

Lone Pine Resources, a Calgary-based commercial discovery company, declared in 2013 that it found significant commercial quantities of gas in the shale near Fort Liard. Oil and gas searches and developments continue in the region, and the community is actively involved in the industry. The community continues to adapt to modern technology and increase its participation in the global economy, especially in the oil and

gas industry (ArcGIS 2012), although many residents still choose to live on the land and participate in traditional economic activities like fishing, making dried moose meat, tanning moose hides, making craft products from birch bark, beads and smoke-tanned hides.



Figure 4: Traditional Porcupine Quill Birch Bark and Beaded Moosehide Dene Crafts made in Fort Liard Northwest Territories (NWT Business Development and Investment Corporation 2014)

The Dene people in the community are represented by the Acho Dene Koe Band, and the Métis people by the Fort Liard Métis Local 67. Both groups belong to the Deh Cho First Nations Tribal Council (Acho Dene First Nation n.d.).The following chart compares statistics between the NWT as a whole, the Deh Cho region, and the community of Fort Liard:

Table 2: Comparison of populations, economy and employment, and community well-being in the Northwest Territories, Deh Cho Region and the community of Fort Liard (Adapted from the Bureau of Statistics 2013)

		NWT	Deh Cho	Fort Liard
Population	Total Population (2012)	43,349	3,346	568

	Aboriginal	22,065	2,910	543
	Non-Aboriginal	21,284	436	25
Economy and Employment	Aboriginal (%)	49.8	47.0	53.2
	Non-Aboriginal (%)	83.1	85.9	92.2
	<i>Average Employment Income (\$)</i>			
	2006	47,856	34,444	28,752
	2010	53,630	38,925	33,682
Community Well-being	<i>Violent Crimes</i>			
	2007	4,025	491	85
	2011	3,712	435	136
	<i>Property Crimes</i>			
	2007	8,807	694	133
	2011	10,099	920	214
	<i>Violent Crime Rate (per 1,000 persons)</i>			
	2007	92.4	148.0	144.8
	2011	85.0	136.5	167.9
	<i>Family Living</i>			
	Lone Parent	2,330	210	35
	% Lone-Parent Families	21.3	24.9	24.1

## The Pilot Study

The demographic profile of Fort Liard, over 95% Aboriginal, appeared representative of Aboriginal NWT communities. At the time I embarked on the pilot study, I believed that I was undertaking a qualitative Case Study of this single community on the issue of governance on economic development project. The topic shifted to accountability and in particular reciprocal accountability between government(s) and communities. So I started reading literature on the Case Study method. Yin (1984, p. 24) defines the Case Study research method as:

*an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context; when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident; and in which multiple sources of evidence are used.*

Within the Case Study method, researchers are required to make a choice between two main types of research approaches: quantitative or qualitative. As Thomson (2011, p. 78) expresses, “Data gathered by either quantitative or qualitative methodologies can be used to verify or generate new theory.”

Quantitative data is collected mostly by methods of statistical analysis. Qualitative data collection methods, on the other hand, deal with ideas and other non-measurable elements. Soy (1997, p. 1) lists six steps to conducting successful Case Study research:

- 1. Decide and describe the research questions*
- 2. Choose the case(s) and decide investigation methods*

3. *Organize collection of data*
4. *Fieldwork*
5. *Assessment of data*
6. *Paper finalization*

I started my work on research questions. I specifically aimed at formulating open-ended questions. The focus of forming questions was the assessment of funding situations and the object of the research was the government-funded programs for economic development in Canada's North. The topic's intricate connection with history, politics, economics, social, personal and community issues allowed me the flexibility of framing open-ended questions with a wide-range of possible answers. My initial questionnaire had two principal questions and 16 sub-questions (Appendix C) and I prepared for a pilot project to try them out. Following the Case Study method, as stated by Soy (1997, p. 1):

*The researcher [must] establish clear protocols and procedures in advance of field work, and conduct a pilot study in advance of moving into the field in order to remove obvious barriers and problems.*

My experience in the field is discussed in more detail in the following chapters, but from my pilot visit to the community, I found that story telling by participants became the core of my research. Without me even comprehending this change it had spontaneously overtaken the structured interview questions format that I had initially developed. It resembled more of a semi-structured interview format. I was taking notes and writing memos immediately after the interviews rather than looking for answers to



my specific questions. I also started comparing responses as new themes were emerging and it was evident that a new and different theory was evolving from the stories being told by the participants.

## Western Methodologies

On my return from my pilot trip, my supervisor asked me for a report and after reading my report, she suggested that I was using more of a Grounded Theory approach than a Case Study method. She advised that I go back to reading books and literature first, not on the topic of the research but on the Grounded Theory approach. Indeed, she was right. As I read books and literature on research methodologies, I asked myself, “Did I unknowingly embark on Grounded Theory or was it a marriage of Case Study method and Grounded Theory or something else?” Further research into these concepts led me to constructivist Grounded Theory, which I quickly found support for in the literature. As McCalman (2013, p. 2) states:

*Constructivist Grounded Theory is considered appropriate to the task of conducting exploratory research in situations, such as Aboriginal program transfer and implementation, where there has been little prior research because it is generally based on interviews with those directly affected by the phenomenon and derives a theory grounded in their perspectives.*

Due to demographics I was in many ways using Grounded Theory with Aboriginal methodology within a community chosen as a case for study. Kovach (2010, p. 30) also

found that “Aboriginal epistemologies fit nicely within the narrative aspect of constructive paradigm.” A paradigm is a “basic set of beliefs that guides action” (Guba 1990, p. 17). The constructivist/interpretive paradigm focuses on bringing together multiple perspectives and describing these interpretations of reality without passing judgment (Bain et al. 2000).

However, this falls in contrast with the approach of many past studies of Aboriginal peoples that Kenny (2004, p. 10) argues have suffered from:

- *Lack of partnerships with communities;*
- *Researchers in control;*
- *Little participant involvement;*
- *Mistrust;*
- *Conflicting world views;*
- *Lack of understanding on objective of research;*
- *Failure to obtain informed consent;*
- *Research methods not compatible to Aboriginal culture;*
- *No meaningful community involvement; and*
- *No feedback to the participants.*

Unfortunately even in present times these practices continue, resulting in incorrect conclusions and messages primarily due to misinterpretation of the needs and values of Aboriginal peoples and communities (Dodson 1994). Rigney (1999) argues that these research investigations poke, push and prod to establish and compare data under the pretext of comprehending Aboriginal cultures and human nature. Dodson (1994) goes a step further by calling such research investigations an attempt to accumulate

inappropriate control. The most significant impact of such methodologies is the continuance of a saga that Aboriginal peoples are a “problem” in need of solving, and that they cannot function without support from the outside world (Porsanger 2004).

Rigney (1999) further iterates that research on Aboriginal peoples has in the past been planned, executed and applied without Aboriginal input or consultation. Meddling by external “experts” into their communities and their culture has left negative experiences for Aboriginal peoples (Smith, L. T. 1999), and letting them decide what was best has produced demoralizing consequences (Dyck 1991). This has resulted in Aboriginal peoples losing a great deal of control over their own state of affairs (Alfred 1999). The damage done by past research likely holds relevance for future research if the practice of excluding Aboriginal peoples from the research continues. The past has already shown an invasive research is ineffective and only adds to the hostility towards Aboriginal peoples: “An Aboriginal world view that not only understands, but embraces change, is often left behind in policy discourse, with Aboriginal peoples commonly characterized as living in the past” (Kenny 2004, p. 8).

Moving forward, it was clear to me that I must acknowledge Aboriginal perceptions of reality. The challenge was that correct behaviour often clashes with norms prevailing in western research (Castellano 2004). Kovach (2010, p. 31) confirms that when evaluating different research methods, it should be kept in mind that significant differences exist between western methodologies and Aboriginal epistemologies, despite even the best intentions:

*At present, there is a desire to give voice to Indigenous epistemologies within qualitative research, yet those who attempt to fit tribal epistemology into Western cultural conceptual rubrics are destined to feel the squirm. From my perspective, Indigenous methodologies and qualitative methodologies at best form an insider/outsider relationship.*

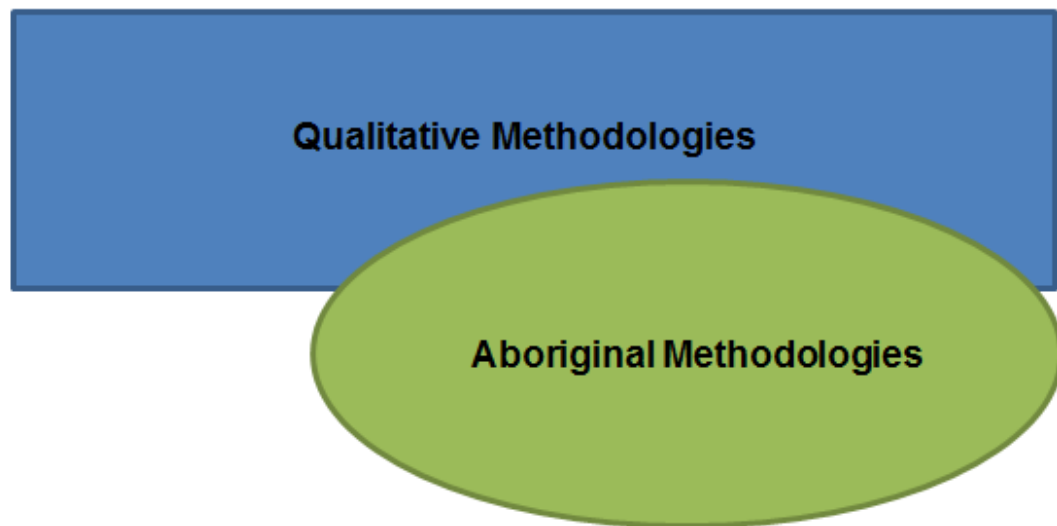


Figure 5: Locating Aboriginal Methodologies within Qualitative Research (Adapted from Kovach 2010 p. 31)

Dissertations that do not respect the integrity of Aboriginal values should be opposed.

Porsanger (2004, p. 6) explains that the research process should break free from the Western epistemologies that clash with Aboriginal philosophy and rationales. He notes:

*“Our purposes” are those of Aboriginal peoples, and “our own perspectives” are the Aboriginal approaches that allow Aboriginal scholars to decolonize western philosophies, develop Aboriginal approaches and use Aboriginal epistemology. These approaches allow*

*Aboriginal scholars to make visible what is special and needed, what is meaningful and logical in respect of Aboriginal peoples' own understanding of themselves and the world.*

Often, Aboriginal peoples are put in a position of ceding priority to modern western values over their own traditional beliefs, which further fuels a colonial perspective and “blindness to other measures of success” (Orr, Weir & Atlantic Aboriginal Economic Development Integrated Research Program 2013, pp. xiii-xiv). They should instead be encouraged to work within their traditional world view that embraces a holistic approach to life. In other words, Aboriginal peoples should not be asked to discard the significant characteristics of their identities and culture (Kenny 2004).

## **Aboriginal Methodologies**

Poor practices and ethical abuses and culture insensitivity of some past researchers have legitimately resulted in limited access to interviewees in Aboriginal research. As Kovach (2010, p. 147) explains:

*Western research has a bad reputation in Indigenous communities for a good reason. Simply because a researcher is Indigenous (or following and Indigenous framework) does not automatically translate into community trust. Trust needs to be earned internally. Trusted relationships are engendered in a variety of ways: following protocol, showing guardianship over sacred knowledges, standing bicultural validity of knowledge, and giving back.*

The use of inappropriate research practices has contributed to distrust of researchers in Aboriginal communities. However, Kovach (2010, p. 3) argues that Aboriginal epistemologies can not only be reconciled with western research methods, but can in fact guide those methods to produce a distinctive Aboriginal approach to research. She posits that this “Aboriginal methodology” is attractive to non-Aboriginal researchers accepting personal responsibility for the impact of research projects on the lives of participants and their communities, and those seeking, as I was, “to understand the world without harming it.” She further emphasizes the importance of ethics as a “methodology which positions reciprocity as an ethical starting place (Kovach 2010, p. 19).”

Aboriginal research methodologies focus on Aboriginal peoples’ interests, knowledge and experiences (Porsanger 2004); encompass Aboriginal heritage, culture, communities, health, well-being and environments in which they live (Castellano 2004); and use ways of life tied to Aboriginal systems of knowledge and the spiritual nature of Aboriginal peoples’ existence (University of Calgary 2014). It is vital to reflect on the meaningful ways of generating knowledge that exist in the Aboriginal communities (Cochran et al. 2008), as it is the recognition of the foundation and scope of Aboriginal knowledge itself that requires researchers to endorse the cultural realities of Aboriginal peoples. Aboriginal communities anticipate that cultural protocols will be maintained and respected; and that the findings from research will be significant to them (University of Calgary 2014). Researchers must generate measures and procedures that are culturally appropriate and practical in an Aboriginal research setting (Kovach 2010).

They should be incorporated as key elements which are thought about automatically and declared willingly as part of the research design.

Equally important, Aboriginal research methods should acknowledge and honour Aboriginal traditions and customs both within and beyond the parameters of the research process such that the well-being of the community is upheld (University of Calgary 2014). These methods are not simply processes or approaches to investigate but they are based on traditional knowledge and should focus on communities. The final results of the research should be presented to the participants in a “culturally appropriate way” (Smith, L. T. 1999, p. 15) and in a “language that is understood” (Smith, L. T. 1999, p. 15) by the whole community (The Aboriginal Education Research Centre 2007). Researchers need to recognize the uniqueness of Aboriginal cultures not only in the past but also today (Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples 1996). The Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (1996, p. 612) states:

*Though bruised and distorted as a result of the colonial experience, inevitably changed by time and new circumstances, even in danger of extinction in some important dimensions such as language, nevertheless a fundamentally different world view continues to exist and struggles for expression whenever Aboriginal peoples come together.*

Early western approaches to research have fuelled distrust of researchers among Aboriginal peoples (Radel 2010). Based on some of the past malpractices, the main

objectives of Aboriginal methodology should be to ensure that research is carried out both respectfully and honourably. As Porsanger (2004, p. 108) puts it:

*Indigenous issues can be carried out in a more respectful, ethical, correct, sympathetic, useful and beneficial fashion, seen from the point of view of Indigenous peoples.*

For a story to surface, there must be trust. Given the past research practices in Aboriginal communities, it may take some time, however, to earn the trust of the participants. At times, this could translate into upsetting the efficiency and research timelines set to complete the research (Radel 2010). Kovach (2010, p. 98) cites Cree scholar Laara Fitzrtor who highlights the element of trust and the significance of pre-existing relationships with research participants when she states:

*They know me, I have a good reputation and they know that I would be trustworthy. Such relationships of trust may have a history of shared stories with one another. If a pre-existing relationship is not in place, such a process must begin. In asking others to share stories, it is necessary to share our own, starting with self-identification, introduction and building trust.*

As Aboriginal methodologies emphasize giving back to the community, they involve knowing what is valuable to the community (Kovach 2010). Knowledge gained from Aboriginal communities should in turn be useful and beneficial to the community. Aboriginal research methods involve going into the community to converse with and make direct observations of the Aboriginal peoples surrounding the topic of the research



(Kovach 2010). The research findings are then written clearly and with consent of the participating communities using suitable research practices. The benefit could be localized to a given research effort or could have broader potential impacts on the development of the community (Cochran et al. 2008). Rigney (1999) supports an emphasis on Aboriginal perspectives. He states that communities must be at the centre of research methodologies and research results should be shared with an appreciation of the different perspectives of researchers and participants (Cochran et al. 2008).

Researchers should find ways of distributing knowledge in a manner that the findings are shared with the people who have assisted, participated or contributed in the research (The Aboriginal Education Research Centre 2007). The results shared should include the reference to the processes, tools and methods used for the study of not only the research project but also the study of Aboriginal culture. This should exhibit responsibility, transparency and accountability in the reporting process while reinforcing a key aim of the research to contribute something useful and relevant to the community (Kovach 2010).

All Aboriginal methodologies are anticipated to retain Aboriginal voices and create political veracity and most importantly strengthen the sense of communal building (University of Calgary 2014). Aboriginal participation in the consideration of Aboriginal research on Aboriginal subjects is consistent with collaborative efforts by Aboriginal communities and researchers and this provides openings for narrative. The researcher's current or past involvement with the community is also relevant as it provides a chance for the research participants to assess the researcher's motivations for the research, and begin or strengthen this relationship that is elemental to story-based

methodology. Researchers use a variety of methods to build this relationship, such as conversations, interviews, and research/sharing circles. For many individuals active in Aboriginal research, this approach comes naturally as a part of community practice (Kovach 2010).

Another important factor in Aboriginal research framework is that the dominating power of research has to shift from the researcher so that the researcher does not control the outcome of the investigation. When the research processes are controlled solely by the researcher they are typically one-sided and, quite often, the end result is a benefit only to the researcher; information is gathered and analyzed without critical feedback from the researched. When one takes this concept into account, it becomes more pertinent to conduct research in an open and transparent way, which hopefully results in the clear purpose, research techniques, and conclusions (Ivanitz 1998). This requires embracing a meticulous and balanced approach to gathering knowledge which allows representational opinion and involvement of the community through the communication process and also considerable participation in interpreting the findings (Kovach 2010).

Rather than being treated as equals in the research process, Aboriginal peoples are frequently left in the dark regarding the objectives of the research and are exposed to being disproportionately "studied to death" by social researchers (Park 1992, p. 31).

Academic researchers and their institutions should be prepared to abandon their role of "principal investigator" to facilitate real participative research, and be willing to accept community playing the dominant role. This way the research will flow from within the communities. The communities will then decide on how much information will be shared and processed and disseminated taking into consideration the priorities of the

community (Cochran et al. 2008). These partnerships are rooted in a shared interest in avoiding domination by one party in a community-based study (Kovach 2010). One methodology which can be considered as a reasonable approach is participatory research. It has been an ally for both researchers and the researched (Brown & Strega 2005). Participatory research has emerged as a solution to this scepticism because it brings participants into the fold every step of the way and puts them on equal footing with researchers:

*The participatory research process enables co-researchers to step back cognitively from familiar routines, forms of interaction, and power relationships in order to fundamentally question and rethink established interpretations of situations and strategies. However, the convergence of the perspectives of science and practice does not come about simply by deciding to conduct participatory research. Rather, it is a very demanding process that evolves when two spheres of action—science and practice—meet, interact, and develop an understanding for each other (Bergold & Thomas 2012, p. 1).*

Moffit and Vollman (2004) also point to greater participation as a means of developing research methods that are more culturally appropriate in Aboriginal communities. In their research on the health practices of pregnant Tlicho women in the NWT, they employed “photovoice, a technique based on participation, empowerment, and self-documentation” (Moffit & Vollman 2004, p. 189) as a way of balancing the needs of the researchers and participants:

*“The researcher is engaged with and responding to the researched at the same time as the researched are engaged with and responding to the researcher, creating multiple truths so that representation can be explained only through the contextual meaning that the researcher and the researched negotiate and create together” (Moffit & Vollman 2004, p. 197).*

This differs from past practices where usually the researchers are the dominant partners in the research and the respondents to the research are not considered of equal status. While an Aboriginal research model and participatory research use distinct methodologies, they both share some common language of community benefit and socially responsible research (Orr, Weir & Atlantic Aboriginal Economic Development Integrated Research Program 2013). This echoes Brown and Strega (2005, p. 24), who have indicated:

*Participatory approach to community benefit shows evidence of a shared goal—that research should be respectful and honour relationships in addition to research outcomes.*

This approach is based on the understanding that participants are best-positioned to frame research questions because they have closer knowledge of their experiences than researchers, and especially so for participants dealing with the effects of historic oppression (Torre & Fine 2007). Participatory research has often been proposed as a solution to scepticism of western methodologies because it engages participants in the research process at all stages. It aims at filling some of the power gaps between the

researchers and the researched people by participation of the researched people in the research process (Hisayo 2007). When conducting research in Aboriginal communities, the participatory approach can achieve “a high scientific standard without compromising the values and principles of those being researched” (Couzos et al. 2006, p. 1), and can “lead to empowerment, capacity building and social transformation, impacts that go far beyond simple buy-in to data collection and interpretation” (Orr, Weir & Atlantic Aboriginal Economic Development Integrated Research Program 2013, p. xiv).

## A Holistic Approach

Little Bear (2000, p. 78) notes that across many Aboriginal philosophies:

*The idea of all things being in constant motion or flux leads to a holistic and cyclical view of the world. If everything is constantly moving and changing, then one has to look at the whole to begin to see patterns.*

Kenny (2004), in fact, questions the validity of the structure for Aboriginal policy research without the holistic approach, and asserts the importance of holistic outlook in an Aboriginal research context. According to Kenny (2004, p. 8) in general, a framework for holistic research would include:

- *honouring past, present and future in interpretive and analytical research processes including historical references and intergenerational discourse;*

- *honouring the interconnectedness of all of life and the multi-dimensional aspects of life on the Earth and in the community in research design and implementation; and*
- *honouring the spiritual, physical, emotional and mental aspects of the person and the community in research protocols, methodologies and analyses.*



Figure 6: The components of a Holistic Model for Aboriginal Research (Kenny 2004 p. 9 Figure 2)

Kenny (2004, p. 15) also offers a rationale for this approach that adheres well to the present study:

*Holistic approaches emerge as central to policy research because ... the consequences of social, health and public policies are experienced as interconnected: this balance of relationships can neither be revealed by a fragmented research approach nor best served by fragmented policies that seek to address singular aspects of individuals' lives or community processes.*

This holistic and exploratory approach must begin with a serious deliberation on the western methodologies which at times are attached to historical and political influences that guide the investigation (Kenny 2004). In reference to western methodologies, the use of Grounded Theory opens the way to minimize these influences because it does not rely on a specific postulate or research question planned before beginning the data collection. Grounded Theory builds the research as it proceeds and gives importance to participation.

Constructivist Grounded Theory appeared to indirectly offer a solution to some of these pitfalls while also avoiding the fundamental error that researchers make in observing Aboriginal communities and peoples through their own lenses. I will discuss constructivist Grounded Theory in more detail in the following chapter, but first must elaborate on the often overlooked Aboriginal epistemologies that make this approach viable in the present study.

In the next chapter, I take a deeper look at Grounded Theory with a discussion of its history and associated authors, schools and tenets. The next chapter also describes Grounded Theory and its use as a methodology in this research, including details of data

collection and analysis and the similarities between Aboriginal methodologies and Grounded Theory.



## Chapter 3—Grounded Theory

Grounded Theory is grounded in the words and actions of those individuals under study.

Martin, P. Y. and Turner (1986, p. 141) defined Grounded Theory as “an inductive theory discovery methodology that allows the researcher to develop a theoretical account of the general features of the topic while simultaneously grounding the account in empirical observation of data.”

With grounded theory the research begins with the raising of generative questions which help to guide the research. The theory is grounded in the words and actions of those individuals under study. The purpose of Grounded Theory is to develop theory about phenomena of interest (Trochim 2006). Grounded Theory takes a case rather than variable perspective. Accordingly, behaviour is goal driven, evolving from social interaction. This behaviour involves various forms of communication, both verbal and non-verbal and the notion of symbols is intrinsic to the perspective (Schwandt 1994). The Grounded Theory allows for in-depth interviews, observations, and memos which describe situations, record events, note feelings and keep track of ideas (Goulding 2005). The Grounded Theory validates the use of non-technical publications such as reports, journals, periodicals and internal documents as a prospective source of data. This theory has an important interactional element to it. This means not using the predetermined literature but as the process evolves, and getting closer to direct sources as the conceptual categories take shape and gain explanatory power (Goulding 2005).

The work begins as a reasonable process of talking to the participants who are most likely to provide early information. This chapter (Chapter 3) discusses different versions

of the Grounded Theory Method and the shifts which took place from its origin. It also depicts the commonalities Aboriginal methodologies have with Grounded Theory. The chapter also provides an explanation on where the commonalities are and how they can be married together and lastly but more importantly the detail steps involved in data collection and the significance of the data collection, coding and developing categories from it.

## History of Grounded Theory

Grounded Theory was developed and introduced by Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss in the early 1960s, after the two teamed up to study how death impacted patients and staff in hospitals (Glaser & Strauss 1965; Glaser & Strauss 1968; Glaser & Strauss 1970). Their team observed how dying occurred in different environments and explored methodical ideas in long discussions with patients and staff. They prepared notes and evaluated them as they established methodical approaches that social scientists could adopt for researching other topics. Glaser and Strauss (1967, p. 28) wrote that “generation of theory through comparative analysis both subsumes and assumes verification and accurate description, but only to the extent that the latter are in the services of generation.” They made a powerful case to legitimize qualitative research by way of the Grounded Theory approach as a credible methodology. Since then, the use of Grounded Theory as a research method has established expanded acceptance in diverse research fields such as nursing, education, business (Kenealy 2008) anthropology, sociology and health care (Bowen 2006).

Grounded Theory then split off into somewhat different directions (Charmaz 2000), as Glaser remained consistent with his earlier method defining Grounded Theory as a method of discovery emerging from the data, and Strauss, collaborating with Corbin (1998), moved the method towards verification, and the two are considered to have “reformulated the original version” (Cooney 2010, p. 19). Heath and Cowley (2004) state that at the same time Glaser continued to emphasize induction and theory emergence.

### **Straussian Grounded Theory**

Strauss and Corbin (1998, p. 51) updated the original Grounded Theory approach to literature. They argue that in the early stages of research, literature is useful “to formulate questions that act as a stepping-off point during initial observations and interviews.” As the research advances, literature becomes useful in generating insights. “Insights do not just occur haphazardly; rather, they happen to prepare minds during the interplay with the data” (Strauss & Corbin 1998, p. 47). Researchers can use literature to increase their theoretical sensitivity, while checking interpretations against patterns in the data (Strauss & Corbin 1998).

Strauss emphasized the importance of deduction and verification, and suggested that the role of induction in Grounded Theory had been exaggerated (Heath & Cowley 2004).

Strauss and Corbin (1998) also acknowledged that there could be competing interpretations of the data, and stressed the influence that contextual factors can have on a given situation. They described Grounded Theory as “a method that uses a systematic set of procedures to inductively derive a Grounded Theory about a phenomenon”

(Strauss & Corbin 1990, p. 24). Strauss' methodology is a validation of criteria and a systematic approach, and appears to be more useful for studies of individuals than studies involving organizational, political, and technical issues (Gregor & Hart 2005, p. 46).

## **Glaserian Grounded Theory**

Continued development of what Glaser and his advocates refer to as “classic” or “Glaserian” Grounded Theory supports the methodology that is predominantly empirical and inductive (Thornberg 2012, p. 244). According to Christiansen (2007), the data will relay what is material and significant, and theories derived directly from data can explain the behaviour patterns of those being studied as much as possible in as few concepts as possible. This approach focuses on intangible conceptualizations that are tied to an essential area of inquiry. Glaser's definition of Grounded Theory is “a general methodology of analysis linked with data collection that uses a systematically applied set of methods to generate an inductive theory about a substantive area” (Glaser 1992, p. 16).

Despite the differences between Glaserian and Straussian approaches, there are two beliefs which are fundamental building blocks of Grounded Theory: a) the researcher has to avoid preconceived theoretical ideas; and b) constant comparison is what will generate new concepts (Fernandez 2004). The first belief reaffirms that avoiding preconception is central to Grounded Theory. The researcher must know when to dig deeper into a topic.

Having prior experience in a field of research is not synonymous with preconception. Glaser (2011) did not reject researchers' use of knowledge gained prior to a study, but rather encouraged researchers to keep an open mind throughout the process. Further, neither Glaser nor Strauss ever made "a claim of pure objectivity; it is merely a statement regarding maximizing objectivity to the extent possible. This is what classical Grounded Theory was designed to accomplish" (Simmons 2011, p. 75). What matters is that the research does not attempt to prove or disprove a theory at the outset (Fernandez 2004) so as to develop theory grounded in lived experiences.

The second belief emphasizes that features and groupings across the data are to be compared constantly (Navarro Sada & Maldonado 2007). Holton (2010, p. 29) explains this constant comparison as the researcher proceeds with constant comparison, a core category begins to emerge. This core variable can be any kind of theoretical code: a process, a typology, a continuum, a range, dimensions, conditions, consequences, and so forth. Its primary function is to integrate the theory and render it dense and saturated.

### **Constructivist Grounded Theory**

As the Glaserian and Straussian approaches to Grounded Theory diverged, a third approach arose: Constructivist Grounded Theory. As per Thornberg (2012), Constructivist Grounded Theory was developed by Charmaz (2000; 2006; 2008; 2009) and others (Bryant, 2002; Mills, Bonner, & Francis, 2006). Constructivist Grounded Theory countered the positivism of classic Grounded Theory put forward by Glaser and Strauss (Charmaz 2006). Constructivist Grounded Theory emphasized that the researcher keep participants present and their words intact throughout the process of

analysis. Through the use of qualitative research designs, the researcher can connect with participants, witness their activities, and observe what they do and say (Mintzberg 1979), while using text as a supplementary source of data (Evans 2013).

Charmaz (2006, p. 2) explained Grounded Theory as “systematic, yet flexible guidelines for collecting and analyzing qualitative data to construct theories ‘grounded’ in the data themselves.” She stated that from the start of a project, Grounded theorists are collecting data with which to develop theories. She focused on the importance of the researcher examining and interpreting participants’ perspectives, instead of merely gathering ‘facts’ and describing their actions.

Charmaz (2006) criticized classic Grounded Theory for keeping a distance between researchers and participants, wherein researchers “assume the role of authoritative experts who bring an objective view to the research” (Charmaz 2006, p. 132). Charmaz (2003) has rejected the ‘objectivist’ stance within classic Grounded Theory, instead arguing that researchers and participants can create a shared reality. She suggests that, instead of searching for a central problem to solve, Grounded theorists should seek to construct a “picture that draws from, reassembles, and renders subjects’ lives” (Charmaz 2003, p. 270). She thus offers an alternative to classic Grounded Theory.

Even Strauss and Corbin acknowledged the importance of “multiplicity of perspectives and truths” (Mills, Bonner & Francis 2006, p. 4). Participants who are encouraged to speak about subjects of common interest with the researcher will reveal what is important from their perspective. This also meets the researcher’s duty to “describe the experiences of others in the most faithful way possible” (Munhall 2001, p. 540).

Constructivist Grounded Theory has its foundations in a relativistic approach to seeking out the truth. Rather than an objective observer, a researcher is a partner to participants whom together construct meaning as they interact.

For the present study, I considered all three approaches to Grounded Theory: Classic, Straussian, and Constructivist, and ultimately chose the Constructivist approach.

Compared with Grounded Theory models by Glaser and Strauss, I found the constructivist model of Grounded Theory proposed by Charmaz (2006) as being commensurate with Aboriginal methodologies.

### **Choice of Methodological Approach for This Study**

Selecting the most appropriate research method can prove difficult, as “methodological choice is not a question of enabling a researcher to reach the ‘absolute truth line’, but to come closer to it” (Christiansen 2007, p. 45).states:

*At some stage of a research project, the researcher(s) must choose between: (a) initially adopting or generating a theoretical framework with which to analyze and interpret a specific phenomenon; or (b) allowing an understanding of the phenomenon to emerge through data analysis and a literature search that is performed mainly after data have been collected, a procedure known as Grounded Theory generation. Both methods are legitimate approaches to the qualitative objective of explicating relationships.*

I had been struggling for some time, to avoid focusing the research through the lens of my own personal biases, given my experiences with the execution and accountability of government funding policies and projects. When I began to better understand and implement the constructivist Grounded Theory approach to data collection and analysis, I found the approach fit well with the present study. By removing the need to formulate a hypothesis at the outset, the approach provided me with the flexibility needed to delve into the research area and “allow issues to emerge” (Jones & Alony 2011, p. 96).

Taking this approach let Aboriginal voices to rise to the forefront of the research, contributing to the process of decolonization identified by (Smith, L. T. 2012) while also effectively communicating the interrelationships between the emergent themes (Lincoln & Guba 2013).

Grounded Theory “has enormous appeal for a range of disciplines due to its explanatory power. The power illuminates common issues for people in a way that allows them to identify with theory and use it in their lives” (Mills, Bonner & Francis 2006, para 46). Using Grounded Theory, therefore, presented a pathway to generating new perspectives relevant to participants, while staying true to the values of inductive creativity contained in the methodology.

I established that a Grounded Theory approach of building on the phenomenon was more likely to generate novel and accurate understandings of assessing process and outcome of government-funded projects than testing a hypothesis based on existing economic development phenomenon with limited data. I found permitting phenomenon to develop through analysis to be of more assistance in achieving this target. Ultimately,



when applying a specific approach to Grounded Theory, the present study was guided by the dictum that “one has to use common sense and not get caught up in worrying about what is the right or wrong way ... the important thing is to trust oneself and the process” (Strauss & Corbin 1998, p. 295).

### **Marriage of Methodologies—Aboriginal Perspectives and the Grounded Theory Approach**

Even though the Constructive Grounded Theory was chosen, I believe that the overall research methodology used in the present study is a combination of Aboriginal methodologies and Grounded Theory, which were brought together by the commonality of participation. Traditionally, grounded theorists paid little attention to their relationship with participants. Nevertheless, participants’ words, opinions, thoughts and actions were key sources of data, so long as these were obtained in an objective manner, without any preconceptions. As newer versions of the processes and practices of Grounded Theory emerged, the relationships between participants and researchers gained importance, requiring researchers to prioritize and analyze this interaction (Breckenridge et al. 2012).

During the process of exploration and interaction, the researcher and the participants share knowledge and experiences with each other, and the interview becomes a practice in knowledge construction; the process of data collection changes to one of data generation (Collins, P. 1998). It was my intention in this study to recognize the power of the participants and give voice to Aboriginal communities by empowering the participants to talk freely on the subject of this research. While there are many distinct

approaches to qualitative inquiry, the constructivist approach appeared compatible with Aboriginal epistemologies and ontologies:

*Indigenous methodology can be summarized as research by and for Aboriginal peoples, using techniques and methods drawn from the traditions of those peoples. This set of approaches simply rejects research on Indigenous communities which use exclusively positivistic, reductionist, and objectivist research rationales as irrelevant at best, colonialist most of the time, and demonstrably pernicious as a matter of course (Berg et al. 2009, p. 4).*

While this research uncovered similarities between Aboriginal methodology and Constructive Grounded Theory, I found little published literature acknowledging the combined use of these methods. It appears that the work of Glaser and Strauss, the original gurus of Grounded Theory, has not been used in conjunction with Aboriginal methodology in any published research, although some researchers Holt (1997), for example, do cite the use of participation as a "grounded" method to data collection and analysis.

However, the compatibility of Aboriginal methodology and Grounded Theory is comprehensive and far-reaching. While Aboriginal methodologies focus on the equal or dominant participation of Aboriginal peoples and the importance of tying their culture to specific outcomes, Grounded Theory attempts to avoid such preconceptions. Even so, there are many commonalities between Aboriginal methodology and constructive Grounded Theory that make a strong case for a marriage of the two. Constructivist

paradigms have been used to study the underpinnings of successful Aboriginal tourism enterprises in Australia, as these paradigms represent the “progression of a culturally ‘safe’ and sensitive approach to research in Indigenous contexts for non-Indigenous researchers” (Radel 2010, pp. 224-225).

In line with Aboriginal methodologies, the constructivist Grounded Theory approach positions the researcher as the author of issues of importance to participants that emerge from the stories they shared on areas of common interest (Mills, Bonner & Francis 2006). “It reshapes the interaction between researcher and participants in the research process and in doing so brings to the fore the notion of the researcher as author” (Mills, Bonner & Francis 2006, para 8). Charmaz (1995, p. 33) has also set up the researcher as partner, exhorting them to “add ... a description of the situation, the interaction, the person’s affect and [their] perception of how the interview went.”

The Constructivist model proposed by (Charmaz 2003) was ideal for this study because it centers on giving voice to participants. Charmaz (2003; 2006) says that researchers should encourage participants to transcribe their lived experiences and use this knowledge to co-construct data. Constructivist Grounded Theory uses “an interactive process whereby the researcher and participant construct a shared reality” (Breckenridge et al. 2012, p. 65). These elements enable enhanced researcher/participant interaction and greater capacity to generate data relevant and specific to the participants’ lived experiences (Breckenridge et al. 2012).

Due to these interactional elements and the commonality of participation, the constructivist Grounded Theory approach appeared suitable for research in Aboriginal

environments. Pettigrew (2000) argues that it is detailed, permits flexibility and is well suited to explore socially related issues and the investigation of complex, multifaceted phenomenon. In particular, Grounded Theory aims to identify the main concern of social actors, along with the various strategies that can be used in its resolution. In the process, Grounded Theory can be viewed as a potential instigator for change as it gives participants an enhanced degree of control. As Pettigrew (2000, paras 9-10) states:

*One of the major strengths of Grounded Theory is that it recognizes the complexity of the social world, and works to make sense of it to both analysts and lay-people ... Grounded Theory has its emphasis on the socially constructed nature of reality ... and the aim is to produce interpretations that can explain social phenomena and provide information of value to those engaged in the behaviour under study.*

### **Applying the Constructivist Grounded Theory Approach**

After confirming the methodology of the present study, its application began with an initial, overarching literature review of Aboriginal economic development. This was commenced in 2010, although a second, more narrowly focused literature review followed after I had interviewed all of the participants.

### **Literature Review**

The traditional view of research is that research problems emerge from the literature, whereas Robson (2011, p. 50) points out, “in real world research literature provides a

background resource rather than an essential starting point for research.” However, while literature can provide a wealth of knowledge about a certain key concepts, it does not help discern whether a given concept is a practical means of addressing a problem in the real world (Glaser 1978). The Glaserian position on literature review in Grounded Theory is quite clear:

*Glaser’s main objection to an initial literature review is that the researcher may be side-tracked by received knowledge and interpretations that support taken-for-granted assumptions, which are not relevant in the new area of study. When the research goal is discovery, to explore the main concern of participants and find out how they continually resolve that concern, energy need not be wasted on speculating about the problem (McCallin 2006, p. 15).*

In Grounded Theory, researchers must not only describe situations, but conceptualize from them. In doing so, “the concepts that emerge from the data will transcend the data and make the theory abstract of time, place and people” (Sandgren 2012, para 5). Thus, the Grounded Theory Approach involves conducting a rigorous and constant literature review that diverges from what is normally seen in a qualitative study in two important ways:

1. *the researcher must be constantly reading in other substantive areas to increase their theoretical sensitivity, and;*

2. *conceptual emergence forces the researcher to review convergent and diverging literature in the field related to the developing concept*  
(Fernandez 2004, p. 87).

Because theory creation remains a central focus throughout the literature review, the existing literature is integrated into the study as data (Fernandez 2004). “Therefore, most of the relevant reviewed literature will be presented, as it finds its way into, and becomes integrated with, the substantive theory” (Fernandez 2004, p. 87). Delaying an extensive review of literature assists the researcher to generate a theory that is uncontaminated by pre-existing concepts that may not be relevant to the real-world situation under study (Fernandez 2004). As (Heath 2006, p. 520) puts it, if this contamination were allowed to occur, “the result would be a constructed theory, supporting what was already known, rather than emergent theory providing new insights.”

Despite this focus on avoiding preconception Christiansen (2007, p. 44) posits, “suspension of prior knowledge and minimization of logical-deductive elements does not mean the elimination of them; neither does it guarantee ‘objectivity’.” What it does mean is that the data, untainted by preconceived notions, will lead the researcher (Christiansen 2007). The researcher cannot truly know what he or she is studying before looking at the data—the topic must “emerge” from the data and because of this, a full literature review has to wait until after data collection.

In case of this research too, the initial title was “Assessing Process and Outcome of Government-Funded Projects in Northern Canada Aboriginal Communities” but by the

end of the project, it seemed that it was not representative of the research. The data lead me to a holistic view of economic development and thus after writing my conclusion I felt that it was more appropriate to change the title to “A Holistic Approach to Accountability: Measuring Outcomes of Economic Development Funding in Northern Canadian Aboriginal Communities.” This title developed from the data collected and is better representation of the dissertation.

Flexibility is required in applying Grounded Theory, as no researcher can fully purge themselves of preconceptions. Indeed, drawing on a body of knowledge is an important component of theory generation. In this sense, researchers must often perform a careful balancing act throughout the process (Evans 2013).

## **Data Collection**

### ***Preparing for the Interview***

In contrast to traditional approaches whereby researchers refine their research questions through a literature review before moving on to data collection and analysis, one has to be careful when preparing for an interview using Grounded Theory as there is an expectation to avoid preconceptions.

Intensive interviewing has long been a useful data-gathering method in various types of qualitative research. “Most essentially, an interview is a directed conversation” (Charmaz 2006, p. 25). Intensive interviewing permits an in-depth exploration of a particular topic or experience and, thus, is a useful method for interpretive inquiry, both on its own or in tandem with other methods of data collection (Charmaz 2006). It is a

bottom-up approach which requires careful reading of interview notes and transcripts to note important patterns and themes. It is “open-ended yet directed, shaped yet emergent, and paced yet unrestricted” (Charmaz 2006, p. 28). One needs to be open to new ideas and a good listener in order to apply Grounded Theory. Literature review done prior to commencement of the interviews may become irrelevant if the participants discuss completely different concepts. “For a Grounded Theory study, devise a few broad open-ended questions. Then you can focus your interview questions to invite detailed discussion of topic” (Charmaz 2006, p. 26).

Nathaniel (2008) indicates that a researcher must keep an open mind. Fielding (1994) emphasizes the importance of carefully explaining to participants the focus of the interview. To achieve these competing objectives, Nathaniel (2008) suggests that rather than delaying the literature review, one can choose to simply put aside what was learned from it. According to him, “to avoid preconceptions, which halts the generation of new knowledge, it is best if the theorist reviews the literature after the Grounded Theory process is well underway” (Nathaniel 2008, p. 62). I found these suggestions very useful, and while I had prepared a high-level literature review on economic development, I consciously put this aside during the interview process. I had open-ended questions to avoid preconceptions and with semi-structured format, I went on the field relying that the participants will share their views openly.

### *Choosing the Right Sample*

Obtaining the correct sample size when working with qualitative research can be a difficult task, as one must obtain enough data to ensure relevant opinions are uncovered, while also avoiding an overly arduous and ultimately redundant data collection process.



Researchers should stop collecting data once they have reached saturation, after which point there will be diminishing returns in terms of shedding new light on the topic of study (Mason 2010). Smaller studies with a narrower focus might achieve saturation quicker. Hence, depending on the situation, a small sample may be a better option (Mason 2010). Creswell (1998) argues that 20-30 participants can make up a small but acceptable sample when using Grounded theory.

As Nathaniel (2008) puts it, Grounded Theory emerges from research where the researcher tries to find and comprehend with the concerns of a group of participants, and so obtaining an appropriate sample, from that group is essential; “for example, if one wishes to know about the transition from freedom to prison, interview prisoners; if one wishes to learn about nurses’ moral dilemmas, interview nurses” (Nathaniel 2008, p. 62).

Participants in the present study were selected based on connections to funding programs delivered by various levels of government. I contacted the local offices of Hamlet and the Department of Industry Tourism and Investment which enabled me to establish a list of 28 people who directly received funding for various projects in the community. As I began conducting the interviews, some participants referred more names to me, increasing the list to 34 potential participants. Out of these, I was able to complete interviews with 25 participants. In addition one participant started the interview but did not complete and wanted to meet some other time but did not set another meeting. A few participants were also added to represent the funding providers, community leaders and key representatives from inside and outside of the community. The details are as below:

Table 3: List of Participants

Participant Code	Description
P1—P25	Funding recipients from Fort Liard
P26	Official from Fort Liard (did not complete interview process)
P27	Senior GNWT official responsible for providing funding
P28—P29	Funding recipients from Fort Liard (did not show up for interview)
P30	Social Counsellor operating outside of Fort Liard
P31	Community leader from outside of Fort Liard
P32	Development Corporation leader operating outside of Fort Liard
P33—P34	Front-line GNWT funding officials operating outside of Fort Liard

### *Choosing the Right Setting*

In Grounded Theory, simple things like setting the locations for interviews matter. They should be held in comfortable settings that contribute to open discussions: where both researcher and participant feel they can speak freely and honestly about potentially sensitive matters (Nathaniel 2008). Unfortunately, as McDowell (2001) has noted, the interview process cannot always be consciously controlled.

In my own study, I experienced a number of dilemmas regarding interview site selection as shown in this excerpt from my field notes from the trip of March 27-28, 2013:

*I asked myself, should it be a private setting, public place or neutral place? While a quick and automatic solution was a neutral venue, I found that it is not that easy an answer as I could not apply the same solution to all the participants. I had to go accommodating each participant's comfort separately. I found that it was not appropriate to set one turf as a standard turf. I discussed with the participant prior to*

*the interview and let the participant preferences and conveniences prevail and choose the location and time of the interview. To cater to participants' comfort, most interviews took place in their offices or a coffee shop, as per their preference." In some cases, the choice was a neutral office space (Source: Notes from present research).*

### ***Asking the Right Question***

Although the role of literature, the settings and the locations of interviews are important in Grounded Theory research, there are other vital factors that can influence the research process. The questions that are used in data collection, and the questions that follow during the analysis, are equally important. Good questions are simple and without confusing inferences (Nathaniel 2008, p. 63), avoiding false and preconceived expectations that could undermine the aims of Grounded Theory heading into an interview.

Staying open is a critical problem when framing questions in Grounded Theory. The questions should be drafted in a manner which provides the flexibility to let participants do the story telling. Follow-up questions are introduced only when participants express interest in steering the topic of conversation. Interview questions are drafted for the study with the goal of inducing participants to verbally "spill" (Nathaniel 2008, p. 64) as much information as possible. This is done while keeping in mind the researcher/participant power imbalance and avoiding questions containing unclear motives or cultural faux pas that could worsen the divide (Soy 1997). Mishler (1991) provides guidance on minimizing power imbalances between participants and researchers, urging researchers to yield control over the course and content of the

interview and concentrate on what benefits participants, who gain greater insight into their own worlds through the research process.

One has to be careful that the questions do not dominate the relationship, the conversation or the researcher's pre-existing concepts and ideas. The question should fit the concept of openness as the Grounded Theory seeks to understand the perspectives of participants which invariably mean greater involvement of participants in steering the process. Often researchers infuse their own theoretical and academic knowledge into the interview process. This does not fit the Grounded Theory process and so it is important to frame the questions carefully not only while gathering data but also later when analyzing data. Participants will have little to contribute to a conversation on a problem that only the researcher sees as important (Nathaniel 2008). Elliott and Higgins (2012, p. 6) emphasize this by commenting:

*A critical discussion point, therefore, is how Grounded Theory methods and the use of relatively neutral questions for gathering and analyzing data provide researchers with a means of generating a new and emic perspective.*

Neutral questions do not necessarily render an interview neutral. They instead lay out what each side brings to the table (Charmaz 2006). Questions should be easy to follow and put in the language suitable to the participants' education and culture and should be as free as possible from inferences that could possibly confuse and puzzle the participant. The Researcher should be mindful that many terms in public usage have contrary meanings and are easily misinterpreted (Nathaniel 2008). "A good question is clearly stated, simple, and free from confusing connotations" (Nathaniel 2008, p. 63).

When constructing the questions, the researcher should work to prevent incorrect assumptions that will disrupt the concept or lead to false expectations. The participant cannot respond expressively to a question that is vague:

*The researcher should avoid professional jargon, which creates power imbalance and can become a barrier to genuine human-to-human discourse. If the participant understands the jargon, he or she may feel compelled to match the language to impress the researcher with his or her knowledge (Nathaniel 2008, p. 63).*

### ***Blending With Participants***

Blending means adjusting certain aspects of oneself so as to not to appear as an outsider when interacting with participants. Most people are comfortable in the presence of others who seem to be like them and get encouraged to speak openly and honestly in such an environment. To do so, the researcher should wear clothing that blends with not only with the participants but the culture and environment of interview itself. I felt that my ‘normal’ business attire would assign me a CEO or government official role and hence represent a positional power in the interviews. I left my business dress behind and wore semi-casual dress for this exercise.

Nathaniel (2008, p. 64) also notes, “the researcher should attempt to be inconspicuous in sound as well by matching speech volume and cadence to that of the informant.”

Charmaz (2006) suggests that researchers will obtain better results by approaching interviews with participants’ comfort levels as their top priority. In the interviews I was acutely aware of my potentially competing roles and assumptions of power or authority

on the part of participants. I therefore ensured that I had softness and humbleness in my voice, and that the volume was kept low to match the participants.

### *Encouraging Spill*

The researcher should nonetheless be mindful that proximity with the participant does not guarantee accuracy. In fact, it is possible that the closer the affiliation the more undependable the data as the participant may be reluctant to say something which will displease the researcher. People want to be respected and have their voices heard and an appropriate communication strategy that conveys respect can make the participant realize the importance of a conversation. This can be conveyed simply by paying nonjudgmental and complete attention to the participant. Unless customarily unsuitable, the researcher should make good eye contact and listen attentively without worrying about the next question. Once the participant is comfortable, the story flows:

*The researcher should begin the conversation with an open, non-judgmental question that encourages the informant to tell his or her own story. The question can begin with the words, “Tell me about....” or “What was it like when....” In many cases, this is all that is required to elicit spill (Nathaniel 2008, p. 64).*

I perceived myself as a conduit for the opinions and beliefs of the participants, as I tried to capture the discussions from participants' viewpoints. I repeatedly reminded myself to keep an open mind to the suggestions and results flowing from participants during the conversations. Sultana (2007, p. 380) expresses this relationship:

*Similarities and differences that emerge through the relations that are involved in the research process demonstrate the ways that alliances and collaborations can be forged, rather than an a priori agenda before the research was undertaken. Such fluidity and openness in the research process is not always easy to enact or maintain, especially when inserted into multiple scales of power relations and institutional affiliations, time/budget constraints, and distances (physical, emotional, philosophical, and political).*

Normally the research questions surround “Who, what, why, when, where and how?” That is what I had prepared and presented in my oral presentation for the confirmation of my project. I soon realized that the presentation for my confirmation and the field work based on Grounded Theory were not to be approached in a similar manner. In the context of fieldwork for my research, I found that preconceived questions posed, even though open-ended, at times were restrictive to the free flow of information. In such circumstances I resorted to avoiding asking any questions and let the interview take its own course, allowing the participants to talk freely. Foddy (1993, p. x) rightly remarks:

*Although a number of studies have been carried out to increase our understanding of question-answer processes, there are few signs that social researchers have made major improvements in their ways.*

### ***Conducting the Interview***

In qualitative research, a common technique utilized is the interview: structured, semi-structured or unstructured (Gill et al. 2008). Even though I started the process with

structured questionnaires and interviews, I soon learnt that this approach was restricting the free flow of conversation. Keeping with scripted questions was not the best approach, so I switched to more informal conversation-style interviewing (Charmaz 2006). This interactive climate of open conversations permitted deviations to other topics and allowed participants to bring forward new concepts regarding the measurement, accountability and transparency of funding, deviations that were later found to be the foundation of theory generation.

It became obvious that building trust first was both extremely important and challenging. To build trust, it was vital to clarify my objective to the participants before starting any introductory questions. Following my personal introduction, I disclosed the purpose of my conversation and the attached goal of pursuing the PhD program. I gave each participant the background of Central Queensland University, explaining my field of research. I also made sure that they understood their names would not be disclosed and would be kept confidential. I wanted to make sure that this research was conducted in accordance with the guidelines of Central Queensland University and with approval of its Human Research Ethics Committee, and that the participants of this research gave willing and informed consent. All consents were verbal as the participants were more comfortable that way rather than doubting my intentions if I asked for a written consent. Despite this, I found myself in two uncomfortable situations when asking for names from a couple of Elder participants. The names were required simply for my own reference purposes, but I noticed an element of distrust from them upon asking this. They questioned why I needed their names, and I humbly appreciated the viewpoint of the participants. I explained to them that their names were required in the event some



follow-up was needed regarding any of our discussions. Ethical research involves not just limiting inappropriate behaviour, but also remaining aware of the settings that may lead unintentionally to behaviours that could be deemed imprudent or untrustworthy (Whitbeck 1995).

I also explained how my research work could benefit the community, but among some participants there was also an explicit lack of trust on governments. I was not naïve to this sentiment, as I had similar prior experience when I had visited the community of Colville Lake near Norman Wells with officials from my office. We had gone there on a trip planned with the community officials to discuss funding opportunities for the community and its people. The community did not want to meet with government officials even though it was aimed to be to their benefit. The reluctance to talk was mainly because the community saw little value in government-funded projects. According to them, the government required too much paperwork and failed to deliver the intended results.

Given this past experience, I could recognize that I was in a better position to be trusted as an academic than as a bureaucrat. Though I did not invoke my position of authority, it could not be ignored that I would assume somewhat of a relative position of power as a senior government official. Therefore, it was vital for the participants to acknowledge my role as a researcher conducting a research project that could potentially benefit the community. I understood that the key to success in gaining the participants' cooperation was by emphasizing the benefit or contribution of the research work to their community. To me, the participants valued community development more than

individual development. They enthusiastically contributed ideas which they believed would help in the development of their community.

I informed the participants about their rights of privacy, confidentiality and anonymity; these were respected throughout the process and would continue to be after the completion of the project. My experience was similar to Davison, Brown and Moffitt (2006, para 20), who found that “obtaining written consent in research with Aboriginal people might be inappropriate for a number of reasons,” including a mistrust of forms that bear similarity to historical treaties between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples.

Audio taping is frequently the method of choice, as it provides a detailed insight into the performance of both the respondent and the interviewer. To provide a more comfortable and trustworthy environment the interviews were not taped but notes were taken during the interviews.

*As with just about everything in conducting social research, there is a cost (other than the financial cost of tape recorders and tapes), in the use of a tape recorder may disconcert respondents, who become self-conscious or alarmed at the prospect of their words being preserved (Bryman 2008, p. 483).*

Glaser (1998) advocates against tape recording interviews, as he says Grounded Theory does not rely on their precision in the same way as more descriptive methods. Participants' exact words are less important than the broader concepts and patterns to which they contribute.

## Coding, Developing Categories, and Theoretical Saturation

More detailed field notes were generated soon after completing the interviews. These notes were subsequently transcribed and coded. Coding in Grounded Theory plays out differently than in quantitative research. Whereas quantitative researchers develop preconceived categories that are then applied to data; a grounded theorist sifts through the data until the categories emerge (Charmaz 2006). Coding is the critical connection between assembling data and proceeding to develop an emergent theory (Bradley, Curry & Devon 2007; Charmaz 2006).

Grounded Theory also employs three types of coding: open, focused, and theoretical (Mills & Birks 2010). Other prominent Grounded Theory methods have different types of coding. For example, Classical Grounded Theory and Straussian Grounded Theory have two levels of coding each. The Classical Grounded Theory has substantive and theoretical coding, while Straussian theory has axial and selective coding (Evans 2013).

For this project, a constructive coding process was used. Charmaz (2006) emphasizes the importance of coding in the Grounded Theory method when she explains it as a crucial phase that leads directly to developing categories and unifying ideas analytically. She identifies the initial main phases of coding as the following:

*Grounded Theory coding consists of at least two main phases: 1) an initial phase involving naming each word, line, or segment of data followed by 2) a focused, selective phase that uses the most significant or frequent initial codes to sort and synthesize. Careful attention to coding furthers our attempts to understand acts and accounts, scenes and*

*sentiments, stories from our research participants (Charmaz 2006, p. 46).*

In the present study, the constructivist coding process was followed by identifying codes within my field notes that pulled participants' disparate responses together into categories. As I coded interviews, field notes and other data I searched for commonalities and contrasting ideas until the core category emerged.

Without a core category to represent the continuous processing of a problem (Hernandez 2012), an effort at Grounded Theory will struggle to remain focused—it is an “indisputable requirement” (Holton 2010, p. 30). Since a core category accounts for most of the variable patterns found in participant behaviour, it is instrumental in generating theory. Researchers should be in search of a core category when coding the data. As incidents and concepts are compared, this will produce a variety of codes. The researcher must remain alert to the one or two that are core.

The Grounded Theory researcher is constantly on the lookout for the “main theme”, the common concern. This is what pulls from the data the substance of what is happening—the essence of relevance reflected in the data (Glaser & Holton 2005). In this way, Grounded Theory provides a viable means for researchers and participants to generate a theory that is established by practical experiences shared by participants.

I selected the responses that surfaced most frequently for focused coding, an analytical re-examination and clarification of the earlier categories (Charmaz 1983). Memo writing took place throughout this process, which lead to further data collection in order to help clarify emerging theories.

The well-known dictum that “all is data” Glaser (2002, p. 1) refers to the fact that everything that happens during research becomes data, no matter the source. It is everything said and done as the process unfolds. As I collected the data, my job was to capture exactly what was happening, not just what was said, but also the context and cultural environment within which the conversation took place.

As Eisenhardt and Graebner (2007, p. 28) posit, “Interviews are a highly efficient way to gather rich, empirical data, especially when the phenomenon of interest is highly episodic and infrequent.” Grounded Theory also accepts the use of secondary publications and reports such as newsletters, organizational documents, and other texts as sources of data. Comparison between such existing texts and field notes, memos and data gathered by the researcher during the data collection process, allows the comparison of actual observations in the field with existing literature which facilitates further coding (Evans 2013). In the present study, I compared the data I collected with the existing literature to substantiate my findings. I found that most of the literature focused on separate themes without considering those themes together in a holistic solution for economic development.

Research work using Grounded Theory involves the choice of an area of inquiry by the researcher and an appropriate location for study. From the start, the researcher documents the classifications that emerge from the data to retain a “theoretical sensitivity” (Connell & Lowe 1997). Data collection then plays out as a spiral where the researcher gathers ‘slices of data’ in an area of enquiry that are analyzed by coding, a process of conceptualizing or categorizing. The slices are then organized and classified in an ongoing procedure that leads to saturation (Gregor & Hart 2005, p. 48). I elaborate

on this in the next chapter, which delves into greater detail on how the coding process was carried out in the present study while providing both an overview of the categories and themes that emerged and an analysis of those findings.

## **Chapter 4—Findings**

The next step was to prepare a research plan precisely as outlined to gain approval of the project from the University. Despite Grounded Theory's dictates of remaining open to participants' responses and minimizing preconceptions (Charmaz 2006), it became necessary to prepare the topic and research plan in a way that would justify academic and applied contribution to the existing knowledge on the subject, and also outline the potential practical benefits of the research outcomes. I had to do a preliminary literature review to plan the topic.

This chapter (Chapter 4) goes into detail on the process I followed, my experiences during the interviews and the findings I made while following the process. No doubt, the preliminary literature review was not of much relevance to the practical aspect of the research as the themes and topics originated from the participants and the benefits of preplanning were limited mainly gaining approval of the project from academic perspective only. In this chapter, I also elaborate on the coding process, how themes evolved, and finally how a model developed grounded in those themes.

### **An Initial Review of Literature—Developing the Research Contexts**

As mentioned above, to stay true to Grounded Theory methodology, preconceived ideas had to be limited to high-level research needed to gain University approval for the topic of research and to better understand the contexts within which the research would be conducted.

In the beginning, the literature review was limited to economic development at a very high level. I found that while the literature on Aboriginal economic development was plenty in Australia, it is relatively recent in Canada, but growing.

Fumoleau (2004) provided a thorough history of Treaty 8 and Treaty 11 signed between the Canadian government and the First Nations people living in Northern Alberta and the Northwest Territories. He includes a compilation of over seventy Dene First Nations witnesses that together provide narration on the treaty negotiations and their repercussions. From there, I looked at considerable literature on Aboriginal economic development ranging from theoretical frameworks to collections of cases on development success stories. (Elias 1991), looks at holistic approaches to community development in Aboriginal communities. Elias (1991, p. xi) discusses:

*the development problems unique to Aboriginal peoples and shows the range and variety of development initiatives Aboriginal peoples have taken to solve them. It also shows how Aboriginal peoples have used indigenous and innovative skills in new combinations that are appropriate to the culture, history, and contemporary problems faced by each community.*

(Elias 1995) has through a small edited collection of case studies on northern Aboriginal economic development illustrated Aboriginal communities' initiatives aimed at in overcoming economic obstacles, and Elias (2002) shows how the Dakota First Nations Peoples adapted to changing economic circumstances and the impact of this shift on their culture.



Anderson (1999), examined various economic strategies, of Aboriginal peoples in Canada. He argues that Aboriginal peoples individuals can take control of their futures through community-driven, initiatives and embrace the global economy. Anderson (2002) also discusses venture creation and recognition of opportunities. He argues that Aboriginal peoples can learn from, and develop innovative businesses to meet the conditions and needs of their unique communities, providing examples of cases including the Brokenhead Ojibway Nation Historic Village in Manitoba and the Nakoda Lodge in Alberta. Anderson and Bone (2003) emphasize the complexities of natural resources and Land Claim Agreements using a collection of readings, cases and commentary on the traditional Aboriginal environmental knowledge, culture, and values in relation to achieving sustainable economic development.

Similarly, Wuttunee (1992; 2004) has supported the importance of small business in northern communities through case studies on Aboriginal economic and business development (Wuttunee 1992). She also argues that Aboriginal peoples can adapt capitalism to fit their needs and develop economic means of protecting their culture and rights (Wuttunee 2004). This fits with American perspective put forth by Smith, D. H. (2000), who states that Aboriginal rights and culture, must underpin efforts at economic (Smith, D. H. 2000). Indeed, O'Neill and Hosmer (2004) state that Native Americans have in many ways had success adjusting to capitalism, because in the process they have turned business development into a tool for preserving their cultural integrity. In this sense, 'modernity' and 'tradition' can be considered "overlapping, not exclusive, categories" (O'Neill & Hosmer 2004, p. 2).

Calvin Helin (2006; 2011; 2012; 2014), an Aboriginal businessman and lawyer, states that Aboriginal peoples should take control of their future (Helin 2006). He argues that through economic development, Aboriginal peoples can pursue long-term business and education-oriented strategies to solve social problems in their communities. While Helin (2006; 2012) puts emphasis on freedom from dependency, and his views on the importance of accountability and transparency are similar to others, his strong views on the dependency of Aboriginal peoples have been controversial.

The *Journal of Aboriginal Economic Development* is dedicated exclusively to Aboriginal economic development and contains an assortment of articles and book reviews on issues touching on culture and power in this context. I also read articles relating to Aboriginal economic development in an assortment of other academic journals such as *Native Studies* (Tough 1984), the *Canadian Journal of Native Studies* (Anderson 1995), *Arctic* (Robinson & Ghostkeeper 1987) and the *Canadian Business Review* (Thomas 1994), among others.

As a result of this limited review of the literature concerning Aboriginal economic development in Canada, the articles and texts provided me with a clear research direction. The initial literature review confirmed that Aboriginal peoples, not only in Canada but across the world, have struggled to maintain their socio-cultural identity and freedom. A multitude of corrective social welfare and dependency measures have largely served to increase reliance on government funding without actually improving socio-economic conditions. This dependency undermines empowerment that Aboriginal peoples could seize through taking control of their own economic development. In the

midst of this, Aboriginal peoples are now more than ever looking to economic development activities as a way to retain their traditional values.

This limited literature review was also required to gain ethical clearance from the Human Research Ethics Committee, an approved institutional ethics committee constituted in accord with guidelines formulated by the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) of Australia. As Sultana (2007, pp. 374-375) states:

*The challenges of implementing institutional ethics formalities in the settings of the Global South are often very different from research contexts in the Global North, where issues such as literacy, access, and a sense of equality usually present fewer barriers, even if they may still be problematic.*

A license for conducting the research was also required from the Aurora Research Institute of Canada, a requirement for conducting research in the NWT. I obtained the required approvals by October of 2012.

## **The Process and My Experiences**

Categorically, I was in search of genuine information and understanding, which I quickly understood could be better attained by immersing myself in the local culture. Going into a community to specifically do research work posed several quandaries for me. I have been to many communities in the past to give presentations on government programs, but mostly as a fly-in/fly-out visitor. This project meant staying in the community and experiencing the culture without any influence of power as related to

my position as a senior government official. Sultana (2007, p. 375) rightfully reminds the researcher:

*Fieldwork involves being attentive to histories of colonialism, development, globalization and local realities, to avoid exploitative research or perpetuation of relations of domination and control. It is thus imperative that ethical concerns should permeate the entire process of the research, from conceptualization to dissemination, and that researchers are especially mindful of negotiated ethics in the field.*

Chacko (2004, p. 53) also emphasizes flexibility when planning for fieldwork:

*Good planning is critical, but even with careful arrangements and organization, successful fieldwork requires flexibility, a capacity to adjust to unexpected situations and competent juggling of diverse identities in varied situations.*

I realized that in order to be successful, I had to be flexible with my fieldwork plan and adjust to the diverse personalities of the participants and that I would be required to modify my plan when faced with inevitable unexpected and varied situations, no matter how carefully I planned my investigations and framed my questions.

## **The Interview Process**

No matter which technique one uses, structured, semi-structured or unstructured, I found it was easy to “break the ice” with casual conversations rather than going directly

into the interviews. A friendly and polite introduction starting with a greeting like “Good Morning/Good Afternoon,” or a simple “hello/hi” went a long way. This was an important step to get the participants to feel comfortable which later helped in developing trust and ultimately resulting in them being relaxed and talking freely.

By using semi-structured interviews involving a number of question prompts, I was able to collect unplanned and spontaneous ideas from the respondents while keeping to a general program of desired topic areas. These semi-structured interviews encouraged participants to tell their stories openly from beginning to end and thus laid the foundation for new and emerging ideas (Charmaz 2006). This interactive climate of open conversations permitted deviations to other topics and encouraged participants to bring forward new concepts regarding the measurement and accountability of government funding programs and their successes or failures in the real world contexts and situations of the community members.

These ideas were later found to be extremely useful in theory generation. I felt that the conversations were more in keeping with to the edicts of Grounded Theory than the discussions I had during the first few initial formal interviews. Once the participants were comfortable, the conversations often automatically transitioned into semi-structured interviews. The participants appeared eager to tell their stories and personal experiences. They disclosed their thoughts and practices and were not hesitant to share both positive and negative experiences, and my role quickly morphed into an active listener rather than an interviewer asking questions.

I was astounded by the amount of trust the participants showed in me, and their confidence in narrating their stories. Most of the data from the field was collected primarily using semi-structured interviews, aimed to stimulate unconstrained opinions on economic development from participants. I perceived myself as a conduit for the opinions and beliefs of the participants, as I tried to capture the discussions from participants' viewpoints. I repeatedly reminded myself to keep an open mind to the suggestions and results flowing from participants during the conversations. Sultana (2007, p. 380) expresses this relationship:

*Similarities and differences that emerge through the relations that are involved in the research process demonstrate the ways that alliances and collaborations can be forged, rather than an a priori agenda before the research was undertaken. Such fluidity and openness in the research process is not always easy to enact or maintain, especially when inserted into multiple scales of power relations and institutional affiliations, time/budget constraints, and distances (physical, emotional, philosophical, and political).*

Normally the research questions surround “Who, what, why, when, where and how?” That is what I had prepared and presented in my oral presentation to the University for confirmation of my project. As I immersed myself in the fieldwork, it did not take long for me to realize that the presentation for my confirmation of candidature and the field work based on Grounded Theory were not to be approached in the same manner.

In the context of fieldwork on my research, I found that even though open-ended, my preconceived questions at times were restrictive to the free flow of information. In such circumstances I resorted to avoiding asking follow-up questions and let the interview take its own course, allowing the participants to talk freely. Foddy (1993, pp. ix-x) states:

*Although a number of studies have been carried out to increase our understanding of question answer processes, there are few signs that social researchers have made major improvements in their way.*

Ultimately, the highly structured, formal interviews of the pilot phase gradually evolved into “conversations with a purpose” (Burgess 1984, p. 102) and active listening, delivering rich thick data focused on the topic from the lived experience of participants.

## **Building Trust**

It became obvious that building trust first was both extremely important and challenging. To build trust, it was vital to clarify my objective to each of the participants before starting any introductory questions. Following my personal introduction, I disclosed the purpose of my conversation and the attached goal of pursuing the doctoral program. I gave each participant the background of Central Queensland University, explaining my field of research.

There appeared to be increased comfort in most of the participants once they understood my goal and that the research was being done through a University in Australia. In line with the ethical clearance process, I also made sure that they understood their names

would not be disclosed and that their identities and any responses would be anonymous to ensure confidentiality.

## **Coding and Analysis of the Data**

In Grounded Theory, the researcher stays close to the data collected to make analytic sense of the data. Participants' meanings, intentions, actions and situations—everything counts (Smith, J. 2008). My data consisted of interviews with participants from the community of Fort Liard, government officials working for the GNWT as funding providers, and input from Chiefs and leaders of development corporations in the NWT. Numerical data from various websites, specifically the NWT Bureau of Statistics and Statistics Canada, also supported the findings of the present study. Data collected from interviews was also supported by field notes that detailed contexts and situations, interview notes, and post-interview observations at conferences and meetings with Chiefs and councillors working in Aboriginal communities.

Once the data had been collected, I began the coding phase. Initial or open coding helps identify and label important words, or groups of words, present in the data (Mills & Birks 2010). I chose 142 codes for focused coding out of over 150 codes identified initially. They fluctuated among accountability, reporting, governance, management, and importance of culture and empowerment, in relation to individuals in some cases but primarily to the community as a whole. The following is a coded compilation of participant responses:



Table 4: Initial coding development

#	Description	Coding	Refer Notes Page(s)
1	Sufficient funding is not made available	Funding Management	7
2	Funding is directed to other reasons while neglecting the important issues like education and social issues	Funding Management	7
3	Funds are not as much directed to social responsibility	Funding Management	7
4	They were shy to come out	Personalities	6
5	Son used to translate the contents to her but she herself was not literate enough to read	Education	37
6	Full community consultation	Community	20
7	Priorities were listed	Priorities	20
8	"Nothing changes" too much time taken by governments to process	Federal processing	7
9	Need to coach how to deal with money	Financial Management	39
10	Students learn how to prepare business plans	Financial Management	39
11	Would be good to know in advance that the government officials are coming	Lack of Awareness	34
12	Challenges in communicating to the community the objectives of the programs	Community	18
13	Fifty percent population which did not support because they did not understand the program	Lack of Awareness	18
14	People are shy to talk	Personalities	6
15	Divide between Hamlet and Band	Band	17
16	No idea what happened to "Community Garden" project	Community	23
17	Elders were consulted	Respect	20

18	Critical of the federal process the waiting period and response time was excessive due to lack of authority at local level	Federal processing	2
19	Excessive delay, result in higher cost due to inflation and thus resulting in likelihood of short funding	Federal processing	7
20	Sufficient funding is not available, the outcome is not achieved	Funding Management	7
21	Funding from federal government is in limbo—No answers	Federal processing	20
22	Homelessness project	Housing	27
23	Uplift of Old Church not being taken care of as a place of historical importance and tourist interest	Culture Retention	15
24	No trail for Lisa Memorial Park, yet it was given a status of tourist destination	Culture Retention	15
25	There should be big signage for it	Culture Retention	26
26	People do not go to council meetings so the information does not get shared	Participation	17
27	Bank statements to account for money	Financial Accountability	32
28	They spent it for the purpose they received it and provided proper documentation to back it up	Financial Accountability	22
29	Often in small communities the flights to and from gets cancelled mainly because of severe weather	Remoteness Hardships	13
30	Freight cost, timely receipt of freight and the agreed upon process is not followed	Remoteness Hardships	13
31	There is proper paper trail	Financial Accountability	29
32	Required to show the craftwork	Arts and Crafts	6
33	Everything in place to report	Financial Accountability	27
34	Proper receipts	Financial Accountability	16
35	Achievement of long-term goals is questionable	Outcome Based	18

36	Lack of local development officers	Employment	29
37	Division between key organizations like Hamlet and Band	Band	17
38	There is poor promotion of tourism	Tourism	12
39	Hidden tourist information centre	Tourism	12
40	Tourists come and have a look at the showcase but no information	Tourism	12
41	Community interests are not taken care of properly	Community	31
42	Maintain as historically important sites	Culture Retention	37
43	Government should look into future and prepare the youths	Youth	33
44	Unless the social programs are dealt with the economic goals are questionable	Social	18
45	Attention is required to youth programs (in regards to social/addiction issues)	Youth	18
46	Financial accountability is very important— Receipts and paperwork are important for it	Financial Accountability	22
47	Request for funding only if specific goals to achieve	Financial Accountability	24
48	Some reporting is required but not all should be financial reporting	Outcome Based	11
49	It is important to see where the money was spent	Financial Accountability	28
50	There should be training provided to the community before consulting them	Education	25
51	When all was at community level, all was good	Community	20
52	Tie benchmarks with them	Benchmarking	24
53	Quantifiable benchmarks that are achievable and can be adjusted as you progress and start measuring actual achievements against the benchmark set	Benchmarking	24
54	It is important to focus on youth	Youth	33
55	Social problems need equal attention	Social	23

56	Economic development helps deal with the social problems	Social	23
57	Lack of work	Employment	23
58	People prefer to stay home	Employment	23
59	Not much employment so social problems are on increase	Employment	23
60	Lack of education	Education	23
61	Need to go to school and get education	Education	18
62	Adult education though available is embarrassing	Education	23
63	Housing needs attention. Multiple families staying in one unit	Housing	23
64	No laundromat in the community	Remoteness Hardships	23
65	Important to do physical exercises and healthy living	Health	18
66	Need for training	Education	25
67	Whole community needs to be on board to make a program successful	Community	18
68	Community has to support whole heartedly even if it is one program	Community	18
69	Unless the social programs are dealt with and the goals are quantifiable, the programs will not succeed	Social	18
70	Need to come with programs for youth (Duplicate)	Youth	18
71	Drug abuse and alcohol abuse need to be addressed more importantly than economic development	Drug Abuse	17
72	The government changes view when First Nations are involved—Certain individuals are preferred over others	Federal processing	16
73	First Nation organizations like Bands, there is a problem	Band	32
74	They behave as if it is their own money	Band	27
75	Local people are too shy and lack self-confidence	Personalities	6
76	The artists need a place to sell. Need a lot of push on marketing side of	Arts and Crafts	10
77	Our art is dying	Arts and Crafts	10

78	Economic development is affected because of violence, crime, family violence and other social problems	Crime, Violence	27
79	Lack of social support— There is no one to turn to	Social	27
80	Social problems definitely have to be addressed with any program and in any direction including economic development	Social	19
81	It is very tragic what happens to young people	Youth	19
82	They are dragged down by social issues	Social	19
83	It will take a “decade-long program” to address it if implemented seriously	Long term Objectives	19
84	Economic development helps deal with social problems	Social	23
85	Social problems need to be addressed but lack of work does not help economic development	Social	23
86	Social housing and go to work, most of your earnings go towards paying rent as it increases with your income	Housing	23
87	Level of education will determine the control of future	Education	21
88	Education is important	Education	21
89	Education attendance at school is dismal	Education	21
90	Even then, the level and standard of education is not the same as Grade 5 or Grade 6 in schools down South	Education	21
91	Same grade standards down South are much higher and so difficult to compete	Education	21
92	There should be a traditional native bank group like First Nation Bank in the community	Community	25
93	No funding for education in local activities related to culture—Funding for Aboriginal culture stopped	Education	26
94	There should be funding for cultural activities	Culture Retention	29
95	There is no restaurant in the community	Remoteness Hardships	29
96	Son does not want to go out in bush with me	Culture Retention	35

97	There is abuse of funds—There is conflict of interest at Band level	Band	32
98	Our gas station is the most expensive gas station in NWT	Remoteness Hardships	32
99	There are huge housing issues—it is visible from the situation where a 50-year-old is living with parents or staying in tents	Housing	32
100	At the Band everyone wants to get finger in the pie	Band	39
101	Employment trains people	Employment	39
102	People are happier and productive when in phase of Economic development as they are generating income	Employment	39
103	Use technology to promote Aboriginal work	Technology v. Traditions	33
104	Aboriginal traditional work involves lots of work but not enough compensation	Arts and Crafts	34
105	Lots of Aboriginal peoples do not use technology and cherish traditional ways of doing things	Technology v. Traditions	24
106	In government social assistance is tied to economic development which gives birth to attitude	Social	24
107	The attitude of Band to get priority to North is “crippling”.	Band	25
108	“Benchmarks” are important	Benchmarking	25
109	Economic prosperity will be determined by first dealing with social problems, drug addiction, etc.	Drug Abuse	17
110	Education is an important component because technology and computer require reading/writing skills	Education	22
111	Will have to deal with challenges like using computers. Education is a must	Education	30
112	We cannot afford to lose our culture	Culture Retention	37
113	Global economy does not understand our culture	Culture Retention	17
114	The Globe needs to understand Aboriginal culture	Culture Retention	17

115	Could achieve even with modernization like oil and gas and be successful	Oil and gas	16
116	Need right tools to do that-IPhones, smart phones, blackberries do not even work in some communities-we are quite behind in implementation of new technology-it is very important to keep pace	Technology v. Traditions	14
117	Living with parents in their houses leaves us with no thrive to work	Housing	32
118	Families should look after traditional values and culture	Culture Retention	18
119	It is hard to survive by living on land in today's world	Culture Retention	42
120	Elders do not understand that modern youth do not want to engage in learning traditional activities like skinning a moose—This is disconnecting Elders and youth	Disconnect between Elders and youth	20
121	Students nowadays cannot speak and write local language, so it is important to keep it alive	Language	8
122	The Liard highway has very poor signage	Tourism	12
123	The real interest is in funding companies not individuals	Funding	26
124	There should be funding for moose-hide tanning	Culture Retention	16
125	Cultural events should be promoted. There is lack of “drum dancing”— There is loss of language— In school there is only half a class on “slavey” and the rest of the day is all in English— Cultures cannot be preserved like that	Language	31
126	Always encourage to include cultural aspects and traditional activities with programming	Culture Retention	39
127	Trucking businesses, road constructions have not much to do with culture, but arts and crafts had	Technology v. Traditions	10
128	Accountability should be based on sustainable development. Community development should be the goal but it should be sustainable and not short	Sustainability	14
129	Reporting is the best part of it— There is definitely a need to see how the numbers and dollars worked	Financial Accountability	8

130	Want to be accountable as it shows honesty	Financial Accountability	9
131	Comfortable accounting with receipts or/and outcome	Financial Accountability	9
132	Both numbers and outcomes are important— Need funding and presentation for information on funding— Need to get deeper information for money provided— Information is just top priority	Outcome Based	10
133	If because of misplaced receipts, the total does not add up, one has to return the difference—So the funder should not be stuck to one process of reporting. —Either or combination of both financial reporting and outcome reporting should be adopted	Outcome Based	11
134	The accountability should be less financial reporting based— Pictures can say a lot Pictures can be sent on work done or completed	Outcome Based	18
135	The interest is not in right place— Focus is on corporate not individual— There is challenge hiring and retaining an Economic Development Officer— Where is the real interest? We have world-renowned arts and crafts but the visitor centre is just a glass showcase— Look at how British Columbia advertises its hot springs— We have beaver, duck swans, buffalos and beautiful mountains which resemble a “face”— There should be a nice stop at Liard— There should be proper museum— Where is accountability to deliver all this? There should be someone responsible to think of categories outside of the existing box of projects	Funding Management	12
136	There is a big “Sleeping Giant” mountain—Who is accountable for promotion to tourists?	Tourism	13
137	Receipts and written reports are fine—One knows what to purchase with what they are getting in funding	Financial Accountability	17
138	Receipts and paperwork serves as a backup for accountability	Financial Accountability	22
139	By keeping the receipts I knew where the money went— The process was more than fair	Financial Accountability	28
140	Accountability cannot be traced by receipts— In Canada, you can return the products after purchase— The accountability should be more visible than financial	Outcome Based	31



	statements— Money should be accounted for through bank statements		
141	We can be flexible— If a person loses receipts, a statutory declaration or oath on how money was used is acceptable.	Financial Accountability	39
142	We try to simplify accountability as much as possible- Engineering report satisfactory to Department of Transportation, supported by financial statements are enough for contracts on construction of road - It all depends on levels of amount involved	Outcome Based	39

## Focused Coding

Focused coding refers to taking earlier codes that frequently re-emerge in the initial coding and using those codes to sort through large amounts of data. “Through comparing data to data, we develop the focused code. Then we compare data to these codes, which helps to refine them” (Charmaz 2006, p. 60). Put another way, “focused coding checks your preconception about the topic” (Smith, J. 2008, p. 96).

Table 5: Focused Coding Classifications

<b>Focused Coding</b>	
Arts and Crafts	4
Culture Retention	13
Disconnect between Elders and youths	1
Language	2
Tourism	5
Community	8
Federal Processing	5
Funding	1
Funding Management	5

Health	1
Long term Objectives	1
Oil and gas	1
Participation	1
Personalities	3
Priorities	1
Remoteness Hardships	5
Respect	1
Sustainability	1
Traditions v. Technology	4
Youth	5
Band	7
Lack of Awareness	2
Financial Accountability	15
Financial Management	2
Outcome Based	7
Benchmarking	3
Crime, Violence	1
Drug Abuse	2
Education	14
Employment	6
Housing	5
Social	10
<b>Total</b>	<b>142</b>

The constructivist Grounded Theory coding process also uses a third type of coding—namely, theoretical. While the definition of this term differs among Grounded Theory

authors, in the constructivist approach, theoretical coding involves grouping similar concepts (Evans 2013).

Additional theoretical codes can also be pulled from the literature to enhance theoretical integration and strengthen the final output of a Grounded Theory study (Mills & Birks 2010).

Table 6: Focused Coding Category Results

<b><u>Focused Coding</u></b>		<b><u>Categories</u></b>
Arts and Crafts	4	Arts and Crafts
Culture Retention	13	Culture Retention
Disconnect between Elders and youth	1	Culture Retention
Language	2	Language
Tourism	5	Signage, culture promotion
Community	8	Governance
Federal Processing	5	Governance
Funding	1	Governance
Funding Management	5	Governance
Health	1	Spiritual
Long term Objectives	1	Community
Oil and gas	1	Resources
Participation	1	Spiritual
Personalities	3	Spiritual
Priorities	1	Spiritual
Remoteness Hardships	5	Environment
Respect	1	Spiritual

Sustainability	1	Community
Traditions v. Technology	4	Modernization
Youth	5	Modernization
Band	7	Governance
Lack of Awareness	2	Governance
Financial Accountability	15	Accountability
Financial Management	2	Accountability
Outcome Based	7	Performance
Benchmarking	3	Benchmarking
Crime, Violence	1	Addiction etc.
Drug Abuse	2	Addiction etc.
Education	14	Education & Employment
Employment	6	Education & Employment
Housing	5	Housing
Social	10	Addiction etc.
<b>Total</b>	<b>142</b>	

## Memos

As Glaser (1992, p. 87) explains:

*In Grounded Theory the analyst humbly allows the data to control him as much as humanly possible, by writing a theory for only what emerges through his skilled induction. The integration of his substantive theory as it emerges through coding and sorting is his verification that the hypotheses and concepts fit and work and are relevant enough to suggest. They are not proven; they are theory.*

I condensed the codes into written memos, which have been referred to as “intellectual capital in the bank” (Clark 2005, p. 85). Like other aspects of Grounded Theory, memo writing is ongoing task from the beginning of a study to its completion. It was important at this stage in the research because “memo-making leads directly to theoretical sampling, that is, collecting more data to clarify your ideas and to plan how to fit them together” (Charmaz 1996, p. 45).

At this point, I went back to the collected information for the purpose of developing my emerging theory. I now approached the officials on the government funding projects and asked them more focused questions. Their experience supported my findings and the emerging theory, and I realized that there was a pattern of themes emerging, common to both the funder and the recipients. Memo-writing establishes a vital stage in the Grounded Theory process because “it prompts you to analyze your data and codes early in the research process” (Charmaz 2006, p. 72). Memo-writing stimulated analysis of collected data and allotted codes in the research process and was thus the focal transitional step between collecting data and writing my draft paper.

Memos were then sorted according to core categories (Table 6 below). If I found that a memo was not related to a core category, I set it aside. The selected memos became the outline for my findings. I connected and integrated the ideas together into a formal theory. The following main themes emerged from the theoretical coding process.

## Themes

I found that by the end of my fieldwork, even though I had received answers to my initial research questions, the participants wanted to discuss much more. As Charmaz (2006, p. 46) points out, “the logic of Grounded Theory coding differs from quantitative logic that applies preconceived categories or codes to the data.” Without any hesitations, the participants were ready to speak freely about their thoughts on the issues being discussed. New concepts emanated from the participants, and in all, there were over 15 categories that emerged from our discussions. While the categories were individually well defined, once linked there was a pattern that formed four major themes for review: Culture retention, Empowerment, Financial measurement and Social measurement.

Table 7: Focused Coding, Core Categories and Themes

<b><u>Focused Coding</u></b>		<b><u>Categories</u></b>	<b><u>Themes</u></b>
Arts and Crafts	4	Arts and Crafts	Culture Retention
Culture Retention	13	Culture Retention	Culture Retention
Disconnect between Elders and youths	1	Culture Retention	Culture Retention
Language	2	Language	Culture Retention
Tourism	5	Signage, culture promotion	Culture Retention
Community	8	Governance	Empowerment
Federal Processing	5	Governance	Empowerment
Funding	1	Governance	Empowerment
Funding Management	5	Governance	Empowerment
Health	1	Spiritual	Empowerment

Long term Objectives	1	Community	Empowerment
Oil and gas	1	Resources	Empowerment
Participation	1	Spiritual	Empowerment
Personalities	3	Spiritual	Empowerment
Priorities	1	Spiritual	Empowerment
Remoteness Hardships	5	Environment	Empowerment
Respect	1	Spiritual	Empowerment
Sustainability	1	Community	Empowerment
Traditions v. Technology	4	Modernization	Empowerment
Youth	5	Modernization	Empowerment
Band	7	Governance	Empowerment
Lack of Awareness	2	Governance	Empowerment
Financial Accountability	15	Accountability	Financial Measurement
Financial Management	2	Accountability	Financial Measurement
Outcome Based	7	Performance	Financial Measurement
Benchmarking	3	Benchmarking	Financial Measurement
Crime, Violence	1	Addiction etc.	Social Measurement
Drug Abuse	2	Addiction etc.	Social Measurement
Education	14	Education & Employment	Social Measurement
Employment	6	Education & Employment	Social Measurement
Housing	5	Housing	Social Measurement
Social	10	Addiction etc.	Social Measurement
<b>Total</b>	<b>142</b>		

The Grounded Theory of a holistic model of accountability for funding in northern Canadian Aboriginal communities can therefore be represented as follows:

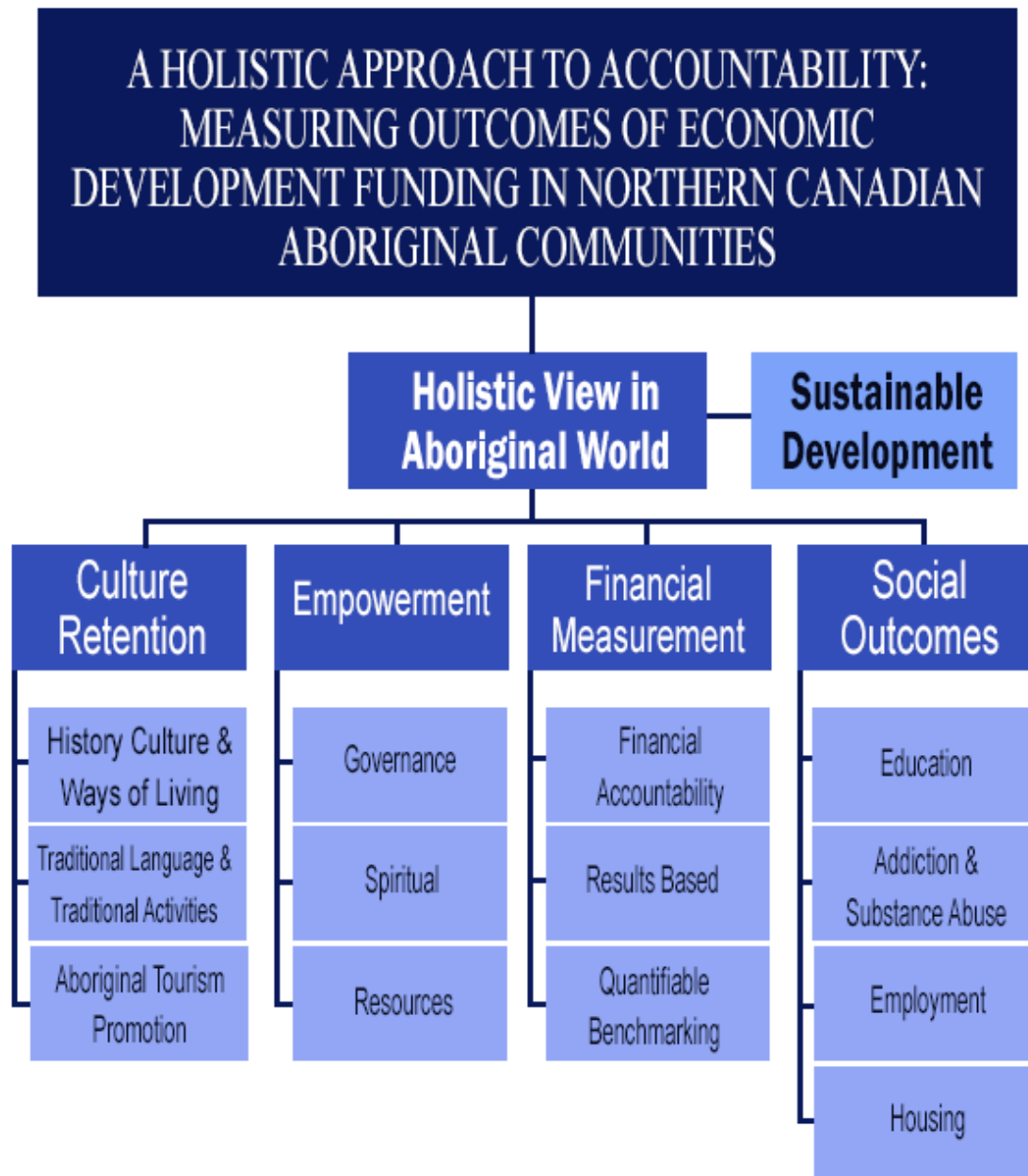


Figure 7: A Holistic Approach to Accountability: Measuring Outcomes of Economic Development Funding in Northern Canadian Aboriginal Communities

Given the multitude of themes that emerged from the data, a singular, fragmented approach could not hope to address them without stripping away the context that



grounds them in reality. And so, with Kenny's (2004) concept of holism colouring the process, I took a deeper look into these emergent themes.

## Culture Retention

Cultural retention was of clear importance to many participants. Several participants mentioned the growing disconnect between Aboriginal youth and Elders; local languages having fallen out of use with younger generations along with skills associated with traditional activities on the land. Others indicated that both technology and tourism could play a role in retaining culture.

P7 highlighted missed opportunities for cultural retention and put forward ideas on how Fort Liard could bring attention to culture by breathing life into what she felt was an undervalued tourism industry. While P7 was not critical about the funding flow or model, she was of the opinion that not much was being done to promote tourism. "We have a world-renowned craft shop here," she said, but there is very limited promotion.



Figure 8: Acho Dene Native Craft Shop – Fort Liard Northwest Territories Canada – (NWT Business Development and Investment Corporation)

P7 also commented on the lack of proper signage in the community and on the highway, noting that the visitor centre “does not even look like a visitor centre ... One needs to have an information booth and signage to make people stop at Fort Liard.” Newhouse, Orr and The Atlantic Aboriginal Economic Development Integrated Research Program (2013, p. 10) share the dissatisfaction when they state:

*It is a big disappointment that there is a long history of the catastrophic effects on Aboriginal peoples when their language, culture and identity are overlooked, degraded and not allowed in schools.*

Others discussed the importance of bridging the knowledge gap between youth and Elders. Economic development has opened the North up to new technologies, and while Aboriginal youth have generally embraced this, many Elders remain wary. Combining traditions with technology was viewed as another way to preserve and promote culture, language and history. One participant suggested that the community “use technology to promote Aboriginal work” (P21). Another noted that “lots of Aboriginal peoples do not use technology and cherish traditional ways of doing things” (P20). However, others felt that traditional activities and modern lifestyles were not mutually exclusive; “it is possible to balance both” (P22).

There were conflicting opinions among participants on the role economic development played in cultural retention. While many were aware of funding streams that combine economic opportunities with cultural activities, such as those targeted at the arts and crafts sector, participants felt that these contributions were too small to make a meaningful difference. Most of these were small amounts to individuals as opposed to

significant amounts to promote cultural activities to promote the community. Others felt that economic development initiatives should be concerned with employment, not culture, and that people would naturally pursue more cultural activities when they gained the incomes and freedom needed to do so. When asked about the importance of culture in economic development funding, P5 responded, “It depends: if funding is to purchase trucks or construct roads, culture is not that important (in such cases) as it has not much to do with culture, but if it is arts and crafts, culture is extremely important.”

## **Empowerment**

The concept of “empowerment” is less tangible than the other themes explored in the present study. Indeed, the term “covers a vast landscape of meanings, interpretations, definitions and disciplines ranging from psychology and philosophy to self-help industry and motivational sciences” (Sena 2013, p. 1). During the process of analyzing participant responses, empowerment arose on the basis of integrating the following codes: Community, Federal Processing, Funding, Funding Management, Health, Long term Objectives, Oil and gas, Participation, Personalities, Priorities, Remoteness Hardships, Respect, Sustainability, Traditions v. Technology, Youth, Band, and Lack of Awareness. Helin (2011, p. 175) brought these codes under his view of working definition of empowerment:

*A state of mind in which an individual, recognizing the control and power they have over their own life, confronts their fears, takes ownership of their problems, accepts responsibility for their actions,*

*adopts positive attitudes and values, and implements a strategic plan to improve their situation.*

This concept of empowerment manifested itself in a variety of different ways when participants delved into issues of control over their traditional lands, the governance of their communities, and over themselves and their spirituality.

Participants narrated their experiences and stories on governance of funds at various levels. The delay in funding in certain cases ended in loss of momentum to carry the projects or even the cost going up due to inflation, thus resulting in incomplete projects due to lack of timely availability of funds. There was frustration expressed regarding funds spent on feasibility studies or preparation of business plans without any delivered outcome. “Outcome is not achieved as sufficient funding is not provided. One has to bite the bullet to finish the project” (P2). Lack of proper reporting on the management of funds by certain organizations also contributed to poor results or incomplete projects. “Not much information was shared” (P20).

Participants exhibited mixed opinions on natural resource development in the North, acknowledging the benefits that oil and gas development could bring to the region, such as jobs and investment, while also noting concerns with the associated environmental impacts. P12 stated:

*Aboriginals can achieve economic development without losing traditional culture. Oil and Gas can still be successful while retaining the Aboriginal culture. The Oil and Gas companies share projects and show respect and accommodate Aboriginal peoples and their culture.*

While some thought that Aboriginal culture could co-exist with oil and gas, mining and other resource development, others were uneasy since development was too often pushed through and given priority over local concerns—the focus is on corporations, not individuals. “Funding for Aboriginal culture stopped ... All talk about is on Oil and Gas” (P10). Some expressed a major risk of minimizing or even losing spiritual values. Divisions could arise in communities due to competition over the lucrative but temporary contracts that accompany oil and gas development. This observation was no different than the one I had observed on my previous business visits to some other communities in the North. Questions were raised on sustainability of benefits if measured with a scale of long-term community development.

### **Financial Measurement**

Discussions about accountability elicited detailed responses from participants who had either received or dispensed government funding. Finding ways to improve the government’s approach to financial measurement was a theme that ran through these responses, and participants were united in the view that there are limits to reporting systems that rely solely on financial statements to measure the results of funding. “More should be done in terms of accountability. It should be more than financial statements” (P22). In general, this traditional form of financial measurement, while seeming to match with government and broader public perceptions of accountability, had failed to achieve long-term goals that are actually of value to the community:

*Accountability should be result based. One can see the outcome but if the receipts are misplaced or do not add up then the money is to be returned.*

*The reporting process should be open to allow choosing between outcome based and accountability based on receipts and financial statements. It should not be stuck to one (P3).*

However, in contrast with this participant's view, "We can be flexible" said P27, a senior funding official. He noted that a statutory declaration signed by the recipient could be used in lieu of a missing receipt. While a statutory declaration could also be viewed by others as culturally inappropriate, the search for additional options indicates there is a fundamental breakdown in the communication process for accountability but also that participants wanted more than simple 'dollars received, dollars spent' equations to understand the true value of the funding provided.

Compliance with current financial reporting mechanisms was not an issue for most participants, and many found the process to be an important exercise in fostering accountability and tracking the flow of funds. One participant stated that "I want to be accountable, as there is nothing to hide and it shows my honesty" (P4), while another found "Reporting is the best part of getting funding as it shows how the numbers and dollars worked" (P3). The lack of information available about program results was a more pressing concern, and participants expressed the need to develop flexible, non-financial targets that can help steer programs towards positive results.

Setting targets, tracking results, and adjusting strategies accordingly were raised as crucial steps in addressing the problems highlighted in other themes of the research. Funding cannot address social, cultural, and environmental matters if it is not guided by indicators of success in these realms. "Accountability should be both based on financial

numbers and outcomes & results” (P5). The development of communities would be in the hands of coming generations. Balancing the economic development and culture retention in a global economy would be a challenge the youths would face as they plan and compete in a world influenced by technology and western modernization.

## **Social Measurement**

The most common theme that emerged from the interviews was the interconnectedness of social issues with economic development. The general consensus among participants was that communities needed to address social problems before any meaningful economic development could take place. Their desired approach differed from what they perceived as the governments’ current strategies, which exhibited a primary focus on development and secondary, if any, consideration of other issues.

*Social issues are often ignored by funding providers and it results in a mismatch. Social issues like education and health are important but funding is not directed to address them. It is directed for other reasons (P2).*

The current approach ignored the drag on economic development produced by a set of interrelated social issues endemic in northern Aboriginal communities. Many participants cited problems with the high cost and poor condition of housing in their community. These deficiencies pushed up rates of overcrowding, homelessness, and poverty, which in turn exacerbated substance abuse problems for many individuals.

Subsequently, these surrounding social conditions stunted the potential for positive employment and education outcomes resulting from the funding gained. Youth were identified as key to overcoming social problems, while also being particularly susceptible to their effects.

*It is very tragic what happens to young people. They are dragged down by social issues. Nothing will develop and evolve without them being addressed. It is a decade-long problem with no quick solution in sight (P14).*

Participants linked improved youth education and programming to better overall outcomes for their community, while lamenting the poor results achieved under the current system. “The level of education is poor. A Grade 6 kid from here will have a tough time to compete with a Grade 6 skills down South” (P26).

What emerged from viewing these social issues as a whole was that Aboriginal communities can become trapped in a feedback loop, wherein degrading social conditions fuel further degradation. Without accounting for this cycle, economic development initiatives risk achieving only fleeting results. As P14 states, “Unless the social programs are dealt with the goals are questionable.” Social measurement developed into a central theme of this research because participants made it clear that economic development can only be effective if considered within the context of persistent social issues such as low levels of education, inadequate housing, systemic barriers to employment, and high rates of alcohol and substance abuse.



## Summary— A Holistic Approach

The findings summarized in this chapter provide an overview of data generated through formal and semi-structured interviews, and the coding process followed to reach the key themes of the present study.

Participants demonstrated that the success of economic development funding is dependent on how that success is measured. Funding can be advanced for certain activities and spent appropriately, but does that funding actually make a difference when looking at the big picture? The growing social issues in Canada's northern Aboriginal communities suggest that funding may not have actually achieved meaningful results. This brought to the forefront the concepts of community development and sustainable development, which were later narrowed down to Aboriginal community development.

Literature reviews into these areas also uncovered the concept of holism (Collins, D. 2007; Kenny 2004), which has been explored as a component of government programs targeted at Australian Indigenous peoples. In this context, Osborne, K., Baum and Brown (2013, p. 2) have argued for a greater focus on

- *holistic approaches which work with Indigenous people in ways which take into account the full cultural, social, emotional and economic context of their lives, including an awareness of the ongoing legacy of trauma, grief and loss associated with colonization active involvement of Indigenous communities in every stage of program development and delivery, in order to build genuine,*

*collaborative and sustainable partnerships with Indigenous peoples, and build capacity within Indigenous communities;*

- *collaborative working relationships between government agencies and other relevant organizations in delivering services and programs, acknowledging the interrelatedness of key social and economic determinants across multiple life domains for Indigenous Australians valuing Indigenous knowledge and cultural beliefs and practices which are important for promoting positive cultural identity and social and emotional well-being for Indigenous Australians.*

In Canada, Shewell (2004, p. 207) contends that holism has been discouraged by the increasingly reductionist approaches taken by the federal government following World War II:

*One of the chief research difficulties encountered in a study of post-Second World War Indian administration arises from the growth and complexity of the Indian Affairs Branch. At headquarters, enriched funding and the development of new and existing programs resulted in a dramatic increase in correspondence with educational institutions, international bodies, the media, other public and private organizations, and the Canadian public, not to mention assorted federal and provincial government sectors. Much of the earlier, apparent simplicity of branch policy was lost as officials grappled with a variety of influences and as branch programs began to develop their own unique requirements. As*

*professional expertise within the branch grew, holistic approaches to the Indian 'problem' became less and less possible as each area claimed its own special knowledge.*

Orr, Weir and Atlantic Aboriginal Economic Development Integrated Research Program (2013, p. 111) support the notion that holistic approaches should be a part of any action the government takes to bridge the socio-economic divide between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples:

*It is well recognized that (community) economic development in the Aboriginal context is clearly rooted in the concepts of community-based decision-making, participation from the whole community, and taking a holistic approach to development which incorporates more than just pure economic activity to include social, health, environmental and organizational concerns and outcomes.*

A holistic approach to enhancing economic development became the focus of the research, as participants expressed a wide range of related concerns: financial accountability, social problems, empowerment, and culture and language were important themes connected to economic development that evolved out of open discussions. Glaser and Holton (2005, p. 1) state that all Grounded theory transpires around a core category, which may or may not be a basic social process. The inclination is to refer to core categories as a formal theory without the required relative advancement of formal theory. However, on choosing a core category, the relationship between categories and integration among them lead to theoretical completeness

resulting in increased scope of the research (Glaser & Holton 2005, p. 2). According to Glaser and Holton (2005, p. 16):

*By discovery, the analyst goes to a fairly contained social unit  
attempting by observation and interviewing to see as much as possible  
and find out the most salient social problem of the people there.*

The following chapters take each of the core categories, sorted into key themes developed from the research, and further explore, define and integrate these themes of cultural retention, empowerment, financial and social measurement into the Grounded Theory of funding accountability.

## Chapter 5—Culture Retention

### Introduction

Successive Canadian governments made both explicit and implicit attempts to absorb Aboriginal peoples into Canadian society, and over decades undermined and attempted to eliminate Aboriginal cultures and identities. Today, the fact is that Aboriginal cultural values and world views remain fundamentally different from mainstream Canadian society:

*On the negative side, we have a drinking culture. We have a culture of violence. We have a culture of violence against women. We have a suicide culture. We have a culture of vicious Indian politics. We have a culture of family breakdown. Which of these cultures we want to support in perpetuity? On the positive side, we have a culture of sharing and a culture of being close to the land. We have a culture that values art, music, literature and graphic arts. Those are only some of our strengths. We need to realize that we must shape the culture that we want for our children and we must do it ourselves (Wuttunee 1992, pp. 3-4).*

Nevertheless, in the NWT, “culture and heritage are powerful ... They play a significant role in personal well-being, community resiliency, language, identity, a diverse economy and a sustainable environment” (Minister of Education Culture and Employment Jackson Lafferty 2015, p. 1).

## Aboriginal Ways of Living

Aboriginal communities in northern Canada are characterized economically by a mix of traditional ways of living and non-traditional economic activities. Boyd, Jardine and Furgal (2010, p. 268) mention:

*Even though wage employment is now very familiar to northern Indigenous populations, subsistence harvesting continues to play an important role in the modern economy of many communities. In fact, most households effectively integrate hunting, fishing and gathering with participation in some form of wage-earning labour.*

Participants in the present study claimed that the shift from Aboriginal ways of living based on the concepts of sharing to more individualistic approaches of the wage economy has left a significant void in the culture. Responses from participants were mixed when asked whether traditional ways of living could co-exist with modern lifestyles. P13 argued that:

*Global economic development needs to consider Aboriginal development. Unfortunately, they do not understand Aboriginal culture. They need to understand the Aboriginal culture first before we can compete in global economy without losing our culture.*

However, others also pointed out that “it is hard to survive by living on the land in today’s world” (P12) and that “Aboriginal traditional work involves a lot of work but

not enough compensation for the time and labour involved” (P22). One participant said that traditional activities “will struggle to compete” (P10) with modern lifestyles.

P2 was positive that traditions could compete with modern lifestyles, and argues that “it has been proven in Africa.” Mellet (2007, p. 383) provides some supporting evidence for this perception with an example from their study on the rapid adoption of modern technology in rural African communities:

*Mobile phones brought for the residents of the rural communities had positive economic and social impacts. Typical examples are that mobile phones reduced travel needs, assisted job hunting and provided better access to business information. Greater ease of contact with family and friends also brought improved relationships. These benefits were reported even though the communities surveyed were amongst the poorest in their countries.*

Sena (2010, p. 8) also argues that Aboriginal traditions need not be eclipsed by modern developments, although many Aboriginal peoples are becoming disconnected with their culture. This is fuelled in part by organizations promoting economic development who:

*are more interested in giving fish rather than teaching the communities how to fish in a modernizing world. These build a dependency syndrome where Indigenous peoples just sit and wait for the government and donors to come to their rescue.*

In North America, Aboriginal traditional ways of living have a long history. Prior to contact with European traders, the Aboriginal peoples of North America had already

established an extensive and varied economic system and a continent-wide network of trade centres (Carlos & Lewis 2012). The first Europeans to arrive in North America joined this network, trading their manufactured goods for Aboriginal furs and country food. Europeans soon established their own coastal trading posts, which attracted Aboriginal traders and hunters, who provided a stable supply of goods and labour needed to maintain the posts and associated transport systems. Chief Roy Fabian (2015) of Hay River Reserve, NWT argues:

*without the role of the First Nations, the fur trade would not have happened. The Aboriginals like the Dene were astronomical in the fur trade. Their traditional beliefs, values, knowledge and skills enabled the Aboriginals to access furs that was the main commodity of the Fur Trade. Over a period of four centuries the Dene and other Aboriginal peoples transferred a huge amount of wealth to Europe and created an economy (Chief Fabian 2015, p. 1).*

As Europeans expanded their operations inland, Aboriginal peoples gradually lost control over the fur trade, were exposed to disease and conflict, and eventually fell into dependency on trading companies following the collapse of European fur markets (Voyageur, Newhouse & Beavon 2011).

Five hundred years after first contact with Europeans, many Aboriginal peoples still look to hunting and gathering as a way of life that “integrates people with the land, the animals, and the seasons, producing an economy that is based on seasonality, diversity, and opportunity” (Voyageur, Newhouse & Beavon 2011, p. 29). These practices have



preserved an Aboriginal philosophy of interconnection between the land, people and their ancestors, which Voyageur, Newhouse and Beavon (2011, p. 29) argued, “is part of a cultural revival and is a source of renewed identity for many Aboriginal peoples of Canada.”

Today, Aboriginal peoples in northern Canada continue to participate in hunting, fishing, and trapping as a means of pursuing both economic independence and a traditional lifestyle. However, in line with concerns expressed by participants of this study, the rates of participation in these cultural activities, is declining. The percentage of persons 15 and over who trapped in the Northwest Territories dropped from 8.0% in 1989 to 6.2% in 2009. Outside of Yellowknife where trapping was less common (1.2%), the proportion of trappers ranged from 7.6% in the South Slave Region to 16.3% in the Dehcho region (Northwest Territories Bureau of Statistics 2009a).

Between 1999 and 2009, the percentage of persons 15 and over who hunted or fished in the Northwest Territories fell from 42.0% to 39.4%. Participation in hunting and fishing was lowest in Yellowknife (34.5%) and ranged between 39.5% and 48.1% in the remaining regions (Northwest Territories Bureau of Statistics 2009a). Even though declining, Chief Fabian (2015, p. 2) attributes the staying power of these traditions to Aboriginal peoples’ sustainable practices:

*The Dene and other Aboriginals based on their world views were natural conservationists. They understood that the land they lived on was fragile and had to be protected. Their worldviews and integrities helped them to maintain a balance of resources that enabled them to continue to thrive.*

*Thus in the four hundred years plus of accessing furs did not affect the land. With a practise of balance they continue to harvest fur and are still doing it today.*

These traditional practices are also an important factor in promoting food security (availability of food) and food sovereignty (control over the production and distribution of food) in remote communities. For millennia, northern Aboriginal communities subsisted on a diet of nutrient-dense country food harvested from the land. The Gwich'in people of the Northwest Territories, for example, lived nomadically off the land, hunting, fishing, and gathering over 75 species of plants and animals until settling permanently during the 1960s. Modern technology, advertising, and increased participation in the wage economy have since increased consumption of less nutritious market foods shipped in from the South (The Council of Canadian Academies 2014).

In 2008, country food represented more than half of all meat consumed in 28.1% of Northwest Territories households, a figure that was lowest in the capital city of Yellowknife (10.7%) and highest in the Beaufort Delta (43.8%), Dehcho (52.4%), Sahtu (60.9%), and Tłı̄chó (73.7%) regions (Northwest Territories Bureau of Statistics 2009c). A 2002 survey also revealed that 18.2% of persons aged 15 or older gather berries in the Northwest Territories and another 6.8% gather plants for medicinal purposes (Northwest Territories Bureau of Statistics 2003).

Country food is an important alternative to market food due to the elevated transportation, warehousing, and distribution costs associated with the latter. Increased consumption of market foods has also been linked to increased rates of obesity,

cardiovascular disease, and other negative health effects (The Council of Canadian Academies 2014).

In terms of cultural retention, a significant component of Aboriginal culture is the capacity for sharing and reciprocity and many participants gave examples of sharing. P33, recollected how in old good times when hunters would come back from the land, they would share the hunt with the community. Kuokkanen (2011, pp. 217-218) also talks about concepts of sharing in subsistence economies:

*These economies, including the practices of sharing, manifest indigenous worldviews characterized by interdependence and reciprocity that extend to all living beings and to the land. In short, beside an economic occupation, subsistence activities are an expression of one's identity, culture, and values. They are also a means by which social networks are maintained and reinforced.*

It was a sense of sharing within the community that was a central cultural element in the past. As Power (2008, p. 97) argues, “conceptualization of food security for Aboriginal peoples in Canada must take account of traditional food harvesting, sharing and consumption.” However, within a western-based wage economy, wages earned have an individualistic attribution, and the concept of sharing is becoming obsolete. “People often share harvested country foods, which strengthens community solidarity. With shift work and rotational work, there is less time to spend on traditional activities and traditional livelihoods” (National Aboriginal Health Organization 2008, p. 5).

Collings (2011) has also noted that country food exchanges in remote northern communities were once closely tied to broader economic strategies. Not only were they imbued with cultural, economic and political meaning, they also facilitated exchanges of information and were “part of a much more significant movement of goods, involving the free flow of snowmobile and ATV parts, tools, sleds, labour, and other favours” (Collings 2011, p. 214). Consider the following example of a typical exchange:

*A father may receive money from a daughter employed in the community daycare facility. With the money, the father purchases fuel and supplies to fish for Arctic char. Of the 500 pounds of char caught, he sells 100 for \$1.75 per pound. He returns this \$175 to his daughter for her initial investment and distributes the remaining 400 pounds of char — with an exchange value in the local cooperative or Northern store of \$2,000 — to friends and family (The Council of Canadian Academies 2014, p. 119).*

In this way, food-sharing networks helped integrate subsistence and wage-earning pursuits into a mutually supportive mixed economy. Despite this, the pursuits of many Aboriginal hunters, fishers, and trappers are limited by heightened costs of living and going out on the land (The Council of Canadian Academies 2014). At the same time, individuals who abandon subsistence activities for wage employment opportunities increasingly find themselves isolated from food-sharing networks (Collings 2011).

Declining participation in these on-the-land activities is likely to continue as younger generations lack the relevant skills and are more immersed in southern education, culture, and technology. “More worrying still is the fact that younger generations have made large shifts towards these energy-dense foods” (Pilgrim, Samson & Pretty 2009, p. 10). In this context, passing down traditional knowledge and skills related to hunting, fishing, and trapping is not only a method to achieve food security and food sovereignty, but also a manner of preserving cultural heritage and building cohesive communities. Ultimately, “relevant and effective responses to improve food security and food sovereignty must be holistic, enabled by local traditional knowledge, and paired with economic development strategies” (The Council of Canadian Academies 2014, p. xxii). Newhouse, Orr and The Atlantic Aboriginal Economic Development Integrated Research Program (2013, p. 188) confirm the importance of culture when they state:

*The truth test for traditional knowledge is in its practicality and its usefulness for survival. The Aboriginal knowledge principles that have been used to create sustainable communities over the centuries are still relevant in today’s world: respect for the land and environment, respect for each other, thanksgiving and respect for life, co-operation rather than competition, long-term thinking, acting for mutual benefit, consideration of all life in decision-making and an ethos of self-sufficiency and self-determination. The economic institutions that are created within Aboriginal communities to advance their interests are expected to be imbued with values like these and to operate in ways that*

*are consistent with Aboriginal understandings of the world as well as demonstrate an ability to thrive within a contemporary market economy. Culture matters.*

## **Importance of Aboriginal Languages**

The ongoing loss of Aboriginal languages was identified as an alarming situation by participants. Language is an important part of the lives of Aboriginal peoples and an inseparable part of Aboriginal culture. A majority (80%) of participants agreed that conserving, strengthening and supporting traditional culture, values and languages should be reflected in development activities. One participant who answered in affirmative stated that they “have a very strong opinion on that” (P9). Others who answered in negative expressed that this “may only be good in some situations” (P14) and that “it should be balanced. First opportunity should be for job training” (P12 and P17). P20 expressed frustration at current language education practices in the community:

*The language is getting lost. There is only half-hour class in Slavey at the school and the rest of the day it is all English language. That is not the way to retain culture ... Students nowadays cannot speak and write local language, so it is important to keep it alive (P20).*

Several participants lamented the failures of the status quo; P22 said “We have practically lost our way” (P22).

Aboriginal languages have long been in decline. After initial contact between European settlers and Aboriginal peoples in the late 15<sup>th</sup> century, efforts at cooperation between the two groups gave way to a period of “long-term, overt and insidious domination of one culture over another” (Rose & Rose 2012, p. 50). A concentrated effort by these settlers to demonize Aboriginal practices and assimilate the Aboriginal population into Western norms, combined with the effects of forced relocations, disease, and famine led to a decline in Aboriginal culture and language (Patrick 2012, p. 3). The residential school system was particularly damaging to Aboriginal linguistic diversity, as its policies forbid generations of Aboriginal youth from speaking their traditional languages, under threat of harsh punishment (Huang 2009).

Across Canada today there are twelve Aboriginal language families made up of over 60 individual languages. Almost 213,500 people reported an Aboriginal mother tongue in the 2011 census, with the Algonquian (144,015), Inuit (35,500), and Athapaskan (20,700) language families containing the most speakers (Statistics Canada 2011). In the Northwest Territories, there are 11 official languages: Chipewyan, Cree, English, French, Gwich'in, Inuinnaqtun, Inuktitut, Inuvialuktun, North Slavey, South Slavey, and Tlicho (*Official Languages Act* 1988). Many Aboriginal languages are at risk of extinction, with just three considered to have a chance at survival: Cree, Ojibway, and Inuktitut (Usborne et al. 2011). Canada-wide, the proportion of Aboriginal peoples with knowledge of an Aboriginal language decreased from 29.3% in 1996, to 21.5% in 2006, to 17.2% in 2011 (Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada 2013). In the Northwest Territories, between 1989 and 2009, the percentage of Aboriginals over the age of 15 who could converse in an Aboriginal language dropped from 55.6% to 38.0%.

This drop was most pronounced in the Dehcho (78.6% to 58.2%), and Sahtu (85.6% to 53.3%) regions, while the Tłıchō region showed the least amount of change (96.1% to 90.4%). Sachs Harbour was the only community in the Northwest Territories that saw an increased proportion (38.0% to 40.0%) of Aboriginal language speakers over the same period (Northwest Territories Bureau of Statistics 2009b).

Aboriginal language revitalization is a rising concern for many communities, with successful initiatives taking the form of language immersion programs in schools (Usborne et al. 2011). Patrick (2012) argues that these revitalization efforts are not merely symbolic, but are part of larger social movements relating to education, territory, environment, and decolonizing relations with the Canadian government. These languages are a means of passing down history, values, principles and beliefs from one generation to the next, and are “critical to the survival of the culture and political integrity of any people” (Burke & Milewski 2012, p. 278).

Newhouse, Orr and The Atlantic Aboriginal Economic Development Integrated Research Program (2013, p. xii) express the value of language in terms of continuity of inherited heritage as:

*The gift of language is a gift of potentially infinite wisdom and knowledge that most people receive upon birth. Language provides a sense of belonging, a sense of continuity among a collective, and a deep connection to a knowledge system that grounds the individual to a place, a history, an ancestral heritage and to the people who continue to use and to grow in through that language.*



Gerein (1998) points out those communities that provide Aboriginal first language instruction in their schools are in better health, as the use of the children's mother tongue results in improved language performance than when taught to use other languages, such as English. Aboriginal first language as a medium of instruction contributes to the retention of Aboriginal culture and language, and contributes to maintaining the rich cultural diversity of the Territories (Gerein 1998).

Newhouse, Orr and The Atlantic Aboriginal Economic Development Integrated Research Program (2013, p. xv) support the first language education when they indicate that it has a constructive impact on students' self-esteem and self-concept, on their connecting up with their ancestors and seniors' knowledge. More considerably it assists with their ability on their learning to read with ease and ability to understand in other languages as well, such as English. The importance of language has been summed up as follows:

*Language is an essential part of, and intrinsically linked to, Aboriginal peoples' ways of life, culture and identities. Languages embody many Aboriginal values and concepts and contain Aboriginal peoples' histories and development. They are fundamental markers of indigenous peoples' distinctiveness and cohesiveness as peoples (United Nations General Assembly fifth session 2012, pp. 8-9).*

In Australia, the Standing Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs (2012, pp. 7-8) further adds:

*Cultural heritage and knowledge are passed on throughout each generation by language. Language is integral in affirming and maintaining well-being, self-esteem and a strong sense of identity. Languages contain complex understandings of a person's culture and their connection with their land. There is a wealth of evidence that supports the positive associations of health, education and employment outcomes as well as general well-being with language and culture. Indigenous languages keep people connected to culture and this strengthens feelings of pride and self-worth.*

The value of communication is often overlooked. It is not only a means of communicating thoughts and ideas, but it also serves as an important means of passing on culture and identity from one generation to another. It forges cultural connections, and economic interactions. Studies of language in Canada have explored the cultural rate of return from both learning a second language and honing one's mother tongue. This cultural yield can be measured by increases in consumption of literature, poetry, theatre and other expressions of the language, but also in ways unrelated to consumption:

*Suppose that in a group one permanent value is a sense of solidarity which is deemed essential to the group's social fabric and which is correlated to linguistic cohesion. The learning of the language that supports cohesion will then have a cultural yield ... The foregoing suggests that it may be beneficial for a society to invest in the preservation of minority languages, if these languages support and*

*nurture permanent values that are deemed beneficial (Breton 1998, p. 30).*

White, Maxim and Beavon (2003, p. 139) make a similar point in the context of Aboriginal languages, noting that “it is difficult to pass along cultural knowledge if the younger generation has no idea what its predecessors are saying.” Strengthening Aboriginal language education can also play a part in unravelling colonial perceptions of reality; as Battiste (1998, p. 24) puts it:

*Indigenous languages offer not just a communication tool for unlocking knowledge; they offer a process of orientation that removes us from rigid noun-centered reality and offers an unfolding paradigmatic process for restoration and healing. It reflects a reality of transformation and change in its holistic representations and processes that stress interaction, reciprocity, respect, and non-interference.*

While English can be important to learn as a common language of communication internationally, local languages are first medium of instruction in many parts of the world. The same should apply to Aboriginal communities and their respective mother tongues. As Alfred (1999, p. 156) states, “native languages embody indigenous people’s identity and are the most important element in their culture. They must be revived and protected as symbols and sources of nationhood.”

## Commitment to Cultural Activities

P24 stated that “we can’t lose our culture,” while P19 emphasized that “there should be commitment to cultural activities.” These should be coordinated in a way that the commitments are met, and the promises are delivered upon. Several participants felt that cultural activities in their community were underfunded. P10 said that “There is no funding to go camping. No funding for education in local activities related to culture.”

Others felt that funding providers had already made efforts to fund cultural activities, and that individuals should be responsible for maintaining their own culture. One participant said they were “always encouraged to include cultural aspects and traditional activities with programming” (P11). Another said that “if you find a way to massage your request with cultural aspects, you are more likely to get funding” (P12). P25 also stated that they had successfully secured funding “for traditional activities.”

P11 argued that “families should look after traditional values and culture. Developmental activities should be economic development focused.” Asked about cultural activities, P21 added that “these things should be done by people on their own time.” P11 expressed that preserving cultural activities was not contingent on government funding:

*I know my parents and my grandparents and the culture they followed. I do not need to carry their way of life to honour their traditions.*

*Development activities should not be based on traditional values and culture. They should be separate and one should have independence to adopt them to whatever extent one wants to.*

Some responses suggested that there is a generation gap when it comes to appreciation for traditional cultural activities. P9 stated that “My son does not want to go out in the bush with me,” and P12 said that “Elders do not understand that modern youth do not want to engage in learning traditional activities like skinning a moose. This is disconnecting Elders and youth.” However, P5 suggested that Elders and youth could benefit from increased cooperation: “My grandson helps me with internet searches and I am strong on culture, so it is good mix of culture and modern lifestyle.”

Studies suggest that Aboriginal cultural activities provide a number of benefits to their participants (Smith, K., Findlay & Crompton 2010). However, for much of Canada’s history, government officials actively suppressed these practices and provisions of the *Indian Act* banned many Aboriginal traditions. These were not repealed until the middle of the twentieth century. The following memorandum sent out in 1915 by Duncan Scott, then head of the Department of Indian Affairs, is an example of the bureaucratic approach taken to discourage participation in these traditions:

*It is observed with alarm that the holding of dances by Indians on their reserves is on the increase, and that those practices tend to disorganize the efforts which the Department is putting forth to make them self-supporting. I have, therefore, to direct you to use your utmost endeavours to dissuade the Indians from excessive indulgence in the practice of dancing. You should suppress any dances which cause waste of time, interfere with the occupations of the Indians unsettle them for serious work, injure their health or encourage them in sloth and idleness. It is realized that reasonable amusement and recreation should*

*be enjoyed by Indians, but they should not be allowed to dissipate their energies and abandon themselves to demoralizing amusements. By the use of tact and firmness, you can obtain control and keep it, and this obstacle to continued progress will then disappear (Scott 1915, p. 1).*

In the words of Buckley (1992, p. 23), “ancient beliefs and practices were seen as standing in the way, and the Department did its best to root them out.” As can be seen in participants’ responses, there remains an imbedded fundamental conflict between those participants who believed that traditional activities should be a cornerstone of funding outcomes and participants who felt that cultural activities should be retained in a peripheral space. The draconian approaches of the past have yielded to a growing appreciation for the positive impacts participation in cultural activities and increased cultural identity have on health, academic performance, self-regard, alcohol and substance abuse, adolescent aggression, depression and suicide (Burack & Schmidt 2014; Currie et al. 2013; Findlay & Crompton 2010; Flanagan et al. 2011)

Sablonnière et al. (2011, pp. 302-303) trace much of colonization’s negative impacts back to the destruction of Aboriginal cultural identities:

*The best explanation for most of the social problems currently plaguing the Inuit communities is not the negative valence of colonization, but rather the devastating impact of this process on Inuit cultural identity. By destroying the traditional Inuit identity without effectively replacing it with a new one, the colonization process left the Inuit in the worst possible situation. The former norms associated with the traditional Inuit*

*identity do not exist anymore, and have not been replaced by new norms, leaving the Inuit communities in a state of social dysfunction.*

Sablonnière et al. (2011, p. 319) also found that among Inuit youth, those who possessed a clearer view of their cultural identity had achieved better outcomes in psychological well-being. The authors concluded that “Inuit young people may well benefit from interventions designed not to boost their self-esteem directly, but rather to help them clarify their identity as Inuit.”

Aboriginal peoples have identified participation in ceremonies as a “key component of cultural practice” (Burack & Schmidt 2014, p. 96). However, only a minority of Aboriginal children, four in ten, participate in cultural activities; 43% of First Nations children, 33% of Métis children, and 56% of Inuit children (Smith, K., Findlay & Crompton 2010). Economic concerns, as Loxley (2010, p. 86) notes, could be a factor contributing to this trend:

*If people are struggling to survive, they may have no time, energy, or resources to participate in cultural activities. In particular, many cultural activities cost money. Economic development is, therefore, a prerequisite for cultural fulfillment, provided it is consistent with underlying values.*

## **Aboriginal Tourism Promotion**

Several participants stressed the importance of tourism in relation to Aboriginal economic development. As Smith, V. L. (1989, p. 6) notes, “the major stimulus for the

development of tourism is economic. Tourism is labour intensive, especially for a minimally skilled labour pool, and ranks high as a developmental tool, particularly for underdeveloped areas worldwide.”

The National Study of the Aboriginal Tourism Industry in Canada documented that Aboriginal tourism was a larger economic generator than anticipated. The study found that in 2001:

- *Aboriginal tourism generated \$4.9 billion in Canada (including casino revenues);*
- *More than half (59%) of the total was from tourism expenditures;*
- *The direct contribution to the GDP from Aboriginal tourism businesses' was \$290 million which increased significantly when casinos were included (\$596 million);*
- *There was an estimated 13,000 full-time equivalent jobs attributed to Aboriginal tourism; and*
- *There was growing interest in the Aboriginal tourism experience, creating opportunities for food and beverages, accommodations, outdoor activities, cultural and interpretive centers (O'Neil et al. 2015, p. ix).*

Aboriginal cultural knowledge is the foundation of the arts and tourism sector industries in the NWT, and the benefits from these industries flow through to other local businesses. As P32 stated, the government, “needs to put more money into tourism—that is how you maintain culture and show your culture.” P7 was excited to tell stories



and make suggestions about traditional activities and tourism in Fort Liard, which she felt was lacking given that many people drive past the community on their way to British Columbia. She made specific reference to the “Sleeping Mountain” as a tourism asset:

*As one enters Fort Liard by road, there is extremely beautiful scenery with a history. No one talks about it. It is just and just considered beautiful scenery. In fact, it is a sleeping man. If you notice closely, you will see his face down. But, if someone does not tell you the story, you will not come to know.*

P7 also felt that there was more to be done to promote the region’s history. “We have a rich history but no one talks about it ... there should be a glass case [in the visitor centre] showing the history ... We can have a museum attached to the craft shop ... There should be glass cases with artifacts which tourists can come and look at” (P7).

P10 also listed “poor signage” as an issue in the community, and P8 echoed these thoughts as well. She mentioned a historic church in the community that had no signage to direct tourists: “One could pass by it without even noticing it.” P8 also spoke about the lack of a trail running through Lisa Memorial Park, despite its status as a tourist destination, and P15 said they had “no idea what happened to the ‘community garden’ project.” P10 noted that “Tourism Organizations and not government involved in funding for tourism sector development in the town. There used to be around 40 circle tours which have been decimated to almost none.” P7 added that “there is no restaurant in the community. There should be a restaurant as a basic need for tourists,” and also argued that the community need only look to the South to see the missed opportunities:

*Look at how British Columbia advertises its hot springs. We have beaver, ducks, swans, buffalos and beautiful mountains that resemble a face ... there should be a nice stop at Liard. There should be a proper museum. Where is the accountability to deliver all this? There should be someone responsible to think of categories outside of the existing box of projects.*

Speaking about the alignment of tourism with cultural retention, P31 mentioned a past cultural tourism initiative that would have seen modern activities such as golf and boating mixed with traditional cultural elements like drum-making and displays by Elders:

*I think there's a huge potential there, we just need more resources ... there's all kinds of different culture tourism that can be started here ... there wasn't any funding at that time for the infrastructure, but the ideas are there.*

Participants' call for greater tourism promotion find support in recent industry statistics. There are currently over 1,500 Aboriginal tourism businesses in Canada, which employ over 33,000 people and contribute \$1.4 billion annually to Canada's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) (O'Neil et al. 2015). In the NWT, tourism has grown substantially over the past 50 years. In the 1960s, only a few hundred tourists visited the territory each year, growing to over 20,000 annually by the mid-1970s (Hicks 2010) and reaching over 70,000 annually by the mid-2000s (Government of the Northwest Territories 2015). "In northern Canada there are approximately 75 communities – 14 in Yukon, 33

in the Northwest Territories (which also has two Indian Reserves found in the southern region of the territory), and an estimated 28 hamlets/communities in Nunavut” (O’Neil et al. 2015, p. 106). “In 2014, there were 278 Aboriginal tourism businesses in the three northern territories, of which 250 were Aboriginal owned which was 14% of all Aboriginal tourism businesses in Canada” (O’Neil et al. 2015, p. xxxiii).

Currently, tourism in the NWT generates more revenue than “all other renewable resource sectors combined” (Aboriginal Tourism Champions Advisory Council 2013, p. 6). The Aboriginal Tourism Champions Advisory Council (ATCAC) provides advice to the GNWT on Aboriginal tourism (O’Neil et al. 2015). Its most recent Strategic Action Plan listed increased “community and Aboriginal organization engagement” (Aboriginal Tourism Champions Advisory Council 2013, p. 24) as a priority.

Arts and crafts are also among a range of Aboriginal cultural experiences that serve as catalysts for Canada’s tourism sector. One study found that among prospective French, German, and British travellers to Canada, “there is a strong desire to experience several aspects of Aboriginal culture including arts and crafts (viewing and making), dancing and drumming, ceremonies, pow-wows, and traditional subsistence activities (fishing, hunting, trapping, gathering)” (Canadian Tourism Commission 2007, p. 13).



Figure 9: Traditional Porcupine Quill Birch Bark and Beaded Moosehide Dene Crafts made in Fort Liard Northwest Territories (NWT Business Development and Investment Corporation 2014)

A study examining the economic impact of Nunavut's commercial arts and crafts sector found that it contributes \$33.4 million to the territory's GDP, and generates more than \$27 million directly to artists each year while exposing their work to a global audience. While many arts and crafts producers work part-time to generate a secondary source of income for their households, Nunavut's arts and crafts sector still generates 1,068 full-time equivalent jobs, representing 5.5% of the territory's eligible labour force. Moreover, all of these benefits are derived from locally gathered materials in remote communities (Government of Nunavut 2010).

In 2008, more than 3,000 persons aged 15 and older in the NWT produced arts and crafts, 27% of which earned \$1,000 or more (Government of Northwest Territories 2011). Arts and crafts producers were least dominant in Yellowknife, where they comprised 3.5% of the population. Proportions of arts and craft producers were above average in the South Slave (9.1%), Sahtu (11.4%), Tlicho (15.0%), Beaufort-Delta (13.5%), Dehcho (21.9%) regions (Northwest Territories Bureau of Statistics 2009d), and most producers worked with sewing and needlecraft (63.7%) or drawings and

paintings (13.0%) (Northwest Territories Bureau of Statistics 2009d). P5 argued that “the artists need a place to sell. Need a lot of push on marketing side. Our art is dying. Previously all tanning was done at home. It is a costly process but due to imitation by competition, we need machinery to tan.” P9, who works at a store that sells locally made arts and crafts, emphasized the importance of her trade by adding that “it is very important to maintain traditional activities and culture ... kids need to be encouraged to keep the culture.”



Figure 10: Mary Sassie Sr. - Elder Moccasin Mender from Fort Liard Northwest Territories (NWT Business Development and Investment Corporation)

There is a growing appreciation among Canadian governments for the arts and crafts sector in terms of its economic benefits (Canadian Craft Federation 2001). Traditional craft trades are “important contributors to the rural or northern economies are strongly

suited to economic diversification and can help rejuvenate rural areas” (Vaugeois et al. 2013, p. 11). For Aboriginal peoples, the arts and crafts sector presents additional cultural benefits. Steinberger (2002, p. 12) states that “the creation of crafts can provide indigenous peoples with an opportunity to display and promote their cultural diversity to the public and to preserve their ethnic identities and traditional cultures.”

As Smith, V. L. (1989, p. 9) states, “tourism can be a bridge to an appreciation of cultural relativity and international understanding.” However, while tourism can open up opportunities for Elders to pass down traditional teachings to youth, it would mean doing so in a very different context:

*Rather than based on an intimate transfer of knowledge between the Elder and the youth in the bush, the teaching of traditional knowledge through a tourism experience may diminish its relevance and worth (Colton 2005, p. 198).*

Thus, attempts at cultural retention through tourism should be careful not to undermine the very teachings they seek to promote.

## Summary

In the context of traditional activities such as hunting, fishing, trapping and their associated sharing networks, there is a “need to account for the more intangible effects on social relations and cultural values when planning for further development activities in northern communities” (Boyd, Jardine & Furgal 2010, p. 267). Wider studies of arts, crafts and tourism also suggest that investing in these sectors can generate a cultural rate

of return for communities (Antrobus et al. 2010; New Zealand Government 2013; Shergold 2010).

Arts and crafts businesses are especially well suited to northern Aboriginal entrepreneurs because they make use of existing skills, preserve cultural traditions, require a small start-up capital investment, and retain workers in remote communities while providing them with autonomy and a source of income (Steinberger 2002). Communities should be taking advantage of these opportunities in tandem with efforts to preserve Aboriginal languages, which produce similar cultural benefits (White, Maxim & Beavon 2003). As Alfred and Corntassel (2005, p. 605) argue, “our true power as Indigenous people ultimately lies in our relationships with our land, relatives, language, and ceremonial life.”

## Chapter 6—Empowerment

### Introduction

Empowerment is the key to ensuring financial resources are invested in the sustainable development of communities. Many participants expressed the importance of community empowerment and put forward suggestions for reaching this goal. P17 stated that when it comes to development activities, there is a need to “empower communities to do the work.” P20 advised that “the community needs to have a stake and the people need to work for it. The feeling is like the project is not being given to you as community people.” Another participant who was a government official stated: “It is hard to think of economic development when people are losing self-confidence” (P 27).

Some felt community empowerment could be achieved by gaining control of resources including oil and gas, while others favoured empowerment through retention of traditional activities on the land, land ownership and spiritual reconnection. Many had concerns about the politics of government funding and signalled a need to improve Band management to achieve better governance and empower individuals in their community. In the words of Yunus (2007, p. 9): “Politics also stands in the way of efficiency in governments. Of course, politics can mean accountability.”

Overall, participants approached the notion of empowerment from three distinct perspectives:



1. Band Governance
2. Spiritual Empowerment
3. Resource Management

Empowerment through economic development can help individuals escape poverty.

Erasmus and Sanders (2002, p. 10) state: “we need enough control over our lives so that we can grow, we can flourish, we can prosper.” Aboriginal peoples can cast aside dependency, and take control of creating their own local opportunities. In keeping with this notion, Aboriginal peoples should have control over choices that can help them achieve independence. “Aboriginal peoples have control, can choose independence and achieve sovereignty. It is this control which makes economic development successful” (McBride 2001, p. 5). Sovereignty is about more than eliminating poverty; it goes to the recognition and preservation of a common Aboriginal identity—an aspiration that must be considered when measuring economic development success (Orr, Weir & Atlantic Aboriginal Economic Development Integrated Research Program 2013).

## **Band Governance**

Aboriginal institutions with healthy organizational structures and capacities are central to the social and economic success of communities (Orr, Weir & Atlantic Aboriginal Economic Development Integrated Research Program 2013). As Jorgensen (2007, p. 146) notes, “inefficient or ineffective bureaucracies can cripple a community's efforts to achieve its goals. But a capable, efficient, and effective administration can be an enormous asset.” In the present study, participants had much to say on the topic of local Band governance:

*Aboriginal peoples are hard on themselves. They are jealous, suspicious and lack trust in their own people. I do not know how this can be fixed. There is infighting and not working for individuals, but competing with each other (P32).*

Participants generally felt that funding controls were being vested to a few powerful individuals with their own personal agendas. Governance has been generally defined as “the interactions among structures, processes and traditions that determine how power is exercised, how decisions are taken, and how citizens or other stakeholders have their say” (Plumptre & Graham 1999, p. 3). P20 summarized the issue several participants had with governance at the Band level:

*The Bands overdo their powers and do not care for conflict in interest. Everyone wants to get a finger in the pie. People are losing confidence in self and in the governance. This has to be addressed.*

P20’s concerns were two-fold: the loss of confidence in Band management and the resulting disempowerment of individuals seeking greater accountability and positive results in their community. P16 elaborated on this and raised questions about ownership of funds. Does government funding belong to the Band or to the community members they represent?

*When funding involves First Nations organizations like Bands, there is a problem. They behave as if it is their own money and not the peoples’ money. It is like an ownership issue on how it will be spent. Individuals*

*are ignored. It was like an ownership issue that it is our (Band) money (P16).*

Other participants brought up problems stemming from divisions in the community. P13 said, “there is a divide between Hamlet and Band. The relationship is getting better but it has already hurt the community a lot and we do not know if they will move to a positive relationship or go backwards again.”

When asked if there was any discussion at the Band level on culture aspects and how these may be integrated with, or related to, the usage and reporting of funding, P13 said, “not so much. The Hamlet does but the Band does not. Only some organizations do. More can be done.” P13 also mentioned that the rift between the Hamlet of Fort Liard and the local Band has led to duplication of services and apathy among community members, explaining that “people do not go to Council meetings; so the information does not get shared.” P13 added that “there is work in progress but it is important that they work together.”

P15 argued that the Band’s current approach was also limiting the potential of local enterprises:

*The attitude of the Bands, the concept of priority to northern businesses cannot be carried too far when competing with businesses in southern markets. It has a crippling effect when there is a bidding war because you are used to free assistance and so crippled. You cannot compete with businesses down South. How far can you carry it? Not much.*

P15's discussion finds support from Chief Louie, who argues that "the Band does not owe its membership dependency. It owes them opportunity and a chance to become independent" (Chief Louie 2014, p. 2).



Figure 11: Chief Clarence Louie of the Osoyoos Indian Band speaking at Northern Economic Development Practitioners Conference - 2014

P11 mentioned that community role models are not leading by example and identified better communication as a solution. P11 expressed that people should work for the stake they have, and that Band members should follow rules to avoid conflicts of interest. Bands should handle funds carefully and be held accountable when it comes to governance of communities, schools, and the education system. P11 stressed that Bands should focus on tackling social issues, stating "education is very important and equally important is healthy lifestyles."

There is much to suggest that the participants' concerns are part of a broader dysfunctional system of governance. Alfred (1999) argues that the *Indian Act* established an inherently corrupt system wherein Band governments are at times held accountable to Ottawa, but never to their own people.

(Rinehart 1999, p. 1), in an interview with Leona Freed, a Dakota Plains native from Manitoba and founder of the First Nations Accountability Coalition, lends further support to this notion, when she states “there's no financial accountability, no democracy and no equality on First Nations reserves.” She also notes the disparity in pay and benefits for Band chiefs and administrators versus the average person living on reserve. McBride (2001, p. 6) expressed a similar view when he stated that:

*The politics must be separated from business wherever possible, and offices must run smoothly so they can serve all members or clients. Aboriginal peoples must cultivate leadership and efficient administrative systems so they can do business effectively for the preservation of the culture and the community. Through economic development communities should provide for the health, social services and education of their people.*

Band mismanagements of even small amounts of funds have been held under close scrutiny and media attention, and one-quarter of Canada's First Nations Bands were under subject to financial supervision under orders from the federal government in 2013. Out of 615 Bands across Canada, 157 were assessed to have defaulted on their financial obligations according to reports by Aboriginal Affairs and Northern

Development Canada (Levitz 2013). In this context, on March 27, 2013, Canada's parliament enacted Bill C-27, the *First Nations Financial Transparency Act (FNFTA)*. The legislation brings into force increased financial reporting requirements for Bands and gives them 120 days after the end of the fiscal year to publish the information online. Bill C-27 has changed who gets to see these financial reports, and while for many communities, the public disclosure required by Bill C-27 came as welcome news; for others, it was viewed as further unnecessary intrusion by the government. In the NWT, Dene National Chief Bill Erasmus has criticised the legality of Bill C-27, and is supporting another Band's appeal of the legislation to the United Nations:

*The money we're talking about are not public funds, they're called Indian moneys and they're appropriated by the Treasury Board and earmarked for First Nations communities ... They have no jurisdiction to develop legislation in regard to Indian moneys. If they did, they have to do it in conjunction with First Nations (and they didn't). That's why people are saying this legislation, really, is illegal (Gilbert 2015, para 8).*

Copley (2014, p. 1) reporting on the *FNFTA*, wrote that The Assembly of First Nations (AFN) pointed out:

*This bill in no way addresses calls by First Nations for reciprocal accountability—that the government demonstrate its accountability to First Nations including spending and outcomes related to First Nations, as called for in many reports by Auditors General over the years.*

Further in his article, he mentioned that The AFN Nations said that it “believes in accountability and transparency but the government must be transparent and accountable as well.”

Following a ruling by the Federal Court of Canada that the federal government halt legal action against non-compliant First Nations (Morin 2015), on December 18, 2015, the newly elected federal government announced that it would “cease all discretionary compliance measures related to the *First Nations Financial Transparency Act* and to reinstate funding withheld from First Nations under these measures” (Government of Canada 2015, para 2).

This failed, one-sided approach to transparency and accountability by the government is not a new concept. The discharge of corporate accountability traditionally relied on the preparation and audit of accountability reports (financial statements). However, from the 1990s, responding to the increasing severity of the impact on society from unexpected corporate failures, accountability requirement needed to be extended beyond financial reporting (Porter 2009).

While small amounts of Aboriginal fraud cases are being publicized extensively, corruption has become an increasingly notorious problem in global government, industry and non-governmental organizations. If we take a broader view of corruption, instances of frauds involving billions of dollars are not uncommon in western society. Serious governance issues are not exclusive to the domain of Aboriginal communities. Many Canadian firms have also been caught in scandals of their own, such as: Nortel in 2003; Sino-Forest Corporation in 2011; and SNA Lavalin in 2013. Reports indicate that

a large proportion of the Canadian public see their politicians and their institutions as fundamentally corrupt (McBride 2001).

Helin (2014b, p. 49) compares the compensation of Band executives, which has become a focal point for many, with that of executives in both public and private sectors who often receive extraordinary bonuses even as other workers at their companies are laid off en-mass. As he explains:

*Leo Apotheker received \$25 million in severance and other benefits from Hewlett-Packard following his termination after less than a year on the job as the company's CEO; Samuel Palmisano, former CEO of IBM, received \$170 million in retirement benefits at age 60; and CEO Eugene Isenberg of Nabors Industries received \$100 million in severance after he was pushed out of his position.*

Naidoo (2003, p. 2) argues that due to a wave of financial scandals, “the legitimacy of formal institutions can no longer be taken for granted and must be continuously earned by those institutions themselves.” As a result, both ‘accountability’ and ‘governance’ have risen in prominence as buzzwords in recent years, and not only in the corporate and political spheres. Trosper (2008, p. 3) argues that this has led to increased scrutiny of Aboriginal governance, even though there can be a wide disparity between individual Bands:

*Someone relying on national media in Canada would receive the impression that Band government is universally strife-ridden and ineffective. This focuses attention on only one part of the spectrum of governance among First Nations. Many have sought to reform their*



*Indian Act imposed governmental forms to ones that serve their own purposes much better. Others have learned how to use the Chief and Council system effectively. With good governance sorted out, many First Nations have embarked on successful development of both private and social enterprise. Once a First Nation has developed an independent source of revenue, it can pursue many political strategies with more effectiveness.*

Trosper (2008) goes on to argue that negative perceptions of Aboriginal governance have been amplified in the media, which has caused the public to overlook the significant progress that has been made by many Bands across Canada.

While governments remain powerful and controlling, the involvement of citizens in decision-making, distribution of resources, and in the development and implementation of policies is increasing (Fram 2004, p. 10). Painting governance in broad strokes also oversimplifies the unique challenges faced by Bands across Canada; as Plumptre and Graham (1999, p. 8) point out, “Aboriginal governance is an area of particular complexity because the challenge is to create ‘space’ for new kind(s) of governments within fields of jurisdiction already occupied by national or provincial government structures.” Many Aboriginal communities are also dealing with the fact that a “huge increase in administrative responsibilities usually has taken place under burdensome external constraints and with limited human and financial resources” (Jorgensen 2007, p. 152). Martin, D. F. (2005, p. 140) also argues that governments fail to account for the unique political dynamics that can exist in small Aboriginal communities:

*There is often a tension between principles drawn from the wider socio-political sphere, such as broadly based equity and access to services and resources, and imperatives typically operating within Aboriginal groups and communities. Aboriginal organizational politics is frequently characterised by a high degree of factionalism or localism, in which the political, social and economic imperatives lie within various forms of local group rather than some broader aggregate or 'community'; by a focus on negotiating internal relationships rather than necessarily on demonstrable outcomes; by particular styles of political process and decision-making which emphasise the autonomy of the participants and their resistance to domination by others; and by notions of 'representativeness' which are not based on equal rights to participate in the political process but on having or asserting particular culturally constructed interests and rights to speak on specific issues.*

Adding to this complexity are the “silos” that limit cooperation between the various departments of federal, provincial, municipal and Aboriginal governments, as well as non-government agencies that act as service providers in Aboriginal communities. Some have argued these silos can be broken down with governance that includes “Aboriginal community involvement in decision-making as well as shared accountability for collaborative initiatives and programs” (Four Winds and Associates 2012, p. 8).

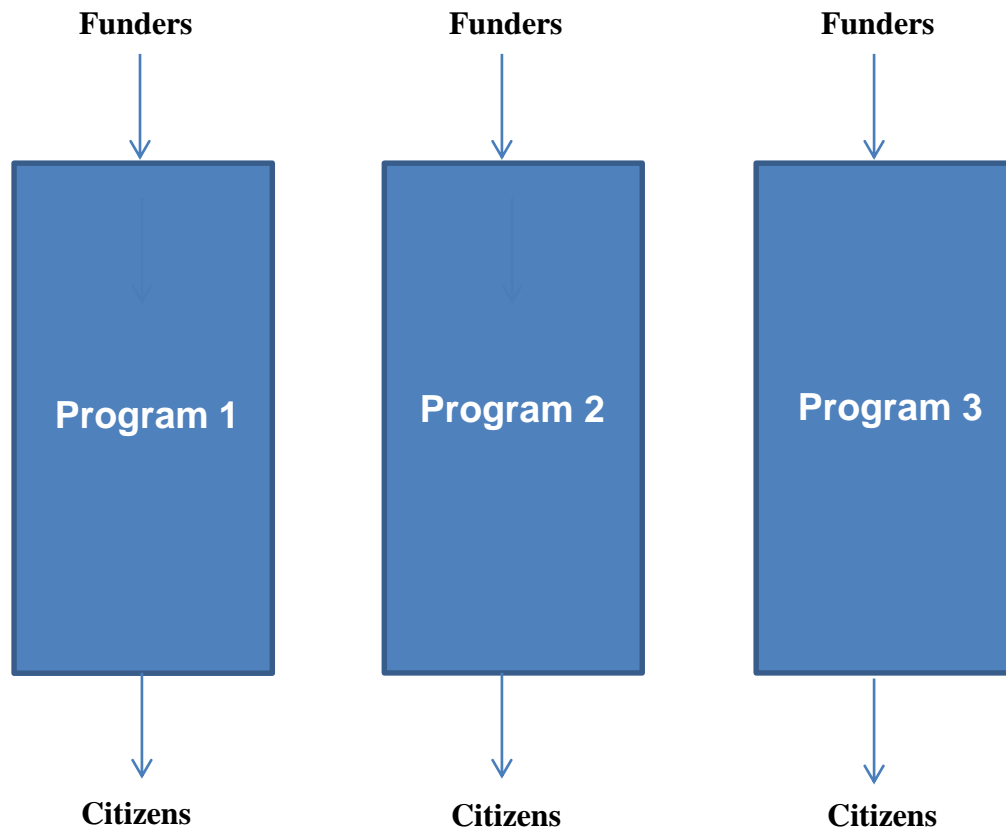


Figure 12: Silos (isolated) (adapted from Jorgensen (2007))

## Spiritual Empowerment

As mentioned by the Indian Chiefs of Alberta (1970, p. 149), spiritual strength can underpin the success of Aboriginal peoples in modern society. Indeed, spirituality has far-reaching impacts in Aboriginal culture:

*Everyone and everything is spiritually connected, and everyone and everything has a function and role to play in ensuring that the universe continues to operate in a state of balance. In Aboriginal thought, all*

*human beings possess the capacity for a consciousness that is able to perceive the spiritual nature of life, and then to understand how all of life is interconnected (Hill 1999, p. 92).*

The modern wage economy has produced gigantic leaps forward in technology and efficiency, but as Helin (2014b, p. 68) argues, while “scientific technology has brought us comfort it has robbed our souls.” This is especially so for Aboriginals living in northern Canada, who have had to adjust to this new reality much more rapidly, through government policies of assimilation, acculturation and displacement.

Participants repeatedly mentioned that “People are shy” (P8) in their community and would prefer a traditional spiritual way of living over participation in the wage economy. “Local people do not want to travel outside. People lack self-confidence to go outside of the community to talk. In order to get funding they need to get out and show their crafts and they are too shy to do that” (P1). P21 also noted that there is resistance among some Aboriginal peoples to embrace new technology: “Lots of Aboriginal peoples do not use technology and cherish traditional ways of doing things.” P21 argued that Aboriginal peoples must adapt, and “will have to deal with challenges like using computers.”

A desire to back away from mainstream western society can certainly be understood from a spiritual perspective. As Helin (2014b, p. 68) states, “Western civilization is one-sided, not taking mystical experiences seriously as essential aspects of human growth.” This fixation on a “physical, explicit, scientific and objective journey for knowledge” (Poonwassie & Charter 2001, p. 64) is in stark contrast to Aboriginal

worldviews rooted in a “subjective journey for knowledge based on the premises on skills that promote personal and social transformation ... and the attribution of a spiritual dimension to the environment” (Poonwassie & Charter 2001, p. 64). Chief Fabian (2015, p. 1) elaborates on this spiritual dimension in the context of the Dene in the NWT:

*The Dene Elders saw life as being of mind, heart and soul. There is an abundance of mental information that Dene develops. This information does not stay in the mental process. When it enters in to realm of the heart it becomes a value, something you care about and love. The goal of the Dene is to love everything they know which makes the spirit strong. This balancing of Dene mental, emotional and spiritual self-enabled the Dene to maintain strong and healthy physical well-being.*

Following first contact with Aboriginal peoples, the government of Canada went to work disbanding existing forms of tribal government and setting up a new system of dependence on the state under the *Indian Act*. Beginning in the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the government shifted to a strategy of assimilation, bolstered by policies of “aggressive civilization” and residential schooling introduced by the 1879 *Davin Report* (Kirmayer, Simpson & Cargo 2003, p. 16).

This remained the government’s dominant approach until the 1969 *White Paper* that sought to integrate Aboriginal communities into the rest of Canada by ending the concept of “Indian” status altogether. After the government eventually abandoned the *White Paper*, devolution came to define Canada’s approach to Aboriginal governance.

Through devolution, Aboriginal peoples gained greater input in, and control over, local affairs, service delivery, administration of departmental programs, and decision-making than the government had allowed in the past.

Devolution has signalled a more inclusive approach to Aboriginal peoples by the Canadian government, but it has also been labelled as merely neo-colonialism under “the guise of self-government” (Adu-Febiri 2012, slide 13). Despite steps forward by the government, (Helin 2014b, p. xiii) argues that “spiritual and social fulfillment, the wellspring that nourishes our emotional well-being, are being woefully neglected.” This has also been characterized as “spiritual trauma [stemming from] the intergenerational impact of residential schools and other assimilation policies and practices. It skews and distorts people’s spiritual connections and beliefs about their cultural beliefs and practices” (Crooks et al. 2010, p. 21).

For those who fail to cope with these impacts, “comfort is frequently sought in a bottle of booze, in prescription and illegal drugs, or in a host of vacuous, time wasting entertainment distractions, diversions that fail to fill the social and spiritual void” (Helin 2014b, p. XIX). Wilson (2015, p. 10) states that “we cannot today “un-know” what we now know. The legacy of residential schools must never be forgotten, but its effects must be reversed.” Helin (2012, p. 19) states that the key to overcoming this trauma is spiritual empowerment, which he defines as:

*A state of mind in which individuals recognize the potential power they have over their lives; confront their fears; take ownership of their problems; accept responsibility for their actions; adopt positive thinking,*

*attitudes, visualization, values, and actions; and implement a strategic plan to improve their lives.*

Crooks et al. (2010) show support for applying this concept to holistic government programs to make them more culturally relevant and empowering. These programs aim to simultaneously serve Aboriginal peoples' "intellectual, emotional, spiritual and physical needs" (Crooks et al. 2010, p. 17). As the researchers go on to point out, "Spirituality in particular (often misunderstood as religion) is frequently absent from programs" (Crooks et al. 2010, p. 17).

Similarly, Newhouse (2000) argues for a holistic view of development that encompasses the physical, mental, emotional and spiritual dimensions. Others have expounded on the relational importance of culture and spirituality in Aboriginal life, noting that "worldviews emerge from the totality of peoples' social, political, economic, cultural and spiritual perceptions and beliefs" (Poonwassie & Charter 2001, p. 64). When accountability systems fail to acknowledge this, the end result is that they become "disempowering and alienating" (Chew & Greer 1997, p. 1).

In chapter 5, I have already addressed participants' thoughts on increasing the influence of culture on economic development in the NWT, but participants also described a number of paths to empowerment. P7 suggested that locals' aversion to engaging with the world outside their community is compounded by a lack of communication infrastructure in remote communities, arguing that Aboriginal peoples "need the right tools to do that—iPhones, smartphones, blackberries do not even work in some communities. We are quite behind in the implementation of new technology. It is very

important to keep pace.” P21 also suggested that self-confidence could be built through entrepreneurship: “A simple thing like buying a lawn mower to mow peoples’ lawns at a price made me a good business person. The mower paid for itself with a little bit of entrepreneurship.”

No matter what path Aboriginal peoples take to empowerment, it is important that they are free to ground themselves in their own spirituality. In the words of Elder Walter Linklater, “It’s always good to include spirituality and prayer in everything that you do. That’s the teaching of our people” (Council of Ministers of Education 2010, p. 2).

## Resources Empowerment

Southcott (2015) posits that northern Aboriginal communities are largely perceived by governments as a means of facilitating the extraction of natural resources by outside forces. However, these natural resource developments have produced mixed results for communities:

*The modern resource extraction industry tends to bring a boom-and-bust cycle to northern Aboriginal communities. These projects can have both positive and negative social repercussions. The general perspective from industries is that these projects do not create new social problems but add to existing problems, and only for the duration of the project. The challenge is to plan for the social impact of these large-scale industrial projects, and to reduce any negative consequences that may come with them. The effects of mining and pipeline development on northern*



*communities are complex. Population increases, strains on existing social, health and recreational services, strains on a community's infrastructure and the strain on traditional values and culture are common. These must be weighed against the prospects of an improved standard of living, new training, and the opportunities for new businesses and valuable work experience (National Aboriginal Health Organization 2008, p. 3).*

Participants flagged issues surrounding the management of natural resource extraction at different levels of governments, including Bands in Aboriginal communities.

“Funding for Aboriginal culture stopped,” said P10, “All talk is on Oil and Gas.”

However, P32 stated that “unless industries like the fisheries are strong economically and big, the mines, oil and gas need to be developed to grow industry.” P12 also argued that:

*Aboriginals can achieve economic development without losing traditional culture. Oil and Gas can still be successful while retaining the Aboriginal culture. The Oil and Gas companies share projects and show respect and accommodate Aboriginal peoples and their culture.*

Several participants also mentioned the need for sustainable development. “People do not understand the importance of sustainable development,” said P7. In addition, P7 further emphasized that “accountability should be based on sustainable development. Community development should be the goal but it should be sustainable and not short-term.” Sustainable development has been defined as:

*Development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. It contains within it two key concepts:*

- *the concept of needs, in particular the essential needs of the world's poor, to which overriding priority should be given; and*
- *the idea of limitations imposed by the state of technology and social organization on the environment's ability to meet present and future needs (World Commission on Environment and Development 1987, p. 43).*

Sustainable economic development, control over resources (fishing, oil and gas mining, and forestry) and the integration of culture and spirituality for Aboriginal communities in Canada, is very closely tied to land ownership. In this context, it has been argued that “it may be that the origin and continuance of Aboriginal dis-empowerment is largely economic, having less to do with the race or culture of the occupiers of the land, but more to do with the land and resources themselves” (Mann 2000, p. 53). Furthermore, “one of the most important findings of the Aboriginal Economic Benchmarking Report is that there is a positive correlation between greater control over lands and resources and higher socio-economic outcomes” (The National Aboriginal Economic Development Board 2012, p. 26).

First Nations in Canada cover a total land area of 3.2 million hectares. This figure represents a 25% increase from 1990, and will continue to grow as more land claims are settled (The National Aboriginal Economic Development Board 2012). P32 noted that

“things are gradually changing through land claims” but many Aboriginal peoples remain “cautious and suspicious ... land claims groups are too political—they need to unite.”

Regardless, in the context of resource development decision-making, Aboriginal communities must often assert their rights in the face of much larger societal powers.

As Lutz (2007, p. 1) states:

*Indigenous peoples want to enjoy their rights to the lands, territories, and resources that they have traditionally owned, occupied, or otherwise used. Where such rights conflict with the needs of the state or other peoples, they want to participate as equals in an impartial and transparent process for resolving the conflict in a fair and respectful way. If the resolution is that indigenous peoples must move, they want equitable reparation, preferably in the form of lands of equal quality and value.*

In practice, establishing a fair process for dealing with these conflicts has eluded governments, and disputes have dragged on while Aboriginal rights hang in limbo. Failure to resolve outstanding land disputes in a timely manner has disempowered Aboriginal peoples and undermined a life on the land vital to Aboriginal cultures, health and well-being. The needs and aspirations of Aboriginal communities are left unfulfilled while decisions about resource and economic development are made by outside forces or deferred indefinitely (Amensty International 2012). MacDonald (2014, para 12) states that Chief Louie expresses his frustration on the “same story all over

Canada” and provides a blunt criticism of the colonial missteps that have led to the current situation:

*They gave the best land to the European newcomers and stuck the  
Indians back in the bush and gave them bread and water and a Bible.*

As a result of this unbalanced process, the destruction of the natural subsistence base in the far North in the twentieth century proceeded faster than replacement, although there were successes, such as programs to rehabilitate beaver and muskrat in trapped out areas. Difficulties in the trapping industry worsened with campaigns by the anti-fur lobby that escalated at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century (Dickason 2006, p. 250). In more recent years, exploitation of mining and oil and gas resources have grown in prominence, as Canada holds the second largest reserves in the world of both crude oil and natural gas (Davis 2005). This is especially so in the Northwest Territories, where mining and oil and gas sectors grew by 207% between 1999 and 2005, compared to a rate of 15% in the rest of Canada (Angell & Parkins 2010).

These developments have spurred opposition from Aboriginal communities, who, as Droitsch and Simieritsch (2010, p. 1) point out, “rely on the land, water and wildlife for hunting, fishing, trapping, gathering, harvesting, navigation and ceremonial, recreational and domestic uses such as bathing, cooking and drinking.” Oil sands development in northern Alberta has been the target of much of the criticism, and these concerns were voiced at the national level by former Assembly of First Nations (AFN) Chief Atleo (2010, p. 1):

*First Nations across the country are concerned about the impacts of oil sands development on First Nations peoples, the environment, our traditional foods, our cultural and spiritual practices and our rights in our traditional territories. It is crucial that First Nations voices are heard as these meetings may influence U.S. energy policies and purchases of Canadian energy.*

Increasingly, Aboriginal communities have actively participated in negotiating agreements with governments and resource developers in mining, power generation and other industries. Executing these agreements, which are aimed in particular at reserving jobs for local people and sharing revenue with Aboriginal peoples, is part of obtaining the “social licence to operate” that has become a de facto requirement for mining operations in Canada (Prno & Slocombe 2012). The National Aboriginal Health Organization (2008, p. 3) adds that:

*Impact Benefit Agreements (IBAs) generally guarantee employment opportunities for Aboriginal workers. Usually a set number or a percentage of all work positions are reserved for local Aboriginal community members. The IBAs may also include training opportunities. The promise of jobs, however, does not always translate into long-term employment. For example, it is possible that more Aboriginal workers will be trained than there are jobs to fill. The training opportunities may be offered in more than one community, creating more trained workers than the project actually requires.*

While not long ago, the concept of a “duty to consult” Aboriginal peoples regarding activities on their territory was non-existent, it is now a legal obligation (Fay 2014).

While the intended result of this process is Aboriginal economic prosperity, the general expression among participants was that little progress has been achieved on sustainable development or long-term goals. To P12, the notion of a duty to consult, though implemented, failed to reach the grassroots of the community and thus attempts at sustainable development broke down at various levels of governance, including at the Band level.

Trosper (2008, p. 1) argues that grassroots acceptance of developments is dependent on how those developments affect Aboriginal peoples’ connection to the land, as “Aboriginal peoples see themselves responsible for caring for the land of their ancestors, whether or not they have control of that land now.” He goes on to list the variety of strategies that have been employed by Aboriginal communities in varying combinations to further this goal:

*demonstrations, blockades, litigation, engagement with neighbours, entrance into co-management agreements, participation in land use planning, participation in environmental assessment, participation in private and social enterprises, reorganization of their own governments, and signing modern treaties or agreements (Trosper 2008, p. 1).*

The importance of engaging the grassroots in decision-making has also been emphasized by the *The Council of Canadian Academies (2014, p. xvi)* who found that:

*The manner in which residents are engaged in decisions concerning oil and gas development is an important determinant of their acceptance or rejection of this development. To earn public trust, credible multidisciplinary research needs to be conducted to understand existing impacts and predict future impacts. Public acceptance of large-scale developments in this sector will not be gained through industry claims of technological prowess or through government assurances that environmental effects are acceptable. It will be gained by transparent and credible monitoring of the environmental impacts.*

This literature suggests that economic development initiatives, and more specifically those relating to resource development, will have a hard time moving forward without first securing the grassroots support of impacted Aboriginal communities. As these developments increase in frequency, communities are finding new strategies and forming partnerships that allow them to take advantage of the associated benefits. Government programs can empower Aboriginal peoples by following the suggestion of P20 that “If there is a stake, then people work for it” and working to create among them a sense of stake in these resource developments and the overall economic development of their communities.

## Summary

Aboriginal communities are better placed than ever before to advance their services, amenities and organization (Fay 2014). But to do this, they need control of their development; they cannot leave the control of their prosperity in the hands of others:

*There are Aboriginal peoples who have broken the bonds of dependency and created stability and self-sufficiency in many different ways, using all kinds of economic strategies and forms of political and social organization, but they have all accomplished their re-empowerment in political and economic ways after they have been successful in recovering a strong connection to their traditional culture and restored their spiritual strength on personal and collective levels (Alfred 2009a, p. 45).*

In their report on economic impact of Aboriginal tourism in Canada, O'Neil et al. (2015) have recounted case experiences from each region in Canada featuring several cases supporting Aboriginal tourism including Aboriginal owned set-ups involving community growth and employment of local youth and preservation of Aboriginal culture and heritage. In Canada's North, The Carcross/Tagish First Nation of Yukon is a First Nation whose community economic development activities connects the local youths to their culture through tourism. This north-western community used a strategy that focused on creating destination tourism by hosting community sessions to ensure that local citizens would benefit from any development and that Tagish-Tinglit culture, values, beliefs and lifestyle would be protected. Following the sessions, the First Nation engaged local youth to help develop mountain bike trails, while also establishing a carving center that now employs a master carver of totem poles and acts as a youth centre during the winter months (O'Neil et al. 2015).

In the Northwest Territories, Dene Adventures operates a fishing camp teaching traditional Dene ways by offering visitors to acquire aptitudes for setting up camps and



learning how to prepare fish. The business highlights the involvement of youth in the cultural adventure tourism connecting activities on land (O'Neil et al. 2015). Another success story has been narrated by Wuttunee (1992) when she talks about employment created by Western Arctic Air in NWT with twenty two employees including ten pilots in the summer and about ten employees in the winter.

Aboriginal peoples must be empowered in order for the economy to make positive gains in the long term, and there is a growing but cautious optimism that this can be achieved (Vandervelde 2011). Participants in the present study confirmed that empowerment can be approached from a number of different angles, but invariably it will involve communities gaining a greater role in bringing about their own success.

## Chapter 7—Financial Accountability

### Introduction

Governments have grappled with the concept of accountability since 2000 B.C., when King Hammurabi first disseminated his legal code outlining the responsibilities of those entrusted with property belonging to others (Gray & Jenkins 1993). Accountability is traditionally defined as “a relationship involving the giving and demanding of reasons for conduct” (Goddard 2004), and plays a central role in Western capitalist societies. Through increased accountability, the expectation is that “governments can achieve congruence between public policy, its implementation and the efficient allocation of resources” (Parigi, Geeta & Kailasam 2004).

Accountability is a mainstay of good governance that requires the government and citizens to together pursue clear goals, cultivate effective policies, emphasize outcomes, and observe and report on results. Failing to be accountable could lead to disorganization and ineffectiveness, and even inhibit development (Parigi, Geeta & Kailasam 2004).

In addition, a lack of financial accountability often results in a gap between the intended government objectives and the outcomes achieved (Saulis 2008). While the government may have every intention of demonstrating accountability and transparency when spending public funds, there is no reliable, consistent system in place for doing so. In fact, (Sinclair 1995) penned the term “the chameleon of accountability” to describe the myriad of changing and complex approaches to financial accountability and good

financial governance at the levels of individual organizations, communities and all levels of government.

Participants of this study were not opposed to financial accountability measures attached to economic development funding, and in fact many expressed the necessity of financial reporting as a means of tracking where funds were spent and building trust between those on both ends of funding agreements. What they did reject was the notion that accountability is a purely financial issue.

Several mentioned the importance of taking a deeper look at programs to see if the community's desired results were actually being achieved. To this end, results-based management and quantifiable benchmarks emerged as tools that could provide communities with greater insight into economic development programs in the NWT.

### **Financial Accountability in Aboriginal Community Projects**

Participants in this study noted that Aboriginal peoples generally are not reluctant to comply with reporting requirements. The consensus was that “with any government funds there should be accountability” (P32). As P4 affirmed, “We want to be accountable as it shows honesty.” Participants appreciated the opportunity to demonstrate their truthfulness when spending funds — “people want honesty upfront” (P33). Participants 12, 18 and 20 echoed openness in providing reports on funds obtained: P12 said, “receipts and reports are all important as they prove that you are buying with what you get.” P18 added “receipts and paperwork are important to back up accountability,” and P20 said, “they should have a paper trail. They will know if they

underspent or overspent.” P23 put forward education as a solution to improving accountability: “Prepare the youth how to manage funds. People do not know what to do when it comes to funding.”

Almost all participants showed willingness to account for funding received. Some even went so far as to claim reporting on how the numbers and dollars worked as the best part of government-funded projects “Reporting is the best part of the project. It fulfils the need to see how the numbers and dollars worked” (P3). Their responses echo the words of Chief Louie, who states that “profit and loss statements are your scorecard” (Chief Louie 2014, p. 1).

Government funding processes for Aboriginal community projects generally involve measures of accountability to provide evidence that funds allocated to projects are used as initially intended. Notwithstanding these measures, there remains “very little hard analysis about Aboriginal business performance and the performance of financial institutions set up to support Aboriginal business” (Loxley 2010, p. 255). This has developed into a source of friction between Aboriginal peoples and Canada, fuelled by a widely held perception that Aboriginal peoples are opposed to accountability measures, a view that is in direct contradiction to what was expressed by the participants in this study.

Saulis (2008) confirms that the issue of accountability is usually at the forefront of the relationship between Aboriginal peoples and Canadian governments. It has been a common perception that Aboriginal peoples do not like it and therefore shun it. “This perception has spread into many streams of Canadian society, including Aboriginal

populations themselves” (Saulis 2008, p. 2) and has led to concerns that require consideration and a pursuit for a common appreciation about accountability.

Findlay and Russell (2005, p. 89) refute the perception that Aboriginal peoples are hesitant of accountability as a construct of traditional accountability mechanisms and strongly criticize this perception as a double standard in stating:

*In the context of mainstream accounting, Aboriginal organizations and communities are subjected to a double standard of unusual scrutiny and inappropriate economic indicators at the expense of all other considerations and at great cost to those organizations and communities. The effect is redoubled for those organizations whose mission is not only economic but also social, cultural, and ecological.*

Saulis (2008, p. 2) also challenges the prevailing views of accountability, and points out that “Deeply embedded in the traditional views of Aboriginal peoples, is the issue of accountability: to your people, to your nation, to Creation, etc. It is the fundamental expression of responsibility.” Aboriginal communities have a vested interest in increased accountability, as “accountability frameworks address the systemic power imbalances that exist between the federal government and Aboriginal peoples, between Aboriginal governments and their citizenry” (Native Women’s Association of Canada 2005).

Chew and Greer (1997) looked at accountability systems in Australian Aboriginal communities and argued that these systems rely on trust that comes built-in to notions of collectivism, kinship relationships, and respect for Elders. Fundamentally, such

cultural positions are incompatible with western financial accountability, which is premised on imposing legal responsibilities on those in authority to report on the use of resources. These cultural factors should be recognized in discussions of accountability that attempt to reconcile these distinct approaches (Chew & Greer 1997). Culture of engagement is to be built on reciprocal trust and shared decision-making in a community-based environment (Peredo 2004, p. 4). These views are consistent with those expressed by participants in this study, who placed a high value on reciprocal trust and honesty.

Graham (1999) agrees that accountability has a cultural aspect and that accountability should be viewed in the light of agreed-upon expectations. Since the trust in the public sector institutions is declining, accountability is also to be measured in terms of fostering Aboriginal peoples' confidence in the government. Accountability is ultimately about achieving the appropriate balance among potential conflicting objectives between political leaders and citizens. The end result at stake is the quality of public programs that can be achieved with the notion of continuous improvement.

### **A Broader Concept of Accountability**

Participants emphasized the importance of presenting information on the uses of funding received. While participants were not averse to reporting, many indicated that receipts often got lost or misplaced. In such cases, they feel they should not be held hostage to return the funds, as there are other ways to verify that the funds were spent on the purpose for which they were given. As P34 stated, there was “no high school

until 1960 ... so no maths, no language development, no bookkeeping and no accounting, but there are Aboriginal ways of being accountable without having book knowledge.” For example, if they were given funds to produce arts and crafts, they should be able to show their work as an accountability measure if the receipts are lost. (P6) stated:

*Accountability should be outcome based. If receipts are misplaced, then funds are to be returned even if the outcome was achieved.*

While submitting financial numbers is an important method of reporting, participants believed it is not the only way. There was almost equal support for reporting based on financial numbers versus reporting based on outcomes: “On accountability, half and half will be okay. There should always be some reporting as both the giver and receiver need to know where the money went” (P19). Both P3 and P4 made strong comments on exhibiting accountability. P3 added, “I would like to show the outcome and financial numbers to be accountable.” Participants seemed comfortable with both methods, but articulated the point that financial numbers are not the only viable method. P11 offered this example:

*If because of misplaced receipts, the total does not add up, one has to return the difference. So the funder should not be stuck to one process of reporting. Either a combination of both financial reporting and outcome reporting should be adopted. The accountability should be less financial reporting based. Pictures can say a lot. Pictures can be sent on work done or completed.*

As P6 argued, “The government should not be stuck to one process of reporting.” One must consider that accountability “takes on different interpretations from different perspectives, but all are valid components of a complex overall picture” (Goddard 2004, p. 569).

For accountability models to effectively address Aboriginal views of accountability, they must extend beyond a purely financial perspective and take a holistic view of the economic, cultural and social outcomes of government funding (Native Women’s Association of Canada 2005). One issue that arose in discussions with participants is that Elders often find it hard to keep their receipts. P22 mentioned that financial reporting should not be “a burden”, as it is hard for older people to remember. Findlay and Weir (2011) agree and argue that this can be accomplished in part by shifting resources away from stringent reporting burdens and into the development of outcome-based performance measures. Such a shift could also lead to increased cooperation between government and Aboriginal communities, as projects that “are sensitive, in their design and operations to the interrelationship of social, economic and cultural views have a greater chance of achieving community support” (Loxley 2010, p. 242). Poor living conditions of Aboriginal peoples should be addressed by self-reliance and not government handouts. Democratic accountability tools should be ensured for Aboriginals to identify and resist excess use of power by the government. Accountability has to be at the system’s root and should address education and experience limitations of Aboriginal leaders (Helin 2006).

Traditionally, corporate accountability remained limited to the realm of financial statements. However, beginning in the 1990s in response to unexpected failures in the



corporate world, accountability requirements have been extended to include reporting on value-added, employment and social responsibility (Porter 2009). Emerging results and community-based approaches to accountability have effectively shifted the attention from traditional accountability practices of documenting compliance with processes to reporting client and program results. Intended outcomes for clients of government-funded projects are central to this results-based accountability at every stage of the process. These results are used “to inform initial selection of goals, to guide decisions to alter existing structures, and to help create new structures capable of better achieving desired results” (Aronson, Mutchler & Pan 1998).

## **Results Based Management**

Participants highlighted the importance of making decisions at the community level. As P15 stated, “Where funding is applied and whether it was applied right or wrong (i.e. for the purpose it was given) should be for the community to decide.” P14 added that “the whole community needs to be on board to make a program successful” and that “one of the challenges is communicating to the community the objectives of the program. Trying to help them understand is a challenge.” P33 stressed the need to generate meaningful results while criticizing the status-quo in the NWT: “we are way behind the rest of the world in Aboriginal development.”

Results-based approaches to accountability aim to enhance the design and evaluation of government-funded projects while supporting complex community initiatives (Aronson, Mutchler & Pan 1998). These approaches are based on the notion that communities

have greater control over projects when they are able to make informed decisions about any associated impacts these may have. As outcomes are measured, “information about results enhances community capacity to judge the effectiveness of their efforts, and to modify activities in response to impact information” (Schorr et al. 1994).

Incorporating results-based feedback into decision-making is known as results-based management, a process that is “used to assess the need for, to design in detail, and to monitor progress of development programmes” (Ubels, Acquaye-Baddoo & Fowler 2010, p. 241). First conceived in the early 1990s, results-based management has quickly become a central decision-making tool in the public and non-profit sectors, and is also “used to increase the transparency and accountability of public and non-profit organizations and even governments, principally through periodic public performance reporting” (McDavid, Huse & Hawthorn 2012, p. 6).

Results-based management begins with a strategic planning phase, where desired program results are identified and indicators with target values are set. This is followed by a performance measurement phase, where indicator data are collected and compared against the target values. Finally, an evaluation phase takes a more detailed look at whether the desired results were achieved (Japan International Cooperation Agency Evaluation Department 2010). This cycle has been described as “an iterative planning–implementation–evaluation–program adjustments sequence” (McDavid, Huse & Hawthorn 2012, p. 7).

A report assessing the use of results-based management at Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada (AANDC) found that AANDC had advanced towards a

results-based culture by aligning corporate performance with program performance and by simplifying their reporting processes for funding recipients. But while AANDC's approach to accountability was shifting to a results-based model, this was still not the focus:

*In large part, the Department's culture remains focused on transactions, funding and outputs ... some progress has been made towards advancing a results-based management culture at AANDC, although it is clear that a cultural shift remains in its infancy (Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada 2013, p. 22).*

However, the report predicted that over time, results-based management would become more important within the department than reporting on expenditures alone. The report also discussed factors influencing the success of results-based management at AANDC. The greatest hurdle faced by the department was gathering credible information on program performance and implementing it effectively. The report also found that "performance outcomes are not consistently part of discussions among senior management, and that discussions tend to be more process oriented" (Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada 2013, p. 7). This lack of traction within senior management also had wider implications for embedding a results-based management culture in the department as a whole. As the report concluded, "accountability for results-based management typically lags when management and staff fail to see the usefulness of performance measurement tools as well as the opportunity to relate day-to-day operations with the larger strategic vision" (Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada 2013).

The Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency (CanNor), formed in 2009, has gone through similar performance measurement issues. A 2014 report by the Office of the Auditor General of Canada (2014, p. 11) found that CanNor “has not measured or reported on the achievement of program objectives” and “did not implement performance measurement strategies” for several of its programs.

The Assembly of First Nations (2011) has been critical of the administrative burden placed on Aboriginal communities by AANDC, arguing in a 2011 Fact Sheet that:

*the federal focus remains on compliance reporting rather than performance reporting—which leaves First Nations citizens and Canadians in general no better informed regarding effectiveness of programming. There is also the question of accountability of the federal government for its management of First Nations’ funding. With federal Government control over decision-making and funding levels, First Nations communities have been relegated to the poorest in Canada (Assembly of First Nations 2011, p. 1).*

The Auditor General of Canada stated in her December 2002 report that “We are concerned about the burden associated with the federal reporting requirements. Resources used to meet these reporting requirements could be better used to provide direct support to the community” (Auditor General of Canada 2002, p. 1). At that time, First Nations communities, many with fewer than 500 residents, were required to submit at least 168 reports annually to four federal agencies (Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, Health Canada, Human Resources and Skills Development Canada, and

the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation) to receive contribution funding. The report also found that “many of the reports were never reviewed and served no purpose” (Office of the Auditor General of Canada 2011, p. 11).

The Auditor General’s follow-up Status Report on Management of Programs for First Nations (2006) subsequently found that “reporting requirements still need to be overhauled” (Office of the Auditor General of Canada 2006, p. 163). In all, 34 federal organizations were involved in delivering 360 programs targeted at Aboriginal peoples, and Indian Affairs and Northern Development Canada alone received more than 60,000 reports each year from 600 First Nations. A further follow-up status report Office of the Auditor General of Canada (2011, p. 34) found that:

*despite many initiatives, we have not seen a significant reduction in the reporting burden ... First Nations officials with whom we spoke also told us that they had not seen a reduction in reporting requirements since our last audit, and many indicated that the reporting burden has increased in recent years.*

Although a 2004 Data Collection Policy called for the department to assess reporting requirements when renewing or setting up new programs, the audit found that in most cases this policy was not applied.

Results-based management “has a critical role to play, conceptually and practically, in breaking through some of the problems and challenges facing the Aboriginal economic development community in building a more meaningful results based indicator framework” (Lewis & Lockhart 2002, p. 16). Inherent in this approach, however, is the

challenge of continually refining programs to keep them relevant in both their design and implementation, while also gathering the steady stream of feedback required to do so (Aronson, Mutchler & Pan 1998). Difficulties with results-based management can also arise from the need to interpret partial information and results while accounting for the influence of uncontrollable external factors (Japan International Cooperation Agency Evaluation Department 2010).

Despite these challenges, results-based management is an alternative to traditional financial reporting that appears well-suited for application to a diversity of locally designed programs. It enables program planners to “set predetermined goals for programs that reflect the unique needs of their communities and allow them to measure and respond to successes and problems based on outcomes” (Schorr et al. 1994, p. 1).

By focusing on defining and measuring intended outcomes of funding, results-based accountability helps governments justify their investments to the public (Schorr et al. 1994), and avoid spending that does not produce results (Young et al. 1994). Moving from traditional financial reporting to a system of results-based accountability not only provides documentation of program results, but also enables stakeholders including funding agencies, planners, and implementers involved in initiating the program, to create and use a coherent plan to guide program decisions over time.

If large discrepancies prevent programs from achieving their goals, stakeholders can decide whether to increase resources, alter the programs, or alter their goals (Schorr et al. 1994). Thus, results-based management offers a substitute to top-down, centralized

micro-management, which can bring about rules so convoluted that they hinder with a program's ability to actually deliver results (Young et al. 1994).

## Quantifiable Benchmarks

*People receiving funds need to be accountable whereas people giving funds need to have benchmarks. If the goal is not being achieved, the benchmarks for the funding should be adjusted. For example, look at the adequacy of funding (P34).*

P16 put forward a similar proposal, arguing that “benchmarks are key and the way to go,” and elaborated to say that these benchmarks should be quantifiable:

*Quantifiable benchmarks. The benchmarks should be achievable. Benchmarks help to move forward in a planned manner. This is what strong forward thinking organization should be doing and this is what the funding and accountability should be tested upon. Strategic plans and business plans matter but unplanned things crop up. Benchmarks are the way to go as they can be adjusted for unplanned things.*

While benchmarking works well when making industry specific comparisons of best practices, one of the main limitations of global performance benchmarking seems to be its focus on financial results and the lack of useful comparisons in other contexts (Bititci 2010). The measurement systems in government organizations often focus on inputs such as funding and contributions and the associated costs and expenses rather than outputs such as educated populations and safer communities. Schacter (1999) gives an

example of focusing on ineffective outputs in a vaccination program where the quantity of vaccines given to children was measured, but the effectiveness of the vaccines was not.

Establishing benchmarks from which to track indicators over time is essential to results-based management. These benchmarks act as reference points for assessing program results relative to their stated targets, and play an important role in program development and accountability (University of Missouri System and Lincoln University 2000). Without benchmarks, projects can lose direction while managers struggle to interpret complex problems and spending patterns (Lewis & Lockhart 2002). Benchmarks can be tied to both qualitative and quantitative data. McDavid, Huse and Hawthorn (2012, p. 36) explain the difference between the two:

*Quantitative data facilitate numerical comparisons, and are important for estimates of technical efficiency, cost-effectiveness, and the costs and benefits of a program ... Qualitative data are valuable as a way of describing policy or program processes and impacts, using cases or narratives to offer in-depth understanding of how the program operates and how it affects stakeholders and clients.*

As McDavid, Huse and Hawthorn (2012) note, researchers are often tasked with tracking performance in situations where quantitative data collection methods are either not feasible or not affordable due to resource constraints. This difficulty is also highlighted by the ongoing struggle at AANDC to retrieve reliable program performance data (Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada 2013). The



ability to incorporate qualitative benchmarks in these situations allows researchers to work within constraints while still retrieving feedback from program participants and generating recommendations for adjustments.

Early approaches to program evaluation relied heavily on statistical analysis of quantitative benchmarks. This satisfied academic criteria, but made communicating results more difficult, as reports were not always easily understood or trusted by the public (McDavid, Huse & Hawthorn 2012, p. 36). Frustration with these inaccessible reports gradually led to greater acceptance of qualitative benchmarks. As McDavid, Huse and Hawthorn (2012, p. 12) explain:

*Evaluation methods that rely on the collection and analysis of spoken and written words were born out of a strong reaction to the insular and sometimes remote evaluations produced by social experimenters.*

The dominant approach in the field has now shifted to a pragmatic mix of quantitative and qualitative data, intended to “engage users in the evaluation process in ways that encourage them to take ownership of the conclusions and recommendations” (McDavid, Huse & Hawthorn 2012, p. 12).

Developing benchmarks in collaboration with stakeholders can also encourage ownership of recommendations while creating a shared sense of accountability. This means including Aboriginal communities in the initial phase of results-based management so that program success is closely tied to the results desired and expressed by the community. The outcome must be meaningful to all stakeholders (Aronson, Mutchler & Pan 1998). This echoes the experience of AANDC, where it was found that

“by including stakeholders in all the steps to define expected results and indicators, a sense of ownership is created to support a sustainable performance measurement system” (Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada 2013).

Development must start from within the community, with local people encouraged to invest in themselves. As Walker, Jojola and Natcher (2013, p. 118) mention:

*The process of bringing people and ideas together is at the core of what builds community. Developing and implementing a community-based plan intrinsically builds a greater sense of community. It builds consensus and encourages co-operation and communication, provides a forum to discuss problems, and overcomes differences to develop common goals for the future. It is also an opportunity to share local knowledge, history and culture. Planning allows a community to come together, work collaboratively, and accomplish more as a group than would be possible as individuals.*

There are two paths: the traditional method based on needs alone and a newer method based on relationships. The traditional path addresses deficiency-oriented policies and programs, and directs funding to service-providers and not directly to residents.

Kretzmann and Mcknight (1993) advocate a shift from dependency to investing in the community development by building on communities’ existing assets.

In the private sector, a growing interest in impact investing has led to new benchmarks aimed at measuring non-financial returns on investment. For example, the Royal Bank of Canada (RBC) Generator Fund invests in for-profit businesses that take on social or

environmental challenges. The fund uses several non-financial indicators to measure the impact of these investments:

*The impact of an investee organization should be quantifiable and reportable. RBC will work with successful investees to measure community impact. In addition to regular financial reporting, all investees must report on the impact their business is making, or will make, in one or more of the following areas:*

- *Reduction in energy use;*
- *Reduction in greenhouse gas or other emissions;*
- *Improvement in water quality;*
- *Reduction in water use;*
- *Change in number of people employed;*
- *Change in value of wages and benefits paid.*

*(Royal Bank of Canada 2015, para 5)*

Non-financial rates of return have also been used to measure the success of Alberta's Immigrant Access Fund Micro Loan Program, which claims an annual social rate of return of 33% based on increased earnings gains from obtaining accreditation and training (Herbert Emery & Ferrer 2010).

Similar studies have looked at earnings to measure the social rate of return on investments in primary, secondary, and higher education and have found these returns to exceed the opportunity cost of the capital invested (Psacharopoulos 1994). Others have considered the social rate of return resulting from cutting the avoidable costs of

addiction, and found that “in the order of 40–50 percent of the social costs of alcohol abuse can be reasonably considered to be avoidable, given the adoption of appropriate policies” (Collins, D. & Lapsley 2008, p. 36).

In 2012, the National Aboriginal Economic Development Board (NAEDB) issued an Aboriginal Economic Benchmarking Report that assembled a series of benchmarks and indicators aimed at measuring the social and economic well-being of First Nations, Inuit, and Métis in Canada. The report identified three core indicators that “require particular focus by Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal leaders to close the socio-economic gaps between Aboriginal peoples and non-Aboriginal Canadians” (The National Aboriginal Economic Development Board 2012, p. 10). These core indicators are:

1. Employment (Measured by Aboriginal employment, Aboriginal labour force participation, and Aboriginal unemployment);
2. Income (Measured by Aboriginal Income and Aboriginal Income received through transfers);
3. Wealth and Well-Being (Measured by the Community Well-Being Index).

The report also identified five underlying indicators that “track the ability of Aboriginal Canadians to improve their performance on the Core indicators set out in the Benchmarking Report.” The National Aboriginal Economic Development Board (2012, p. 11) lists these underlying indicators as:

1. Education (Measured by high school and university completion rates);
2. Entrepreneurship and Business Development (Measured by Aboriginal self-employment and the profit and revenue of Aboriginal-owned businesses);

3. Governance (Measured by First Nations Community Intervention Status and First Nations Property Taxation status);
4. Lands and Resources (Measured by the First Nations Land Management Act, Comprehensive Land Claim and Self-Government agreements);
5. Infrastructure (Measured by access to clean drinking water, overcrowding, connectivity, and off-grid communities).

(The National Aboriginal Economic Development Board 2012).

The report makes both a financial and social justification for this holistic approach to benchmarking, noting that “poverty is expensive; expensive for individuals, their communities, and all governments. The most effective way to reduce the amount of money spent on social programs is to foster economic self-sufficiency” (The National Aboriginal Economic Development Board 2012, p. 34). For effectiveness, it is important to remain true to the benchmarking principles of continuous improvement through comparison and sharing (Camp 1989).

## Summary

A purist approach to financial accountability stifles Aboriginal economic development because it can put communities in a subordinate position to outside decision-makers without actually measuring the delivery of benefits a program may have delivered to the public. Intrusive financial regulations should give way to processes of continual reciprocal accountability such as respectful attention and dialogue (Sullivan 2009).

Aboriginals are dealt with as disadvantaged culturally backward and as individual clients. The nature of accountability is changing in the context of management in the public service as the focus shifts from outcomes to process. Program success is being defined in terms of effectiveness not compliance. The traditional accountability does not reveal much useful information on the success or effectiveness of programs (Aronson, Mutchler & Pan 1998). Accountability embodying only the function of financial reporting within a centralized accounting regime is restrictive and outdated. Public service reforms emphasize this shift in accountability from a focus on mere financial numbers to non-financial yardsticks and broader performance criteria (Gray & Jenkins 1993).

As emphasized by participants in this study, a range of approaches could be taken to financial accountability. The focus needs to shift from collating and accounting for individual dollars spent, towards using results based management strategies and benchmarking processes as well as using a variety of both quantitative and qualitative forms of evidence of work and outcomes delivered.

## Chapter 8—Social Outcomes

### Introduction

Many participants in the present study emphasized that improvements of social conditions in Aboriginal communities is a key element of economic development. Several participants identified poverty and health as significant challenges needing attention if economic development was to be realised to any degree. Participants discussed four major influential causes impacting economic development:

- Low levels of education
- Unemployment
- Addiction and substance abuse
- Poor housing

P14 of this research project appealed for social problems to be addressed if there is any economic development to take place in Aboriginal communities, stating, “We need youth programs. Unless the social programs are dealt with, the goals are questionable.”

P15 wanted the government to do more. According to P15:

*Economic development is not possible without change in attitude of both the government and the receiver of funding. In government funding social assistance and economic development are tied and this results in an attitude of ‘I will work when I want to work. I do not need the paycheck because I am getting social assistance.’ Care free, careless*

*attitude. The bidding war between locals is “crippling” the northern competition. Priority to northern businesses does not work for all.*

P16 echoed similar views and the lack of government support by affirming, “Economic development is missing because of social support, and there is no one to turn to for support when having problems.” P22 indicated that the community was losing hope in the face of these problems: “We accept the way we live in here, living in poverty.”

P17 expressed frustration with inconsistent government attempts to address social issues in the community:

*Community Wellness comprehensive plans were done—all ages were consulted including the youth community members. Talked to community members, priorities were listed and all the money was spent on first phase of consultation and planning. Dead end now, still negotiating with federal government on funding for next phase. Do not know even how much funds will be given. Same story and nothing has changed. The first phase is at risk of going nowhere.*

Shanks (2005) notes that Aboriginal communities face a complex set of development issues. A fragmented approach to these issues will not work. Sawchuk (2011) says these issues include problems with housing, employment, education, health, justice, and cultural retention.

Orr et al. (2011, p. 14) discuss similar conditions in their examination of Aboriginal economic development in Atlantic Canada:



*The social impacts of economic development is of great interest to Aboriginal communities and organizations as well as government agencies interested in ascertaining to what extent economic development policies and practices shape and impact development. Gaining meaningful understanding of these policies and practices in Aboriginal communities is especially complex given the contested and diverse perspectives on the very meaning of economic development and success, and the limited data sets that are available to compare and account for economic and social situations across and within communities.*

In their research project, Papillon and Cosentino (2004) looked at Aboriginal peoples in the United States, Australia, and New Zealand, and found that despite differences in institutional foundations, across these countries, they face similar socio-economic issues relating to young and growing populations that are in many cases living in poverty with low levels of education, poor access to basic services, and high rates of dependence on government programming for income. They also found that all three countries share a history of authoritarian and disempowering policies towards Aboriginal peoples.

Papillon and Cosentino (2004) contend that a commitment to political self-government and capacity-building will reform the welfare of Aboriginal peoples, away from state dependency. Helin (2006, p. 110) has expressed similar opinions on welfare systems, when he states that these welfare schemes easily divorce recipients of the resources and mind-sets required to become self-sufficient:

*While total dependency has been sown by federal policy, the grim specter of social pathologies is what Aboriginal peoples are reaping today. No matter what your race ‘...the psychological effect’ on people from long-term dependence on transfer income is damaging.*

Helin (2006) recommends solutions ranging from establishing policy reforms, to augmenting cultural development, to resetting dependency mind-sets. The result can be an improved ability for Aboriginal communities to work alongside mainstream communities and help create opportunities leading to prosperity:

*Creating sustainable economies for a system that is, at its roots, deeply defective, will take much more strategic thinking and basic re-engineering. Throwing government money at poorly-designed schemes and Band-Aid solutions without a well thought-out game plan will not stimulate economic development, but instead, waste precious resources. ... the welfare trap will never be overcome until Aboriginal peoples take ownership of their problem. As well, government efforts to create positive economic results will never be realized until there is recognition of the existing governance and structural impediments (Helin 2006, p. 128).*

Participants expressed a sense of the requirement for urgent attention on social issues as they discussed their key concerns and that it would be futile to pursue economic development initiatives before dealing with education, addictions, housing and employment issues plaguing remote Aboriginal communities. Participants viewed these

issues as intertwined with economic development, and that overcoming them is an important precursor to lasting progress in their community. Health and social concerns should not go unaddressed while money is spent on priorities decided without meaningful public input (Rinehart 1999).

## Education

The participants in this research frequently emphasized education as being key to economic development. Participants' concerns surrounded not only the provision of basic education but also focused on the level and standard of education achieved. P14 for example, mentioned that the standard of education in Aboriginal communities is low, and P32 stated that the "education system needs fixing ... grade 12 is not the same everywhere in Canada ... a social passing system does not work." As P12 remarked:

*Level of education will determine the control of the future. Empower communities to do work on education system. Education is important. Education attendance is dismissal. It seems that it is okay to drop out of school with Grade 5 or Grade 6 education. The grade level of school is not the same as down South. A child goes through school and completes schooling with no opportunity to work outside because the same level of education at other places is higher and the child cannot compete.*

The problem is further compounded later in life as adults are dissuaded from continuing their education. As P15 stated, the "lack of education is another major factor contributing to social problems and inadequate economic development. Adult education

though available is embarrassing. Money should be spent on community learning.” This issue is indeed pressing, as “over 40 percent of Northwest Territories adults are estimated to have low literacy skills. Though they may have completed Grade 12, their reading skills may not meet the standards for industrial employment” (National Aboriginal Health Organization 2008, p. 3).

P13 also touched on the importance of education from the perspective of the exhilarating pace of developing technology and the associated computer skills required, stating, “Education is important because technology, computer, reading/writing skills are needed for every person.”

Education in Aboriginal communities is “a clear instance in which social and economic goals coincide” (Mendelson 2006), but the gap between the educational attainment of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples continues to grow. Aboriginal high school graduation and post-secondary enrolment rates lag behind that of the general population, which is of great consequence as “education is by far the most important determinant of labour market outcomes and also plays a pre-eminent role in improving social outcomes” (Sharpe & Arsenault 2010, p. 27). Mendelson (2006) views non-completion of high school as the biggest barrier to increasing success in post-secondary education and asserts that Canada’s high rate of failure for high school completion by Aboriginal Canadians is a grim situation that must be taken care of. He suggests that education is the key to influence the successes of Canada’s Aboriginal population. This corresponds to what the participants’ responses highlighted.

Sawchuk (2011) put forward data on Aboriginal education that draws a similar image. In 2011, 28.9% of the Aboriginal population aged 25 to 64 had not graduated high school, compared to 12.1% of the non-Aboriginal population. Aboriginal peoples aged 35 to 44 were more likely to have graduated (68%) than those aged 55 to 64 (58.7%). For non-Aboriginal peoples in the same age categories, these figures were 88.7% and 79.5% respectively. As of 2011, more Aboriginal women aged 35 to 44 had earned a college (27.1% and 18.3%) or university (13.6% and 7.6%) degree than Aboriginal men of the same age (Sawchuk 2011).

Average school attendance in the Northwest Territories begins dropping after grade 5, dipping to under 75% before grade 12. The percentage of students at or above acceptable standards in English Language Arts by grade 9 is at its highest in the three schools located in Yellowknife (62%) and is lowest in the twenty-nine schools located in outlying communities (11%). Overall, 36% of children in the NWT are significantly behind in one area of development at age 5, compared to 25% in the rest of Canada. The home life of students in the NWT is a contributing factor to poor educational outcomes. The percentage of students who report they go to school hungry or go to bed hungry because there is not enough food at home at least some of the time is significantly higher for the Northwest Territories than the rest of Canada. More than a third of those helped are children—kids who are going to school, trying to learn, and going to bed with empty stomachs (Food Banks Canada 2013, p. 2). The women and children shelter occupancy rates are higher in the Northwest Territories (91%) than the rest of Canada (74%):

*Of the 833,098 individuals receiving food, 11% self-identify as First Nations, Métis, or Inuit, and an additional 11% are new immigrants to Canada. Both of these groups continue to face unacceptable levels of poverty, and are forced to turn to food banks as a result (Food Banks Canada 2013, p. 2). Too many individuals and families are finding that, after they pay their rent and bills, there is very little left over for enough healthy, nutritious food (Food Banks Canada 2013, p. 19).*

Other studies have also found that earnings for Aboriginal peoples are associated with educational attainment levels (Sawchuk 2011). Closing the gap could have a powerful equalizing effect on society, yet attempts at government intervention have failed to reverse the trend (Rosenbluth 2011). Dei, Hall and Rosenberg (2000) claim that this has resulted in disintegration of traditional ideals and practices and a loss of sanctity; which have distorted the local, regional and national ecosystems and culture retention. Economic expansion has suffered because of these factors (Dei, Hall & Rosenberg 2000).

The National Committee on Inuit Education (2011) has similarly associated low educational outcomes with higher rates of unemployment, youth criminal activity, illness, and poverty. According to Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada (2013), 9.8% of Aboriginal peoples in Canada had a university degree, compared to 26.5% of non-Aboriginal Canadians. According to Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada (2013), among Aboriginal peoples aged 25 to 64, 28.9% had no certificate, diploma, or degree, compared to 12.1% of non-Aboriginal Canadians in the same age group.

In the Northwest Territories, the disparity is even more pronounced. Just 4.7% of the Aboriginal population had a university degree, compared to 34.2% of the non-Aboriginal population (Northwest Territories Bureau of Statistics 2014b), and only 54.6% of 18-year old Aboriginal peoples were high school graduates, compared to 84.0% of non-Aboriginal 18-year olds (Northwest Territories Bureau of Statistics 2014a).

As Gerein (1998, p. 94) points out, there are both economic and cultural aspects tied to educational outcomes:

*Aboriginal peoples want education to prepare them to participate in the economic life of their communities and in Canadian society. But this is only part of their vision. Education must develop children and youth as Aboriginal citizens, linguistically and culturally competent to assume the responsibilities of their nations. Youth that emerge from school must be grounded in a strong, positive Aboriginal identity.*

Many educators hold that failing to weave Aboriginal culture into education has produced at best “educational tokenism” and have called for more culturally responsive schooling as a way to improve Aboriginal educational outcomes (Castagno & Brayboy 2008). A recent roundtable hosted by the Canadian Chamber of Commerce, educators expressed that “one of the fundamental reasons Aboriginal peoples do not succeed in school and the workforce is because they cannot see where they fit into either” (The Canadian Chamber of Commerce 2012). A former school principal in Fort McPherson, Northwest Territories, told Wuttunee (2004, p. 119) that young Aboriginal peoples

often wanted to be taught a mix of academics and traditional bush skills; the thinking was that “If we can include those two, then the youth say they’ll be knowledgeable on the land and about education. We’ll be happy in both worlds, and we’ll have a foot in each culture.” While recognizing that a holistic approach to Aboriginal culture and education is a marked departure from past initiatives, Rosenbluth (2011, p. 6), refers to comments made on October 1, 2012, at Gatineau, Quebec by former National Chief of the Assembly of First Nations (AFN) Chief Shawn Atleo in a presentation to the Special Chiefs Assembly on Education:

*Education has been an instrument of oppression used against us,  
emphasizing the removal of our identities, the fracturing of our families,  
and the elimination of our ways of communication, thinking and being...  
Our challenge today is to work together to overcome the past, to set about  
a commitment to reconciliation, respect and prosperity, mutual hope  
and opportunity, and to forever turn education from an instrument of  
oppression to a tool of liberation.*

Apprehensions persist over government intervention in Aboriginal education as a result of this past oppression. This is understandable given the legacy of the residential school system, which “never established an adequate set of standards and regulations to guarantee that residential school students received the same consideration and care that any parent would expect from an educational institution” (Wilson 2015, p. 8). While discussing the high rates of death among Aboriginal children who attended residential schools, Wilson (2015, p. 8) states that:



*mostly, the causes of death found root in the same attitudes that enabled the schools to exist in the first place—a belief that Aboriginal peoples were inferior... a belief that they did not warrant investing in richly... a belief that their culture could and would be extinguished.*

The enduring scepticism of western education is evident in Shawn Atleo's recent resignation as National Chief following discord within the AFN over his support for Bill C-33, the *First Nations Control of First Nations Education Act*. If implemented, the Act would provide increased federal funding aimed at raising Aboriginal education to provincial levels, contingent on commitments to quality and accountability. However, implementation of the Act has stalled over a perception within members of the AFN that the funds would come at the cost of reduced Band council autonomy over educational decisions in their communities (Iverson 2014). Nevertheless, there remains an underlying acknowledgement among Aboriginal peoples that “successful people never stop reading; never stop learning” (Chief Louie 2014, p. 2). As stated in the Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (1996, p. 418):

*Aboriginal peoples want to prepare their children for stronger academic performance, but their concerns go beyond a singular focus on cognitive development. They recognize the need of families for support and respite while they struggle with personal and economic problems. They want to see early identification of children with special needs and provision of appropriate care and parent education in the community.*

Overcoming the barriers to educational attainment of Aboriginal peoples is crucial, as it is tied not only to better social conditions for communities, but also to an improved

labour market. Improving Aboriginal educational outcomes is not only critical for the Northwest Territories, but has wider implications as well, as “investing in Aboriginal education will benefit not only the Aboriginal population itself but also Canadian governments and businesses, and, by extension, the entire Canadian population” (Sharpe & Arsenault 2010, p. 27).

## Addictions and Substance Abuse

The impacts of addictive behaviour are devastating for many Aboriginal communities in the NWT and across Canada. P13 argued, “drug abuse and alcohol abuse need to be addressed more importantly than the economic development. If they are not addressed first, economic development has no meaning” (P13). Observations from a social counsellor (P30) working in the NWT also lend support to this view, as he mentions:

*The people are not the problem ... what they're really looking for is an opportunity... It's hard because suddenly the opportunity may be there, but they've got their addiction, for example, and they can see the opportunity but their hands are tied by the addiction ... it really helps them to know that there's an opportunity, and there's a place to go in order to get that opportunity to happen, because it gives them motivation to give up their addiction. It's not always like that, but ... a person who doesn't really have anything like a house or a place to go to work, and so on, might be drinking because of that ... If you think about it, addiction is a dependency, it's not self-sufficiency, right? When you have*

*an addiction you can't really control a lot of things in your life, you become ... powerless. But if you can somehow turn it around and become self-sufficient, then it may be the opposite—where you get your power, and you can now buy a house, look after your family and so forth without having to depend on other things ... Having all that, they now have a reason to give up their addiction, but it becomes very difficult because that's when a person might realize that they can't really do it on their own, and then they'll come, for example, to counselling and they'd work with a counsellor, and at the same time as working on their recovery they'll be working on their business plan or getting motivated to take the next step.*

Participants in this research clearly laid down the importance of addressing drug abuse in the Northwest Territories. P12 expressed a similar view when stating that the “challenge to economic prosperity is the social problems. Economic prosperity will be determined by dealing with social problems like addiction” (P12). P11 put the focus on youth, and suggested that members of the community need to set positive examples: “Physical exercise which leads to healthy lives is important. Unfortunately the role models are not supporting or leading by examples” (P11).

P11 went on to state that “social problems definitely have to be addressed with any program and in any direction. It is very tragic what happens to young people. They are dragged down by the social issues. It is a decade-long program.”

These views find support in the literature, in that “youth are more likely to get involved in drugs at a younger age, perhaps in an effort to copy the ‘flashier’ lifestyle of those with money” (National Aboriginal Health Organization 2008, p. 6).

Across all of North America, the prevalence of drug use disorders is two to four times greater among Aboriginal peoples than the general population (Currie et al. 2013, p. 1). According to the 2008-2010 First Nations Regional Health Survey (RHS), 32.2% of First Nations adults across Canada were users of cannabis, up from 26.7% in the 2002-2003 survey, while 7.8% had used crack/cocaine in the past year (First Nations Information Governance Centre 2012). Chansonneuve (2007, p. 28) highlights the gravity of the current situation:

*Addictive behaviours and substance abuse have taken a terrible toll on the Aboriginal population, contributing to far greater incidences of accidents, disease and illness, violence, and death than in the general population. Alcohol and drug use are still the most prevalent and urgent types of addictive behaviours in Aboriginal communities today.*

The frequency of heavy drinking and smoking among First Nations was also significantly greater than the general Canadian population. Among First Nations adults aged 18-29, 68% met the RHS criteria for heavy drinkers. Compared to the general population, this prevalence reduced more slowly with age, dropping to 63.8% among adults aged 30-49 and to 59.1% for those aged 50-59. 57% of First Nations adults were smokers, compared to just 20% of the general Canadian population. 7.4% of First

Nations adults also met the RHS criteria for problem gambling, and another 31.1% met the criteria for at-risk gambling (First Nations Information Governance Centre 2012)

Similar trends were present in the Northwest Territories. Aboriginal drinkers exhibited over twice the rate of high-risk alcohol use (61%) as compared to the non-Aboriginal population (25%), and more Aboriginal peoples (59%) were harmed as a result of someone else's drinking, than non-Aboriginals (43%). The likelihood of heavy drinking, cannabis use, and smoking were all higher for individuals living in the smaller communities outside of Yellowknife and other regional centres (Government of the Northwest Territories 2010).

Many trace the origins of addictive behaviour to trauma resulting from government policies such as the *Indian Act*, forced relocations, mass slaughter of Inuit sled dogs, and the intergenerational impacts of childhood abuse and cultural genocide in the residential school system. Multidisciplinary, community-driven healing models that acknowledge this trauma have proven successful. As Chansonneuve (2007, p. 1) notes: "Increasingly, evidence shows that the most effective addictions prevention and intervention programming for Aboriginal peoples is grounded in the wisdom of traditional Inuit, Métis, and First Nation teachings about a holistic approach to a healthy life." This philosophy finds support in the Regional Health Survey, which concludes that "great reductions in prevalence of substance abuse are unlikely to occur without addressing the larger economic and social factors that impact the lives of First Nations" (First Nations Information Governance Centre 2012, p. 107).

In terms of gaining positive outcomes from government-funded economic development actions, a study that measured the costs associated with tobacco, alcohol, and illegal drugs in Canada in 2002 found that “substance abuse represents a significant drain on Canada’s economy in terms of both its direct and indirect impact” (Rehm et al. 2006, p. 2). The direct social costs of substance abuse (e.g. to health care, law enforcement) were estimated at \$15.5 billion annually, and the indirect costs due to productivity losses in the home and workplace were estimated at \$24.3 billion annually. The per capita annual cost of substance abuse in the Northwest Territories was \$1,934, well above the Canadian average (\$1,267), and second only to that of Nunavut (\$2,184) (Rehm et al. 2006). It is clear therefore that if funding for economic development activities is to have any positive impacts for communities, significant dollars must be equally directed towards reducing the incidence of substance abuse and lowering the costs of loss of productivity and health care.

As noted above, several participants brought the issue of addictions into the conversation surrounding economic development. It is clear from the literature that the negative impacts of addictions extend beyond individuals and can act as a drag on the economy. This point was highlighted by the participants asserting that dealing with addictions and substance abuse in the community should take primacy over economic development initiatives. If left unchecked, addictions could claim the minds and lives of many youth before they can take advantage of economic opportunities in their community.

## Housing

While the situation varies by region, housing is generally inadequate and overcrowded across northern Canada. Poor housing conditions have also been tied to the increased spread of diseases such as tuberculosis, poor youth academic performance, and a decreased ability to live balanced lives. Report after report has confirmed that housing is one of the major issues in Aboriginal communities:

*Many northern communities already suffer from sub-standard and overcrowded housing as well as a general lack of housing. Sewer and water services may be inadequate. The infrastructure is not in place to accommodate the construction of new homes or to accommodate an influx of people and businesses. Housing material is expensive and there may be a lack of skilled tradespeople, contractors, building inspectors, and other administrators. An influx of workers can worsen existing housing shortages, inflate house prices and rents, and lower vacancy rates. These factors make it difficult to buy or rent a place to live for single parents, women leaving abusive relationships, and people who are unemployed or have low incomes. There are few homeless shelters, and as projects lure transient people into communities, the number of homeless is likely to increase. The Northwest Territories already has a homeless rate that is over four times the national rate (National Aboriginal Health Organization 2008, p. 4).*

The participants' responses, housing reports and literature reviewed all confirm that this concern needs immediate attention. To quote P14, "Attention needs to be on housing needs. Multiple families are living in one unit." P20 unequivocally expressed that:

*Housing is an issue which needs to be addressed. 50-year-old living with parents, people are staying in tents, no responsibilities and no drive because there is not much to do. We accept the way we live in. Living with our parents is not an acceptable situation. There is no thriving because there is not much to do and that keeps you backwards. We are fighting ourselves.*

Thurston et al. (2011, p. 11) echo the call for an immediate increase in services directed towards homeless individuals, while also concluding that "ending Aboriginal homelessness will take greater effort in the economic development and education sectors." Housing is tied to economic development because it provides more than just a basic human need for shelter; it generates opportunities to employ and train local residents, creates linkages with ventures outside the community, and helps promote neighbourhood stability (Loxley 2010). As Tibaijuka (2013, p. 1) puts it, "housing is not just a periphery activity but a central force of sound economic development."

In the Northwest Territories, as stated by The Canadian Chamber of Commerce (2012, p. 22):

*The dearth of housing—affordable and otherwise—is a huge barrier to territorial economic development. People cannot move to a community to work or study if there is no place for them to live.*



While there are no official estimates of the housing shortfall, the Northwest Territories Association of Communities (2014) found that there are routinely over 400 applicants on waiting lists to obtain public housing units. Canada-wide, by 2010 there was an estimated shortfall of 20,000 in on-reserve housing units, with a projected increase of 2,200 units annually (The First Nations Information Governance Centre 2012). Aside from the high projected growth rate of Canada's Aboriginal population, there are numerous compounding factors that perpetuate this shortfall:

*As quickly as new units come on stream, they require aggressive maintenance because of the overcrowding and heavy "wear and tear" they take. There is not yet sufficient capacity within First Nations communities to do the maintenance, and limited personal funds with which to pay for someone else to do the work. The consequences are manifold: maintaining housing stock is costly, poorly maintained housing is unsafe and contributes to poor health, which in itself generates additional costs (Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada 2011, para 12).*

While only 3% of the non-Aboriginal population lived in overcrowded housing as of the 2006 census, the rate is much higher among both First Nations people (15%) and Inuit (31%). Living in these conditions has been associated with higher risks of disease transmission, injuries, mental health conditions, family tensions, and violence (Statistics Canada 2006). Indeed, violence within the home is a pressing issue, as "the rate of reported spousal assaults in the NWT is 9 to 12 times more than the average in southern Canadian provinces" (Cooke 2015, p. 4).

The 2006 Canadian census also recorded that 29% of First Nations people, 14% of Métis people, and 28% of Inuit were living in dwellings in need of major repairs. During the same period, just 7% of the non-Aboriginal population lived in dwellings in need of major repairs (Statistics Canada 2006). According to the 2009 NWT Community Survey, 15.7% of dwellings in the Northwest Territories were in need of major repairs, with this proportion increasing for 25 of 33 communities between 2004 and 2009. The proportion of dwellings in need of major repairs was lower in Yellowknife (4.3%) and the regional centres of Hay River (15.3%), Inuvik (10.1%), and Fort Smith (14.9%), and higher in outlying communities, the highest being Colville Lake at 61.1% (Northwest Territories Bureau of Statistics 2010).

The 2009 NWT Community Survey also identified unaffordable housing as a problem consistent across all regions of the Northwest Territories, with 12-15% of households experiencing affordability issues. A study conducted by YWCA Yellowknife and The Yellowknife Women's Society (2007) also estimated that there were over a thousand homeless women in the Northwest Territories, a figure that jumps to well over two thousand when factoring in their dependent children. Of the homeless women living in Yellowknife that were interviewed for the study, 25% were employed, but still could not afford housing. A wide range of determinants fuel this problem, and ultimately, "women are not able to return to their home community, or escape it, without extensive financial, emotional, or practical resources" (YWCA Yellowknife & The Yellowknife Women's Society 2007, p. 8). Christensen (2011, p. 330) claims that:

*The fundamental elements that drive housing insecurity in the NWT result from decades of change in the North—decades of*

*sociocultural and economic transition and the aftermath of traumas that can be associated with such wide scale transition ... In attempting to discourage dependency by neglecting to provide supports to homeless northerners, the problem of homelessness is only exacerbated ... Efforts to alleviate homelessness must confront concrete problems such as northern housing need, as well as more abstract problems such as intergenerational trauma. Only then will the roots of northern housing insecurity be addressed.*

Provisions of housing services to remote communities include both repairs to existing units and building new houses. Cost continues to be a challenge as supply of building material and equipment is dependent on accessibility by road or rail. In the modern age, these challenges should have been addressed by now.

## **Employment**

According to Chief Louie, there are three keys to economic prosperity: “jobs, jobs, jobs” (Chief Louie 2014, p. 1). In the present study, participants identified a link between unemployment and other social problems in their community. As P14 stated:

*Not much employment so social problems ... Lack of work because restrictions are so high; so local work in business is suffering. People want to stay home. Need more economic development in the community to provide employment.*

P7 identified training to local people as one of the solutions, and stated that “there is a capacity issue at local level and so to provide employment to local people training is necessary.” P32, said that “there is a huge issue with employment ... when people got their settlement payments they just stopped coming to work. This creates huge production problems and we cannot commit to customers.” P32 also mentioned that attitudes are shifting with increased education, especially among youth: “People understand now that to make a living we need jobs. Our children are in Toronto studying that to develop opportunities they need industry, jobs and education.”

There is indeed a gap in employment outcomes between the Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal populations of Canada. It is noteworthy that there are many stipulations in assessing Aboriginal earnings, but unmistakably Aboriginal Canadians are substantially poorer than their non-Aboriginal fellow citizens (Richards & Scott 2009).

After experiencing above average negative employment impacts from the 2009 recession, while Aboriginal Canadians have rebounded at a faster pace than the general Canadian population, in many ways they still lag behind. Between 2010 and 2013, the unemployment rate for Aboriginal peoples fell by 2.3%, compared to a drop of 1.0% for non-Aboriginals. As of 2013, the unemployment rate stood at 10.0% for Aboriginal peoples and 5.8% for non-Aboriginal peoples. Over the same period, the Aboriginal employment rate and labour force participation rate grew by 3.5% and 2.0%, respectively. The non-Aboriginal employment rate and participation rate grew by 1.0% and 0.2%, respectively. Employment rates in 2013 were 69.3% for Aboriginal peoples and 81.9% for non-Aboriginals, and labour force participation rates were 77.0% for Aboriginal peoples compared to 86.9% for non-Aboriginal peoples (Employment and

Social Development Canada 2014). The chart below shows the disparity in unemployment rates between Aboriginal peoples and other groups in Canada:

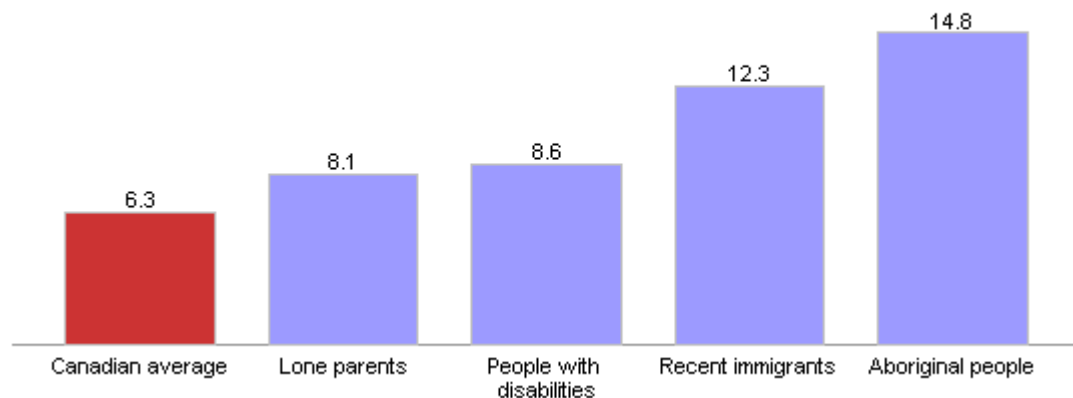


Figure 13: Unemployment Rate, Selected Groups, 2006 as a percent of labour force (Data for lone parents, recent immigrants and Aboriginal peoples, HRSDC calculations based on Statistics Canada. Census 2006 data (not published); and for people with disabilities, Statistics Canada. Education, Employment and Income of Adults with and Without Disabilities—Tables. Ottawa: Statistics Canada, 2009 (Cat No. 89-587-XIE))

Similar employment trends were present in the Northwest Territories. The unemployment rate for Aboriginal peoples in 2014 was 17.4%, the employment rate was 51.7%, and the participation rate was 62.6%. Non-Aboriginal peoples in the Northwest Territories fared much better, with an unemployment rate of 2.0%, an employment rate of 81.9%, and a participation rate of 83.6% (Northwest Territories Bureau of Statistics 2014d).

A deeper look at where the Aboriginal population is employed also exposes concerns. In 2013, roughly half (46.6%) of the Aboriginal population across Canada worked in occupations that required at most a high school diploma or on-the-job training, compared to 38% of non-Aboriginals. This presents a challenge due to the forecasted decline in these types of positions between 2012 and 2020. Meanwhile, only 17.6% of Aboriginals were employed in occupations that require a university degree, compared to 27.7% of non-Aboriginals. Demand for these high-skilled positions is forecasted to grow substantially between 2012 and 2020 (Employment and Social Development Canada 2014).

This disparity in employment outcomes is influenced in part by lower education and skill levels, geographic remoteness from employment opportunities, and disadvantaged living conditions in Aboriginal communities. Ultimately, while there are many interrelated determinants, “there is a surprising dearth of information about how young Aboriginal peoples themselves understand their situations, and what their aspirations are for the future” (Abele & Delic 2014, p. 31). One must also consider that Northern Aboriginal communities have mixed economies, in which individuals switch between subsistence and market activities as opportunities arise.

Some have suggested that government should support and develop this mixed system, rather than accommodating it as a temporary stumbling block on a path towards a wage economy (Abele & Delic 2014). Others have stressed the importance of entrepreneurship as a vehicle for employment and self-reliance. Northern Development Ministers Forum (2010, p. 11) argued that “the most effective way (and probably the only way) for Aboriginal communities to address their current socio-economic

challenges is to create wealth through business activity.” Others look to developing northern Canada’s natural resources as a path to improved employment outcomes:

*Pipeline construction and mining projects offer a wide range of work opportunities. Many are entry-level jobs like trades helpers and heavy equipment operators, or support services like catering and cleaning. Mine companies may even need tree planters after a mine has closed. Better-paying technical trades require post-secondary education and years of experience. Some positions require university degrees. Employment opportunities vary with the exploration, development, operational, and closing phases of a project. In the end, local community members can gain new skills and the work experience needed for better-paying jobs and careers (National Aboriginal Health Organization 2008, p. 3).*

Fixing this employment disparity could reap major benefits for the country, because despite slow economic growth and increased immigration, Canada’s supply of labour is expected to fall short of rising demand in the near future (Ramlo & Berlin 2006). As the fastest growing demographic in the country, Aboriginal youth (aged 15-24) present a potential solution to this issue. It is ultimately the capacity to which the people in this group are able to shape the basis for stable and industrious lives that will have a definite bearing on the economic and social health of Canada into the future (Abele & Delic 2014).

The government has work to do to make sure this group is not underemployed (Chief Louie 2014). Sharpe and Arsenault (2010) noted that the federal government could save \$115 billion in expenditures and add \$401 billion to Canada's cumulative gross domestic product by bringing Aboriginal labour market outcomes in line with those of the non-Aboriginal population by 2026.

As is true for any underemployed group, with improved employment opportunities Aboriginal peoples can gain a sense of contributing to a collective purpose while also benefitting from social networks that develop in the workplace. Given this, "securing and sustaining employment is important to numerous social and economic goals" (Ciceri & Scott 2013, p. 3).

## Summary

It was clear from the sheer volume of unprompted input on social concerns (including education, housing, additions and employment) that social outcomes were of the utmost importance to participants. Even so, their responses also get support to the idea by Chief Ovide Mercredi, the Past National President of the Assembly of First Nations. McBride and Gerow (2004, p. 2) quotes Chief Ovide Mercredi as stating that "it's the economic horse that pulls the social cart."

The use of Grounded Theory provided an environment that allowed participants to bring these concerns to the forefront, while also tying them back into a broader discussion of economic development in northern Aboriginal communities. The participants and their community members can better support an economic development initiative when



information and actions about how and when a program contributes to better educational, health, or life outcomes are key components of the program. Program planners and implementers can make use of results to monitor and improve service delivery systems, program strategies and resource allocation (Aronson, Mutchler & Pan 1998). A review of the literature on these issues provided ample backing for the participants claims, and further solidified the need for a holistic approach, as will be confirmed in the final chapter to follow.

## **Chapter 9—Conclusion**

This research explored and identified the processes and outcomes of government-funded projects in Aboriginal communities, examining in particular the effectiveness of traditional accountability using financial statements, and concluded with a holistic model needed for the sustainable economic development of northern Canadian Aboriginal communities.

### **Emergence of a Grounded Theory of Accountability**

This study used a Grounded Theory methodology to discover participants' views on accountability processes related to government funding. Preparation of financial reports using budgeting was found to be the most dominant method for reporting accountability of government funds. There was quite a distinct disconnect between the funders and the receivers on using accountability meaningfully and reciprocally. However, it became apparent that there was dissatisfaction among both groups with the current accountability system. A Grounded Theory on accountability developed explaining the differences in the relationships and expectations. In the process, four categories and components also emerged (a) cultural retention (b) empowerment reflecting engagement and control, (c) financial accountability, and (d) measuring social outcomes. Simultaneously, a Grounded Theory of adopting a holistic view of accountability as the core variable/core category established through data collection and analysis.

## The Research Voyage

This study commenced in 2010 with a focus on governance and capacity building in the Northwest Territories, Canada. The research was aimed at identifying threats specific to sustainable economic development in northern Canadian Aboriginal communities and exploring ways to turn those threats into opportunities. My deliberation was on the inherent challenges of capacity building, specifically in the NWT communities. The Hamlet of Fort Liard was the optimal location: a community with a population and contexts representative of many of the small communities outside of the capital Yellowknife, which imaged the uniqueness of challenges faced by similar communities in the NWT. I was in quest of information which would deepen my understanding of development policies for these communities in the NWT and put forward a governance model that would fit well with the accountability: a policy model that would be sustainable, produce results, and emphasize self-reliance and community development.

I commenced my research studying history of Aboriginal peoples in Canada and found that the troubled history of colonization of Aboriginal peoples is at the root of many contemporary problems in NWT, Canada and around the world. Many continuing disadvantages in the areas of education, health, housing, empowerment and employment can be linked to longstanding government attitudes towards Aboriginal peoples that persist as “structural factors, locational factors, cultural factors and prejudices held by non-Aboriginal society” (Pascoe & Radel 2008, pp. 301-302). Colonial policies and legislation led to the destruction of Aboriginal economies and social structures; appropriation of land and resources, loss of individuals’ legal and

financial control; organizational structures that foster conflict within and between Bands; repression of cultural practices, languages and ceremonies; forced eviction of children from homes and communities; and a growing dependency on the federal government for housing, infrastructure and social assistance funding.

Canada's national purposes have long been served by the presence of northern Aboriginal peoples, as their communities provide support to Canadian sovereignty claims, and act as destinations for tourists and bases for mineral explorers who wish to share in the North's natural resources. Unfortunately, the historical record reveals considerable exploitation of Aboriginal peoples. Land has been expropriated, economic activity suppressed by outside interests, and cultural expressions (such as arts and crafts) have been appropriated by outside groups. According to, Henry and Hood (2015, p. para 78) "Appropriation refers to the act of taking something for one's own use, typically without the owner's permission." Despite the challenges created by policies such as appropriation, there is a growing acknowledgement of the often negative impacts of historical colonial processes on Aboriginal peoples. This acknowledgement is visible around the globe. Worldwide travellers are attracted to many Aboriginal destinations because of the opportunity to interact with, and learn from, these cultures (Henry & Hood 2015).

Regrettably, despite an increased interest in Aboriginal culture, this legacy of suppression lives on, and continues to fuel a mutual mistrust that permeates relationships between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples, in turn impacting the policy outcomes that rely on these relationships (Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples 1996). Many communities now demonstrate disrupted cultural traditions,

reduced capacity and resources, and experience a sense of marginalization, dispossession, and disempowerment. The outcome from this is that “goals of economic self-sufficiency and economic development may be unrealistic” (Martin, D. F. & Liddle 1997, p. 2).

Within the current system, the concept of welfare gradually evolved from a form of funding which is temporary relief from financial hardship, into a perceived right, ultimately leading to a culture of entitlement and dependency. On one hand, the public sector is justified in intervening to assist those facing barriers to employment and avoid the economic fallout from high unemployment (Helin 2014a); on the other, a balance must be struck. That is, a balance between the judicious use of government interventions to achieve the employment goals and avoiding the reckless provision of handouts perpetuating the intrusiveness and social corrosiveness of the welfare state.

Though many papers, articles, reports and books have been published on the dependency of Aboriginal populations on government funding (Schwartz 2013), and the effect this has on their lives (Widdowson & Howard 2008), few studies have examined the effectiveness of these funds (Canadian Chamber of Commerce 2015). Furthermore, among the large number of researches in the past, there are not much definitive studies concerning the communities of northern Canada, and in addition, there is limited research on economic development when it comes to measuring outcomes of government funding. It should be noted that there is substantial controversy surrounding the writings of (Widdowson & Howard 2008). Alfred (2009b, para 17) provides a detailed critique of their work, calling it “reminiscent of a nightmarish succession of

under-researched, badly-written, unedited and emotion-laden undergraduate-level papers.”

Consequently, new questions emerged: Was there a match between funding objectives and outcomes? Were there certain prerequisites for economic development? Why had economic development initiatives seen limited success in northern communities?

By July of 2011, the project had taken on a new dimension of accountability; specifically the accountability process for government-funded projects. During an initial literature review, ‘accountability’ surfaced as a cornerstone of 21<sup>st</sup> century governance. Accountability “is the ownership of responsibilities combined with the obligation to report on the discharge of those responsibilities” (Government of Newfoundland and Labrador 2011, p. 3), and is one of the most oft-invoked buzzwords associated with good governance (Stefanick 2013). In the public sector, accountability drives public officials to meet objectives set by the government and also helps shape programs to respond to the needs of the communities they are meant to benefit. According to Graham (1999), accountability is about achieving the appropriate balance between the conflicting objectives of political leaders and citizens. However, in the public sector, accountability is often limited to a comparison of budgets with actual expenditures. This can be contrasted with Serra (2008, p. 1), who argues that, at least in the context of monitoring corruption, top-down measures alone, “are rarely able to keep service providers accountable.”

Even today, the measurement system in the public sector often focuses on inputs like funding rather than outputs like increased literacy (Schacter 1999). A comprehensive

approach is needed, with a governance model that assesses more than just numbers. What matter most are the outcomes produced by funding, the value created for the community and the community's satisfaction with those outcomes. There should be an increased accountability for funding which goes beyond one-sided financial accountability to include outcomes with enhanced empowerment. New public management approaches to greater political accountability should ensure that Aboriginals are not dealt with as a disadvantaged minority, culturally backward and as individual clients (Copley 2014). Indeed, the government environment is changing as demand for services increases and the public demands greater government accountability (Probst 2009). Government programs are typically targeting diverse objectives which require an improvement in efficiency, effectiveness, and accountability by formal performance measurements to appropriately evaluate the results and ensure that funding is spent cost-effectively (Probst 2009).

Shifting the focus to performance measurement and program evaluation is an emerging strategy known as results-based management. Results-based management establishes a system to objectively assess whether a program is producing its intended results (Government of Newfoundland and Labrador 2011). Global Affairs Canada (2016, para 22-23) has defined performance measurement as:

*a structured plan for the collection and analysis of performance information [that can] empower managers and stakeholders with 'real time' information (e.g. use of resources, extent of reach, and progress towards the achievement of outputs and outcomes).*

As I was reviewing the literature on the changes to financial reporting mechanisms that have been applied over the past two decades, integrated reporting emerged as an additional option and a new concept of interest in context of the culture of Aboriginal communities. Paul and Nieland (2013, p. 2) refer to the definition of integrating reporting provided by the International Integrated Reporting Council (IIRC) as “a process that results in communication by an organization, most visibly a periodic integrated report, about how an organization’s strategy, governance, performance, and prospects lead to the creation of value over the short, medium and long-term.”

Integrated reporting is a fairly new standard for communication that emphasizes value creation over time, and helps to complete financial and sustainability reports. The IIRC was formed in August 2010 and aims to create a globally accepted framework for a process that results in communications by an organization about value creation over time (Deloitte Global Services Limited 2015, para 1).

Despite the fact that concepts such as value creation are emerging and gaining prominence around the world, reporting in the NWT is still based on traditional methods of using only budgets and financial statements. Reporting on economic development initiatives in northern communities should provide stakeholders with the meaningful information which requires going beyond traditional financial reporting and into approaches such as value creation. Reporting should allow users to better understand the value created for the community and the barriers to creating that value. Projects’ sustainability should be expressed in terms of value created immediately and maintained over time (Matthews 2011, p. 2).



The emphasis of the research stretched to developing a better understanding of the value for money spent on projects aimed at development of Aboriginal communities and the focus moved partially on the processes for improving accountability, responsibility, and transparency.

The revised research topic cultivated into “Improving Accountability in Development Projects for Northern Canada Aboriginal Communities.” While still relevant to the concept of capacity development, this topic was specifically concentrating on improving the accountability process of funding projects for economic development. The argument for this modification was that the traditional monitoring and compliance approach to accountability was limited in application, and its usefulness for publicly supported community-based programs was questionable.

*It is usually argued that complex processes such as development are about social transformation, processes which are inherently uncertain, difficult, and not totally controllable and - therefore - which one cannot be held responsible for... The RBM approach put in place by UNESCO aims at responding to these concerns by setting out clear expected results for programme activities and projects, by establishing performance indicators and associated benchmarks to monitor and assess progress towards achieving the expected results and by enhancing accountability of the Organization as a whole and of persons in charge (Bureau of Strategic Planning 2011, p. 19).*

I evaluated the possibility of the research assessing the accountability process that could assist in creating complex community initiatives while at the same time incorporating

the outcome measurement not just on numbers but also including a results-based accountability system and/or value based results. The topic of research now emerged as “Assessing Process and Outcomes of Government-funded Projects in Northern Canada Aboriginal Communities.”

## Methodology

As expressed earlier, my preliminary approach to the study was a typical Case Study methodology (Yin 1984) using a formal interview questionnaire for the data collection process but as the research topic evolved, a more emergent research design was necessary, particularly as I am from a non-Aboriginal background, and so I had to first understand the protocol of interviewing Aboriginal peoples.

As noted by (Peredo 2010, p. 3), “field work often presents the researcher with phenomenon that are deeply puzzling, given an outsider’s point of view.” I explored the literature around Aboriginal research methods and examined a range of qualitative approaches. The emergent research design combined my understanding of Aboriginal research methodology with a constructivist Grounded Theory (Charmaz 2006) approach and the original Case Study design was reframed to become a participatory, co-construction of knowledge approach. This meant developing and refining active listening skills and having informal conversations with participants.

I anticipated that a major difficulty I would face in developing this research would be overcoming the power imbalance between myself, as the researcher and the Aboriginal

community as the researched, and developing the relationship of trust mainly because of my position of power for funding businesses with Government of Northwest Territories.

I used several strategies to make the participants feel that they were either in a dominant position or at least on equal footing with me as the researcher, and to feel free to speak and assume control over the conversation.

The data I obtained was coded and examined according to the principles of the Grounded Theory Method and Aboriginal methodology, which provided an in-depth understanding of the ways in which Aboriginal peoples live while also generating a holistic view of their general development. Combining Aboriginal methodology and Grounded Theory allowed not only for a greater understanding of Aboriginal history and contemporary challenges to development, but also fed into the holistic approach required for sustainable economic development of Aboriginal communities.

## Findings

The four main themes which emerged from this research are interconnected and surfaced from some basic findings that Aboriginal peoples pride and believe in:

1. Culture and the desire to pass it on to future generations
2. Self-Empowerment and significance of land
3. Resource management and accountability in using the resources
4. Controlling own destinies and human development by overcoming social evils.

Participants emphasized that the end result of economic development should be sustainable and in the interest of the community as a collective whole, and not for the interest of a handful of individuals. In addition, accountability and outcomes should not be measured only in financial terms. Social outcomes, culture retention and ultimately the empowerment must be considered in a holistic assessment.

Participants want to make progress on their economic, social, and cultural development while also retaining their unique political, legal, economic, social, and cultural foundations so that they are able to determine their own destinies. They want a broader definition of economic development that is not limited to growth of wealth, but that also includes the eradication of social evils like drug and alcohol addictions.

This calls for the reflection on human development, which “incorporates all aspects of individuals’ well-being, from their health status to their economic and political freedom” (Soubbotina & Sheram 2000, p. 7). This concept recognizes that different communities have different development priorities, including various socio-cultural issues. Economic development alone, fragmented from these issues, cannot achieve sustainability, and “history offers a number of examples where economic growth was not followed by similar progress in human development” (Soubbotina & Sheram 2000, p. 7). Instead, one must appreciate that “human development is the end—economic growth a means” (The World Bank 2004, p. 8).

If economic development is pursued without a corresponding focus on human development, any growth produced will be difficult to sustain. “To be sustainable, economic growth must be constantly nourished by the fruits of human development”

(Soubotina & Sheram 2000, p. 8). Poverty must not prevail; it is the most critical problem targeted by sustainable development. Further, to this point, “analysts have found a strong positive relationship between economic growth and poverty reduction” (Soubotina & Sheram 2000, p. 31). This is because poverty is not an isolated issue, but is in fact a significant barrier to development. Its persistence has profoundly influenced the quality of life and aspirations of Aboriginal peoples and their communities (Brunnen 2003). As Yunus (2007, p. 12) states:

*Growth is extremely important in bringing down poverty—there is no doubt about it. But to think that the only way to reduce poverty is to promote growth drives policymakers to a straight theoretical path of building infrastructure to promote industrialization and mechanization.*

Conclusively, this thesis puts forward an alternate holistic model for reporting. The exciting new possibilities which emerged from the search for this framework are summarized below.

### **Financial Accountability**

There is no shortage of literature on the importance of accountability in relation to financial reporting, but as my research progressed, it was established that an effective accountability model for NWT communities must measure results in more ways than just financial statements. The traditional performance-based accountability still poses significant challenges of implementation to clarify the conceptual relationship between operation and the public interest. Broadened accountability as a conceptual framework

is processual rather than substantive in nature and increasingly requires embracing more than merely mission outcome-related measures (Valentinov 2011).

Participants in the study clearly exhibited this shift and made a call for an increase in reciprocal accountability and this was supported through my extensive review of literature on the topics raised. Greater efficiency and culturally based outcomes can be found in reciprocal accountability (Sullivan 2009). The accountability regime faced by Aboriginal peoples in northern Canada can be compared to what Sullivan (2009, p. 57) describes as the status quo for Aboriginal peoples in Australia:

*As a disadvantaged, culturally distinct minority, Aboriginal peoples are the subject of, rather than partners in, accountability regimes which mire their community service organizations in reporting requirements at the expense of practical activity. In some respects Aborigines are dealt with as individual citizen/clients, at other times as a disadvantaged minority group, and third, as culturally distinct polities. Each of these approaches implies different forms of accountability both by Aborigines to the state and by the state to them. Greater efficiency as well as culturally appropriate outcomes can be found by instituting regional regimes of reciprocal accountability.*

The concept of reciprocal accountability “stresses that there are obligations on all parties in an accountability relationship, not merely on a subordinate party” (Auditor General of Canada 2002, p. 6). When properly implemented, it can encourage the trust

and participation of communities, stakeholders, and the general public while holding governments responsible for their decisions. Elmore (2000, p. 2) states:

*Accountability must be a reciprocal process. For every increment of performance I demand from you, I have an equal responsibility to provide you with the capacity to meet that expectation. Likewise for every investment you make in my skill and knowledge, I have a reciprocal responsibility to demonstrate some new increase in performance.*

One-sided government approaches to transparency and accountability are not a recent phenomenon, nor are the calls to reform this approach and expand the discussion beyond financial reporting (Porter 2009). Over two decades ago, (Gray & Jenkins 1993) foreshadowed the changing nature of public accountability. Accountability embodying only the function of financial reporting with a centralized accounting regime was restrictive and old-fashioned. The reforms in public services emphasized refocusing from accounting based on simplistic financial numbers to interpreting and integrating non-financial, prerequisites of strong relational management. Gray and Jenkins (1993) emphasized the requirement for an approach which can draw on social sciences to fill the gaps in public management.

In the same year, Kretzmann and Mcknight (1993) elaborated on a shift from dependency and deficiency-oriented policies and programs to investing in community development. As time passed, authors and scholars strengthened the concept of an evaluation guided by a theory of change that requires specific information about actual

mechanisms that are related to positive outcomes across a varied range of indicators (Connell & Kubisch 1998).

By 2003, a number of high-profile scandals had attracted public attention and while governments still remain powerful and controlling, the involvement of citizens in decision-making, in the dispersal of resources, and in the implementation of policies was increasing (Naidoo 2003). The traditional monitoring and compliance approach to accountability with its limited application and usefulness for publicly supported, community-based programs was in question. An evaluation of processes to control accountability for programs could assist in creating complex community initiatives while at the same time incorporating a results-based accountability system. The argument on the applicability of particular accountability processes in the perspective of government-funded community compels one to rethink public accountability and adopt a change from traditional formulaic models of accountability to ones based on process and results (Aronson, Mutchler & Pan 1998).

In terms of culture-specific solutions, however, rarely had the literature considered public accountability in terms of kinship and culture enhancement. Chew and Greer (1997) have also pointed to the incompatibility between western and Aboriginal culture, values, principles and systems. Aboriginal culture is expressed through respect for Elders, kinship and collectivism, and does not readily align with the concept of accountability based on economic rationalistic principles and measuring performance in dollars alone (Chew & Greer 1997).



Meanwhile, Helin (2006) raised concerns over poor living conditions of Aboriginals and encouraged change. He focused on a future for Aboriginal populations in terms of independence and economic development. He emphasized that accountability should be addressed by self-reliance and not government handouts. He recommended democratic accountability tools for Aboriginals to identify and control excess use of power by the government. Accountability should be at system's root and should address education and experience limitations of Aboriginal leaders and communities (Helin 2006).

The results of this research suggest that a purist approach to financial accountability in fact stifles Aboriginal economic development. What emerged most clearly from the data was the need to look beyond financial reporting. Almost all participants agreed that there needs to be reporting on the funds disbursed, but many added that financial reporting alone does not adequately track achievements or failures of economic development programs. Methods of reporting that account solely on a financial basis for the funding provided have significant limitations. The traditional way of budgeting and accounting is confined to reporting in numbers. Almost all participants agreed that there needs to be reporting on the funds disbursed, but many added that financial reporting alone does not adequately track achievements or failures of economic development programs.

### **Culture Retention**

Aboriginal peoples' connection to the land is important to them and modern technologies and the wage based economy of western world can do little to sway this. Programs and policies can empower Aboriginal peoples to access a mixed economy

incorporating both a life on the land and the modern wage economy, but only if underlying economic conditions permit. In the North, there is a high cost attached to sustaining life, whether on the land or in communities. For many young northerners today, if the wage economy fails to provide a steady flow of high income opportunities, they will see a drop in time available to spend on the land and an increase in chronic welfare dependency. In Aboriginal culture there is resistance to time as it is seen as the “dictator of life” (Radel 2010, p. 189).

My attention also arched to culture, as many economists agree that economic development requires more than a mixture of capital, the latest technology, and responsible political and economic organizations; “a constellation of cultural values suited for modern business seems to be a critical ingredient as well” (Hezel 2009, p. 17). Hezel (2009, p. 6) mentions about Amy Chua, who in her much acclaimed book *World on Fire* also emphasizes that culture has fundamental impacts on development.

Northern Aboriginal languages are endangered to varying degrees, and there is cause for concern about their future, especially given their role in bringing communities together and passing Aboriginal culture and values down to future generations.

Concerns about waning participation in Aboriginal traditions and their importance were eloquently expressed by participants in the study. Participants in this study take pride in their culture and want their children to have economic opportunities while also continuing their traditions, languages, histories, and spiritual practices.

Culture is critical to developing a strong Aboriginal identity. Not just in the NWT but across Canada, Aboriginal peoples still participate in a traditional economy that

maintains the importance of history and culture (Sawchuk 2011). A considerable number of people earn a living in the mixed economy, and draw income from a number of sources including wages, harvesting from the land and the sale of arts and crafts. This mixed economy can foster community development, in some ways more so than the wage economy. It allows people to satisfy norms of sharing and community living, recreation and spiritual satisfaction: by sharing skills and expertise; sharing healthy and local grown or harvested food, and by establishing an avenue for the promotion of Aboriginal traditions and languages.

Research is vital for designing and pursuing education and economic development among Aboriginal peoples, but more important to the design is culturally and contextually appropriate research to the regions (Newhouse, Orr & The Atlantic Aboriginal Economic Development Integrated Research Program 2013, p. xiv). History shows that in many instances Aboriginal peoples' ability to be involved in their traditional practices such as hunting, fishing and trapping was superseded by the mining, energy and forest operations. The resource industry irreversibly impaired their capacity to pursue cultural and spiritual activities while providing little offsetting benefits to the communities (The Canadian Chamber of Commerce 2015, p. 6).

### **Social Development**

To be successful, an economic development framework for the North will require a strategy to deliver vast improvements to the stock of affordable housing, addictions services, quality and diverse employment opportunities. When the conversation turned to these issues, participants were overwhelmingly focused on the youth in their

community. This sentiment is in keeping with the words of Chief Louie, who has stated that “caring for children is the first step in economic development” (Chief Louie 2014, p. 2). Collaboration between communities and other stakeholders, both government and non-government, will be essential to taking this step.

Problems plaguing Aboriginal youth become all the more pressing when considering that the brain drain of these youth moving South, if reversed, could help fill important gaps. Demographic changes and economic environments have resulted in a shortage of skilled workers necessary for development of natural resource industries, but the Aboriginal peoples residing in the vicinity of these projects are a natural fit for resource sector employment. If done right, this could result in higher employment for Aboriginal peoples in this sector (The Canadian Chamber of Commerce 2015, p. 15). Dealing with social issues and achieving self-determination are essential to the success of Aboriginal peoples in the NWT (Irlbacher-Fox 2009).

## **Empowerment**

Self-empowerment and the land are important to the participants in this study. They want to be able to respect ancestral lands. They want proper rights over the use of those lands and the right to make their own choices about what happens to those lands. They are concerned about pollution from oil and gas development and advocate for full consultation of, and prior permission from, affected communities before such projects move ahead.

Aboriginal peoples have the right to govern and control their own destiny, and a realization is forming around the world that “economically strong indigenous peoples

will be able to protect their land, territories and resources” (Sena 2010, p. 9). This control can also help them to persevere and protect their culture and lifestyle from further erosion. MacDonald (2014, para 13) narrates Chief Louie:

*As I grew up and studied our history, I became convinced that the remedy to most of our problems was economic development. We needed to close the circle and reclaim the power that we had before the white people came along.*

It is in Canada’s best interest to see that Aboriginal peoples are empowered and their communities remain strong and in control of their own fates as much as possible. Only then will Canada’s northern regions have the foundation necessary for sustainable growth. According to the United Nations World Commission on Environment and Development, sustainable development meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own (The World Bank 2004, p. 9).

Tinsley (2009) has referred to the story of Chief Phillip Martin as a prime example of success achieved through determination despite adverse circumstances and numerous challenges. Martin became tribal chief of the Mississippi Choctaws in 1979, at a time when roughly three-quarters of the reservation’s population were unemployed. Over several decades, he led the development of numerous business enterprises and schools, and the reservation’s unemployment rate eventually dropped below four percent. Over this period, household incomes also rose dramatically, the number of Choctaw students who enrolled in college each year grew from two or three to more than 400, and life

expectancy increased from 65 to 75 years (Williams 2002). In an interview with Williams (2002, para 21), Chief Martin says that:

*Our aim was to create jobs so people could stay here on the reservation ... That way, we could maintain our tribe and our culture and start sending our kids to school to give them an opportunity to do even better than we are.*

Tinsley (2009, p. 1) calls Chief Martin's story "a compelling history of an impoverished, neglected and despised people who have made such remarkable progress as to be practically incomprehensible."

One of the objectives of both the federal and territorial governments should be to develop a strategy for northern economic development that provides residents with a high quality of life and equal opportunities. This strategy must foster orderly growth of the local economy and provide employment opportunities for northerners at all levels of industry and government, while avoiding dependence on a single industry or the public sector. The purpose should be to empower Aboriginal peoples to help themselves by making educated and well-informed decisions. This could help them choose their paths, make a living and experience the purpose and joy of life.

## **Breaking Down Silos**

In the end, this research explored stumbling blocks and potentially constructive changes that could achieve a balanced and holistic model of accountability that takes into account the need for social, cultural and spiritual development. Unfortunately, the

history of tragic effects on Aboriginal people is extensive with their language, culture and identity ignored, dismissed, devalued and forbidden in schools (Newhouse, Orr & The Atlantic Aboriginal Economic Development Integrated Research Program 2013, p. 10).

*Aboriginal peoples have unique aspirations and worldviews, with threads of understanding and dreams held in common with most of humankind (Wuttunee 2004, pp. 3-4).*

Economic models should deliver social and spiritual well-being in a sustainable manner, while at the same time nurturing real communities consisting of families, friends, fellow citizens, acquaintances, assemblies and community clubs. Proper implementation of this model requires working together in pursuit of important and frequently common goals, such as better employment outcomes, retention of culture, improved education and self-empowerment. Even though the education of Aboriginal peoples has become a national priority which requires implementation of successful models and ways to measure the success of those models (Newhouse, Orr & The Atlantic Aboriginal Economic Development Integrated Research Program 2013, p. xiii), yet organizations often act as if they are an end unto themselves, with little communication between different departments of the same government. Significant societal problems cannot be addressed by just one branch of government. Crime, for instance, is not so much a policing problem as it is a problem with poor schools, lack of jobs, economic inequality and inadequate support for health care and food (Froy 2009). Thus, addressing crime does not just involve public safety departments, but also departments of human resources, education, justice, health and social services (Pattison 2006). Environmental issues are

another example. Electricity utilities, water and wastewater utilities, parks and recreation and natural resource departments all need to cooperate (Froy 2009).

To truly understand the problems caused by silos in government, one needs to look no further than state and local economic-development initiatives. Virtually every state and local government has an economic-development agency devoted to encouraging businesses to locate or stay in their state or locality. The economic-development agency director and his or her employees focus on gathering resources for their department to use to entice businesses. They may perform their specific mission extremely well. Unfortunately, this activity—sometimes referred to as ‘smokestack chasing’ overlooks the importance of other important “quality of life” factors in retaining or attracting businesses. Education, taxes, crime, culture and health care are also factors that figure into company location decisions. Therefore, activities of departments responsible for these issue areas should be considered essential to the creation of a positive environment for economic development (Pattison 2006, p. 1).

Departments should work together on these areas that are essential to encouraging economic development, as “the problem with silos is that they cause people to ignore the big picture, and instead, focus insularly” (Pattison 2006, para 1). It is important to bridge the gaps that divide these silos and ensure all departments are working towards a common goal of improving citizens’ lives (Pattison 2006). However, “such divisions are often taken for granted, blamed on historical working relationships (‘it has always been like that’) and organizational cultures (‘they don’t work like we do’)” (Froy & Giguère 2010, p. 9). Others “dismiss department inefficiencies and lack of cross-functional solutions with immature employees, lack of basic training, or simply the



inability for some employees to play *nicely* with one another” (Gleeson & Doyle 2013, para 4). These divisions hinder progress. The problems and challenges restricting economic development are often multifaceted and as this research concludes require a holistic approach to be resolved. Many government officials sadly recognize the problem of silos in their governments but still limit their focus to the specific mission of their department.

As Osborne, D. and Gaebler (1993, p. 147) state, “the people who work in government are not the problem; the systems in which they work are the problem.” Changing these systems will require all levels of government to rethink the way they operate and take collective action. There is an increasing demand for government to improve its governance. However, government departments have remained focused on protecting program budgets and growing the client base to which they provide discrete services. This encourages departments to treat the symptoms of problems rather than attacking their root causes, as funds spent on prevention come from one department’s budget, but the savings it generates accrue to another. In this system, legislators and public executives adjust funding levels up and down based on political considerations without knowing what programs are working and which are failing, “they have no idea whether they’re cutting muscle or fat.” The authors argue that this strategy undermines communities and leads to dependency, and that government should instead act as a catalyst for community building by bringing together various interest groups and putting more control over public services into their hands. Empowering communities is essential because communities have a greater commitment to their members than bureaucracies do to their clients (Osborne, D. & Gaebler 1993).

Government must keep the big picture in focus if it is to achieve broad goals (Pattison 2006). Limited resources can go much further when directed to priorities that are shared across departments. Continuing to take a fragmented view of the issues facing northern Aboriginal communities will only undermine the intentions of government policies. In the words of (Gleeson & Doyle 2013, para 3):

*The silo mindset does not appear accidentally nor is it a coincidence that most organizations struggle with interdepartmental turf wars. When we take a deeper look at the root cause of these issues, we find that more often than not silos are the result of a conflicted leadership team.*

Leadership can come from communities themselves if governments take a holistic view of the entrenched social, cultural and economic problems that act as barriers to development. Increased integration and innovation will be key to identifying opportunities to overcome these barriers (Froy 2009).

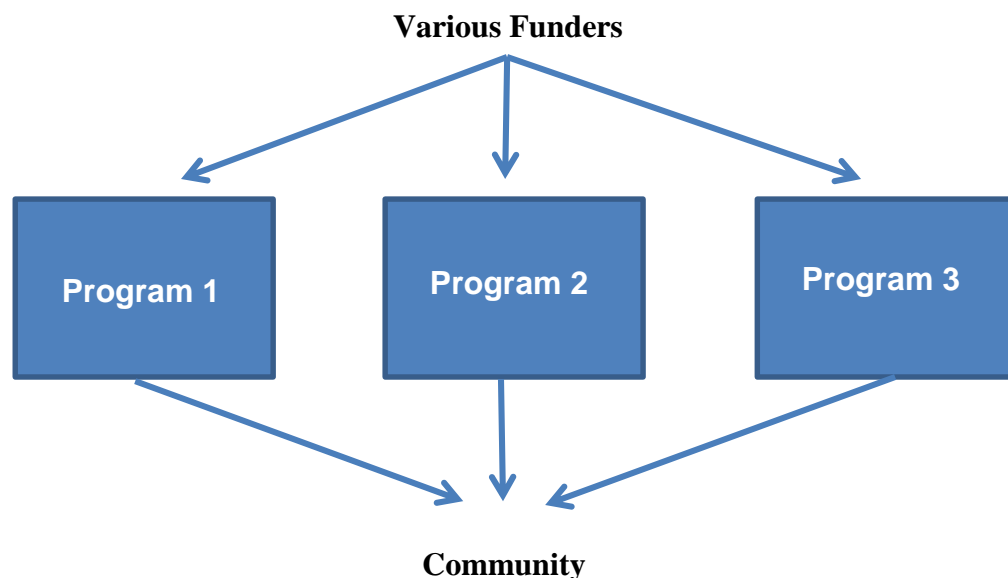


Figure 14: Systems (linked) (adapted from Jorgensen (2007))

## **Conclusion — A Holistic Approach to Accountability**

To conclude, funding successes are generally reported in terms of numbers, and more specifically, financial numbers. Participants in this study identified this as the most prevalent method of measuring the use of government funds spent on economic development. For example, government lending authorities such as the NWT Business Development and Investment Corporation typically report on loans given out, the amount of loans given, loan repayment rates, number of businesses and full time employment positions created (NWT Business Development and Investment Corporation 2014).

These indicators are effective measures of some, but not all aspects of funding. The holistic approach to accountability that developed from this research was a result of the complex mixture of variables influencing Aboriginal economic development that emerged through the use of Grounded Theory. This approach recognizes that accountability for government funding must be considered in the context of recipient communities' desired outcomes. Without this focus, accountability becomes a fragmentary exercise that oversimplifies the economic situation in northern communities and overstates the importance of narrow financial measures. This quantitative data has its place in the model, but it is only one of a number of factors that must be considered.

But what outcomes are communities actually looking for? Participants in the present study spoke of various social issues plaguing their community, of disappearing cultural practices and languages, and a colonial legacy of deeply-rooted disempowerment. They

want action on these issues to build a better future for community youth; acknowledging that such a result requires a long-term, sustainable approach. It will also require accountability that is reciprocal; measuring at once both the manner in which funds are spent and the effectiveness of those funds in producing results. Researchers must pivot away from purely quantitative analysis and look to qualitative data, the unfiltered insights of funding providers and recipients generated through Aboriginal Methodologies and Grounded Theory.

A holistic model of accountability for government-funded projects in Canadian Aboriginal communities of the NWT combines quantitative and qualitative benchmarks while retaining an overarching focus on sustainable development. Goals of culture retention, empowerment, financial measurement and social outcomes underpin this model and are integrated with traditional measures of economic development and growth. This holistic approach to accountability is represented by Figure 6 in Chapter 4 and has been reproduced here once again for reference:

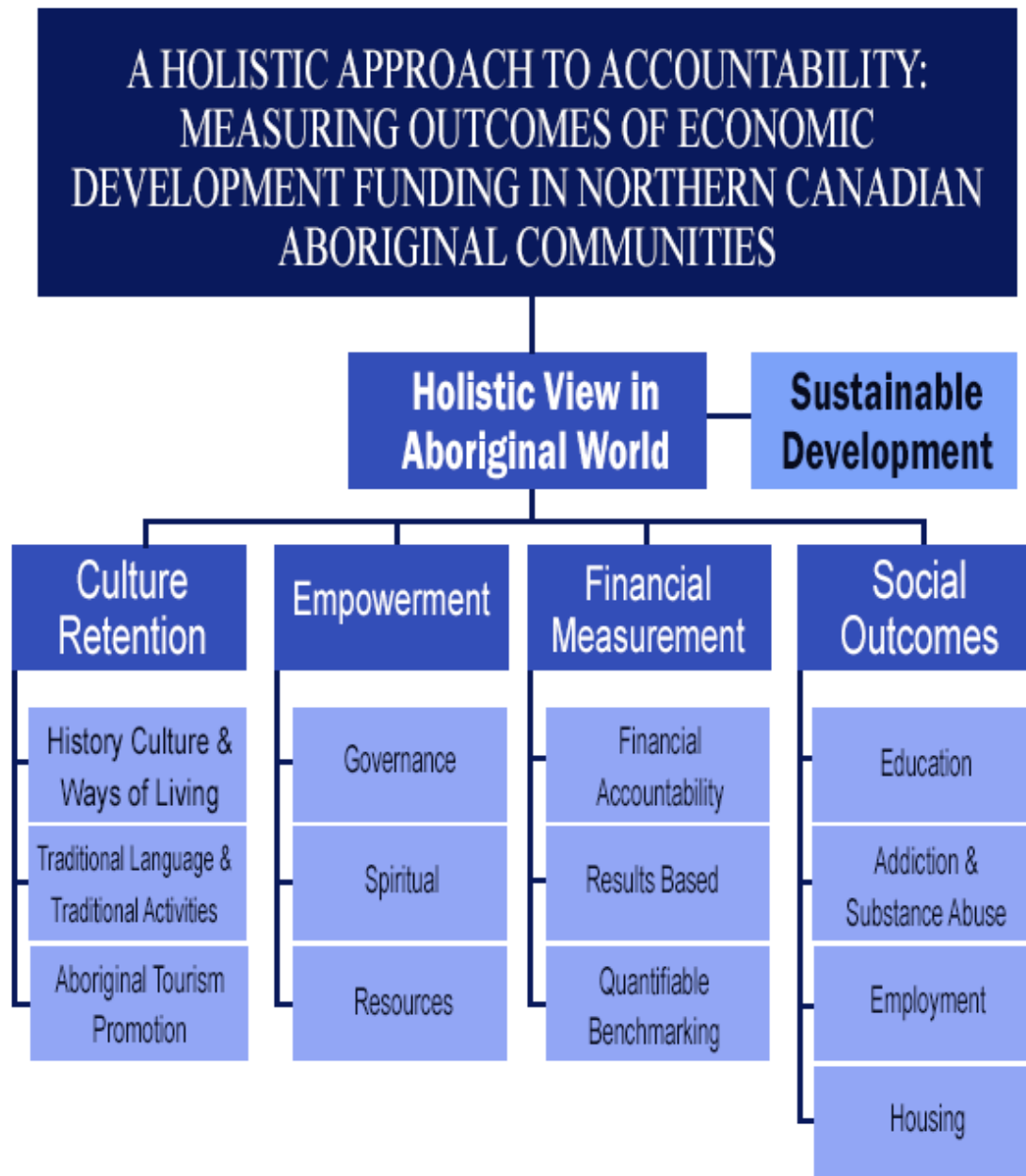


Figure 15: A Holistic Approach to Accountability: Measuring Outcomes of Economic Development Funding in Northern Canadian Aboriginal Communities

This model relies on knowledge generated from the bottom-up, in keeping with the idea that “government and non-government organizations must recognise the value that can be created for Aboriginal communities by undertaking social and economic

development through Aboriginal perspectives and approaches” (Radel 2010, p. 221). In giving greater consideration to Aboriginal perspectives, it also shifts the onus onto the government to enact reforms as:

*Aboriginal policy itself should change to provide a far more effective route to improving the lives and life chances of Indigenous peoples. This refocusing would result in changing oppressive circumstances rather than requiring people to change to better cope with oppressive circumstances (Irlbacher-Fox 2009, p. 1).*

A holistic model of accountability would not come without its own set of challenges. As Steets (2010, p. 39) notes:

*Strong accountability arrangements can have serious practical downsides. Establishing accountability processes can create significant direct costs and strict accountability regimes can hamper flexibility and reduce the agent’s willingness to accept risks.*

These risks must be kept in mind when embarking on the creation of any accountability model. While holism can help governments better engage Aboriginal communities in the accountability process, it is not a panacea for every issue that can arise when government attempts to improve accountability. However, the recent controversy surrounding the *FNFTA* underscores the need to consider new approaches to accountability.

Southcott (2015, p. 3) also notes that bringing about positive change for communities in Canada's North is no simple task, and there are many challenges to be borne in mind:

*The change from a colonial relationship to regional empowerment has not come easily. Issues of capacity and responsibility loom large and are causing difficulties for those attempting to improve the social, economic, and cultural situation in these communities.*

As a next step, I plan to take this model back to the community. On the other hand, it is uncertain how much can be done to break down the "silos" between different stakeholders. It is clear that a holistic approach is needed, but this also requires a cultural transformation at all levels of government. Fred Carmichael, President of the Gwich'in Tribal Council, suggests to Wuttunee (1992, p. 153) that the door is open for governments to adjust their approach and move forward:

*A lot of people don't like government interference. In the past the government dictated to us that this is what you'll do and this is how you'll do it. People naturally had a bad reaction to that. They are sick and tired of government telling them what to do. I'm talking about Native people. Since the territorial government has taken over, they've got quite a different attitude, in that they want to try and help. It's taken people a while, including myself, to realize that they're not there sticking their*

*nose in your business. They are there trying to help you. If you allow it, they will help.*

A major shift is required to break down existing “silos” and move to a more integrated focus on the economic development of Aboriginal communities. The economic future of Canada, as the demographics showed, depends on the success of Aboriginal peoples, but government and communities must work together to succeed and remain determined. The literature documents in abundance evidence of the difficulties experienced by Aboriginal peoples across Canada and a holistic view of these issues makes it abundantly clear that they are all “a Canadian problem, not an Aboriginal problem” (Fedio 2015, p. 1).

Further increases to financial reporting burdens will at best produce diminishing returns to accountability in government-funded programs. At worst, they will serve as a distraction while the social problems plaguing communities spiral further out of control and the traditions and languages that bind those communities fall further out of use. Governments must recognize the socio-economic challenges created by colonialism and work together with Aboriginal communities using a holistic approach to accountability that achieves balance between financial, social, cultural and economic factors. By doing so, governments can empower Aboriginal peoples to take control of their lives and create the sustainable foundation they seek for the next generation of northern Aboriginal youth.



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## Appendices

### Appendix A

Table 8: Number and distribution of the population reporting an Aboriginal identity and percentage of Aboriginal peoples in the population, Canada, provinces and territories, 2011 (Adapted from Statistics Canada 2011)

<b>Provinces and territories</b>	<b>Aboriginal identity population</b>	<b>Percent distribution (of Canada's total population) (%)</b>	<b>Aboriginal identity population as a percentage of the total population (%)</b>
Canada (total)	1,400,685	100.0	4.3
Newfoundland & Labrador	35,800	2.6	7.1
Prince Edward Island	2,230	0.2	1.6
Nova Scotia	33,845	2.4	3.7
New Brunswick	22,615	1.6	3.1
Quebec	141,915	10.1	1.8
Ontario	301,425	21.5	2.4
Manitoba	195,900	14.0	16.7
Saskatchewan	157,740	11.3	15.6
Alberta	220,695	15.8	6.2
British Columbia	232,290	16.6	5.4
Yukon	7,705	0.6	23.1

Northwest Territories	21,160	1.5	51.9
Nunavut	27,360	2.0	86.3

## Appendix B

Table 9: Top 10: First World Countries in terms of their Gross National Income - The GNI

based on purchasing-power-parity (PPP) per capita in int'l Dollars.

([http://www.nationsonline.org/oneworld/first\\_world.htm](http://www.nationsonline.org/oneworld/first_world.htm)) - (IMF - International Monetary Fund, World Economic Outlook Database 2005)

#	Country	Region	GNI per Capita
1	Luxembourg	Western Europe	66,821
2	Norway	Northern Europe	41,941
3	United States	North America	41,557
4	Ireland	Northern Europe	40,003
5	Bermuda	North America	*36,000
6	Iceland	Northern Europe	35,686
7	Denmark	Northern Europe	34,718
8	San Marino	Southern Europe	*34,600
9	Canada	North America	34,444
10	Switzerland	Western Europe	33,168
* CIA The World Fact book (covers countries not mentioned by the IMF, information may refer to 2004 or earlier). Slightly different figures you will find at The World Bank Group.			

## Appendix C

### ***Main Questions:***

The principal research question of the dissertation is:

Was there reciprocal consultation on intended purpose and use of government funding to the communities?

The second research question of the dissertation is:

Was measurement of effective use of funds based on participation and reciprocal accountability?

### **Interview Questions:**

1. Are you aware of any government-funded projects/programs?
2. What kind of information on such programs was available to you?
3. Tell me if the goals were supported and understood within the community?
4. In your opinion, did the funding provide adequately support programs and projects?
5. Could you tell if the community was consulted on how the funding will be used?
6. Are you aware if there was a consensus on the funding requirement?
7. Do you have any knowledge on how and where the money was spent?
8. Was the funding used for the purpose it was given?
9. Do you know if the process agreed upon was followed?
10. Were the reporting requirements agreed upon and followed accordingly?
11. In your opinion did the funding achieve its goals?
12. What can you add to the above or what examples can you give me?

**Questions on culture:**

13. Can Aboriginal peoples achieve economic development goals to compete in global economy without losing traditional activities and with modern lifestyles?
14. Should preserving and strengthening traditional culture, values and languages be reflected in development activities?
15. Please explain to me in your own words if there was any discussion that took place on culture aspects related to the usage and reporting of funding?
16. In your opinion from a scale of 1 to 5, how important is the culture aspect to funding from the government?