

# Arts-based Teaching and Learning as an Alternative Approach for Aboriginal Learners and their Teachers

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This work was funded by a contribution from the Canadian Council on Learning.

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***As Native people we became lost along the way so we have to regroup to make education better for our children.***

~ [Therese Tuccaro \(Elder\)](#), Mikisew Cree First Nation, Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation, Athabasca Tribal Council, Education Committee Member

***Our culture, history and traditions should be included in the education of our children so that they become proud of who they are.***

~ Kim Marcel, Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation, Athabasca Tribal Council, Education Committee Member

***To accept a language that expresses neither our true selves nor our true mythologies is to disarm our civilization. It is to cripple our capacity to talk and to act in a way that reflects both our collective unconscious and our ethical standards.***

~ John Ralston Saul, (2008). *A fair country: Telling truths about Canada*. Toronto: Penguin Group

## **Terms Used in this Report**

### ***The Term 'Aboriginal'***

In Canada, the term *Aboriginal* refers to First Nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples. The research reported herein involved mainly First Nations and Métis individuals and groups. The term *Aboriginal* is used throughout this report.

### ***Arts-based Teaching and Learning***

We have defined arts-based teaching as that which uses student art-making as a means for promoting learning in non-arts subjects areas such as Literacy, Social Studies, Mathematics and other non-arts curriculum subjects.

Please go to [www.ltta.ca](http://www.ltta.ca) to see examples of arts-based lessons in non-arts curriculum areas.

## **Executive Summary**

The research reported herein explores the potential of arts-based education to contribute to the educational success of Aboriginal children and youth. The need for alternative approaches to education for Aboriginal learners is clearly illustrated by continuing low school graduation rates among Aboriginal peoples in Canada. So-called “mainstream” approaches to education have failed to meet the needs of Aboriginal learners.

Arts-based education was considered as an approach to education for Aboriginal learners worthy of exploration because it shares many of the qualities that the literature describes as the holistic, traditional approach to learning that is congruent with Aboriginal values: it is experiential and has the capacity to engage learners physically, mentally, socially, and spiritually (Csikszentmihalyi, 1996; Dewey, 1934; 1938; Willis & Mann, 2000; George, 2004; Antone, Gamlin, & Provost-Turchetti, 2003).

The team for this research was composed of seven individuals, four of whom were Aboriginal, and three of whom were not. The researchers were affiliated with either the Division of Academic Research at the Royal Conservatory, Toronto, or with the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education at the University of Toronto.

The *Learning Through the Arts* (LTTA) program of The Royal Conservatory was chosen as the primary vehicle through which this research was conducted because of its pre-existing history of implementation of arts-based programming in Canada and abroad. Prior to the commencement of this research, LTTA had already been established in classrooms with Aboriginal students primarily at the elementary school level (Grades 1 to 8) in British Columbia, Manitoba, Ontario, and the Atlantic Provinces. In these classrooms, arts-based curriculum, incorporating cultural and local community input, had provided Aboriginal students with the opportunity to learn subjects such as language, mathematics, environmental conservation, and weather systems through traditional Aboriginal and new media-based art forms. With its existing connections to Aboriginal communities, the LTTA program provided a suitable entry point into conversations with

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Aboriginal students, their teachers, and their communities as to the suitability of arts-based teaching for Aboriginal learners.

Three hundred and ninety-two individuals in the Atlantic Provinces, Ontario, Manitoba, Alberta, British Columbia, and the Northwest Territories participated in this research. Fifty-six percent of those participants were Aboriginal. Some of the research participants had previous experience with the LTTA program, and some had not. In cases where individuals and groups were not familiar with the concept of arts-based teaching, the research team provided experiential arts-based workshops, so that participants could make informed comments about the suitability of the approach for Aboriginal learners. The workshops were led by the Aboriginal artists on the research team, who were also part of the LTTA artist roster.

The research was guided by four key principles for community-based research (CBR) developed from a Canadian Aboriginal community-based health promotion study (Potvin, Cargo, McComber, Delormier, Macaulay, 2003). CBR emphasises the involvement of communities in the design and enactment of research that affects local concerns. Information about how those principles were enacted is included in this report.

Research data were gathered through interviews, focus group discussions, questionnaires, and field observations. These research instruments were variously constructed to reflect local contexts and concerns, but the thread that tied all of the research instruments together was the underlying research query about the capacity of arts-based education to meet the needs of Aboriginal learners.

Data were analysed for patterns, themes, and frequencies using *ATLAS.ti* (Muhr, 1997), a computer program designed to facilitate the coding and analysis of large amounts of qualitative data. Using a system of researcher-created codes and memos, the program organizes material according to themes and patterns and frequencies.

In the first phase of the research, the team identified the main impediments to the educational success of Aboriginal students in Canada. Aboriginal participants from across the country emphasized that the following three major impediments factors to the school success of Aboriginal learners:

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- 1) Aboriginal children and youth have learning needs that differ from those of non-Aboriginal students. These needs are rooted in both traditional Aboriginal approaches to learning and in the history of oppression of Aboriginal peoples in Canada, especially in the traumas visited upon Aboriginal peoples by the Residential School system.
- 2) Racism continues to exert a damaging effect on Aboriginal learners.
- 3) Poverty is an on-going effect of racism and failed schooling. Conversely, poverty engenders racism and failed schooling.

Examples supporting each of the foregoing points are included in this report.

It was primarily, although not solely, the Aboriginal research participants who identified the following six actions needed to create an educational practice that would better reflect traditional cultural values, counteract the destructive impacts of historical oppression of Aboriginal peoples, and promote the school success of Aboriginal children and youth:

- 1) Adopt traditional teaching and learning methods: experiential, hands-on learning; holistic learning; modelled learning; and collaborative learning. (Recommended by 95% of our aboriginal participants; 5% of our non-Aboriginal participants.)
- 2) Promote cultural knowledge and pride in Aboriginal identity. (100% of Aboriginal participants)
- 3) Provide positive Aboriginal role models in education. (62% of Aboriginal participants)
- 4) Train, hire, and retain more Aboriginal teachers and school administrators, and promote retention of those individuals. (85% of Aboriginal participants; 20% of non-Aboriginal participants).
- 5) Provide school environments that reflect traditional Aboriginal values and traditions (10% of Aboriginal participants).
- 6) Promote understanding of Aboriginal values and traditions among the broader Canadian population (50% of Aboriginal participants; 15% of non-Aboriginal participants).

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This report contains statements and examples provided by participants as to how arts-based learning can help achieve these educational goals. In particular, arts-based programs involving Aboriginal students in Winnipeg, the Atlantic Provinces, and in Vancouver were examined in order to determine their impacts on both students and teachers. The research results showed gains in students' personal and cultural pride, their capacities to focus and persevere in their learning, and in their engagement, enjoyment, and success in learning. Teacher gains included an increased capacity to use the arts in their teaching of non-arts subjects, broadened realizations of what their students were capable of, and pride in student achievement.

While the persistence and nature of those challenges may be familiar to Aboriginal peoples, they may not be so evident to some non-Aboriginals, as evidenced by the reluctance of 7% of the non-Aboriginal participants to admit that Aboriginal children might have culturally-specific learning needs. Nonetheless, the research showed widespread interest on the part of both Aboriginal and the non-Aboriginal research participants in arts-based teaching as a means to promote the school and life success of Aboriginal learners.

This research involved individuals to whom we introduced the concept of arts-based learning and those who had already participated in the LTTA program. We feel that that a longitudinal study that enables the collection of base-line data and traces the effects of arts-based learning on Aboriginal students and teachers over two or three years is now warranted.

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## Context for the Research

The research reported herein explores the potential of arts-based education to contribute to the educational success of Aboriginal children and youth.

### *Aboriginal Educational Concerns*

The Assembly of First Nations' Action Plan on Education (2005) has reported that First Nations students were far less likely than other Canadian students to enrol and excel in Math and Science courses, to attend school regularly, to complete high school, and to survive adolescence. Of the then almost 120,000 on-reserve Kindergarten to Grade 12 students recorded by Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC) in 2001 - 02, only 32 percent were expected to receive their high school diploma based on then current statistics (Assembly of First Nations-Assemblée des Premières Nations, 2005). In 2006, Mendelson noted that that 43% of *all* Aboriginal peoples in Canada (First Nations, Métis, and Inuit), do not have a high school diploma. Obviously, so-called "mainstream" approaches to education have failed to meet the needs of Aboriginal learners in Canada.

Aboriginal students in Canada are poorly prepared for academic success by both their elementary and secondary school educations. Participants at the 2009 Summit on Aboriginal Education organized by the Council of Ministers of Education Canada, and which involved leaders of five national Aboriginal organizations, emphasised the need to focus on and improve early learning opportunities, as well as secondary and post-secondary education.<sup>1</sup>

It seems obvious that improved school graduation rates may mean that that Aboriginal peoples can capitalize on employment opportunities and enjoy healthier lifestyles. However, as Battiste (2004) has pointed out, to think of Aboriginals education reform *only* in terms of better suiting Aboriginal individuals to enter the work force is to ignore the fact that Aboriginal school underachievement in this country is one of the most

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<sup>1</sup> The Summit included representatives from the Assembly of First Nations, the Congress of Aboriginal People, the Métis National Council, the Native Women's Association of Canada, and Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami.

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deleterious effects of a “colonial system that triggered indigenous peoples’ trauma and disconnection with many aspects of education and themselves.” Repression of Canada’s Aboriginal populations was powerfully enacted, in large part, through the Residential School system.

In his official apology to Aboriginal peoples of Canada (2008), Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper described the underlying colonial objectives that guided the foundation and functioning of the Residential School system:

For more than a century, Indian Residential Schools separated over 150,000 Aboriginal children from their families and communities. In the 1870’s, the federal government, partly in order to meet its obligation to educate Aboriginal children, began to play a role in the development and administration of these schools. Two primary objectives of the Residential Schools system were to remove and isolate children from the influence of their homes, families, traditions and cultures, and to assimilate them into the dominant culture. These objectives were based on the assumption Aboriginal cultures and spiritual beliefs were inferior and unequal. Indeed, some sought, as it was infamously said, "to kill the Indian in the child". Today, we recognize that this policy of assimilation was wrong, has caused great harm, and has no place in our country. (Office of the Prime Minister, June 11, 2008: <http://www.pm.gc.ca/eng/media.asp?id=2149>)

Just as education has played a major role in the oppression of Aboriginal peoples, it holds the potential to contribute to the healing of wounds suffered by the families, communities, and the psyches of Aboriginal peoples in Canada (e.g., Battiste, 2004; Kirkness, 1999; Kirkness & Bowen, 1992; Stairs, 1994). Battiste (2004) has called for education that promotes an honest acknowledgement of past inequities and atrocities and that “reflects the languages, literacies, visual expressions, and philosophical foundations of indigenous communities,” while acknowledging the differences that exist among

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Aboriginal peoples in Canada. Arts-based teaching and learning may have the potential to contribute to the kind of education called for by Battiste.

***The Nature and Effects of Arts-based Teaching and Learning***

Arts-based education, also referred to as arts-integrated education, couples the teaching of an art form or forms with the delivery of one or more non-arts curriculum subjects. For example, drama might be used to learn about a particular historical era, or song-writing might provide a means of understanding mathematical concepts. In arts-based teaching and learning, the emphasis is usually on active art-making by students, and arts-based lessons are designed so that knowledge of the art form and of the non-arts curriculum area is promoted.

Advocates for arts-based education often express the belief that the division of teaching into discrete subject areas contradicts the integrated nature of human knowledge and the interdependence of subject areas. They argue that art-making provides a means for engendering, processing, expressing, and applying learning of all kinds and is thus a particularly effective ally in the teaching non-arts subject areas (Burnaford, Brown, Doherty, & McLaughlin, 2007).

The particular ability of the arts to promote learning is often attributed to the capacity of art-making to provide sensual/experiential, emotional, and spiritual engagement, as well as personal expression, thus promoting personal attachment and commitment to learning (Csikszentmihalyi, 1996; Dewey, 1934; 1938; Gradle, 2009; Uptis & Smithrim, 2003). Proponents of arts-based education also frequently refer to its ability to provide differentiated learning opportunities: differences in learning readiness, preferred learning styles, cultural backgrounds, and interests that students bring to their learning at any grade level are accommodated in art-making because it is non-prescriptive by nature and not reliant on a specific set of cultural, cognitive, and linguistic capacities (Gardner, 1993; Greene, 1995; Willis & Mann, 2000).

There are also arguments that art-making likely provides lessons in such things as perseverance, creative thinking, goal setting and self-regulation that are transferable to other learning and life situations (Winner, Hetland, Veneema, & Sheridan, 2007; Baum, Owen, & Oreck, 1997).

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The evidence is mounting that attests to the benefits of arts-based education. For example, several studies have shown its positive impact on students' academic performance (e.g., Baum, Owen, & Oreck, 1997; Butzlaff, 2000; Deasy, 2002; Upitis & Smithrim, 2003) and their engagement in school life and pride in learning (e.g., Patteson, Upitis, & Smithrim, 2005; Upitis & Smithrim, 2003). Arts-based learning has also been shown to boost students' self-esteem (Sylwester, 1998) and improve their social skills (e.g., Mentzer & Boswell, 1995; Patteson, 2009c). There is evidence that arts-based teaching can foster more tolerant classrooms by promoting the inclusion of children with learning challenges and of varied cultural backgrounds because the arts encourage the sharing of divergent perspectives on experience (Patteson, 2009c). There are also numerous studies that link specific art forms with the development of specific abilities, such as the case of drama, which has been shown to have positive effect on second language acquisition, and that of music study that has been seen to positively link to literacy skills and spatial reasoning (Deasy, 2002; Hetland, 2000).

For teachers, there have also been demonstrated benefits of arts-based teaching. Some studies have shown that teachers discover hitherto unrecognized aptitudes and knowledge in individual students or groups of students through student art-making (Patteson, 2004). Teachers have also claimed that students are more engaged and joyous in their learning when it involves art-making and that teaching is, therefore, more rewarding (Upitis & Smithrim, 2003). Many teachers have also experienced professional rejuvenation when arts-based teaching is added to their repertoires of pedagogical approaches (Patteson, 2004).

***Arts-based Learning for Aboriginal Students***

When conceiving of this research project, our team members were aware that it is often an exercise of dubious merit to try to broadly assign preferences in learning approaches to any group of people and that there exists great diversity among Aboriginal peoples in Canada. However, there was enough in own experiences that convinced us that arts-based learning might hold a special appeal for Aboriginal learners. For instance, Patteson, the PI for this research, in her role as lead researcher into the effects of the *Learning Through the Arts* (LTTA) program, had heard anecdotal accounts of arts-based

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educational program for Aboriginal students. Patteson and Restoule, Co-investigator on this research, were also individually aware of calls for educational approaches that would accommodate the value Aboriginal educators placed upon learning opportunities that involved *holistic* learning.

In the literature concerning educational approaches that would suit Aboriginal learners, the term holistic is widely used to describe learning opportunities that promote the physical, mental, social, and spiritual engagement of the learner (e.g., Aboriginal Learning Knowledge Centre, November 2009; Antone, Gamlin, & Provost-Turchetti, 2003; George, 2004). In its *Position Paper on Aboriginal Literacy* (2002), the National Aboriginal Design Committee (NADC), spoke of the need to provide holistic education for Aboriginal learners and the negative effects of not doing so:

Since time immemorial, Aboriginal Peoples have believed that we are Spirit, Heart, Mind, and Body. That is, in order for programming (including literacy) to be effective for Aboriginal peoples, it must recognise and nurture all four parts. Historically the institutional educational has focussed on facts, cognitive skills—mind—and perhaps Body through physical education. Typically spirit and Heart were not addressed. That is, the institutional education system has ignored 50% of who we are. Aboriginal Peoples believe that this is the reason for a significant portion of the social ills seen in many communities, including non-Aboriginal. (NADC, 2002)

Patteson and Restoule were struck by the similarities in claims made for holistic and for arts-based education: as in the holistic approach described by the NADC, arts-based learning accommodates spirit, heart, emotion, and body. Given those overlaps, the two decided to explore the potential of arts-based approaches to teaching and learning for Aboriginal students. We agreed to anchor our study of arts-based teaching and learning in an exploration of the actual and potential impacts of arts-based education in the LTTA program, since the program already had a history of providing arts-based teaching and learning to Aboriginal students and their teachers in Canada. Our aim was not to promote

the LTTA program, but to use it to explore the potential of arts-based education in general for Aboriginal learners and their teachers.

### ***The Learning Through the Arts Program***

#### ***History of the LTTA Program***

*Learning Through the Arts* (LTTA) is an arts-based educational program that originated at the Royal Conservatory of Music (RCM), Toronto, in response to widespread sentiments that Ontario education was in a state of crisis. A report commissioned by The RCM in 1994 confirmed that Toronto area teachers were ill-equipped to deal with multi-cultural classrooms and non-English speaking students; to meet the demands of an ambitious new curriculum; to keep pace with the accelerated pace of social, political, and up technological change that characterised their own lives and those of their students; and to deal with what they described as wide-spread lack of student engagement in learning (Elster, 2001; Korn, 1994). The 1994 report suggested that arts-based teaching across the curriculum might alleviate some of the pressures on students and teachers by enlivening and enriching learning, and by making it more engaging and accessible. Consequently, the LTTA program was launched in 1994 in seven Toronto area schools, some elementary and some secondary. From its original 1994 start in Toronto, the program has grown to reach more than 100,000 students in 400 schools (primarily elementary) across Canada in 2010 and is the largest arts-based education program in Canada. Extensive LTTA school programs now also exist in England and Germany, and teacher and artist professional development programs in arts-based teaching have been offered in twelve countries outside of Canada.

#### ***LTTA Program Format***

In LTTA, specially trained regional artists and classroom teachers partner to develop and implement comprehensive 8-week units of arts-based lessons in non-arts curriculum areas identified by the classroom teacher. Regional artists are recruited and trained by LTTA so that they are able to merge their art forms with curriculum subjects. Teachers are likewise provided with professional development session where they explore the potential and logistics of arts-based education. In LTTA, each artist is in the

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classroom four times over an eight-week period. Teachers practice new arts-based teaching techniques themselves and are responsible for moving the assignments forward between artist visits. Each teacher works with two LTTA artists during a school calendar year, resulting in 16 weeks of professional development yearly. LTTA is typically implemented in a school for at least three years, so that teachers are supported in incorporating these new teaching techniques into their own practice. LTTA, as an organization, aims to create local capacity so that educators and artists are eventually able to sustain arts-based programming without the organization's involvement.

***LTTA's Record of Success***

LTTA has a proven record of success. There have been more than 35 studies, some originating from the Research Division of the Royal Conservatory and others involving research partnerships with university researchers in Canada and abroad, that have documented the program's positive impacts on teachers and students. Those positive impacts include many of those already mentioned in the previous section about arts-based learning: enhanced academic achievement and engagement for students (Patteson, Upitis, & Smithrim, 2005; Upitis & Smithrim, 2003), increased student cooperation and collegiality (Patteson, 2009), better intercultural understanding, reduction in behaviour problems, and increased capacity for students to access and express their learning in non-verbal and verbal ways (Patteson, 2009c). As well there has been evidence that arts-based learning has enhanced student retention of learning (Patteson, 2008).

***LTTA in Aboriginal Communities***

Prior to the commencement of this research, LTTA had already been established in some classrooms with Aboriginal students primarily at the elementary school level (Grades 1 to 8) in British Columbia, Manitoba, Ontario, and the Atlantic Provinces. In these classrooms, arts-based curriculum, incorporating cultural and local community input, had provided Aboriginal students with the opportunity to learn subjects such as language, mathematics, environmental conservation, and weather systems through traditional Aboriginal and new media-based art forms. With its existing connections to Aboriginal communities, the LTTA program provided a suitable entry point into

conversations with Aboriginal students, their teachers, and their communities as to the efficacy of arts-based teaching for Aboriginal learners.

## **Funding for this Research**

The bulk of the funding for this research came from the Canadian Council on Learning. This funding was augmented by the following organizations:

- *The Alberta Ministry of Environment*, who commissioned a study of the need and desire for arts-based teaching and learning in Aboriginal communities surrounding Fort McMurray. The results of that study (Patteson, 2009a) are folded into this report.
- *The National Arts Centre – Centre national des arts* with whom we partnered to study the effects of their *Music Connections – Winnipeg* program in Aboriginal classrooms (Patteson & Gazan, 2009)
- *The Salamander Foundation*, who provided funding to LTTA to investigate the interest in arts-based teaching and learning in the North West Territories. The findings from workshops with Aboriginal artists and teachers of Aboriginal students are included in this report (Patteson, 2009b).
- *The Social Science and Humanities Research Council of Canada*, who provided seed funding for a grant application to study the effects of arts-based teaching on Aboriginal teachers and learners. SSHRC funded a letter of intent to submit a Community University Research Alliance (CURA) project.
- *The Ontario Institute for Studies in Education* of the University of Toronto, who provided funds to develop research relationships, as well as two Research and Development Graduate Assistantships
- *Learning Through the Arts*, who provided substantial in-kind contributions that augmented the funding for this research

## **The Research Team**

Dr. Ann Patteson was the Principal Investigator for this research. She is Director of Academic Research for *The Royal Conservatory*, which operates the LTТА program. Dr. Jean-Paul Restoule (Anishinaabe) was Co-investigator. Dr. Restoule is a member of the Dokis First Nation and Assistant Professor of Aboriginal Education in the Department of Adult Education and Counselling Psychology at the *Ontario Institute for Studies in Education* (OISE) of the University of Toronto.

Dr. Indrani Margolin and Ms. Conely de Leon, MA, were research associates on this project. When this research commenced, Dr. Margolin and Ms. de Leon were both OISE graduate students who were interested in Aboriginal education. During the course of the research, they both graduated from their respective programs.

Ms. Amanda Morgan Pulling, a BEd student at *Queen's University*, assisted with data entry, report formatting, and report proofing.

Three additional members joined the research team part way through the project:

- Ms. Anastasia Hendry (Haida), LTТА Aboriginal Mentor Artist-educator and the Aboriginal Programming Co-ordinator for British Columbia and Alberta
- Mr. Aaron Paquette (Cree) Aboriginal LTТА Mentor Artist-educator in Alberta
- Ms. Shelley MacDonald (Mi'Kmaq), LTТА Core Artist-educator, British Columbia

These three individuals joined Dr. Patteson, PI, in research conducted in Northern Alberta and in the Northwest Territories.

## **Goals of the Research**

The broad goals of this research project were to determine a) if and how arts-based curriculum learning has promoted the educational success of Aboriginal children

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and youth already participating in the LTTA program and b) if, when introduced to the concept and experiences of arts-based teaching and learning, Aboriginal community members and teachers of Aboriginal students who have not had exposure to LTTA think that approach could be used to enhance the school engagement and success of Aboriginal learners.

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The specific questions that guided this research were as follow:

- What do teachers, community members, and teaching artists identify as the main impediments to the school and life success of Aboriginal children and youth?
- What do teachers, community members, and teaching artists identify as culturally responsive approaches to education that might promote school success for Aboriginal students?
- Do teachers, community members and school administrators identify learning needs and dispositions particular to Aboriginal learners?
- Do Aboriginal community members identify arts-based teaching and learning as a potential means of promoting school and life success for their children and youth?
- Do teachers perceive that their Aboriginal students better understand and embrace their cultural identities because of arts-based teaching and learning?
- Does arts-based teaching provide teachers of Aboriginal students with what they perceive to be effective teaching approaches for meeting the needs of Aboriginal learners?
- Do teachers of Aboriginal students, themselves, report positive program impacts on their levels of satisfaction and sense of accomplishment in their own teaching as a result of using arts-based teaching?

## **Methodology**

### *Research Participants*

Three hundred and ninety-two individuals participated in this research. Table 1 indicates from what Canadian regions and organizations these research participants were drawn, the percentage of Aboriginal individuals in each group, the research instruments used in each case, and whether or not participants had experienced the LTTA program prior to involvement in the research. A fuller description of our research instruments, as well as a discussion of the necessity for applying different research instruments in the

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different research contexts is contained in the section on *Research Instruments*, which immediately follows Table 1.

Table 1: Description of research participants and data-gathering instruments

<i>Region</i>	<i>Study Participants</i>	<i>% Abori- ginal</i>	<i>Data Collection</i>	<i>Previous Experience of LTTA</i>
<b>Atlantic Provinces</b>	Fifteen teachers and five principals in reserve schools in Nova Scotia and New Brunswick in the reserve communities of Potlotek, Eskasoni, Wagmatcook, Pictou Landing, Eel Ground, Red Bank, and Elsipogtog.	30%	Teacher & principal interviews teacher questionnaire	Yes
<b>Atlantic Provinces (continued)</b>	Representative from The Atlantic First Nations Help Desk, Membertou First Nation Reserve, Nova Scotia	Abori- ginal	interview	Yes
<b>Ontario</b>	Five Ontario principals	0%	interviews	Yes
	Four LTTA teachers in schools that had a high proportion of Aboriginal students (30%-90% of class populations).	0%	questionnaire	Yes
	Fifty-five LTTA Artist-educators in Ontario schools	0%	questionnaire interviews	Yes
<b>Manitoba</b>	Ninety-four Winnipeg elementary students in schools	85%	questionnaire focus groups	Yes

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<i>Region</i>	<i>Study Participants</i>	<i>% Abori- -ginal</i>	<i>Data Collection</i>	<i>Previous Experience of LTTA</i>
<b>Manitoba</b> (continued)	Winnipeg city core			
	Six educators taking part in the Music Connections–Winnipeg program	17%	questionnaire interviews	Yes
	Thirty-seven teachers at LTTA schools in Winnipeg city core.	4%		
<b>Alberta</b>	Fifteen Aboriginal artists in Northern Alberta	100%	observation	No
	Sixty Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal educators; Aboriginal community members in Fort McMurray and the reserve communities of Anzac, Chard, Fort McKay, and Fort Chipewyan (Cree, Métis, and Dene); representatives from the Fort McMurray Catholic School Board, Fort McMurray Public School Board, & members of the Education Committee of the Athabasca Tribal Council	40%	interview focus group	No

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<i>Region</i>	<i>Study Participants</i>	<i>% Abori- -ginal</i>	<i>Data Collection</i>	<i>Previous Experience of LTTA</i>
<b>British Columbia</b>	Nineteen attendees at “Aboriginal Science Day”: five licensed teachers, two district school board Aboriginal consultants; one school principal, 11 Aboriginal Support Workers	90%	questionnaire focus group	Two individuals had previous experience of the program.
<b>British Columbia</b> (continued)	Nine Aboriginal students participating in a school dramatic production jointly produced by LTTA and the Musqueam Nation	100%	interview with LTTA artist	Yes
	Ten members of the participatory action research group, <i>The Girlz Group</i> , aged 11 to 22; average age 15 <sup>2</sup>	100%	questionnaire focus group	No
<b>The Northwest Territories</b>	The Aboriginal Education Coordinator for the Public School Board	Abori- -ginal	interview	No
	Thirty Yellowknife regional artists	77%	observation	No

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<sup>2</sup> Participatory Action Research involves social action in that it is designed to address the knowledge and action needs of a specific community. The research participants are involved the research design, research instruments, and interpretation of data (Hall, 1992). In the case of the *Girlz Group*, the issues being explored are those that pertain to the well-fare and education of Aboriginal girls and women.

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<i>Region</i>	<i>Study Participants</i>	<i>% Abori- -ginal</i>	<i>Data Collection</i>	<i>Previous Experience of LTTA</i>
	25 Yellowknife region educators	53%	observation and informal discussion	No
	Director of Early Childhood Services for <i>The Ministry for Education, Culture, and Employment, NWT</i>	Abori- -ginal	meeting notes	No
	The Professional Development, Coordinator, <i>the Northwest Territories Teachers' Association</i>	No	meeting notes	No
<b>Canada-wide</b>	Five Aboriginal LTTA Artists	100%	Interviews	Yes

***Research Instruments***

As can be seen from Table 1, data for this research were gathered through interviews (usually lasting from half an hour to an hour and a half), questionnaires (designed to be completed in about 20 minutes), focus group discussions (typically an hour or two in length for adults, and a half-hour for students), and field observations. In the case of the interviews and focus groups, we created semi-structured scripts. That is, we developed lists of questions that we anticipated would draw out the information we needed, but that would also be flexible enough to allow participants to expand their comments to focus on their specific concerns and take us in un-anticipated directions in the conversations. All of the research instruments are contained in Appendices A through J of this report, and, when recounting instances where a particular research instrument was used, the corresponding Appendix is indicated in the text.

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In many situations where we gathered data, we used a combination of research instruments in order to create depth in the data. For instance, in classroom settings we typically administered student questionnaires to the whole class, but involved a subset of that class in focus group discussions where we were able to delve into student experiences in more detail. Student participants for the focus groups were selected by teachers, since we were often dealing with sensitive populations of students, some of whom lived with learning challenges. We asked teachers to ensure that students participating in the focus groups were those who would be comfortable in doing so.

We also applied multiple means of gathering data with our teacher participants, using questionnaires, as well as interviews or focus group discussions.

In other cases where we were conducting the research outside of a school setting, such as in the majority of the discussions that took place in with Aboriginal community leaders in Northern Alberta, the conversations were less formal and more fluid. In these cases we often judged that the introduction of questionnaires could have jeopardised the process of building trust and created the appearance that we had arrived with our own agenda which we were imposing upon the individual or group. Instead, we opted for loosely structured discussions, where we wove our questions into the general flow of conversation.

Because of the variety of contexts, groups, and individuals involved in the research, it was not possible to construct the above mentioned research instruments so that they could be used universally with all of the research participants. For example, we were consulting with some research participants who had already had experience of LTTA, as was the case in the Atlantic Provinces, Ontario, and Winnipeg. With these participants, we focussed on determining the effects of the LTTA programming, as an example of arts-based education, with interviews, questionnaires, and focus group scripts constructed accordingly. Even among these groups, however, there were differences in the ways that they had applied LTTA, and we often had to create research instruments responsive to those varying program contexts.

The threads that tied all of our research instruments together were the underlying research questions articulated in the previous section of this report. We wanted to know if and how arts-based curriculum learning has contributed to the educational success of

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Aboriginal children and youth already participating in the LTTA program and if, when introduced to the concept of arts-based teaching and learning, Aboriginal community members and teachers of Aboriginal students thought that approach could be used to enhance the school engagement and success of Aboriginal learners. Each research instrument was designed to draw out this information in ways appropriate to the particular research context.

Some of the variance in the ways we applied our research instruments also had to do with the fact that we were guided by the principles of *Community Based Research* (CBR) (Potvin, Cargo, McComber, Deformer, Macaulay, 2003), with its emphasis on shared research design and implementation among researchers and research participants.

***Community-Based Research Methodology***

In our data-gathering we were guided by four key principles for Community-Based Research (CBR) articulated in a Canadian study of the Kahnawake School Diabetes Project, a health intervention designed to reduce Type 2 Diabetes among young Aboriginal children in the community of Kahnawake, Quebec (Potvin, Cargo, McComber, Delormier, Macaulay, 2003).

The Kahnawake School Diabetes Project was designed to reduce diabetes while promoting community capacity and ownership of the program, respecting Mohawk traditions and cultures (Potvin et al., 2003). Potvin et al. articulated four underlying principles of a CBR methodology that guided the research and the successful implementation of the Kahnawake School Diabetes Project: a) the integration of community members and researchers as equal partners in every phase of the project; b) the integration of the intervention and evaluation research components, that is to say that the research influences the program implementation, which in turn influences the research processes and agenda; c) a flexible agenda responsive to demands from the community in which the program was initiated; and d) the creation of a project that represents learning opportunities for all those involved.

Although our own research, unlike that of the Kahnawake School Diabetes Project, was not directly or intentionally paired with interventions, we found valuable guidance in the principles articulated by Potvin et al. Indeed, as will be made evident in

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the course of this report, the interest communities and individuals expressed in arts-based education sometimes led to the implementation of the LTTA program.

We consider an account of our application of the principles of CBR as articulated by Potvin et al. in this research, with its successes and challenges, important to making clear our decisions concerning research methodologies and instruments. We also believe that a description of our attempts to apply CBR as potentially useful to other researchers. The following paragraphs indicate how we integrated the four principles of CBR as articulated by Potvin et al.

***Integration of Community Members and Researchers as Equal Partners.*** The CBR approach recognizes that, far too often, outside researchers, who do not share in the traditions and history of the research participants, have spoken with unwarranted authority about the experiences and needs of the research participants. The CBR model is predicated on the belief that, when research participants take part in the design and implementation of the research, the quality of the data is enriched and the interactions with research participants are likely to be fruitful (Restoule, 2004). In all of our research, the individuals and groups, Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal, consulted were treated as partners in the creation of knowledge.

In most cases in this research, interview and focus groups were tape-recorded and later transcribed. However, if participants objected to being tape-recorded or when we judged that the presence of a recording device would be intrusive, we kept hand-written notes which were also later converted to type script. Where possible, transcripts and data created from interviews, focus groups and/or questionnaires were shared with the community or individual who provided the information. For example, a written summary of research findings with the Vancouver-based *Girlz Group* (described later in this report) was submitted to the group members for comments about the accuracy of reporting and interpretation before inclusion in this report.

However, such consultations are extremely time-consuming, and, given the time restrictions on this research, it was not always possible to honour this aspect of community-based research methodology. Consequently, as a team, we concluded that it is important that researchers and their funders realize that community-based research will

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most likely be more time-consuming than anticipated and that a realistic, lengthy time-frame be applied to the research agenda.

We solved part of the problem of time restrictions by, wherever possible, engaging individual members of consulted communities in conversation so that they might comment on the interpretation of our data. For example, Ms. Rita Marten, Member of the Athabasca Tribal Council's Education Committee, was consulted repeatedly about the interpretation of the research findings for Northern Alberta.

In addition, the research team was alert to opportunities where triangulation could be used to test the soundness of the interpretation of data (Patton, 2002). For example, in the Fort McMurray and Fort Chipewyan areas, discussions with Elders, community artists, and other community members confirmed that we had interpreted community conversations correctly.

Other prominent Aboriginal individuals in Canada were consulted about the accuracy of understanding and interpretation of data gathered throughout the research: Ms. Danika Billie Littlechild (Cree), LLB, Chair of the LTTA Aboriginal Advisory Committee; Ms. Anastasia Hendry (Haida), LTTA Aboriginal LTTA Program Co-ordinator for British Columbia and Alberta; Mr. Aaron Paquette (Cree), LTTA Mentor Artists, Ms. Shelly McDonald (Mi'kmaq), LTTA Core Artist; and Co-investigator for this research, Dr. Jean-Paul Restoule (Anishinaabe).

In our community-based approach to this research, the guidance of the Aboriginal research team members and advisors was crucial to our success. These individuals offered guidance to the non-Aboriginal team members about etiquette and protocol during conversations with Aboriginal individuals and groups. For example, while eye contact is typically a highly valued indication of attentiveness among people of white, European ancestry, in Aboriginal communities, eye contact can sometimes be deemed disrespectful, as for example, when instigating eye contact with an Elder. The non-Aboriginal team members were also coached to slow down the pace of their speech so as not to appear rushed and to let the agenda for a meeting emerge from both sides of the conversation at a relaxed, respectful pace.

***Integration of the Intervention and Research Components***

It was always intended that the knowledge garnered through this research would result in recommendations regarding education for Aboriginal learners in Canada. Furthermore, it was anticipated that the research would have immediate effects on the Aboriginal LTTA programming offered throughout Canada.

***Flexible Agenda Responsive to Demands from the Community***

Our research team recognized the need to be flexible in establishing its research agenda. For example, in schools with high Aboriginal student populations, there is often a need to have daily routines responsive to the special needs of students. While it was always possible to designate a specific day for school visits from the research team, we quickly recognized the need to flow with the rhythm of any given school day, to stay at the school for the duration of the day, and to fit in research activities when circumstances allowed. When visiting Aboriginal communities, we learned to arrive with a loosely structured research agenda that could be altered should other community needs arise or if the desire was expressed to halt the conversation in order to call in other community members who might have important information to add. Our team also quickly learned that the setting aside of the research agenda in order to accommodate immediate human needs reflected the value that Aboriginal communities typically take to ensuring the well-being of individuals and the community.

Often we would arrive in an Aboriginal community with only one contact in place. It invariably happened that one conversation would enable contacts with others. The image of a pebble being tossed into still waters, with concentric circles radiating outward seems fitting to describe this process.

***A Project that Represents Mutual Learning Opportunities***

Partnership is a key concept in working with Aboriginal communities. In Canada, there are long traditions of both “taking from” and “imposing upon” Aboriginal peoples by mainstream groups. Clearly, Aboriginal peoples should have a leading voice in defining issues and implementing initiatives that affect them. For example, community members in Northern Alberta who took part in this research emphasized that all programming involving the community should be viewed in terms of partnership, where

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Aboriginal individuals take a leading role in bringing assistance to their communities. This approach ensures the development of local capacity.

Our approach to partnership included gift-giving. Gift-giving is important to most Aboriginal peoples. It is typically not the size or monetary value of the gift that is most important. Rather, a gift has symbolic implications: it conveys the fact that a relationship flows both ways and that both parties are both givers and recipients in any situation. A gift acknowledges the person for the gift of their time, wisdom and expertise. In our discussions with Aboriginal individuals, we offered such gifts as tobacco, tea, small works of art, meals, and grocery gift cards.

As mentioned earlier the standard research mechanisms of interviews, focus group discussions, and questionnaires were used to gather data in this research. However, when Aboriginal peoples were involved, adjustments in applying these instruments were sometimes made to honour traditional approaches to sharing. The connection between social interaction and business dealings is often seamless for Aboriginal peoples. We learned that similar parameters existed concerning research and that the key to success was to develop trust and a sense of equity by listening and by sharing views and life experiences, often in a social situation such as a meal.

In the course of gathering data, we found that the notion of arts-based teaching and learning was sometimes difficult to grasp for those who have not had first-hand experience of them. In such cases, we often offered workshops lasting anywhere from two hours to a whole day, to provide research participants with experiences of learning through the arts. For example, in Vancouver, we offered an “Aboriginal Science Day” where we introduced educators to using Aboriginal art forms to teach Science.

The Aboriginal Science Day came about because we had contacted the British Columbia manager for LTTA to discuss opportunities to meet with regional Aboriginal teachers, in order to investigate the impact of the program on their Aboriginal students. At the time of our enquiry, there was a dearth of LTTA classes involving Aboriginal teachers in the region. Consequently, the LTTA manager suggested that we might better explore how Aboriginal teachers not involved in the LTTA program viewed the potential of arts-based teaching after being exposed to it. We took advantage of the BC LTTA team’s then current efforts to develop science lessons based on Aboriginal art forms and

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disseminated an invitation to the “Aboriginal science Day.” Two Aboriginal members of our team facilitated the event.

In Yellowknife and in Northern Alberta, on the recommendation of individuals we had contacted through the regional public and Catholic school boards, we again held day-long workshops, one for educators and one for regional artists who had not had previous exposure to LTTA in order to explore how art forms might be integrated into school learning for the benefit of Aboriginal students. In both Vancouver and in Yellowknife, the day-long events proved to be extremely fruitful catalysts for discussion of the perceived potential of arts-based education for Aboriginal students. We refer to these and other similar events in the course of this report.

Elders have played an integral role in Aboriginal communities. They are widely considered the keepers of language, cultural traditions, and knowledge. Elders have traditionally been respected and consulted on matters of import because of their experience, wisdom, knowledge, background, and insight. When present during our research gatherings, Elders were asked to give opening prayers/words/greetings, and they provided us with invaluable information about local traditional Aboriginal values and life practices.

***Methods of Data Analysis***

The vast majority of the data we gathered were qualitative in nature. We transcribed audio tapes and hand-written notes of interviews and focus groups, as well as qualitative questionnaire data, into text files and imported them into *ATLAS.ti* (Muhr, 1997), a computer program designed to facilitate the coding and analysis of large amounts of qualitative data. Using a system of researcher-created codes and memos the program organizes material according to themes and patterns.

The original *ATLAS.ti* codes we applied to our research documents were developed from our research questions as articulated earlier in this report. For example, the code “time in program” was used to tag all information indicating the length of time an individual had been a participant in the LTTA program. Given the structure of *ATLAS.ti*, tags were necessarily short, but the program’s memo capacity allowed for a

more extensive explanation of the meaning of the code and could be referred to at any time by the researchers.

We promoted inter-researcher reliability in coding and validity in the findings in general by initially having all team members create and apply their own codes for one particular set of teacher interviews and for one set of student focus group data gathered in the research. This exercise was followed by a discussion of what each code meant to the individual researcher, and agreement was made as to which codes would be used throughout the analysis of all research documents and what type of information was meant to be identified by each code. Bi-weekly team meetings enabled us to share and discuss anticipated, as well as unexpected patterns and themes that emerged in our ATLAS.ti analyses. For example unanticipated evidence of teacher and artist resistance to singling out the benefits of arts-based education to Aboriginal students surprised us (we discuss this phenomenon later in the report). Consequently, we created a code with which to tag expressions of this kind of resistance. Various team members assumed the responsibility of coding individual sets of data from the various regions of our research. Our meetings provided the whole team with an overview of the kinds of information that were emerging from the data.

We restricted our use of quantitative analysis techniques to determining simple frequencies, as for example in the number and percentage of responses or kinds of responses to particular questions. *Atlas.ti* was used to create frequency counts.

## **Research Findings**

The picture that has emerged during our research confirms that there is still much need for exploration of the current educational experiences of Aboriginal learners and of alternative approaches to their learning. We encountered anxiety about current educational practices that was often deep and anguished. For example, a member of the Education Committee of The Athabasca Tribal told us, “We believe that First Nations students are being set up for failure in school” (Focus group, Education Committee of the Athabasca Tribal Council, Fort McKay, Alberta, November 2009).

***Identifying Current Impediments to Educational Success***

Our Aboriginal research participants from across the country emphasized that the following three major factors affecting the school success of Aboriginal learners must be acknowledged:

1. Aboriginal children and youth have learning needs that differ from those of non-Aboriginal students.
2. Racism continues to exert a damaging effect on Aboriginal learners.
3. Poverty is an on-going effect of racism and failed schooling. Conversely, poverty engenders racism and failed schooling.

Prior to our discussion of the potential benefits of arts-based teaching methods for Aboriginal learners, we lay a foundation by briefly discussing the three points identified above.

***Admitting Difference in Learning Needs***

In exploring the issue of alternative approaches to education that might better serve Aboriginal learners, we were wading into waters that were often muddied by conflicting notions of what “difference” implied. Twenty-eight individuals (7% of the research participants) we surveyed and interviewed, in effect, asserted their beliefs that “kids are kids” or that “all student learning is the same.” All of those participants questioned the team’s rationale and integrity for inquiring into the specific learning needs of Aboriginal students. Five of these participants, three teachers and two LTTA Artist-educators, overtly accused us of being racist.

It was the impression of our team that these instances of palpable hesitancy and/or overt antagonism were often motivated by a genuine concern that Aboriginal children not be discriminated against on the basis of race. However, we also wondered if some individuals curtailed their identification of special Aboriginal learning needs out of the wish to not make comments that could be *interpreted* as racist and thereby avoided possible criticism.

About 10% of the non-Aboriginal teachers in our study chose not to comment about social, political, and emotional factors that might impede the school success of

their Aboriginal students. In contrast, *all* of our Aboriginal research participants argued that acknowledging difference in need does not equate with racism, and that denial of that difference can and has led to suffering for Aboriginal learners.

As a team, we would acknowledge that the notion of claiming difference for Aboriginal learners as opposed to non-Aboriginal and the practice of constructing special pedagogical interventions for Aboriginal children are controversial and contested issues in the literature (e.g., Hodgson-Smith, 2000). However, this report is concerned mainly with what our research participants told us. To a person, our Aboriginal participants argued for acknowledgement of the fact that Aboriginal learners have culturally-specific educational needs that are based on traditional life-styles and values and on the historical oppressions of Aboriginal peoples in Canada.

### ***Racism***

Our research team heard countless accounts of the subtle and overt racism that many Aboriginal students still encounter in Canadian schools. We provide just a few examples here.

In Vancouver, we met with 10 members of the Vancouver-based *Girlz Group*, aged 11 to 22 years (average age 15 years), who referred to their experiences of racism from both teachers and students. As noted earlier in this report, the *Girlz Group* is a Participatory Action Research Group. The group was founded by Aboriginal School Youth Workers and Professors at Simon Fraser University. The purposes of the group are a) to provide a safe, supportive environment for the group members; b) to explore issues relevant to Aboriginal females and to advocate for change in educational and social policies that affect young Aboriginal women in particular, and c) to allow the older girls, who have been in the group for many years to act as mentors to the younger members. The group members take their advocacy for Aboriginal youth seriously. At the time of their participation in this research in February 2008, they had spoken about their education and life experiences at 12 conferences, had organized outreach programs, and had produced two videos that spoke to their experiences as young Aboriginal women.

The opportunity to meet with the *Girlz Group* arose when a Vancouver-based LTTA artist who helped lead the group (separate from her LTTA responsibilities) invited

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one of the researchers to a group meeting in order that more voices of Aboriginal students might be heard in this research. It was agreed that, at the meeting attended by the researcher, the young women would respond to a brief questionnaire concerning their educational experiences and participate in a focus group discussion of approximately one and a half hours (Appendix A).

In the focus group discussion (Appendix A), three of the young women in reported experiences of physical violence at the hands of both teachers and students. Five recounted prejudices against them as “young Aboriginal mums” (three of the young women present were mothers, and two were expectant mothers). Seven of the young women referred to the fact that they suffered from the stereotypical perception of Natives being “stupid in school” or generally untrustworthy (*Girlz Group*, Vancouver, British Columbia, February 2008).

In the focus group (Appendix A), the *Girlz Group* members also relayed how, when it came to learning about their own cultures, they were removed from their regular classrooms to gather with other Aboriginal students, under the guidance of an Aboriginal Support Worker. We surmised from our discussions with school and school board administrators that this ‘separating out’ was motivated by a desire to provide a safe space in which Aboriginal learners could feel at home with others of similar ancestry and could take part in Aboriginal ceremonies. However, in the opinions of the young women in the *Girlz Group*, this practice of isolating them in their cultural learning perpetuated the lack of understanding that other cultural groups have regarding Aboriginal peoples. In their eyes, it contributed to stereotyping and racism.<sup>3</sup>

Representatives of the Athabasca Tribal Council’s Education Committee, with whom we held a focus group discussion (Appendix B) in Northern Alberta, also told of the racism that Aboriginal students face. The role of the Athabasca Tribal Council is to represent the interests of the five First Nations of North Eastern Alberta: The Athabasca

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<sup>3</sup> In May 2009, we learned that, because of insistence on the part of the members of the *Girlz Group*, this practice of isolating Aboriginal learners for cultural studies has been eradicated in at least one Vancouver elementary school.

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Chipewyan First Nation, Chipewyan Prairie First Nation, Fort McKay First Nation, Fort McMurray No. 468 First Nation, and Mikisew Cree First Nation.

In Northern Alberta, most Aboriginal reserve communities have their own elementary schools. However, as in the rest of the Canada, Aboriginal school teachers are rare (Council of Ministries of Education, Canada, 2004). Therefore, in Northern Alberta as elsewhere, school lessons are delivered primarily in English by non-Aboriginal teachers. This presents a problem for the many children who, because of family instability, are raised by their “grannies” who speak predominantly their Native language. Aboriginal learners in many parts of Northern Alberta, thus, enter elementary school not knowing much English. This, of course, places them at a great disadvantage when it comes to learning and succeeding in school.

The Tribal Council representatives explained further that some Aboriginal communities in the Fort McMurray area have experienced an influx of immigrant families who have arrived in order to take advantage of employment opportunities in the oil sands developments. These families are drawn to reserve communities outside of Fort McMurray rather than to Fort McMurray itself because of lower living costs and proximity to the oil sands. Children in these families receive special language instruction in English. That same instruction is not available to the Cree-speaking students. One Councillor expressed her frustration at the disregard for the needs of Aboriginal peoples who have traditionally inhabited the lands when she said, “Aboriginal people are treated with less regard than immigrants” (Focus group, Education Committee of the Athabasca Tribal Council, Fort McKay, Alberta, November, 2008).

This particular manifestation of racism may be based on a lack of knowledge of the needs of a specific region or of particular communities. In our discussions across the country, our Aboriginal participants emphasized that each Aboriginal community has its particular needs, that community members are most knowledgeable about those needs, and that they should be provided a responsive forum in which to articulate those needs.

Again in the Fort McMurray area, the Athabasca Tribal Council members told us that Aboriginal youth who move from the reserve environment to the city to attend high school experience culture shock that is often compounded by the widespread ridicule they receive from other students because of their cultural heritage and relative poverty.

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Racism also extends to Aboriginal adults working in the Canadian school system. A focus group discussion with Aboriginal Support Workers in British Columbia (Appendix D) provided us with accounts of how they were sometimes excluded from staff room conversations and treated rudely by their non-Aboriginal peers.

Although we heard of no instances of racism against certified teachers from our research participants, discrimination against Aboriginal teachers is well-documented, and it often comes from multiple sources: students, fellow teachers, administrators, and students' parents. Racism is cited as one of the main reasons Aboriginal teachers leave the profession (McNinch, 1994; St. Denis, Bouvier, & Battiste, 1998).

*Effects of the residential school system that perpetuate racism.* Across the country, our Aboriginal research participants consistently referred to the residual effects of the Residential School system as being a force in the perpetuation of racism. As indicated early in this report, the removal of Aboriginal children from their families to attend residential schools has created generations of Aboriginal people who lack parenting skills, are disconnected from their traditional languages and cultural practices, have low self-esteem, and often have very negative associations with school (Miller, 1996; Chrisjohn, Young, & Maraun, 1997). To a person, our Aboriginal participants told us that poverty, high rates of drug and alcohol addiction, youth suicide, Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD), Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD)/Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), gang membership and violence, crime, fractured families, and unemployment are, in part, direct effects of the residential school system. Reports on these negative manifestations of suffering are featured widely in the media without equally comprehensive coverage of the deep roots of the problems. Thus, harmful stereotypes of Aboriginal peoples are perpetuated.

Our research also revealed a misapprehension by 25% of our non-Aboriginal participants across the country that the residential school system and its deprivations were a thing of the distant past. One BC Aboriginal Support Worker explained that “most Canadians think that the residential school system ended long ago. In fact, the last

residential school just closed in 1995 [sic]”<sup>4</sup> (Focus group, Aboriginal Science Day, Vancouver, British Columbia, February, 2008). It was clear to us that the shadow of the residential school system still looms over many individuals and families. When speaking about lingering effects of the residential school system, one of our Aboriginal research participants said the following:

My mom went to a residential school, but she just called it ‘private.’ My uncle has scars on his back. Every Aboriginal person knows someone who’s went to the school. It’s part of our history. (Interview, Aboriginal LTTA Artist-educator, Artist-educator, September 2007).

***Poverty and Racism.*** Poverty is a fact of life for many Aboriginal individuals living in both urban and rural areas of Canada. In a focus group discussion (Appendix A), the members of the Vancouver-based *Girlz Group* spoke of the rise in crime, gangs, and prostitution in their neighbourhoods, attributing Aboriginal involvement in criminal activity largely to poverty and its devastating effects on self-esteem.

Poverty characterizes Aboriginal life in most of the rural communities we visited in Northern Alberta. In a focus group discussion (Appendix B), members of the Education Committee of the Athabasca Tribal Council indicated that, while there is an abundance of employment opportunities in surrounding oil sand developments, individuals of Aboriginal descent are being passed over because they are not as well educated as other groups. The Education Committee members told us that the unemployed in the Fort McMurray region are almost solely Aboriginal.

In Ontario we interviewed five principals (Appendix G) whose school populations ranged from 30% to 70% Aboriginal. Three of those principals indicated that they believed that poverty had a hugely negative effect on the school performances of their Aboriginal students.

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<sup>4</sup> The last government run residential school closed in 1996. The last band-run residential school closed in 1998.

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In Winnipeg, 10 out of 37 teachers we interviewed (Appendix F) described to us how some parents did not prioritize their children's schooling or attend school events because of their distrust of Euro-centric educational institutions. According to teachers, lack of parental enthusiasm and support for education meant that students often missed school, and thus their academic success suffered. Part of the issue of non-attendance at school also had to do with the fact that Aboriginal children were required to stay home to care for younger siblings while parents worked. Paying for babysitting is beyond the means of many families.

One of the projects we researched was *Music Connections – Winnipeg*, which we describe in some detail later in the report. This project was organized by the National Arts Centre-Centre national des arts (NAC) and was an example of arts-based learning. While the project did not follow the LTTA format, it took place at two schools that had participated in the LTTA program for six years. Therefore, the students and teachers were familiar with the concept of coupling an art form with non-arts learning. Since Patteson, the PI for the research reported herein, is the Research Consultant to the National Arts Centre, she was involved in the evaluating the program. Permission was granted by the NAC to integrate findings from the Patteson's investigation of the program's effects into this research.

*Music Connections-Winnipeg* was a 9-week program involving 94 Grade 4 and 5 students in two elementary schools in the core of Winnipeg. This program aimed to instill a sense of cultural pride and identity in Aboriginal students in two schools (75% and 95% Aboriginal populations) by introducing them to traditional Aboriginal music, instruments, and language. The project also sought to build bridges between Aboriginal and European-based cultures by having the students study the life and times of Vivaldi and learn to play a section from the composer's *Four Seasons*.

Winnipeg's core is noted for its high Aboriginal population, which is reported at 18.9% as compared to 9.6% for the entire City of Winnipeg. The city core is also characterized by high rates of poverty: 33% of families live below the Low Income Cut Off (LICO) compared to 15.5% for the entire City of Winnipeg. Within the catchment

areas of the two schools in the *Music Connections – Winnipeg* project, the percentage of families living at or below the LICO is 16.4% and 55.4% (Census, 2002).

Regarding the intertwining of poverty and racism, National Chief of the Assembly of First Nations, Phil Fontaine (2007), has said that

The poverty that First Nations people endure is horrific. It is as bad as anywhere in the world. . . . The scope of First Nations poverty is deep and wide. It permeates all aspects of our peoples' lives – from health and housing, to child welfare and family cohesion, education and job opportunities. . . . Discrimination plays a large role in perpetuating poverty. A national poll released on February 19th says that 42% of Aboriginal people experience racism in services, housing and employment. That is an increase of 10% since 2003. It is a known fact that as poverty increases, so does racism.  
(<http://www.afn.ca/article.asp?id=3406>)

Fontaine has identified lack of educational success as among the prime causes of perpetuated racism and poverty.

***Internalized Racism.*** Silver (2009) has noted that Winnipeg's Inner City is characterized by "... a new and especially humanly damaging form of spatially concentrated, racialized poverty that disproportionately affects Aboriginal people." He has argued that the issues are compounded even further by "... racism [which has], quite understandably, eroded the self-confidence and self-esteem of many Aboriginal people, creating a deep sense of despair, of worthlessness and, especially, of hopelessness" (<http://canadiandimension.com/articles/1717/>)

Indeed, many of our research participants described the same air of deep demoralization and hopelessness among Aboriginal children and youth as that to which Silver (2009) referred. For example, in Northern Alberta, we were told by the Education Committee of the Athabasca Tribal Council (Appendix B) that high rates of suicide among Aboriginal youth across Canada can be traced back to the feelings of internalized shame combined with the effects of poverty and an accompanying belief that the future holds no promise of a better life.

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Suicide mostly affects the youth of Aboriginal communities. From the ages of 10 to 29, Aboriginal youth on reserves are five to six times more likely to die of suicide than their peers in the general population. The overall suicide rate among First Nation communities is approximately double that of the total Canadian population (Aboriginal Healing Foundation, 2007). The Aboriginal Healing Foundation has identified risk factors associated with Aboriginal adolescent suicide as “acculturation stress and marginalization, failing to acquire and value Aboriginal values and identity, while also failing to identify with the cultural values of the larger society” (p. xvi).

***Summarizing Words Concerning Impediments to Educational Success***

We have just touched here on some of the daunting issues that face Aboriginal students in Canada. We acknowledge that we have discussed these issues in a somewhat cursory way and that the issues have been dealt with in depth in the works of others. Still, we felt it important to convey this information that we received from our participants, as it sets the backdrop for the rest of our discussion and, indeed, as part of the findings for this research.

In fact, when measured against the evidence and deep effects of racial discrimination, colonization, and poverty, our team wondered if an arts-based approach to education could have any substantial impact on the well-being and success of Aboriginal learners. However, as will be seen in the following pages, the vast majority of our Aboriginal research participants identified arts-based approaches to education as resonating with traditional approaches to Aboriginal life and values, and as potential means to promote self-esteem, school engagement, cultural knowledge and pride, and academic success among Aboriginal learners. In the following pages, we explore the aspects of arts-based teaching and learning that resonated positively with our research participants.

***Identifying Components of an Educational Practice that Promote Success for  
Aboriginal Learners***

It was primarily, although not solely, our Aboriginal research participants who identified the following actions needed to create an educational practice that would better reflect traditional cultural values, counteract the destructive impacts of historical

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oppression of Aboriginal peoples, and promote the school success of Aboriginal children and youth. Each of the following points is followed by a bracketed indication of the percentage of our research participants who made the recommendation. We acknowledge that the percentages indicated may not represent all of our participants who feel concerned about any particular issue, but rather, the percentage of participants who brought these issues to our attention:

- Adopt traditional teaching and learning methods: experiential, hands-on learning; holistic learning; modelled learning; and collaborative learning (95% of our Aboriginal participants; 5% of our non-Aboriginal participants).
- Promote cultural knowledge and pride in Aboriginal identity (100% of our Aboriginal participants).
- Provide positive Aboriginal role models in education (62% of Aboriginal participants; 21% of non-Aboriginal participants).
- Train, hire, and retain more Aboriginal teachers and school administrators, and promote retention of those individuals (85% of Aboriginal participants; 20% of non-Aboriginal participants).
- Provide school environments that reflect traditional Aboriginal values and traditions (10% of Aboriginal participants).
- Promote understanding of Aboriginal values and traditions among the broader Canadian population (50% of Aboriginal participants; 15% of non-Aboriginal participants).

In the following pages, we present our findings about how arts-based teaching s of these identified learning approaches.

***Using Traditional Teaching and Learning methods***

*We need to promote and validate a holistic education system with a strong emphasis on virtues, values, language and culture.*

~ Rita Marten, Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation, Athabasca Tribal Council, Education Committee Member, Focus Group Discussion

***Hands-on, experiential, holistic learning.*** As indicated earlier in this report, the *Aboriginal Learning Knowledge Centre* (2009) has identified holistic learning as integral to educational systems that are well-suited to Aboriginal peoples. This endorsement of holistic, integrated learning for Aboriginal children and youth was reflected in the comments of 100% of our Aboriginal research participants and by about 25% of our non-Aboriginal participants.

In an interview (Appendix J), one LTTA Artist-educator, who had spent much time immersed in Aboriginal cultures and teaching in Aboriginal classrooms, captured the sentiments of those of our research participants who endorsed holistic learning for Aboriginal students:

The LTTA program [with its arts-based approach to learning] is good for Aboriginal students because it offers a way back to integrated learning. Traditionally, Aboriginal peoples have not divided knowledge into little parcels: cooking, Math, Geography, painting, beading, drumming, etc. have all been part of a holistic approach to life and survival on the land. It is a Euro-centric approach to knowledge that disconnects it from real life and puts it into silos. (LTTA Artist-Administrator, Interview, Ontario, June 2007)

The traditional nature of holistic, experiential learning was emphasized in all of our meetings with our Aboriginal research participants. For example, while in Northern Alberta we visited the *Nistawoyou Association Friendship Centre*, an Aboriginal gathering place in Fort McMurray. When our team explained the nature of our research, the Executive Director of the Centre volunteered to gather a group of regional Aboriginal community leaders for a mealtime discussion (Appendix C) of the needs for arts-based teaching and learning for Aboriginal learners. At dinner, a Cree Elder told us that art has been woven into all aspects of traditional Aboriginal life:

In the old days, everyone learned to make what they needed, for example, dresses, moccasins and tents. And they made them beautiful with bead work, embroidery,

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and other things....These basic things are what they call art these days. (Community Focus Group, *Nistawoyou Association Friendship Centre*, Fort McMurray, Alberta, November 2008)

The Elder emphasized how well Aboriginal art forms could accommodate teaching in non-arts curriculum areas: “We used to make bent wood boxes. There was lots of math and physics in that.” The Elder was enthusiastic about the holistic approach taken by LTTA and viewed it as a means of restoring health and promoting success for Aboriginal peoples, as well as restoring traditional arts knowledge and practices. She asserted, “We need to get back to learning through living, and we need to revive the traditional art forms” (Community Focus Group, *Nistawoyou Association Friendship Centre*, Fort McMurray, Alberta, November, 2008).

We heard similar views in workshops on arts-based teaching our team presented to Aboriginal artists in Yellowknife, The North West Territories, and in Fort McMurray, Alberta. At the Yellowknife event, we witnessed a ceremonial hoop dance, presented by one of the workshop participants in full regalia, accompanied by an explanation of the cultural significance of the dance, as well as explorations of how the combinations of hoops could create 3-D spheres and other symmetrical and a-symmetrical forms. The words of one Northern Alberta artist are apt here: “We have to learn again that art has always been a way of living for our people” (Artist Workshop, Fort McMurray, November 2009).

In February 2008, at the *Aboriginal Science Day* that we provided for 19 Aboriginal teachers and support workers in Vancouver in order to introduce them to ways to use Aboriginal arts for Science teaching, participants responded to pre- and post-workshop questionnaires (Appendix D). In the pre- and post-workshop questionnaires, 19 participants (90% of whom were Aboriginal) responded to a question asking them how important arts-based teaching and learning is to Aboriginal students. In the pre-workshop questionnaire, 16 individuals (84% of respondents) indicated that they felt arts-based education was “extremely important” to Aboriginal learners, and others (16%) said that it was “important.” In the post-day questionnaires, 18 (93%) respondents indicated that arts

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based education is “extremely important” to Aboriginal learners, while one respondent (7%) still ranked arts-based learning as “important” to Aboriginal students.

We attributed the participants’ high level of belief in the importance of arts-based education for Aboriginal learners prior to the workshop, and the small shift in beliefs by the end of the day, to previously-existing beliefs that arts-based teaching and learning suited Aboriginal learners. In fact, there was unanimous agreement in the focus group discussion that took place that day (Appendix D) that individuals had attended the workshop because they did not know *how* to apply arts-based teaching across the curriculum, not because they needed to be convinced of the benefits of arts-based education for Aboriginal students.

One of the most memorable and succinct statements regarding the fact that the arts have traditionally been an integral part of Aboriginal life and learning was made by one of the Aboriginal Support Workers at the workshop. In BC, Aboriginal Support Workers are the front-line individuals who teach Aboriginal students about their heritage and try to find approaches to curriculum content that are suitable to Aboriginal students. When one of the researchers asked the Support Worker about her personal involvement in art-making, she replied, “You call it art. I call it life.” (Focus Group, Aboriginal Support Worker, February 2008).

In their questionnaire responses (Appendix A), nine (90%) of the young women in the *Vancouver Girlz Group*, too, indicated their shared beliefs that Aboriginal students come from an oral and active learning tradition, rather than a writing tradition, and that there is a need for more experiential, life-based learning for Aboriginal students in Canadian schools.

As part of our research, we explored the possible benefits of arts-based learning for Aboriginal children with learning challenges, particularly FAS/FAE and ADD/ADHD. The prevalence of these conditions among school-aged Aboriginal children is estimated as 25 to 30 times the national average (Canadian Paediatric Society, 2002). Due to compromised abilities to concentrate and engage, children living with these conditions require educational interventions that are more enthralling and active than the lecture format of lesson delivery (VON, 2006).

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In our focus group discussion with the representatives of the Education Committee of the Athabasca Tribal Council (Appendix B), we were told that arts-based learning opportunities provided by LTTA, led by Aboriginal artists, would allow for more physical movement, collaborative effort, culturally-relevant lesson content, culturally appropriate approaches to learning, and engaging learning for students living with FASD/FAE and ADD/ADHD. In fact, in our travels across Canada, we heard six separate stories of how Aboriginal children living with these conditions had responded well to arts-based learning, especially when the lesson content was based on Aboriginal values and traditions.

In May 2008, we interviewed 37 teachers in ten schools in the core of Winnipeg (Appendix F) who had participated in the LTTA program for between 3 and 6 years. These teachers were not part of the Music connections project mentioned earlier. The teachers confirmed that FASD/FAE and ADD/ADHD are major problems among their Aboriginal students. A common theme in the teacher interviews was how arts-based teaching helps:

They need experiential, kinaesthetic, interactive, creative ways of learning. Kids with FAS are very visual and very artistic so I don't know if it's left brain compensating for right or vice versa because of brain damage, but they learn by doing. The LTTA art is now a part of everything we do whether it's Math, Science, or Social studies. (Interview, Teacher, Winnipeg, Manitoba, May 2008)

**Modeled learning.** In June 2008 our team provided an LTTA Artist-educator questionnaire (Appendix J) for 55 LTTA Artist-educators (all were non-Aboriginal) working in Ontario schools during the 2007-2008 academic year. The schools were almost entirely located in urban settings. One questionnaire item asked if there were any noticeable differences in the way Aboriginal children responded to LTTA lessons, as compared to non-Aboriginal children. Eighteen (about 33%) of the Artist-educators told us that Aboriginal learners tended to be quieter and shier than non-Aboriginal children and less likely to “jump into activities.”

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Nine of the aforementioned LTTA Artist-educators indicated that, at first, they had interpreted this quietness as a reluctance to participate. Reluctance to participate can certainly be attributable to being in a minority in the classroom and apprehension that one's views will not be accepted by the majority. However, these LTTA Artist-educators reported that they had noticed that their Aboriginal students appeared to feel most comfortable when "observing first and acting second."

Our team noticed a similar hesitancy to join in some activities when working with adult Aboriginal artists in Yellowknife, The North West Territories, where we offered them the day-long, experiential introduction to ways of using their art forms to teach school subjects. It was clear to us that participants were reluctant to engage in activities until they were clearly explained and demonstrated and that they felt much more comfortable presenting their works in groups, rather than alone.

When we asked in a questionnaire item (Appendix A) if it was possible to discern learning styles favoured by Aboriginal students, two members of the Vancouver *Girlz Group* responded that they, themselves, liked to have their learning tasks modeled before they participated.

***Collaborative Learning.*** It may be argued that much of so-called 'mainstream' North American culture is built on the notion of individualism, where the ability of an individual to outshine his or her peers is deemed a sign of success. In our research, we found that this emphasis on individual success did not fit well with Aboriginal values. For example, in our Ontario Artist-educator questionnaire (Appendix J), about 25% of the respondents noted that their Aboriginal students were wary of activities that shone the spotlight on individuals and seemed to prefer working in collaborative groups.

As mentioned in our earlier discussion of community-based research principles, our research team learned that Aboriginal peoples and communities typically accord high importance to ensuring the well-being of individuals and the community. This appears to extend to life in the classroom in some cases at least. In an interview (Appendix K), one Aboriginal LTTA Artist-educator told us of a time when he had witnessed a child echoing another child's incorrect answer to a teacher's question, even when the child in question knew the correct answer. When the artist asked the second child, in private, why

he had done this, he explained that he had not wanted to make the other student “feel bad” (Interview, LTTA Artist-educator, Alberta, November, 2008).

### ***Promoting Cultural Knowledge and Pride through Traditional Art Forms***

In virtually all of our discussions with Aboriginal individuals, we were informed that integrating traditional art forms in curriculum teaching could go far in restoring a sense of identity and cultural pride for Aboriginal learners. An inspiring example of how arts-based learning may counteract internalized and overt racism was provided by the Music Connections-Winnipeg project. Ninety-four students and six educators participated in the project. In the project, 94 students did the following:

- studied the life, times, and music of Vivaldi using a guide developed by the Music Education Department of the *National Arts Centre-Centre national des arts* (NAC), and developed group creative responses to Vivaldi’s *Four Seasons* using dance, drama, music, visual arts and media;
- made and decorated their own American Native flutes; learned to play the Native American flute; learned to play a section of the *Largo* from the *Winter* movement of *Four Seasons* on the flutes;
- learned to play (on the flutes) and sing (in Cree and in English) *One People*, a composition created especially for the project; and
- played part of the *Largo* section of *Winter* with the NAC brass octet, performed *One People*, and presented their creative responses to *Four Seasons* at a culminating concert for family and community members.

The original *Music Connections - Winnipeg* program format involved teaching students how to play a section from Vivaldi’s *Four Seasons* on the recorder. However, through consultations with outside partners, including representatives from the Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra, the *Wii Chiiwaakanak Learning Centre* of the Faculty of Education at the University of Winnipeg, and specialists in the Native American flute, it was

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decided that the Native American flute would replace the recorder and that music content would be added to incorporate works from the Aboriginal community.

Elder Joseph Naytowhow, of the Woodland Cree Nation, Sturgeon Lake, Saskatchewan, wrote the song, *One People*, which was taught in both English and Cree to students in the *Music Connections - Winnipeg* project. Students were also asked to create artistic responses to the *Four Seasons*. Their creations included hip hop routines, Métis fiddling and dance, poetry based on traditional Aboriginal teachings, and a First Nations Shawl Dance. As a result, students were provided with authentic exposure to music and artistic forms from both the Aboriginal and Western traditions. The project culminated in a final performance involving the students and a brass octet from the NAC Orchestra.

Eighty-six of the 94 students participating in the project responded to a pre-programming questionnaire (Appendix E) provided by our research team, and 71 of the same students responded to the same questionnaire at the end of the programming. The day after the culminating concert, students also participated in focus group discussions (Appendix E) with a member of our research team. A representative sample of 10 students from each class, 40 students in total, was chosen for the focus groups.

Four classroom teachers, one school music teacher, and one teaching assistant were directly involved in the *Music Connections - Winnipeg* programming. These educators responded to pre- and post-programming questionnaires and participated in one-on-one interviews at the end of the programming. The teaching assistant did not complete the questionnaires, but participated in an interview. We begin with an account of the findings for these adults.

***Findings for Students.*** A number of the student questionnaire items (Appendix E) solicited information regarding students' knowledge of several aspects of Western music practices and of Vivaldi, as well as information regarding their exposure to Aboriginal music. The following chart indicates student responses to the pre- and post-questionnaires and shows growth in knowledge in *all* tested areas from the beginning to the end of the *Music Connections - Winnipeg* programming:

Table 2: Student change in responses to pre-and post-programming questionnaire items

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	Yes (pre) % of Respondents	Yes (post) % of Respondents
1. I know what a flute is.	79%	97%
2. I know who Vivaldi is.	24%	90%
3. I have listened to Aboriginal flute music.	49%	93%
4. I have listened to non-Aboriginal flute music.	51%	66%
5. I know what an orchestra is.	43%	87%
6. I have heard an orchestra play music (live or on a recording).	55%	83%
7. I have heard Aboriginal drumming.	80%	90%
8. I know what a music composer does.	27%	68%
9. I have seen a violin.	67%	96%
10. I know what the conductor of an orchestra does.	34%	70%

In the questionnaires, students were asked about their feelings when they heard classical music:

Table 3: Questionnaire item concerning students' feelings about classical music

When I hear classical music I feel . . . .	☺	☹	☹
--------------------------------------------	---	---	---

Prior to the *Music Connections - Winnipeg* programming, 29% of respondents chose the 'happy' face to indicate how they felt when hearing classical music. In the post-questionnaire, 34% of students chose the 'happy' face in response to this questionnaire item, indicating a slightly increased appreciation of Western European classical music.

Another outcome of *Music Connections - Winnipeg* was the fact that the children's concern for the environment was enhanced. As part of the programming, students explored their relationships with and knowledge about the seasons and with nature on a broader scale. For example, many students went on neighbourhood walks to study the local natural environment. As well, the creative responses to Vivaldi's *Four Seasons* were based on knowledge of the seasons and on activities that the children

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associated with specific seasons. One group developed a claymation film about hockey. Another group created a “dance of the leaves” using their brightly coloured, traditional ceremonial shawls to represent the colours and flight of autumn leaves as the students swirled across the stage. The following table reveals that students’ concern about two environmental issues, climate change and pollution, increased substantially over the course of the programming:

Table 4: Student pre- and post-programming responses to two questions about environmental issues

	☺ % of Respondents	☹ % of Respondents
1. When I think about pollution I feel . . . .	41%	61%
2. When I think about climate change I feel . .	8%	51%

This project outcome interested us especially in light of assertions we heard from all of our Aboriginal participants in Northern Alberta, the Northwest Territories, and British Columbia that relationship to nature is of paramount importance in Aboriginal cultures and that arts-based learning through could and should be used to promote a sense of concern and stewardship for nature.

In the focus groups (Appendix E), students were asked if they could remember any of the Cree words they had learned during the project. In some of the focus groups, students spontaneously began to sing the Cree verse from *One People* to the researcher. Other students called out individual Cree words and provided the English translations. About 15% of the students reported that they had not previously known any Cree words, while others said that they had known some. After singing *One People* or reciting Cree words to the researcher, approximately 60% of the students in the focus groups spontaneously exclaimed such things as, “My grandmother is Cree!”, “I’m part Cree!”, and “I’m full-blooded Cree!” The degree of pride the students displayed in their Cree heritage was noteworthy.

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When asked in the focus groups (Appendix E) what they had liked best about the *Music Connections - Winnipeg* programming, the vast large majority of students (90%) indicated that they had enjoyed most the making and painting of their flutes and the singing and playing of *One People*. All of the children in the focus groups expressed excitement at the fact that they would now be allowed to take their flutes home, and all said that they would continue to play them.

The children in the focus groups told the researcher that they had needed to practice on their flutes daily for the duration of the program. The words of one student reflected the sentiments expressed by approximately 75% of the 40 students in the focus groups: “Practicing was about 50% hard work and 50% fun.” In fact, according to one teacher who took part in the interviews (Appendix E), one of the greatest student learnings was that hard work, focus, and perseverance pay off in huge rewards. This, she said, had been a particularly valuable lesson for those students with learning challenges.

When asked in the focus groups (Appendix E) about their favourite parts of the culminating concert, students consistently named the following (listed in order of most to least frequently cited; some children provided more than one “favourite” concert feature:

- The singing and playing of *One People* (80% of students)
- Playing and singing the Largo from *Four Seasons* (20%)
- Hearing the National Arts Centre brass players (especially when they played the theme from *Star Wars*) (40%)
- Lunch (after the dress rehearsal) (15%)

***Findings for Teachers.*** An interview comment (Appendix E) from one of the teachers participating in the *Music Connections - Winnipeg* program underscored the opportunity that the project provided for Aboriginal children to learn about their heritage:

It is a great opportunity for the kids. How often do you get to play with a professional orchestra? Music is such a large part of our kids’ lives, and I’m not sure how often they get to participate in their own cultural music. (Teacher Interview, Music Connections-Winnipeg, November 2008)

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According to the six educators, the making and playing of the flutes gave students a sense of creativity and accomplishment that was reinforced when they did their final performance with the NACO brass octet. Four of the teachers, as well as the researchers, observed that, when the students were working on their flutes, an air of peacefulness descended upon the group. These reports of pervasive calm and focus are particularly impressive when one realizes that a high proportion of the participating students were living with learning challenges and in home conditions that sometimes made it difficult to focus on school work. The obvious absorption that the students felt in the making and decorating of their flutes attests to engaging nature of experiential, arts-based learning.

In the interviews (Appendix E), all of the educators agreed that planning and implementing their creative responses to *Four Seasons*, practicing on their flutes, learning to play and sing in ensemble, and finding the courage to perform, all stretched the students in new and exciting ways. In the words of the music teacher at one of the schools, “The children took ownership of their own musicianship.” (Interview, Music Connections-Winnipeg, November, 2008).

According to all six educators, since students had to work together to complete challenging tasks, the rewards of teamwork became clear to the students. The students also made connections outside of their peer group, especially with members of the NAC Orchestra, Richard Dubé who taught them how to make and play their instruments, and Joseph Naytowhow, who shared his song.

In the interviews (Appendix E), all of the educators exhibited enormous pride in what their students had achieved during the *Music Connections - Winnipeg* programming. When discussing the high prevalence FAS/FASD among the participating students, one teacher commented, “These kids taught me that, if you just believe in them and give them responsibility, they can do it.”

In the questionnaires (Appendix E), teachers were asked to rate their knowledge of Aboriginal and of classical music prior to and at the completion of the program. They were also asked to indicate their levels of confidence when it came to teaching music in the classroom. In all of these areas, teachers’ questionnaire responses showed less confidence and knowledge than they indicated prior to the programming. While, it may at

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first seem disheartening to see that teachers estimated that their knowledge of Aboriginal and classical musics and their confidence in teaching was lessened over the course of the program. However, previous research (Patteson, 2004; Upitis & Smithrim, 2003) has shown that teachers very often react this way following in-depth exposure to professional artists: it is as if they feel daunted by recognizing how much knowledge they do not possess. Again, typically, this is a temporary reaction: teachers adjust their expectations of themselves over time and, despite initial reactions, inevitably begin to apply their newly-acquired knowledge of the arts to their classroom practices. In fact, in the interviews as opposed to the questionnaires, *all* of the educators indicated they had learned much about singing and Aboriginal music that they could now use in the classroom.

In response to another questionnaire item (Appendix E) asking teachers about their feelings in anticipation of the programming, teachers indicated that they felt mainly excitement at the prospect of participating in *Music Connections – Winnipeg*. The post-programming questionnaire was administered the day after the culminating concert, and 50% of teachers indicated that their predominant feelings at that time were of fatigue and stress. However, in the interviews conducted that same day, all of the teachers indicated that they were extremely proud of their students and of themselves for what they had achieved during the programming. All teachers said they would participate in the program again if given the chance.

Despite its successes, *Music Connections - Winnipeg* was not without its challenges. Several teachers suggested that the program should not begin in September because, in Winnipeg, teachers are tasked with the Comprehensive Assessment Program used to assess children and determine who will need special interventions. Some teachers expressed the view that the program should be moved to another time of year because the fall is a time to establish routines, something especially important to children with learning challenges. Some of the teachers reported that they and their students found the program to be very demanding from the outset and that they would have liked the program to be longer so that learning could be achieved in a more relaxed atmosphere. Other teachers indicated that a few students felt stressed by the demands of the program because they worked best in “calm and predictable environments.”

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Overall, however, interview comments by the educators indicated that they felt that *Music Connections - Winnipeg* was highly successful. All of the educators and the two school principals told the researchers that they would definitely undertake the program again, both for their personal growth and that of their students. The following are a few teacher testimonials:

For some of these kids, this may be the highlight of their schooling.

(Educator interview comment, *Music Connections–Winnipeg*,  
November 2009)

I'm not artsy, more a science guy. But I have come to understand that the arts are possibly more important than math or science. The way kids responded in terms of excitement was infinitely better than their response to math and science. I've come to understand that the arts are vital. These kids just came alive.

(Educator interview comment, *Music Connections–Winnipeg*,  
November 2009)

The benefits of the *Music Connections–Winnipeg* project continue to accrue. Since the time of the culminating performance, the children have also been invited to perform at the groundbreaking of the Canadian Museum of Human Rights and the Indigenous Festival presented by the Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra. The Prime Minister of Canada attended the former and praised the children for their performance. It was clear to our team that this experience with arts-based learning has provided the children with more self-confidence, competence, and personal and cultural pride. The students themselves are also increasing public recognition of Aboriginal contributions to Canadian culture and providing role models and hope for other Aboriginal children and youth.

LTTA programming in British Columbia provided another instance of the transforming effects of arts-based learning on the success and cultural pride of Aboriginal students and their families. LTTA Artist-educators and the Musqueam people of Vancouver partnered with Aboriginal students from many grade levels at Southlands

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Elementary School for a performance based the traditional Musqueam myth of the *Wolf Transformation*.

The project was conceived of as a means to instil cultural knowledge and pride. It was also intended to teach the children that they are the future story tellers, the future keepers of knowledge and that they will soon have the responsibility to teach others what they have learned. The production included visual art, music, dance, drama, and story-telling. Three LTTA artists assisted the Musqueam artistic community to develop the acting capacities of youth and with Aboriginal artists in the community to produce high-quality costumes and set designs. According to one of the LTTA Artist-educators,

Ten students worked tirelessly from the outset. They were committed to the project and showed their enthusiasm every day by being punctual and very actively engaged. Some of the students have learning disabilities, but these disabilities seem to have been cast aside when the youth performed with pride, exhibiting strength and courage. Proud parents and extended family members expressed their thanks with tears, hugs and thunderous applause. Over 200 community members attended the performance. (Email correspondence, Aboriginal LTTA Artist-educator, Vancouver, British Columbia , February 2009)

The reception of the play also illustrates the power of their children's art-making to draw Aboriginal parents to the school.

In New Brunswick, at the residential school in Eel Ground, drama has also been used to promote student learning and empowerment. In 2006, when Grade 7 and 8 students at the school were asked to identify a troubling issue in their community, they focussed on FASD. They researched the condition and its manifestations and then wrote a play entitled, *The People vs. Mary Moses*. In an interview (Appendix I), the school's principal indicated that the play had proven to be a profound educational experience for the students and their local audiences. It was also awarded six prizes at the 2006 *New Brunswick Drama Festival*. The theme song from the play, *An Ounce of Love*, composed in partnership between the students and LTTA Artist-Educator, Peggy Ward, is still played every Sunday on regional CBC radio. Students at Eel Ground have subsequently

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written, performed, and made a CD of another play about Aboriginal teen suicide (Interview, Principal, Eel Ground School, New Brunswick, June 2007).

The desire for connections to, and expression through, cultural traditions in school curricula was highlighted by members of the Vancouver-based *Girlz Group*. One item on the questionnaire we provided to the young women (Appendix A) asked them to describe a curriculum that they would enjoy and that would be suitable for Aboriginal learners in general. All of the young women indicated that they needed Math, Science, and Literacy skills. But, they also indicated that First Nations languages, teachings, culture, ceremonies, history, hunting, fishing, drumming, and singing should be included in the curriculum.

In Fort Chipewyan, Northern Alberta, our team met with the principal of the Athabasca Delta Community School. The school provides Kindergarten to Grade 12 education to the community. In the meeting, the school's principal expressed enthusiasm for an LTTA program involving traditional Cree and Métis art forms. In fact, he indicated that he already involved many community Elders in teaching traditional Aboriginal languages and art forms in the school. In their questionnaire (Appendix A), members of the Vancouver *Girlz Group* also said that a school that would meet the needs of Aboriginal learners should include Elders among its teachers.

In our focus group discussions with Aboriginal community representatives in the Fort McMurray area (Appendix C), we heard concern over the fact that the young have lost touch with the ability to treasure the land, to accept stewardship of it, and to derive joy and sustenance from it. We were told that many Aboriginal students seem to be caught in a malaise that is temporarily alleviated by drugs, alcohol, and screen games. We heard that arts-based learning using traditional art forms could reconnect Aboriginal children and youth to Aboriginal culture and the land, and also restore the spirit of childhood:

I think that LTTA would be really good for the kids. They'd be involved, and they'll learn. They've forgotten how to play. They don't even know how to [snow] sled. (Focus group, *Nistawoyou Association Friendship Centre*, Fort McMurray, Alberta, November 2008)

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Three representatives of the Fort McMurray Catholic School Board, with whom our team met, also expressed concern to find ways to promote the school success of Aboriginal students and to make them feel more at home in the school system. Aboriginal students comprise anywhere from 20% to 40% of the populations of the board's elementary schools. The school board representatives considered curricular teachings that included traditional Aboriginal art forms as a means to enhance the school experiences and essential learning of Aboriginal students and non-Aboriginal students alike. They also embraced the notion of introducing traditional Aboriginal values into school curriculum under the leadership of Aboriginal artists. All three board members expressed the belief that Aboriginal approaches to stewardship of the land are needed for all students, Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal, to provide them with motivation and new tools to address environmental issues.

While in Fort McMurray, we provided a day-long introduction to arts-based teaching and learning to 30 of the Catholic school board's teacher and administrators. The outcome of that day has been the board's commitment to launch a three-year LTTA pilot program in 12 classes in their board beginning September 2009. One of the features of that programming will be the measurement, by the LTTA Research Division, of the effects on school engagement and success of Aboriginal students.

***Providing Positive Role Models***

All of our Aboriginal participants emphasized their belief that Aboriginal art forms should only be taught by Aboriginal individuals with requisite local knowledge. For Aboriginal peoples, knowledge is widely considered a gift, rather than a commodity, and some individuals are given permission to share specific kinds of knowledge. This view of knowledge-sharing emphasises the fact that knowledge is not neutral, but, rather, value-laden. Without a deep and intimate understanding of the art form one shares, misreading and therefore miscommunication can occur. We encountered the universal view among our Aboriginal participants that, given the history of appropriation of Aboriginal cultural forms in Canada, organizations promoting arts-based approaches should ensure that Aboriginal artists who possess cultural knowledge about the meaning

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of the arts be the ones to bring the gifts of their art forms to other cultures. In an interview (Appendix M), one Aboriginal LTTA Artist - educator explained her feelings this way:

We're dealing with a lot of people doing our art that are non-Aboriginal... it's one of the things we do have left. . . . Sharing doesn't mean it's yours to keep or take. If we share too much of it, it gets taken." (Interview, Aboriginal LTTA Artist-educator, Vancouver, British Columbia, September 2008)

While arts-based teaching and learning through traditional art forms can promote cultural knowledge and pride, they can also be used to reinforce connections to the broader contemporary culture. In our focus group discussion with the Athabasca Tribal Council's Education Committee (Appendix B), we were told that Aboriginal children and youth need to learn to navigate in the contemporary world, while being true to ancestral traditions and values. Three of the five Aboriginal LTTA Artist-educators we interviewed (Appendix K) told us that Hip-hop, Rap, graffiti, and media-based art forms seem to hold particular appeal for Aboriginal as they did for non-Aboriginal adolescents. Also in an interview (Appendix F), one core Winnipeg told us that arts-based programming involving digital cameras, video camera, and other technology made her Aboriginal students feel special and, at the same time, part of the broader contemporary culture because they did not have access to these technologies in their everyday lives.

***Positive Role Models for Aboriginal Children and Youth***

In our research, we often heard children and youth are in need of positive role models of both genders.

Aboriginal artists can act as role models. For example, in an interview (Appendix K), one Aboriginal LTTA Artist-Educator described her own experiences of growing up in the public education system and having to deal with negative self-esteem issues and a lack of pride in her ancestry. Now, as an LTTA Aboriginal Artist-Educator, she focuses most of her attention on instilling a sense of personal and cultural pride in Aboriginal students. In classes, she introduces herself by explaining who she is, where she comes

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from and who her family is. In our research, we were frequently told and observed that this sort of sharing knowledge about oneself is considered essential to building relationships among Aboriginal peoples, and relationship is considered the foundation upon which all other interchange takes place. Indeed, it is considered a gift of the self that invites similar revelations.

After establishing relationships with students, the aforementioned Artist-Educator mentioned above typically passes around Aboriginal artefacts such as drums, feathers, and a talking stick for students to touch, feel and smell:

And by then they say it's kind of okay to be Aboriginal. This lady's having fun doing it, and maybe I can tell everybody that I am too. And that's when they take ownership of it. And they'll actually share a bit of their stories. It's very rewarding to make even a little impact and have them proud of what they are. (Interview, Aboriginal LTTA Artist-educator, Vancouver, British Columbia, September, 2008).

Caring relationships among teachers, Aboriginal or non-Aboriginal, and students is of paramount importance, both because it reflects the Aboriginal emphasis on relating and because it off-sets anxiety about schooling. All of the members of the Vancouver *Girlz Group* had attended or continued to attend elementary and secondary schools where Aboriginal teachers and students were in the minority. Still, in focus group discussion (Appendix A) they were able to identify non-Aboriginal teachers who had been their "favourites." The young women described those teachers as "trusting", "helpful", "understanding", "friendly", "fun", and "able to get students involved." It was clear that, the most appreciated teachers related on a personal level to the young women and possessed some understanding of the challenging conditions that often characterize the lives of Aboriginal youth. The following quote conveys the importance of the kindness and respect of a non-Aboriginal teacher for one member of the *Girlz Group*. It also indicates how rare the experience of such kindness and respect were for the student:

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[Mr. X] believed in me and never gave up on me. He understood my living situation with the way things were at home. He saw the potential in me and helped me see how much I loved to spell, write, and learn. He was the *only* teacher who saw me both as a student and a person. (Focus group, *Girlz Group*, Vancouver, British Columbia, February, 2008)

In our interviews of 37 teachers working in the core of Winnipeg (not part of Music Connections-Winnipeg), 50% of the non-Aboriginal teachers told us that they felt ill-equipped to teach about Aboriginal cultures without the support of their schools' Aboriginal advisor. At the Aboriginal Science Day, all 11 Aboriginal Support Workers reported that they are being increasingly called upon by non-Aboriginal classroom teachers to deliver Aboriginal content. In the Atlantic Provinces, 25% of the non-Aboriginal teachers we interviewed volunteered that they were not comfortable with delivering Aboriginal content. We surmised that there is increasing consciousness in Canadian education that Aboriginal cultural knowledge should be conveyed by Aboriginals themselves. We also felt some consternation at the fact that many provinces are now introducing substantial Aboriginal content into elementary school education: we wondered how many teachers are prepared or entitled to teach that content.

Aboriginal Elders have traditionally played a large role in passing on traditional learning in their communities, although there are many examples of current-day estrangements between Aboriginal youth and Elders. The representatives from the Athabasca Tribal Council's Education Committee with whom we met voiced their beliefs that Elders could act as role models and play a vital part in providing culturally-based arts activities in the classroom. At one point in the focus group discussion (Appendix B) committee members described a prevailing malaise they perceived among school-aged Aboriginal learners. One committee member told us, "One teacher in a local school has local Elders come in to the class to do art with the children. The children *want* to go to that class" (Focus group, *Nistawoyou Association Friendship Centre*, Fort McMurray, Alberta, November 2008). Five members of the Vancouver *Girlz Group*, when asked in their questionnaire (Appendix A) who should teach in a school that would be well-suited

to Aboriginal learners, also indicated that Elders should somehow be included among the teachers.

***Providing Suitable School Environments***

It was the members of the *Girlz Group* who alerted us to the effects of school architecture on Aboriginal learners.

Upitis (2007) has said that “it seems self-evident that the kinds of buildings that children and their teachers inhabit will affect not only what they learn but also the ways in which they learn.” She has elaborated that for nearly two centuries, schools have been built largely as a reflection of the factory model for learning:

Put a homogeneous group of children in a confined space (called a classroom), process them for a year (fill them with knowledge), make sure they have learned the set and predictable curriculum (test them according to established standards), move them to the next processing container (another classroom), and continue the cycle until they have reached the age at which they are deemed ready to leave (and enter the workplace). (p. 1)

Because of the familiarity of one of our researchers with the work of Upitis, we began to contemplate the effect that school buildings might have on Aboriginal students. We took advantage of our opportunity to meet with the *Girlz Group* to explore this issue. In the questionnaire (Appendix A), we asked the members of the *Girlz Group* to describe a school building suitable for Aboriginal learners. In all of the comments, the descriptors reflected traditional Aboriginal building materials, size, environs, and décor. The following are two representative comments from group members, all ten of whom described a school that reflected traditional Aboriginal dwellings:

The school would be like a Big house . . . . There would be cedar wood walls with First Nations designs on them to help us feel at home, with natural berries and flowers growing outside around the school, with sweet grass, sage, buffalo sage,

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and cedar trees. (Questionnaire, *Girlz Group*, Vancouver, British Columbia, February 2008)

The school would be a Long House with totem poles, traditional carvings, potlatches, and a huge gym with the latest equipment. (Questionnaire, *Girlz Group*, Vancouver, British Columbia, February 2008)

Like Upitis, our team thought that all children, Aboriginal or not, would benefit from schools that allowed more interaction with the natural world.

***Training and Retaining Aboriginal Teachers and School Administrators***

One of the most prominent recurring issues cited in Aboriginal education is that “the racial makeup of the teaching corps rarely matches that of the student body” (St. Denis, Bouvier, & Battiste, 1998). Recruitment and retention of Aboriginal teachers and qualified non-Aboriginal teachers in Aboriginal communities is identified to be a major force in increasing Aboriginal student success. The Council of Ministries of Education, Canada (2005) identified the need to increase the number of Aboriginal teachers, both entering as well as remaining in the profession. But recruitment and retention present enormous challenges, for there is “a relatively high turnover rate among newly inducted Aboriginal teachers, even if initial recruitment has been successful” (McNinch, 1984, p.10).

Table 5 illustrates the share of Canadian educational positions that were occupied by Aboriginal teachers in 1996. Our research and that of others (e.g., Archibald, et al., 2002) has shown that similar percentages exist 13 years later.

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*Table 5: Aboriginal share of employment in key education occupations across Canada<sup>5</sup>*

<b>Occupations</b>	<b>All workers- Numbers</b>	<b>Aboriginal Numbers</b>	<b>Aboriginal Share</b>
<b>Administrators in post-secondary</b>	8550	135	1.6%
<b>Principals/Elementary &amp; Secondary</b>	27250	520	1.9%
<b>University professors</b>	47170	240	0.5%
<b>Post-secondary teaching &amp; research assistants</b>	25315	210	0.8%
<b>College &amp; vocational instructors</b>	91410	1385	1.5%
<b>Secondary school teachers</b>	154035	1335	0.9%
<b>Elementary &amp; kindergarten teachers</b>	226105	3720	1.6%
<b>School &amp; guidance counselors</b>	116650	880	7.6%
<b>Instructors/teachers</b>	19040	185	1.0%

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<sup>5</sup> “The ABCs of Educator Demographics” (Steering Group, 2002, Table 6, p. 15). Source: Statistics Canada, 1996 Census of Canada, HRDC Special Data, referenced in Archibald et al. (1995)

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<b>Occupations</b>	<b>All workers- Numbers</b>	<b>Aboriginal Numbers</b>	<b>Aboriginal Share</b>
<b>of disabled persons</b>			
<b>Elementary &amp; secondary School teacher assistants</b>	57695	2670	4.6%

One of the problems in teacher recruitment has been the relatively small body of high school graduates to draw upon. Battiste (2002) traced this problem back to the fact that non-Aboriginal teacher candidates are not provided with “insight into the diversity of the legal, political, and cultural foundations of Aboriginal peoples” (p.9). She credits, in part, the resulting lack of knowledge about these issues among teachers as one reason why the complex needs of Aboriginal students are not being met and for the high drop-out rate among those students.

In one city in Northern Canada, we spoke with the Dean of Humanities of a community college. He acknowledged that training in arts-based teaching could well better prepare teachers and educational assistants to offer deep, culturally inclusive learning to all of their Aboriginal students. In particular, he viewed the inclusion of arts-based teacher training that involved Aboriginal art forms and Aboriginal artists in its delivery as a possible means to attract more individuals of Aboriginal heritage to the teaching profession and to elevate their sense of having reached their Aboriginal students.

Yet there are multiple and complex challenges that further impact Aboriginal teacher candidates. The literature cites poverty, geographical isolation, travel and economic expenses, family commitments, conflicts between students’ communities and mainstream education programs, conflicts in learning styles, [and] perceived lack of support from program counsellors as among some of the reasons why Aboriginal teacher candidates choose to leave their programs prematurely (Archibald, 1986).

Once in the teaching profession, Aboriginal educators face continuing challenges. For example, they often face extra pressures to be role models and care-givers in Aboriginal communities and classrooms. In our focus group discussions with educational

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Aboriginal teachers and Support Workers in B.C. (Appendix D), we learned of high rates of burn-out in the professions because student needs were so great. Interventions with students are often required outside of the classroom, such as providing food, transportation to appointments, counselling, and so on. Other support programs appear unable to provide frameworks, resources, or support through which Aboriginal teachers can meet all of these demands. When these demands are coupled with the challenges of working in an environment of racial discrimination, teachers often leave the profession (McNinch 1994). Thus, aside from the paucity of Aboriginal teachers in Canada, there is a problem with retaining teachers, both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal, in schools that serve Aboriginal learners. This is particularly true in remote locations where additional factors such as personal and professional isolation make the teaching life challenging.

For example, in the North West Territories, we heard from the Director of Early Childhood and School Services for the Government of the North West Territories Department of Education, Culture and Employment, how teachers, predominantly non-Aboriginal, are mainly drawn from ‘Southern’ Canada and are typically either at the beginning or the end of their professional careers. Beginning teachers are attracted to the adventure of the north and because there are usually teaching jobs available. End-of-career teachers are most typically drawn from the Atlantic Provinces where the retirement age of teachers is young, relative to the rest of the country. Teachers from both groups typically stay in their posts for two to three years. The rate of teacher turnover in Aboriginal communities in the NWT ranges from 40 to 100% each year. As the Director of Early Childhood services told us, “Aboriginal students have learned to think, I will love you and then you’ll leave. So, they retreat into a withdrawn space where it is difficult to reach or teach them.” (Meeting notes, December 2008).

While some of the teachers in the NWT are near retirement and, thus, expected to remain in their posts for a short time, it is the new teachers who apparently face the greatest challenges. The difficulties of first year teaching in remote areas are complex. As mentioned earlier, teachers’ actions are often under scrutiny, demands are great, they have had little or preparation for teaching the multi-grade classes that typify these schools, and they lack the support of mentors who could help them navigate the challenges.

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Once of our participants, a principal of a reserve school New Brunswick, pointed out in an interview (Appendix I) that teacher isolation tends to be a fact of life in schools, no matter the cultural background: “Collaboration is the key. As you know, a teacher’s life is so isolating during the day. They’re always isolated in the classroom” (Interview, Principal New Brunswick, April 2009). In this principal’s school, arts-based activities, offered through the LTTA program, promoted greater collegiality:

When you had two different teachers at the same grade level working together in arts-based teaching, there’s a lot of collaboration. This falls in line with what the schools in New Brunswick are doing to promote professional learning communities. When you get teachers working together, it benefits them in terms of collegiality, and that also benefit the kids. (Interview, Principal New Brunswick, April 2009)

Indeed, previous research into the effects of arts-based teaching indicates that the teacher collegiality is increased through shared professional development workshops in arts-based teaching, by having teachers at the same grade level or division participate in programming, and by having students from different grades share the end products of their art-making with other classes at the same or different grade levels (Patteson, 2004).

The prospect of arts-based teaching for Aboriginal students and their teachers in The North West Territories was greeted with enthusiasm by the education administrators we interviewed in The North West Territories, who unanimously told us that they were eager to determine next steps in bringing LTTA to the Territory. As a result, a conference on arts-based teaching has been planned for the last week of November 2009. With funds from various stakeholders, one Elder, one community artist, and one teacher from remote communities will be flown to Yellowknife to take part in the conference. The conference is conceived of as an opportunity to help heal the wounds that exist between Aboriginal individuals living with the effects of the residential school system and educators, so that they may work together through arts-based teaching to provide meaningful education for Aboriginal children and youth.

***The Effects of Teacher Professional Development in Arts-based Teaching***

To this point in the report, we have mainly provided evidence of the positive reaction of educators and community members in various regions of Canada to the notion of providing of arts-based teaching and learning for Aboriginal children and youth. We have also provided instances of successful arts-based projects involving Aboriginal students. We now turn to the component of our research where we sought more evidence of the effects of arts-based teaching for LTTA teachers of Aboriginal students in order to determine if the teachers a) were actually enabled to use more arts in their teaching and b) if they perceived that arts-based teaching to have positive effects on their Aboriginal students. We will now report on the impact of the LTTA program on teachers participating in the program in two regions: schools in the core of Winnipeg and reserve and urban schools in New Brunswick and Nova Scotia.

***Findings for Teachers in the Winnipeg City Core***

In Winnipeg, we interviewed and gave questionnaires to 37 teachers (Appendix F), who had been in the program for 3 to 6 years, All of the teachers taught grades from Grade 1 to 6. Thirty-seven teachers participated in the interviews, while 19 responded to the questionnaires.

***Questionnaire Results.*** The Winnipeg teachers indicated that the proportion of their students who were Aboriginal ranged from 24% to 100%, with the majority of classes having about 60% Aboriginal representation. Of the 19 teachers who responded to the questionnaire two were Aboriginal.

Table 6 indicates the positive shift in Winnipeg teachers' reported increases in their use of arts-based teaching after three to six years in the LTTA program. Collapsing the top two categories in the previous table, we can identify a positive shift of from 37% to 58% in teachers' use of arts-based teaching every day or 2 to 3 times a week after having been involved in the LTTA programming.

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Table 6: Increases in Teachers' Use of the Arts in Teaching in Winnipeg LTTA Classrooms

<b>Frequency of use of the arts in teaching ....</b>	<b>Pre-LTTA</b>	<b>Post-LTTA</b>
Every day	1	1
2 or 3 times a week	6	10
Once a week	10	6
Every two weeks	2	2
Once a month		
Rarely		

The limitation of this particular questionnaire item was that it depended upon teacher recall. We were a little surprised that the teachers recalled quite a high frequency of use of arts-based teaching techniques prior to their LTTA program participation. This finding is not in line with other pan-Canadian LTTA research that showed that approximately 18% of approximately 600 LTTA teachers in five cities across Canada used arts-based teaching prior to LTTA programming, with about 87% using it after five years of LTTA involvement (Patteson, Upitis, & Smithrim, 2005). We wondered if our questionnaire finding reflected the fact that teachers had found an effective method in arts-based teaching and superimposed their current practices on those of the past. However, this is speculation. It may also be that the teachers had, independent of the LTTA program, discovered that their students, most or all of whom were Aboriginal in many cases, responded well to arts-based teaching and had, indeed, been using the this pedagogical approach for several years. The fact remains that many teachers attributed increased use of the arts in teaching to their participation in the LTTA program.

A question regarding the suitability of arts-based teaching for Aboriginal students was worded this way: "If you feel comfortable, could you please comment on the suitability of using arts-based teaching with Aboriginal students?" In Winnipeg, eight of the 19 teachers declined to answer the question. Of the remaining teacher respondents, six teachers said that arts-based teaching was good for all students, while four indicated that they thought that their Aboriginal students responded well to arts-based teaching. We speculated that the reluctance on the part of teachers to discuss the question of the

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suitability of arts-based teaching for Aboriginal students echoed the same concern for not being or *appearing* to be racist that we encountered elsewhere in the country and which we discussed earlier in this report.

In their questionnaire responses, 100% of the Winnipeg teachers strongly agreed or agreed that the arts could be used to teach Math, Science, Social Studies, and Literacy. When asked in the questionnaire to indicate how much time during their teacher education had been devoted to learning how to use the arts in teaching, seven (37%) of the Winnipeg teachers said they received no training in how to use the arts in their teaching, with the remainder indicating that they received anywhere from one class to 40 hours of classes in using the arts in teaching.

It is useful to diverge a moment here to discuss a comparative finding from the Vancouver *Aboriginal Science Day* workshop where educators, primarily Aboriginal, were shown how to combine traditional Aboriginal approaches to learning with Science curricula. Pre- and post-day questionnaires were distributed to participants (Appendix D). One question asked participants to indicate in what subject areas arts-based teaching and learning might be successfully applied in order to support Aboriginal learners. Table 7 demonstrates their responses. There were no virtually changes between the responses on the pre- and post- workshop questionnaires:

Table 7: Aboriginal Science Day: Participants' Identification of Curriculum Subjects Suitable for Arts--Based Teaching

<b>Subject</b>	<b>Number (Percentage)</b>
Language & Literacy	19 (100%)
Mathematics	17 (90%)
Social Studies	19 (100%)
Relationship Skills	18 (95%)
Cultural Identity	19 (100%)
Other (Identified by individual participants)	- Social responsibility and social justice: 1 (5%)  - Self-esteem: 1 (5%)

This finding seemed to indicate to us that the BC educators already had a clear idea that

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the art could be used to teach all subjects prior to the workshop: throughout the Science day, the participants talked widely of how the arts were traditionally interwoven into Aboriginal learning approaches. However, all of the participants expressed gratitude for having been shown *how* to combine traditional art forms and learning systems with the BC school curriculum, something that had not been clear to them prior to the workshop.

***Interview Findings.*** In Winnipeg, the 37 teachers who had participated in the LTTA program took part in interviews (Appendix F). In the interviews, five (14%) of the teachers also told us that school was often the most stable environment in a student's life and that the ills that beset many Aboriginal families can be traced back to the negative effects of the Residential School system. Two teachers (5%) indicated that students often talk about their LTTA experiences at home with such enthusiasm that parents often asked about what was happening in the arts-based classes.

In the interviews, we asked, "In your opinion, are there social, health, and/or political issues that negatively impact the success of Aboriginal students in the educational system in your province? If so, can you indicate what they are?" In their responses, the Winnipeg teachers reported similar barriers to the success of Aboriginal students that we encountered elsewhere in Canada. Four teachers (11%) directly attributed students' absence to parents' lack of parenting skills. they told us that students often do not have structure at home. For example, they have no help with wake up or bedtime, eating meals, or support to learn in terms of resources or help with homework. Two teachers (5%) reported that their Aboriginal students lacked social-emotional skills and they appeared withdrawn. Fifteen teachers (41%) reported problems faced by students were family transience, unemployment for parents, social isolation, racism, and neglect. Two teachers (5%) stated that reading and math skills were often below grade average. Eight (22%) of the teachers focussed on FASD as the biggest barrier to many Aboriginal students, while identified racism and poverty as the underlying causes of low academic performance.

In most of the Winnipeg schools, where the LTTA program has been in place for six to eight years, although all of our research participants had been in the program from for from three to six years,. Arts-based teaching had apparently become woven into the

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fabric of school life: in an interview, one Winnipeg teacher explained: “LTTA is now a part of everything we do, whether it’s Math, Science, or Social Studies” (Interview, Teacher, Winnipeg, Manitoba, May, 2008).

In the Atlantic Provinces, fifteen teachers in reserve communities in the New Brunswick and Nova Scotia participated in interviews and responded to questionnaires (Appendix I). All had experience of the LTTA program. Of those teachers, 2 were Aboriginal.

In the interviews (Appendix I), six teachers, all non-Aboriginal, declined to answer the researchers’ query as to whether or not arts-based teaching and learning held special appeal for Aboriginal students. Six of the non-Aboriginal teachers responded that arts-based teaching is suitable for all children, not just Aboriginal. The two Aboriginal teachers and one non-Aboriginal teacher replied that arts-based teaching was of a good fit with Aboriginal students. One of those teachers said, “Arts-based teaching is very suitable for Aboriginal students. They are creative and participate more when art is used.”

In the interviews, we heard teachers (25%) mention the difficulties of getting many of their Aboriginal students’ parents to attend school events and to play a supportive role in their children’s education, something most of the teachers, again, attributed to the legacy of the Residential School system. However, a common theme was how much the children loved to be at school: “The kids love the school. They don’t want to leave at the end of the day” (Interview, Teacher, Nova Scotia, June 2007).

In New Brunswick and Nova Scotia, as in Winnipeg, many of the non-Aboriginal teachers (60%) reported they were comfortable to teach Aboriginal content only with support from an advisor or expert.

When asked in the questionnaires (Appendix I) to indicate how much time during their teacher education had been devoted to learning how to use the arts in teaching, the teachers in New Brunswick and Nova Scotia indicated anywhere from a class a week for 32 weeks to no time at all, with the majority indicating about a week of instruction.

Of the east coast questionnaire (Appendix I) respondents, 91% of the teachers strongly agreed or agreed that the arts could be used to teach Science, Social Studies, and Literacy, with 90% agreeing that the arts could also be used to teach Math.

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Responses to a questionnaire item (Appendix I) indicated that there was a positive, but not statistically significant shift in teachers' use of arts-based teaching of non-arts curricula over the time of their engagement in the LTTA program. Since teachers' participation in the program varied from one month to two years, and because our sample group was so small, we are reluctant to make any claims about this result.

***Promoting Understanding of Aboriginal Values through Arts - based Activities***

The *Music Connections - Winnipeg* project revealed how arts-based learning promoted knowledge and enjoyment of both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal arts forms. The performances that the children have given of "One People" are a testament as to how school produced art forms may be used to reach a wider Canadian audience. The same may be said of Eel Ground School's two dramatic productions.

One of our own research events illustrated the power of arts activities to bridge cultures, economic status, and ages. As mentioned earlier, in Northern Alberta we provided a day-long introductory workshop intended for regional artists in order to explore with them the possibilities of using the arts to teach non-art school curricula. Artists of both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal ancestry, as well as non-Aboriginal teachers and school administrators turned out for the workshop. We were aware that this was an atypical gathering of individuals from diverse backgrounds in the north. There was palpable reticence when the day began. However, when we asked the participants to form small groups (of mixed cultural backgrounds) in order to work on arts-based activities, barriers seemed to melt away into laughter and playfulness, as well as serious consideration of the issues at hand.

One of the activities at the workshop art involved defining a problem of concern to the individuals. In each group, Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal participants alike identified the issue of environmental pollution. The next steps were to determine the causes of the problem and then the solution. Then participants were required to create drawings of the cause-problem-solution sequence and exchange the drawings with another group. The group that received the drawings then had to compose a short story, a poem, or a song (as designated by one of our team) to tell the story of the drawings. Of course, as well as learning about the arc of a story, the participants, despite their different

cultural backgrounds, learned that they shared common concerns about the environment and that they could play and work together. As a team, we concluded that there is clearly potential for wider use of arts activities to bring a wide variety of adult stakeholders together for constructive dialogue concerning issues such as the environment. We also surmised that the arts-based community programming could bring children and youth into the conversation with adults.

This draws to a close our reporting on the data gathered for this research. The following section conveys what we think are the most important implications and conclusions that may be drawn from this extensive bank of data.

## Discussion of Findings

Our research confirms that there still exist substantial and pervasive impediments to educational success for Aboriginal learners in Canada. Our study revealed a wide-spread interest on the part of our Aboriginal and our non-Aboriginal research participants in arts-based teaching as a means to both promote the school and life success of Aboriginal learners. We discuss our findings here, using the six questions that guided our research.

### ***1. What do teachers, community members, and teaching artists identify as the main impediments to the school and life success of Aboriginal children and youth?***

Our research illustrates how Aboriginal learners across Canada continue to struggle with racism, poverty, isolation, lack of knowledge of traditional cultures and values, wide-spread learning challenges, low self-esteem, lack of hope, and criminal involvement. These factors were identified in our research as impacting negatively on the education of Aboriginal children and youth. We found that these struggles existed for Aboriginal learners in all of the regions we visited, from the West to the East coasts and in Canada's North.

Across the country, our research participants told us that many of the struggles faced by Aboriginal learners have their roots in the Residential School system that has

left a legacy of mistrust of education systems and wounds to individuals, families, and communities. Any educational reform for Aboriginal students, we were told, should be modelled on culturally-based approaches to teaching and learning and take into account the distressing challenges with which many Aboriginal children live.

Our research participants told us that the shortage of Aboriginal teachers in Canada exacerbates the other educational challenges faced by Aboriginal students: Aboriginal teachers, it was argued, possess the requisite knowledge of the challenges Aboriginal learners face and of local values and traditions that youth and children need to learn in order to feel more positively connected to their Aboriginal identities. Indeed, we found that Aboriginal teachers continue to be underrepresented in the locales we visited. However, the weight of responsibilities that falls on the shoulders of teachers of Aboriginal students is often overwhelming: they are unable to provide all of the support needed by their Aboriginal students. This situation calls for the introduction of more community supports for Aboriginal youth.

Teacher transience, whether the teachers are Aboriginal or non-Aboriginal, is another problematic issue, especially in remote and Northern locales, and has additional harmful effects on the level of attachment Aboriginal learners feel to their schooling and to their educators.

***2. What do teachers, community members, and teaching artists identify as culturally responsive approaches to education that might promote school success for Aboriginal students?***

Our findings revealed to us a hunger for approaches to education that mesh with the value that Aboriginal peoples in Canada place on holistic learning, that is, learning that engages students physically, mentally, socially, and spiritually. In addition, we were informed that stewardship of the land and concern for community should be central components of Aboriginal education. All of our Aboriginal participants viewed successful approaches to education for Aboriginal learners as those that not only engaged students and promoted their academic success, but also restored cultural pride, a sense of identity, joy in learning and living, and the traditional Aboriginal life values.

***3. Do Aboriginal community members identify arts-based teaching and learning as a potential means of promoting school and life success for their children and youth?***

All of our Aboriginal participants identified arts-based teaching as a means to promote Aboriginal student success because of its capacity to provide holistic learning opportunities, to transmit traditional values, and to engage Aboriginal students.

About 7% of our non-Aboriginal participants refuted the assumption that Aboriginal students learn differently from non-Aboriginal students. However, this dispute over whether one group or another learns differently does not lessen the potential of arts-based approaches to reach more students who prefer these modes of learning, since the method of learning through the arts is culturally neutral. We interpreted the desire of these non-Aboriginal participants to view all children's learning needs to be the same, despite cultural heritage and history, as expressions of the wish to not be, or to appear to be racist. However, we were struck by the universality of expression on the part of our Aboriginal participants that differences in learning needs of Aboriginal students, as compared to non-Aboriginal, exist and that they are based both on historical oppressions and, as well as a preference for holistic, experiential learning.

In three instances in particular, our research showed that arts-based learning using traditional art forms and/or stories does, indeed, promote cultural pride and knowledge for Aboriginal children and youth. In the *Music Connections–Winnipeg* project, students experienced gains in knowledge of the Cree language, personal and cultural pride, and experiences of educational success. In The New Brunswick school at Eel Ground students were provided the opportunity to research the impact of FAS/FASD on Aboriginal learners, and then to write and perform a dramatic production that reached hundreds of people and garnered provincial awards. In Vancouver, the school production of a play based on a Musqueam Nation traditional myth, facilitated the inclusion of an FAS/FASD learner in the play, promoted traditional knowledge, and prompted parents to attend the school performance.

In Winnipeg and Vancouver, arts-based approach to learning enabled students with learning challenges such as FAS/FASD and ADD/ADHD to participate and learn. In the *Music Connections-Winnipeg*, in particular, we heard how the arts-based learning had

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enabled children with learning challenges to stay on-task, persevere in their learning, and derive a sense of personal pride in their work. We also learned that, in Winnipeg, Vancouver, and in Eel Ground School, that children's involvement in dramatic productions brought many formerly non-participatory parents to the schools.

A prevalent theme in our discussions with our Aboriginal participants was the need for inclusion of Elders in teaching Aboriginal children and youth. We found a widespread belief that arts-based teaching provided by both Aboriginal artists and Elders could be a means to provide continuity in students' education, to provide engaging approaches to learning that might overcome some of the student alienation that results from teacher transience, enable children and youth to access traditional knowledge, and equip teachers with cultural knowledge. Providers of teacher education in the Canadian North also speculated that the inclusion of arts-based approaches in their curricula might better prepare teachers for teaching in Aboriginal classrooms and might even attract more Aboriginal teachers to the profession.

However suitable arts-based learning might be to Aboriginal students, it was obvious to us that, if connections are to be made between arts forms and curriculum content, professional development is needed for artists and teachers alike. Teachers, we found, typically do not receive adequate training in how to provide arts-based learning in their teacher training. Our experiences with educators in Vancouver, Northern Alberta, and in the Northwest Territories showed that, while they may have had an intuitive sense that the arts could be used to teach in many non-arts curriculum areas, participation in the experiential workshops we offered provided the beginning knowledge and skills needed to make the leap from intuition into practice. Our research into the effects of LTTA programming in the Winnipeg city core schools revealed growth in teachers' use of arts-based teaching after 3 to 6 years of participation in the LTTA program.

In our research, we were repeatedly cautioned that Aboriginal art forms should be taught by Aboriginal teachers, Elders, and artists, in order to avoid further usurpation and distortions of Aboriginal knowledge and traditions.

***4. Do teachers perceive that their Aboriginal students better understand and embrace their cultural identities because of arts-based teaching and learning?***

Our research revealed that educators in Winnipeg, on reserve schools in the Atlantic Provinces, and in Vancouver schools (all locales with high Aboriginal student populations) felt that arts-based teaching promoted the school success, cultural pride, and cultural knowledge of their students.

We noted several instances where arts-based learning activities provided Aboriginal students with opportunities to become spokespeople for and representatives of their communities. In the *Music Connections – Winnipeg* project, student musicians were bringing an Aboriginal presence to numerous public ceremonies. In Eel Ground School, student dramatists were shining a light on Aboriginal social concerns such as suicide and FAS/FASD. In the LTTA-Musqueam Nation project in Vancouver, children were using acting to teach traditional Aboriginal values. These students were simultaneously learning, providing role models for other Aboriginal children and youth, becoming aware of Aboriginal values and traditions, encouraging parental and community involvement in schools, and accumulating much-needed experiences of success.

***5. Does arts-based teaching provide teachers of Aboriginal students with what they perceive to be effective teaching approaches for meeting the needs of Aboriginal learners?***

Our finding that teachers in Winnipeg core were implementing arts-based teaching extensively in their classrooms suggests that this cohort feels that arts-based practices are meeting the needs of their students, the majority of whom were Aboriginal. Educators in the *Music Connections–Winnipeg* project, Eel Ground, and in the Vancouver Musqueam project expressed enthusiasm for the positive effects of the arts-based projects on students' success in learning and gains in self-esteem. However, our findings on this matter were confined to the three instances where we were able to explore actual arts-based programming for Aboriginal students.

We acknowledge the need for further study of this issue of how widely teachers themselves view the effectiveness of arts-based teaching and learning for Aboriginal

students. It may be that Aboriginal teachers, of whom there are relatively few in Canada and in our research cohort, recognise the benefits of arts-based teaching more readily than do non-Aboriginal because of an awareness of the integral role of the arts in traditional Aboriginal life and learning.

***6. Do teachers of Aboriginal students themselves report positive program impacts on their levels of satisfaction and sense of accomplishment in their own teaching as a result of using arts-based teaching?***

We observed great teacher pride in the arts-based accomplishments of their Aboriginal students in the *Music Connections –Winnipeg* project, Eel Ground, and the Musqueam Nation projects. Teachers expressed surprise at hitherto un-noticed abilities in individual students and whole classes of students, as well as recognition that it was arts-based learning that promoted these successes. It has been our observation during years of educational research that teachers are customarily inspired and rejuvenated when they witness student success. For teachers of Aboriginal students who face so many challenges as they move through the schooling systems in Canada, this may be particularly true.

***Closing Words***

Our research findings indicate that arts-based approaches to teaching and learning hold promise for ensuring that Aboriginal youth and children thrive, not merely survive, in Canadian educational systems. This research involved individuals to whom we introduced the concept of arts-based learning and those who had already participated in the LTTA program. We feel that that a longitudinal study that enables the collection of base-line data and traces the effects of arts-based learning for Aboriginal students and teachers over two or three years is now warranted.

## **Dissemination of Results**

To date, the results of this research have been presented at the following conferences:

- The Canadian Society for Studies in Education, Annual Conference, May 2008, Vancouver, British Columbia
- The Canadian Arts and Learning Symposium, October, 2008, Kingston, Ontario
- *Music Education for Social Change* Conference, University of Ottawa, March, 2009
- *The Promise of Music*, Toronto, October 2009

The results have also been presented to the following groups:

- Participants in the Artist Educator Certificate Course, The Royal Conservatory, Toronto, Ontario
- Participants in the LTTA Artist Educator Cultural Sensitivity Training Session, Burlington, Ontario
- Teacher Candidates at the Faculty of Education, Queen's University, Kingston, Ontario

Sections of this report have also been submitted to the following:

- Ministry of Environment, Alberta
- Teachers and administrators of the Fort McMurray Catholic School Board
- The Ontario Ministry of Culture

## **Acknowledgements**

The authors of this report would like to thank the following individuals for their contributions to this study:

- Leah Gazan, MA, Coordinator of the Wii Chiiwaakanak Learning Centre/ University of Winnipeg Faculty of Education

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- Graham Shorting, MA, Research Associate for LTTA, for report editing
- Nicole Simon and Brad Borbridge, Research Assistants to LTTA, for report proofing.

Thank you also to all of our research participants who gave so generously of their time and knowledge.

**We would like to thank the Canadian Council on Learning for their generous support of this study.**

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**Appendix A: Girlz Group Questionnaire and Semi-structured Focus  
Group Script**

*Grilz Group Questionnaire*

1. Your age: \_\_\_\_\_
  
2. Your Nation: \_\_\_\_\_
  
3. Where you currently live: \_\_\_\_\_
  
4. A) If you are still in school or taking a course, what grade or course are you in?  
\_\_\_\_\_
  
- B) If you are NOT at the present time in school or taking a course, what was the last grade or course you completed? \_\_\_\_\_
  
5. What did/do you like *best* about school?  
\_\_\_\_\_
  
6. What did/do you like *least* about school?  
\_\_\_\_\_
  
7. A) Who was/is your favourite teacher? \_\_\_\_\_
  
- B) What was it about this person that made/makes her/him your favourite teacher?  
\_\_\_\_\_
  
8. If you could design a school to suit Aboriginal/First Nations students, what would the following be like?  
  
A.) The teachers \_\_\_\_\_

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B.) The building: \_\_\_\_\_

C.) The school subjects: \_\_\_\_\_

D.) The approach to learning (e.g., lectures, hands-on activities, through books, etc.):  
\_\_\_\_\_

E.) Who would be the students at this school? Why? \_\_\_\_\_

***Grilz Group Semi-structured Focus Group Script***

1. What is the purpose of the Girlz Group?
2. How often do you meet?
3. What sorts of things do you do as a group?
4. Why is the group important to you?
5. For you, what are/were the biggest challenges at school?
6. What do/did you enjoy most about school?
7. What, if anything, needs to change about schooling in order to make Aboriginal students more comfortable and successful?

**Appendix B: The Athabasca Tribal Council Education Committee  
Semi-structured Focus Group Script**

1. What are you most worried or concerned about regarding the education of Aboriginal children and youth in your region?
2. What do you think are the reasons for these educational challenges?
3. What steps have been taken to deal with these challenges?
4. What additional steps need to be taken to deal with these challenges?
5. [After our explanation of arts-based education] Do you think that arts-based education has the potential to meet some of the educational needs of Aboriginal children and youth in your region? Why? Why not?
6. Should contemporary art forms or traditional Aboriginal art forms, or both, be used for arts-based teaching for Aboriginal children and youth? Why?
7. Who should the teaching artists be for Aboriginal arts-based education in your region?
8. Can you think of any artists who might be interested in learning more about arts-based education?
9. Can you suggest other community members with whom we might meet to gather their views of the potential of arts-based education for Aboriginal children and youth?

**Appendix C: Fort McMurray Community Focus Group Semi-  
Structured Focus Group Script**

1. Are you worried about the education of Aboriginal children and youth? Why? Why not?
2. What role have the arts traditionally played in your culture?
3. Is there a place for traditional art forms in the education of Aboriginal children and youth? If so, what might that role be?
4. Who should be teaching traditional art forms in schools?

**Appendix D: Aboriginal Science Day Questionnaire and Semi-structured Focus Group Script**

***Aboriginal Science Day Pre- and Post-Questionnaire***

[With the exception of the questions that requested demographic information, this same questionnaire was administered at the end of the day in order to be able to determine change.]

Feel free to answer in point form. This questionnaire is anonymous. You need not sign your name.

1. Please indicate what, if any, former involvement you have had with the *Learning Through the Arts* program:

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2. In what capacities do you currently work with Aboriginal children and/or youth?

---

---

3. In which of the following school locations do you work with Aboriginal young people or youth?

\_\_\_ Non-reserve school with predominantly Aboriginal students

\_\_\_ Reserve school

\_\_\_ Classes with predominantly Aboriginal students, within schools where the majority of students are non-Aboriginal

\_\_\_ Classes with predominantly non-Aboriginal students

\_\_\_ Other [please specify]: \_\_\_\_\_

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4. Please indicate the appropriate responses to the following:

*I believe that the arts may be used to promote learning in the following areas:*

	Agree	Disagree	Not Sure
Math			
Language & Literacy			
Social Studies			
Relationship Skills			
Cultural Identity			
Other [please specify]			

5. How important do you think it is that arts-based teaching be a part of the educational experiences of Aboriginal children and youth?

Extremely Important    Important    Somewhat Important    Not Important

6. a) How do you self-identify? \_\_\_ Aboriginal   \_\_\_ non-Aboriginal

b) If you are Aboriginal, to what Nation do you belong? \_\_\_\_\_

c) If you are Aboriginal, are you \_\_\_ Status \_\_\_ Non-status \_\_\_ Métis?

7. What do you hope to gain from your participation in this Aboriginal Science Day?

[Please use the back of the page to answer]      →

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***Aboriginal Science Day Semi-structured Focus Group Script***

1. What are you most worried or concerned about regarding the education of Aboriginal children and youth in your region?
2. What do you think are the reasons for these educational challenges?
3. What steps have been taken to deal with these challenges?
4. What additional steps need to be taken to deal with these challenges?
5. How can arts-based education help meet these challenges?

## Appendix E: *Music Connections*–Winnipeg Teacher and Student Research Instruments

### *Music Connections– Winnipeg Teacher Pre- and Post-Questionnaire*

1. Approximately how often do you currently use music in your teaching of non-music subjects?

- Daily    Once or twice a week    About every two weeks    Once a month  
 Less than once a month

2. For which of the following reasons do you include music in your teaching?

- In order to meet curriculum requirements for the teaching of music.  
 To set a mood in the classroom.  
 To teach non-music subjects such as Social Studies, Language Arts, etc.  
 To provide pleasure to my students.  
 Other: \_\_\_\_\_

3. How would you rate your own knowledge of classical music?

- Extensive    Moderate    Minimal    Non-existent

4. How would you rate your knowledge of Aboriginal music?

- Extensive    Moderate    Minimal    Non-existent

5. How confident do you feel about teaching music in the classroom?

- Very confident    Confident    Somewhat confident    Not confident

6. Please indicate which descriptors reflect your feelings about the *Music Connections* program now that you have completed it:



***Interview Questions for Teachers***

1. How did you come to be involved in the *Music Connections* program?
2. Can you tell me about other opportunities that students in the school have to learn about music and to experience music within the school?
3. Are there any Aboriginal music events taking place in the school?
4. How important do you think it is that your students are exposed to music as part of their elementary school education? Why?
5. What do you hope your students will get out of the *Music Connections* program?
6. What are you, as a teacher, hoping to get out of the *Music Connections* program?  
(Probe: augmented knowledge? new teaching techniques?)
7. Do you have any concerns as you anticipate the beginning of the *Music Connections* program?
8. Is there anything else you would like to say about the program?

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***Music Connections Student Pre- and Post-Questionnaire***

1. Please circle the face that most closely shows how you feel about the following:

E.g. right now I feel.... ☺      ☹      ☹  
Happy    Neutral    Sad/unhappy

1. When I hear classical music I feel . . . .	☺	☹	☹
2. When I think about climate change I feel . .	☺	☹	☹
3. When I think about pollution I feel . . . .	☺	☹	☹

2. Please put a tick in the box that shows your answer.

	YES	NO	I'M NOT SURE
1. I know what a flute is.			
2. I know who <i>Vivaldi</i> is.			
3. I have listened to Aboriginal flute music.			
4. I have listened to non-Aboriginal flute music.			
5. I know what an orchestra is.			
6. I have heard an orchestra play music (live or on a recording).			
7. I have heard Aboriginal drumming.			
8. I know what a music composer does.			
9. I have seen a violin.			
10. I know what the conductor of an orchestra does.			

***Student Semi-structured Focus Group Script***

1. What did you like best about the Music Connections project?
2. How did you like practicing your instruments? (Probe: hard? easy?)
3. What were your favourite parts of the concert?
4. Please describe your creative responses to the music of Vivaldi.

**Appendix F: Winnipeg Core LTTA Teachers Questionnaire and Semi-  
SSstructured Interview**

*Winnipeg Core Teacher Questionnaire*

1. You are \_\_\_ Female \_\_\_ Male
2. In your estimation, approximately what percentage of your students are of Aboriginal descent? \_\_\_\_\_
3. For how many years have you been a teacher of Aboriginal students?  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. What grade(s) do you currently teach? \_\_\_\_\_
5. To which age group do you belong?  
 20-29 yrs.    30-39 yrs.    40-49 yrs.    50-59 yrs.    60 yrs. or over
6. a.) Are you of Aboriginal descent?    Yes    No  
  
b.) If yes, to what Nation(s) do you belong? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
7. For how long have you been involved in the LTTA program? \_\_\_\_\_
8. A) *Before* being involved in the LTTA program, approximately how often did you use the arts in your teaching of non-arts subjects?  
 Every day,    2 or 3 times a week,    Once a week,    Every two weeks,    Once a month,  
  
 Rarely,    Never  
  
B) How often do you *now* use the arts as a teaching tool in non-arts subjects?  
 Every day,    2 or 3 times a week,    Once a week,    Every two weeks,    Once a month,  
  
 Rarely,    Never

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9. Approximately how much time (in weeks) did you spend on learning how to use the arts in your teaching during your teacher education? \_\_\_\_\_

10. Approximately how much time (in weeks) did you spend on learning how to use Aboriginal art forms in your teaching during your teacher education? \_\_\_\_\_

***Winnipeg Core Teacher Semi-structured Interview Script***

1. For how long have you been involved in the LTTA program?

2. What grade levels do you teach?

3. A) In your closest estimate, how many of your current students are Aboriginal?

B) At that grade level/these grade levels, how much Aboriginal content is currently in the curriculum?

C) Do you feel able to teach the Aboriginal content of the curriculum? Why? Why not?

4. Are you Aboriginal?

5. Has involvement in the LTTA program altered the way you teach in non-arts curriculum areas? If so, how?

6. How do you think your students in general have responded to arts-infused LTTA teaching(s)?

7. How have your Aboriginal students responded to arts-infused LTTA teaching(s)? (Probes: did you note any effects on self-esteem, engagement in learning, engagement in classroom activities, comfort level, etc.?)

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8. In your opinion, are there social, health, and/or political issues that negatively impact the success of Aboriginal students in the educational system in your province? If so, can you indicate what they are?

9. Is there anything else I should have asked you? Or are there any other comments that you would like to make about the LTTA program in general or about how it applies to the learning of Aboriginal students?

## **Appendix G: Ontario Principal Semi-structured Interview Script**

1. For how long has your school been part of the *Learning Trough the Arts* program?
2. Approximately what percentage of your school's population is made up of Aboriginal students?
3. Approximately what percentage of those students has received LTTA programming?
4. Have you noticed any differences in the ways in which Aboriginal students respond to the LTTA program as compared to the response of non-Aboriginal students?
6. Have there been LTTA lessons that used Aboriginal art forms?
7. Would you like to see the LTTA program continued at your school? Why? Why not?

## **Appendix H::Ontario Teacher Questionnaire**

1. What grades do you currently teach?
2. Approximately what proportion of your students is Aboriginal?
3. Typically, how unengaged are your student, Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal, during the LTTA Artist-educator visits?
4. Can you identify any aspects of an arts-based approach to teaching and learning that your Aboriginal students seem to find appealing?
5. Is there anything else you would like to say about how the LTTA program has operated in your classroom(s)?

**Appendix I: Atlantic Provinces Teacher Questionnaire and Semi-structured Interview Script**

1. You are \_\_\_ Female \_\_\_ Male
  
2. In your estimation, approximately what percentage of your students are of Aboriginal descent? \_\_\_\_\_
  
3. For how many years have you been a teacher of Aboriginal students?  
\_\_\_\_\_
  
4. What grade(s) do you currently teach? \_\_\_\_\_
  
5. To which age group do you belong?  
 20-29 yrs.    30-39 yrs.    40-49 yrs.    50-59 yrs.    60 yrs. or over
  
6. a.) Are you of Aboriginal descent?    Yes    No  
  
b.) If yes, to what Nation(s) do you belong? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
  
7. For how long have you been involved in the LTTA program? \_\_\_\_\_
  
8. A) *Before* being involved in the LTTA program, approximately how often did you use the arts in your teaching of non-arts subjects?  
 Every day,    2 or 3 times a week,    Once a week,    Every two weeks,    Once a month,  
  
 Rarely,    Never
  
- B) How often do you *now* use the arts as a teaching tool in non-arts subjects?  
 Every day,    2 or 3 times a week,    Once a week,    Every two weeks,    Once a month,  
  
 Rarely,    Never

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9. Approximately how much time (in weeks) did you spend on learning how to use the arts in your teaching during your teacher education? \_\_\_\_\_

10. Approximately how much time (in weeks) did you spend on learning how to use Aboriginal art forms in your teaching during your teacher education? \_\_\_\_\_

11. Please choose the most appropriate answer:

I believe that the arts may be used to teach the following subjects effectively to my students:

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Not sure
Math					
Science					
Social Studies					
Literacy					
Other (Please specify)					

12. If you feel comfortable in doing so, could you please comment on the suitability of using arts-based teaching with Aboriginal students?

13. Please feel free to provide further comments:

***Semi-Structured Teacher Interview Script***

1. For how long have you been involved in the LTTA program?
2. What grade levels do you teach?
3. A) In your closest estimate, how many of your current students are Aboriginal?  
  
B) At that grade level/these grade levels, how much Aboriginal content is currently in the curriculum?  
  
C) Do you feel able to teach the Aboriginal content of the curriculum? Why? Why not?
4. Are you Aboriginal?
5. Has involvement in the LTTA program altered the way you teach in non-arts curriculum areas? If so, how?
6. How do you think your students in general have responded to arts-infused LTTA teaching(s)?
7. How have your Aboriginal students responded to arts-infused LTTA teaching(s)?  
(Probes: did you note any effects on self-esteem, engagement in learning, engagement in classroom activities, comfort level, etc.?)
8. In your opinion, are there social, health, and/or political issues that negatively impact the success of Aboriginal students in the educational system in your province? If so, can you indicate what they are?

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9. Is there anything else I should have asked you? Or are there any other comments that you would like to make about the LTTA program in general or about how it applies to the learning of Aboriginal students?

## Appendix J: Ontario LTТА Artist-educator Questionnaire

1. Please indicate how much experience you have had working with Aboriginal students in the LTТА program:

2. Please put a mark beside each of the following that describes the situations in which you have worked with Aboriginal Students in the LTТА program:

- a) Non-reserve schools with predominantly Aboriginal students \_\_\_\_
- b) Reserves schools: \_\_\_\_
- c) Classes with predominantly Aboriginal students, within schools where the majority of the student population was non-Aboriginal \_\_\_\_\_
- d) Classes with a few Aboriginal students, but predominantly non-Aboriginal \_\_\_\_
- e) Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

3. In your opinion, have the Aboriginal students respond any differently from non-Aboriginal students to the LTТА lessons you have provided? If so, how?

4. a.) What have been your greatest personal challenges when working with Aboriginal students?

b.) How did you meet those challenges?

c.) What have been your greatest rewards in working with Aboriginal students?

5. a.) In your opinion, is the LTТА program suited to meet the needs of Aboriginal students? \_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_ No

Why or why not?

b) What changes would you recommend making to the LTТА program in order to have it better meet the needs of Aboriginal students?

6. Please provide any other comments you wish to make:

**Appendix J; LTТА Aboriginal Artist-Educator Interview**

1. What art forms have you used in the LTТА program with Aboriginal students and with what success?
2. In your opinion, are there social and political issues that impact the success of Aboriginal learners? If yes, what are those issues?
3. How do you create trust and comfort for aboriginal learners in your classes?
4. What are the benefits of arts-based learning for Aboriginal students?

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