

**THE CONFLUENCE OF THEORY, PRACTICE, AND GEOGRAPHY:
LEADERSHIP OF THE SMALL, RURAL COLLEGE WITHIN THE
DIVERSE ENVIRONMENT OF NORTHERN BRITISH COLUMBIA**

by

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ABSTRACT

This study examines college leadership in Northern British Columbia and uncovers a unique leadership requirement and skill set called resourcefulness. This research is substantiated by the narratives of educational leaders from the College of New Caledonia, Northern Lights College, and Northwest Community College as they serve their communities and interact with global perspectives and knowledge systems.

Like other Canadian rural communities, the small, resource-based communities within Northern British Columbia are experiencing rapid change. The vastness of the geography and the diversity of the communities and of the Aboriginal peoples in the region pose unique challenges and extensive opportunity for entrepreneurial and cosmopolitan approaches to delivering education and training. Naturally, the community looks towards the college for leadership; therefore in small communities, the college leader has a high public profile and extensive political engagement. The college leader requires a comprehensive understanding of leadership theories and practices, particularly servant and transformational leadership, and must use authentic approaches to reach understanding, particularly to appreciate and respond to the needs of diverse Aboriginal cultures. The moral implication of unique situations must take precedence over the simply effective. In this regard, the ways that the leaders interpret and understand their surroundings and correspondingly navigate within large systems are of critical importance in terms of acquiring the necessary resources for success. The research culminates in recommendations for effective succession planning at the colleges and unique leadership development approaches that address the realities of Northern British Columbia.

Keywords: Resourcefulness; college leadership; succession planning; rural communities; participatory approaches; authentic communication; Northern Postsecondary Council; Aboriginal self-determination; Northern British Columbia

Subject Terms: Postsecondary education in Northern British Columbia; characteristics of resourcefulness; multi-campus college structure; scarcity of resources; resource-sector economies; community engagement; college leadership; succession planning; leadership development programs; imaginative and creative responses, ethics and effectiveness, cultural differences

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Leaders of public community colleges in Northern British Columbia have expansive mandates and unique challenges that require resourcefulness to bring about success in fulfilling the visions and missions of their institutions. The most salient aspects of the challenges common to these leaders are: serving small, widely dispersed communities within a multi-campus college structure; large distances to urban areas where government ministries are located; large numbers of Aboriginal communities spread across more than half the province's geography; local economies based on the resource sector, provincial funding formulas designed for urban circumstances; extensive engagement in community activities, and extremely scarce resources to carry out broad educational mandates.

The purpose of this work is to examine the form of leadership that is required to meet these challenges. The study was conducted using qualitative research methods and was specifically rooted in narrative-based case study. The data sample included six senior administrators from the College of New Caledonia, Northern Lights College, and Northwest Community College. The study provided rich insight into the economic, societal, cultural, historical, political, and personal contexts of these leaders as they work to provide for the educational and training needs of the communities and the constituents that they serve.

The research assumptions were situated within the notion that resourcefulness was required of the leaders as they faced their unique challenges within the complex nature of their environments. The study was guided by contemporary theories that helped situate the Northern British Columbia realities within globally complex perspectives. Collectively these theories frame an understanding of the nature of and responses to the northern experiences. The notion of *communicative action* as a means to reach understanding for people who live and work within complicated systems and from diverse cultures and perspectives is a strong thread within the study. The prominent leadership theories include those of servant and transformational leadership and the belief that leadership must be ethical to be effective.

The outcome of the study provided evidence that college leadership in Northern British Columbia requires a large degree of resourcefulness. Given the diversity of the communities and people that the colleges serve, participatory approaches are required for success. The study uncovers the realities of a larger post-secondary education system interacting and influencing the local *lifeworld* of rural communities. The lifeworld is presented as a generative place where people in rural settings realize their dreams and where collective actions provide for the greater good. "These approaches begin with an imaginative spirit that reaches out to community to partner and collaborate in order to acquire the resources necessary for basic educational and training needs. The leaders demonstrated a genuine and strong desire to listen to others, to move towards greater understanding of the complexity of the cultures and needs within the region, and to act authentically in relation to those needs.

The study also correlates with other studies conducted more generally on college leadership and acknowledges an urgency to develop future leaders to fill large numbers of vacant administrative positions that will be occurring in the education sector. The study provides recommendations for developing formal succession plans and leadership development programs to ensure that potential candidates for these vacant positions understand the uniqueness of college leadership in Northern British Columbia.

DEDICATION

This study is dedicated to my husband Danny Jacques who has both inspired me and supported my life-long pursuit of learning. The study is also dedicated to our life in the small, rural community of Mackenzie in Northern British Columbia where we have resided for the last 37 years. For years, we wrestled with the notion that we didn't make a conscious decision to move to this small community of under 5000 people. In 1974, we entered this lifeworld as a weekend visit with family and decided to stay for a few months. Now we acknowledge that our family roots are entwined in small community life in Northern British Columbia as we contemplate and settle into a more permanent perspective.

Equally, this study is dedicated to our children who highly value education and the opportunities that education provides. We consider our children, their spouses, and our grandchildren as they and many others like them experience the fears, the pain, the frustrations—but also the unique opportunities—of living in small resource-based communities. Our children continue to reinvent themselves and their ways of being as they relate to a much broadened global community. I have complete confidence in their abilities to excel in this reality.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I extend my gratitude to Dr. Geoff Madoc-Jones—the Simon Fraser University pioneer who has substantially impacted and continues to impact the lifeworld of educators by bringing education, insight, and potential to Northern British Columbia—by taking education out to the learners. Dr. Madoc-Jones and the faculty teaching in the off campus Master and Doctoral programs have developed extensive human capital and educational talent in Northern British Columbia. Collectively, they have increased capacity for educational leadership throughout the Province of British Columbia. I salute them in their achievements.

I am also at this time reminded of my connections to the Program Development staff at Vancouver Community College and their educational outreach through the Instructor Diploma Program and the Diploma in Adult Education. I am thankful for their collegiality and for inspiring me to really think about and consider the needs and desires of our learners. I particularly thank Bob Aikin and David Tickner for their inspiration. Additionally, I thank my friends and colleagues for their support while I worked through this degree.

I also extend my gratitude to Dr. Deborah Poff and Dr. Sharon Bailin for their insight and guidance and to the study participants for sharing their understandings and interpretations of their lifeworlds. I have learned a great deal from their collective wisdom and experiences.

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BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

Situating the Researcher and the Research

My interest in this study is founded on my practice as an administrator at the College of New Caledonia (CNC) in Northern British Columbia. As CNC's Vice President Academic and as a seasoned educator and administrative practitioner, I have a career in post-secondary education that spans 24 years. For the purposes of this study, I reflect on the tensions I have experienced between the authorities of theory and practice; and I situate myself and my administrative colleagues within the geography of Northern British Columbia. I know and continue to experience the daily challenges of living in small, rural communities. I celebrate the contributions that I and other educators and college leaders make to our communities' economic and social development.

As a young educator delivering vocational training, I internalized in many ways the various tensions within my practice. At that time, I would say that I had neither the language nor the ability to articulate the struggles that presented themselves in an ongoing and sometimes frustrating internal dialogue. My experience has been that practice-level authority tends to present itself or be acknowledged as subservient or in conflict in some way with the authority of theory. In the college environment, naturally, one must have an understanding of theory on which to ground one's thoughts, arguments and positions. As I acquired increased formal education and more concrete abilities to articulate the nature of this internal struggle, I gained a stronger sense of this posturing and disharmony between the two factions of theory and practice.

Now as a seasoned senior administrator completing the final stages of my formal education, I speak with confidence in my authority as practitioner. I am cognisant of and attentive to the integration of theory and practice in my educational fabric. Within this study, I also now add and contemplate the dimension of geography within that tension and confluence.

Northern British Columbia colleges have complex mandates and substantial challenges. These mandates and challenges require resourceful approaches to provide education and training in a region that encompasses more than half the province's geography and to effect success in student learning. With the complexities of global market economies, local community inhabitants require support and assistance to become more aware of and competitive within these global realities. The goal of this dissertation is to provide insight into and understanding of the senior leadership role within the environments and communities of practice of colleges in Northern British Columbia, particularly in relation to the notion of the resourcefulness required of its institutional leaders. The study begins by framing historical, political, and social perspectives and imperatives within the educational contexts of Northwest Community College, Northern Lights College, and the College of New Caledonia as they reside within provincial and global educational communities. The roles of senior administrators at these three colleges and in this study are informed by contemporary philosophical and leadership theory that provides opportunity for embracing the pluralistic context of education. I acknowledge that theory is fundamentally necessary in guiding successful educational practice. The study seeks to explore in a deep and rich way the characteristics, virtues, and practices of

resourceful leaders as they guide and direct their agile post-secondary institutions in Northern British Columbia.

Senior administrators of community colleges in Northern British Columbia are faced with a multitude of leadership challenges ranging from the reality of managing institutions that are financially disadvantaged by a rigid provincial funding model; to navigating within the historical, political, and economic constructs of Aboriginal¹ and northern paradigms. As well, the leaders of colleges in Northern BC are required to be part of the solution to a rural economy challenged by one of the greatest ecological disasters in Canadian history—the Pine Beetle infestation that anchored its devastation in British Columbia. Northern BC post-secondary leaders provide educational opportunities to a region comprised of more than half of the province’s geography and respond nimbly to a rapidly changing northern economy. Rural communities have experienced rapid changes in the last few decades. Although the economy of Northern British Columbia is still substantially based on extraction of natural resources, a recent phenomenon includes the disappearance of small retail and service centres as larger manufacturing, government services, and non-resource-based commercial services are centrally located in the larger communities within the area.

Profile of the Small Rural College

Six publicly funded community colleges in British Columbia fit the profile of the small, rural institution—College of New Caledonia, College of the Rockies, Northern

¹ “Aboriginal” is defined as “the Indian, Inuit and Métis peoples of Canada” (Department of Justice Canada, 1982).

Lights College, Northwest Community College, North Island College, and Selkirk College. These institutions have unique histories, geographic locations, philosophical contexts and visions. Weninger (1997) states, “In responding to these different needs, each institution has developed its own approach and identity, resulting in a phenomenally complex and diverse system” (p. 6). Additionally, government policy impacts small, rural colleges in unique ways. Weninger further states, “It has become increasingly difficult to fully anticipate the wide spectrum of consequences resulting from policy initiatives intended to serve the total province . . . but having unintended negative consequences for the small college” (p. 6). Weninger continues to point out that the funding formula in the 1990s met the needs of the larger urban institutions but dramatically impacted growth in the institutions located in sparsely populated regions.

The three northern colleges in British Columbia serve more than 50% of province’s geography (see Figure 1) and encompass more than 60 distinct Aboriginal communities and a large urban Aboriginal population. The vastness of BC’s north alone creates challenges that require skilful and innovative approaches in delivering educational programs and services. Linked by geographic proximity and shared northern opportunities and challenges, the three northern colleges have approached the distribution of resources in innovative and forward-thinking ways.²

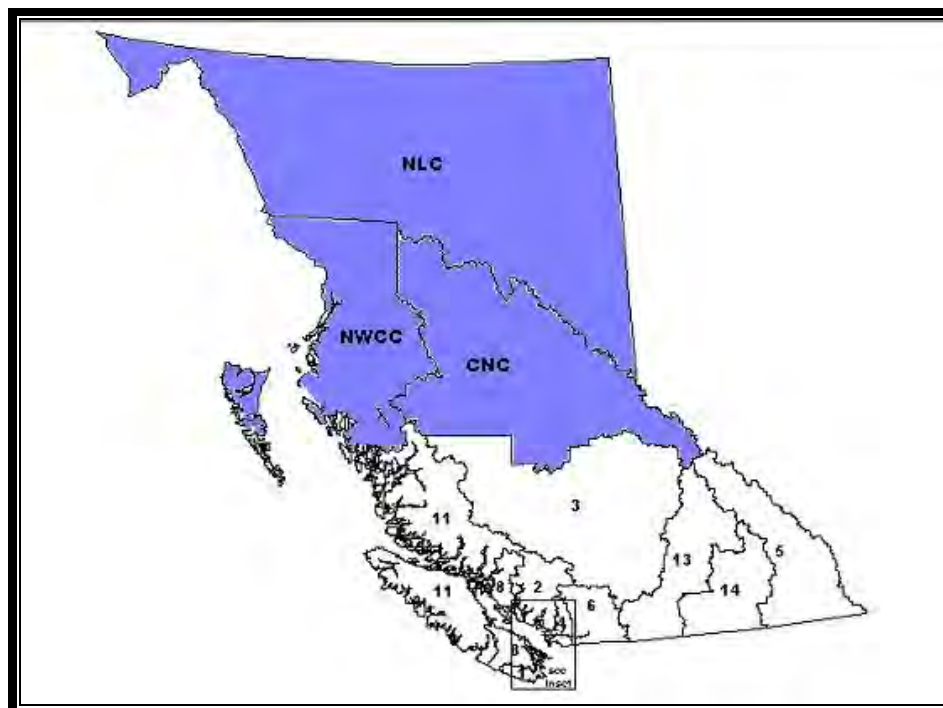
² One example being the recently formed Northern Post Secondary Council that is a collaborative initiative among the three northern colleges, the University of Northern British Columbia, and a Northern Team from the Ministry of Advanced Education. The challenges of delivering education and training within a common geography led to an innovative collaborative poised to address the depth and breadth of these challenges and opportunities in the North.

The three northern colleges embody the dynamic of the larger post-secondary educational system—an organic system that evolves, shifts, and moves with the many forces at play. These variables include:

- economic booms and busts in the Northeast
- decades of economic decline in the Northwest
- Aboriginal communities with severe unemployment rates
- low levels of literacy in Northern British Columbia
- declining populations
- exodus of small- and medium-sized businesses in rural communities
- the impact of Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders, and,
- the challenge of the Pine Beetle infestation

Figure 1.

Profiles of the Three Northern Community Colleges



Note. Adapted from BCStats, 2000.

Clearly, innovative responses to these challenges and to their resulting opportunities are required.

Northwest Community College (NWCC)

Northwest Community College is situated within some of BC's most rugged and spectacular landscapes and serves a population of close to 100 thousand people of whom 38% are Aboriginal (Northwest Community College, 2006, p. 4). The region stretches to Haida Gwaii on the West; Houston on the East; Stewart to the North; and to the south the region interestingly is less defined by a community location than by its proximity to Vancouver, which is about 800 km due north. Geography challenges the delivery of programs and services with access to many communities often practical only during summer months. Northwest educators often endure hazardous conditions to bring services to their remote communities. Although the region is planning for improved economic conditions with the port expansion in Prince Rupert and mining exploration and development within the region, Northwest Community College's communities have been economically depressed for many decades. Examples of these challenges follow:

- the highest unemployment rates in the province (Labour Market Census, 2006, p. 14)
- depopulation of the region's small communities; for example, as high as a 25% decline in Stewart from 2001 to 2006 (BCStats, 2006, p. 4), and,
- policies that disenfranchise Aboriginal learners (Stonechild, 2006, p. 77)

Although these statistics are alarming, one is reminded of the richness of the educational experiences, the spirit of the communities and of the educators within the

region, and the overall vibrancy of the institution. NWCC is currently reinventing itself as a bicultural institution by concentrating on growing and enhancing its relationships with and service to the region's Aboriginal populations. Northwest is currently integrating Aboriginal wisdom, culture, and practices within every aspect of its fabric. The Freda Diesing School of Art and Design in Terrace is attracting high calibre students and Aboriginal artists to the region (College of New Caledonia, 2006, p. 10). Further, innovative programming such as Applied Coastal Ecology and First Nations Land Stewardship are central to Northwest's vision and celebration of Aboriginal paradigms and ways of being. Expansion in health, trades, and mining programs and partnerships with other institutions, with industry, and with its regional communities provide opportunities for growth and for clear pathways for learners to higher education and to employment. Anticipated changes in the economy combined with innovative and community-driven partnerships are providing hope and anticipation as Northwest Community College forges its future and assists Aboriginal people in their right to self-determination and to share in the wealth of Canada.

The College of New Caledonia (CNC)

The College of New Caledonia is centred in Prince George and has regional responsibility in the college sector for post-secondary education throughout the central interior region of British Columbia. The college region reaches from two very remote Aboriginal communities, Tsay Keh and Kwadacha, in the North; to the small Aboriginal communities of Nazko, Kluskus, and Alexandria in the South; and from Granisle in the West; to Valemount in the East. Prince George is the largest and the most central campus,

with additional campuses in Mackenzie (North) and Quesnel (South) and Burns Lake, Vanderhoof, Ft. St. James (West) and the Valemount Learning Centre (East) (College of New Caledonia, 2006, p.4). The College of New Caledonia serves 21 Aboriginal communities and a large urban Aboriginal population and struggles to meet their deep and broad educational needs. CNC also struggles to retain its comprehensiveness as a community college. Current growth for CNC is focused on trades, health, and Aboriginal programs and services, while business, technology, and university credit programs have substantially declined over the past decade. With the central and largest community in the region, the health sector has growing needs and research and development in rural health is a signature of the College and of the University of Northern British Columbia (UNBC) that is also anchored in Prince George. The recent announcement of a \$100 million cancer centre will see this sector grow substantially within the next five years. The College of New Caledonia is synonymous with community, and local and regional partnerships sustain and enrich the educational landscape.

Largely dependent upon the forest sector and devastated by the mountain pine beetle infestation, communities in the central interior are dealing with the realities of substantial downsizing of the sector.

Quesnel already has a gut understanding of what that [sustainability] means: our economy relies almost completely on a biological system—the forest, [is] our main natural capital. (Quesnel Community and Economic Development Corporation, 2007, p. 6)

Because of this understanding, the small communities in CNC's region are bracing themselves for the looming disaster with energies currently focused on survival through municipal strategies for economic diversification.

British Columbia's northerners, like other rural Canadians, are resilient and innovative. Canada has a long history of communities forming around resource industries with limited sustainability and community shelf life. However, the lack of sustainability of resource extraction can also lead to innovation. Green-city initiatives, tourism, diversity in renewable energy, and a return of the forest to grassland provide opportunities for diversification. Strong international markets in minerals and energy also stimulate exploration and development in BC's central interior and provide hope for a more vibrant central city. Prince George as the gateway to the expanded port facilities in Prince Rupert has a promising future as an international hub of transportation, with potential to benefit from the consequent flow of goods and services to and from northern, eastern, western, and southern points in Canada. Although this extraction economy is still based on the rise and fall of commodity prices, generally a better economic future is proposed. Additionally, in Canada and like other countries around the globe, demographics of the baby boomers are beginning to provide a range of opportunities within the global skilled labour shortage. Within a "Start Here, Go Anywhere" adage, the College of New Caledonia is promoting itself as a transitional experience in preparing its learners for impressive employment and higher education opportunities.

Northern Lights Community College (NLCC)

Northern Lights Community College and its eight campuses and learning centres stretch from the Stikine Region in the West, Chetwynd in the South, to BC's northern and eastern borders. The primary industry of North Eastern British Columbia is the oil and gas sector with international markets driving the prosperous economy. Mining, forestry,

agriculture, and health sectors are also stabilizing factors of the region. Multi-year planning for Northern Lights (Northern Lights College, 2006, p. 4) sees heavy emphasis on applied sciences, trades, and employability skills and moderate emphasis on health and social sciences. Although a comprehensive community college, industry and industrial expansion clearly provide urgency to the delivery of education and training in North Eastern British Columbia. Additionally, as the gateway to the Canadian North with Mile Zero of the Alaska Highway located at Dawson Creek, tourism is also a strong influence in community and educational activity.

Partnerships with other institutions to meet the educational needs of its communities are standard at Northern Lights College and include collaborative initiatives with its Northern BC sister colleges, the University of Northern British Columbia, Yukon College, Grande Prairie Regional College, and other neighbouring Alberta institutions. The employability of graduates is strongly represented in the learning outcomes of programs at Northern Lights College, and the nurturing of strong partnerships and relationships with Aboriginal people and with school districts is extremely important. Since high paying jobs in North Eastern BC have lured the young and hearty to the oil patch, Northern Lights and the local school districts have found creative ways (such as taking education to the work site) to keep high school graduation from plummeting and the workforce trained and poised for rapidly expanding economic opportunities. Northern Lights is finely attuned and poised to sustain the success of its businesses, industries, and communities. As a career-focused college, Northern Lights's "Where Learning Works" signature is embedded within a culture that recognizes and responds to "learning for

everyone, earning both credits and income, contributing to economic development, and influencing change for individuals, for the institution, and for society” (J. Valgardson, personal communication, September 14, 2007).

Adjusting Local Expectations to Global Realities

Communities in Northern British Columbia place substantial expectations on their colleges to assist in growing the local economies by providing a labour force with the knowledge, skills, and abilities necessary for economic and social growth. In support of these expectations, the communities rally around their colleges to provide resources for program delivery and for services to learners. The college leader in these small, rural communities with economies based on natural resource extraction also lives within rapidly changing global economic and social realities. Small, northern communities, marked by periods of boom and bust economies and substantial geographic challenges, also require supports from provincial and federal ministries. The community colleges in Northern British Columbia are entering a time of transition and their college leaders are learning to adapt to their local economic and political realities. The funding opportunities sometimes match the needs of the communities and at other times seem to work in opposition to the communities’ needs. As well as other college leaders in British Columbia, the college leaders in Northern British Columbia indicate their frustration at what they describe as a micro management of the post-secondary system and their diminishing autonomy and discretion in matching public resources to community need.

Research Assumptions and Questions

Assumptions

Since both the external and internal institutional contexts of the three Northern British Columbia community colleges are challenging and diverse and since institutional resources are scarce, their leaders require unique skill sets, characteristics, and virtues called ‘resourcefulness’.

The role definitions of leaders of northern and rural institutions are likely to be more diverse and less differentiated than the roles of leaders in southern, urban institutions

On a personal level, the life of a leader of a post-secondary institution in a small, northern, rural community is defined by a high public profile where the leader is extensively engaged in community.

Questions

Which particular political, ethical, and leadership theories have been most useful in illuminating the unique set of issues found in post-secondary education leadership in Northern British Columbia?

How do the political, historical, and geographic contexts of post-secondary educational institutions in Northern British Columbia influence the lives and the work of senior leaders at the following three colleges: the College of New Caledonia, Northern Lights College, and Northwest Community College?

How do the characteristics, virtues, and practices of senior leaders at CNC, NWCC, and NLC affect the way they view their leadership roles in this situation of northern diversity? Do these individuals exhibit ‘resourcefulness?’

What general conclusions can be drawn about the nature of college leadership in Northern BC that could influence future leadership development programs and succession planning? Are changes to northern leadership theory and practice required?

LITERATURE REVIEW

I have used modern philosophical, leadership, and educational theories to inform this study and to articulate in better and more definitive ways the nature of my practice and the practice of other college administrators as together we reside and work in Northern British Columbia. Following is an overview of the intent of the research literature noting the main authors. I acknowledge that the philosophical authors have contributed to whole traditions in philosophy that have deep intellectual roots and that the leadership theorists additionally build upon preceding leadership constructs. My intent is to use these authors as a window into these theories rather than represent their complex historical evolution.

- Taylor (2004) first informs this study by proposing that individuals and collectives define their contexts and themselves through their interpretations of their experiences.
- The work of Benhabib (2002) and Habermas (1981/1987) can serve to remind us of our responsibility as democratic citizens to consider how destructive colonization of Aboriginal people was and continues to be. They also inform the study by offering theories that might serve as a basis for helping us to understand how we might learn from those mistakes and truly embrace Aboriginal experiences, wisdom, and practices in the design and delivery of education, training, and support services. These theorists emphasize the primacy of communication to reach understanding and compromise.
- Habermas's (1981/1987) notion of a lifeworld that interacts with systems and Nurse's (2002) work comparing rural and urban life help me understand the situation of participants in the study within Northern British Columbia and within the larger post-secondary system.
- Contemporary leadership theories from Burns (1978); Ciulla (2004); Covey (2004); Darling (in Wren, 1995); Drucker (in Hunter 2004); Goleman (1994); Goleman, Boyatzis, and McKee (2002); Greenleaf (in Maak & Pless, 2006); Hunter (2004); Kander (in Hesselbein, Goldsmith, and Beckhard, (1996); Kidder (1995); Kotter (1996); and

Wren (1995) provide insight into the characteristics, virtues, and skill sets required of ethical and effective college administrators in these northern settings but also as situated within the broader global context of contemporary societies.

- Key factors that contribute to understanding current educational reform of the post-secondary education system are exposed by the writings of Castellano, Davis, and Lahache (2000); Dennison and Schuetze (2004); Levin (2001 & 2003); Ouchi (in Fullan, 2005); and Ungerleider (2003).
- Succession planning for educational leadership in Northern BC is illuminated by the work of Bond (2001); Gibbs (2006); Goates (2007); Howley, Andrianaiov, and Perry (2005); and Shults (2001).

Viewing Ourselves in New Ways

In the questioning of our understanding of ourselves, Taylor (2004) suggests that we view our societal and political challenges and ourselves in new ways, in particular as a series of *modern social imaginaries*. Taylor (2004) believes that there exist today not just one but multiple modernities because “other non-Western cultures have modernized in their own way” (p. 1). We cannot properly understand these cultures if we “try to grasp them in a general theory that was designed originally with the Western case in mind” (p. 1). Instead, “the differences among today’s multiple modernities need to be understood in terms of the divergent *social imaginaries* involved” (p. 2).

This study explores the work of college leaders as they negotiate within both Euro-western and Aboriginal contexts. Taylor (2004) argues that we create the social imaginary by making sense of our societal practices. He further explains the concept of the social imaginary as:

. . . the way ordinary people imagine their social surroundings . . . [the imaginary is] often not expressed in theoretical terms, but is carried in images, stories, and legends. . . it is shared by large groups of people . . .

[and]... makes possible common practices and a widely shared sense of legitimacy. (p. 23)

In this research study, I draw on Taylor's concept of the modern, western social imaginary to illuminate the challenges facing the three community colleges in Northern British Columbia. For, it is evident that our current western educational approaches do not fully meet the needs of British Columbia's Aboriginal people. Canada has a long history of assimilation of Aboriginal people into the Western ways of thinking and of education as Canadian federal and provincial policies evolved and directed the lives of Aboriginal people for this purpose. Only in the new millennium are we as a nation starting to more fully comprehend and acknowledge the far-reaching effects of these policies. As a province, we are entering into a new era—into a new relationship with Aboriginal people in British Columbia.

In Northern British Columbia (the North), we are reminded that “the urban model of multiculturalism and cosmopolitan cultural hybridity will not work” (Nurse, 2007, p. 63) as Canada's Aboriginal people gain political, legal, and economic rights and recognition through self government. Through educational opportunities, colleges in Northern BC are working with Aboriginal people to renew the authority and dignity of Aboriginal culture. “The promise to education will be fulfilled. Aboriginal people know that the will to learn is inseparable from the will to live” (Patton as cited in Castellano et al., 2000, p. xvii).

What Taylor proposes on a global scale and Nurse and Patton propose on a local level, I also propose within this study. My intent is to view the college leaders and their societal and political challenges in new ways. By uncovering and illuminating the social

imaginary within the Northern BC post-secondary context, the learning will represent individual and collective voices—the images, stories, and legends inherent in the collective. The modern educational institution as comprised of multiple perspectives requires new ways of articulating its experiences and of building mutual understanding. The narratives in this study will assist in making sense of the college leaders' experiences. As “we learn our identity in dialogue” (Taylor, 2004, p. 65), the voices of the study participants will add a degree of depth to the collective research on leadership practices in post-secondary settings.

Within the dissertation is an account of removing oneself from the events of one's life and looking at those events through a new lens, of unpacking the layers to see what lies beneath the experiences—of the “contexts of the imagination of self” (Taylor, 2004, p. 63). The report is interlaced with particulars of how a degree of revelation and self-understanding occurs. As the participants construct in text and in voice the imaginary in relation to their world, its culture, society, and personality, the participants have the opportunity to look at their context and say, “Is that what happened?” or even, “Is that what is currently happening? Have I well represented the events by uncovering the opinions, beliefs, and views underlying my ways of knowing and the actions that I have taken?” In the writing, I acknowledge the difficulty of distancing or disembedding. Within the text of this dissertation, I attempted to effect the potential of the experiences. However, I again acknowledge that the text may not have the ability to fully capture the depth and breadth of those experiences.

Communicative Action

Seyla Benhabib (2002) brings awareness to the challenges for and limitations of liberal democracies that represent multicultural participation and that consequently demand accommodations for the needs of individual cultures. Benhabib (2002) cautions us to look at equality not from merely a stance of preservation of culture but more broadly from the perspective of universal justice and freedom. The question then becomes, “How do we create impartial opportunities and institutions where the struggle for cultural recognition is considered as an aspect of democratic equality?”

Benhabib (2002) proposes an answer through discourse ethics and the bringing forth of cultural narratives that must be heard in order to achieve understanding and to achieve consideration of cultural differences. Benhabib (2002) encourages us to view cultural differences as places of possibility through discussion, understanding, and compromise.

Benhabib (2002) further cautions us that the interpretations of traditions and discourses may vary based on whether we are a cultural observer or a cultural agent. Often the cultural observer (usually an outsider) seeks to represent a culture in one way or another and often for self-serving purposes. These external views often portray a culture as “unified, harmonious, seamless wholes that speak with one narrative voice” (Benhabib, 2002, p. 102) whereas in fact, the participants (actors or agents) in a culture continually “renegotiate their narratives of identity and difference through multicultural encounters in a democratic civil society” (p. 104). Benhabib urges us to be cognisant of these identity differences within cultures and be aware of our views of cultural totality.

In trying to understand perspectives and in representing or articulating the views and practices of Aboriginal people involved in educational programs and services, a critical skill of the effective educational administrator is to recognize his or her limitations as the cultural observer. Educational administrators in Northern British Columbia learn very quickly that the 60 plus northern Aboriginal communities in their college regions have varying and distinct perspectives and that pressing forward with mandates that do not acknowledge this distinctiveness will no longer be tolerated. Although the resourceful leader must often make decisions quickly and astutely, inherent in Aboriginal practices is a widely consultative perspective where conversations must take place and time must be taken to bring care and understanding to complex situations. To proceed in any other way would bring a quick demise to the initiatives of the educational leader. “A global civilization that is to be shared by world citizens will need to be nourished by local attachments, rich cultural debate; contestations about the identity of the ‘we’; and a sense of democratic experimentation with institutional design and redesign” (Benhabib, 2002, p. 184). The college leaders in Northern British Columbia, as well as other educational and political leaders around the globe, know all too well the violence that has potential to become unleashed as culture, religion, and language clash. The educational leader in Northern BC must be a robust practitioner in bringing understanding and solutions to complex situations and within complex structures and systems.

Jurgen Habermas (1981/1987) also proposes *communicative action* as a means to reach understanding for people who live and work within complicated systems and from

diverse cultures and perspectives. Habermas (1981/1987) urges us to think about these systems in relation to one's lifeworld, our inescapable context of knowing and acting. Habermas (1981/1987) sees lifeworld as more than just our culture. Lifeworld is the way in which our direct or immediate world presents itself. In relation to the context of the leader of a community college and from an educational perspective, I use Habermas's lens to consider the ways in which systems approaches rationalize and implicate the lifeworld of the learner or the educational leader. Habermas (1981/1987) describes communicative action as a form of rationalizing of political or personal perspectives. To achieve a degree of common understanding, a facilitation of the rationalization of ideas must take place. The environment for communicative action must be trust based and valid to achieve understanding or agreement between and among the communicating parties. Habermas's theory (as cited in Eriksen & Weigard, 2003) is not as concerned with motives in communication as it is concerned with the interplay and role of language and human interaction in attaining a degree of understanding or consensus. Habermas is interested in discourses that relate to the right action or the use of practical reason. "The aim is to single out the most rational choice among the existing alternatives, based on a normative ideal where utility or expediency is viewed as the ultimate value" (Eriksen & Weigard, 2003, p. 76).

Choosing the right action and having practical reason are the imperatives of the educational leader in the North. A northern practitioner making ethical and effective decisions must reside within the context of understanding and questioning of his or her own culture and surroundings. He or she must have an understanding of and a curiosity

about the cultures and surroundings of others. Additionally, he or she must have an in-depth understanding of the mandates and practices of British Columbia's post-secondary educational system and must be ready to question that system in relation to the realities and perceptions of his or her institutional constituents.

Habermas's lifeworld (1981/1987) also represents our understandings of the surroundings in which we live. These surroundings are that which we know in terms of our interaction with and interpretation of our culture and the situating of self within a collective of shared circumstances or experiences. Lifeworld is the context in which individuals exist. Lifeworld shapes its participants, and the participants become the creation or discovery of lifeworld. Habermas's theory (1981/1987) also includes a component of systems theory. "I shall therefore propose that we conceive of society simultaneously as a system and a *lifeworld*" (p. 120). The individual interacts and reacts within a system or within multiple systems that engage the lifeworld. Resources flow between the system and the lifeworld. Within a political context and similar to Benhabib's bringing forth of cultural narratives, Habermas (1981/1987) proposes communicative action as a means to assist in reaching understanding. Through open discussion and deliberation, a broader group perspective prevails.

Within the post-secondary context, systems are evident that allow for collaborative decision making by constituent groups. However, very knotty issues often simmer underneath or within those systems as the disparate voices and opinions often remain unacknowledged or covert. In the current study, I explored the concept of communicative action as an opportunity to bring these underlying perspectives and

varying perceptions and opinions to a place of public debate for improved resolution and understanding. The resourceful leader should encourage this opportunity for authentic dialogue.

In looking at opportunities to apply both Benhabib's and Habermas's theories to the political and social context of post-secondary education in Northern British Columbia, the insights uncovered from the interviews and brought forward within an interpretive report were one medium for increased understanding. These accounts by college leaders working within the college system and as portrayed within the limited scope of language provide insight into the lives and worlds of the people who live in small communities in Northern BC. These narratives add a contribution to the illustration of lifeworld and to the articulation of the *social imaginaries* of the three northern colleges as they struggle to meet the breadth and depth of education and training needs of their communities.

Changes in Rural Canadian Culture

For many reasons, rural communities are distinct and are not simply small-scale replications of urban centres. Although small town residents no longer characterize a monoculture, Nurse (2007) believes that the urban notion of celebrated diversity is not easily transferred to the context of the small town as ongoing historical processes continue to remake small-town life and culture. Nurse believes these processes and forms of recognition allow for a different kind of diversity, particularly as diversity relates to Aboriginal communities.

Northern colleges in British Columbia work closely with Aboriginal people and communities in their regions and often are a conduit between the communities and the mandates of provincial and federal ministries. Not only are Northern BC college leaders constantly faced with these competing pressures but also along with their desires to remain true to their own ethical and moral stances, they wrestle with rapidly changing political forces within their respective college regions. Like other Canadian rural communities, the small communities within Northern British Columbia are experiencing rapid change. Large multinational corporations employ people in the resource extraction economy. Small business is declining as it strives to compete with large retail and service centres centrally located in urban areas. Additionally, government services that were once accessible in small communities are also being centralized and often are accessed through call centres.

All of these changes make rural life challenging. However the college leader in Northern BC needs to understand that rural Canadian culture continues to be solidly founded on volunteerism and civic participation that “constructs and reinforces specific normative standards of behaviour and social values . . . all of which prompt civic engagement and consideration of the public good” (Nurse, 2007, p. 61). Therefore, the successful college administrator is required by his or her community to be actively engaged in community initiatives and public events. Nurse (2007) also believes that class structure has changed within the small town. “The capitalist re-colonization of the ‘back country’ produces a more quiescent working class and a more aggressive self-serving corporate culture that geographically polarizes class relations between communities and

what are, in effect, absentee owners” (p. 62). An economic environment that is “no longer linked to primary community production” (p. 62) challenges community resources and the hearts and minds of its residents. In acquiring the data for this research and in writing this report, the work of Nurse is important in terms of illuminating this aspect of the lifeworld of the Northern BC residents.

Leadership Assumes Transforming and Serving Others

The contemporary leader in all settings faces tough challenges in environments representative of diverse cultures and perspectives and global societal needs and focused on economic prosperity. Authoritarian styles and approaches are no longer relevant nor are they effective. The college leader requires a comprehensive understanding of leadership theories and practices. Underlying these leadership theories are core questions about ethics and morality.

When defining the concept of leadership, often more questions arise than do answers. For example, “What does leadership mean? How would one define effective leadership? Does being a good leader mean that the leader is morally good or merely effective?” Further, in relation to this research study, “Is a resourceful leader both good and effective? How would the resourceful leader’s personal characteristics and values relate to his or her effectiveness?” In response to these questions, I explored leadership literature on the connection between ethics and effectiveness. Additionally, I illuminated the practice of college leadership in Northern British Columbia through two contemporary normative leadership theories—transformational leadership and servant leadership.

Joanne Ciulla believes that leadership as a human relationship is “morality magnified” (as cited in Maak & Press, 2006, p. 17) and that the morality of the leader is fundamental in terms of the leader’s influence on individuals, organizations, communities, and societies. Ciulla (as cited in Maak & Press, 2006) states that “ethics lies at the very heart of leadership” (p. 17). Fundamentally, Ciulla believes that ethics essentially is about the way we treat others. In this way, Ciulla supports James MacGregor Burns’s (1978) assertion that leadership is a “relationship between leaders and a multitude of followers of many types” (p. 30) and supports Burns’s theory that transformational leaders cultivate moral integrity. Maak and Pless (2006) add that leaders must approach their work in relational ways and that using empathy and understanding to build sustainable relationships is a vital quality of contemporary and future leaders. Maak and Pless examined the contextual challenges that leaders face and conclude that “Most new leadership challenges result from interdependence and interconnection of people and processes in the global business environment” (p. 34) and that the complexities of this environment are explained by challenges with diversity, ethics, trust, stakeholders, and values.

Ciulla (as cited in Maak & Press, 2006) cautions that the very way that we use normative assumptions about leadership tends also to direct how we frame and define leadership. However, Ciulla’s (2004) focus has been on determining what is *good* leadership. Ciulla (2004) notes that there are two normative interpretations of *good*. The first is about effectiveness and the second is about being morally good. Her thesis is that when we say that we want to understand leadership, we really mean that we want to

understand good leadership and that statement has to imply both senses of the term. She concludes therefore that good leadership is about being both ethical and effective. In contemplating this necessary relationship between ethics and effectiveness, Ciulla (2004) believes that the leader's intentions towards a particular event or activity are crucial but also points out that moral failures are not always intentional and that the success of leaders can be related to both cognitive abilities and normative perspectives. Hersy and Blanchard (as cited in Maak & Pless, 2006) studied leadership effectiveness and how leaders adapt their styles to the situations at hand and conclude that thoughtful and understanding leaders have more satisfied followers. However, does this satisfaction imply effectiveness? Ciulla (2004) concludes that the study of leadership requires a study of moral implications as a critical factor in leadership effectiveness. Ciulla (as cited in Maak & Press, 2006) looks at the ethics and effectiveness imperative from both a deontological and a teleological perspective. From the deontological perspective, the "intentions are the morally relevant aspects of an act. As long as the leader acts according to his or her duty or moral principles, the leader acts ethically, regardless of the consequences" (Ciulla as cited in Maak & Press, 2006, p. 23). From the teleological view, ethical conclusions are based on the action and the results. Ciulla (2006) proposes that both perspectives are important to consider in determining the effectiveness of a leader but that consideration of the leader's duty and the accomplishment of the greater good must also be factored.

Ciulla (as cited in Maak & Press, 2006) adds a degree of humanity to contemporary thought when considering whether leaders should be expected to have

higher moral standards than followers. She concludes that, “Leaders must be more successful at living up to moral standards, because the price of their failure is greater than that of an ordinary person” (p. 24). Ciulla also concludes that we want leaders to do their jobs. If leaders are intended to lead their institutions, communities, and countries, then the public expects that the leader will do his or her job. Ultimately, leaders must look after the interests of their constituents. However, the value of leadership is also assessed in terms of what a leader

. . . intends, values, believes in, or stands for—in other words character . . . the enduring marks or etched-in factors in our personality, which include our inborn talents as well as the learned or acquired traits imposed upon us by life and experience. (Ciulla, 2004, p. 35)

Ciulla (2004) exemplifies her argument about the necessary relationship between ethics and leadership by examining transformational leadership and servant leadership theories. According to the father of transformation leadership theory, James MacGregor Burns (1978), important is to understand the inherent moral aspects of the relationship between leaders and followers as they engage in events and activities where they have shared motives, values, and goals. Burns (1978) believes that leaders cannot define the needs of the followers. Ultimately, only followers can define their own needs; and in relation to leadership power, the moral authority of transformational leadership is “grounded in *conscious choice among alternatives*. Hence leadership assumes competition and conflict, and brute power denies it” (p. 36).

Burns (1978) believes that the leader’s role is to take advantage of these tensions created by change, innovation, competition for scarce resources, and conflicts among individuals. Leaders not only articulate these tensions and conflicts and act on behalf of

their followers but they also shape the conflicts and tensions. Therefore, intellectual leadership that unites ideas “through disciplined imagination” (Burns, 1978, p. 141) is concerned with values, purposes, and ends that rise above immediate practical needs. Burns believes that intellectual leadership is transforming leadership, a term Burns now uses instead of his original notion of transformational leadership. Transforming leaders respond to the needs of society through the catalyst of conflict. In shaping the conflicts and tensions, transforming leaders play a critical teaching role. “Transforming leaders ‘raise’ their followers up through levels of morality” (Burns, p. 426). Burns (1978) believes that transforming leadership is “morally purposeful” and “elevating” in that both leaders and followers are “raised to more principled levels of judgment” (p. 455). Ciulla (as cited in Maak & Press, 2006) concludes that the “transforming leader is engaged in a dialogue about values that elevates the leader and the followers” (p. 29) and that through this dialogue and collective experiences, the leader as a moral agent transforms followers into leaders.

The second normative and compelling leadership theory that illuminates my analysis of the practice of college leadership in Northern BC is that of servant leadership. Servant leadership finds its roots in both Eastern and Western thought and is also founded on moral principles. The servant leader wants to serve others and through this serving, transforms and elevates others. The people served by the leader grow as persons. Robert K. Greenleaf (as cited in Maak & Pless, 2006), the forerunner in servant leadership theory, asks, “Do they *while being served* become healthier, wiser, freer, more autonomous, more likely themselves to become servants?” (p. 30).

The principles of servant leadership are simple in structure and are also to most people quite self-evident—to lead is to serve others. “Leadership and life are about people and relationships” (Hunter, 2004, p. 17). Hunter believes that character development and leadership development are one in the same. In his first book on leadership, *The Servant*, Hunter (2004) defined servant leadership as “The skill of influencing people to enthusiastically work toward goals identified as being for the common good,” (p. 32) and now to his definition Hunter adds, “with character that inspires confidence” (p. 32). Hunter believes that leadership is about who we are as people and differentiates leadership from management, which is more about what we do. “Leadership is influencing people to contribute their hearts, minds, spirits, creativity, and excellence and to give their all for their team” (p. 33).

The servant leader both knows when to follow and when to lead. The servant leader is part of a team that is fully responsible and responsive to the organization and to each other. Peter Drucker (as cited in Hunter, 2004) believes that although a minority of people may be born leaders that leadership is something that must be learned and that learning leadership is about increasing character development. Ken Blanchard (as cited in Hunter, 2004) believes that leadership is an influence process. Influencing is an important aspect of the resourcefulness required of the educational administrator of a community college. Resourcefulness in the post-secondary education context is about influencing people and organizations to collaborate and partner in providing or sharing resources to deliver programs and services to meet community needs.

The college leader in Northern BC must have widespread influence to be resourceful; hence, the theory of servant leadership is critical to the role of the leader. The educational administrator must influence people to commit to the institutional mission and to “enthusiastically, contribute their hearts, minds, creativity, excellence, and other resources toward mutually beneficial goals” (Hunter, 2004, p. 46). This influence is not automatically assigned to the position of the leader; rather, the influence is earned.

Hunter (2004) believes that how we respond to what happens to us in life is about building character and that character is “our moral maturity and commitment to doing the right thing regardless of the personal costs” (p. 49). Hunter believes that leadership is “character in action” and that leadership development is about character development. Hunter (2004) further discusses the notions of power and authority in relation to servant leadership. The autocratic leader uses power to coerce others; and the servant leader uses personal influence that Hunter describes as authority. Authority is about inspiring others. Operating from the outdated management paradigm of a power base will lead to “nasty collateral activities, including head games, adversarialism, low trust, cronyism, political games, and a host of other unhealthy behaviors damaging to relationships and consequently damaging to the organization” (Hunter, p. 56).

Hunter (2004) believes that legitimate leadership is about using influence through personal authority and character and that this personal authority is the essence of servant leadership. Servant leadership is about serving others and operating from a place of moral authority. Stephen Covey (2004) believes that the notion of moral authority is a paradox as the word “authority” has connotations of command, control, and power. Whereas

“Moral authority is the gaining of influence through following principles. Moral domination is achieved through servanthood, service, and contribution” (p. 299). Covey also acknowledges Robert K. Greenleaf as the foremost contributor and founder of present-day servant leadership theory. Greenleaf (as cited in Covey, 2004) believes that servant leadership is founded on a new moral principle that authority must be freely granted to the leader: “To the extent that this principle prevails in the future, the only truly viable institutions will be those that are predominantly servant-led” (p. 299).

Servant leadership does not necessarily come easily or naturally to humans. Servant leadership is about sacrificing self for others and about providing others with the resources and encouragement that they need to excel. Servant leadership is always about achieving the greater good for the institution or for those being led. Servant leaders will be found at all levels within an organization. However, Hunter, (2004) also emphasizes that servant leadership is not about always deferring to others or about avoiding difficult decisions. To serve others is to do the right thing. “We may have to sacrifice our need to be liked, our bad habit of avoiding conflict, our desire to have all the answers, to look good, to always be right” (p. 78). Again, the challenge of the theory surfaces. “The most powerful executives possess a paradoxical mixture of personal humility and professional will. They are timid and ferocious. Shy and fearless. They are rare—and unstoppable” (Collins as cited in Covey, 2004, p. 301). Hunter (2004) points out a further paradox that when we serve others, when our focus becomes “other” rather than “me” that in the end our own personal needs will also be met.

Hunter (2004) believes that love is the underlying factor in servant leadership and speaks of the notion of love as volitional love or the love of the will. “Volitional love is the choice, the willingness of a person to be attentive to the legitimate needs, best interests, and welfare of another” (p. 85). Volitional love is about helping others and about leading to seek the greatest good for the organization or for the group—for the educational institution and ultimately for those who work or study at that institution. Hunter (2004) believes that leadership requires humility, which means that the leader must behave authentically and without pretence. Therefore, servant leaders are humble leaders who easily give credit to others, who are open to possibility, and who are secure in themselves and their abilities. Servant leaders believe that others are important and therefore find great satisfaction in serving. The servant leader also acknowledges that humans have limitations. Servant leaders are tolerant people who communicate readily and who also forgive and let go of resentment easily. This tolerance is one more reason that servant leaders gain trust from their constituents. Ultimately, servant leaders have moral courage and integrity. Having integrity and courage also means that servant leaders hold their people accountable to the goals and aspirations of the organization. “I often tell managers that they should feel insulted when someone performs below standards, breaks rules, or behaves irresponsibly in their presence. Why? Because the employee doesn’t expect you to do anything about it!” (Hunter, 2004, p. 119). Therefore, feedback and performance management are also critical aspects of the role of the servant leader.

Hunter (2004) further points out that the servant leader must have a strong understanding of the distinction between the relativism of values, morals, and ethics and

the natural law of principles. Hunter believes that ethics is about behaving according to acceptable standards of conduct that vary among cultures and that ethics is also about applying these morals, values, and duties. On the contrary, Hunter believes that principles like integrity, respect for human life, self-control, honesty, courage, commitment, and self-sacrifice are unchanging and generalizable among and inherent in human beings. Hunter (2004) urges the servant leader to listen to his or her inner self in terms of knowing what is right and what is wrong and to continually focus on developing moral courage and maturity. This is what Hunter defines as a person's character. "Character is our moral and ethical strength to behave according to proper values and principles. The difficult part of life is not knowing what is right but doing what is right" (p. 144).

Hunter (2004) believes that organizations must be purposeful in developing their future servant leaders. An important aspect of this purposefulness is to convey that leadership is a privilege that comes with ultimate responsibility. Educational institutions in general would be well advised to implement leadership development programs as a critical component of succession planning. Within these leadership programs, individuals will need to be provided with opportunities to practice their leadership skills and to receive open and direct feedback on their performance. Future leaders must be nurtured and developed. Hunter (2004) suggests that organizations create leadership teams that learn by focussing on accountability, change, and continuous improvement. Hunter further proposes that a sense of community will develop through this team building and through leadership development activities. Additionally, Hunter believes that to motivate leadership teams and future leaders, institutions must continue to motivate people through

recognition of and appreciation for the work that people do. Creating meaning and purpose in the lives and roles of people will ultimately bring rewards. “People are yearning for ways to find alignment between their personal values and the values of their organization. People hunger for a way to live out their lives in a meaningful and fulfilling way” (Hunter, p. 199). The servant leader honours the people with whom he or she works by setting high standards, by instilling pride for work well done, and by building healthy relationships. “Servant leadership requires a level of intimacy with the needs and aspirations of the people being led” (Blanchard & Hodges, 2003, p. 58). The servant leader is a leader with a strong and healthy character.

Contemporary Leadership Theory and Practice

As one can clearly see by reading leadership theory and by talking with others about leadership, the notion of leadership is a somewhat vague and elusive concept. “Leadership today is one of the most observed and least understood phenomena on earth” (Wren, 1995, p. 5). From today’s citizen leaders (Wren), the definitions of leadership and leadership approaches and styles are constantly evolving. “Leadership that seeks to take a simple vision and then teach, nurture and shape a company is a challenging, demanding and exciting concept that ultimately brings success” (Darling as cited in Wren, 1995, p. 477).

Wren (1995) believes that one of today’s main leadership challenges is to accomplish goals and functions within large and complicated systems. Darling (as cited in Wren, 1995) confirms that today’s leaders are shaped by changes in society. “People

question the status quo, sometimes to an extraordinary degree. We see this in family life, schools and universities, religious life and government” (p. 475).

I think the ideal leader for the 21st Century will be one who creates an environment that encourages everyone in the organization to stretch their capabilities and achieve a shared vision, who gives people the confidence to run farther and faster than they ever have before, and who establishes the conditions for people to be more productive, more innovative, more creative and feel more in charge of their own lives than they ever dreamed possible. (Crandall as cited in Wren, 1995, p. 58)

Aspiring future college leaders at community colleges would be well advised to identify the traits and to acquire the skills required for leadership success in the 21st Century. Given the complexities of modern societies and the notion of legal recourse for solving a myriad of problems, one of these skill sets would be to assist in dispute resolution and to understand that “conflict is inevitable within organizations . . . [and if] successfully managed can produce high quality, creative solutions that lead to innovation and progress” (Brett as cited in Wren, 1995, p. 435). Another skill set would be to understand that “Successful moral leadership for the Twenty-first Century will be grounded in centuries-old concepts of ethics that may never change. Yet it will also be flexible, adaptable, and inventive” (Kidder, 1995, p. 212).

Daniel Goleman (1994) provides further insight into leadership success by drawing our attention to a new concept, emotional intelligence, which he claims is the main factor in personal and professional success and not the previously highly regarded concept of intelligence quotient. Emotional intelligence is comprised of “abilities such as being able to motivate oneself and persist in the face of frustrations; to control impulse and delay gratification; to regulate one’s moods and keep distress from swamping the ability to think; to empathize and to hope” (p. 34). Goleman et al. (2002) believe that

emotional intelligences for leadership can be learned and improved. “The trick is to learn while doing other things, a strategy that might be thought of as *stealth learning*” (p. 159). Goleman et al. further suggest that accomplished leaders practice these skills both within the workplace and while engaged in community and family activities. Goleman et al. suggest that the leader first establish a learning strategy that focuses on overcoming impulsive behaviours by replacing them with new and effective behaviours.

Goleman et al. (2002) further refine their theory by saying that “collective emotional intelligence is what sets top-performing teams apart from average teams” (p. 177) and that “group emotional intelligence . . . cultivates ‘trust, group identity, and group efficacy’ and so maximizes cooperation, collaboration, and effectiveness” (p. 177). Goleman et al. advise building emotionally intelligent organizations and urge that organizations create sustainable change by designing “a process that continually builds leadership that gets results” (p. 233). Goleman et al. further state that a multifaceted approach that addresses individuals, teams, and the organizational culture is the ideal.

The fiscal reality facing post-secondary education in British Columbia is one of extensive need and demand for services and programs and limited resources to actualize those realities. Collaboration and partnerships with other institutions are key aspects to system-wide solutions. Today’s educational leader must be nimble in building relationships, trust, and liaisons with other leaders within the post-secondary system and with other education stakeholders. “Leaders must become *cosmopolitans* who are comfortable operating across boundaries and who can forge links between organizations” (Kander as cited in Hesselbein et al., 1996, p. 91). Future educational administrators must

embrace partnerships with minds open to possibilities and visions that will span challenging organizational cultures and mindsets. “The leader of the future, of the next millennium, will be one who creates a culture or a value system centred upon principles” (Covey as cited in Hesselbein et al., 1996, p. 149). Covey continues to say that these leaders will have to “constantly grow and learn” (p. 149) and further confirms the other leadership theories that emphasize that the leader of today must lead in all walks or aspects of his or her life.

The Contemporary Educational Organization and Its Leaders

The organization of the future should also be considered when discussing leadership and succession planning for colleges in Northern British Columbia. The Campus 2020 directional paper for post-secondary education will set the course for education in British Columbia. Kotter (1996) identifies necessary attributes of today’s successful organization as having a persistent sense of urgency, teamwork at the top, people who can create and communicate vision, broad-based empowerment, delegated management for excellent short-term performance, no unnecessary interdependence, and an adaptive corporate culture. One would ask how these attributes translate from the corporate to the educational environment.

Along with higher education, British Columbia’s community colleges have experienced reform in every aspect of their being, “in organization, management, curriculum, accessibility, and finance” (Dennison & Schuetze, 2004, p. 14). In Canada, provincial governments have jurisdiction over education. Massification of education has robustly increased demand and therefore substantially increased the number of

community colleges, educational institutes, and universities in Canada and throughout the world. In British Columbia, the governance of publicly funded colleges is accomplished through government appointed boards, “answerable for operations to the government minister. . . . locally responsive and legislatively mandated to meet local needs” (Levin, 2003, p. 60). Dennison and Schuetze (2004) advise college leaders to learn to collaborate with the private sector. “It is safe to predict that the opening up of higher education to private investors and market mechanisms will enhance and accelerate this [the breakdown of the public post-secondary education monopoly] development” (p. 34). Therefore, today’s college leader has to understand how to be successful and entrepreneurial in a complex public/private post-secondary system. A 2002 study by Ouchi (as cited in Fullan, 2005) that examined innovative school systems in Canada and the US concluded that “With greater freedom and flexibility to shape their educational programs, hire specialists as needed, and generally determine the direction of their school, the best principals will act as entrepreneurs” (p. 9).

The notion of the academic administrator as an entrepreneur and the market economy driving the work of education is not without its cultural and historical challenges. The community college leader in British Columbia needs to be fully aware of the historical context of education in British Columbia and the concerns that educators have in today’s political environment. Levin (2001) notes that in a survival response to market economy perspectives, many community colleges have moved away from their core mandate of meeting local community needs by responding to a more globalized notion of community.

This globalization of education is a concern of many college faculty and of other community college leaders. Charles Ungerleider (as cited in Moll, 1997) noted, with respect to teacher education, that we should learn from the mistakes of the US and Great Britain where teacher education programs have been privatized and where standards have been diminished. Ungerleider (1997) affirms that contemporary BC educational politics will be fraught with struggles to resist globalization and market driven forces. Therefore, college leaders will have to contend with the public's and employees' emotional reactions to changing government mandates.

Teachers' unions also contribute to the anxiety of parents Every initiative—from accountability to technology—is met with 'shock and dismay.' . . . they over dramatize the impact of such [funding] reductions. (Ungerleider, 2003, p. 3)

From my personal experiences in college administration and from observations and conversations with other college administrators, community colleges and their leaders are becoming adept at responding to market-driven forces and are accountable to their external constituents. These constituents include government, business, industry, and local communities. Employees and learners rightfully question changing mandates and practices and respond to these societal and government changes.

As well, Aboriginal communities extend across the north of British Columbia. The three northern community colleges studied in this research project have unique and diverse experiences in delivering Aboriginal education to their constituent communities. However, "Aboriginal educators will continue to be challenged to nurture the spirit and values of Aboriginal knowledge while negotiating the complex terrain of post-secondary education" (Castellano et al., 2000, p. 174). Post-secondary institutions have much to

learn from Aboriginal peoples. “Education which emphasizes teaching and learning as two-way processes . . . is more likely to validate Aboriginal students’ experiences and knowledge bases” (Kirkness as cited in Castellano et al., 2000, p. 202). Therefore reciprocal learning and reciprocal leadership will be fundamental to success in working with Aboriginal communities and in the political and cultural context of education.

The Nature of Resourcefulness

On a local level, transforming leaders and servant leaders must be immersed in their communities; be aware of their cultural beliefs and perspectives; and be aware of how those perspectives influence their decision making. In reflecting on the phenomena of resourcefulness and in constructing meaning from the experience of delivering training to remote Aboriginal communities, I am reminded of the notion of learned experience or what might be described as practical wisdom. *Phronēsis* is a word of Greek origin (*phronein* to think) that is defined as “wisdom in determining ends and the means of attaining them” (*Phronēsis*, 2006). To know what is good and then to know how to do what is good is an aspect of the characteristic of being resourceful. Using an example from my personal experience in finding a solution to a training dilemma (see the description in the chapter endnote), the stakeholders were able to apply practical wisdom or *phronēsis* by identifying the problem, by seeing the possibility for a solution, and then by working together to acquire the resources (in this case living expenses for the participants) to actualize the full potential for the community to participate in a training initiative.

As Ciulla (2004) indicates, our team moved others to an emotional level where they were able to support this initiative from an ethical stance. “Ethical leadership is essentially based on an emotional relationship” (p. 84). Ciulla (as cited in Maak & Press, 2006) offers an opportunity to think about the differences between transactional leadership where modal values such as fairness, responsibility, and honesty are the values inherent in the means of an act, and transforming leadership that is “concerned with end-values such as liberty, justice and equality” (p. 28). The *good* leader is one who as a moral agent raises the followers “through various stages of morality and need” (p. 28). However, both transactional and transforming leadership have moral and ethical aspects.

Resourcefulness is about using the lens of morality to seek the greater good and to do what is right for people and in the case of educational leadership for communities to thrive. Resourcefulness requires intellect to use empathy and to reach understanding. Resourcefulness builds sustainable relationships and requires both intense reflection on a situation and the ability to live within the tensions of making, carrying out, and defending difficult or unique decisions. Resourcefulness requires the ability to take communicative action—to engage others in dialogue to reach understanding—to develop the trust required to move forward and to manoeuvre within complicated systems. Resourcefulness requires determination and self-reliance.

In contemporary times, resourcefulness relies heavily upon impartiality in struggles for cultural recognition and democratic equality. Resourcefulness requires learning—learning about self and others, learning about systems, and learning about how to lead, when to follow, and how to empower and transform others. One would assume

that resourceful leaders are present in everyday circumstances and within other postsecondary settings, both rural and urban. Perhaps resourcefulness may even be sorted by a taxonomy from the general to the specific across broad contextual anchorings. However, this study uncovers the contextual specificity of resourcefulness as a response to encountering scarcity while engaged in the administration of a small, rural college in Northern British Columbia. The study exposes that specificity while recognizing that resourcefulness as a personal attribute is not confined to leadership in Northern British Columbia.

Succession Planning

In exploring literature on succession planning, I focused my attention in this study on specific characteristics and personality traits that lend themselves to successful educational administration; aspects of educational administration that are challenging; and on how educational leaders come to their institutions. Shults (2001) indicates that faculty members often assume the roles of lower-level and then senior administrative positions. Information from the American Council on Education study indicates that “many current community college presidents served as faculty at some point in their career” (Shults, 2001, p. 4). Another survey from the American Association of Community Colleges (2001) asked presidents to identify elements of the presidency they had not been prepared for when they assumed their positions. “The most frequently cited response was a lack of understanding of the overwhelming nature of the job” (Shults, 2001, p. 3). Other elements for which the presidents were under prepared were the political context of education, fundraising, financial activities, and the degree of

relationship building for which they were responsible. The presidents indicated they would have liked “more training in fundraising, financial management, and working with their governing boards” (Shults, 2001, p. 3).

Other community college leadership studies have examined the traits that college leaders must acquire. These traits include the “ability to develop a vision of where the college should go, integrity, confidence and courage, technical knowledge, a collaborative spirit, persistence, good judgement, and a desire to lead” (Hockaday & Puyear as cited in Shults, 2001, p. 3). As well, “the ability to bring a college together in the governing process; the ability to mediate; having a good command of technology; maintaining a high level of tolerance for ambiguity; understanding and appreciating multiculturalism; and the ability to build coalitions” (Vaughan & Weisman 1998 as cited in Shults, 2001, p. 8) are necessary skills.

The research clearly identifies that instructional administrators at community colleges must be skilled and visionary leaders. Shults (2001) further indicates that these traits can be learned. Academic administrators will experience a wide range of issues arising from pluralistic and multicultural contexts and from a society that is moving towards a greater degree of individualism. Individual perceptions of what is important to oneself and the rulings of Canadian law that support these perspectives confirm the need for educational administrators to consider these “individual realities” (Bond, 2001, p. 72). The result of this individualism has been continuing social instability and a “[d]isintegration of the old social boundaries which for centuries had provided not only

social stratification but the means by which the various social classes could conduct their affairs and understand their limits” (p. 62).

Additionally, Bond (2001) advises that educational administrators pay close attention to the learners’ education, safety, and rights. Similarly, Bond (2001) advises educational administrators to pay attention to the needs of the employees that they supervise, ensuring that subordinates are receiving information necessary for them to function well in their roles. Educational administrators must be “fully conversant with client groups and employee cultural norms” (p. 73). The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms must be the reference point for a multitude of decisions. As well, college leaders must create a “working environment as conducive as possible to harmonious productivity” (p. 73) and to “idiosyncratic approaches to work related issues by employees” (p. 74). Further, academic administrators must be knowledgeable about instructional methodology and experienced in instructional delivery in order to appropriately evaluate faculty, to mentor faculty, and to know when faculty discipline or termination may be required. Bond (2001) further advises that educational administrators be well versed in other details that support good learning environments; such as, student disabilities, student discipline, copyright, student privacy, and harassment issues.

As well, administrators must think critically to “differentiate between true organizational integrity and administrative agendas developed in a framework of interactive (and, perhaps, party) politics” (p. 74). Bond (2001) also advises the academic administrator to be well versed in administrative and leadership theory, which combined

with his or her own peculiarities helps to achieve a well balanced approach to administrative leadership.

A recent master's project and a recent doctoral thesis also have informed my study of college leadership in Northern BC and my recommendations in terms of succession planning. The first that I reference is that of Stacey Gibbs (2006) whose unpublished Master of Business Administration project from the University of Northern British Columbia indicates that organizations and communities in Northern British Columbia face extensive obstacles in attracting and keeping professional talent in the North. Gibbs (2006) found that since our northern communities are less attractive to potential employees, we must be purposeful in our recruitment efforts to market our businesses and institutions as unique and attractive to these potential employees. Booth and Fraquahr (as cited in Gibbs 2006) suggest that organizations create long-term recruitment strategies that include growing internal leaders through providing leadership opportunities to employees and by developing learning circumstances where new leaders are well supported through mentoring and coaching activities and where transfer of organizational knowledge occurs. Gibbs (2006) concludes that organizations must be purposeful in creating an employment environment where employees flourish and maintain loyalty and commitment to their employers and that potential employees and leaders must understand and enjoy the northern lifestyle.

In the North, fit needs to be not only with the organization but also to the Northern lifestyle. Northern British Columbia is unique for its vast geographical area, its rural communities, long winters and in some areas, sparse amenities. New hires need to be aware of the Northern lifestyle and make sure it fits their idea of quality of life. Once a geographical fit is determined, organizations need to ensure they are nurturing their people

through constant communication and needs assessment. (Gibbs, 2006, p. 62)

The second study that informed my research in terms of succession planning is that of Robin Goates's (2007) doctoral dissertation, which was a study of the career paths of academic administrators at colleges in Alberta. Goates indicates that of the 230 respondents in her survey, only 3% of the college administrators were intentional in seeking their current positions and that 25% of the senior administrators in the study acknowledged that they were appointed to their roles. Cejda and McKenney (as cited in Goates, 2007) who studied the career paths of Chief Academic Officers (CAO) at public community colleges in the US concluded that the position was "relatively closed for those without 2-year college experience" (p. 18). Those following the path to Chief Academic Officer had held membership predominantly in the ranks of faculty. Therefore, "providing faculty with opportunities for leadership training will assist in their preparation" (p. 40). In terms of educational requirements, a doctoral degree was generally required of a president and a master's degree for other senior leadership positions.

Goates (2007) acknowledges that although colleges are in the business of education and training for careers, "there is no clearly defined way to prepare for a career in college administration" (p. 20). Goates concludes that senior leadership positions at public colleges in Alberta are "not highly sought after, which may say something about how we view academic administrators as well as how confusing the positions in academic administration are" (p. 95).

This notion of administrative jobs not being highly sought from within the faculty ranks is also substantiated by Howley et al. (2005) whose study in the K-to-12 context concurs that “teachers generally view the disincentives associated with the principalship as more salient than the incentives . . . [and] the principalship appears not to represent a professional aspiration” (p. 773). Howley et al. (2005) conclude that younger teachers are more inclined to look positively towards career advancement to a principalship.

Literature Summary

Understanding the context of college leadership in Northern British Columbia is a complex enterprise that in this study is illuminated by philosophical, educational, and leadership theory. This theory was then used to examine the narrative of leaders from the College of New Caledonia, Northern Lights College, and Northwest Community College. I first acknowledge that I accepted the volume of research that identifies that our educational system in British Columbia is an evolving construct that originated from Western and European ideologies and practices. As massification and globalization of education occurs, the BC post-secondary system adjusts to the broader needs of a global society. Specifically in relation to this study, the educational construct in BC is being challenged by Aboriginal people.

The study also acknowledges that individuals each have their own unique experiences and circumstances that frame their ways of being. In situating my research, Charles Taylor (2004) provided a window into the concept that individuals have their

own *social imaginaries* or social constructs. For this study, Taylor provided the starting point in situating the perspective of college leadership in Northern BC.

In relation to this idea of a social construct, Habermas (1981/1987) provides an interesting perspective that is somewhat parallel to Taylor's *social imaginary*. Habermas believes that individuals have unique and inescapable contexts that Habermas calls the lifeworld. Habermas's systems theory further illuminated my research as he explained that resources and services flow in and out of the lifeworld. I also used this theory as a base as I wrote about the North's inhabitants and how various systems interacted with their lifeworlds.

Next, Habermas's (1981/1987) and Benhabib's (2002) theories can be used to help understand how college leaders might navigate within these systems and lifeworld. Since a large contingent of Aboriginal people are served by the colleges in the North, the educational leaders must clearly understand their roles in acknowledging and embracing the unique cultural and political systems inherent within their college regions. But beyond that starting point, the college leader must have an authentic approach to reach understanding. As proposed, the way to accomplish this understanding is to communicate with others in genuine ways. Through dialogue we are able to speak about our own personal circumstances; and through dialogue, we have the opportunity to learn about and from others.

In order to better understand the complexities of working with people from varying cultures, backgrounds, and perspectives and to lead educational institutions in positive ways, the college leaders must see themselves both as leaders of initiatives and

activities and, at times, as followers or supporters. In contemporary times, leaders must have a strong desire to serve others and to assist others in their personal and professional growth and development and to leave others at least a little better off through their mutual experiences. These approaches are fundamentally ethical and effective. They can also be characterized as being cosmopolitan or worldly in nature.

The college leaders who live within systems where resources are scarce and where multiple factors have influence over institutional visions and mandates and their personal dreams and desires can no longer claim to be self made or to be hero leaders. The leaders must work with and for others—the learners, other college employees, community stakeholders, and ministry officials and politicians.

To fully understand the complexity of the system in which the leaders work, they must be conversant with educational theory, with systems theory, and with leadership theory. The leadership theories that I explored in this literature review are contemporary in nature and are anchored in servant and transformational leadership. Another critical aspect of effective leadership is that the leader has a high degree of emotional intelligence where the leader is acutely aware of his or her impact and influence on others.

In response to succession planning, I explored literature that acknowledges the looming crisis in filling educational administrative positions and that identifies strategies for leadership development programs. This literature also included advice on how to attract people to Northern British Columbia and how to create the employment environment where people will thrive in their work.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Narrative-based Case Study

The method used for the study is a descriptive, narrative-based case study focusing on the lived experience of six contemporary academic administrators at three community colleges in Northern British Columbia. The cases include both the responses of these leaders to their environments and contexts as well as their understandings of their actions and decisions. The study investigated the possible existence of a unique set of characteristics necessary for successful leadership at a small rural college in Northern British Columbia. The study was designed with a constructivist approach that was mainly sequential but also somewhat flexible, lending itself to an interpretive process. The research problem and assumptions are stated above; however as guided by Rossman and Wilson (as cited in Creswell, 2003) in constructing knowledge from this research and in trying to reach greater understanding of the issue, I remained open to the possibility that I could encounter an opportunity for a more fluid or organic process and outcome as I acknowledged that the inquiry took precedence over the method; however, little variation from the original plan occurred.

This study provides an interpretation of the roles and lives of senior administrators within the postsecondary education environment in Northern British Columbia and specifically within the context of community college leadership. The insights gained at this local or immediate level uncover how the administrators construct meaning, which is qualified as being constrained by time and geographic place. A

secondary purpose of this study is to use the learning that takes place from the research project to inform other individuals or institutions within similar settings and within contemporary times. I acknowledge that the features of this study and its findings as situated within a specific social and educational context were somewhat difficult to interpret and tentative to generalize. However, using multiple cases provides a degree of applicability to other college leaders in similar contexts.

One of the challenges encountered within a predominantly text-based representation of data collection, analysis, and reporting was that words often have varying and sometimes ambiguous connotations. Therefore, I was cognisant that clarification and definition of language was an important practice in all aspects of the study. As well, I acknowledge that language may not have the ability to fully represent the experiences uncovered and that the subtleties and the depths of human experiences have facets that are difficult to communicate in language. “Everyday life is invisible to us (because of its familiarity and because of its contradictions, which people may not want to face). We do not realize the patterns in our actions as we perform them” (Erikson as cited in Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2007, p. 28).

Gall et al. (2007) believe the causal agents in the social environment are our interpretations, and the intentions we form are based on those interpretations. I kept this perspective in mind as I drew conclusions about relations among social phenomena. Gall et al. further clarify that constructivists approach the notion of causality or viewing causal patterns by investigating interpretations of social realities and that constructivists see individual’s beliefs as situational perceptions. Interpretation, as a key component of the

qualitative research project, has to do with “the confluence of questions, images, and ideas” (Peshkin as cited in Gall et al., 2007, p. 454) and forms the entry point of the study. Peshkin argues that interpretation has to do with one’s perspective, with one’s accounting of what has gone on, and is generative in terms of learning.

Through the case study, I provided detailed descriptions, called thick descriptions, which are “statements that re-create a situation and as much of its context as possible, accompanied by the meanings and intentions inherent in that situation” (Gall et al., 2007, p. 451). These thick descriptions are intended to explain, to bring meaning to, and to understand the roles and lives of six college administrators situated within the post-secondary educational environment in Northern British Columbia. I aim to identify constructs or concepts that are inferred from the observed or articulated phenomenon, and identify relational or causal patterns. Therefore, I acknowledge that I made judgements about the phenomena and their situation within those contexts. In making those judgements, I became aware of my conceptual and theoretical understandings of the research participants’ social reality in relation to the participants’ perceptions and understandings of their social reality. These insights were gained through a reflective journal that I used to record my continuing progress in this regard.

Data Sample

The data sample that I used was comprised of interviews with six college leaders, two from each of the three northern institutions. Specifically, the sample articulated the lived experiences of three college presidents, one senior academic leader at the vice president level, one dean, and one satellite campus administrator—all of whom provided

special value and insight into the roles of senior leaders at the three community colleges. The choice of multiple case studies is based on Yin's (as cited in Gall et al., 2007) literal replication logic where findings from one case will yield similar results from each of the other study samples. I also acknowledge that although multiple case design is often used in qualitative research, Wolcott (as cited in Gall et al., 2007) warns that the multiple case study detracts from the depth that can be accomplished from a single case study.

Correspondingly, the multiple case study provides a breadth of understanding. Therefore, I was cognizant of the task of aggregating and comparing the data that suggest connection to the phenomena being studied and the possibility of systemic outcomes.

Ethical Considerations

Entry to the study site was gained through approval of the three colleges (see Appendix A) and supported by disclosure waivers from the participants (see Appendix B). Also, as I am currently a colleague of the study participants (and an indirect supervisor of one of the participants), I acknowledge that my role is complex as I, too, have personal involvement in and experiences with the phenomena being studied. In this regard, I acknowledge that I regularly interact with the research participants in my work setting and in collaborative initiatives among the three northern colleges. As Gall et al. (2007) further emphasize, I was cognizant that I empathized with the personal experiences of the college leaders and their understandings as they grappled with the phenomena. Therefore, I took into account the special relationship that I hold with the participants and of the need to ensure that I minimized the vulnerability of my colleagues. Undoubtedly, the field study sites are identifiable in the study. Because of the small

number of administrators at the three colleges, the participants are also somewhat identifiable within the study. Therefore, despite the use of pseudonyms, the privacy of the individuals may still be compromised.

In approaching this situation of vulnerability from an ethical stance, I made the participants aware of their vulnerability before conducting the interviews. I also ensured that the participants reviewed the findings and outcomes of the study before the study was presented in the thesis to ensure that the participants approved of and supported the findings. This approach also ensured that the participants had an opportunity to clarify or remove their comments if they so desired.

Collecting Case Study Data

Peshkin (as cited in Gall et al., 2007) suggests that researchers approach the collection of data in a subjective manner to shape the inquiry and impact the outcomes. Therefore, Peshkin suggests that personal involvement in the data collection process should be considered at the onset of the study. Therefore, I began the data collection by translating the research inquiry into topics to be explored. I then used a corresponding general interview guide for my interviews with the participants (see Appendix C). My assumption was that the participants had common information that I would explore. However, I used a flexible approach that offered spontaneity to both the participants and to me as the interviewer. During the interviews, I occasionally added brief personal comments that I have characterized to add to the depth of the reader's understanding. As well, I conducted a subjectivity audit in concert with the data collection to determine if either positive or negative feelings were effected as the interviews were taking place. In

this way, I became aware of my own beliefs and their influence on my perceptions and actions during the collection of data and attempted to control the degree of personal involvement that could have been distracting on a number of levels.

I followed Lincoln and Guba's (as cited in Gall et al., 2007) guidance to determine when data collection in each interview ended. They suggest that exhaustion is determined when the interview categories or themes are sufficiently saturated and when consistent regularities are established that point towards phenomena being represented by each construct or theme as either regular or occasional occurrences. The data collection ended where new information diverged beyond the appropriate categories and when additional categories were not closely related to the intent of the research.

Data Analysis

By uncovering the layers of meaning and constructs and through the use of thick description and interpretive analysis, my intent was to represent themes and patterns within the data collected. This analysis was conducted inductively. Analytic induction is a process of discovery that has potential to bring about understanding. Gall et al. (2007) suggest that in case study research, data collection is emergent and that as data are collected they should be used to inform subsequent data collection. As Huberman (as cited in Gall et al., 2007) recommends, I used a contact summary sheet to record specific details or questions that arose during the interviews (see Appendix D). I consulted these notes as I considered the next interview that I conducted. Interviews were recorded using electronic voice recorders and transcribed into text. During the transcription small verbal expressions; such as, sighs, ums, ands, and other such extraneous inputs were not

transcribed. Additionally minor grammatical errors such as subject-verb agreements that occur more commonly in oral communication were appropriately transcribed in their correct form.

As constructs, themes, and patterns emerged, they were used to relate to the phenomenon being studied. This process provided grounded theory, a process where new information or knowledge was gained from the interpretation of the phenomena. Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss (as cited in Gall 2007), developers of the grounded theory approach, created the label “constant comparison” to refer to the continual process of comparing segments within and across categories. Strauss and Corbin (as cited in Gall et al., 2007) suggest that when using grounded-theory principles to determine categories, the researcher should collect data to the point of “theoretical saturation”, which is when “no new data are emerging relevant to an established coding category, no additional categories appear to be necessary to account for the phenomena of interest, and the relationships among categories appear to be well established” (Straus & Corbin as cited in Gall et al., 2007, p. 469). Additionally, causal patterns emerged from the data and assisted in developing theory to explain relationships and to construct meaning.

I confirm that credibility and validity are attained in my research. I followed the advice of Maxwell (as cited in Gall et al., 2007) that research be:

- useful;
- that the interviewees engaged in participatory practices;
- that good detail in setting the research context was provided;
- that the research methods and practices were well documented;
- that the researcher was honest, straightforward, and truthful in reporting;

- that the participants checked the report for accuracy of the details;
- that peer reviews of the findings were conducted, and;
- that I conducted strong and constant reflection on the study.

The Report

In writing the report, Wolcott (as cited in Gall 2007) advises that skill is required to reveal the essences with sufficient context and yet not to describe everything that was uncovered during the study. “Wollcott argues that case study is not a research design method, but rather an outcome of qualitative research that the researcher chooses at the stage of preparing the report” (Gall et al., p. 479). I identified and analyzed both consistencies and differences in constructs, themes, and patterns across all the cases. Reporting in this manner allows my readers the opportunity to compare their own personal circumstances in relation to the individual and collective cases and perhaps draw similarities or differences from the context of college leadership in Northern BC. I then presented my perspective of the study in terms of the phenomena being studied. I was also cognisant that as the data were collected and as insight was gained while studying the phenomena, the research had an evolving property that lent to the study an organic or emergent approach.

Adding to the Knowledge Base

Most of the literature on the topic of leadership within educational contexts is generated in the USA and Great Britain. Canadian research tends to focus on the public Kindergarten-to-Grade 12 (K-to-12) system or on higher education. Limited literature is available on the Canadian college sector. This research project is specific to the three

publicly funded community colleges in Northern British Columbia and therefore generates new and specific knowledge that should benefit the three northern institutions, other post-secondary institutions in British Columbia, and perhaps have some applicability to other northern, rural, and remote institutions in Canada or in other countries. Additionally, provincial ministries, policy makers and educational decision makers in British Columbia might benefit from the research. Potential also exists for institutions developing succession plans and in-service professional development programs to be informed by this study.

RESEARCH RESULTS

Profiles of the Participants

Six participants informed this study: two college leaders at each of the three community colleges in Northern British Columbia, including three Presidents/Chief Executive Officers, a Vice President of Learning, a Dean, and an Associate Regional Director. All participants provided data for the study through guided interviews. Of the six participants, three were female and three were male. The Dean's mandate is for trades and technology training, and the Associate Regional Director reports to a Regional Director at a satellite campus and is responsible for all aspects of program and service delivery. The participants have been at their institutions ranging from 2 to 21 years and similarly have been in their current positions from 1.5 years to 16 years. Throughout the interviews, the participants spoke about profound experiences that have shaped who they are and what they still aspire to become. "It's truly how I've shaped who I've become—is listening to the feedback from the students that I've worked with" (M. Green). All spoke about the rapidly changing contexts in which they work and appear to be shaped by the many forces at play in their environments and by the breadth and depth of their experiences.

The leaders are humble in terms of their perceived influence on others and in terms of their desires to be recognized for their successes and accomplishments. All participants acknowledge the importance of their role as leaders of teams of experts—and of their role in providing service and support to employees, learners, and communities. "I

have learned that the hero leader doesn't work" (M. Grey). Of the three presidents, two are relatively new to their presidential positions with 1.5 to 2 years experience; and the other president has been in her role for 7 years. Although all are in their current positions for the first time (have not held a similar role previous to their current role), three have been in their positions for 1.5 to 2 years; another two have been in their positions for 6 and 7 years, and one has been in his position for 16 years. "I was the Assistant Principal—that was my first appointment. Actually it was only about a year, and then I moved into the Vice President's position. I've been there ever since" (M. Black).

They arrived at their institutions through a number of avenues. Robin Goates (2007) as cited in the literature review notes that college administrators enter management through a number of pathways. One of the presidents has been with his institution for 10 years and has moved through roles first as a Regional Director, then to Vice President of Student Services, and now to President. The other two presidents entered as newcomers to their institutions and have been in their roles for 2 and 7 years respectively. All presidents have extensive experiences at Canadian colleges. Two of the presidents draw on experiences mainly from British Columbia in both large urban and small rural institutions; and the other has extensive experiences in the Alberta college system. Two of the other three leaders are predominantly British Columbian in their college experiences, and the third has college experiences from a number of Canadian locations and institutions. Only one of the interviewees was born in Northern British Columbia; and in fact, the participant was born in the community in which she currently works. She was exposed to a variety of teaching experiences and leadership roles at her

institution. “I was really fortunate to have teaching experience here at the college, a programming background at the college, understanding cost recovery and that whole scope of responsibilities” (M. Red). All administrators cite learning as a major point of satisfaction in their roles.

All participants have a master’s degree in educational disciplines and five participants have classroom teaching experiences with one of the presidents having decades of teaching experience. Of the presidents, two were previously vice presidents and two had experience as deans. All participants have worked in the post-secondary system for several years, ranging from 8 to 39 years, and have extensive knowledge and experiences to draw on as they lead their institutions. “In many ways our experience is our teacher” (M. Grey). All cite the importance of the people who have inspired them and helped them along the way. “I have been fortunate to work with great people, great role models, people I have learned a lot from about great leadership and about being an educational leader in a college environment” (M. Grey). Two of the leaders also taught for a period of time in the public K-to-12 school system. All the leaders appear to have a strong understanding of the British Columbia post-secondary education system and appear to be connected to the larger national community of college educators through their discipline areas and through leadership experiences. One of the participants had extensive experiences with educational ministries in British Columbia where he interacted with most of the colleges in the province. Another had strong experiences with institutional planning. “I got to interact with all facets of the college's operations—from

program evaluation to faculty development to institutional research and planning”

(M. Grey). Another also conveyed a breadth of experiences.

It's recognizing what are the concepts, what are the issues, which is a package of a whole bunch of stuff streamed together that gets you to the point where you're actually making a strategic choice. That comes from experience. (M. Brown)

An impressive breadth of knowledge and experience guides these leaders in their daily practice and within their challenging and rapidly changing environments. “There are complexities to institutions like ours that, boy, I've needed every bit of experience that I've had” (M. Brown).

Opportunities seemed to be what brought the leaders to Northern British Columbia. One of the leaders had previously worked with his current president at another institution in an urban setting. They worked together on an innovative Aboriginal Financial Management program. He liked his president's vision and approaches, so recruiting him to the North and to his desired educational environment was relatively easy. Another participant found his first college leadership position in Northern British Columbia after an extensive career teaching high school and working for government ministries. Within these varied experiences and pathways to their current positions, the participants saw themselves as fairly well equipped to deal with the challenges of their broad role definitions and broad responsibilities at their northern institutions. The leaders were reflective in terms of the challenges that they were encountering and in terms of the urgency of the institutional change required to meet those challenges.

Sometimes we get trapped in our kind of old ways of doing things or slow ways of doing things, arguing that it's the most thorough way to do stuff. But, if there is nobody wanting what you produced when you get there, then there is something wrong with the fit. (M. Brown)

The leaders' passion for working in teams and towards other collaborative initiatives; for developing and mentoring others; for serving students and colleagues; and in developing and delivering high quality programs and services were strong components of the satisfaction that they derived from their leadership roles. "My attitude towards education is that it's an opportunity to assist in the removal of barriers for each individual and thereby to create a better world" (M. Green). These college leaders appeared positive in nature, generally seeing the possibilities as opposed to being overcome by the challenges. M. Green labelled himself as a "Polly Anna" and a "Human Potentialist".

Scope of Responsibilities

The scope of responsibilities addressed by college leaders in Northern British Columbia is extremely broad and multifaceted. With regional responsibilities for multiple campuses and diverse communities, both the challenges and opportunities appeared to be extensive. For example, a dean at one of the three colleges represented in this study may have a mandate as broad as that of three or four deans at a larger institution. For example the BC Institute of Technology and Kwantlen University College each have a Dean of Business. At CNC the business division is supervised by the Dean of Arts, Science, and Business and NWCC's Dean has responsibility for Business, Trades, and Technology. As well, the Dean at NWCC has responsibility to deliver programs in up to 35 communities.

A dean in Northern British Columbia has to be a generalist with the ability to "make that switch [from one discipline to another] many times a day" (M. Green). Collaboration, teamwork, and the building of strong relationships are key approaches to this end. "There's a whole concept of teamwork that comes through; and from that

teamwork, innovation is tied with that teamwork interchangeably” (M. Red). However, the leaders acknowledge that they must be willing to make the tough decisions when others are not able to do so. They appear to be organized, energetic, and committed. They talk about leading their teams through the actions of moving activities and initiatives forward. They identify working diligently to provide opportunities and to remove barriers for students and for colleagues and co-workers. They see themselves as passionate innovators, visionaries, and servant leaders. As one participant states,

never, ever leave your emotions at the door. Bring yourself wholly and fully into the role. . . . I want to feel like if I go tomorrow that I've lived pretty fully and I've put my heart into what my work is. (M. Blue)

They see the possibilities where others see challenges and their ideas are plentiful. They characterize themselves as “workhorses” and are community agents and catalysts for change.

It's very gratifying to be in the position to influence the course of the college's activities in a positive way, hopefully for the betterment of individuals and the people who work for the college—so very gratifying. (M. Grey)

The College leaders are immersed in community and strive to provide extensive opportunities for local social and economic growth. They appear to approach their roles in intuitive ways, judging the possibilities without too many constraints on their thinking or without rigidity in perspective; and they have learned that educational programs and initiatives must be derived from the community. Community and college are synonymous, and success in delivering quality education is ultimately founded on community needs. “There’s not a lot of predefined parameters that you’re working with.

It's about bringing possibility, social and educational possibilities to the community" (M. Red). Community colleges in Northern British Columbia serve their communities, and their college leaders have service foremost in mind when working with others. Their scope of responsibility is often overwhelming. The leaders appear to be versatile, consultative, and passionate about the work that they do. In return for their passion and their accomplishments, the leaders are rewarded with intense personal gratification and fulfilment. "It's gratifying to work with people. I've become in the habit of referring to the work that we do as helping people live better lives through education" (M. Grey).

The presidents at community colleges in Northern British Columbia, like presidents of other community colleges, are ultimately responsible for the institution's planning, operations, and success. The role of president is to a substantial extent defined in legislation. Additionally, the president is responsible to a policy governance board and for the development of college policies and bylaws. This role is broad and comprehensive. As suggested by leadership theory, the president is ultimately responsible for influencing the institution through open communication and for building trust both internally and externally. Relationships must be established and developed with community and industry leaders, ministry officials, politicians, employees and students, employee and student unions, and with other public and private institutions, agencies, and accreditation bodies. Therefore, presidents must have highly developed interpersonal skills, political astuteness, and considerable fortitude.

Community colleges are predominantly funded through provincial ministries and are therefore subject to changes in political will and mandates. College presidents must

be able to secure resources by charting the institutional course and steering the institution in the same direction as the political will. This manoeuvring and positioning of the institution requires skill, agility, and courage.

It's critical to our ability to secure resources; and I think we have seen in the past where we didn't have positive political relationships. It was to the detriment of the college. So, we have to tend to those very carefully. That is a big part of the president's job and a big part of the Board of Governors' role. (M. Grey)

In leading a publicly funded institution, a president must ensure that the institutional mission and values are responsive to its communities. The president must know how to apply pressure to secure resources, must know when and how to make tough decisions, and must know how to engage the politicians and community leaders to bring understanding to the tenuous issues that colleges face.

Communities in Northern British Columbia are both geographically dispersed and diverse with economies ranging from the abundant to the marginal. Presidents of the three northern community colleges face disparate realities, all of which bring their own challenges and opportunities. Presidents make decisions that require striking a practical balance between economic and social programming and initiatives.

How we support and deal with that and those challenges, as we've been talking about in terms of becoming more nimble and flexible and to deploy resources in different ways—those factors weigh on us and influence what we are doing and how we are doing it. (M. Grey)

The notion of equitable distribution of resources to communities and to multiple campuses creates additional pressures and stresses for leaders of northern colleges with vast geographic challenges and communities with seemingly limitless and deep needs.

“We now have eleven different sites that we're operating, and we call them all campuses

to ensure that there is not inequity” (M. Blue). As well, presidents, vice presidents, deans, and directors must be visible at their campuses and within their communities. Northern administrators must be prepared to travel in inclement weather conditions and must have adventuring spirits in terms of their outreach initiatives and inquisitive exploration of possibilities. All the while, the leaders are operating within changing funding models that continue to disadvantage their very unique circumstances and contexts.

The college leaders believe their roles to be quite different from the roles of leaders from larger urban institutions. For example, presidents of the northern colleges believe their roles to be more public than the role of a metropolitan president. This more public role is emphasized by a substantial degree of community presence and engagement and far less personal privacy.

I'm quoted in the newspaper or my picture is in the newspaper probably on average of one time a month, maybe more often than that so visibility in a smaller region as opposed to a bigger region in a city is quite different. (M. Grey)

Community college leaders from smaller institution are:

. . . closer to the front line, closer to the operation and day-to-day activities of the institution . . . it's easier in a smaller institution to become a bit mired in the short-term, day-to-day pressures . . . and can certainly push out all the time to think strategically and longer term. (M. Grey)

Therefore, leaders at the northern institutions believe that their communities place greater expectations on them than metropolitan communities place on their college presidents. Their experience tells them that they must “lead in ways that benefit the college and the community” (M. Grey), even to the extent that “the performance of the president in a northern rural college has probably a bigger impact on the success of the institution than living in a larger urban centre” (M. Grey). Leaders in the northern institutions believe a

substantial part of their roles is to bring together community resources to accomplish evident and increasing educational needs. Further, the role of college leaders in Northern British Columbia requires long hours each day, including attending numerous community events and extensive participation in community initiatives. “It’s really important to Aboriginal communities that they see the president. So, I have to get out there. I have to get out at least once and that’s 28 places” (M. Blue). “It’s not for the faint of heart. It is draining, but very fulfilling . . . I think that’s who I am—passionate, committed, obsessive, probably obsessive compulsive fits” (M. Grey).

Another responsibility of the northern leaders is to adapt and respond to growing expectations from the broader community of stakeholders. “When I was in Vancouver, it was a lot harder to identify your community; and the community usually clustered around the programming of the institution” (M. Blue). However, this immediacy of community heightens the degree of change and is often astounding in terms of its demands. Although presidents expect their institutions to meet these challenges, they appear to understand the pressures and stresses that are inflicted upon the employees. Presidents and other leaders worry about how their institutions’ employees will cope with and rise to these challenges. One way of helping employees cope with these stressors is to model the leadership style that the administrator expects from others. Therefore, the educational leader must consider where he or she will focus attention in setting the stage for innovative directions and where educational initiatives have opportunity to stimulate the economy and support economic diversity.

Finding talented employees within the current competitive context of post-secondary education adds a further dimension to the presidential and the vice presidential roles. Limited human capital at smaller institutions creates a situation where the northern leaders must enter territory that may be unfamiliar and may add considerable challenges and stressors to their roles and their lives. When full complements of executives are not available, presidents and vice presidents fill the roles of human resource directors, institutional planners and researchers, and senior instructional officers. “Ever since I’ve arrived here, we’ve been without some key positions. So, I have never been just president. Right now I’m president and vice president” (M. Blue).

The participants who are currently presidents and vice presidents have observed and concur that presidents and vice presidents in larger urban institutions have more human resources and support services to rely on than do leaders in northern colleges. The participants believe that leaders are better sustained and nourished in those urban environments and have opportunities to delegate responsibilities and tasks. Therefore, leaders at the northern institutions feel disadvantaged to some degree by not having the time to completely fulfill their broad scope of responsibilities. They particularly acknowledge not having adequate time to attend to strategic planning.

However, being the positive thinkers that they appear to be, all the leaders indicated that they have extensive experiences that developed broad skill sets and that add interest and flavour to their roles. “Here I find that I’m in the kitchen all over the place; and I ask, ‘Why am I in this kitchen?’ I should be out of this kitchen” (M. Blue). M. Blue describes her experience in working at a larger urban college and her

observation that the president was not involved “with the inner workings of the city. He leaves that to deans and other folks” (M. Blue). The primary role of community college leaders in Northern British Columbia focuses on being the educational advocate to advance social and economic development. This role requires a broad skill set, an adventurous spirit, the ability to get the work done and to create a positive community profile for the college’s initiatives.

. . . presenting at conferences, and insuring the faculty are being recognized for their work and the operational staff, encouraging paper writing of those kinds of profiles, profiles of best practices with the ministries, that kind of profiling is really crucial. (M. Red)

Geography and demographics substantially impact the expansive nature of the roles of the college leaders.

It’s just that in these larger geographic regions, you’re involved with many more mayors, many more community leaders, Aboriginal leaders, for example. They [urban college leaders] may be dealing with one Community Futures office. I’m dealing with three. They may be dealing with one AHRDA [Aboriginal Human Resources Development Strategy], well I am dealing with one AHRDA. But, they may be dealing with one Friendship House. I’m dealing with five. So it’s that kind of thing. (M. Blue)

The cultures of the communities and therefore of the campuses require consideration and special approaches. Where one campus may be innovative another may be closed even to the point of being viewed by the community as being racist and unresponsive.

In different campuses, I will find anything from a very innovative environment and one that’s progressive thinking, those tend to be ones that are newer, to the main campus which tends to be more conservative in scope, less likely to change. (M. Blue)

The presidents spoke about how smaller communities may be divided by religious perspectives, race, gender, and industry and union affiliations. “You know you’re part of the fishbowl, the environment. So, yes, I find it odd at times” (M. Blue). The college leaders must be astute in living within their diverse communities and ensuring that minorities and special interest groups have voice and access to opportunity and advantage. Being aware of the nuances requires assessing one’s communication style to the point of consideration of appropriate dress (either dressing down or dressing up) and of thinking that what is appropriate in one given situation may not be appropriate in another. “I have to be A-political and A-religious and even A-sexual” (M. Blue). Presidents and leaders have a responsibility to represent their institutions in professional ways. An effective college administrator must pay attention to public perceptions and to his or her image. “People would be cautioning me about image; and it’s in my job description” (M. Brown).

The closer the educational leader’s role is to program delivery, it seems, the broader becomes the scope of his or her responsibilities and the more directly immersed he or she becomes in the breadth of community initiatives. Therefore, the role of a dean at a small college in Northern British Columbia is engaging. He or she is perhaps an expert in one of the disciplines that he or she supervises and then potentially has some expertise in other disciplines within the dean’s portfolio. College leaders at the smaller, northern institutions consider how effective they can be within these broad contexts.

My biggest worry about being a dean in this context is that there just isn't enough time to focus thoroughly enough on each area to achieve the level and to maintain the level of quality that I expect, that is acceptable to me as acceptable .(M. Green)

All participants in this study reported that their scope of responsibilities were broad and believe that this scope is not as clearly defined as it would be in larger institutions. Deans and directors interviewed in this study also disclose passions that lie in meeting the needs of the learners. They draw on their teaching and leadership experiences to add richness to the learners' experiences. The roles of these college leaders are complex and intense. "It's interesting being a dean, being at this level. It's definitely a daunting task. I'm never satisfied with it" (M. Green).

In working with Aboriginal communities, the presidents spend the predominance of their time working with hereditary and elected chiefs whereas, the deans and directors work more closely with band officials and specialized people in the communities.

There's seven nations. In terms of how you prioritize the work, I have to focus on that level [Hereditary Chiefs] first, for that nation; and then try to get the deans and others to worry about the bands. (M. Blue)

All leaders report that understanding the complexities of Aboriginal societies and their corresponding political agendas is challenging, whether those initiatives are the repatriation of culture and language, economic development, or land claims. Each Aboriginal community is unique and requires considerable understanding in order to support their work and their needs. The educational leader needs to understand these varying agendas but also must ensure that he or she remains apolitical. This political and cultural astuteness is a critical skill set required of the leaders. In this regard, the college leaders are recognizing that cultural guides and advisors are necessary to assist in gaining this understanding and in the opportunity to work closely with Aboriginal people. "So that's actually driven us to have an Aboriginal advisor to my office" (M. Blue).

Regional campuses further deepen the pressures on resources and in response to these pressures often recover costs for their program deliveries through special grants and initiatives. The educational leader, sometimes working with project teams and sometimes working within extremely limited human resources, develops and negotiates proposals for community education or training initiatives. The Associate Regional Director may lead curriculum development and program implementation. He or she may be responsible for support services for students, admissions, community relations, marketing and promotions, safety, capital expansion, financial and quality accountability, and all other aspects of a full operation and a comprehensive range of support systems.

In comparison, these tasks are performed by experts at larger institutions or at larger campuses. Even supervision and upkeep of facilities fall under the purview of a campus director or associate director. “So it’s a really all-encompassing position from the college’s perspective from what I’ve seen within a college system” (M. Red). To emphasize the impact on such a director, he or she might be phoned in the middle of the night to respond to a security alarm or to a failed electrical or heating system. Therefore, the role of small campus administrator is extensive and may be almost foreign to those who work at larger institutions or larger campuses. Given the cost recovery nature of the smaller campus, many non-traditional approaches to meeting student needs and responding to communities may be required.

Each campus appears to have its own culture and perspective in those approaches ranging from the very creative and innovative to the traditional. An example of a creative approach would be how a small community might implement a new trades program. An

Aboriginal community or a private organization might have a small amount of funding, that funding is then partnered with the college who might bring in the local school district to augment the pooled resources. A Career Technical Centre program that brings high school students to the college for trades training will add to the student cohort base. The college and the school district have the mandates to bring education to the community. If a willingness is present to bring the resources together, the community will have its training program. However, one of those entities would need to communicate its resources and desires to the other entity.

If you have a history where the college is providing the trades training and all of a sudden a new mandate comes down and a new person gets the same funding for the same kind of training, you get these competitions set up that aren't intentional but they really are very evident in a small geography. (M. Red)

The role of the campus director would be to overcome this competitiveness and cooperate and collaborate in the delivery. Therefore, in one instance or circumstance, the college would be the lead in program delivery and in other instances the college would need to support the other agency in its efforts to build capacity and success in the community.

Within our community, there might be organizations that don't have a lot of experience or where you are able sometimes, by working together, it's not your role, but the role by working together, where their capacity for leadership grows as well. (M. Red)

Therefore, if egos and competitive natures block opportunities, the entire community suffers. These are the realities and complexities of delivering education in rural areas in Northern British Columbia.

I have to be careful, not careful, but I have to have it consciously in my awareness when I'm talking to people and when I'm interacting with industry. Where are they coming from? What's their perspective? (M. Blue)

Therefore, facilitation of community initiatives and growing the capacity of individuals and of communities form a substantial aspect of the role of the college leader. Just as in the early days of contact, when Aboriginal cultures flourished, northerners depended on Aboriginal people for basic survival. These Aboriginal and community building perspectives continue to exist and continue to be key aspects of community life and community growth in Northern BC communities.

Also key to leadership success in rural settings appears to be empathy for community circumstances and an ability or desire to lead change. In resource-based communities, often leaders face situations where the type of employment or the number of local jobs have changed or have been completely eliminated. Naturally, the community looks towards the college for leadership. The challenge is always that the community wants to regain what they once had. Therefore, a key aspect of educational roles is to help communities make transitions; and often, these transitions are emotionally charged and extremely difficult. The leader's role is to explore conflict and bring the tensions of conflict to the surface to be dealt with in productive ways.

One example is the changing composition of a port community such as Prince Rupert where new cultures are settling and where multicultural perspectives change how the college might view its work. Forestry and fisheries are replaced by transportation and tourism. As the community's cultural composition changes, the college leader must help both the long-time residents and the newcomers make these transitions and together build a vision for a new future.

The culture of the small rural college does lend itself well to a service leadership perspective and is counter culture to the nature of a hero leader or a self-made person. In Northern BC, the college leader is a risk taker and supports risk taking within his or her team. The study participants disclosed giving strongly supportive recognition to their teams and mitigating any negative circumstances that the team might encounter.

Educational technology is also changing the scope of influence of the small rural institution. Colleges in Northern British Columbia have extended the impact of their creative energies to a global market through the use of technology. The learning environment has changed and technology provides new opportunities for program and service deliveries. The participants believe that many of their institution's employees also have diverse skill sets. Supporting the development of staff and faculty is an important aspect in the role of the college leader, who positions his or her institution for broad markets with the development and delivery of creative educational products.

Because we offer a diverse array of programs and a lot of our programs rotate, we actually have a really rich internal resource, that being many of our employees wear multiple hats so their knowledge base has a greater depth than if you're just working in a program area in one job forever and ever and ever. (M. Red)

Environmental Scan

Economic Factors

The long-time residents in Northern BC and the college leaders in this study watch their local economies go through boom or bust periods where fast money and rapid expansion are not sustainable.

People who have been around our region for years talk about oil and gas highs and lows; and they will say that we're not getting the same kind of

peaks and valleys, so you do have to be cautious; and the new comers, they tell them to be cautious. (M. Brown)

Training workers for the booming economy in Northeast British Columbia is both exciting and challenging. The workforce in the oil and gas sector is transient and mobile with workers continually travelling in and out of its communities. Local young people with impressive job opportunities that require minimal education and training need little assistance from community colleges. Many struggle in the face of economic incentives to stay in high school to finish a Grade 12. The youth acquire a few specialized or short-term safety credentials, and they are lured off to working in the oil and gas sector.

Northern Lights College and the Ministry of Advanced Education have responded to this phenomenon by developing partnerships with the sector to provide focused training delivered directly on site to industry. The oil-and-gas sector and the ministry supported extensive capital expansion at its Fort St. John campus in the creation of a 12 million dollar Industry Training Centre where programs tailored to industry needs are developed and delivered.

Northern Lights College has established two Centres of Excellence, the first is in oil and gas and the other is in aerospace. As well, NLC is developing another centre of excellence in alternate energy. Additionally, the rise in oil and gas extraction and production has led to extensive growth in tourism, the service industry, and the real estate market that all add further opportunities to Northern Lights training and education plans. With an extensive volume of traffic up and down the Alaska Highway, new hotels, motels, restaurants, and industries that support a rapidly expanding transportation sector are also in an extensive growth phase. The college has substantial capacity for

experienced people to develop and deliver programs and services that respond to the industry sectors.

However, the college is challenged on a very basic level to attract talented employees to the North, particularly in communities that are currently experiencing the boom of the oil and gas industry where real estate values are rapidly escalating. Of course, similar challenges also occur in attracting professionals to small northern communities with depressed local economies and declining community attractiveness; such as, limited retail shops and recreational facilities. Provincial funding to colleges has yet to respond to the need for differential salaries to respond to either the booming or the declining economic circumstances. The college leaders complain that the ministry officials living in Victoria don't understand the economic climate and the cultures of these northern communities. "On paper, something looks reasonable; and yet when you try to play that out in a college that is not under one roof, it takes on different dimensions and challenges" (M. Black). Therefore, college administrators are continually trying to navigate a course charted for an urban condition and are having to challenge ministry-level perceptions and decisions.

From a social responsibility perspective, big business is expected to provide the resources necessary to grow its work force, and it does help resource the local colleges to supply skilled labour to their sectors. Small business on the other hand has a more limited social obligation to fund education and training and can become challenged by constant requests from communities to fund local initiatives. "We are very, very fortunate that we have a giving small business sector in the North because we wouldn't be able to run some

of the programs or support the initiatives at the college level without that support”

(M. Black).

Just as the Northeast is experiencing a boom, the Northwest region has experienced substantial periods of economic decline.

We have people who are really living in a marginal [situation], that are marginalized. They've been living that way for quite some time again both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal. (M. Red)

The educational leaders are often perplexed by the economic challenges that their communities face and how their institutions might assist in economic development.

Just as an example, if I want to export something, let's say I want to take the fibre basket here and make something out of wood, that I would stuff into a container and ship over to Asia to sell, that's great, but I'm going to have to do it here and then ship it to Prince George to be loaded and then haul it back on the train. How do I stop the container? You'd have to haul the container off to the side, and fill it up and put it back on the train. The train might not even stop. From Prince Rupert it goes to Prince George, so those, those are the infrastructure bits, when I talk about infrastructure, those are the kind of things that really need to be addressed. (M. Green)

College leaders in this area acknowledge that the unemployment rates in the region are the worst in British Columbia, if not the worst in the entire country, rising to almost 80% in some Aboriginal communities and affecting anywhere from 33 to 38% of the total population of the Northwest region of BC. (Skeena Native Development Society, 2006, p. 6)

There is chronic unemployment and in many communities a historically indentured dependence upon the social assistance of the federal government programs in some of the First Nations communities. (M. Green)

Local economies are sustained by the service industry and by a large contingent of mobile workers who travel great distances for employment opportunities in northern

areas of the western provinces and return to their families on weekends or on non-working days. The workers fly in and out of the central communities of Smithers and Terrace to mining camps and oil and gas sites.

The Kemess mine, for example, flies in, flies out all the time. We have a lot of people from Terrace, New Aiyanch, they go into camp, come back into Terrace for supplies and a break and go back out again. So, it's an interesting economy. (M. Blue)

Northwest Community College delivers a full range of education and training opportunities; however, this development of potential workers at the moment has limited impact on wealth creation in its local communities. "So, I'm just helping with the out migration of people, which is not helpful for us" (M. Blue). The college struggles to deliver programs and services and struggles with the reality that communities that are in near bankrupt condition are unable to pull themselves out of these downwardly spiralling economic circumstances. "The tax base is so negligible. Terrace as of last month [October 2007] now has no industry tax base. It just lost its last tax base. There is no industry in Terrace anymore" (M. Blue).

Our economy is really bad, and you know, we hear the Premier say that and here's a quote, "British Columbia's booming." Well, Northwest British Columbia is not booming. It has potential to boom. It needs attention. It needs some support. The will is here; the drive is here. (M. Green)

So, the people of the Northwest region of British Columbia join forces, develop creative responses to their circumstances, and train a contingent of transient workers. NWCC is also transitioning workers from the declining forest industry and struggles with substantial attrition of youth from high school. Growing numbers of older workers and youth have immediate needs for basic education and improved levels of literacy.

We have huge opportunity to try new things and to take things in a new direction that you really and truly respond to the needs—not necessarily always following the way things have always been done. (M. Green)

Northwest Community College's vision to better meet the needs of is Aboriginal population starts at the policy level and follows through with purpose to mitigate the effects of colonialism by "decolonizing its curriculum" (M. Blue). This is a bold statement that is embodied in a bold approach. Where the Northeast region has big business partners, Northwest Community College and its leaders rely on collaboration and the strong determination and drive of disenfranchised communities and correspondingly disenfranchised people. "It's really very much a struggle so we have to be pretty resourceful ourselves" (M. Blue). The northwest region may be economically disadvantaged; however, Northwest Community College appears to be intellectually and emotionally wise and savvy as it responds in direct relation to the needs and desires of and opportunities available to the Aboriginal populations in the region. Study participants conveyed several examples of how they have incorporated Aboriginal practices and wisdom into their curriculum. They use on-site elders to mentor the students in programs such as trades and mining exploration. The learners participate in cultural practices such as smudging and ending the classes with circles to debrief the day's events. They enrich their university credit programming by taking the learners into the rainforest to learn about how the forests have sustained Aboriginal people.

Communities that thought that they had a few years to adjust to the devastating effects of the Pine Beetle infestation are further caught in an economic down turn in the forest industry that is placing extreme stress on rural communities where residents rely on the industry as their major form of employment.

We are experiencing lots of mill closures and layoffs numbering in the hundreds. So those communities that are affected, should and are, will look to the college to assist in mitigating those negative impacts on people and on their communities. (M. Grey)

Although these communities were starting to develop strategic plans to transition their workers and their economies to alternate sources of employment, they are now additionally confronted by global economic realities such as the downturn in the US housing market. College leaders in Northern British Columbia have considerable challenges in adjusting their resources to respond.

How we support and deal with that and those challenges, as we've been talking about in terms of becoming more nimble and flexible and to deploy resources in different ways—those factors weigh on us and influence what we are doing and how we are doing it. (M. Grey)

As the College of New Caledonia extends its reach to the west, its small communities replicate the economic and social realities that Northwest Community College identifies. Residents are historically divided between the more affluent who have experienced “very good money given the resource-based industry” and those that “have on the other hand [experienced] extreme poverty” (M. Red). However, Aboriginal people are learning and are beginning to address the affects of colonization. Aboriginal groups are advancing in terms of acquiring education and of using their resources in different ways to leverage opportunities. Increasing numbers of Aboriginal communities are developing business and entrepreneurial skills and are looking for increased opportunities for economic development. Some of the participants noted that the Aboriginal approach to wealth creation tends to be somewhat different from the notion of building individual or corporate wealth. Rather, Aboriginal people tend to add a broader community element for sharing of resources and for wealth distribution.

Our Aboriginal population, who have a sense of community that is different than perhaps a non-Aboriginal community; and so that's really a constant factor; and not only has that benefited our community extremely in terms of education but has hugely benefited economically. . . that's a growth pattern. (M. Red)

Therefore, this growth in the Aboriginal population has lent economic stability in terms of the services required to support the communities. College leaders communicate an increasing desire to be a stimulus or catalyst in this growth and assist in creating opportunities in Aboriginal communities.

They're really diversifying that base, and that's new. The Native Development Corporation also is significant in our community. There's a strong link there for forest resources, but it gives them a starting place in terms of capital where they're able to diversify and do a number of different initiatives. So, that's been a significant change that I've seen in my lifespan for the Aboriginal communities. (M. Red)

Societal and Cultural Factors

Northern British Columbia faces extreme challenges in meeting the social and cultural needs of its residents. Equally, so do its community colleges. “Poverty, isolation, substance abuse, adult violence, health—all those factors definitely come into play; and they compound each other, of course, as is their nature” (M. Red). Northwest Community College estimates that 44% of its student population is of Aboriginal descent and that the concentration of Aboriginal people within this college region is the “highest in the province and also encompasses seven different First Nations” (M. Green). Therefore, Northwest’s building of a bi-cultural institution shifts its fundamental thought process from one that was more inwardly focused on western approaches to education to a more outward perspective that considers who their learners are and what their learners need to

be successful. This shift in thought, this distancing from cultural norms, is powerful in articulating and defining Northwest's new vision.

*One gets contact and the evolution of, through the colonial imperative and assimilation, through the government, the churches, and through every aspect of society. That impacts us in a way that we are all fully aware of. Basically, they disenfranchised huge bodies of the population who are disenfranchised from opportunity and marginalized; and so we're trying to work with those people, through the leaders of those communities, to try and address that and reverse that. . . . That's to me, it's just reflective of the first one—that's our community. So really to be a true community college and to be responsive, that's the vision I have, very simple.
(M. Green)*

College leaders in Northern British Columbia are attuned to their social and cultural environments and recognize the need for basic health education and services that are delivered to meet the cultural diversity of their regions. College leaders work with communities, with elders, mothers, fathers, and children, to teach preventative strategies that involve making the right choices for lifestyle; including, diet and exercise, mental health, and addictions. Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder and other systemic effects of poverty are prevalent.

Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder, given the annual alcohol consumption of our community and the patterns of consumption, there's just no question that Fetal Alcohol is an issue for our community in a very, very significant way. It's reflective probably best in our kindergarten entry statistics, which show over 49% of our children are not entering kindergarten with the appropriate skills, or the developmental skills that are norm at that point. (M. Red)

College leaders in Northern British Columbia are informed by social and health research as well as by their close proximity and immersion in these social and cultural phenomena. They work within the local systems, with the Northern Health Authority and

with their local hospitals and social service agencies, to collaborate and provide local supports, and to acquire the resources that their communities need.

So, we're starting to put a lot of resources into, we're totally revamping our Social Work program, we're looking at addictions, we're looking at suicide prevention workshops—all kinds of wellness. That's really why we have to get on to this centre; we're going to call it the Aboriginal Centre for Health, Recreation or something else. Something that will catch the Ministry's attention in no time. So, those socio-economic issues are driving the priorities of the college. (M. Blue)

In the smaller communities that dot the northern landscape, the community college adds its expertise and wisdom to larger systems. The college or a regional campus becomes the centre of social service delivery and embraces the opportunity to lead national research in areas such as Aboriginal health and Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder.

There are hidden diagnoses which, as you know, are just rolling out in our community now. There's no accurate way you could say what the impact is; but some of the things we know for certain, we know that intergeneration is for multiple generations, there are people who display characteristics and behaviours. We have children and the adults, perhaps the parents or the grandparents that are parenting, that are also affected themselves. We have had professionals in the community estimate, kind of, what prevalence rates we're at in different caseload situations. It's very, very significant for our population. That being said, I don't think our community is unique to the north. I know we've done a lot of work in Fetal Alcohol, and so we might have a better idea of capturing what that statistic is more accurately; but I really don't think if you're looking at those areas of socio-economic factors combined with alcohol and drinking patterns, I don't believe I can use that as unique in terms of other communities. (M. Red)

Culture is complex and the college leaders all convey that the non-homogeneous Aboriginal populations require unique and individual approaches. To this end, the college leaders have employed Aboriginal advisors to inform policies and to guide cultural initiatives. “There's not a pan-First Nations protocol” (M. Green). Substantial learning about

Aboriginal people is occurring and attention is being placed on the needs of the Aboriginal learner.

I think the college has much to do in positioning ourselves to better meet the needs of Indigenous learners and communities. That will also be a major focus for us over the next few years. (M. Grey)

Three of the participants disclosed that issues of racism add to the complexities in their environments and their challenges in working with employees, learners, and communities. These participants disclosed that community residents and employees display and express a range of opinions from curiosity and tolerance or acceptance of Aboriginal culture to substantial degrees of condemnation and rigidity. College leaders conveyed their experiential learning in understanding communication styles and in the need to building strong personal relationships. Participants acknowledged the distrust that Aboriginal people have of the education system and convey that the contemporary western social norms do not and cannot fully accommodate the complexity of a culture built on oral traditions and that have fundamentally different ways of being.

You write agreements. Really they are quite stupid to write. I find that they are irrelevant to them [First Nations People] because unless the Band regards them as very important documents, they don't, most of them don't consider them worth the paper they are written on. . . . This is true of the Aboriginal paradigm. It is relationship that is important. . . . So we have actually moved away from legalistic sort of documents to documents that are philosophical in approach. This is who we are and this is what we are trying to do. We'll do it in the spirit of that, it's about language as spirit and relationship. That is more so we can have ceremony. The documents are just ceremony. (M. Blue)

The leaders talk about the need to uniquely understand each Aboriginal community in terms of how a particular band conducts its business and how it chooses to interact with the education system. The leaders also talk about making mistakes and

about the need to listen, to really listen, and to relax to some extent with the ambiguity of the interactions. The participants indicate that the college leader therefore might need to be more inquisitive than one might normally be in his or her day-to-day interactions with others. All participants expressed their humble understandings of Aboriginal people and their desires to continue learning and understanding. “The communities are right there telling us, helping us with what has to be done” (M. Green). These aspects of their work as college leaders appeared to bring a great deal of satisfaction to their roles.

There’s that huge role there . . . that culture of passion, fun, innovation, being risk taking, supporting risk taking which also means barriers, so that understanding that willingness to walk beyond boundaries. (M. Red)

Geographical Challenges

All six administrators who participated in this study viewed their geographic challenges as having a substantial negative impact on their leadership roles and on their personal lives.

In the winter time, as you see right now, the roads up here are treacherous, to say the least. I’ve lived all over Canada; and this is on par with the Eastern Yukon, in terms of the great danger of driving. (M. Green)

The provincial education system with its finite resources and escalating needs is entering a new era of collaboration and of building strategic alliances to maximize opportunities. Our collective educational system mandate is for educating people from the early years to senior years—a birth to grave mandate that emphasizes life-long learning. Colleges in the North work closely with school districts and with each other. This collaborative approach is new territory for many educators and requires extensive attention to conversation and interpersonal skills—to Habermas’s theory of

communicative action. When one thinks about this phenomenon from a geographic perspective and when one acknowledges that the predominance of the BC population lives in the lower mainland and on Vancouver Island, one realizes that the college administrators in Northern British Columbia are geographically disadvantaged in terms of the most basic level of participation in the larger provincial education system. For example, one of the leaders spoke about how his colleagues at southern institutions may have to drive for a half an hour to an hour to attend an important provincial meeting.

For us, it's two or three days depending on flights, so in order to stay involved at a provincial level, it's both expensive and time consuming; and plus you are away from your family, which is not something I like to do.
(M. Green)

One of the leaders spoke about growing concerns over spreading the college's resources equally among its communities and the substantially increased costs of taking programs to the learners. Another participant spoke about how in her previous position at an urban institution, she didn't have to think about the impact of the geography and the extensive additional costs to rural deliveries and the critical importance of being visible at all the campuses. "There is not a day that goes by where I don't have to think about the geography" (M. Brown). The leaders spoke similarly about being isolated in the North and about being prepared on each excursion to the satellite campuses to be snowed in or weather bound and that the leader may have to spend an extra two, three, or maybe even four days stranded in a remote community. Consider planning a trip to one of these isolated communities when commercial flights occur only once or twice per week. The leader must fly in one day and fly out a few days later.

I was up there doing some trouble shooting; and I was smart enough to say that I was going to stay there for four days and just provide back up to

the staff. I sat in the front office area, manned the phones and just kind of hung out. So, I had four really rich days with the staff. The fact that I was there for another issue didn't negate the fact that was quality time that I probably would have been pulled away to something else trying to make choices of splitting my time between campuses. (M. Brown)

These leaders are frustrated by the fact that many of the ministry officials don't acknowledge even the most basic of the geographic challenges.

Some of those people across the table from me have never been up there, so here I am talking to this wall of ignorance about the reality of the North. (M. Brown)

Through this frustration, the leaders have sought ways to educate others and all participants communicated their strategies in encouraging the ministry officials to come to the North and see for themselves. Understandably from a personal safety perspective, these excursions by ministry officials seldom are planned for winter meetings. On the other hand, when the northern leaders attend meetings in the lower mainland they are scheduled throughout the year. One of the leaders spoke about her frustration in bearing the responsibility of the travel only to be disappointed that the southern people cancelled their attendance at an important ministry budget meeting.

Meanwhile, we had come through rain, sleet, hail, snow and winter travel conditions to get down there to tell them our story. Well, I had just returned in December from a 4500-km tour of my region; and I was just wound up. (M. Brown)

This scenario is common and adds to the frustration of unequal distribution of resources, of unequal access caused by geography, and a perceived unequal personal commitment by the other system players.

Because we are so far away from where decisions are being made, really on a provincial scale, even though there is recognition perhaps for best practices that are occurring in our environment, that recognition, because you're not close to it in that proximity and always passing the hallways,

those kinds of things are often lost and the intents change through time with no intent to change it through time. It's just a lack of proximity; and so because nothing in education is static, that is rarely captured. So there's a disadvantage in terms of influence and in terms of, and it's not the validity of your voice, it's the proximity of your voice. So, that really has a play in terms of geography. Because there's logistics behind the influence of the voice, that geography really plays into it. (M. Red)

The geography causes disparity on a number of levels that all have impact on access, whether that access is required by the college leader or by the learner. This study focuses on the notion of resourcefulness. Just think about the resourcefulness that is required in providing access to very remote areas. The college either takes the opportunities to the learners or brings the learners to small centralized delivery sites. The urban dweller may not even contemplate that the sites won't have public transportation services. A taxi service might be available; but in many remote communities, the luxury of a taxi or even a public telephone is not available. Coastal or inland communities might be separated by bodies of water that require ferry service. That service would only run at certain times of the day and would likely be cut off in the late afternoon. Geography and isolation compounded with poverty and sparsely populated communities equates to a rapid downward spiral of lost educational opportunities and a loss of human potential to participate in the economy of Northern British Columbia. Correspondingly, northern community colleges have a mandate to improve these disheartening and multi-barriered circumstances.

On paper, something looks reasonable; and yet when you try to play that out in a college that is not under one roof, it takes on different dimensions and challenges. So, you are having to play that role of trying to educate, in some cases the challenges of decisions that are being made at the ministry level. (M. Black)

So, geography limits access to learners. Geography limits the college leader's impact and influence on the larger system. Participants in this study spoke about the substantial amount of time that they spend on activities impacted by geography in relation to the time that is spent by their southern counterparts on similar activities. This time commitment includes the time spent in transporting themselves or their learners to important places where important decisions and important educational activities take place. However, one more aspect of time should be considered when capturing the geographic element. Community colleges work directly with other government agencies, with Aboriginal structures, and with other institutions that deliver education. Where an urban college would focus its attention on a large group of people within a small geographic area, the corresponding northern college leader has a large geographic area with attention to sparsely populated communities. This attentiveness to small communities requires individualized approaches and strong communicative action. The attentiveness requires stepping aside from the larger system and focussing on the realities of the people. This attentiveness proposes that the lifeworld of the people in these communities must take precedence over the larger system.

Historical Influences

The impact of colonization and the destruction of culture of Aboriginal people identified by the college leaders appears to be the single most important historical factor influencing their work. The three northern colleges serve more than 60 Aboriginal communities, some of the largest urban Aboriginal populations in BC, and substantial numbers of Métis. This study accepts the work of Aboriginal scholars and Aboriginal

people in their account of their history, of their experiences in becoming colonized and the resulting systematic destruction of their language, culture, and practices. It also accepts Aboriginal experiences in trying to regain, reclaim, relearn, and even reinvent their cultures and define their places in both local and global societies. The effects of genocide on Aboriginal people in Northern British Columbia is deep in terms of its destruction of the Aboriginal lifeworld and their ability to recover from centuries of oppression and cultural domination. I use the term “genocide” in this paper as a broad definition that encompasses the destruction of, through very coordinated and explicit plans, the fundamental elements of a culture; such as, its language, customs and practices, and educational and economic systems to an end that devastates the personal security, health, welfare, and dignity of a people. College leaders in Northern British Columbia also acknowledge that the systems inherent within the College leader’s lifeworld were violently changed by their experiences within the acts of colonization. Memories of a flourishing Aboriginal lifeworld become ever so distant as the destruction of its systems and its core beings continues.

College administrators in Northern BC acknowledge the importance of recognizing and celebrating the essential elements of Aboriginal views and are starting to aid in the reclamation and revitalization of language and the reestablishment of traditional cultural practices. The college leaders have critical roles in assisting—in providing an environment in which Aboriginal education and Aboriginal people will thrive. Castellano et al. (2000) tell us that innovations in educational practices have profound impacts on the lives and well being of Aboriginal people and that we are, as outsiders to their experi-

ences, only able to understand or grasp these concepts or impacts in broad abstract forms and shapes. College leaders all too closely represent the colonizing society; and within their fundamental roles as educators, they live in the depths and shadows of Aboriginal experiences.

I'm certainly not an expert on it [First Nations culture and experience] and would never presume to speak from a First Nations perspective, which I think is really important to say. (M. Red)

College administrators have the opportunity for profound impact by acknowledging and incorporating Aboriginal values, knowledge, practices, wisdom, and ways of being into mainstream educational programs and services. The administrators begin this work first by listening.

So, with 10,000 plus years of success and all that historical knowledge of what works, as relative newcomers here it makes more sense for us to listen to the communities than for us to go and tell them our wisdom which is so—it just hasn't even evolved here yet. (M. Green)

From listening and then progressing through to authentic dialogue, the college leaders use communicative action as they move closer and closer to understanding both the generalities and nuances of what must be done. “We are moving more that way as a community, a greater understanding. But, it hasn't been historically” (M. Red).

The province of British Columbia has entered into a new relationship with BC's Aboriginal people as defined in the 2005 *The New Relationship* agreement. This agreement lays out the province's vision, goals, principles, and actions and identifies a management committee to guide the Province of British Columbia's actions and interactions with Aboriginal people. The agreement is “based on respect, recognition and accommodation of Aboriginal title and rights” (Province of British Columbia, 2005, p. 1).

The post-secondary system in British Columbia has substantial opportunity and responsibility to move this new relationship forward; and college leaders in Northern BC are embracing this new mandate.

One gets contact and the evolution of, through the colonial imperative and assimilation, through the government, the churches, and through every aspect of society. That impacts us in a way that we are all fully aware of. Basically, they disenfranchised huge bodies of the population who are disenfranchised from opportunity and marginalized; and so we're trying to work with those people, through the leaders of those communities, to try and address that and reverse that. They enjoyed well over 10,000 plus years of independence, economic variability, trade, very sophisticated political, cultural and social structures, with very well developed trade routes and trade practices, spanning up and down basically this side of the world. (M. Green)

Contact with Europeans forever changed the Aboriginal lifeworld and its associated systems. Now, after centuries of ethnic destruction and devastation, we are starting to recognise and acknowledge our unique role in this cultural rebuilding. This attention to Aboriginal education is important work.

Additionally, rural community life is also an important factor in the history of delivering education in Northern British Columbia. Administrators who move into these Northern BC college regions are quickly immersed in the immediacy of their roles within unique social and historical community natures and temperaments. Mistakes are readily made and lessons quickly learned in terms of appropriate protocols and approaches to working with and influencing community members. A long-standing community member, perhaps living for decades in the community, may still be considered an outsider. Imagine then the potential for error for the neophyte college administrator. The leader needs to both listen attentively and respond appropriately to the nuances of these

historical and cultural contexts and then conduct the affairs of the college in some harmony with these unique *social imaginaries* and lifeworlds.

Only one of the administrators interviewed in this study was raised in the community in which she worked. This participant informs the study in a unique way in that she has a deep historical understanding of the community in which she lives. She also has a strong understanding of the college's impact on the community over the course of 30 or more years. Historically, the college and the campus played a foundational community development role in this small community. Over the years, the community looked towards the college for economic and social advantage, and the campus was able to respond in unique and innovative ways. The college took "a rural spirit approach" (M. Red) in working with the community and with local Aboriginal people. This approach led to building positive and sustainable relationships.

However, that was not the experience that many of the other participants encountered as they interacted with the various community memories of the colleges. Many of the administrators cited substantial historical circumstances that needed to be ameliorated by first naming what the former circumstances were. Through communicative action—through dialogue and reconciliation the negative memories were addressed. These impacts and challenges ranged from college employees and campuses that were perceived to be extremely racist to the college not being responsive to community needs. Whether these perceptions were real or perceived is irrelevant because in this case perception was the college's reality and the circumstance that the college

leader faced. Further, the changing nature of these resource-based communities required innovative responses.

The need for education [historically] wasn't as important in terms of acquiring work that was well paid. As that labour force has changed, and we have more technology entering the workforce in the resource-based industry, it really has changed the role of education within our community. (M. Red)

Another significant historical factor was the quick turnover of college leaders. The instability of leadership contributed to negative community impressions of the college, resulting in substantial obstacles for incoming administrators. The real or perceived lack of leadership and lack of institutional ability to make the necessary changes to move the college and communities forward in positive ways was cited by several participants as a significant historical factor influencing the lives of the administrators. In many cases, profound changes and approaches—such as becoming a bi-cultural institution—were cited as the only way to overcome the negative historical factors that impacted the role of college leadership.

Internal institutional history and external perceptions of the colleges were, therefore, predominant factors that the participants identified as impacting their roles and their individual and collective abilities to move their institutions forward in positive and innovative ways. This history focused predominantly on the notion that institutions were difficult to steer and to move in new directions as both employees and administrators were resistant to change.

John Kotter (1996) underscores the importance of modern organizations developing adaptive, flexible, and lean approaches that reduce bureaucracy and include inherently informed systems and people. Such approaches advantage performance and

results and focus on employee empowerment and customer satisfaction. College leaders in Northern British Columbia are informed by leadership theory and have strong desires to create nimble institutions that respond appropriately to their environments. However, the histories within their internal contexts create small scale systems that are slow to respond and are not as adaptable as desired. The consequence is that leaders believe their institutional and personal opportunities are negatively affected by employee-employer relations and by past practices that upheld tradition and a status quo institutional character and reputation. One of the participants indicated that a historically and widely held complacency within the institution was exacerbated by historically tight controls of information. These historical institutional practices crippled managers and potential leaders from effectiveness in moving forward on various initiatives and in contributing positively in the shaping of the future.

Another factor cited by the participants was that the colleges have had difficulty settling on either centralized or decentralized internal systems. Some of the institutions had recently changed their method of operation in this regard. From some of the participants' perspectives, the underlying assumption in supporting a decentralized model was to provide a richer engagement by the institution at the community level. This decentralization was viewed as being able to better accommodate local needs and increase access to programs and services. Conversely, other study participants who upheld a centralized model desired a more consistent approach to program delivery and held the belief that centralized deliveries improved quality. This dichotomy appeared to

be unresolved. Underlying all of the dialogue was a historical challenge in getting people to work well together.

So there is, there certainly has in our institutions historically a tendency to centralize; and we are, I think, still, some of our administrative team are reluctant to support or they are challenged by the direction that we are taking in recent years, which is to be more decentralized. (M. Grey)

Relationships among faculty, staff, and administration within the institutions have in general had longstanding and difficult histories. At times, these histories are inflamed and heightened by labour conflict and dissonance in values between employees and administrators. Institutional stories, imagery, and myths appear to substantially affect the lives of the college leaders. Throughout these institutional histories, rapid and drastic changes in leadership perspectives and approaches appear to have somewhat impeded progress for institutions to become more responsive to community and industry needs. However, the current college leaders all cite some progress, whether on a small scale or on a large scale, with institutional acceptance of change. The study participants appear to remain positive in terms of their roles as agents of change. In fact, at times throughout the interviews the participants minimized the impact of history and appeared to want to remain true to their employees with a trust-based appreciation of the employees' contributions.

The college has a rich history, there have been some ups, peaks and valleys, ups and downs throughout that time; but generally, I think the college's history is quite positive. (M. Grey)

The historical arrival and departure of predecessors also had an influence on the incoming leader. Whether the former leader was loved or hated, appreciated or despised, effective or ineffective, was part of the historical context in which the current leaders

reside. All appear to have lived or be living to some extent within the shadows of the experiences of the leader who came before them. Clearly, this phenomenon is evident to anyone entering a new position. However, in the small rural community the educational leader appears to have been impacted more substantially by his or her predecessor's scope of influence. Participants believed that their high visibility in the small communities contributed to this phenomenon with living memories of previous leadership lingering just a bit longer in the small community.

Political Will

As with other colleges in BC, both internal and external historical and political factors influence the work of senior leaders at community colleges in Northern BC. The politics appear to create both large- and small-scale arenas for position and presence. Internal history and politics begin in philosophical debate and ideology regarding fundamental issues for public education delivered in a western society. Politics also centre around bringing voice to the despair of and disadvantage brought to the Aboriginal population. The leaders all cite struggles in finding ways to bring restitution and recognition to this disenfranchised group. Other internal struggles focus on the distribution of college resources. Internal system challenges are smaller scale representations of larger global and broad contexts of societies. Attention must be paid to the varying community perspectives and the minority interest groups.

Education is expensive and governments historically have been committed to looking for ways to reduce costs and move the post-secondary system to a more business-like model. Within all of these parameters, people, real people with hopes and dreams,

are impacted. Whether the people are employees, learners, external stakeholders, or simply interested parties, all of the system factors have impact on their lives.

Additionally, globalization and the massification of education bring multiple perspectives. In Northern British Columbia, as Aboriginal people redefine their identities and cultural practices and demand a rightful place in society, renegotiation is required. Renegotiation implies well developed conversation skills and opportunities to reach understanding. The college leaders are not only witnessing this democratic shift in society but also they have active roles as participants in and agents of this change.

Conversations about small ‘p’ politics and big ‘p’ politics appear to be common among college leaders in Northern BC as provincial and federal politics impact the daily practice of college administrators. “Internally, in colleges and everybody I talk to says that the environment is so political” (M. Green). Within their contexts, big ‘p’ politics refers predominantly to provincial and federal government politics and the resulting influence on college leadership and governance. Small ‘p’ politics generally refers to the influence of local community politics and internal institutional politics. All participants in this study have both challenges and opportunities with political will. Whether that political will is the posturing of small special-interest groups that see the college as a source of funding for their causes (a somewhat corporate welfare perspective) or the demands of and directions imposed by the master—the provincial government in power.

Our institution, as you know, is so highly dependent on the provincial government for its revenue, because our funding comes from the province. So, our relationships would be, are in favour, and certainly have positive support on the part of the provincial politicians. It's critical to our ability to secure resources; and I think we have seen in the past where we didn't have positive political relationships. It was to the detriment of the college.

So, we have to tend to those very carefully. That is a big part the president's job and a big part of the Board of Governors' role. So, I don't think that you can underestimate the importance of the political relationships with the province and the MLAs. (M. Grey)

As with other post-secondary leaders in BC, the participants in this study cite an increasing requirement for provincial control of their institutions. However, the participants believe the increasingly rigid accountability factors and particularly the target utilization rates (enrolment statistics) for their institutions to be unachievable given the context of the northern institutions. The multiple-campus structure combined with the vast geography and the nature of very small rural and remote communities alone causes challenges. Provincial norms for filling classes at the optimum level identified by the Ministry of Advanced Education are unrealistic for northern settings. Another challenge that remains for all colleges in British Columbia is that inflationary costs have not been funded by the province. As a result of the Perrin Report (as referenced in BC Select Standing Committee on Finance and Government Services, 2006) that identified this as a substantial flaw in the funding of post-secondary institutions, universities in BC received funding lifts for the cost of inflation. A second unpublished report by Perrin (as referenced in BC Select Standing Committee on Finance and Government Services, 2007) that identified similar pressures in the college system appears to have fallen on deaf ears in Victoria. An understanding of how inflationary costs might more negatively affect the northern colleges might be gained by considering heating costs for multiple campuses in northern climates and the cost of travel throughout the vast geographic regions.

There may be a lack of understanding and actually the culture, the climate, the community, the challenges that the institution faces as opposed to someone who is somewhat removed in Victoria. (M. Black)

Providing access to education and acquiring educational resources within an environment challenged by demography, geography, and scarcity requires attention to political will. All participants acknowledge the importance of having political astuteness within what one participant calls “layers of politics” (M. Red), ranging from federal, to provincial, to municipal, to Aboriginal bands and agencies.

They [politics] are very intricate and complicated and in some areas, we are always learning. It's never static. So, all of those interplay, I think, in terms of what I would call a political, the political role that I have here. (M. Red)

Participants also acknowledged the political pressures that individual board members bring to college governance as they represent the various interests of the stakeholders. Additionally, the participants acknowledged the extreme frustration of not being one of the big provincial players. From a systems perspective, the participants believe the voice of small, rural colleges to be quite different from the voice of large, urban institutions. The participants also believe that proximity to Victoria tends to translate into a more substantial voice and a larger proportion of the system's resources. Study participants who had experiences at larger urban institutions referred to those experiences at both locations to articulate the differentiation of geography on political influence.

One participant spoke about annual meetings with the ministry as an example of this difference. If one resides in the lower mainland or on Vancouver Island, one tends to have much more ministry presence at important meetings and important events. If one

resides in the North, the experience is that fewer ministry officials and experts attend critical meetings between and among the ministry and the colleges.

*If I was at Capilano or Vancouver Community College or Malaspina, the Deputy Minister would be in the room, the ADM absolutely in the room.
(M. Blue)*

Further, within their scope of experience and practice, participants acknowledge that economic growth in the college region brings additional resources for the local college. Northwest Community College provides an apt example. For many years now, Alcan has been the only large industry in the region. Therefore, catching the attention of the politicians had been extremely difficult for the college. However, this phenomenon of political attention matching potential tax revenue may once again position Northwest Community College on the province's political radar. The port expansion in Prince Rupert with its potential for substantially increased transportation services and the potential for mining are starting to bring political attention to the Northwest region. Skilled workers will be required, and Aboriginal youth have substantial potential to fill the labour shortage. From the participants' perspective, the provincial government ignored this economically depressed region with its high preponderance of Aboriginal people. Participants also acknowledge that new funding for education and training through funding envelopes for Aboriginal initiatives will assist in developing the capacity of Aboriginal people as they contribute to the local economies.

Another key aspect of having voice in the North appears to be directly related to whether or not a provincial cabinet minister is located in the college region. The study participants convey that their local MLAs are interested in the work of the colleges and that these politicians assist with their causes and with their advocacy within the ministry.

Northern Lights College has direct contact with the Minister of Energy, Mines, and Petroleum Resources. CNC's region is well represented with two cabinet ministers—the Minister of Forests and Range and the Minister of Education who is also the Deputy Premier. These politicians assist the colleges by making important connections and linking the colleges to funding opportunities. All participants cited the importance of being closely connected to the provincial politicians and the importance of that proximity in terms of accessing special funding opportunities. The three presidents represented in this study provided examples of direct contact with their region's MLAs and MPs. They particularly appreciated the connection to cabinet ministers in terms of the potential for advancing the interests of their college. Given the large current majority in the Liberal government, the participants disclosed that the impact of opposition members is minimal. Gaining the attention of the provincial ministries can be extremely difficult. "So that means for us a lot of travel—getting down and making sure that we're physically present in front of these people and as many opportunities as we can" (M. Blue).

Paying attention to both local and internal politics is equally important in terms of positioning the colleges for opportunities. The notion that self-serving individuals or small interest groups have potential to derail an inexperienced college leader was also conveyed by some of the participants.

When I first got into this Dean's job, I experienced situations . . . you get everybody lobbying. I'm not used to that; and they're quite good at it. I figured, "How do I figure the bullshit from what really matters in this, what am I supposed to do here?" (M. Green)

So, the educational administrators participating in this study learn their political astuteness from practice. Not one administrator referred to theory in terms of how one

might navigate the potential landmines of politics. However, they are all acutely aware of the political factors that inform practice and appear to be reflective on the nature of their roles and the importance of doing the right thing for their institutions and for the communities that they serve.

We have an ethical, effective environment. So that is the answer I give on politics. I choose not to call it politics. Maybe it's feedback on the ethical, maybe not, hopefully not. (M. Green)

As well, municipal governments tend to be an incredible source of political determination that has further impact on college administrators. All administrators conveyed experiences of working directly with local mayors and municipal councils and sitting on many local boards and advisories. The participants viewed their community counterparts as critical to informing delivery of programs and services. Participants cited experiences of participating in local municipal meetings and having the predominance of the community in attendance. Having the attention of the entire community is a unique and interesting experience that a president or dean of a large urban institution would not likely experience.

Provincial politics inform municipal politics; and participants believe that provincial politics in many ways disadvantage the North. The college administrators are concerned about policy decisions that will be aligned with Campus 2020. This report is currently the most influential direction paper on the BC education system. All participants believe that the political and financial decisions related to the 2010 Olympics will continue to disadvantage the North; and they feel disempowered within this circumstance. All participants believe that major educational initiatives, such as capital

expansions, will be on hold for a few years and are hopeful that in future years, the educational system will receive a larger share of the provincial pie.

I think colleges have always done more with less. So from my perspective, I don't think all of education is about how much money you've got. But there are, we have now got to the point as a system, and I talk about the BC system or other systems, where society has to start to recognize what a critical investment in the future of our country is based on the monies that are given to post secondary. Colleges and technical institutions are the future of the country. . . . You don't see many university grads looking after cars, looking after the plumbing, keeping the building safe. . . . we need to continually be upgrading our infrastructure to stay competitive and get our product in order so that it can be useful. Those political choices are really counter productive to what we really need to do, so politics, history, provincial impact, also those competitors for what has been mainstay, a dependable mainstay since the Second World War, the roles for colleges, to fast track skilled workers. (M. Brown)

The other most influential and important players in provincial and federal politics are the Aboriginal people of BC and of Canada. Aboriginal communities are not homogeneous. They represent complex cultures with unique protocols and perspectives that are focused on issues ranging from the economic to the repatriation of language and culture. The Aboriginal agendas and the relationships with Aboriginal people are of extreme importance to the college leader in the North. With over 60 Aboriginal communities in the northern part of British Columbia, the college leader places great importance in moving the Aboriginal paradigm forward and assisting in improving the social and economic conditions for Aboriginal people.

So, there are different agendas going on there; and in my role, it's really important that I understand the political agenda without getting involved in any of them, of each of those Aboriginal communities, otherwise it's very difficult to operate. (M. Blue)

Further, these unique environments provide extensive opportunities to leverage funding from federal and provincial ministries; such as, the Ministry of Children and

Family Development and the Ministry of Health. The educational institutions work closely with Northern Health in meeting the needs of communities, but particularly in trying to address the health and social development needs of the Aboriginal people in the North. All these social and economic factors are politically charged and require the college leader's particular attention. Outsiders to the North sometimes convey that they understand what it is like to work in a small community, but the leaders in this study believe that unless one is immersed in small community life, one is only an observer and can not truly understand the context. The landscape is indeed broad and the connections are immediate.

The way I try to explain it is that, you know, my children play soccer with my students, with the funders, with people that you have partnerships with . . . I grocery shop with and with my sister. There is no fine line. So, that separation is really complicated. There's community politics there. So your role within the community, you don't, nor would I want to, separate my role within the college within my role within the community, within my role as a parent and all those other roles that are very intertwined within the community role. So that's a huge part in our small rural communities in terms of the decision making structures that are inherent within an understanding of how those work, especially when you are raised in the community. There are all those connections that are there as well. It's very complex; and of course, within our community as well, that's kind of a personal role, I guess. Then there are the layers of politics with industry that you have to be aware of and that you play a role there. There are also layers of politics with our Aboriginal communities. We are really fortunate to be enriched by many First Nations, Aboriginal communities, in this area. They, themselves, have mandates that are so complicated that in partnerships, in working with them, those complications become part of that. (M. Red)

Internal politics are another dimension of organizational composition. Internal politics are representative of internal constituents and are often focused on the fair application of policy and fair distribution of institutional resources. Political environments exist between management and unions, between and among departments,

and between and among campuses in a multi-campus structure. “Those relationship dynamics are always challenging and create opportunities for conflict and growth and learning” (M. Grey). Ultimately, college administrators in Northern British Columbia play extensive roles within complicated systems within inherently complicated politics. “Sometimes that’s about politicians’ egos more than government in power. So relationships are important at all levels” (M. Blue).

All participants indicate ‘college’ to be synonymous with ‘community.’ All participants indicate the importance of paying attention to the political environments in which they are situated and convey the importance of leveraging those political systems to advantage the people in the regions that they serve. “Ultimately the politics are about relationships, people in organizations” (M. Grey). The college administrators participating within this study were attuned to their political environments and spoke positively about the importance of being politically informed and politically astute.

Limited Resources

Providing programs in small centres, providing learner supports in smaller centres, is more expensive; and in recent years, and even not that recently, traditionally, the province and the provincial government has focused on the efficiency measures and accountability, which essentially is utilization of dollars as reflected in enrolment. The FTE [full-time seat equivalents] utilization measure has dominated the Ministry of Advanced Education's thinking and accountability system and that really places colleges like ours serving small communities, with a program mix that has more smaller classes, we are at a disadvantage financially. So, our resources, our capacity to deliver programs and services, has been contracted for many years and that is certainly frustrating and disappointing for the institution and for the communities that we serve, as we have reallocated millions of dollars in recent years to just cope with the increased costs of energy and of basic operations. (M. Grey)

Resources to deliver educational programs and services traditionally have been scarce in Northern British Columbia and the policies and the mandates of the provincial government add to the stressors for northern administrators and limit the opportunities for the small rural institution. Northern learners have unique profiles with lower than national and provincial levels of education and literacy (Literacy BC, 2005) and at the same time are also faced with scarce resources and support systems. Northern BC communities have very limited resources. College leaders at the three colleges in Northern BC have significant challenges in delivering the education and training that is required to prepare northern people to participate in local and global economies. When asked to describe the resources available to the institutions, the participants' responses were:

- Insufficient . . . They are always scarce; that's the case in every single thing we do (M. Green);
- Wholly inadequate (M. Grey);
- We're being held back at a time when there are critical needs for our product (M. Brown);
- We have needs that are very, very challenging to meet (M. Red);
- We have to spread the dollars out thinner (M. Black); and,
- There are rarely enough resources—rarely (M. Blue).

Participants explained that through the one-size-fits-all funding formula, BC's small, rural colleges have been forced to reduce program offerings and have little resources to address the growing needs within their regions.

We are providing what I would characterize as a thin veneer of support and activity in a number of areas; and a number of areas have been entirely discontinued, certainly in the last six years. So, "Limited Resources R Us". (M. Grey)

The profile of the potential learners in Northern British Columbia is generally at a substantially lower level in terms of academic preparedness. In general and as mentioned, Northern BC has low levels of literacy and lower levels of high school completion. The BC Ministry of Education (2006) high school completion rates show that 79% of children from British Columbia complete high school; however, the results are a staggering 47% for Aboriginal children. School districts in Northern BC vary from a 50% rate in Haida Gwaii, to 65% in Prince George, to 61% in Fort Nelson. The North's potential college admissions are spread out over more than one-half the province's geography and have substantial challenges in terms of just getting to classes with large distances to travel and almost non-existent transportation services. Access to educational opportunity is severely impaired in comparison to educational opportunities in metropolitan areas.

*So, if you think about our demographic and the social and economic realities for folks up here [Northern British Columbia], the amount of support, learner support, forget the materials in the classroom, just learner support to help people make, to support people to make that, their attempts to success are definitely something that is basic and necessary.
(M. Green)*

The remoteness of the learners and their level of preparedness alone indicate that northern learners require increased supports to merely attend classes. Resources in this regard are inadequate and college leaders continue to be astounded by increasing provincial expectations in terms of class sizes and enrolment rates. In fulfilling basic college mandates to provide access to quality education across their college regions, the leaders struggle in their continuing aspirations for their institutions to remain comprehensive community colleges.

When you take the educational equation and balance it against economic development and social development, community development, and the

return on investment, it shocks me as a business person that we are not taking a much higher investment in this level of education in this part of the province given that the goal of the current provincial government, and actually any provincial government, is to ensure economic prosperity across its whole region. (M. Green)

Resources for basic program deliveries, such as in the highly subscribed trades programs and the consequent extensive capital equipment investment that is required are so inadequate that one participant disclosed that employers are reluctant to send their employees for apprenticeship training. This participant indicated that allocation of capital equipment for trades deliveries is first prioritized in terms of safety and secondly is based on delivering quality programs within the region. The college leader struggles with these kinds of decisions. If the college can't guarantee safety, the program does not run. The decision point is less definitive when quality is concerned. Obviously, when employers question the quality of a program based on the equipment that is available to the learners, the college is walking a very fine line in terms of providing an effective learning environment. An outsider to this context of scarcity might say that quality must not be compromised. The educational leader in Northern BC, particularly working in remote areas, frankly does not have the same place of comfort as access takes precedence over the notion of having all the necessary resources for a program delivery. Therefore, resourcefulness is required.

The multi-campus context of community colleges in Northern BC also adds a large degree of complexity and extreme challenges when discussing resources. Consider that as a college president, one might have to ensure that adequate resources were distributed across anywhere from six to eight campuses (possibly with additional points of access) in extremely small communities of a few hundred people. "They [resource

allocation decisions] are all challenging” (M. Green). As the participants have indicated, adequate resources are simply not always available. In an urban centre, the definition of adequate resources might be large capital expenditures for exemplary services such as a provincial multi-media centre or a centre that addresses climate change. The participants acknowledge that these provincial initiatives are extremely important. However, at a small rural campus where need equates to having basic supplies and perhaps a small community building in which the campus could deliver a foundational trades program, “the system as a whole is so lean that assumptions are made that those infrastructures might be in place; and they’re often exasperated for us, so chairs, tables, the building” (M. Red).

Many of the facilities in the smaller communities are rented, which poses additional problems in terms of providing space that is suited to a contemporary learning environment. Further, college leaders in this study looked at their neighbours to the south or to the east in Alberta with envy in terms of their having exceptional facilities that lend themselves well to exceptional educational, cultural, and other societal experiences and initiatives.

So, it [small buildings spread across a college region] limits your program delivery and the kinds of programs that you can have. Whereas where you are under one roof, you can provide a lot more. (M. Black)

Additionally, larger metropolitan institutions are able to leverage substantial donations for impressive facilities (and perhaps in comparison to northern standards somewhat extravagant). Smaller rural communities do not have those advantages of scale and use their fundraising opportunities predominantly to secure basic supplies and equipment for short-term or rotating deliveries in remote areas.

Funding for program delivery is the most critical component of scarcity in the North. Communities rally around the northern colleges to help provide for the smaller operational needs of program delivery. Clearly, the northern colleges are challenged by scarcity at the most fundamental level. The campuses and the colleges tend to fill the gap between the community needs for education and training and the provincial funding that they receive by writing proposals and securing grants for ancillary revenue. However, the leaders indicate declining opportunities for these soft-funded programs and services. Oddly, funding may be available for researching community capacity or for stimulating a short-term need, but the most critical shortfall is in acquiring sustainable funding for the most basic of program deliveries. These include literacy and adult upgrading, social services programming, health programming, and programs in trades and technologies. In other words, the northern colleges are challenged in providing the most basic level of education and training required to support the needs of the rural communities in the college region.

So, providing programs and services across that area, close to people's homes, is a huge challenge. We lack economies of scale, which leads to higher costs. Providing supports to the smaller communities is obviously difficult because we don't have the resources. (M. Grey)

Limited and stretched human resources add an additional dimension and intensify the resource challenges of the northern colleges. If one is considering becoming a president at a small rural college, one must think critically about the lack of supports that would be available to fulfill that leadership role.

So they [presidents at larger institutions] can have an institutional researcher who pulls together the Board's environmental scan that they need and also does a lot of the larger writing of service plans. . . . I don't have those extra skills in my organization or somebody who's been

assigned by role to do those. So, that then means that it's northern, but it's small rural. . . . So, I write the service plan. . . . I write the strategic plan after the Board gives the ends and people fill in the gaps and give it life. (M. Brown)

In rural locations the college leader is one of the most critical resources within the community. These leaders wear many hats and provide a fundamental level of service and care to students that a senior leader at a large institution might find quite unusual.

You may find yourself at the reception area dealing with things because somebody hasn't shown up that day and there is nobody else there and that becomes a priority. We've always tried to maintain students first, so whatever is required in the day-to-day operation of the college to accommodate the students becomes your priority. (M. Black)

The study participants all appear to ascribe to the notion that the rural spirit is about people coming together to overcome their collective challenges and overall resource requirements. The rural spirit appears to be an embodied resource that is a very distinct phenomenon. The rural spirit as characterized by the participants is about working together to achieve the best possible community outcomes. At the heart of the work is an ethic of care that is visible and vibrant and perhaps one that is learned through experience.

People are always stepping forward to help out and that is the only way we can keep our doors open. We don't have a large pool of people that we can draw from on a short notice, so it's the people within the organization that often pick up the slack. I referred to that earlier in terms of people wearing many hats, and people do that without questioning. (M. Black)

Therefore, the most important aspect of resource capital within the educational environment and within the communities in the college regions is that spirit of oneness—a spirit that collectively forges the way for the community to meet the most basic need of

survival. This rural spirit provides the incentive for building stronger relationships as it acknowledges a greater degree of interdependence.

Because of the lack of resources, I found it interesting that we really knew in order to keep the doors open and the morale where it should be that we developed relationships with our union representatives and our faculty or staff in a way that would minimize the obstacles that would get in the way. (M. Black)

All participants in this study tend to define themselves and their roles within a hierarchy of resources. The presidents' comparative horizon is more typically the provincial system. As one drills down to understanding the notion of scarcity, the horizon tends to be a comparison of resources among campuses or among the communities within an area of the college's region. This phenomenon presents itself somewhat as a yearning for other—a strong desire to have what the other has. However, the phenomenon also appears to bear correlation to intense capacity for compassion and understanding. This compassion for individual circumstances tends to lead to creative and innovative responses.

A recurring theme in this study was that policy as a resource often disadvantages small, rural institutions and people who live in remote areas of British Columbia. The college leaders and the small, rural institutions are directly and severely affected by policies at both the federal and provincial levels that impede opportunities and further disadvantage people in the North. For example, a 1987 federal policy that caps funding to an Aboriginal person where time spent in a certificate, diploma, or degree program is limited to one, two, and four years respectively is still in place (Stonechild, 2006, p. 77). The Aboriginal person who needs to attend developmental programs has only one year of band support (including living expenses) to do so. He or she then has

one year to acquire a college certificate, two years for a diploma, and 4 years for a degree. Although this policy is in effect nation wide, the policy severely disadvantages northern communities with their high preponderance of Aboriginal people and the geographic, economic, and social challenges posed by having to leave one's community.

Another example of the impact of policy was when the federal government stopped the direct funding of cohort program deliveries to community colleges. Instead they placed the funding in the hands of employment insurance recipients. This policy works well for urban dwellers and also for the larger rural communities where post-secondary institutions have broad arrays of offerings. However, consider the outcomes for people who live in small, rural communities. The program offerings in small communities are fairly limited. At one time, funding was available to deliver a skills program to meet a particular community need. Now, learners must relocate to larger centres to access a program of choice, which is not always possible for many individual circumstances. Therefore, urban-based policies and urban-based funding models—the one-dimensional approach—do not work for the complexities of northern deliveries where economies of scale, geographic disadvantage, multiple campuses, and multi-barriered learners reside. Policy ultimately causes disparity and can contribute substantially to scarcity.

Learners are also likely to be unaware of the kinds of resources that might have come together to provide even a single option in a small community. Key to that one option for a particular person or a group of people would be that their “identity might be served through a variety of funding sources” (M. Red). Resources in small communities

are about bringing those funding constituents together and pooling the resources or opportunities—“a four-quarters-equals-a-whole kind of approach” (M. Red). An example that was presented by a study participant was when the Aboriginal community, the school district and the college came together to fund an adult basic education program. The importance and strength of that relationship were instrumental in moving forward and providing the single opportunity for learning. Frequently, resource funding arrives in a community through a number of avenues. If the constituent groups are insular, then the opportunity can be compromised.

If those identities aren't able to work together, you're spreading out the resources and such that the service actually can't be sustainable in the community. . . . So, if those funding dollars are separated like that at the community level and there's an unwillingness to pull it together, what happens is that it self destructs, for lack of a better word. (M. Red)

Communities are fortunate if they find a level of sophistication in this milieu of resource gathering. This cosmopolitan approach might mean that sometimes the college takes the lead on the initiative and at other times the college provides more of a support role. In this way, the community builds internal capacity and strength. This opportunity for capacity building and collaboration is a direct result of using communicative action that requires a specific skill set in understanding modern systems and for facilitation of the process. Participants believe that policy often involves many assumptions about a people and their societal needs. For example in Northern British Columbia, a potential learner may live in a community that doesn't have a bank, a post office, a medical centre, or even a local coffee shop. In such a context, urban policy may be unaware of the disadvantage created by assumptions based on urban norms.

Small communities require adaptive systems that can respond quickly to these changing federal and provincial policies and mandates. The participants spoke about how labour intensive the accumulation of resources becomes when one funding source is inadequate for a particular program or service. The participants expressed how vulnerable communities and residents are to the changing tides of government policy. In a small community of place-bound learners, policy decisions may result in no options for learners. Another example that is truly perplexing is when income assistance recipients were no longer allowed to attend basic adult education upgrading classes as they were expected to be looking for work. Imagine the situation in some of the small communities where residents had no option for work and also no options for accessing the education.

Another common experience that was conveyed by some of the participants is when an institution would be collaborating with a particular provincial or federal ministry. The program or service delivery is adding value to the community. Then the funding moves to a different ministry. The campus or the college then starts up again with proposal writing, the relationship building, and the demonstration of success often with accountability factors changing in an unpredictable landscape. Therefore, the college leader is continually trying to find appropriate funding streams and sustainability of the service or program is substantially compromised. So, college leaders in Northern British Columbia find themselves constantly articulating the nuances of northern life.

Resourcefulness Uncovered

Resource Decisions

Given the shortage of resources and the broad and deep needs of communities and campuses, college leaders have extremely difficult choices to make regarding resource allocations. Legitimate decisions require thought, purpose, collaboration, communication, and shared responsibility. Therefore, these leaders take great care to get it right through inclusive practices and communicative action. Senior leaders require broad skill sets that advantage them in making complex and intricate decisions. They consult and ask advice from their colleagues and from the communities that they serve. Financial and human resource administrators and other institutional colleagues assist academic leaders with these difficult circumstances and lend complementary insights into the challenges at hand. Ultimately, the academic leader is expected to “make the call” (M. Green). The study participants value the collegiality of their decision processes and acknowledge the creativity and broad skill sets of their colleagues. Executive and management teams provide core strength within the colleges and are sounding boards for academic leaders as they work their way through complex issues and critical decision points.

These college leaders also consult with their various counterparts within the college and broader post-secondary system through the establishment and nourishment of strategic alliances. Authentic and important friendships provide opportunities for dialogue in working through these challenging aspects of their roles. The environment of educational decision making and executive leadership appears to be evolving and transformational in nature. Collaboration among professionals can move small rural

institutions into global arenas. College leaders in this study are progressive thinkers who are connected to global opportunities and are willing to take risks. On the other hand, they also have to make tough decisions that have potential to damage institutional and community relationships. Resource allocation decisions are predominantly driven by serving the greater good of the college region. Serving the greater good also means a validation of services based on cost and student numbers as constantly being driven by system-wide discriminating factors.

We've had some program rationalizations in the last couple of years. I know it's been hard on people because they have been part of a very tight knit team. But, when it happened and it was over, people said to me "Well we knew those programs weren't justifiable for years." You know, the hard choices are hard for a reason. Be resourceful? I had to take a stand.
(M. Brown)

The Resourcefulness Domain

According to Random House, resourcefulness is defined as the ability to “deal skilfully and promptly and effectively or imaginatively in difficult or new situations or circumstances” (*Resourcefulness*, 2006). The qualifiers within this definition are clearly evident in the daily lives and daily practices of the college leaders in Northern British Columbia. The participants portrayed an excitement about their abilities and successes in acquiring resources in extremely arduous circumstances. The leaders find their resourcefulness as common place in what others might describe as untenable circumstance. However, they also exhibited a tiredness or anguish in relation to the relentless waves of requests from internal and external constituents. They despair about the lack of acknowledgement within the educational system and the lack of appropriate action to address the educational shortfalls. “Probably my real strength is that I never

look at a situation as having only one solution” (M. Brown). The college leader’s response to these challenges is entrepreneurial, broad based, and sophisticated.

*I love sitting down with a bunch of people and trying to figure out what can be. Then the more bizarre it seems, trying to come up with a way to make it happen. . . . I'm used to going after solutions to problems.
(M. Green)*

Smallness and trimness of the campus appear to provide answers to the question of what motivates people to become resourceful. Evident from this study is that as the size of the institution or the size of the campus declines, the amount of creativity and elasticity of minds of the employees and the leaders increases. Small, well structured and skilled groups function with extraordinary focus and entrepreneurial approaches to overcome systemic and structural shortfalls. This small group dynamic appears to be the key to innovation and imagination as the acquisition of resources from untraditional sources occurs.

You’re able to enact change that other people are really envious of, because we have a smaller group. You can sit around one table, and you have all the different player. You know that concept of a collective approach? It’s easier to facilitate; and so if we’re able to do it well, we can really bring out some wonderful things. As a result, a lot of best practices have emerged, I think not only with us, but many other rural examples like that. (M. Red)

One of the participants spoke about educators having commonality in a love for learning that extends far beyond delivering educational programs. At this leader’s campus, the team took a very creative approach in working with learners. They explored far more deeply the kinds of personal supports that a learner might require. The team developed a model that merged the academic, the physical, and the emotional and spiritual needs of the learners.

I've developed a hub approach to education so we have a lot of family programs as well as academic programs so that's kind of a unique environment; and that environment really brings strength and different expertise. (M. Red)

At this campus, the uniqueness of the environment is defined by a substantial proportion of the people in the region being affected by Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders (FASD). Population studies (May & Gossage, 2001) indicate that the prevalence rate of FASD is at least 1% of all births; however, studies (Robinson, Conry, & Conry, 1987) in some rural communities in Northwest British Columbia have estimated FASD prevalence as high as 60%. With this devastating statistic comes the consequent need for very different approaches to delivering education. The campus has developed an experienced team of proposal writers and negotiators that aggressively pursue every opportunity to fund what they call *wrap around supports* for students who need special attention and special environments to be successful.

A deepening example that this participant provided was that the campus employees became specialists in research and innovation for FASD. This in-depth understanding of the FASD condition and the strong compassion demonstrated by the employees in supporting students with substantial barriers to educational success led to unique compassion and understanding that had transformational opportunities for learners. As the FASD affected learners started to access programs on the campus, the college employees became acutely aware that a different approach was required. The visibility of the students and their interactions with staff led to a greater understanding of the disorder.

The learners had unique systemic barriers to accessing educational opportunities. They were also involved in multiple systems that didn't appear to work together to support the FASD affected person. Examples of this would be that the learners needed assistance with parenting skills, with health issues, and even with the justice system. The campus learned that communication across these social services systems was extremely challenging. "You quickly understand that there's a compounding factor that really comes together at that point" (M. Red). As the students moved through their educational programs, the campus learned that the students understood little of what was happening to them in these large and intimidating systems. Their lifeworlds, who they were and what they understood of themselves, were made fragile and fearful by the systems that they very little understood.

So as an educator kind of trying to figure that out and saying, "You know, there's a role there for interpretation". Not judgment or swaying but in a way, the information from the court, relaying it in a way that the students could understand and then make their own decisions . . . helping them remember what that decision was and then what things they would have to put in place to actually follow through on that decision. So, we wrote, I think, about five proposals all over the place, because it really fit in a variety of areas, and we called it . . . the justice system is so complicated, was a court interpreter position, because it was affecting so many of our students. (M. Red)

More than 50% of the student population at this campus was involved in one way or another in the justice system. That involvement might have taken the form of being a perpetrator or it might have involved being a victim. In almost all cases the situations affected the lives of children. In a large urban centre, learners would be directed to the appropriate support services. But in a small rural community like this one, the college became the centre of both the educational programming and the community support

systems. A unique situation brought unique outcomes and advantages. A richness of understanding and compassion occurred that perhaps would be difficult to actualize in large and complicated systems. A team of experts at this campus reached out to a community with extreme social challenges. This eclectic and dynamic team now includes speech and language pathologists, occupational and physical therapists, court interpreters, and people who write and negotiate proposals to fund ongoing research and creative responses. This reaching out to learners in need is resourcefulness exemplified.

All participants in this study indicated that having a common vision among the constituents for an initiative was the determining factor in finding solutions. Achieving a common vision required collaboration and communication. One participant spoke about a capital project that couldn't move ahead until the stakeholders broke the project into manageable components where they could see their individual roles. Once those components were identified, the leader was able to convince the Ministry of Advanced Education that the pieces would come together. This resourcefulness was what moved the partners forward in acquiring a new building to address the needs of one of their industry sectors.

I think our institution is going to thrive because of our partnerships, partnerships that will be strategically chosen because we will build on the strengths of each other . . . and adaptability makes you resourceful.
(M. Brown)

Similarly, another participant spoke about how the community will was facilitated by the participant and that together the community and the ministry built a campus that was an award-winning architectural achievement. This structure now houses the college,

the regional university, the school district, and the community as together they grow their community capacity.

I had personally to plan and organize and empower other people within that community and within those organizations to work together. That proved to be compelling and persuasive to the province to make that investment. (M. Grey)

In response to the overwhelming need to collaborate and to pool resources to deliver a broad range of educational programs and services, the educational institutions in Northern British Columbia have formed a Northern Post Secondary Council (NPSC). This council is comprised of the presidents from the three northern colleges, the president from the University of Northern British Columbia, and the Assistant Deputy Minister from Advanced Education. The council is also supported by a Northern Team from the ministry. This collaborative parallels the Campus 2020 recommendation to create regional learning councils. The Northern Post Secondary Council was created before Geoff Plant's (2007) Campus 2020 vision was made public and is directly the result of institutions coming together to provide increased programs and services to the northern half of the province. Although in its early stages of development, the council is already engaged in three major initiatives that speak to the sophisticated nature of the collaboration. Those initiatives include a curriculum institute that will oversee curricular aspects of collaborative projects, the Northern Educational Developers Network (NEDNet), and NorthLink. NEDNet is currently forming faculty groups at each of the institutions and is being funded by the Northern Post Secondary Council to facilitate faculty educational forums in Northern BC. NorthLink is an initiative that will connect

the communities in Northern BC for the delivery of educational programs and services using teleconferencing and learning management systems for multi-location deliveries.

Technology holds great promise for stretching resources and for reaching out to geographically dispersed communities. The three presidents involved in this study were instrumental in bringing this unique council to fruition. The leaders who had the vision for this collaborative initiative are resourceful and innovative and lead our province in finding solutions to rising costs of delivering education and to increasing access in remote and isolated communities. “Partnering has become, I think, it was something that you talked about, but it’s become more of a necessity—if you want to keep a broad-based delivery” (M. Black).

Using technology to maximize opportunities is not new to the institutions and to the college leaders in Northern BC. All institutions are engaged in online delivery of education and in connecting learners and educators through technical means. Two of the institutions are very conversant with teleconferencing and all four institutions are collaborating to develop an Information Technology Diploma that will be delivered collaboratively across the North. This initiative also includes the University of Northern BC and Yukon College and has membership from individuals from the University of Alaska. The program will have leading-edge technology and through connections and experiences of the northern participants will have partnerships with large global technology corporations. Northern college leaders are proven to “think big” and plans are underway to deliver innovative programming on a global scale.

Why shouldn't Northwest Community College and Prince George and Fort St. John and Whitehorse be on the world stage when it comes to our

programming and our innovation? There is no reason in the world why we shouldn't be. We're no different than San Francisco or London, we're just smaller. We have just as smart people, we have different challenges; but they have challenges, too. So, there is nothing to stop us from taking a leadership position. (M. Green)

These generative individuals will create nimble institutions ready to respond and acquire resources to fulfill institutional mandates and visions. Participants also acknowledge the vulnerability of collaborative approaches as additional labour and time is required to build the relationships and to communicate. The colleges are also experiencing a lot of challenges in finding experienced candidates to fill vacant positions.

So, if we have a great concept of a wonderful program or service but we can't actually hire someone with that expertise, then that's very tricky. Of course, that's a norm that's really starting to hit us now. We've been talking about it, but it's in our competition files now; and so I can think of a position that we put out recently, and we got two applicants. I'm assuming that any day now we're going to be putting positions up, and I think we probably have when we've had no applicants. . . . So, that's a very new reality to us. (M. Red)

Another participant conveyed an experience in identifying a specialist who would help move the college forward in opportunities for Aboriginal education. This participant indicated that she was creative in acquiring not only financial resources but the very important and strategic human resources that are needed. She characterized her approach in acquiring this person as bartering and commented that the bartering skill was an aspect of resourcefulness that perhaps a traditional college president might not have.

You have to get those people to help you. He [the specialist] is bringing all kinds of great assets to the institution—ones that I don't possess myself—and he is wonderful at them. He is a strength. People that I've brought on our team—you have to be resourceful in that way as well. (M. Blue)

Resources required by the colleges are predominantly in human, financial, or capital areas. Base funding to the colleges is allocated through two provincial ministries, the Ministry of Advanced Education (MAVED) and the Ministry of Economic Development (MED) and soft or short-term funding opportunities are found predominantly with other provincial and federal ministries. A small amount of funding can usually be acquired through industry or through Aboriginal bands for contracted services. One of the participants disclosed that in a small community of about 2500 people, two-thirds of their campus funding was acquired through cost recovery means and equated to 3 million dollars in the current year.

Funding for trades training, which is highly sought in the North, is provided predominantly through the Industry Training Authority (ITA), an agency that has recently moved from the Ministry of Economic Development to the Ministry of Advanced Education. Since wait lists for trades training are extensive in BC, the ITA has in the last year provided a substantial amount of additional funding to colleges that are able to respond quickly and effectively to the growing need for skilled trades people. Since the northern colleges are experienced in developing proposals, negotiating funding, and quickly acting upon the consequent delivery mandates, they have been very successful in acquiring additional resources for trades training in the past year. Smaller communities, industry, and Aboriginal people have been the benefactors of this funding. However, the funding is determined on a provincial funding model that provides only for the basics of classroom deliveries. The ITA assumes that the infrastructure of buildings and administrative overheads are already funded by the Ministry of Advanced Education.

This situation therefore requires that the colleges acquire resources from other sources to actualize the deliveries.

We are not getting the resources we feel we need from the government. We're constantly looking out there for other kinds of resources. We know there isn't much of an industry base so we can't really look to that, so we're looking farther. It usually ends up being grants or contracts of some sort. (M. Blue)

In small communities, the college administrator demonstrates resourcefulness by pulling into the delivery equation community assets; such as, shop space, heavy equipment, and supplies. These deliveries are so welcome in the small communities that onlookers and supporters show up at the delivery sites with coffee and doughnuts to support the learning environment. Another participant spoke about how the college was challenged because of the high employment rates. When everyone is working, traditional classroom deliveries are challenging as workers cannot be spared to attend training. So, the college took the training to the work place and to the work camps where mobile workers resided. The administrators used a combination of technology and on-site deliveries to meet the needs of both the industry and the workers.

Participants spoke about the importance of really knowing the community needs and aligning those needs with the college's priorities. Knowing the specifics of what is needed and then being skilled at articulating the need and matching the need with funding opportunities is a skill set of a resourceful leader. As we also uncovered, resourcefulness also speaks to the need to know how to report effectively on funding initiatives and to position the college for new initiatives. One of the participants spoke about having up to 11 envelopes of funding for one initiative and the labour intensity and complexities of acquiring that funding and reporting the outcomes to multiple sources.

The reporting systems are very complicated; because if you don't adequately report, it cannot only impact the program, which would then, consequently, be no longer funded. But, it might impact the impression on multiple funders that fund other programs [at that campus]. So those complexities need to be considered at all times. (M. Red)

The ability to be responsive and open to opportunity is also a criterion for resourcefulness.

Responsiveness is really key in that, for us, so an idea comes or the concepts come; and all of sudden, you're working really hard; and finally the resources come, because you're usually working on many resources at once, many concepts at once, at different stages. They seem to miraculously gel when you least expect them. So, OK, it's gelled and now you have a project that you're going to move forward on. (M. Red)

Once the campus received confirmation of the funding, usually from a provincial or federal ministry, the development team would meet and take stock of their resources and abilities to move the initiative forward. If the initiative required additional community support, the campus would identify potential partners and start the advocacy work. Therefore, the ability to conceptualize and articulate the possibility was a critical aspect of being resourceful. The ability to mobilize a campus and a community were further aspects of the resourcefulness skill set.

You have to create a solution—it's so commonplace that it's actually hard to isolate something [an example of resourcefulness]. I often refer to myself as an entrepreneur. You have to be a specialist on call. There is no other way around it. I'm resourceful and not just from the dollars sense. (M. Blue)

According to all the participants, resourcefulness is also about tenacity and not giving up. In being resourceful, the college leaders looked upon a wide horizon of possibility and were resolute about serving the people in their regions. Working towards

improving people's lives and being clear about how to move their ideas forward from a values-based perspective was also common in the participants' disclosures.

There's a lot of organic, a lot of judgment based on, I guess, an infrastructure of values. So the values are really top in our priorities. It's a value-based priority rather than a very empirical or discipline based or any of those other kinds of parameters you put on it; and that's why it's more organic. (M. Red)

The participants spoke clearly about the frustrations encountered when people of influence could not see the despair and deep needs within their communities. Participants talked about the approaches to resourcefulness that they used in these circumstances. One of the participants indicated that resourcefulness is about strategically positioning the college's perspective and the voice of the people in the region in front of politicians and ministry officials. When one course of action didn't work, the leader was quick to find other approaches and was quick to position his or her college or campus in the most advantageous way. That positioning also includes instilling confidence in the college's ability to deliver.

You have a solution-based approach and a team that's able to do the best to solve your problems as you go along. So you absolutely have to have, you have to be planful as much as you can; and then you have to have that solution-focused approach that you can then trust. I think we trust each other. By trusting each other, you just get to a point where you can say, "of course we can do that" and there's a trust. We don't know how we're going to do that; and if someone would say, "Can you do that?" The answer is "yes." How you're going to do that? The answer is developing (laughter). It's still developing, I think. I think that's common for many, many different areas but it's certainly the usual happening at this campus at this institution. (M. Red)

The participant was quick to clarify that she chose the word planfulness over the word planful. She identified that she and the team aspired to be planful but due to time factors, a desired amount of planning time was not usually available. The group had trust

in each other and confidence in their collective abilities to overcome any obstacles that might occur. Resourcefulness is therefore about being resilient and about being innovative during those ambiguous times.

A stellar example of how an initiative for a community was coming together was conveyed by one of the participants. The community needed an Aboriginal long house. The college tried without success to find funding with the Ministry of Advanced Education. Then, a little later down the road other provincial funding for gathering places was announced. The college had training dollars for a carpentry program and a residential building maintenance program. The Aboriginal community had the cedar trees and the structural knowledge to build the long house. The college leader was able to capture the necessary elements to first conceptualize the project. The rest of the story is within the grasps of the community as totem poles and Aboriginal art are added through additional bartering and swapping.

We decided that we're going to build it [the long house] with or without them [the provincial government], and I don't know if we're going to be able to pull it off; but this is the kind of attitude that we take to everything. On one hand, it's ridiculous and on the other hand it shows the resiliency of communities. You know, we need it, we've got to figure it out, we're going to do it one way or another and so that's what we're doing . . . So the deal we made for them [the First Nation] is that we'll provide the training dollars but then you've got to come and provide the expertise for the structure. So there is all this bartering going on. . . . that's how we do things. (M. Blue)

Several of the participants also disclosed the importance of communicating urgency to others in terms of the issues that the college was facing. Grave outcomes may occur if resources cannot be acquired. Resourcefulness is therefore about clearly and graphically communicating the scarceness of resources and the consequent impact of that

scarceness on communities and on the human spirit. When anticipated responses are not forthcoming, then the leaders have tenacity to keep going and to keep trying until a solution can be found.

One of the participants spoke about how students in a very remote area had the opportunity to attend classes at the campus but that the only method of transportation to the campus was to ride the school bus into town. The problem that the campus encountered was that in order to ride the school bus, a criminal-records check must be secured for each student. Some of the potential students couldn't provide positive responses to that requirement. The campus wanted desperately to assist these students in changing their lives and acquiring education and training. Innovatively the campus placed employees who lived in the same vicinity on the school bus and rode that bus into town supervising their students. Additionally, while they rode the bus, the employees did homework with the students creating a very unique and exceptional learning environment.

Forming partnerships with school districts and with other educational institutions was another way of being resourceful and providing a broader array of opportunities than was possible working in isolation. One of the participants spoke about partnering with the school district in a remote community to share resources for the delivery of adult basic education classes. The leaders cited numerous examples of working very closely with their local schools to share facilities and pool resources for the best possible outcome for the community. These are examples of best practices that speak to resourcefulness.

Timing was also a continuing theme in terms of the leaders' acquiring resources.

All spoke about the need to match the urgency of an initiative with the timing of provincial or federal mandates.

So, there is a recognition now, so that judgment issue can, the urgency, sometimes you can misjudge the urgency; and as you think about your resources, your resourcefulness doesn't meet the urgency, you're not able to pull it together. So, you really need to balance the urgency. (M. Red)

All participants conveyed that when the timing isn't quite right, the leader needs to know when to let go of an initiative that may have need but that might not match the current funding opportunities. Therefore, being resourceful is also about shifting perspectives to ones that are realistic and doable at the time. The participants indicated that when the timing for an initiative isn't in sync with the funding, that the initiative might still have life at another time. That initiative is placed on the back burner and the leader lets it percolate for a while. Therefore, resourcefulness is about channelling one's attention on the immediate but making connections for meaningful projects that might be actualized at a later date. The participants spoke about how previous experiences and institutional history also allows the leader to potentially expand one initiative into another to fully maximize over time the potential of resources. The characteristic of resourcefulness can be defined as generative.

In not all instances will you be successful. But you don't detour. You shouldn't detour and have that get in the way of other options that would work. So that's what we've done. We went on to look at other program areas where we might have success; and by doing so, we were able to make that connection. (M. Black)

Participants spoke about the necessity of the cultures of the partnering institutions being somewhat aligned with their own institution's values. They spoke about the

necessity of seeking out other resourceful and innovative people at other institutions and about not feeling too defeated when they encountered negativity.

Another example of resourcefulness that was posed was how one leader took great pride and conveyed great success in bringing the college's employees from multiple campuses together to advance the notion of collaboration and in sharing of ideas and perspectives. On an annual basis, the employees gather for professional development and social activities and overcome some of the issues related to the isolation of living in communities that are geographically dispersed. This employee forum has the capacity for developing a collaborative institutional mindset.

Do the participants see themselves as resourceful people? When this question was posed in the interviews, the participants acknowledged that they were resourceful. For most, the response was immediate and clear—yes, they were resourceful. For one participant, the response was a bit hesitant. They were all able to cite multiple examples of their resourcefulness. The leaders have learned a lot from interacting with their communities and also from exploring what other regions and other disadvantaged groups have done to acquire the resources that they need. One participant acknowledged that their regional situation is similar to that of economically depressed Newfoundland. So, that's where she went to learn about their responses to under funding.

What we should be doing, could do, is developing a Marine Institute on the West Coast. It should have been there four years ago, five years ago; but I can't get the attention of the government on that. We still have more work to do on developing a clear path for that, but it should be something that we're doing together. How am I going to get the resources for that? Most likely, I'll be going after national research grants. (M. Blue)

Imminent Change

The educational environment in British Columbia is undergoing massive change and perhaps even massive restructuring in the coming decade. The college leaders participating in this study acknowledge that they are in the midst of rapid change and appear to be bracing for both its fury and its passion. They communicate that the landscape is generative with possibility.

The world is changing. The pace of change is probably accelerating, not slowing down. So how we cope, survive, and thrive in that context is our challenge, my challenge as president, and the challenge of the whole college community. So, it is a very worthwhile and gratifying enterprise; and I hope to be part of it for a long time to come. (M. Grey)

All three college presidents are concerned about the future of community colleges in British Columbia and particularly in relation to the amount of provincial funds that are being channelled into the university system and into the 2010 Winter Olympics. They acknowledge the extent of the current budget shortfalls and are bracing for this change in a variety of ways.

I think that in the next five to ten years, we are going to be more focused on economic-related challenges, like we were in the past. We are likely going to become a slightly smaller institution but more focused on particular program areas. I hope and expect and I am committed to ensuring our use of technology catches up with the world around us. I guess ultimately, the vision is to become more of a learning organization and a learning community. (M. Grey)

Major shifts in program mix have created extreme stressors for faculty and staff and the presidents acknowledge this systemic challenge. “We can’t be everything to everybody; and so my vision for our institution is quite radical compared to what I think has been the

historical evolution” (M. Brown). The presidents communicate strong resolve and talk about positioning their institutions for new realities.

So three years of deficit means cutting pretty deep to some of the small institutions. Ours for example, that’s significant and where it has come out of in the past is infrastructure; and I’m building infrastructure now and building it for the future. I’m not going to cut infrastructure anymore.
(M. Brown)

The underlying premise is the need to be responsive to community; but the reality is that the institutions will have to define their expertise and then be resourceful in actualizing other resources from external sources “serving as an agent of collaboration and facilitation” (M. Grey).

We’re going to have to realize where we’ve got our real strengths, concentrate on doing them well, invest in them well, and then the rest of the story, find a partner or somebody else who can do it, and attach ourselves to them with us doing part or parcel of the combination.
(M. Brown)

Therefore, sustainability of their institutions is foremost on the immediate agenda of all the study participants. The uniqueness of the communities drives the unique visions that the leaders have for their institutions. From the bi-cultural institution that integrates Aboriginal wisdom and culture into the very fibre of its being to the smaller, nimbler, more focussed community college ready to respond to the demands of a rapidly changing economy, the visions of the leaders appear more focussed than in the past. “The reality in today's world is that employees and students have choices. We truly have to position ourselves to be a choice that people want to make” (M. Grey). Therefore, the institutions are in the midst of redefining themselves—creating a hybridity of purpose.

So the analogy that I use is that we’re on a journey. We are taking a canoe ride and the river is safe, so we know that much. There will be some ripples and currents, but we are not going to take you down any waterfalls

that I know of (laughter). But nothing is for certain. Yet we have to get through them. We know from the experiences that we are having every day that it is a much richer journey. From that experience, we are getting a sense of what the vision is. (M. Blue)

Characteristics and Virtues of Resourceful Leaders

Family of origin was the starting point for discussion regarding the participants' characteristics and virtues in relation to their being resourceful people. All participants appear to draw strength from nurturing families. Two of the participants spoke about having to be resourceful children living in modest homes where the necessities of life were provided but where the children of the family used creative approaches to acquiring the goods necessary for an interesting and productive childhood. Two other participants spoke about being raised in large families and about learning a broad range of skills from their siblings and from hard-working parents.

From my family life, I learned about living in a large family of 16. I got sandwiched with three boys, so survival skills. In terms of the interpersonal dynamics, you start learning those interpersonal skills or else you get killed, right. (laughter) (M. Blue)

All participants spoke about being raised by families who had strong community values and experiences. Three of the participants were raised by professionals and believed that they acquired strong skill sets and work ethics from observing their parents or siblings: "the teachings and learnings at home with five brothers and sisters, lots of role modeling from my older siblings about being successful and how they succeeded through hard work and a good education" (M. Grey).

Examples that were presented were being exposed to unique situations such as having a range of multi-cultural visitors in the home or being exposed to situations where

strong work ethics and employment skill sets were developed. All participants acknowledged the important role that having a good education had on their success. Four of the participants were raised in small communities and spoke about the nature of rural living and about the devotion that they and their families had to their communities.

He is an adventurer, my dad, and, my mom as well. They are both pioneers in terms of their professions, very comfortable coming out into rural areas, both came into the area as professionals—my mom, who had been nursing, and my father was in forestry. That whole pioneer spirit, so that is the word that I would settle on, a pioneer kind of spirit and an open mindedness, so that started the skill set for me, a pioneer spirit is definitely a skill set that was started that came from my family. (M. Red)

Another participant spoke about the strong influence of nuns at the nursing college that she attended and about how that experience taught her to have high standards and a strong work ethic. But, she also learned to have compassion for individual circumstances.

You've got to do the right things when you're with me. I was educated by the nuns; and the nuns had very high standards at the Holy Cross. I believe that it never hurt me at all, in fact they'd say, "We don't want good nurses, we want excellent nurses." So, accountability for excellence has been a standard since I was 16. It opened doors for me in my career. (M. Brown)

One other participant spoke about his experiences in living off the land and from learning from others who were able to live independently and rely on their instincts and honed skills for basic survival.

You want to go fishing? Well, you grab your fishing pole. You can't afford it? You just get a stick and then you dig around in the garbage until you find some string or something. Before you know it, you've got a couple of nice fish you can bring home for dinner; and you can have a nice dinner. I think that is just the way that we all grew up. Not just me. So, it comes from that sort of rural, farm-based aspect of things—then the hunting, fishing, guiding. . . . Learning how to shoot straight, with a gun, to hunt for food and things. . . . I grew up with an appreciation for people who can live on the land, in Newfoundland. . . . I don't expect that I'm going to have everything that I should have to do my work. If it is there, then awesome,

I'm thrilled. But, I don't expect that to happen. I expect that we are going to have to innovate and find creative ways to bring other people in and bring in other resources to create some sort of a base to accomplish the goal. (M. Green)

Overall, the most dominant themes in terms of personal characteristics and virtues that the participants either displayed or communicated during the interviews were positive attitudes and abilities to see the possibilities when encountering challenging situations. As well, they all appeared to be well grounded in an ethic of caring for others and for nurturing, empowering, and developing others within their institutions.

There's caring that comes into how I do my work. That's one word that comes out. It's not only caring about students and community, but it is caring about staff and those kinds of things. (M. Red)

Additionally, all participants communicated a passion for education and a high degree of fulfilment in their roles as college leaders.

I'm passionate. I picked that up four or five times today. I sometimes blurt things out. Fools rush in where angels surely tread. I fret too much that way. It's a bit infectious, I think. (M. Blue)

When asked about the personal characteristics that contributed to their abilities to be resourceful, two of the participants spoke specifically about their being risk takers, Others alluded to taking more calculated risks in their roles; such as being playful or taking thoughtful approaches to finding solutions to the challenges that they faced in acquiring resources. Getting to 'yes' appeared to be the norm for these resourceful leaders. All participants spoke about being engaged with others in finding those creative solutions and about the necessity to really listen to and respond to others and to have trust in others' abilities. "Openly, I trust everyone, which some people think is a fault. But I don't distrust, until I see reason to distrust. So, I trust" (M. Blue). Throughout the

interviews, I was clearly aware of the participants' demonstrating humility and freely acknowledging others as substantial contributors to the leaders' successes.

Humility is probably a major factor contributing to my own success. The major successes that I've had have been made by subjugating, putting my own ego and needs in the background and enabling the greater good to take precedent. (M. Grey)

All participants appeared to be honest and open in nature and reflective in practice. Two of the participants communicated what I would describe as a playful approach to their work "that culture of passion, fun, innovation, being risk taking, supporting risk taking, which also means barriers, so that understanding that willingness to walk beyond boundaries" (M. Red) and four leaders acknowledged the importance of having a sense of humour and the others who didn't specifically speak to the notion of humour demonstrated that sense of humour throughout the interview.

Passionate, committed, obsessive probably, obsessive compulsive fits (laughing) I guess, I'm definitely obsessive compulsive, and I struggle with perfectionism, not so much my own, but I expect it in other people (laughing). (M. Grey)

All participants appeared to take their roles very seriously and communicated in various ways that they were very hard workers, having the ability to roll up their sleeves and become involved in the physical work that needed to be accomplished. Being flexible and adaptable to situations was another theme common to the characteristics of these resourceful leaders. All participants spoke to the importance of being flexible in working with others and the necessity to spend time planning for resources and for developing partnerships.

Once you've lived with life-and-death situations of the hospital where that few minutes makes a difference, there's nothing life and death about education. You could always plan the hell out of it, and it's not going to be

an overnight solution. So that gives me the freedom to think things through, not be panicked, not be pushed, just kind of mellow out and think it through. That's the world that I've come from since I was 16.
(M. Brown)

All the participants spoke about the importance of developing leadership skills within their employee base and the importance of developing creative teams of people through avenues such as providing necessary supports and nurturing environments where others had opportunities to learn and to grow.

I've had a few exciting times in just bringing our staff together and actually having them work on issues and then at the end of the day all feeling very committed about what they are doing. (M. Black)

The leaders appear to take their mentoring and coaching roles seriously and work hard to build capacity within their institutions.

I think, I told you that I spend a lot of time teaching. So, I get great gratification out of preparing people around me; and as a president, I think you have to, I'm an educator; and I'm developing leadership below me. (M. Brown)

Mentors were also foremost in the participants' repertoires in terms of acknowledging others who have helped them along their journeys to leadership success and to the subsequent empowering of others. Again the family of origin was the starting point in this reflection.

Family-wise, it would be my mother. I think because I have good patience and acceptance of others, and a peacefulness towards life. The journey itself is good, just do it for that, so from that point of view. (M. Green)

All the participants mentioned the strong support that they receive from their partners or their families and spoke about the need for that balance in their lives between the professional and the personal. However and as mentioned earlier in this report, all the

participants were actively engaged in their communities and appeared to be freely giving of their time to community activities.

Another common aspect of mentorship was having mentors and supportive colleagues in the work setting and the importance of having a common vision for the institution and operating from a common values base.

You need to have a management team that is working off the same page in terms of their philosophy, their ideals, the types of things, you know, when we talk visionary, is actually taking the time to work with your management team to see that we are looking to the future in terms of where we want to be and where we want to go. (M. Black)

The participants spoke about the support and nurturing that they received from other institutional leaders early in their teaching or administrative careers.

Working with mentors who really brought me forward, my first job here, I really remember working with a person . . . who on the first day of work, we were working with students, who said, "You know, our students have academic needs and personal needs and if you don't meet both of them, they are not going to be successful. (M. Red)

Former and current mentors; including, presidents, vice presidents, deans, and campus directors, were freely acknowledged by the study participants as a starting point for their success. That mentorship occurred in a critical point early in their careers. Mentorship continued and was conveyed as an important aspect of the participants' current success.

One of my earliest [experiences with mentors], was when I was a 19-year-old university student working in the capacity of an educational research and planning assistant with the provincial government in Manitoba. I worked with two people there who became friends; and I learned a great deal from them about work and about being part of the team. (M. Grey)

Vice presidents and directors of finance and human resources were also mentioned as important role models. Five of the six participants acknowledged the

importance of a strong foundation in teaching as critical to their current leadership success.

He [the dean] taught us good, sound planning and leadership; and he had always strongly developed faculty. So fundamental to our model, you can't have excellence unless you're in those classrooms and seeing what's going on and so we built from there. (M. Brown)

Participants also acknowledged the reciprocal learning that took place within their support teams.

My colleagues were willing to give me very good input, really good feedback and do it very openly, which is difficult to hear sometimes, but so important to do. We still do well at that; we're committed to do that for each other, because we're all learning. (M. Green)

All participants also spoke about leadership or educational theories that guided their practice as administrative leaders. The most common theory that was referenced was that of servant leadership; but other theorists and literature about leading change, learning institutions, and transformational leadership were also mentioned.

One of my favourite, if not my favourite book in the world, the book that I read once a year is Victor Frankl's A Search for Meaning. I think that it was written for me, and I read it every Christmas. It's sort of a reality check and also it's a form of, a framework in which I can be thankful for the opportunities that I have in my work and in my life. So, I think, from the abilities point of view, that's the biggest one. (M. Green)

Clearly evident from the disclosures of all the participants was that the success of resourceful leadership is directly correlated to the building of strong teams of employees who come from all levels of the institution and from reciprocal leadership and learning opportunities. The college leaders within this study all acknowledge that a leader can only be as vibrant as the team of people with whom he or she works—vibrant teams support vibrant leadership.

They [the staff] also tell me when I screw up. (laughter) That's OK because they also give me encouragement. But I've had staff writing cards, you know, make up poems about me and to encourage me to keep on going. Or, they get in tune with where I'm at. . . . You looked down the other day; and I just wanted to tell you that you're doing a great job if no one told you that today." I say, "Hey wait a minute, I'm supposed to tell you that. (M. Blue)

One of the presidents was involved in the Association of Canadian Community Colleges' presidential development program and spoke about passing on knowledge and experience to aspiring presidential candidates.

I'm part of the faculty for the academy for prospective presidents. The biggest thing that I would say to people is that this job is about heart and common sense. Never do anything that you can't put your whole heart into. (M. Blue)

All participants also acknowledged the importance of really listening to the needs and desires of the employees, the communities, and to the learners and then acting upon those desires. This characteristic appears to be one of the most significant virtues common to the success of the resourceful leaders within this study.

Every student pretty well that I have ever worked with has mentored me in something because they help me understand what I'm supposed to be as an educator. I know that almost sounds like a cop out answer, but it's truly how I've shaped who I've become—is listening to the feedback from the students that I've worked with. (M. Green)

Leadership in Action

Senior academic administrators in this study acknowledge the depth and breadth of their responsibility to their communities and to their institutions. They appear reflective in nature and set the bar high in terms of doing the right things for the people that they serve. As they consider the realities of the economy and the demographics within their regions and as they consider broad global concepts and issues, they effect the

change required to move their institutions forward. The leaders speak consistently and cohesively about their role in bridging the gap between the understandings and directions of the provincial government and the needs of their communities and constituents. These interrelationships of resource supply and constituent demand weigh heavily on the administrators as they inhabit their lifeworlds and as the large post-secondary system affects their roles and their successes. All participants view their abilities as leaders to facilitate change and to garner resources through collaborative initiatives as critically important to their effectiveness. They work within a post-secondary system that is managed through tightly defined control mechanisms and consequent funding that provides for less and less discretionary decision making. Although an observer to this situation might say that the leaders are somewhat reduced by the province to a management role, the evidence provided by this study indicates that the leaders display and articulate tenacious authenticity to their college leadership role. Although they have a longing for the leadership latitude previously inherent within the system, they demonstrate a strong leadership skill set in terms of how they continue to influence and shape the provincial post-secondary education system.

Effective leadership of a community college in Northern British Columbia is about doing the right thing for learners and for communities. In this regard, the college leaders in Northern British Columbia are not only finely attuned to the needs of their communities but are also driven by reciprocal opportunities for servant and transformational leadership. They have acquired their leadership abilities through both practice and by applying guiding theory. They use descriptors such as ‘servant leader’,

‘innovator’, and ‘visionary’ to describe their leadership styles and approaches and talk about the need to be comfortable with ambiguity as they respond to their complex environments.

The college leaders speak about not always having an option of choosing the right answer—their environments are not always like that. Often no right answer exists, and they must then ultimately consider what Ciulla (as cited in Maak & Press, 2006) describes as what leaders have been hired to do—make the best decision within the circumstances and tackle the difficult situations. Doing their jobs in the current environment means making tough choices about what can or cannot be done within their shrinking resources.

I think we make the best informed decision that we can at the time, but we recognize that there is, often times there is no right answer or right decision . . . we do the best we can and get on with it. (M. Grey)

The college leaders situate themselves within the post secondary system. Although they are skilled in manoeuvring within that large system, they also do distance themselves at times and operate on a more personal level within their regions and in their communities. Therefore, the lifeworld of the college leaders often takes precedence over the system.

The participants all acknowledge that being an effective leader is an absolute or an ideal to which they aspire but to which they cannot ever fully attain. They also acknowledge the finiteness of the label “effectiveness”. They hesitated when I asked them if they considered themselves effective. The leaders acknowledge the passion they have for education and for their work and they choose to leave that determination of an ultimate or finite level of effectiveness to the constituents that they serve.

Am I effective? Am I achieving what I set out to do? Do I get the things done that I'm expected to do and that I said I'd do? Yes, I would say so. . . Am I as effective as I would like to be? I hope that I never feel that I am.
(M. Green)

The participants also convey that they spend a good deal of their time in management activities and work intimately along side other employees. The leaders also acknowledge that they are not self-made persons nor are they the hero leaders. The participants all conveyed a large degree of humility in terms of their leadership effectiveness and gave substantial if not the predominance of credit for their institutional and leadership success to teams of skilled and motivated employees. All participants acknowledge that the real work gets done by the people on the ground.

The administrators all long for more time to spend on leadership activities and planning. Some have been able to build the internal supports required to free up time for planning activity and are therefore able more often to turn their attention to leading their institutions. "Leading the institution in the directions that we want to go, innovative directions are primarily what I focus on" (M. Blue). However, all the participants acknowledge that for lengthy periods of time, critical positions within the organization have been vacant and that they have had to assume additional responsibilities to their current roles. For presidents these additional responsibilities include the role of vice presidents academic and human resources directors. For the other college leaders they often fill in the gaps that are left in instructional and support areas. Rarely do the leaders have the full complements of supports that are required to allow them to focus on the one role or position in which they are currently employed.

Ethical leadership is identified by the participants as an everyday consideration in their roles and a frequent consideration in their daily practice.

I think in ethics, the choice between right or wrong, doing harm or not to others, unfortunately management, senior management is as I heard it characterized as, “serious meddling in other people’s lives.” I think it’s bang on because unfortunately, we do make decisions that influence people’s livelihoods, their ability to fulfill their goals as students or employees and their livelihoods. So, I think those are the challenges that we wrestle with everyday and trying to make those decisions that are fair and ethical—these are the things that keep us awake at night, I would say.
(M. Grey)

The administrators cite examples of pressures to compromise their situations and their roles. The leaders’ vision for making ethical decisions must at all times focus on the long term and on serving the greater good of the institution and of their communities. An example of an ethical challenge provided in this study that was quite common to the participants was where stakeholders have proposed initiatives in which the college could engage and where there was potential for financial gain for the institution. However, the leaders must always be ready to question the motivation of the proponents and pay attention to the potential negative impact that the initiative would have on their institutions and their communities.

I think that ultimately what I learned is that if I can keep looking at myself in the mirror and believe that I was true to the values of the institution and my ethics, that I’m OK. I believe that I have been in every instance.
(M. Blue)

When asked about the correlation between ethics and effectiveness, all participants conveyed an ultimate relationship that cannot be compromised, “the correlation is one and not 0.99—one” (M. Green).

The leaders all spoke about having to make tough decisions that ranged from program rationalizations to allocation of finite resources. All participants understood their roles in this regard and indicated that whenever possible they choose to involve others in the decision process. However they also conveyed that they were also able to make the tough decisions that they were hired to make. The leaders accepted their responsibilities in this regard but were also very compassionate and respectful in terms of acknowledging the impact of program closures and discontinuation of services. The participants spoke about some of the decisions that the provincial government will be making in the coming years and the impact of Campus 2020, the new direction paper for post secondary education in BC. The leaders are worried that the 2010 Olympics and other strong government initiatives will lead to policy decisions that will compromise the education system and Northern British Columbia.

Leadership as defined by the participants is a matrix of servant and transformative perspectives that recognize the complexities of their environments and the extraordinary circumstances in which the leaders and the college employees reside. The leaders speak about the exceptional contributions that the employees make to their institutions and to their communities and about the honour that the leaders have in representing their colleges. One of the presidents spoke about walking down the hallways and picking up litter and about washing the dishes in the staff room.

It's important for me and for others to realize that I don't stand on ceremony and I don't stand on position. We all have our roles and responsibilities. . . . If the clerical person isn't there, then that organization is that little bit weaker. So, I need everyone equally. Probably, they could do without me, more than I could do without them.
(M. Blue)

Another participant spoke about the necessity for the leader to have history and experience in the field of education and that this experience will be called upon frequently as the leader supports others and defines the institution's place within provincial or federal contexts. "One of the things I try to do as a leader in Northern British Columbia is make it very clear that we're here; and so I am visible in Southern British Columbia" (M. Brown).

The participants also spoke about their academic credentials being important to their roles and also about how theory guided their practice. One participant disclosed that his most prominent mentors were the authors of those theories and also disclosed the importance of drawing from multiple theories and perspectives in the leadership role. The leaders also defined some of these theories in relation to their practice.

What does servant leadership mean? To me, it means that I am a facilitator. My role is to break down barriers, bureaucracy. One of the first things I did was to throw out the six-inch binder of policies. I'm allowed to. I tossed it out and replaced it with value statements and guidelines, operating principles and guidelines that you can fit on one page. (M. Blue)

The college leaders acknowledged that in most instances they tried to provide an environment where people were empowered in making decisions and in reciprocal leadership opportunities. Also, the leaders acknowledged that they might have to step in and be a bit more assertive in articulating institutional vision and actualizing change.

In that instance [when addressing the need for change], I did something I know that you don't do. I took a very much a hands on, very, I almost felt, almost aggressive at some times with them. I really challenged them, but I did it really openly at the faculty meeting. I said, "I expect this group to be the leaders. I expect you to take this institution forward. (M. Green)

This notion of shared leadership was threaded through the conversations with the participants and many examples of transformational leadership emerged. All participants spoke about developing others and building community capacity for leadership and the importance of community involvement on advisory committees and steering committees. All leaders spoke about finding voice for multiple communities and for the diversity of Aboriginal people in the college region. All spoke about reciprocal learning and reciprocal leadership opportunities with Aboriginal people.

The student and community expectations are growing and changing; and we are, I feel, as I'm sure many people do . . . a good deal of pressure and stress associated with making the types of changes that would benefit the college and the students and communities. (M Green)

Ultimately, the participants are passionate about their leadership roles and about their abilities to effect change and to delve forever deeper into meeting the needs of learners and communities. Leadership of community colleges in Northern British Columbia is defined as being good work with substantial potential for both individual and collective fulfillment. “The passion of the human spirit really comes through when you are an educator” (M. Red).

LESSONS LEARNED ABOUT LEADERSHIP IN NORTHERN BC

Insights about leadership in small rural colleges in Northern British Columbia are plentiful and are a key aspect of this study in terms of preparing future college leaders and for informing succession planning. Following are key areas for future college leaders in Northern British Columbia to contemplate when considering a senior educational leadership role.

Expect to Wear Many Hats and Spend a Lot of Time Travelling

Educational administrators who work at the three community colleges in Northern British Columbia have expansive roles that require specialized skill sets for success. Working in a smaller institution means that the administrator has a broad mandate with limited supports to assist in fulfilling that mandate. This phenomenon was evident with all study participants. The leader must have a substantial degree of comfort with ambiguity and must rely on his or her teams of faculty and operational staff to fill the gaps in expertise. As the looming baby boomer demographic peaks in the very near future and as already experienced in rural settings, attracting qualified and experienced leaders to rural areas will become an increasing challenge. Therefore, from time to time, college administrators in Northern BC should expect to assume the responsibilities of unfilled positions. Conversely, wearing multiple hats also means that many opportunities will be available to the leaders to learn new skills or to venture into areas for which they might not have had the opportunity in a larger institution. In terms of the vastness of the geography, the educational administrator will spend many hours on the road or in the air

travelling to remote locations and to provincial meetings predominantly held in the lower mainland or in Victoria. This travel can be extremely tenuous in winter conditions.

Take Education to Remote Communities

All participants spoke repeatedly about the importance of taking the educational programs and services out to the community. Presidents, Vice Presidents, Deans, and Campus Directors work collaboratively in the multi-campus environment to meet the needs of very small communities. “We have learned that the best way to help communities get education is to bring the education to the communities” (M. Green). All participants emphasized the reciprocity required of successful leadership in the rural context. This reciprocity meant listening—really listening—to the people in the communities that the college serves and then looking for a fit for the specialized knowledge and resources that the college could bring to a collaborative initiative. All participants acknowledged that the three colleges had been very introspective in the past and somewhat elitist in terms of their previous ways of being. “We’re now much more outward looking, as our president can tell you” (M. Green). The leaders all acknowledged that they were experiencing substantial learning as they interacted with their communities, with industry, and with the Aboriginal people in their regions. This paradigm shift appears to be a critical aspect of successfully delivering community-based education and services—the college responding to the needs of the communities rather than merely directing the educational opportunities in the communities.

Let’s go out and find the learners, and tell them about us; and it’s a mixture of marketing and those recruiters can offer them a seat right at the door, right when they see them. We test when we get there. We don’t

test to eliminate them accessing there, and it's just a paradigm shift.
(M. Brown)

Anchor Sustainability through Strategic Alliances and Partnerships

Given the scarcity of college resources in Northern British Columbia, the college leaders have learned through necessity how to leverage additional resources and opportunities. The leaders in the colleges in Northern BC build strong relationships and coalitions to maximize opportunities and to ensure a wider breadth of programming and services in and across their region. The colleges partner locally with municipalities, Aboriginal communities and agencies, and with industry and business. The leaders also acknowledge that from a structural standpoint, discretionary provincial funding is shrinking. Growth opportunities are directed towards labour market development. The gap in this approach is that targeted funding to a large extent excludes meeting the broader societal needs of communities. Concurrently, the unique socio-economic factors within the North lead to substantial need for social programs and developmental services. The newly formed Northern Post Secondary Council provides opportunity for a greater degree of northern sustainability “So, there’s real advantage of having the university in the north in that regard” (M. Green).

Empower Others and Build Dynamic Teams

All participants acknowledged that they were well supported by strong teams of experts. The presidents acknowledged the importance of having a cohesive senior management team and the other participants spoke generally about building strong teams

of faculty, and operational employees. The participants all spoke about strong facilitation skills being an important factor in the building of the team.

I don't worry about knowing everything. I don't have to know everything. Everybody else, collectively, we have to know everything. We have to know a lot. But, I don't worry about that. That's not my role as a facilitator. (M. Blue)

In relation to developing strong teams, the participants spoke about reciprocal leadership and the importance of knowing when to lead and when to follow. The participants also spoke about the need to equip others to make decisions and to act in the best interest of the institution. The participants acknowledged the degree of risk and learning involved in this development. The key strategy was to provide an environment where people were empowered through the sharing of information, through reciprocal leadership opportunities, and through a supportive and mentoring environment.

Some of the participants also spoke about the importance of not overloading the team with tasks that undermined their success and that time was required to develop the skill sets of collaboration and to provide connectivity. One of the participants spoke about the importance of being realistic in the vision that the team set and that the leader should be aware that getting the team all fired up about an initiative and then not being able to follow through with the resources to support success was an important consideration in terms of moving forward.

You can generate your little think tank and retreats, and you come back with all of these ideas; but often when you try to explore what funding is available to mount these kinds of ideas, all of a sudden that can deflate your enthusiasm very quickly if you're being told, "Sorry, there's just no budget for it" (M. Black).

Also the participants were quick to point out the extraordinary contributions that the college employees make to their institutions and to their communities. They acknowledged the innovative and resourceful approaches that the employees often will take. Therefore as identified by the participants, a critical aspect in being resourceful is the development and nurturing of the team. “In my role, there’s nothing that I do on my own” (M. Red). The study participants clearly acknowledge that they are not self made and demonstrate the volitional love that Hunter (2004) acknowledged as critical to servant leadership.

*So, the importance of trust and teambuilding and the complexity that you face everyday in the college environment is so great that we do need specific expertise in education and finance and community and student services; and it's by melding those individual capacities into a team. We don't always agree. There is sometimes conflict, but I think that kind of distributed leadership amongst the executive management of the college, particularly in a small college environment, is critical because the CEO as hero who rides on a white horse and makes all the big decisions in isolation is very detrimental to the development of the whole organization. That was big learning for me, collaborative leadership and team work.
(M. Grey)*

Entrepreneurial Skills Required

Without question, the leader of a community college in Northern British Columbia will be required to have well developed entrepreneurial skills. All participants spoke about their need to acquire resources additional to those provided by the Ministry of Advanced Education. All participants spoke about the need to be business-like in their daily practice and to put the learners’ needs in the forefront—to have a customer-service perspective. Fundamentally, this entrepreneurial spirit starts with a strong desire to meet the needs of the people within their region and to know well the college’s markets. The

senior leaders were all very engaged within their communities and reached out to their constituent groups to understand first hand what those needs were and what the priorities were within those needs. The leaders all acknowledged the importance of not duplicating or competing with other community agencies but rather addressing the needs that weren't being met by other means.

The presidents mainly focussed their entrepreneurial attention to fundraising and on the acquisition of buildings and other capital. The other leaders were immersed in leveraging funding from various sources to augment program deliveries. Specialized skills in proposal development, negotiation, and report writing were identified as key in terms of securing collateral funding and in meeting accountability requirements. One of the participants spoke about taking the proposal development team into negotiations with the potential funder to address the barrage of questions that might arise during those negotiations. Being well prepared with data added to the success of the administrator who typically was the lead negotiator.

Leading Change

The college leaders in Northern British Columbia are participants in a global community of educators and in complex educational systems that are undergoing massive structural and ideological change. As participants in this era of rapid change and within their local contexts, leadership of educational institutions requires broad-based and sophisticated conversation and facilitation skills. Strong inclinations to experiment with organizational structures and to create adaptable systems were also prevalent in the disclosures of the participants.

Having to be flexible and learning oriented, I often joke about not liking surprises. But, surprises just are part of life; and I think that each surprise is an opportunity for learning and growth. I don't get upset about things too much, just take it as it comes, and just taking it as it comes, it's the ISTJ thing [Myers Briggs Personality Traits] about keeping emotions in check and so dealing with change and uncertainty and unpredictability. That all goes hand in hand with living in the rapidly changing world and being open to learning. (M. Grey)

The time has finally arrived for leaders and institutions to pay attention to the needs and desires of Aboriginal people as they take their rightful place in society. All this change requires tenacious leadership and tenacious people at the helm. Bridging western education systems and ideologies with Aboriginal imperatives requires innovative practices and a strong vision for possibility.

So I have this theory. I believe it. I believe it is the right theory. I have this theory that if we could truly decolonize institutions like our college, and embrace the Aboriginal paradigm, along side the Western—I don't want to throw anything out necessarily, but we'll see—we would be much more open to Aboriginal students. We would be a more welcoming environment. I think that we would be a healthier environment because we will be allowing for other world views rather than be just one. It's hard to characterize right now what is the colonial way. It's far easier to describe what they are not. (M. Blue)

One of the participants described how the college is approaching this change through the initiation of small project; such as, the combining of cultural anthropology and geography into one course that was delivered in the rain forest and that addressed both the western and the Aboriginal paradigm. This innovative project helped to move the institution step by step closer to indigenization and biculturalism.

Let us have western academics along side elders who have the knowledge of that area. Let the students be witness to that dialogue. Let them tell us if this is the right journey, so they did that. The first braves, that's what it felt like. (M. Blue)

Another participant spoke about the pace of change and ultimately the pace of the work that the teams accomplish. “There are a lot of times when, we joke around here that things are on fire. It’s a term we use, ‘OK, what’s on fire?’” (M. Red). The participant went on to explain that when approaching change and fast-paced work, the leader and the support team require skill sets that include a level-headed perspective, calmness, and humour. This same participant disclosed that having a clear sense of the skill sets that are required for specific projects and for moving an institution forward are key to leading change. Once those skill sets have been identified, then hiring the right people to move initiatives forward and providing the supports necessary for success are critical. Ultimately, leading change requires concrete planning and adequate resources. Therefore, the leader of change must understand the complexities and interrelationships of situations and not merely their unique components.

That individual is absolutely key. So there have been times when the projects have to run and the individuals run on a certain level of autonomy; and if they don’t have the skills to handle that autonomy, there are times when I have been unsuccessful. (M. Red)

Interestingly, the leaders of the three institutions identified that their institutions were in the midst of substantial change related to the multi-campus nature of their organizations. Taking programming out to the communities adds additional stress to systems, to people, and to resources.

The internal, of course there are the politics of the groups, the relationships between the faculty and staff, inter departmental politics, the politics between campuses . . . the relationships in a multi campus institution between what I often refer to as the mother ship and the regional campuses. Those relationship dynamics are always challenging and create opportunities for conflict and growth and learning of course, which can come from that. (M. Grey)

All participants reported increased delivery activity at the campus level and increased deliveries within Aboriginal communities. This type of structural change was challenging for the institutions and challenging to the leaders on a relationship and personal level.

You know, I needed 35 years of experience in working the ladder of post secondary to understand this kind of spread out campuses, and I know that when I look at my heart of hearts, I know that there are things I've done well, there's things I haven't done well; but, you know, you're always learning and judging from things. People have been extremely tolerant, and I know it's been a strain. It's certainly been a strain for me that leadership styles are so different. I've had great support, good people working with me. (M. Brown)

The leaders also spoke about the need for developmental change required of existing employees and also disclosed that at times individuals who were incapable of actualizing the new institutional vision were moved out of the organization. Change was also extremely challenging at the community level.

Openness to change is interesting. I mean when you've got industry or resource-based towns, communities will want to regain what they had. You know, "Well why aren't you doing more forestry?" Well, we're not doing forestry because there are two jobs in that at the moment, in our immediate area. There may be some out there, but they're not right here. There may be silviculture jobs but there aren't forest tech jobs as such. (M. Blue)

Leader as Cosmopolitan

Sophisticated leadership is required at the community colleges in Northern British Columbia. The successful leader needs to understand his or her role within dynamic and often very complicated political and cultural systems. As disclosed by the study participants, serving more than 60 Aboriginal communities in a region that encompasses more than one-half the province's geography is challenging at best. However, the

participants all appear to be forging new relationships and building new institutional structures where employing Aboriginal cultural guides appear to be becoming the norm. Extensive learning is occurring about Aboriginal people and their centuries-old wisdom and practices. The leaders acknowledge that Aboriginal cultural practices have opportunity to positively inform modern social structures. Taylor (2004) would say that the institutions are creating a new reality in terms of the “*social imaginary*” in Northern British Columbia.

Cosmopolitan leaders have sophisticated visions and perspectives accompanied by sophisticated conversation skills. These skills are required to accomplish or assist in realizing Aboriginal self determination, to add a contribution to other global perspectives concerning human rights and social conditions, and to work within the complexities of the post-secondary system in BC. As contemporary leaders, leaders who work within multiplicity and diversity and acknowledge political and social difference, the college leaders in Northern British Columbia display political and social astuteness. This astuteness resides comfortably within global perspectives and global communities of practice. Therefore, the leader needs to be well educated and have broad educational and human development experiences. This cosmopolitan approach correlates with Maak and Pless’s (2006) notion that leaders must approach their work in relational ways.

All study participants acknowledged that they were continually learning about these political and social relationships. The participants all displayed empathy and understanding when discussing the relationships that they were developing and that sustaining and nurturing these relationships was of vital importance to their success.

Therefore, the building of trusting relationships and of having values in common with their stakeholders and constituents was of critical importance. All participants disclosed that they were faced with ethical considerations on a regular basis. This phenomenon appeared to be more prevalent with the three presidents. All participants conveyed importance in acting from an ethical base, and all appeared to be genuine in their desires to be ethical and effective leaders. All participants appear to act without pretence in terms of being acknowledged for these standards of ethics and effectiveness.

Critical to the success of this cosmopolitan leader is a skill set that is responsive to learning about new situations and about finding creative solutions. This cosmopolitan approach means sometimes being the leader out in front of the initiative and at other times is merely being a member of a community of other experts all working to provide creative solutions to a breadth and depth of community and societal challenges. All participants appear to fall within the scope of practice of transforming leaders as identified by Ciulla (as cited in Maak & Press, 2006) as they engage in this ongoing dialogue and authentic communication and as they live within the tensions of competing demands for scarce resources. As moral agents within this transformation of others and of themselves, all participants acknowledge their desires to develop other employees and also acknowledge the reciprocal nature of growing community capacity in terms of intellectual and social wealth. This concept aligns with Burn's (1978) notion of uniting ideas through the "disciplined imagination" (p. 141), which brings together theory and normative thought or practices. Burns conveys that intellectuals are devoted to theory and

ideas; whereas, intelligence “seeks to grasp, manipulate, re-order, adjust” (p. 141).

Intelligence is at the heart of effective leadership and transformational practices.

Developing Succession Plans

This study has presented rich data in terms of informing readers of the roles, practices, and nature of community college leadership in Northern British Columbia. The leadership roles at small rural colleges are broad and expose the leader to a wide variety of activities that appear to reach beyond traditional college administrative practices. Resourcefulness is a basic skill set that will be required of aspiring future leaders of colleges in Northern BC. This skill set of resourcefulness is rooted in community values and community engagement and is actualized through an entrepreneurial and communicative approach.

One of the colleges in this study has started formal succession planning that includes searching within the institution for leadership talent and finding opportunities for its employees to develop leadership skills. This college is purposefully encouraging faculty to assume leadership roles through the creation of two levels of junior leadership positions. Faculty will have opportunities as a program or discipline coordinator and then as a department chair to take on more leadership functions. The next level of progression would be to move to the level of dean.

This same study participant also disclosed that he and another senior administrator at their institution have been formally developing potential leaders in the operational staff of the college. Additionally, this participant disclosed that he is always searching within the communities in the college region for Aboriginal people who might

be encouraged to apply for positions at the college. He also disclosed that he was willing to step aside from some aspects of his position to provide opportunities for others to assume those functions and to learn leadership. Other participants within the study are clearly thoughtful about the need to develop leaders and are proceeding on a more informal level. All participants acknowledged the substantial numbers of leadership positions that will soon be vacant at their institutions. The participants communicated urgency for formally developing succession strategies and in mentoring and coaching new leaders. Half the administrators within this study disclosed that they would be retiring within the next 2 to 5 years and that succession planning was a dominant and real concern for them.

I think a lot more about retirement in the past couple of years than I ever have in my life. In some way, I think that is a deterrent. I could quite easily see myself doing this until I'm 80; but at the same time, the thought of doing something totally different and maybe retiring and doing some other things—so, that sometimes gets going in my head a bit. (M. Green)

All participants disclosed that finding new employees was becoming increasingly difficult given the demographics of the region and disclosed that they were very concerned about the looming national labour shortages. The study participants all acknowledged the need to look internally for the institution's future leaders and provide opportunities for internal candidates to learn about leadership and to assume leadership responsibility.

I think that we need to succession plan internally. At least it needs to be a focus. We can't assume people are going to come into these positions from somewhere else. That's not our current reality that we are in, in terms of the labour market. I think that we need to look at succession planning in terms of skill sets a little differently than perhaps we have in the past. (M. Red)

All participants acknowledged that their organizations were quite flat in terms of administrative structure. They indicated that the institutions should add more levels to the administrative structure, creating junior positions to grow future leaders. This approach would lead to a broad base of leadership opportunities and would facilitate leadership development.

We need to ensure that people, faculty, staff as well as administrators have the opportunities to gain leadership experience and develop those skills and relationships and that we don't too narrowly define roles in terms of categories of employees, would that be faculty, staff, or managers, and be more flexible in enabling people to get experience and practice in team leadership, interact with community and other organizations. (M. Grey)

CONCLUSIONS

My interest in this study is founded on my practice as both an educator and as an academic administrator at a community college in Northern British Columbia. I have worked at the same institution for the past 25 years. As a young faculty member, the struggles and tensions around the acquisition and allocation of both provincial and local resources were somewhat more distant to my practice than they are now. Over the course of my teaching career, I was administratively well supported and well resourced in the classroom. For 15 years, I reported to two regional directors who were passionate about our campus and about the delivery of education and training to some of the most remote areas in the province. I highly regard these two leaders as resourceful and successful people and learned a great deal about leadership from my interactions with them. My identity was formed in this relationship to others and in the context of delivering training at a remote location and in being a resident of a small northern community.

I always had a large degree of civic pride and engagement. When I moved from the classroom to administrative work as the regional director of this small campus, my connection to community and my history as a community volunteer served me well. As an administrator and in delivering programs and services to very small and very remote Aboriginal communities, I became more acutely aware of the scarcity of resources and the resulting impact of this scarcity on individuals. Administrators at larger campuses or larger institutions have equally valid but differing realities in terms of scarcity. With conviction grounded in experience, I make this statement that the realities of small campuses and small institutions are different from larger centres. From the evidence

provided from this narrative-based case study, I conclude that the form of leadership required to meet the challenges of this ongoing scarcity and of being situated in the sparsely populated, geographically challenging northern half of British Columbia is different in specific ways from the form of leadership required at larger institutions located in urban settings.

The purpose of this study is to examine the form of leadership that is required to meet these challenges. I must also acknowledge that the study was conducted to meet a personal desire to express that my experiences and the experiences of the study participants are unique and that these experiences are equally as valid as the experiences of other post-secondary leaders at other locations. In that regard, I chose to include the insight and experiences of six senior administrators from the three publicly funded community colleges in Northern British Columbia. The study provided exclusive and close insight into the economic, societal, cultural, historical, political, and personal contexts of these leaders. I acknowledge that the representations within this study are filtered through my own lens as a leader of a small northern institution and as a colleague of the participants.

I may have even told the story up to this point as a story of selfless people who in their dedication to community and to assisting Aboriginal people with greater self-determination achieve a higher ideal in some way. Or even perhaps, I have represented the perspectives as those that should be replicated by other leaders. However, I also have a desire to add to this story the struggles encountered in working within systems that are at most times inflexible and potentially unresponsive to unique circumstances. I

acknowledge that desiring and constructing a flexible system that is responsive to the needs of the individual learner is not without extreme challenges. However, if I claim myself to be a transformational leader, I must uncover the challenges as well as the opportunities. Our experiences impact our thoughts and our actions and lead to unique perspectives and identities. I am who I am through these experiences and through my interpretations of those experiences.

As the study participants work with and for others they encounter a multitude of struggles. These college leaders challenge long-standing traditions, systems, and ideologies. Being responsive to the needs of small unique groups contests the nature of large systems and their inherent power. As the study participants disclosed their experiences and personally defined their interpretations of those experiences, I connected my own experiences to a similar circumstance and identity. Unique approaches that care for the circumstances of unique populations tend to frustrate others who are not as closely connected to the struggle.

Taylor (2004) describes the concept of embeddedness as a matter of both identity, “the contextual limits to the imagination of the self” and the *modern social imaginary*, “the ways we are able to think or imagine the whole of society” (p. 63). “We are always socially embedded: We learn our identities in dialogue, by being inducted into a certain language” (p. 65). We also have our “own conversation experience” (p. 65) where we learn to be individuals with our own relationships and opinions. My study exposes aspects of the identity of the leader of a small, rural community college and a leadership form that is similar across a unique group of people who share a unique context. Through

this experience of distanciation, narration, and interpretation, a conversation emerges that potentially validates both the participants' experiences and the experiences of others. As the Vice-President Academic at the College of New Caledonia, I know that the role that I played in the administration of a small regional campus has impact on my leadership abilities and my expectations of others. I acknowledge my frustration when competition for resources disregards the notion of the greater good. I acknowledge that usually one must be immersed in a particular circumstance to fully understand the nuances and the challenges. However, others have opportunity learn about that particular circumstance or perspective if they desire by listening to the stories of others and by hearing and feeling the emotion of the actors in that narrative. My hope is to connect the reader of this study with the struggles of the northern leaders and in doing so together we might all learn from the experiences. The participants uncover the details by reflecting on the circumstances and by articulating their understanding of those circumstances. Through this dialogue with ourselves and with others, we have substantial and unique opportunities to reach greater understanding.

When we tell stories, we cannot avoid also saying indirectly how the subjects involved in them are faring, and what fate the collectivity they belong to is experiencing. Nevertheless, we can make harm to personal identity or threats to social integration visible only indirectly in narratives. While narrative presentations do point to higher-level reproduction processes—to the maintenance imperatives of lifeworlds—they cannot take as their theme the structures of a lifeworld the way they do with what happens in it. The everyday concept of the lifeworld that we bring to narrative presentation as a reference system has to be worked up for theoretical purposes in such a way as to make possible statements about the reproduction or self-maintenance of communicatively structured lifeworlds. (Habermas, 1981/1987, p. 137)

Scarcity Calls Forth Resourcefulness

The first hypothesis that grounded this study stated that the complex contexts of community colleges in Northern British Columbia combined with the scarcity of internal resources call forth a need for college leaders in Northern BC to have unique skill sets, characteristics, and virtues that define the leaders as being resourceful.

Substantial challenges are encountered in delivering education and training in the North due to the cumulative effects of the following:

- large geographic regions to serve;
- geographic distance from provincial ministries in Victoria;
- multiple campus locations;
- diverse communities with small populations;
- boom and bust economies from the extraction of natural resources; and,
- substantial numbers of Aboriginal communities and Aboriginal people with diverse backgrounds and diverse perspectives.

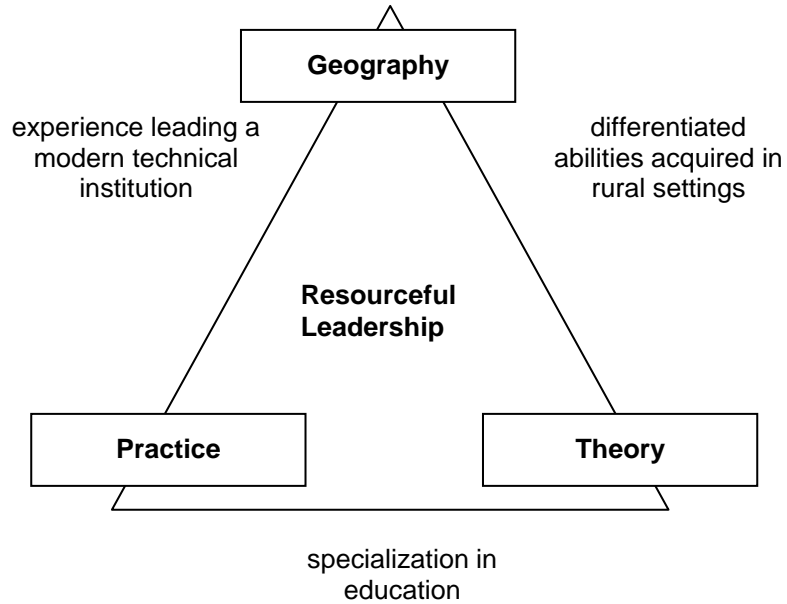
Many examples of the leaders' resourcefulness were disclosed during the interviews. The characteristics and virtues of these resourceful people are inherent within the college leaders' life experiences starting with childhood development and being exposed to important leadership experiences early in the leader's professional career. Mentors and coaches in educational settings provided wisdom and support. Additionally, the leaders all cited examples of servant and transformational leadership theory that guided their practice and actions. The leaders all display a substantial degree of humility when they discuss their leadership abilities and give due credit for institutional success to the people with whom they work. The leaders have positive attitudes that are focused on finding innovative ways to fill the gaps between the resources at hand and the resources

required to fulfill their institutional visions and mandates. The college leaders in this demonstrated that they work closely with their constituents and their communities to deliver education and training that match the needs of their regions. Clearly, the impact of scarceness on their individual spirits was identified as being both generative and exasperating.

My conclusion from this case study was that “yes” these college leaders in Northern British Columbia were resourceful. A common thread in terms of the origin of resourcefulness was that most of the leaders were raised in rural settings where they were exposed to a variety of experiences. These broad-based experiences appear to have nurtured a large degree of differentiation in their abilities and in their approaches to varying circumstances. The environments in which these leaders were raised stimulated creativity and innovation. All participants have also achieved a high level of educational specialization through their formal educational experiences before returning to rural settings to lead their modern technological institutions. This ability to lead in both worlds is a key element in resourcefulness (see Figure 2).

Figure 2.

The Confluence of Theory, Practice, and Geography



Broad Mandates and Less Distinctive Roles

The second hypothesis indicated that the role definitions of leaders of northern rural institutions are likely to be more diverse and less differentiated than those of leaders in southern, urban institutions. The study participants do believe that their roles are more diverse and less differentiated than those of leaders in larger urban institutions. Five of the participants held leadership positions at larger, urban institutions and disclosed that a much broader scope of responsibility exists in the northern college leadership positions. In order to further substantiate this claim, I compared the job descriptions of the college leaders informing this study with job descriptions from larger urban institutions (see samples in Appendix E). In that comparison, I found that the roles of the leaders at both small and large, urban and rural institutions were very similar in scope.

Presidents have broad mandates that include direct responsibility for their institutions with a reporting requirement to a college board. Supported by an executive management team, they are ultimately responsible for strategic planning and implementation of strategic goals and initiatives and for effective fiscal management of the institution. Presidents are required to be astute within the post-secondary education system and within their communities. They are expected to lead their institutions in collegial ways and to be innovative and learning or student centred. Presidents are also ultimately responsible for policy development. Presidents are leaders of change and are the chief spokesperson for the institution. On paper, the roles of presidents appear to be very similar in scope.

The roles of Vice Presidents Academic, Instruction, or Education are equally broad in scope and similar in nature across institutional size and rural or urban contexts. The vice presidents are responsible for the delivery of the academic and vocational programming of their institutions and liaise with college boards. They lead educational management teams of deans and directors of discipline specific areas and of satellite campuses. They have fiscal responsibility for the academic areas and maintain the integrity of college programs; and in some cases, they are responsible for service areas. Vice presidents are key negotiators for collective agreements with faculty and are responsible for maintaining the intent of those agreements. Vice presidents have considerable interactions with government ministries, with other educational institutions, and with their communities. Vice presidents are responsible for ensuring that college programs are innovative and viable and that educational policies are developed and

maintained. Educational vice presidents are members of Education Councils and develop partnerships and strategic alliances with other institutions. Vice presidents may supervise regional operations as well as program areas. If the institution has only one or two campus locations, the vice presidents may also supervise additional areas such as student services. In comparing the roles of the vice presidents of academics, instruction, and learning between southern urban and northern rural, the roles appear to be very similar.

Dean positions appear to be diverse whether the dean is from an urban institution or from a college in Northern British Columbia. Deans provide educational leadership and ensure the effective management of operational, human, financial and capital resources. Deans are responsible for development of new programs and for the development of faculty. Deans have budget responsibility for their discipline areas and participate in collective bargaining and on college committees. Deans interact extensively with other educational institutions and maintain the integrity of the curriculum through articulation agreements, accrediting bodies and licensing and through the participation of advisory committees. Deans also have responsibility for community relations, for student recruitment, and for maintaining college policies such as grade appeals and standards of student conduct. Deans have budget responsibilities for their respective areas of supervision.

I conclude that Deans have mandate definitions based on the size of their institution versus the nature of the rural or urban context. Therefore, a dean at a larger institution may be only responsible for one area such as business or trades whereas a dean at a smaller institution may have responsibility for business, trades, and technology.

Additionally, the other area of differentiation is that at a larger institution, a dean may be supported by associate deans and by program chairs. This phenomenon of narrower mandates at large institutions and broader mandates at smaller institutions is also supported by comparing institutional organizational charts and from discussions with vice presidents from other colleges (Senior Academic Administrators Forum, personal communication, May 8, 2008).

Regional deans, campus directors, or directors of contract services have job descriptions similar to deans. However, their responsibilities generally also include a large degree of entrepreneurial activity such as the securing of soft funding and the development of cost-recovery programs. Campus directors interact with program deans and similarly have general responsibility for curricular integrity and for the supervision of faculty and operational staff. Regional deans and directors interact extensively with their communities and with government funding agencies or divisions. Campus directors also have responsibility for the satellite facilities and are responsible for their campuses' budgets. Regional deans and directors appear to have very wide scopes of responsibility; and as identified by one of the study participants, appear to be mini replications of the broader institutional perspective or a president's scope of responsibilities but within their smaller respective regions.

My conclusions therefore in relation to the broad mandates and the role definition are that the size of the institution and the availability of resources are more substantial determiners of the breadth or depth of the role of the college leader than an urban versus a rural perspective. The smaller the institution, the more diverse the leader must be. This

conclusion is also supported by the participants' disclosures. The largest of the three northern colleges (CNC) appears to have more internal supports available to the president. On the other hand, the presidents at Northwest (NWCC) and Northern Lights (NLC) communicated examples where they personally develop the institutional service plans and where they assume other leadership roles (such as that of the vice president academic or learning) when they are encountering difficulties in securing the human resources necessary to fill administrative positions.

In summary on this issue, the roles of the college leaders in Northern British Columbia are diverse and in general are less differentiated than positions with similar titles at larger institutions. This differentiation then is more a result of the size of the institution and the availability of internal supports within that institution. Therefore, where internal resources are scarce, role definition of the leader is much broader.

The Blurring of the Public and the Private

All participants believe that the line between the personal and the professional is much less definitive in rural settings where people from small communities come together in rural spirit to acquire the resources necessary for their communities to thrive. Additionally, the college leaders in this study confirmed that they have substantial public profiles including regular media coverage and regular interactions with municipal, provincial, and federal government officials who represent their college regions. The public is interested in the work of colleges, and the presence of the college leader and his or her contributions to community initiatives are significant aspects of the leader's role.

Furthermore, volunteerism and civic participation form an integral characteristic of life in a rural community and specifically for college leadership in Northern British Columbia.

Servant and Transformational Leaders

The participants all appeared to align their belief systems and leadership approaches with two dominant theories—that of the servant leader and of the transformational leader. All participants appeared to be humble in terms of the leadership relationship with other employees and the college constituents. The participants all gave substantial credit to the highly skilled teams of professionals and their collective achievements. The leaders all conveyed the importance of both leading and following others. A significant point of reference for all participants was in regard to the vital service that the college leaders provide in assisting Aboriginal people in moving toward greater self-determination. In this regard, the leaders all acknowledge that they are learning about the uniqueness of Aboriginal cultures and the uniqueness of the Aboriginal communities within their college regions. All participants communicated the importance of not viewing Aboriginal cultures as homogeneous and of being inquisitive and striving for understanding in terms of interactions with Aboriginal people.

The extensive contributions made by the college leaders substantiate that the leaders are willing to serve others. This building of capacity was also evident when considering the human capital that lies within a particular community. The leaders all clearly recognized the fit of the college within the broader community goals and relationships and conveyed a strong desire to put community first. The leaders' desires and aspirations to develop others in their institutions and within their communities is

cosmopolitan and worldly and was another salient point of leadership attributes consistent among the participants. This transformation of others and of communities is also indicative of servant and transformational leadership practices. Additionally, I was acutely aware that these college leaders did not see themselves as self-made. They recognized the contributions that others made to their individual and institutional successes.

Within all these complexities, the leaders appear to be comfortable serving others and providing others with opportunities to learn new skill sets and take the lead on initiatives. The leaders all demonstrate a transforming orientation and convey a realization that the complex environments in which they operate require thoughtful and sophisticated approaches. The leaders interact with influential and often authoritative people within the provincial government and within other academic institutions in British Columbia, throughout Canada, and around the globe. The colleges are impacted by global economic and social forces and have close contacts and relationships with large multinational corporations and with other industry within their regions. Local municipal and Aboriginal governance also directly influence and impact the lifeworld of the college administrator in Northern BC.

Therefore, the ability to develop, nurture, and sustain strong relationships is critical to success. In this regard, I have aligned the leadership theory with that of the cosmopolitan leader who understands the complexities of a diverse world and of the global community in which the small rural colleges in Northern BC also reside. The leaders are able to move beyond traditional boundaries and have forged unique

relationships and alliances. Through their accounting of their circumstances and within their political, historical, and geographical contexts, the college leaders define their roles by constructing meaning through reflective practice and through dialogue with others. The leaders' stories and accounts of their worlds are generative in terms of the potential learning that may be derived from reading this study and by contemplating its implications and possibilities for leadership development for college administrators in Northern BC. In Taylor's (2004) terms, the college leaders' *social imaginaries* are unique and derived from their personal interpretation of their lives and of their work as they struggle to assist learners in accessing education and training. All this effort is being accomplished within complex systems and with strong desires to provide cultural recognition for and respect to Aboriginal people.

The Desire to Reach Understanding

In relation to Habermas's (1981/1987) theory of communicative action, the participants all displayed strong desires to understand the complexities of their circumstances in relation to the circumstances of others. In their interactions with others, the leaders reflect on and acknowledge their inescapable contexts. The participants demonstrate an understanding of how their contexts have potential to both positively and negatively impact the lifeworlds of others. The leaders disclosed spending substantial amounts of time in human interaction and dialogue. Authentic dialogue with others dominated their ways of being.

Habermas (1981/1987) refers to an ideal consciousness where a person or a group would use rational ability to interpret events or facts and even further to keep an openness

about conclusions. Habermas also discusses an opposing procedural view of rationality where people, often those engaged in economic activity or working in organizations, use communication for instrumental or self-serving purposes. This instrumental use of communication alienates others or detracts from the legitimacy of the interactions and the authenticity of the outcomes. In their conversation acts, the college leaders in this study appear to use rational ability as they consider the ethical and moral choices that present themselves. For example, knowing that growing the leadership capacity within the Aboriginal community is of critical importance in attaining Aboriginal self-determination was communicated as the starting point for reaching understanding. Acknowledging that a choice exists between building that capacity in concert with the community or moving forward with an initiative and not attending to that reciprocal leadership and learning opportunity brings the participants closer to Habermas's ideal of communicative action.

The most provocative insight that I have gained from this study was a realization that the college leaders were acutely aware of the structures inherent in their lifeworlds and of the important role that the 'right' actions play in achieving the desired outcomes. These leaders chose to abandon strategic approaches that many others still use to achieve personal or organizational goals. Rather, the leaders in this study's close connection to community assisted them in understanding the *needs and desires* of others and in acting authentically to achieve rational outcomes that serve the greater good. These leaders used communicative action rather than the power of systems to reach positive and mutually beneficial outcomes. Even though the college leaders are informed and astute in navigating within these complicated systems, they choose a preferential course of action

to bring about success. They carry out their visions by cooperating with others, by negotiating their perspectives, and by attaining consensus in moving initiatives forward. All of this activity also points to a servant leadership perspective.

Rural living in small communities provides proximity that exposes this need for authenticity. This realization that systems power must be to some extent held in abeyance or separated from negatively impacting the lifeworld of others was clearly evident within the practices of the college leaders as they minimized potential structural aggression on their communities and their constituents. This appeared to be most prevalent when the leaders spoke about the impact of systems on Aboriginal people and about their institution's developing approaches to supporting Aboriginal visions and cultures. As Benhabib (2002) suggests, those discussions, compromises, and genuine desires to reach understanding provide further evidence of the morally balanced approaches demonstrated by the leaders. The participants freely acknowledge, assist, celebrate, and consider *other* before they consider *self*. They situate their institutions within a similar morally balanced approach.

Ethical and Effective Leadership

Ciulla (2004) poses the correlation between ethical leadership and effective leadership. As conveyed by the participants in this study, they are confronted with moral and ethical challenge on a regular basis. All the leaders have strong desires to make the right decisions for their institutions. During times when the scarcity of resources is encountered and when they are not able to meet all the needs of the institutions' constituents, the stakeholders may have varying perspectives on whether or not these

leaders are successful. A number of factors contribute to my conclusion that they are effective leaders.

The presidents are directly accountable to Boards of Governors who ensure that the president is meeting the broad objectives of the colleges' strategic plans. The college Board of Governors defines annual performance objectives for the president. When the president meets the outcomes, the Board deems that the president is effective. All the presidents are on limited term contracts. Renewal of those contracts would also be evidence of the president's success and effectiveness. Recently, two of the presidents have had their contracts renewed. The other president is still working within his first contract. Additionally, some of the college leaders disclosed having 360° performance evaluations culminating in positive results.

Other evidence of effective leadership resides in the visionary and innovative work that the leaders are accomplishing. Three of the leaders clearly communicated the importance of presenting their college's achievements at conferences and forums. These leaders and their accomplished teams have presented at numerous events and have gained the admiration and respect of their system colleagues. The fact that the leaders are approached to present their innovative and successful project outcomes and to communicate their inventiveness at national and international forums is strong evidence of the effectiveness of the leaders.

Additionally, the colleges have recently hosted national conferences and symposia; such as the national Association of Canadian Community College's annual conference, a national symposium on Aboriginal education and a provincial symposia on

Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder. These leaders take action in terms of making life better for their communities, and they are also leaders on national and international levels.

Other evidence of effectiveness is that the work of these leaders is recognized at provincial and national forums; that their work is recognized in a provincial literacy audit; and that they are invited to sit on provincial and national policy tables.

When acknowledging all these accomplishments and when confirming that not one of these colleges is meeting the core provincial accountability factor of seat utilization, clearly evident is that the accountability mechanism and therefore the funding model does not meet the needs of the rural and multi-campus colleges in Northern British Columbia. All leaders stated definitively that the funding formula and this one prominent accountability factor disadvantaged the northern colleges. These college leaders are spending a substantial amount of time lobbying the provincial government to readjust the utilization rates and amend the funding formula for the small, rural college. These systemic challenges grossly affect the lifeworlds of the college leaders and the rural communities in Northern British Columbia.

The college leaders mitigate these systemic challenges by working towards consensus within their communities and by refusing to accept systems driven purely by functionality. The leaders work within their small communities and use public opportunities and community agencies and events as places for open debate. This public dialogue and debate add depth and richness to other conversations about cultural identity and the need for cultural recognition as the leaders deliver educational products and services.

Since much work is currently being accomplished within the public post secondary system to change funding policies and mechanisms for small, rural colleges, I will focus my conclusions in this study on leadership development. I am confident that the numerous reports, proposals, and collective system advocacy work by presidents' coalitions and councils, by faculty associations, student associations, and the public are placing appropriate pressures on our provincial Ministry of Advanced Education to effect changes in funding formulas. In a recent planning and priority meeting with the Ministry of Advanced Education, the Assistant Deputy Premier, Ruth Wittenberg communicated that the province acknowledges the undue challenges and pressures placed on the small rural community college in BC by a one-size-fits-all funding formula. Ms. Wittenberg acknowledged that the ministry wants to "get it right" and will be developing a new model over the next couple of years (personal communication, October 14, 2008).

Developing Leaders for Northern Contexts

The final question that the study poses is "Should different approaches to leadership development be applied to this northern context?" My conclusion is that cosmopolitan leadership values, theories, and styles are and should be common to all college leaders as they approach the complexities of contemporary life and acknowledge the global communities in which their institutions reside. The social issues and the approaches to those issues require sophisticated action including conversations grounded in strong desires to reach understanding and achieve rationality in outcomes.

Noting the urgency for succession planning at the colleges in Northern British Columbia and acting upon the insights gained from this study in terms of the

resourcefulness required of its leaders, I provide the following recommendations for the three northern colleges:

1. Acknowledge the importance of succession planning and the urgency required by allocating institutional resources to developing formal succession plans and to sustaining the organizational environments that are conducive to attracting and retaining employees.
2. Acknowledge the contemporary nature of leadership required in Northern British Columbia and use the specific skill sets uncovered in this study to develop employee inventories that identify potential internal candidates to fill administrative positions.
3. Create leadership opportunities for all employees for reciprocal coaching and mentoring and develop the entrepreneurial and the leadership skills required to build dynamic institutions and to achieve organizational success.
4. Create an environment of engagement where employees develop and practice communication and relationship-building skills that lead to trust-based, authentic outcomes.
5. Market both internally and externally the uniqueness of the institutions and the uniqueness of the region's geography and its people as exciting opportunities future employees.

Educators in Northern British Columbia have unique circumstances that should be acknowledged in leadership development programs and incorporated into institutional succession plans. Potential leaders must understand the frustrations of, challenges in, and opportunities for living in northern environments. Since education in Canada is a provincial jurisdiction, The Council of Ministers of Education was formed in 1967 as a forum to discuss matters of mutual provincial interest. According to the Council (Council of Ministers of Education Canada, 2008), only one-third of Canada's population lives more than 100 kilometers north of the border with the United States; and only 20% of the population lives in rural settings. In fact, "45 per cent of the population [in Canada] lives

in just six metropolitan areas” (p. 3). In 2005/2006 Canadians spent \$30.6 billion (p. 3) on post-secondary education, which represented the efforts of federal, provincial, territorial, and local governments. When considering a leadership development program for administrators of post-secondary institutions in Canada’s northern regions, one must consider the lack of national jurisdiction and a system of distributed provincial powers.

In Canada, there is no federal department of education and no integrated national system of education. Within the federal system of shared powers, Canada’s Constitution Act of 1867 provides that “[I]n and for each province, the legislature may exclusively make Laws in relation to Education.” In the 13 jurisdictions—10 provinces and 3 territories, departments or ministries of education are responsible for the organization, delivery, and assessment of education at the elementary and secondary levels, for technical and vocational education, and for postsecondary education. Some jurisdictions have two separate departments or ministries, one having responsibility for elementary-secondary education and the other for postsecondary education and skills training. (Council of Ministers of Education Canada, 2008, p. 3)

Clearly, fundamental to educational leadership are advanced academic credentials. However, current and future administrators also require access to both external and internal leadership development opportunities. For Canadian community college leaders, the most popular gateways for leadership development are found in the national Chairs Academy and the National Executive Leadership Institute’s (NELI) programs for prospective presidents and vice presidents. As well, attending events such as The Association of Canadian Community College’s annual conference and their special interest symposia provide further access for leadership development. Provincial meetings of deans and directors, vice presidents, and presidents also provide forums for networking and informal mentoring and information sharing among participants. These events are readily made available to leaders of the three northern colleges. Faculty at the

three institutions also have opportunities for self-directed professional development. Recent practices by the two BC ministries responsible for education, The Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Advanced Education, include province-wide meetings and events that focus on specific topics for collaborative leadership.

However, formal internal or in-house leadership development opportunities are extremely limited, if not almost non-existent, at the three northern institutions. The post-secondary education sector is starting to respond to the looming leadership crisis. An initiative among provincial institutions proposes to pool resources to develop leadership training and orientations for new deans. In a collaborative model, leadership curriculum would be developed that would aid individual institutions in delivering leadership training. This collaboration will greatly assist the sector in moving forward with succession planning.

The best recommendation that I provide from this study for the Northern BC leadership condition is that a similar collaborative approach to develop a leadership program might be sought through the Northern Post-Secondary Council. The three colleges and the University of Northern British Columbia would benefit from sharing resources and leadership expertise to develop a leadership network among its educational administrators.

A regional leadership development program could include symposia, workshops, seminars and formal mentoring and coaching arrangements. Common campus-based leadership development programs identified by Hull and Keim (2007) include activities on topics such as team building and collaboration, institutional mission and purpose,

budgeting processes, funding, institutional culture and values, emerging issues, governance, ethics, conflict resolution, leadership theories and practices, and crisis management. Given the context of Northern British Columbia, I would also suggest that a leadership development program would include best practices in providing Aboriginal education and services and in using communicative action as a foundation for dialogue and interaction.

The newly formed Northern Educational Developers Network (NEDNet) that is funded by the Northern Post-secondary Council should be replicated to a Northern Educational Leadership Network (NELNet). A proposal including a relatively nominal funding request to the Northern Post-secondary Council would likely be well received by the institutional presidents and the Ministry of Advanced Education. The NPSC currently funds NEDNet for \$10,000 for each faculty forum. Faculty organize the events and come together to share their expertise for best practices in the classroom and for educational technology. I propose that similar forums for executive leadership could be developed and delivered by existing leaders and should be open to employees aspiring to assume administrative positions at the northern institutions. Clearly, northern solutions to the northern challenges will deliver the best results for a leadership development program.

Epilogue

Is the landscape of post-secondary education in Northern British Columbia rugged? Similarly, as the geography of the region is both rugged and spectacular, the landscape and contexts of post-secondary education can be rugged and spectacular as well. The corresponding leadership at colleges in Northern British Columbia appears to

be generative and entrepreneurial as the leaders and their teams of experts struggle within their provincially allocated and specially funded resources to make the right choices for their constituents. These leaders inhabit the realms of interdependence and connection and apply the skill sets of resourcefulness.

Clearly, massification of education, market driven demands, and opportunities for cultural recognition are steering colleges in Northern British Columbia towards experimentation with institutional design. The presidents and other college leaders are visionary and innovative in spirit. A unique and stellar example is Northwest Community College's aspiration to become bi-cultural with Aboriginal people. In its desire to remain true to the community it serves and as Levin (2001) suggests, NWCC, is a different institution as it enters the Twenty-first Century.

Within the premise of scarcity, the social and economic complexities of college leadership require imaginative and creative responses. When we tell our stories, we provide opportunities for others to understand our circumstances and to learn about our ways of being. This study provides that opportunity for others to learn about college leadership in Northern British Columbia.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A:

INSTITUTIONAL APPROVAL FORM

HUMAN SUBJECTS RESEARCH APPROVAL

Letter of Institutional Approval

Date

In signing this consent form, we agree to our employees' participation in the research project entitled, *The Confluence of Theory, Practice, and Geography: Leadership of the Small, Rural College Within the Diverse Environment of Northern British Columbia* and being conducted by Lynn Jacques between October 2007 and March 2008 and in fulfillment of the Education Doctorate requirements by Simon Fraser University.

We understand that the research being conducted relates to the experiences of educational administrators at the College of New Caledonia, Northern Lights College, and Northwest Community College with a focus on the concept of characteristics and traits of resourceful leaders. The methodology used in this study is narrative-based case study. We understand that the participant interviews will be tape-recorded verbal communications with the researcher. The participants may be quoted in a doctoral dissertation and in future papers or journal articles that may be written by the researcher.

We grant authorization for the use of the above information with the full understanding that the participants and (*name of institution*) will be identifiable in the research study. However, we understand that the participants will have an opportunity to review the findings and outcomes of the study before the study is published. We understand that the participants will have the opportunity to clarify or remove their comments from the study if they desire. We also acknowledge that the participants will grant permission to use their names in the research study and that the participants will sign consent forms before data collection begins. We also agree to the use of (*name of institution*) in this study

We understand that transcripts, both paper and electronic versions, will be secured in the researcher's home office and that any audio tapes of conversations with the researcher will be erased no later than January 2009.

We understand that our participation is entirely voluntary and that we may withdraw our permission to participate in this study without explanation at any point up to and including the last day of February, 2008.

Signature: _____

Job Title: _____

Institution: _____

Date: _____

APPENDIX B:
PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

HUMAN SUBJECTS RESEARCH CONSENT LETTER

Letter of Informed Consent

Date

In signing this consent form, I agree to volunteer to participate in the research project entitled, *The Confluence of Theory, Practice, and Geography: Leadership of the Small, Rural College Within the Diverse Environment of Northern British Columbia* and being conducted by Lynn Jacques between October 2007 and March 2008 and in fulfillment of the Education Doctorate requirements by Simon Fraser University.

I understand that the research being conducted relates to the experiences of educational administrators at the College of New Caledonia, Northern Lights College, and Northwest Community College with a focus on the concept of characteristics and traits of resourceful leaders. I understand that excerpts from my tape-recorded verbal communications with the researcher will be studied and may be quoted in a doctoral dissertation and in future papers or journal articles that may be written by the researcher.

I grant authorization for the use of the above information with the full understanding that I will be identifiable in the research study. However, I understand that I will have an opportunity to review the findings and outcomes of the study before the study is published. I understand that I will have the opportunity to clarify or remove my comments from the study if I desire. I grant permission to use my name in the research study.

I understand that transcripts, both paper and electronic versions, will be secured in the researcher's home office and that any audio tapes of my conversations with the researcher will be erased no later than January 2009.

I understand that my participation is entirely voluntary and that I may withdraw my permission to participate in this study without explanation at any point up to and including the last day of February, 2008. (**addendum for subordinates:** As a subordinate of the researcher, I understand that I will not experience any adverse consequences for declining or withdrawing from participation in this study.)

Signature: _____

Date: _____

APPENDIX C: GENERAL INTERVIEW GUIDE

Note: assure interview participant of absolute confidentiality before beginning the interview. Explain procedures to assure confidentiality and vetting of report with participants to ensure that they agree with their documented responses.

1. Background
 - a. Name
 - b. Position title
 - c. How long have you been in this position?
 - d. How long have you been with your institution?
 - e. Please provide a thumbnail sketch of your position.
2. Use three words to describe the overall scope of the position.
3. I'm interested in the environment in which you work.
 - a. Please give me three or four descriptors to describe your environment.
 - b. What are the political factors that influence your work?
 - c. What are the societal factors that influence your work?
 - d. What are the economic factors that influence your work?
 - e. What are the local or community factors that influence your work?
 - f. What are the geographic factors that influence your work?
 - g. What are the historical factors that influence your work?
4. I would like to talk about your environment in relation to other similar environments.
 - a. How would you describe your role as a leader of a college in Northern British Columbia? What do you see as your main role?
 - b. What similarities does your role have to comparable roles (use job title) at other post-secondary institutions in BC?
 - c. What differences does your role present from other comparable roles (use job titles) at other post-secondary institutions?
5. I'd like to talk about the resources that you have to carry out your work.
 - a. How would you describe the resources that you have to meet the institutional and community mandates and needs?
 - b. How do you manage the resources that you have?
 - c. What do you do when you do not have the resources to carry out your mandate?

6. Please continue to think about situations where resources are scarce.
 - a. How frequently do you encounter these situations?
 - b. Please describe two or three situations where you have had to be resourceful.
 - c. What do you do when no clear solution presents itself?
7. Please think about a challenging situation for which you found a creative solution.
 - a. What made the situation challenging?
 - b. What was the solution that you found?
 - c. Describe how you were able to find this solution.
 - d. What did you learn from that situation that was transferable to other situations?
8. Please think about a challenging situation for which you were not fully satisfied with the results.
 - a. What made the situation challenging?
 - b. What was the outcome of the situation?
 - c. Describe aspects of the outcome for which you were not fully satisfied.
 - d. What did you learn from that situation that was transferable to other situations?
9. I would like to talk about you as a leader.
 - a. Please describe the vision you have for the future of your institution.
 - b. Would you describe yourself as an effective leader?
 - c. What factors contribute to your effectiveness (if yes to above)?
 - d. What factors inhibit your effectiveness?
 - e. How do you assess your overall effectiveness as an educational leader?
10. I'd like to talk about how you carry out your work.
 - a. Please give three or four words that describe how you do your work.
 - b. Describe the knowledge that you must have to do your work.
 - c. Please describe the skills and abilities that you must have to do your work.
 - d. Please describe your attitudes and approaches towards your work.
 - e. Please describe the kinds of experiences that you have had that help you with success in your role.

11. Have you ever had to make a moral or ethical compromise? Please tell me about that situation.
12. What aspects of your own personal context do you find inescapable? i.e., What are the aspects of you that you cannot change?
13. How do you resolve issues where sides are drawn, such as in a conflict, and no solution presents itself?
14. What is the most significant event that you have experienced in your role as an educational leader?
 - a. Reflecting on this experience, what were the strengths and weaknesses of your response to the situation?
15. Human affairs have unpredictability. Please describe how you approach unpredictability.
16. Please tell me an interesting story about your institution.
17. Please tell me an interesting story about yourself.
18. Describe the role of ethics in your practice as an educational leader.
19. Describe your personal characteristics or virtues that assist you with success in your role as (insert role).
20. What final comments would you like to make about your role, about your institution, about your context, or about yourself?

APPENDIX D: CONTACT SUMMARY FORM

Contact Summary Form Salient Points in Contact with Preliminary Themes	
<p>Contact Details:</p> <p>Name:</p> <p>Phone No.:</p> <p>Institution:</p> <p>Place interview conducted:</p> <p>Length of interview:</p>	
Salient Points (Pick out the most salient points in the interview)	Develop Preliminary Themes

APPENDIX E: SAMPLE POSITION DESCRIPTIONS

Sample 1: College of New Caledonia President

GENERAL ACCOUNTABILITY:

The President is responsible to the Board of Governors for the leadership and management of the College of New Caledonia in a manner that achieves the vision, goals and objectives established by the Board and meets the needs of students, faculty, staff and the community. S/he develops partnerships and works in conjunction with government, agencies, industry and other post-secondary institutions to further the interests of the College. The President plays an integral role in the life of the College, and also a visible role as a member of our communities.

NATURE AND SCOPE:

The President advises the College Board on all matters pertaining to the operation of the institution. S/he provides initiative, guidance, and motivation to the Board, the employees, the students and the community to maintain the College's key role in the development of knowledge and skills and the social growth of the population it serves. S/he must also maintain a satisfactory balance between student, staff, faculty, administrative and community participation in the educational process on the one hand, and the control and guidance necessary for acceptable standards of achievement on the other.

The President oversees the design and implementation of educational objectives, maintenance of fiscal and monetary control, and plans for provision of physical facilities.

The President works with administrators, faculty, staff, students and unions to solve problems and pursue new ideas. The President shall ensure that major recommendations provided to the Board have followed a consultative process.

The President must effectively represent the College to the Ministry of Advanced Education and other funding sources in order to acquire funds to achieve objectives. This includes soliciting and securing funds through private donors as a result of the implementation of effective fund raising strategies. S/he pursues and coordinates post-secondary opportunities for the College and advises government on programming needs. The President also acts as the College spokesperson or designates a College spokesperson on all matters affecting the College.

The President is responsible for establishing the organization of the College in such a way as to achieve the College's goals and objectives. Currently, the Executive Vice-President Academic, Vice-President Finance/Administration/ Bursar, Vice-President of Community and Student Services, Director of Human Resources and the Executive Assistant to the President and College Board report directly to the President.

SPECIFIC ACCOUNTABILITIES:

1. **College Board:** Ensures that members of the College Board have all the information necessary to properly exercise their governance responsibilities.

Reports to the Board on a regular basis with relevant information regarding CNC operations. Develops and presents recommended courses of action and alternatives to the board for its consideration. Supports the Board during self-evaluation.

2. **Strategic Plan Implementation:** In collaboration with the Board, and in consultation with the Education Council and the constituent elements of the College, leads the implementation and execution of the Strategic Plan for the College.
3. **Annual Objectives for the President:** Annually, in conjunction with the Board and in the context of the Strategic Plan, establishes a list of objectives and targets to be achieved by the President in the upcoming year.
4. **Organization and Accountability:** Develops and maintains an effective organizational structure that prescribes the authority, responsibility and accountability of staff as they relate to the accomplishment of specific objectives and priorities to meet the education needs of the College and other stakeholder concerns.
5. **Leadership of Human Resources:** Provides strong and effective leadership to all staff of the College in order to capitalize on the full potential of this critical resource. Motivates staff to contribute their maximum to the realization of CNC's mission, vision and objectives.
6. **Policies:** Recommends to the Board new policies to support the achievement of the goals and objectives articulated in the strategic plan. Manages a framework to communicate, implement, and evaluate policies.
7. **Finance, Planning and Performance:** Through the Vice-Presidents responsible, ensures that the objectives established in the Strategic Plan are met with respect to finance, planning and performance.
8. **Relationship with Key Publics/Stakeholders:** Oversees the delivery of appropriate communications with the broader public and actively builds relationships with key stakeholders.
9. **Fundraising:** Actively provides necessary support and leadership regarding to the various fundraising activities of the College.
10. **Trends in Post-Secondary Education:** Keeps abreast of trends in post-secondary education and management and recommends new and innovative approaches to enhance the delivery of education services in achieving strategic goals and objectives.

QUALIFICATIONS:

1. **Experience:** A proven track record as a President, Vice-President, Dean, or other senior executive of a post-secondary institution or a comparable organization.
2. **Strategic:** Strong strategic and innovative thinking skills with the ability to work with others to set priorities and establish strategies to move an organization forward in realizing its vision.
3. **Leadership:** An open and collaborative leadership style. Skilled at creating and fostering a positive, respectful working climate. Fosters a team-based environment; is a highly visible leader who values and supports students and employees. Promotes excellent education, instruction and services.
4. **Educational Knowledge:** A broad-based knowledge and appreciation of college level education and life-long learning that includes business, health sciences, humanities, sciences, technology and trades training.
5. **Relationship Building:** The presence, stature and ability to develop and maintain positive and productive relationships with a wide range of stakeholders. Politically astute. Demonstrated ability to work effectively with the external community, Board of Governors, Education Council, various levels of government, aboriginal communities, students' associations, unions and staff.
6. **Student Centred:** A demonstrated appreciation for students and for the role of a community college in providing access to education for students regardless of demographics, geography and educational background.
7. **Commitment to Community:** Demonstrated ability to actively engage external stakeholders in the community and government. Committed to and enjoys the community outreach and social networking required of a President.
8. **Decision Making:** Effective decision-making skills that encourage collaboration. Willing to make and communicate difficult decisions when required. Excellent judgement, good financial management skills and can balance any competing priorities in the context of fiscal constraints.
9. **Labour Relations:** Positive track record in a unionized environment. Builds trust and positive relations with all employee groups.
10. **Education:** A Master's degree required.

Sample 2: Douglas College President

OVERALL PURPOSE:

The President is the Chief Executive and Educational Officer of Douglas College and is appointed by, and accountable to, the College Board for all aspects of the operation of the College.

RESPONSIBILITIES:

Under general direction from the Board:

1. Assists the College Board in defining and meeting its responsibilities.
2. Ensures the College is supportive of learners.
3. Ensures the College is supportive of its employees.
4. Represents the College and the post-secondary system effectively to the external community and government.
5. Ensures the College's organizational structure is flexible and adapts readily to a changing environment.
6. Ensures that decisions are made effectively and at the appropriate levels in the organization.
7. Leads and ensures effective strategic and tactical planning.
8. Ensures there is an effective and fully competent administration team.
9. Ensures the College is fiscally responsible and financially stable.
10. Demonstrates leadership in policy planning and development.

PRINCIPAL DUTIES:

1. Advises and reports to the Board on any matters pertaining to the operation and development of the institution.
2. Makes recommendations to the Board that support the advancement of the College towards its goals.

3. Provides general direction to the Vice-Presidents and ensures their programs and actions are congruent with the goals, philosophy, and priorities of the College.
4. Acts as Chief Spokesperson for the College on behalf of the Board.
5. Acts as advocate for the College and the Post-Secondary system to the external community, including government and government officials.
6. Makes final decisions on conflict issues for the College in accordance with College policy/procedure.
7. Recommends budgets to the Board for approval.
8. Exercises spending authority on behalf of the College for all expenditures.
9. Ensures that regular evaluations and professional development plans are in place for Senior Administrative Vice-Presidents and the Staff of the President's Office.

QUALIFICATIONS

1. Established academic credibility as is usually evidenced by a graduate or post graduate degree.
2. Senior administrative experience in a post-secondary institution, or equivalent.
3. Demonstrated ability to ensure there is effective decision making within a collegial environment.
4. Demonstrated advocacy and communication skills.
5. Demonstrated record of commitment to learning and learners.
6. Demonstrated experience in community and instructional activities that demonstrates the ability to work effectively as a leader with diverse groups.
7. A demonstrated record of effective strategic planning and implementation of change management.

Sample 3: Northern Lights College Vice President Instruction

GENERAL NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION OF THE POSITION

Reporting to the President, the Vice President, Instruction is responsible for providing leadership for all educational matters for the College including facilitating all matters of instruction within the campus and learning centre operations without having direct supervisory responsibility over most faculty, the evaluation of faculty and programs, the development of instructional strategies for all faculty, faculty professional development and instructional related college committees. The Vice President, Instruction will perform a wide range of difficult and complex administrative activities requiring a high level of independence within a teamwork setting. As a member of the administrative team participates directly in the development of college policies and procedures.

SPECIFIC RESPONSIBILITIES

Administration

Facilitate instruction within the college.

Develop a strategy which ensures public awareness of program developments and successes.

Provide leadership in the evaluation of all faculty and program areas.

Provide leadership in implementing the advice of advisory committees where applicable.

Direct supervision of International Education, English as a Second Language, First Nations, Academic Associate of Arts and University Transfer Programs, and Distance Education Technology.

Directly responsible for the administration of an operating budget of approximately \$1 million.

Indirectly supervise an instructional budget of \$7 million.

Participate in developing collective bargaining strategies.

As part of the college's administrative team, participate directly in the development of college policies and procedures.

Liaison

Through liaison with others such as universities, colleges, skill centre and the Ministry, pursue the development of new program opportunities and ensure that all programs are articulated with other institutions and accrediting bodies.

Serve as Chair of the Admin/Program Committee.

Chair the student/faculty appeals committee.

Serve as a standing member of the college's collective bargaining committees.

Provide leadership, direction & liaison between college committees and the college's administrative committee, Educational Technology Committee, SWAT, etc.

Other

Serve as the administrative representative to the college's education council

Administrative representative serving in an advisory capacity to the College Board.

In the absence of the President, serve as Acting President as requested.

Performs other duties as assigned by the President.

Supervise the Following Staff

Eight staff.

Required Knowledge, Skills and Personal Qualifications

An understanding of current issues in the administration of post-secondary education.

Strong planning, writing and evaluation skills.

Strong leadership and decision making skills.

Capable of resolving issues in an open and participative manner.

Required Experience

A minimum of five years of teaching experience and a further six years of supervisory experience in post-secondary institutions.

Required Education

Master's Degree.

Sample 4: Douglas College Vice President Education**OVERALL PURPOSE:**

Responsible for the overall administration, development, implementation, evaluation, and effectiveness of formal education programs and professional continuing education programs at the College. The Vice-President, Education develops and implements College-wide policies and long-range plans pertaining to formal education programs and professional continuing education programs of the College.

RESPONSIBILITIES:

Under general direction from the President, this position is accountable for

1. Providing leadership in the delivery, evaluation and administration of all post-secondary level, formal, credit educational programs for the College as provided for in the College's operating budget.
2. Providing policy guidance for post-secondary level, formal, credit educational programs at the College.
3. Providing leadership in researching, initiating, developing, evaluating and administering professional level continuing education programs, both credit and non-credit.
4. Direction, assignment, evaluation, discipline and development of administrative personnel reporting directly to him/her.
5. Providing leadership to ensure that policy and procedure is developed and implemented with respect to his/her area of responsibility, in anticipation of institutional needs.
6. Acts as chief advisor to the College with respect to post-secondary level, credit educational programs and professional level continuing education programs, advising the President and the Board regarding all aspects of his/her area of responsibility.
7. As a member of the senior management team, ensures the good general management of the College.
8. Planning and negotiations with various organizations such as school districts, government agencies, Ministry of Advanced Education, public and private institutions with respect to the College level education programs.
9. Represents the College and College interests with the Ministry of Advanced Education, School Districts, other educational institutions, government agencies and

municipal government departments, public and private institutions and at appropriate community meetings, events and public hearings.

PRINCIPAL DUTIES

1. Ensures the quality of curriculum and instruction in his/her area of responsibility, including compliance with College educational policies.
2. Responsible for ensuring the development and maintenance of effective working relationships within his/her area of responsibility and between his/her area of responsibility and other areas of the College including the development and maintenance of procedures to facilitate effective communication with all areas of the College.
3. Responsible for long range planning and developing and implementing policy on College operations related to his/her area of responsibility.
4. Negotiates major contracts and related expenditures within his/her area of responsibility.
5. Responsible for ensuring the effectiveness and competence of the administrative team in his/her area of responsibility including selection, assignment and discipline of administrators reporting directly to him/her.
6. Ensures that regular evaluations and professional development plans are in place for administrators and staff in his/her area or responsibility.
7. Accountable for the overall allocation of operating and capital budgets within his/her area of responsibility.
8. Makes decisions on conflict issues for his/her area of responsibility in accordance with College policy/procedure.
9. Assumes the duties of the President and other Vice-Presidents as and when required.
10. Ensures that decisions regarding his/her area of responsibility are made effectively and in compliance with College processes.

QUALIFICATIONS

1. Established professional credibility as is usually evidenced by a graduate degree, and/or equivalent combination of formal and informal education and experience.
2. A range of senior and/or mid-level administrative experience in a post-secondary institution or equivalent.

3. Familiarity with the development of contemporary public educational institutions together with a demonstrated understanding of the philosophies of post-secondary education and the psychology of adult learning.
4. Demonstrated decision-making capacity together with an ability to ensure effective decision-making within a Collegial environment.
5. Demonstrated advocacy and communication skills.
6. Demonstrated leadership ability.
7. A demonstrated record of effective strategic planning and implementation of change management.
8. Demonstrated ability to work effectively as a leader of diverse groups in community, educational, and administrative environments.

Sample 5: Northern Lights College Dean of Instruction

The Dean of Instruction takes a leadership role in fostering a consultative, respectful College environment that emphasises educational innovation and excellence in response to diverse community needs.

In addition to cross-college educational responsibilities, the Dean of Instruction may also have management responsibilities for instructional activities within a campus that do not fall within his/her specific program portfolio.

The responsibilities listed below under section "A" refer only to the cross-college educational responsibilities. The responsibilities listed under section "B" refers to those campus management responsibilities that the Dean residing on the Terrace Campus, will undertake or oversee.

A. Cross-College Responsibilities

- Ensure quality and consistency of educational programs across the College.
- Provide educational approval of training proposals and agreements where existing College curriculum is utilised.
- Review program enrolments and undertake appropriate action in consultation with campus managers / co-ordinators as per enrolment guidelines.
- Participate in the development of program marketing strategies in consultation with program cluster and College marketing team.
- Review annual operating budget for program areas.
- Participate in College committees as appropriate.
- Participate in search committees.
- Approve faculty appointments.
- Participate in faculty evaluation.
- Establish, monitor and participate in program advisory committees.
- Participate in negotiating collective agreements.
- Participate in program reviews and monitor implementation of recommendations.
- Provide liaison with external licensing or accrediting bodies.
- Participate in provincial Deans and Directors meetings.
- Monitor articulation and affiliation agreements.
- Provide leadership in developing, monitoring and implementing the College's Educational Plan.
- Assist in educational policy development.
- Monitor program compliance with educational policy.
- Provide educational support to those responsible for non-base-funded program activity.
- Approval of faculty hiring within program areas, as appropriate.

- Provide educational leadership and support in program development initiatives.
- Facilitate and support professional development activities.
- Engage in key college-wide, community consultation initiatives.

B. Campus/Region Specific Responsibilities

Planning and Management of Campus Programs

- Conduct ongoing community needs assessment in collaboration with program faculty, staff administration, and plan, implement and assign appropriate resources to campus programs.
- Supervise the delivery of Continuing Education programs to ensure that community needs are met in a fiscally responsible manner.
- Design delivery modes that are effective and efficient.
- Oversee local implementation of marketing strategies
- Ensure that Collective Agreements and College Personnel policies are followed.

Community Liaison

- Establish representative community consultation processes.
- Maintain regular communication with local representatives of funding agencies.
- Maintain positive relations with other training agencies in the communities.
- Pursue partnership agreements as appropriate.
- Participate in community events in a manner that promotes the College.
- Represent the College on community boards and committees.
- Host special events that promote College programs and services (open house, trades show, etc.)

Fiscal Management

- Review and monitor campus budgets for instructional departments
- Ensure that College financial fiscal policies are followed in instructional areas within the campus.

Sample 6: Camosun College Dean**A) ORGANIZATIONAL OVERVIEW**

Camosun College is a leading community college in British Columbia with values that include a commitment to learning, a focus on students, appreciation of the people who provide the services and support that sustain the learning relationship, a dedication to service and a spirit of respect. Physically located on two urban campuses, we have 20,000 fulltime and part time learners, a complement of over 1,100 employees, and an operating budget near \$70 million.

B) JOB SUMMARY

Each of the five Schools in Camosun College is headed by a Dean who has overall responsibility for:

- Leading and guiding the development and operation of a School, that is committed to the provision of quality educational programs and student support, and
- Participating as a member of the Education Management Team which establishes direction and coordination for the Education and Student Services Division as well as College-wide responsibilities as a senior administrator.

The key role of the Dean is to provide vision and leadership in strategic planning, and in establishing goals, priorities, policies, and procedures for the School as well as the larger Education and Student Services Division.

At the School-level, the Dean's role balances responsibility for educational leadership with the need for ensuring the effective management of operational, human, financial and capital resources for the School.

C) REPORTING RELATIONSHIPS

The Dean is responsible to the Vice President, Education and Student Services, and serves with other Deans and Directors as a member of the Vice President's Education Management Team and the College Management Team.

Reporting directly to the Dean are:

- Associate Dean
- Assistant to the Dean

D) ESSENTIAL JOB FUNCTIONS

1. Leadership and Planning

- Participates in college strategic and operational planning
- Leads the development of School strategic, operational and resource planning
- Provides a vision and facilitates the setting of goals for the School
- Encourages organizational growth and leads change
- Builds a culture characterized by trust, acknowledgement, recognition and empowerment.

2. Internal and External Presence

- Ensures the implementation of policy and process which are consistent with College policy and process
- Pursues formal and informal partnerships with other domestic and international institutions or organizations
- Ensures School activities and programming are aligned with government expectations
- Ensures effective links, and representation of the School across the College (other Schools, service departments) with regard to consultation and coordination and joint planning
- Works with College Relations and Student Services to ensure the promotion, marketing and imaging of School programming
- In collaboration with the Chairs explores and establishes links with employers, other educational providers, community groups, and the professional community.

3. Program Development and Student Success

- Ensures the implementation of policy and process related to curriculum development and approval
- Assists in the pursuit and development of new program ventures
- Initiates program-related market research and needs assessments.
- Develops revenue generating opportunities within the School
- Ensures the evaluation of current programs for currency, relevance and effectiveness
- Ensures that quality standards are met through Program performance indicators (quality assurance).
- Participates in the development of College policy and process related to student development and success
- Ensures the provision of a continuous process or invitation for receiving feedback (face-to-face/focus groups/course evaluation/exit interviews)
- Ensures the development and maintenance of student recognition and celebration
- Is final authority for informal student appeals within the School.

4. General Administration

- Represents the School in the development of college financial and administrative policy and process
- Leads overall budget planning and development for the School
- Represents the School in College Budget Development
- Authorizes department expenditures to the prescribed limit
- Ensures effective administration of the School.

5. Human Resources Management

- Ensures the implementation of College policy and process
- Provides leadership in recruitment, selection and succession planning
- Ensures appropriate performance management processes
- Represents the School in the grievance procedure
- Promotes reward and recognition (individual and group)
- Ensures orientation/mentoring is available to employees
- Participates in the negotiating of collective agreements as appropriate
- Ensures that collective agreements are followed as per College policy and procedures.
- Supports and develops a culture of trust, respect and empowerment
- Is the final authority within the School for faculty and staff complaints.
- Approves new hiring and regularization.

E) EXPERIENCE AND ABILITIES

- Demonstrated skills in leadership and team-building
- Demonstrated ability to create and maintain a positive, student-centered working environment that supports learning for students, faculty, and staff
- Demonstrated ability to provide senior leadership to a diverse faculty and administrative group within a multi-union environment
- Demonstrated expertise in budget development
- Knowledge of program design, development, delivery and evaluation within an academic environment
- Demonstrated expertise in human resource management.
- Demonstrated commitment to serving students with diverse backgrounds, interest, goals and abilities;
- Demonstrated ability to lead change
- Demonstrated ability to lead organizational development projects
- Demonstrated competence in program and schedule planning and evaluation.

F) QUALIFICATIONS

MINIMUM QUALIFICATIONS:

Master's degree in a relevant discipline

Five years full-time responsible administrative and leadership experience at the post-secondary education level.

Five years exemplary post-secondary teaching or educational development experience.

Sample 7: College of New Caledonia Associate Regional Director**GENERAL ACCOUNTABILITY:**

Through consultation with the Regional Director this position is responsible for assisting with the effective operation of the Lakes District Campus. Responsibilities include, but are not limited to, planning, organizing, staffing, and managing resources for a campus.

NATURE & SCOPE:

The Assistant Regional Director is a member of the administrative staff. At the discretion of the Regional Director, positions will report to the Assistant Regional Director including up to 100+ full and part-time faculty, support and contract employees.

The incumbent, in conjunction with the Regional Director, is responsible for continuing and improving:

- A cooperative management structure, where all campus constituencies are included in the decision making process;
- Educational leadership in a dynamic, responsive operation;
- A safe, culturally inclusive, enjoyable learning environment that facilitates respect, equality and understanding;
- Innovation, experimentation and risk taking in both new and ongoing programs and services;
- The cost recovery aspect of the campus operation;
- The equality based philosophy where all employees and students are equal partners in the learning process; and
- Student and employee success by encouraging everyone to be their best.

FUNCTIONS:

In consultation with the Regional Director, the Assistant Regional Director will:

- Continue to develop and maintain a student centred environment;
- Encourage a climate of excellence, responsibility and accountability by facilitating professional development activities, monitoring job performance, ensuring program and service guidelines and outcomes are met and recognizing employee contributions and achievements;
- Encourage evaluation as a tool for affirmation, improvement and change;
- Conduct regular evaluations of faculty and support staff as requested by the Regional Director;
- Act as a resource to faculty and staff on academic, program and service issues;
- Assist with problem solving, troubleshooting and provide conflict resolution in a sensitive and professional manner;
- Participate on hiring committees for faculty and staff and, in conjunction with the Regional Director, make the hiring decision;

- Provide overall educational accountability by ensuring program and curriculum changes follow established procedures;
- Ensure all college policy and procedures and collective agreements are adhered to;
- Provide advice to the Regional Director regarding interpretation of policies and collective agreements;
- Assist in determining overall campus direction and educational plan by overseeing curriculum, program and course development;
- Ensure programs and services are designed to meet business, industry and community needs;
- Review staffing requirements and qualifications;
- Coordinate and monitor college support services to ensure accessibility and relevance to students and the community;
- Participate in modifying, developing and maintaining educational objectives, goals, strategies and direction for existing programs;
- Develop and maintain positive campus communication strategies via formal and informal mechanisms;
- Establish and maintain extensive community and agency contacts including industry and business leaders, professionals, and ministries and federal agency representatives;
- When requested, represent the college in negotiations with unions and associations as well as external agencies;
- Ensure course, program and service offerings meet the varied educational, training and personal needs of students and the community;
- Participate on college wide committees;
- Promote open communication with PPWC and the Faculty Association; and
- Participate in grievance process and decision making.

SKILLS:

The incumbent must have relevant post secondary degree, with a master's degree being preferred. Adult teaching and leadership experience, and a directorial philosophy that is employee and student focussed are required.

The position requires excellent communication, interpersonal, motivational, consultation and problem solving skills.

The incumbent needs a broad understanding of cost recovery programming, the college policies and procedures, collective agreements, and the budgetary responsibilities.

Sample 8: Okanagan College Regional Dean**OVERALL PURPOSE:**

The Regional Dean is responsible for promoting and developing the Kelowna Campus and Central Okanagan region and Okanagan College (OC) in general in accordance with the mission, values, goals, and policies of OC, as well as for providing administrative support and leadership in conjunction with the Program Deans for programs and services delivered in Kelowna and the Central region.

NATURE AND SCOPE:

The Regional Dean is the senior administrator in the area served by the region in the promotion and development of the region's Campus and Centres. The Regional Dean will work closely with other Deans, Directors or other administrative staff assigned to the region's Campus in the promotion and development of OC programs and services in general. The Regional Dean's external role includes liaison with the communities served by the College in the region, including contact with the school districts, local community agencies, municipalities, governments, and other public and private sector organizations and agencies.

The position of Regional Dean is a developing position at the new College and new to the Central Okanagan. The incumbent must be prepared to contribute to the ongoing development and articulation of this position in a collegial manner with other Regional Deans and Okanagan College management.

Within the context of Okanagan College as a whole, the Regional Dean is responsible for providing programs designed to meet the needs of students, communities and employers in the Central Okanagan region. In consultation and cooperation with the members of the senior management team, the Regional Dean promotes and publicizes OC programs and services. Regional Dean promotional activities include student recruitment initiatives in the area served by the College in the Central Okanagan region. The Regional Dean also engages in fundraising activities as appropriate.

The Regional Dean works with Program Deans in planning the region's programs and services. The Regional Dean is a member of the senior management team and works to provide direction to and quality assurance of education programs and delivery across all the Okanagan regions. Within this institutional context, the Regional Dean is responsible for ensuring that the Central Okanagan region's educational and administrative needs and perspectives are represented and appropriately incorporated into institutional plans. Accordingly, the Regional Dean participates in institution-wide long and short term planning, budget, and policy development, and in educational planning.

The Regional Dean will foster the development of collegiality and teamwork in the Central Okanagan region and work to maintain such working relationships among faculty and staff

across all regions. The Regional Dean also fosters an environment which is supportive of a learning organization, and is committed to providing quality educational service through the active development of continuous quality improvement initiatives. The Regional Dean attends to personnel matters associated with the region's administrative staff including recruitment of new and replacement staff members, orientation, training, professional development, position descriptions, and performance planning and appraisal. The Regional Dean participates on the selection committees for all faculty and staff hired to work at the Campus and in the region, and also contributes to the evaluation of all faculty and staff assigned to the regional Campus or Centres in accordance with evaluation procedures established by the College. In emergency situations, the Regional Dean may exercise the authority of the designated supervisor to whom regional faculty and staff report, and is accountable to the supervisor in such instances.

The Regional Dean responds to student and public concerns, and consults with institutional deans and directors as appropriate. The Regional Dean works with OC senior management to ensure the effective provision of information, recruitment, advising, registration, and financial aid services at the Campus and Centres in accordance with policies and procedures established by the institution.

The Regional Dean manages the region's budget and is responsible for expenditures and allocations within that budget. The Regional Dean works with the Director, Facilities Planning and Management, to ensure the provision and maintenance of adequate and appropriate facilities, furnishings and equipment at the Kelowna Campus and the region's Centres.

The Regional Dean maintains knowledge of current developments in post secondary education and maintains awareness of trends and conditions affecting the College in order to provide advice and direction to the management of OC, and to provide educational leadership at centre, community and institution-wide levels.

The Regional Dean provides day-to-day liaison with the Okanagan College's student union at the Kelowna Campus, consulting with the Director of Student Services as appropriate.

The Regional Dean represents OC on provincial committees, participates in internal committees, and maintains liaison with counterparts at other institutions, and with government and private sector organizations and agencies as required.

Challenges of this position include the need to effectively coordinate the delivery of programs and services in the Central Okanagan region without always having direct responsibility for these programs and services. This requires an ability to work with a wide range of delegated authority. Due to the operational complexities that arise from the resulting relationships, the Regional Dean must possess consultative and personal leadership skills.

SPECIFIC RESPONSIBILITIES:

1. Advises the president, vice presidents, deans, and directors on significant matters relating to the operation of the Campus and Centres.
2. Ensures the provision of public services delivered through the centre administration office, including academic and continuing education support staff. Services include the scheduling of classes, rooms, examinations, and other activities at the campus.
3. Ensures the effective day-to-day operation of the Campus by developing and maintaining effective communication and coordination both within the Campus, and between the Campuses and Centres of other faculties, divisions, departments, and the OC community for programs and services delivered in the region.
4. Anticipates, recommends, and contributes to the development of institution-wide policies and long term planning, and contributes to the overall management of OC as a member of the Senior Management Team.
5. Develops and updates long range plans and annual operating and capital budget for the Campus and Centres in keeping with OC requirements.
6. Develops and administers region wide policies, procedures, and services to support the objectives of OC.
7. Reviews and approves professional development plans for the staff who report directly to the Regional Dean, and monitors follow-up activities in order to maintain high performance standards.
8. Contributes to the evaluation of all OC faculty and staff working at the Campus and in the region.
9. Participates on the selection committees for all faculty, staff, and contract personnel hired to work in the region.
10. Administers and ensures adherence to OC policies and collective agreements.
11. Participates as the designated supervisor in the grievance procedure where appropriate, and provides input to OC's negotiating committees in formulating bargaining proposals.
12. Manages the region's budget, monitors monthly and annual expenditure statements and takes corrective action where required.
13. Develops, coordinates, and implements student success initiatives at the Campus.
14. In cooperation and consultation with Program Deans, oversees the progress of students

on academic probation by conducting initial interviews, approving programs of study, and overseeing and tracking student progress.

15. In cooperation and consultation with OC Foundation, promotes, develops and manages scholarships and bursaries at the Campus and the region, and ensures the provision of an appropriate annual awards selection process and presentation ceremony.
16. Manages the ABESAP budget for the Campus, including interviewing applicants and approving allocations of appropriate financial aid.
17. In consultation with the Director of Student Services, acts as official liaison with the Okanagan College students' union in Kelowna.
18. Maintains liaison with communities, school districts, community organizations, municipalities and other organizations and agencies within the Central Okanagan region.
19. Acts as the spokesperson for the Campus and its Centres and normally as Master of Ceremonies at formal OC Campus events and functions, and represents the College at official functions in the community.
20. Participates in OC committees, teams and task forces, and coordinates the Regional Advisory Committee in the Central Okanagan region.
21. Ensures that faculty and staff are familiar with relevant health and safety regulations and receive instruction in safe work practices and accident prevention.
22. Prepares and submits reports of Campus and Centre activities.
23. Responds to student and public concerns, complaints, and problems, and, with appropriate consultations, ensures that such matters receive satisfactory institutional attention and resolution.
24. Performs other duties as assigned.

Education: Master's degree required; Doctorate or equivalent terminal degree in a discipline represented in the College is highly desirable

Experience: 8 - 9 years