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IMPLEMENTING PARTICIPATORY
RESEARCH WITHIN
A NORTHERN ONTARIO
FIRST NATIONS COMMUNITY

by
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Bachelor of Fine Arts, Ryerson University, 2008

A Major Research Paper
presented to Ryerson University

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Master of Arts
in the Program of
Early Childhood Studies

Toronto, Ontario, Canada, 2009

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IMPLEMENTING PARTICIPATORY RESEARCH WITHIN A NORTHERN ONTARIO FIRST NATIONS COMMUNITY

Christine Zupo, 2009

Master of Arts
Early Childhood Studies
Ryerson University

ABSTRACT

Participatory evaluation research (PER) is a research method that promotes decolonization among remote First Nations communities. Traditional methods of research have marginalized First Nations people while advancing western knowledge. As colonization worked to expunge First Nations cultural values from western mainstream knowledge, PER constructs new meaning derived from First Nations world perspectives. The present study explores the initial stages of implementing PER in a remote northern Ontario First Nations community. Community members are invited to form a research team to evaluate the outcomes of services available within the community. All levels of Canadian government are encouraged to embrace PER as a tactic for reducing the racism so deeply rooted in policy.

Key Words: colonization, decolonization, participatory evaluation research (PER).

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Implementing Participatory Research within a northern Ontario First Nations Community

Introduction

For more than 500 years, the voices of First Nations people have been silenced through the dominant culture's insistence to remain in power (Gaikezehongai, 2003). Assimilation tactics have been embedded in policies that enforce the reiteration of western values and assumptions as a means to ensure western self-preservation. Colonization involved governments using assimilative processes to expunge First Nations traditional world views and culture. Many of these processes have been compared to cultural genocide (Thomas & Green, 2007).

As a result, First Nations world perspectives have been invisible in social policy. The acts and treaties created by governments to assimilate First Nations have left a legacy of poverty and placed First Nations people in a vulnerable position (Sinclair, 2004). Presently, living conditions in fly-in First Nations reserves are considered the poorest in Canada (Bennett & Blackstock, 2007). Every day, First Nations communities face the challenge of living in poverty and finding hope for a future in a system that promotes oppression.

In 2005, the Lieutenant-Governor of Ontario, the Honourable James K. Bartleman, instituted the Summer of Hope Literacy Camps within 23 northern fly-in reserves in Ontario. The literacy camps are a response to the alarmingly high rate of First Nations youth suicide in northern Ontario. The intent of the camps is to increase self-esteem and sense of hope for First Nations children and youth.

A process of decolonization must be enacted in order to reverse the effects of colonization. Martin (2003) described decolonization as a pathway that must consider anything western as the "other" while valuing First Nations world views. Decolonization requires the dominant culture to critically understand the assumptions and values currently underlying ways in which the world is understood by First Nations themselves. Space must be created that does not only invite First Nations perspectives, but is fully reflective of First Nations perspectives. Decolonization involves detecting the power imbalance that creates inequity and oppression, recognizing the harm that has been inflicted through colonization, and ensuring First Nations world views are expressed in policy (Thomas & Green, 2007). Decolonization must be a transformative process that creates new meaning and knowledge derived from First Nations world views previously ignored by all levels of government. Social transformation involves the disempowerment of those who remain in privileged positions while at the same time empowering those who have been marginalized (Sonn & Green, 2006).

This research paper refers to participatory evaluation research (PER) as a method of decolonization. I will evaluate the initial stages of implementing PER within a northern Ontario First Nations community. PER values the community members as the experts in determining the worth of the programs and services available to them (King, 1998). PER, in general, invites community members to form a research team. The research team is then encouraged to outline locally specific goals and outcomes for programs (Cousins & Whitmore, 1998). As a facilitator, the researcher supports the team in developing methods of evaluation. This enables the community research team to determine the effectiveness of programs in response to community expectations. As a method, PER has the potential to move away from the western ambition to assimilate First Nations people by creating program goals entrenched in First Nations world perspectives. The process of decolonization is facilitated when programs are evaluated against First Nations community values as opposed to western values.

As a participant observer (PO), I evaluated the process of initiating PER within a remote First Nations community in northern Ontario. I kept rich field notes as I observed a south Ontario

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university professor invite community members to form a research team. The community research team was encouraged to define locally specific goals for the Summer of Hope Literacy Camps. Goals were created by community members who care for and have genuine concern for their children and youth.

The subject of this major research project is an evaluation of the forming stage using methods of participatory observation. I was accompanied by my supervising professor from a south Ontario university who is in the beginning stages of implementing PER within the community. The supervising professor oversaw the research study and reviewed my field notes for accuracy and bias. The process of group formation will be reviewed using Tuckman's (1965) stages of group development. This study is intended to be a template for future PER projects within First Nations communities.

Situating the Case

Governmental Intervention Programs as Agents of Assimilation

Government intervention programs, entrenched in western assumptions, have been seen as a means to further assimilate First Nations communities toward western ideologies (Sinclair, 2004). First Nations perspectives have been missing when determining program goals and outcomes. As a result, it is difficult to assess whether programs truly meet the needs of First Nations communities (Antone, 2000). Colonization attempted to disconnect First Nations communities from their world views and identity (Sinclair, 2004). Eileen Antone (2003), who is an Aboriginal literacy researcher at Ontario's Institute for Studies in Education University of Toronto, has written articles that emphasize First Nations perspectives of literacy. Antone (2003) stated First Nations literacy encompasses more than obtaining a set of effective skills of reading and writing. Instead, First Nations literacy is most often seen as the development of the wholeness of self and not just the cognitive processes involved in literacy (Archibald, Antone, & Blair, 2003). The process of requiring First Nations literacy skills is transformative in nature, as it focuses on the connectedness between the "…spirit, heart, mind and body," whereby educating the mind, you educate the whole spirit (Antone, 2003, p. 21).

There is a demonstrated need in children's services in northern Ontario remote First Nations communities. However, there is a startling lack of services available to young children in these communities. Louise Brown, education reporter for the *Toronto Star*, noted that, "Three quarters of students here show special needs, yet there is only one special education teacher. There are no regular visits by social workers, no literacy experts, no speech pathologists, no professional development" (Brown, 2005). This article was part of a response to *Star*'s series "Ontario's Forgotten Children" (Brown, 2008). This series demonstrated how young children in Ontario's northern remote First Nations communities are eight out of ten times more likely than their non-First Nations counterparts to be two grades behind. In an article from this series, a young nine-year-old child from northern Ontario admits, "I can't read (she hangs her head), I don't know how" (Brown, 2008). In south Ontario, this child would have services made available to her. In northern Ontario, services are not available.

In the north, teachers without the qualifications expected in south Ontario are hired, teacher aids with no training in special needs work with identified children, and young children who experience the suicide of loved ones and who struggle with the hopelessness poverty brings have no social workers available within their communities. In fact, it is not First Nations children who are lagging behind, it is the system that is lagging behind by not providing opportunities to increase well-being for northern Ontario First Nations children. Deputy chief Goyce Kakegamic

of Nishnawbe Aski Nation in northern Ontario states, "…with the right learning environment and proper supports, our students can excel" (Brown, 2005). First Nations communities in northern Ontario have the opportunity to create program goals that reflect community values through the implementation of PER. In facing the crisis in the north, it is essential that the community is a partner in creating new meaning that is reflective of cultural values unaware to those in south Ontario.

Education as a Means of Assimilation

When considering the public education system in Ontario and the success and failure of First Nations children, it is impossible to ignore the lingering historical remaining effects from the residential school system (Van Der Woerd & Cox, 2003; Riecken, Tanaka, & Scott, 2006). The residential schooling system was derived from an educational policy put into place to assimilate First Nations people. The public education system also has been responsible for the process of assimilating First Nations world views, language, cultural and spiritual values, as its objectives have been to ensure assimilation through silencing First Nations presence (Antone, 2000). By ignoring the voice of First Nations people, the dominant culture remains in power and First Nations remain oppressed. The discourse of educational policy continues to affect quality of education for First Nations children, as it still fails to incorporate their unique needs.

Wilson and Wilson (2002) have explored current literature concerning the value of integrating First Nations education into mainstream systems. They recognize the current educational system as a system that represents the dominant culture's value system and ideologies to be taught to children and youth to ensure its longevity (Wilson & Wilson, 2002). Wilson and Wilson (2002) claim fusing eurocentric curriculum with First Nations world views is

not sufficient as the content becomes "…mainstream knowledge about Indigenous peoples" while remaining oblivious to First Nations world views.

Battiste, Bell, and Findlay (2002) recognized the education system as "entrenched in assumptions…with eurocentric knowledge [that] represents the neutral and necessary story for 'all' of us" (p. 83). Deconstruction of the current education system and a reconstructing of a system derived from First Nations world views is needed. For a process of decolonization to be effective, it is essential to disrupt mainstream thinking, deconstruct current concepts and create new meanings that reflect First Nations world views (Battiste, 2004). It will be necessary to deconstruct a particular way of looking at the world and the meanings attached to concepts. The concept of literacy, for example, may shift away from the western value of print where literacy equals intelligence and "…illiteracy equals incompetence" to include First Nations values of literacy (Rasmussen, 2001, p. 107).

Bureaucratic Disentitlement of Services

Fragmented, bureaucratic federal government services have not been successful in addressing the poor living conditions on northern Ontario First Nations reserves. Structural weakness of the federal government's bureaucratic system has disentitled First Nations communities to services meant to benefit populations in meaningful ways. Lipsky (1984) explained bureaucratic disentitlement as the unseen, undetected, subtle ways in which federal government statute is manipulated by front-line workers. Intentional or unintentional manipulation of statute often results in the retrenchment of services. The term *retrenchment* describes the curtailing of services that result in a reduction of the quality of service provided. often not meeting the needs of the target group (Ingram, 1991).

In Ontario reserves, this means retrenchment strategies hinder the deliverance of services to those who require them, making it challenging or impossible to create positive change. Budgetary cuts and policy that is oversubscribed are often the root issues of retrenchment (Ingram, 1991). Policy has been oversubscribed when too many target groups qualify for the same service (Ingram, 1999). When agencies are not able to meet client needs, often governmental officials allow agencies wider discretion to determine who is the very most eligible. Discretion comes with a substantial cost, as it may mean clients for whom the statute was created may be denied services or will receive services where most likely quality has been compromised (Lens, 2005).

Bureaucracies aim to move citizens away from dependence on the state by tightening entitlement and eligibility guidelines (Sossin, 2006). Tougher sanctions increase the number of people disentitled to services, thus removing them from government benefit rolls (Sossin, 2006). The more interviews required to attend, the more letters to answer, the more forms to complete in order to prove eligibility and entitlement will increase the chances of people failing to meet requirements (Sossin, 2006).

The ability to disentitle people from benefits is a barrier to social justice. Those in need may be overlooked and not justly served. It is how statute is implemented that will ensure or discourage social equity (Lens, 2005). Social injustice occurs when citizens do not qualify for benefits because they cannot comply with bureaucratic requirements. A democratic society assumes social justice is a structural dynamic in delivering service. However, bureaucratic disentitlement is a subtle process that is unnoticeable and unavailable to the general public to scrutinize or critique (Lipsky, 1984). For the poor operating within the bureaucratic welfare system, social inequities are often the result of issues of disentitlement (Lens, 2007). Bureaucratic disentitlement is a disempowering process that creates a sense of helplessness.

Bureaucratic disentitlement becomes more evident on northern Ontario First Nations reserves where the literacy rate is lagging behind the rest of Canada (Ontario Native Literacy Coalition [ONLC], 2003). Discouragement tactics of bureaucracy result in slowing progress on reserves, creating a sense of hopelessness, and securing a dependency on the system that perpetuates poverty (Sossin, 2006). Lack of literacy skills increases the difficulty in meeting bureaucratic requirements, such as filling out forms, writing proposals, writing complaints, and so on. To master the bureaucratic system, one must have the skills to complete the proper forms, as the primary concern of a bureaucratic system is to comply with its requirements (Keohan, 2008).

Effects of Colonization on Present-Day First Nations Children

Poverty has become the legacy of colonization as First Nations communities became dependent on the state. Bennett and Blackstock (2007) referred to poverty as the new form of colonization, as "…it overtakes the spirit, physical, emotional wellbeing and negatively affects cognitive potential" making it difficult for families and communities to care for themselves independently (p. 5).

Presently, the effects of colonization are evidenced by loss of land, diminished sense of autonomy, loss of language, loss of spirituality, suppression of belief systems, weakening of social and political institutions, and racial discrimination that has damaged sense of identity. As a result, First Nations youth are predisposed to suicide, self-injury, and other self-destructive behaviour (Advisory Group on Suicide Prevention, 2003). Northern remote communities in

Canada experience a suicide rate of up to 6% above the national suicide rate average of non-First Nations people (French, 2004). Rates of youth suicide are alarmingly higher than the national average of the suicide rates of non-First Nations young people. First Nations male youth are five times more likely to commit suicide and First Nations females are eight times more likely to commit suicide than their non-First Nations counterparts (Advisory Group on Suicide Prevention, 2003).

The statistical data available for Canadian First Nations youth suicide rates does not illustrate the extent of daily living that is faced within a context of poverty, shortage of housing, unemployment, and access to affordable food and clean water as communities face on remote fly-in reserves in northern Ontario. Canadian First Nations children are the most impoverished children in Canada, with one in two Aboriginal children living below the poverty line (Morris, 2007; Bennett & Blackstock, 2007).

Families face increased hardship on northern Ontario First Nations reserves, many of which are isolated and accessible only by air. Poverty, shortage of housing, high unemployment rates, and lack of access to clean water and affordable food are variables that increase the stress of daily living. The article *An Understanding of Poverty from Those Who are Poor* discusses the daily struggles of families on welfare. Families report that life is lived within a context of stress and worry of not having adequate amounts of food, unemployment, poor quality housing and increased likeliness of illness (Collins, 2005). Poverty is associated with poor outcomes for children, and the longer a child lives in poverty, the more poor outcomes become distinct (Bradshaw, 2001). First Nations youth face increasing hardship as they not only struggle with daily living within poverty, but also in finding hope within a system that has historically oppressed them.

Self-Esteem as the Moderator between Depression and Suicide

Poverty and depression are highly correlated (Patel, Flisher, Nikapota, & Malhotra, 2007). In a large study of adolescent risk behaviour, Wild, Flisher, and Lombard (2007) found depression and self-esteem to be highly correlated. It was found that self-esteem may act as a moderator between depression and suicide—with a high self-esteem guarding the individual's mental health and a low self-esteem compromising mental health (Wild et al, 2007). Growing up in a context of poverty exposes children to the many variables that put them at risk for depression (Patel et al., 2007). In a study to explore the origin of depressive symptoms in children, Dallair, Cole, Smith, Ciesla, LaGrange, Jacquez, Pineda, Truss, & Folmer (2008) stated, "…the stress associated with economic hardship and poverty is associated with increased risk for the development of children's depressive symptoms" (p. 831).

Young people do not wake up with high or low self-esteem. As children mature, they learn to define themselves from the verbal and non-verbal, and the conscious and unconscious messages received from the environment in which they develop. Youth are in the process of defining themselves and their place in society. Youngs (1993) described self-esteem as "self regard" in how one sees their value as a member of society. Youngs outlined six variables of self-esteem, "…a sense of physical safety, a sense of emotional security, a sense of identity, a sense of belonging, a sense of competence and a sense of purpose" (p. 63). Young children will acquire a sense of high or low self-esteem in accordance to the degree to which the described variables are met. As children and youth create their identity and sense of belonging, they require verbal and non-verbal messages that tell them they are valued, cared for, and safe. First Nations families in remote northern Ontario communities struggle with generations of cultural loss, battle with daily living within a context of poverty, and search for hope within a context of oppression.

First Nations children and youth are at a greater disadvantage of acquiring a low self-esteem and internalizing attitudes of learned hopelessness.

With poverty and unemployment rates extremely high on reserves, First Nations youth have little hope in finding a job. A lack of healthy food and clean water makes children and youth vulnerable to disease, stunted physical growth, and brain maturation. A lack of medical and counselling services on northern reserves fails to provide children and youth with the support and immediate services so taken for granted in south Ontario (Bennett & Blackstock, 2007). Households experience overcrowding due to a lack of housing units.

Gaikezehonga (2003) describes her memories of when she was growing up on reserve: Although I have always known that I am Anishnabekwe, I can recall thinking and feeling at 8 years old that I was basically born at the bottom rung of the latter of society. By the time I was 14, such thoughts and feelings remained internalized within while enough of my peers killed themselves. (p. 42)

Canadian First Nations children and youth are likely to receive messages from their environment indicating their health and well-being is not of significance. When First Nations youth compare their well-being to non-First Nations youth, it is unlikely they sense a feeling of affiliation, competence, and mission, which are requirements for positive self-esteem (Youngs, 1993).

Van Der Woerd and Cox (2003) conducted a study to explore how educational status is associated with risk-specific factors and protective factors for First Nations youth. They found that youth who have poorly attended school reported a low sense of self-esteem and were more likely to be involved in risky behaviour. It was also found that youth who stayed in school and attended regularly reported a higher sense of self-esteem (Van Der Woerd & Cox, 2003). Youth who remain in school sense a connectedness to school and are in a position to experience

opportunities that increase self-esteem. Affiliation with the school provides a sense of belonging to the school community, and these youth are more likely to aspire to continue their education. According to the results of this study, it appears that staying in school increases self-esteem and provides hope for the future. Arnau, Rosen, Finch, Rhudy, and Fortunato (2007) have determined hope to be an attribute that acts as a motivator for youth to pursue future goals.

Having hope seems to buffer against depression and suicidal ideation. In exploring the effects of hope on depression, Chang and DeSimone (2001) found individuals who reported being hopeful had less incidence of psychological maladjustment to the stresses of daily living. Individuals who experience a sense of hope experienced less depression than those who did not experience hope. Having a sense of hope and high self-esteem seem to act as protective factors against depression and suicidal ideation.

Summer of Hope Literacy Camps

The then Lieutenant-Governor, the Honourable James K. Bartleman, initiated the Summer of Hope Literacy Camps in 2005 as a means of fostering hope for First Nations children and youth. The intent of the Lieutenant-Governor's initiative was to boost literacy skills among First Nations children by providing literacy camps in remote First Nations communities. He worked with local leaders to institute the camps and partnered with Frontier College, Canada's longest-serving literacy organization, to deliver the program.

The program runs in 23 communities and provides literacy camps during the week following a schedule that meets the needs of the local community. Activities provide literacy experiences as well as crafts, games, and sport activities. The camps are now in the fourth year of

operation and are staffed by young people from the south working alongside young people hired within the communities.

The Honourable James Bartleman's objective of the summer literacy camps is to boost children's self-esteem through improved literacy and to provide learning through fun activities that encourage future participation in school. As research has previously indicated; participation in school increases a sense of self-esteem and the hope of attaining desired educational goals. As quoted by Grand Chief Stan Beardy of Nishnawbe Aski Nation (NAN):

> If we are to ask our young people of their dreams and goals, we must ensure that we can provide the vehicle for them to get there. If we are to ask them to reach for the stars, we must provide them the telescope to look through. The Summer of Hope camps open doors…and make dreaming possible. (Frontier College, 2007).

There is research that indicates that there is loss of learning due to summer vacation, and the loss is greater for children who live in a lower socio-economic class (Cooper, Nye, Charlton, Lindsay & Greathouse, 1996). Middle-class children show a gain in reading levels over the summer vacation while disadvantaged children show as much as one month of loss in skill (Cooper & Harris, 2003). Middle-class children seem to have the opportunities to build or increase skills during the summer. A suggested practice to close the gap between social economic status (SES) groups is to provide summer opportunities for skill building in literacy. Karl, Entwisle, Entwisle, and Olson (2001) also acknowledged seasonal influence on inequity in school achievement and found that disadvantaged children keep up throughout the school year but experience learning loss over the summer months. This study suggested that a summer program should have a large emphasis on physical activity to keep learning fun. On northern Ontario reserves, where young children live in deep poverty and lag behind the rest of the nation in literacy skills, literacy camps appear to be that much more essential.

Alarmingly high suicide rates have highlighted the need for intervention on northern First Nations reserves. Research has demonstrated that high self-esteem protects against suicidal ideation (Van Der Woerd & Cox, 2003). The Summer of Hope Literacy Camps have the potential to build on First Nations children and youth's self-esteem as they aim to increase or maintain literacy skills over the summer vacation period, making learning fun by including physical activities, and by encouraging children's engagement in learning.

Research to Decolonize versus Research to Marginalize

western research conducted within First Nations communities has created a relationship of mistrust between the researched and the researcher. Research has been performed by the dominant on the dominated (Piercy, Volker, & Thomas, 1998). Research on First Nations has historically benefited the dominant culture's ways of knowing while perpetuating the denial that First Nations world views and ways of knowing even exist (Wilson, 2007). Research has reflected interests and values of the dominant culture, and has marginalized and colonized First Nations. In fact, research has aided the colonization process, as First Nations people were being stripped of their world views, culture, spirituality and language. The word *research* represents western systems of acquiring knowledge that has historically "…meant…violation, disrespect, subjectivism, and intolerance…" toward First Nations (Pidgeon & Cox, 2002, p. 99).

Research also implies that First Nations are not capable of dealing with the problems that colonization has produced (Menzies, 2001). Linda Smith (1999), in her book *Decolonizing Methodologies,* described the effects western research has had on colonization by recognizing

"western knowledge and science [are] beneficiaries of the colonization of indigenous people" (p. 59). Due to past experiences, research and researchers are at times met with suspicion by First Nations people. Since traditional methods of research have advanced dominant mainstream knowledge at the expense of First Nations people, research projects presented by western institutions and researchers may not be as readily accepted on reserves. Years of exploitation and appropriation have left a sense of mistrust of western methods of research on the part of First Nations communities. The Tri-Council Policy Statement on ethics is beginning to recognize and address the past abuse of powers by researchers. It acknowledges that researchers have, in the past, exploited First Nations. The Tri-Council is currently designing policy that will ensure ethical principals, standards, and procedures are written in policy. Among the several recommendations are to include First Nations communities to be part of the research design and to ensure multiple First Nations perspectives are expressed (Tri-Council Policy Statement [TCPS], 1998).

Disrupting Mainstream Knowledge

There is a misconception that real knowledge is generated by experts in academic fields or governmental bodies. Mainstream knowledge reflects the belief system of the dominant culture and excludes First Nations world views. First Nations knowledge does exist; however, it is not recognized within the western mainstream (Hart, 2007). In order to encourage a process of decolonization, it is essential for the executors of mainstream knowledge to unlearn ways of thinking and being in order to transform the effects of colonization (Nadeu & Young, 2006).

In unlearning ways of thinking, the "white privileged" must first "...see other ways of being and doing or even to recognize that other ways exist" (Wilson, 2003, p. 165). Galinsky,

Magee, Inesi, and Gruenfeld (2006), in the article *Power and Perspectives not Taken*, studied the relationship between power and perspective taking. Power is understood as the "...capacity to influence other people; [which] emerges from control of resources and the ability to administer rewards and punishments" (Galinsky et al, 2006, p. 1068). They found that power is associated with the difficulty in taking the perspective of the less powerful. People, such as those in power of the dominant culture, are more likely to not take the perspective of those who are less powerful. In having control over "valuable resources," the powerful are less dependent on others and do not have to consider their perspectives (Galinsky et al., 2006, p. 7). Perspective taking is seen as empathizing with another's experience by "...imagining the emotions, perceptions, and motivations of another individual..." (Galinsky et al, 2006, p. 7). It was discovered that having power without perspective taking increases the possibility of stereotyping and racism, whereas the ability to take the perspectives of others allows individuals to value others (Davis, Conklin, Smith, & Luce, 1996).

The process of colonization lacked perspective taking as the dominant culture created legislation to eliminate First Nations world perspectives. In present times those in power do not have to consider other world views or recognize that other world views exist unless it will help them to attain their goals (Galinsky et al., 2006). Without the need to look beyond their world views, the dominant culture may remain comfortable and confident within an ideological system that has been created by themselves for themselves (Diaz, 2004).

Role of Participatory Evaluation Research

For the process of decolonization to be effective, research cannot be implemented among First Nations communities in order to solely benefit the researcher and the institution

represented. Participatory evaluation research (PER) has the potential to deconstruct traditional western methods of research. As discovered, traditional methods of western research place the researcher in the role of the expert. The knowledge that is acquired through formal research methods is entrenched with assumptions that support western ideologies (Piercy & Volker, 1998). The theories derived from this knowledge create discourse of theory and practice that perpetuate and strengthen dominant world views while excluding the views of those who are oppressed (Suarez-Balcazar, 2005). In creating community-based research teams, PER provides the space to tailor research to produce practices that are meaningful to those in which the research directly affects (Piercy & Volker, 1998).

PER finds it roots in participatory action research, which is part of community-based research in which research is conducted *with* communities and not *on* communities (Washington, 2004). PER assumes collaboration between communities and stakeholders such as universities, who share an interest of the entity being evaluated (Cousins & Whitmore, 1998). A research team is formed from community members who participate as equal partners in all aspects of research. Research teams formulate goals for community programs, and university collaborators provide information the research team may find useful when evaluating program outcomes. The function of the researcher is to invite community members to form the team and to relinquish power to the members of the community (Smulyan, 1987).

For some researchers, PER means a mere broadening of perspectives by including the input from those who the research directly affects. However, when PER is used within the context of decolonization, it implies the reallocation of power in constructing new knowledge based on First Nations community values (Cousins & Whitmore, 1998). PER becomes a transformative process because social change is made possible with the construction of new

knowledge (King, 2007). Within this forum, it is the First Nations community that creates the direction of the knowledge to be produced (Cousins & Whitmore, 1998). In this way, PER encourages First Nations to gain control of resources that impact their lives (Suarez-Balcazar, 2005). PER provides a sense of hope and less dependency on bureaucratic systems as First Nations communities move away from dependency toward self-reliance (Christopher, Watts, Knows, McCormick, & Young, 2008).

It has been demonstrated that it is essential for First Nations communities to design program goals, outcomes and evaluation methods based on indigenous world views and community needs (Menzies, 2001). In doing so, First Nations communities work in collaboration with outside agencies to ensure governmental programs and policies are meeting First Nations community needs as determined by the community. PER encourages the building of trust as it moves away from traditional western methods of research to include First Nations world perspectives (Cousins & Whitmore, 1998).

The present study uses qualitative methods to explore the components of the PER process. This study aims to support a northern Ontario remote First Nations community in assuming full ownership and control of the government-initiated Summer of Hope Literacy Camps.

Methods

The Role of the Participant Observer

The aim of the study is to realize the effectiveness of implementing PER within a northern Ontario First Nations remote community. The "case" of this study represents the process of establishing a research team through direct observation. As the participant observer

(PO) in this qualitative study, it is essential to situate myself within this case. I am a Caucasian woman who is of European descent and was born and raised in Toronto. I come from a working-class background, have been educated within a south Ontario university, and am currently a graduate student in a master's program in a south Ontario university. I have never travelled to northern Ontario, and I bring with me my own personal package of understandings and misunderstandings of how I have come to create meaning of the world I live in. I was supervised by my professor, who acted as a sounding board as I created meaning through direct observation.

The information derived from qualitative research provides depth of an intimate nature of the case being studied (Ambert, Adler, Adler, & Detzner, 1995). Qualitative research aims to focus on the way in which people behave, think, and make meaning. Blumer (1969) stated, "...if the scholar wishes to understand the actions of people it is necessary for him to see their objects as they see them" (p. 51). Blumer was referring to the role of the PO as one that does not only assume the role of observer, but also assumes the role of a participant of the group. Ashworth (1995) describes the participant observer's perspective to be one that provides "...emotional and motivational attunement to the group's concerns" (p. 372). As I attuned with the groups concerns, I was able to better understand what is of importance to them. Greene, Benjamin, and Goodyear (2001) discussed the qualitative observer as someone who is striving for social betterment. In order to strive for social betterment, I must practise perspective taking so that I learn to I see their concern and understand their values in ways that are locally specific to the community's team.

In striving for social betterment, it is imperative to realize that evaluation is not made in isolation. Evaluation is made within existing structures. These structures represent western norms of knowledge, behaviour, and ways of thinking and being that directly influence the observer's judgment at a seemingly unconscious level (Valovirta, 2002). Since educational structures influence the design of research, evaluation results may continue to contribute, shape, and reinforce normative structures already in place. It is necessary for me not to take on the role of the expert and to be open to other ways of knowing and understanding the world.

For the implementation of this evaluation, my supervisor and I visited a northern Ontario First Nations remote community. We visited the community on three separate visits, each for the duration of four days and three nights. The three visits were carried out over a four-month period. I observed my professor initiate the process of the research team formation as PER was implemented within the community. I recorded all she observed during the visit, and tried to keep an open mind in order to better understand the values and concerns of community members. Special emphasis was placed on observing the acceptance of our visits by the community, becoming familiar and trustworthy within the community, and the process of forming a community research team.

The relationship between the PO and the research team needs to reflect the common understanding of a shared perspective (Menzies, 2001). I adopt the transformative potential of PER as a personal paradigm (Cousins & Whitmore, 1998). I made every effort to disclose personal thoughts and opinions to ensure the meaning I was creating was derived from observations that reflected the perspectives of community members (Kemp, 2001). I kept a journal in order to document feelings and thoughts that occurred throughout the day.

A case study approach requires extensive data collection (Cresswell, 1998). I kept systematic and detailed field notes of observations made by recording anecdotal observations in a field log journal. The journal highlighted anecdotal observations recorded in sequential order of events. Observations included contextual information, what was seen and heard, reactions from

community members, and the challenges faced in establishing a community team within the context of PER. These notes provided the opportunity to reflect on the meaning being constructed from observations in order to detect bias. Kemp (2001) stated that it is necessary to validate the data of the PO through a systematic approach that follows "[o]bservation, recording, reflection and…clarification…" in a continual manner until saturation is achieved (p. 529). Saturation was achieved when it became possible to identify a repeated expressed concern, value, or experience. In order to provide clarification, my supervisor reviewed my field notes on an ongoing basis and provided me with support. When all observations were recorded, I analyzed the observations to identify emerging themes. I coded the themes that emerged and labelled them as findings to be analyzed and discussed.

Group Development

PER requires the development of a group that will work together to assess community programs. Bruce Tuckman (1965), an educational psychologist, observed the behaviour of small group to determine the ways in which they form. From his research, Tuckman identified four stages he believed groups need to move through before teams become as effective as they can be. The stages Tuckman identified are 1) forming; 2) storming; 3) norming; and 4) performing (Tuckman, 1965). In 1977, Tuckman and Jensen named a fifth stage: adjourning (Tuckman & Jensen, 1977).

In his article, Tuckman (1965) did not stipulate how long each stage will take. The time it takes for teams to reach the next stage is unpredictable (Runkel, Lawrence, Oldfield, Rider, & Clark, 1971). Each stage progresses as members establish themselves and their roles within the team. This stage is "the forming" stage, where there is high dependence on the leader for direction and clarification. Individuals question why they want to join the team, what it will require of them, and whether the team will work toward a common purpose (Brown, 1992). Within the "storming stage," individuals begin to respond emotionally as they assert their ideas and beliefs about the project at hand. Conflict may arise in the storming stage as members express their differing perspectives. As members begin to feel comfort in expressing their perspectives, the group moves on to the "norming stage." Within the "norming stage," the group comes together to establish a common perspective of the project at hand. The group can move on to functioning as an effective team when individuals within the group feel comfortable to express their perspectives and accept other members' perspectives with little emotional conflict (Brant & Harvery, 2004). Teams in the "performing stage" have established their roles within the team and can now begin to generate ideas and solutions. Team members become a sounding board to one another (Runkel et al., 1971). Groups within the performing stage now utilize the initial leader as a support.

Building Trust and Friendship

In PER it is essential the group be developed within a context of trust. Trust allows members to feel comfortable expressing their perspectives and ensures active participation (Fetterman, 2001). Trust takes on a deeper meaning when PER is implemented within a First Nations community. First Nations people are likely to be skeptical of the benefits of research, as historically research benefited the researcher and not the researched (Bennett, 2004). When implementing PER, it may appear that the south Ontario university is more interested in PER than the community itself. In implementing PER on a northern Ontario fly-in First Nations community, the researcher must ensure that participatory research is an approach rather than a

series of research techniques. The underlying assumptions of PER is to shift the power to the community in order to provide opportunity to create change.

Establishing a sense of trust happens over time (Plowfield, Wheeler, & Raymond, 2005). Trust emerges in a relationship when the needs of the partner are valued. Perspective taking must be implemented by the researcher, since the focus of PER is to create knowledge based on the views of the community. Community members must feel that they are treated as the experts in determining their values and designing the outcomes they desire for their programs. Universities that desire to establish a sense of trust within a First Nations community must carefully take into consideration the historical abuse First Nations people have endured through western research methods. Every effort must be made to listen to community members and be present within the community as an alley. In building trust, it is essential to be honest about the expectations of PER in order to be able to produce what you say you will be able produce. The first step in becoming familiar within the community is to make oneself visible within community.

Walking in the community, saying hello to children, waving at people driving and walking by, helping out whenever possible, attending community events, and expressing genuine interest in the community are essential acts that demonstrate care and concern that spread far beyond the scope of PER. Becoming familiar within the community establishes trusting relationships and friendships. Establishing trusting relationships between First Nations communities and the dominant culture is essential to the decolonization process (Cross & Blackstock, 2000). The racism and stereotyping that has been created by western society toward First Nations people is eliminated through perspective taking (Galinsky et al., 2006). Through perspective taking, we begin to see each other as we see ourselves, recognize our similarities,

accept our differences, and value each other. Demonstrating value for one's perspective is the basis of a trusting relationship (Bergen, 2002).

When the community sees the university representatives within the community at social functions, building relationships, and expressing genuine concern for its members, a sense of trust is easier to establish. The community will see the university representative as someone who demonstrates authentic care and concern for the community and is not solely interested in their own personal agenda. In establishing a sense of trust, one must be genuine, follow-through on what one says one will do, and not be judgmental. Creating an atmosphere of genuine care is a core ingredient for establishing a sense of trust (Christopher, Watts, Knows, McCormick, & Young, 2008). Considering the contextual history of western research on First Nations communities, establishing trust needs to be nurtured with a genuine and open presence in the community.

Results and Analysis

The following are the emerging themes resulting from the direct observations conducted during the three visits to a northern Ontario First Nations remote community. The duration of each visit was four days and three nights. Observations were recorded manually throughout each visit and were reviewed by my supervising professor. I did not use a tape recorder to record observations in order to limit the intrusiveness and invasiveness that research can bring to First Nations communities. The names of the people in this paper have been changed to protect privacy.

Observations were read by the supervising professor daily and discussed in order to provide clarification. The four main themes that have emerged are: 1) Building Trust and

Extending Respect in the Community; 2) The Emergence of a Community Research Team; 3) Double Standards between northern Ontario and south Ontario; and 4) Bureaucratic Disentitlement.

Building Trust...Building a Team

When reading this section, the reader might feel too much detail is being provided about the data collected when familiarizing myself within the community and in the formation of the research team. This information is recorded deliberately in order to demonstrate the level of commitment required from the researcher in respecting the development process of the community in establishing trust. This paper focuses on the initial stages of PER within a First Nations community. The goal of this PER project is to establish a research team made up of community members who will design the goals for their local Summer of Hope Literacy Camps and choose methods of evaluation (King, 1998). However, the research team did not form by western expectations. The team emerged as community members established a sense of trust with us. This paper will highlight the journey we took together as we established trust and friendship with community members. It was out of trusting relationships that it was possible to form research team.

First Visit

In representing a south Ontario university, it was essential for us to extend respect for the northern Ontario community's customs and traditions. Extending respect demonstrated that we valued the community's traditions and beliefs. The university may have increased the likeliness of establishing trust within the community by extending respect in a variety of ways.

Upon arriving for the first visit, the gentleman we shall name Peter who was supposed to pick us up from the airport and bring us to the hotel did not meet us. As my supervisor and I

walked to the hotel, three young people in a truck asked us if we would like a ride. When we arrived at the hotel, the room we reserved was not available. My supervisor and I left our bags at the hotel and went to announce our arrival at the Chief and Band Council's office. When we arrived, we removed our shoes before entering and were greeted by the receptionist. The Chief was not in so we announced our arrival to the Education Authority. As my supervisor greeted him, she briefly mentioned there was no room for us at the hotel. He assured us he would help us find a place to stay if the hotel was full. The woman from the hotel was at the Band Council office as well, and together we drove off in her car. The woman took us to a gentleman who made arrangements for us to stay in the teacherage.

With each trip, we paid a visit to the Chief and Band Council. Although request for permission to visit had previously been granted by the Chief, my supervisor felt that it was a sign of respect to greet him in person. In the community, I observed, it is a sign of respect to remove your shoes when entering someone's home. My supervisor and I offered this sign of respect upon entering all dwellings and businesses, including the Chief and Band Council office,

During each visit, it was important that we walked around the community to make our presence known. We made deliberate effort to wave and smile at drivers passing by as we walked along the roads of the community. The majority of drivers and children in cars or trucks waved back. Through my observations, I identified a variety of responses received by drivers as we said hello and waved and smiled at community members. Some drivers lifted their arm up and waved as they looked at us, others simply lifted their fingers off the wheel, and some nodded their heads in acknowledgment. Those who recognized us waved longer or slowed down to say hello and those we befriended stopped and talked. As we walked along the roads, children walking by or riding their bikes said hello to us. Some children initiated conversations, asking us

where we were from, showing us their puppies. Others said hello in response to our greeting. In reflecting upon these observations, I noticed there were varying degrees of greetings from community members ranging from obvious to subtle gestures. There was no evidence of us being unwelcomed or in danger. In fact, while being outsiders, we felt very cared for in the community.

On the first day, my supervisor and I set out to find John, who is a community member my supervisor knew previously and is the reason this community was chosen to implement PER. Once we found John, he and my supervisor reacquainted themselves and made a plan to connect with each other at some point during our stay.

On our way back to the teacherage, Peggy, whom my supervisor knew from a previous visit in the community, stopped her van to speak with us. Peggy teaches in the local school. My supervisor and Peggy had a conversation in which Peggy agreed to be a research team member and asked for advance notice for the initial meeting so she could make childcare arrangements.

That same afternoon we made ourselves visible in the community by crossing the bridge to an island rich in history to the community members. We hoped that exploring the community in depth demonstrated that we valued and respected the community beyond the scope of the PER project. We asked two young children who were swimming in the lake for directions to the bridge. The boys were helpful and descriptive.

On our way back to the teacherage, Peter drove by and stopped to speak with my supervisor. Peter is Peggy's sister and also works in the local school. Peter is working as a community program consultant for the project and assists my supervisor as a contact person in the community. Peter agreed to contact community members and attempt to organize a meeting.

That evening, we walked to see John. John owns a variety store in the community. While in the store we met Sally, John's wife. Sally is also a teacher in the local school. She sat with us

for an hour as we discussed her work and the commitment she has to her students. Sally spoke of how she works hard with the children who struggle. She spoke of how the ability to struggle it out sometimes helps the children make it through okay. Both Sally and John attended university and are highly respected by the youth in the community. My supervisor explained the purpose of our visit to Sally. Sally thought it was a good idea to form a team and committed to joining. While we were in the store, a friend of Sally entered. After talking for a bit, this woman agreed to join the team.

Spending time in a community store where there is constant stream of community members was another way for us to establish a connection within the community. Unlike a variety store in the south, where customers purchase something and leave, this store was set up as a community hub. John spoke of the care and concern he had for the community, especially the youth. John designed the store intentionally to be a local gathering place. More than just a store to purchase a snack, it was a place to connect with others. It had three long rectangular tables with chairs set up around a flat-screen TV for community members (especially youth) to gather. People purchased snacks, refreshments, homemade pizza, and grocery items, including meat, canned goods, and frozen foods. As we stayed in the store, we said hello to customers, smiled, waved, and sometimes talked with young children. We shared our experiences and answered questions about where we were from, why we looked different, and what we were doing there.

On the second day, Peter arranged to introduce my supervisor to the community over the local radio to encourage the establishment of a team and to organize a first meeting. During the announcement (which they repeated several times), Peter invited the community to a meeting that evening at the local school to discuss the formation of a research team. Peter introduced my

supervisor and asked her to describe the project and her need to gather a research team willing to evaluate the Summer of Hope Literacy Camps. Peter, my supervisor, and I showed up at the school that evening for the meeting and waited patiently for community members to arrive. As we were waiting, Peter mentioned that he understood that schools in the south sometimes complain of swimming pool closures. He said that up here they don't have pools in the school, and some communities don't have schools. It was discouraging that evening that no one attended the meeting. We had overlooked the fact that there was a community memorial service being held at the same time.

We left the school and Peter drove us to his sister Peggy's coffee store. Peggy's store is similar to John and Sally's store. Both stores are deliberately designed to welcome the community in to sit and talk with each other. We sat in a room with four sets of thick, lacquered pinewood rectangular tables with six matching chairs. A glass display case had homemade desserts and pizza. The smell of flavoured coffee filled the air. The store rented out DVD and video games and a variety of snacks and refreshments. This was a very comfortable gathering place where community members would purchase refreshments and play cards or board games at the tables. At this time, I spoke about the summer camps and the research team with one of the gentlemen (Sam) there who is a father of two young children. Sam expressed his concern for his children, hoping for them to do well in school. Sam expressed interest in joining the team. At this point, recruitment was slow as individuals reflected on the pros and cons of joining, but the team was forming. In this forming stage, it appeared that the initiator is more invested in the team than the members (Cousins & Whitmore, 1998). Community members responded to the invitation join the research team in a variety of ways. All members smiled, nodded their head, and were very open to the idea of forming a research team to evaluate the literacy camps. All members we

spoke to liked the camps; those who had children enrolled spoke of how much their children enjoyed the weeks in camp. Community members were always open to join the team, but it was difficult to organize a meeting with them.

We walked back to the teacherage afterwards with a dog we befriended on our earlier walks. The next morning we prepared to leave. As we waited for our ride to the airport, John drove by with his grandson to say goodbye and to ensure we had a ride to the airport. As we sat on the porch with John and his grandson, Sam also drove by to let us know what time our plane left and to offer us a ride. My supervisor thanked him and ensured him that a ride for us was arranged.

Second Visit

Establishing a sense of trust and friendship takes time and commitment. During the first afternoon of the second visit, approximately one month later, my supervisor and I walked through the community and waved and smiled at people as we made our presence known. It became evident that community members began to recognize us, and people initiated waving and smiling at us. Upon speaking with Peter, we discovered there would be no meeting this visit. Peter was unable to get the information out to community members, and the fact that there was a baseball tournament made it all the more challenging.

The men's baseball tournament celebrated its 30th anniversary this year and the women's baseball tournament has been in effect for 8 years. Teams from neighbouring communities on northern Ontario reserves participated in this tournament. My supervisor and I watched the games and cheered on members of the team. We were able to deepen relationships and establish new friendships.

As we were walking back to our hotel (a room was available this time), Sam, the father of two children who expressed interest in joining the team during our first visit, stopped his van to say hello and asked us when the first meeting would take place. My supervisor told Sam that there was no meeting, and we all laughed a little about it. Sam expressed his interest in joining the team again.

The relationship between Sally and my supervisor was strengthened during the second visit. As we disembarked from our flight, Sally and John were at the airport picking up groceries and supplies for the store that had just been flown in. Sally was very happy to see my supervisor and waved her over to her truck. Sally mentioned she wanted to talk to my supervisor regarding a personal matter and invited us to her home the next day.

The next day, as we were walking to watch the community baseball event, Peggy, who committed last time to join the team, stopped her van to welcome us back and ask us when the first meeting would be. The team was continuing to form as members of the community continued to express an interest in joining the team. During the second visit, my supervisor compiled a list of twelve community members who were interested in participating.

We then visited Sally and sat on her back porch talking a bit about the research team and the work that Sally does. Sally seemed to feel very comfortable to have us in her backyard as she discussed personal matters with us. The last evening of our second visit, as we were sitting at the table in Peter and Sally's store, Sally decided to take my supervisor and me for a ride to sacred land where all the families in the community gather together once a year to camp. We drove down a long, winding, bumpy back road surrounded by pristine forest that seemed to stretch across the land endlessly. The sky was a brilliant mixture of crystal blue and vivid pink. When

we arrived at the, Sally spoke to us about her father and mother and the memories she shared on the land we were on.

We were very fortunate to share this experience with Sally. I felt for a moment that there was no divide between us at all. But we were reminded that as governments created policy to promote assimilation, and research advanced western knowledge, First Nations communities became marginalized and segregated (Pidgeon, 2002). I could not help but feel that the divide between First Nations and western worlds was created because we ignored their perspectives.

Third Visit

Seven weeks later, my supervisor and I returned for a third time. Peter greeted us at the airport and drove us to the hotel. Peter reported on how he had followed up on all his duties since our last visit. Two meetings were organized: one for the next evening and one for the following evening; postings were up at the local store; and all members had been contacted.

On the first evening, we walked to Peggy's store to say hello and spend some time with her, but the store was not open. We walked to John's store, where we were warmly greeted by John. John was there with his daughter-in-law and grandchildren. Sally came in and was surprised and happy to see my supervisor. We chatted for a little until Sally mentioned that she needed to leave for a moment to pick up her mother and bring her back to her home. Sally invited us to her home later to meet her mother.

Sally came back in, and she and John carried their two sleeping grandchildren off to their home for bed as their son and his wife watched the store. Sally returned to bring us back to her home to meet her mother. It was an honour to meet her mother. When reflecting on this

experience. I understand this gesture deepens the relationship as Sally demonstrated a trust in us by inviting us into her life in a meaningful way.

Sally's mother was sitting on the sofa in the living room wearing pyjamas. Her hair was long, mostly grey with traces of black running through it. She did not speak English but welcomed us with a big, warmhearted smile and gentle handshake. As we were talking, Sally showed us a picture of her father, who had passed away. We talked about Sally's mother's excellent skill in slipper making (by hand) and how she and her husband would trap together on the land. Sally's mother had impeccable skill in recognizing the workmanship of slippers made in other parts of Canada. By examining the stitching and beading on a slipper, she would be able to determine in which part of Canada the slipper was made in. I felt a great respect for this woman. During this visit, reaching out in friendship and establishing trusting relationships became paramount to the project. John and Sally offered us a ride back to the hotel, but my supervisor refused the ride so we would not be a burden. Instead, we walked for 40 minutes along the roads back to the hotel in the middle of the night.

The Local School

The second afternoon, my supervisor and I went to the school to visit the classes of two of the teachers. We visited a grade four class at a time when the children were reading. The teacher had the children practise reading one by one in front of the class while the others followed along. There were not enough books for children to look at individually so they had to share among themselves The teacher sat with four children who needed extra support in reading. After reading time, the teacher hung chart paper with information written on it. She mentioned to me that she did it the "old-fashioned" way, not using photocopies so that children could further

practise their reading and writing skills because it meant extra practise in reading from the chart paper and writing down what was read. The children had a break, which provided us with an opportunity to talk with them. The children were happy for us to read their handwritten stories posted on the bulletin board. We examined the rocks they collected in the community, and the children named the different types of gems they were studying. We praised the children for their wonderful writing and reading skills. On another occasion, outside the classroom, the teacher, told us how connected she is to her class. The teacher spoke of how the children brightened up her day, how she works hard with the children who are struggling and are interested. On other occasions, outside the classroom, I observed many children approach her to hug her and talk with her. This teacher is much appreciated by the children. I reflected on this observation that evening. I struggled with seeing first-hand the lack of books in the school, how the teacher was motivated to teach and worked closely with the children but did not have adequate resources or support. There did not appear to be a lack of will to achieve; instead, it is evident there is a lack of resources available to support learning in the community.

Next we visited a grade seven class. Their teacher told us in front of the class how proud she was of them, as they were doing well and working hard. We had a chance to talk to the class, and they explained their experiences with the Summer of Hope Literacy Camps and expressed how they enjoyed the games and the activities the counsellors provided. It was interesting to note they fondly remembered the counsellors who were there two years ago. It appears the literacy camps had a big impact on them. My supervisor mentioned to them that they should think about becoming counsellors for the literacy camps. As the children were on a break, I had a chance to talk to them informally in a small group. I read their handwritten stories that were posted and commented on each story individually. We talked about what it is like to go to college or

university, how many siblings we each had, and what the students' aspirations were for when they got older. One of the students asked me for a college course calendar so she could see what it was like. I promised to mail it to the class. Upon reflecting on this observation, I valued the opportunity to speak with the students and acknowledge their hard work. Recognizing young people's strength and praising their efforts is important in boosting their self-esteem. I could see that having their teacher acknowledge their work as she did and believing in them as she does provides for a safe and trusting environment for them to learn.

The First Meeting

My supervisor and I arrived at the school on the second evening to prepare for the first meeting. Questions concerning the literacy camps were written on chart paper; cookies and juice was provided; and we waited in anticipation. Peggy was the first to show up and quickly began sharing her views with my supervisor. She told us she felt the community had issues with colonialism, mentioning that the young people are learning about it and they understand its effects. There is a sense of frustration as the community sees many white people come and go, and nothing really changes. Peggy stated the importance of starting meetings with prayer, as prayer provides a blessing and direction. She explained the importance of including elders in prayer, to provide counselling. Peggy asked for a mission statement of the literacy camps and the job descriptions of the counsellors that run them.

The third afternoon, my supervisor and I visited John at his home. John spoke of the Indian Act as a template of slavery. He spoke of how he spent time handing out copies of the Indian Act to Band Council members so they would be able to read it and understand the limitation placed upon Aboriginal peoples. He spoke of the sympathy he felt for Aboriginal peoples who lived off reserve, as he felt they did not receive the cultural support required to move forward. John explained how ingrained First Nations children are, with respect for the treaty that stipulates the First Nations must make the visitor feel safe and welcomed. The James Bay Treaty Number 9, which is relevant to this specific northern Ontario First Nations community, outlines:

> The Indians were informed that by signing the treaty they pledged themselves not to interfere with white men who might come into the country surveying, prospecting, hunting, or in other occupations; that they must respect the laws of the land in every particular… (Indian and northern Affairs Canada [INAC], 2008).

John explained this is why First Nations do not fight back. As children they were taught to respect the treaty. The treaty provided provision of land but did not prepare communities to survive within a context they were not familiar with and where they were clearly being taken advantage of. John further explained that if slaves are not fully prepared to survive upon being set free, they might ask for slavery back because at least with that they knew what to do and what to expect. Slaves understand how to function in their environment; they have the knowledge of how to survive in their circumstance. The Indian Act dictated all aspects of the "Indian" life. As the federal government releases control, it must also provide the support, autonomy, and tools necessary for success.

The Second Meeting

The second meeting on the third night of our visit, my supervisor and I returned to the school to prepare in the same way we did the previous night. Three community members attended the meeting, two of whom committed to joining. The members who attended expressed

the same concerns as Peggy did the night before at the first meeting. My supervisor's role was to put together a package for the group, outlining the background information on the literacy camps. The group with twelve committed members decided to meet together before the return of my supervisor to review the information sent to them via Peter. Peter agreed to contact my supervisor and inform her of the next meeting date.

Saying Goodbye

The third visit would be my last visit. My supervisor will continue on with the project, but I would not go to the community again. It was very emotional for me to say goodbye. The evening before when we were in John and Sally's home, I told them that this would be my last visit. I told Sally that I have received so much and have given nothing. I told Sally that I have grown to care about her and the community and that I think about her when I am in Toronto. In a very comforting and assuring manner, Sally nodded her head and told me it was all okay. In a prior conversation, John told me that he believed I would be able to make some sort of change.

On the last evening, we went to visit Peggy in her store to say goodbye. My supervisor and I had a coffee with Peggy. I told Peggy that this would be my last visit and I would not return with my supervisor next time. Peggy said that was too bad, but she did say that you never know what is going to happen in the future and if God wanted, then I would return. We then went by John and Sally's store to say goodbye. While we were sitting with Sally, she mentioned that she needed to go to John's mother's home for a moment and invited us along. As did when we met her mother, this signified a deepening of the relationship between my supervisor and Sally.

I did not expect to feel this emotional attachment to the people I met up north. But I did and it was very difficult to leave. I expected to go to northern Ontario and implement PER with my supervisor. It didn't work like that. PER challenged all my notions of research.

Observed Differences between south and northern Ontario

There were obvious differences in security regulations in airports when travelling from south Ontario to northern Ontario. When travelling by plane to northern Ontario, Pearson Airport ensures all liquids over one ounce are stored in plastic bags, all bags are inspected, and security is highly enforced with a repeating message aired on the loud speaker informing people not to leave bags unattended. In Pearson Airport, the metal detectors seem to have a higher sensitivity than airports in northern Ontario. For example, I always had to remove my shoes when walking through the metal detector at Pearson because the metal tabs on my shoes activated the system. However, in the Thunder Bay airport, the metal detector was never activated in the same way. In Pearson Airport, I had to remove my shoes, was scanned with a wand, and my carry-on bags were X-rayed and searched. When at the Thunder Bay airport travelling north, I was able to walk right by security to the plane without showing identification. As a matter of fact, on all three occasions, there was no one present at the security desk. We held our carry-on bags without them being searched. At Thunder Bay, upon boarding the airplane to Sioux Lookout for the first time, I discarded my water bottle; however, I was told that wasn't necessary as I was able to board with a water bottle.

However, standards shift within the same airports when returning to south Ontario. At the Thunder Bay airport, upon returning to Toronto we boarded on the upper level of the airport. I was asked for identification to travel back to Toronto. No identification required when flying up

to northern Ontario however, only when flying back to south Ontario. Also, all bags were searched and all liquids had to be contained properly. It appears this double standard in airport security signifies security in south Ontario is taken much more seriously than in northern Ontario. Lack of security translates to an unspoken message delivered to First Nations communities living in the north.

On the third trip up to northern Ontario, we met a Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth who specializes in working with northern Ontario First Nations youth. In a personal communication, the Advocate, whose focus in on quality of care in group homes, highlighted the emerging issues in northern Ontario group homes. A current trend in northern Ontario group homes is to rely on police to deal with in-house youth behavioural issues. In south Ontario, these same issues would be dealt with in-house by qualified staff trained to work in such situations. However, First Nations youth with the same issues are being handed over to the police in northern Ontario. The homes seem to be staffed with unqualified workers who have not been trained to implement appropriate strategies for guiding youth and managing the issues faced in group homes. As a result, the police are receiving large amounts of calls to deal with issues that should be dealt with in-house, increasing the criminalization of First Nations youth.

The Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth discussed the discrepancy in access to services between north and south Ontario. Service providers have long waiting lists in the north; they have mandates to follow further complicated by levels of funding. Often there are discrepancies between federal, ministry, and treaty stipulations, which delay the funding of services to children and youth in meaningful ways. As a result of this bureaucracy, a large population of youth who live in the most vulnerable living conditions in Canada are placed on long waiting lists, are served by unqualified staff, and do not receive the same care their counterparts receive in south Ontario. The Advocate also discussed the concerns of services being delivered up north but not available to those who require them. For example, bus services are provided to take children to and from school. However, when a bus driver refuses to accept the child on the bus due to behavioural reasons, the child is left with no alternative way to get to school. The end result is the child does not go to school.

Within the fly-in First Nations reserve, a childcare centre has been built with a new playground and equipment. The centre is not operating, however, because they cannot find a qualified person to run it. In a personal communication with a teacher from the community school, she mentioned there is an abundance of equipment and materials for teaching children with special needs, but the school has never used them because they cannot find a teacher who is qualified. These services are available but cannot be provided. It is critical to recognize the significant difference between available and accessible services.

Another area of division between south and northern Ontario is the cost of food. The cost of food is substantially higher in northern Ontario. Please see Table 1.

Table 1

Food Item	northern Ontario Prices	south Ontario Prices
4 litre bag of milk	$14.89	$4.79
Rice Krispies 350 grams	$6.89	$3.99
baby formula 750 grams	$38.99	$27.99
cheddar cheese 500 grams	$9.99	$2.79

A community member, through personal communication, explained that sometimes families can make it and sometimes they can't. She explained how everyone is dependent on one another. The ones who do make it through the month with food try to help those who can't. High

costs of fuel are blamed for high food costs for fly-in reserves in northern Ontario. But in examining the colonial historical context, First Nations have repeatedly been taken advantage of by the dominant culture. The Treaty No. 9 research report states:

> Chief Trader Matheson revealed all when he explained to the Company Commissioner in 1892, …there is an inevitable loss on Indian advances, but it is more apparent than real, as the goods debted out to Indians are always priced higher than general customers. At Chapleau, goods advanced to Indian people were marked up 35 per cent over the same merchandise sold to "general" customers. (INAC, 2008).

The discourse of the Indian Act and the treaties that followed are still in effect in present-day living for First Nations communities. It appears that the quality of life of First Nations in the north has not changed since 1892. A First Nations community on a fly-in reserve pay on average three to four times higher costs for the same food the "general" customers in south Ontario would pay. Food available in the northern store, on reserves, is unaffordable to the community members whose main source of income is social assistance. Fresh food, in particular, may not be purchased in sufficient amounts. Processed foods that are high in fats and sugars are commonly priced at cheaper rates and more widely available.

While in the store, I noticed a grandmother with her grandson shopping for groceries. The young boy, around eight or nine years old, was happily talking with his grandmother and putting food in the cart. I felt the despair as the grandmother examined the food products the boy put in the cart, checked its price, and put it back repeatedly.

In my personal reflection that evening, I felt an uneasy sense of privilege. I tried to rationalize how I became privileged but couldn't. I grew up in a poor family and did not have many luxuries. At times through my life I have felt deprived when comparing myself to my peers. I felt an identify shift upon visiting this northern Ontario remote community and seeing first-hand these experiences and struggle. I began to see that I was privileged without even realizing it. Being born into the dominant culture provides me with some of the privileges the culture has decided to value. In living in the south Ontario, I was privileged for the accessible services available to me, for schools in every community, the ability to read and write at a level where I can complete forms, appeal decisions, and advocate for my rights. This observation and reflection provided me with greater clarity of how invisible this issue is and how low of a priority First Nations peoples remain to our federal government, the media, and the general public.

Bureaucratic Disentitlement in a northern Ontario First Nations Community

Through personal communication, a community member named Peter described an experience he had in grade five. The teacher, who was white and in charge of a group of Aboriginal children, passed out an envelope with pieces of paper inside with career options for the children to pick from. Peter picked Prime Minister of Canada as his future occupation. He laughed as he remembered how absurd he thought this was in grade five to have Prime Minister as a career option. From that early age, Peter believed it would be an impossibility to have an Aboriginal Prime Minister of Canada, even if he wanted to be. Peter addressed the disconnect between the teacher's reality and that of the Aboriginal children.

This showed me that from a young age, Peter did not feel he had political opportunity to be Prime Minister in that he would not be allowed to. Peter had received verbal and non-verbal messages from his environment that he was limited in his life choices. At a young age, the environment shapes self-esteem in positive or negative ways. At this young age, this boy

internalized the limiting messages he received from his environment and internalized them to be true. Peter seemed to be more realistic than his teacher at the time.

In discussing the hierarchy of power and decision-making in Canada, Peter explained, Chiefs are to be parallel with the Prime Minister of the country. However, Peter explained, Chiefs cannot charge tax, cannot set laws, and Aboriginal peoples are not represented in Parliament. Peter explained that the First Nations hierarchy of governance is different. The Chief becomes the spokesperson for the common person. The common person is top of the hierarchy, who speaks to the elders, the elders speak to the Chief, and the Chief consults with the councillors.

In a separate personal communication with a different community member named John, he too explained that the Chiefs' role is to serve the common people. He explained how the laws resulting from the Indian Act immobilize the advancement of reserve First Nations communities. Chiefs may remain in power for a limit of two years while the Prime Minister is in power for four years. Peter explained how it is virtually impossible to initiate change advancement for a community within two years. By the time the Chief has his priorities in place, decides the direction to take the community, and writes necessary proposals, his term is up. This makes it hard to follow-through on community advancement, which results in progress being stunted. Peter felt that this is a deliberate policy, created in the Indian Act, to keep First Nations communities from moving forward. This personal communication is a clear example of a power imbalance between the federal government and Chief and Band Council. Not only are the world views of First Nations not considered within western views, but First Nations communities are restricted and limited to the extent to which they may exercise their power. western views dominate policies and governance and leave no room for First Nations perspectives and redistribution of power.

In a separate personal communication with John, he explained the plans he once had to implement an agriculture project. John had intentions and plans to build a greenhouse in order to advance the community by providing opportunity for employment, to have reasonably priced food, and to acquire skills in planting and harvesting. John had written a proposal to the federal government requesting funding and had sought out a variety of funders to support the project. However, the project came to a halt when someone within the bureaucratic system lost his proposal. John explained that it was challenging to write the proposal with all the other priorities he had. This bureaucrat was not able to locate a copy of the proposal and John's feeling of discouragement stopped the process. As a result, the plans to introduce agriculture in the community were ended.

Discussion

Being the Participant in the Observation of an Emerging Research Team

The observations I made were both structured and unstructured (Mulhall, 2003). Structured observation focused on documenting the process of the forming of a research team within the community. I was conscious to note the process involved in order to have sufficient data to evaluate its process in comparison to Tuckman's stages of group formation (1965). Observations were also unstructured. In unstructured observations, I was careful to record contextual information and all that was seen and heard. When recording unstructured observations, I attempted to hold no preconceived notions of what to expect. Documenting observations in an unstructured manner opens space to create new meaning.

As a participant observer who has been educated within a system created by the dominant culture, I understood that it was necessary for me to constantly analyze my thoughts in order to understand how I was creating meaning. I attempted to do this by following the procedures of a PO. I recorded observations, reflected on the day's events, discussed my thoughts and feelings with my supervisor, but I was still confused. I felt this to be a destabilizing process, as I was trying to observe the process of implementing PER but it wasn't happening. It was not until three months after my last visit up north that I realized I was trained to approach research in a traditional, detached, objective manner that is reflective of mainstream knowledge. PER challenged this approach for me. Implementing PER did not follow the stages as compact as Tuckman's (1965) model outlines. The western approach is to form a team, to begin meetings, and to start working toward a common goal, as Tuckman's (1965) model depicts action.

There appears to be limitations to applying Tuckman's group development model within a First Nations community. Tuckman (1965) outlines a model that reflects a narrow western perspective of group development. The model is void of cultural perspective and needs to be used with caution when implementing PER in a First Nations community. PER proved to be impossible without the formation of relationships between the researcher and the community. It was out of relationships that the team came together. Tuckman (1965) states that all teams must move through the same stages in order to produce results. Within the "forming" stage, the team is required to form and then meet to hold a discussion on the topic. From my experience in northern Ontario, it is evident that this did not happen. Before a team emerged, relationships needed to be established. It was out of our relationships that community members formed a team.

It is a western approach to form a team and plan to have a productive meeting. My observations demonstrate that this First Nations community processed in a very different manner. We were taken to sacred land, introduced to family members, and were welcomed and cared for. A research team emerged out of relationships. The members of the community team made efforts to establish trust with us as a prerequisite to forming a team. The perspective-taking qualities of PER provided for this opportunity and challenged the distant role of researcher that I was accustomed to. There is a humanizing focus in PER. The goal of PER is for social transformation (King, 1998). Social transformation cannot happen with a distant, objective, and impersonal approach. On the contrary, the research must practice perspective taking with the members and attune to their concerns.

Tuckman's (1965) stages of group development describe individuals in a boxed-in manner as he defines the characteristics of each stage. Tuckman states individuals in the forming stage are focused on themselves and are on their best behaviour (King, 1998). The community members who joined the team took action to establish a sense of trust with us as we defined together that we were working toward a common goal.

Tuckman reflects an individualistic perspective while we discover a collectivist perspective in the north. Tuckman's model of group development would need to be expanded to include a pre-forming stage when implemented within a First Nations community. The pre-forming stage should emphasis the need to establish genuine care and concern for the community beyond the scope of the research study. It would also be necessary to accept community advances to build trust with the researcher. In doing so, the researcher respects the community's process and together they establish a common ground. The pre-forming stage would have to be open to the diversity expressed among First Nations communities. However, we can be sure the western traditional, objective, and distant approach to research has caused damage in First Nations communities while perspective taking becomes a fundamental value of PER.

The Community as a Team

From the beginning, the key elements proved to be trust and friendship. Members did not need to be convinced to care for their children's well-being, nor did they need encouragement to discuss grave concern for their youth; they needed to be convinced that an academic institution could be trusted. A community of people who are familiar with the comings and goings of researchers who are only interested in their own personal advancement needed to feel valued beyond the scope of the researchers' desire to advance themselves. Reaching out in friendship has proven to be the most significant aspect of this project.

I observed a community with much strength. I observed teachers who pride themselves in their work despite the lack of outside support, children who work hard at school despite the lack of resources, community members who became part of the research team out of genuine care and concern for their children, parents who valued their child's education, and a community that welcomed and cared for us despite historical abuses of the past. I observed value for family, respect for tradition, and pride in themselves as a community.

The trust established in building relationships reaches far beyond the ambition of PER as it serves as a healing mechanism as individuals feel cared for and valued. Members of this community did not need to feel the sense of belonging that PER encourages because they are a caring community. However, they need access to services and more decision-making power to control their own lives. PER provides the opportunity to design policy that is locally specific to the diversity of First Nations communities. In accessing more decision-making power, communities can be less affected by a bureaucratic system that seems to slow progress in the north.

Cultural Continuity

There are northern First Nation communities that have a number of protective factors in place that appear to enhance better outcome for youth. Chandler and Lalonde (2004), Professors of in the Department of Psychology, at the University of British Columbia, have done extensive research in the identification of cultural protective factors toward incidences of youth suicide. Over a fourteen-year study, Chandler and Lalonde have found First Nations communities to vary in suicide rates. Eight cultural protective factors have been attributed to rate of suicide. The eight protective factors are: 1) Ability to regain land claims; 2) Re-establishment of self-government; 3) Control over education; 4) Control over health care; 5) Control over fire and policing services; 6) Implementation of cultural events and practices; 7) Provision of child and family services; and 8) Presence of women in government (Chandler & Lalonde, 2004).

The eight factors are to ensure cultural continuity (Morris, 2007). Cultural continuity is the protective factor against the high rate of First Nations youth suicide. Communities that demonstrate none of the protective factors have ten times the national rate of youth suicide while communities who demonstrate all eight protective factors have healthier communities with a zero youth suicide rate (Chandler & Lalonde, 2004). As the amount of factors present in a First Nations on reserve community decreases, the rate of youth suicide increases. This evidence is significant as it suggests youth suicide is not a First Nations issue but an issue of an oppressed society.

First Nations communities are strengthened as they take control over decisions being made that directly affect them. As young people struggle with generations of cultural loss, their self-esteem is strengthened as they acquire a self-concept within environments that are self-

reliant. The ingredients necessary for establishing high self-esteem are more attainable within First Nations communities that practice cultural continuity. Cultural continuity as seen as a protective factor suggests First Nations communities need to have the opportunity to establish policies and practices reflective of their own views. First Nations communities need the opportunity to take control and action for themselves, which is made possible with PER.

In a democratic society, all members are assumed equal access to power. Within this context, it is assumed social justice is in play. However, the white dominant culture in power assumes a sense of superiority as it creates systems to perpetuate its ideological values and assumptions. In ignoring First Nations world perspectives, the dominant culture devalues the significance of First Nations culture, language, spirituality, and ways of being. As the dominant culture considers their own ways of being as superior, they construct a political system that oppresses First Nations. Considering oneself as superior is the basis of racism. Those who hold the power often lack perspective taking. Lack of perspective taking opens the pathway to racism and stereotyping since only the perspective of the self is valued. In actual fact, the rules and regulations that govern the Canadian democratic system are embedded in racism in ways that are oblivious to the culture in power until they learn to identify power imbalance.

Future Direction

Governments need to embrace PER. The ability to construct new knowledge through PER can be the gateway to mending relationships between governments and First Nations people. Empowerment is the core value of PER. If governments shift the power to First Nations communities, the inequities of the past can be made visible and space can be created for First Nations perspectives within the existing policies that foster oppression. First Nations self-

confidence and self-esteem can be increased as governments listen and take the perspective of First Nations communities. Members can feel valued and respected if given the freedom to express themselves openly. Motivation could then increase as communities become active in policy formation. I believe the government is in a position to increase community self-esteem by embracing PER.

Federal and provincial governments should be obligated to support implementation of PER without providing direction for the research. While being supportive, governments must remain independent as government and community perspectives may differ. Government officials should be trained in the importance of PER with an understanding of how to begin its implementation and the benefits to be gained through community development. Increasing public awareness will also strengthen the support required for successful implementation of PER. First Nations communities need a movement of caring individuals who understand how to implement PER and care for justice without dominating the direction of the research. Universities can also support PER by ensuring it as part of a graduate curriculum. Members of the community need to build a trusting relationship in order to see researchers as people that can connect them to outside resources in order to achieve the goals they set out to accomplish.

PER has the capacity to rebuild a sense of hope within First Nations communities (Cousins & Whitmore, 1998). When implementing PER within First Nations communities, it is essential to add a pre-forming stage. This pre-forming stage needs to be funded by the federal government as an essential component of implementing PER, as establishing trust within an oppressed community may take time. The pre-forming stage provides time for the community to build a sense of trust and friendship with the researcher. It is necessary to acknowledge that the stages of Tuckman's group development are void of cultural diversity. The group will reach the

forming stage when a sense of trust is established. It is essential that the researcher reaches out in friendship, accepts the community's advances to establish trust, and respects the community's process for establishing trust. The researcher must also ensure that the community is valued and respected beyond the scope of the PER study and that trust is established by being available, present, committed, and trustworthy. It is essential to keep one's word and promise only what one is sure one can deliver. These behaviours will move the community from a pre-forming stage to a forming stage. It should be the goal of the researcher to ensure that the research team members feel valued and respected while allowing them to contribute to the evaluation process in unity.

If communities are supported by governments to foster cultural continuity, children and youth will acquire a higher sense of self-esteem within a context of hope and commitment. Within our democratic society, governments should be obligated on political and moral levels to implement PER as a decolonizing method. PER provides the opportunity to deconstruct policies that have stemmed from racist perspectives. It is necessary to identify cultural continuity as a factor that protects First Nations communities. Ignoring cultural continuity as a protective factor is present-day genocide, as the needs of First Nations people are ignored. The federal government remains arrogant and racist in ignoring the transformative potential of PER. In adapting PER as a fundamental democratic format, the government includes the voices of the oppressed and creates opportunity to replace the culture the processes of assimilation aimed to eliminate.

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