WCPCG-2010

Indigenous footprints along the career journey

Lianne Britten[a], William Borgen[b]

[a]Macquarie University, Sydney, NSW, 2109 Australia
[b]University of British Columbia, ECPS Dept., 2125 Main Mall, Vancouver, BC, V6T-1Z4, Canada

Abstract

Career transitions from secondary school can be a time of challenge and change for all young people. During this time Indigenous youth, often face   difficulties related to further education, employment and sometimes prejudice, our study has attempted to shed light on some of the factors that have helped and hindered First Nation's youth in making a successful the transition from school to post-secondary life. A sample of 8 (n=8) First Nations young adults, aged 20 to 28 years, were interviewed using a Critical Incident Technique. Study findings have implications for a range of counseling, educational and community settings.

1. Indigenous Footprints Along the Career Journey

The dreams of many people in the indigenous communities are still alive and well. The concurrent realities of life on reserves and in urban centres for many of these people, however, is submerged under the mire of oppression, multiple mental and physical health issues, and the real circumstance of poverty. The dreams of many young people are being lost in a haze of negative media, reality and oppression.

Overwhelming statistics report the many problems that First Nations' societies are subject to, and First Nation's youth are often featured as being the most problematic element of this society. High unemployment rates, poverty and suicide are illustrative of the wide disparity in career achievement for Native people in relation to many other socio-cultural and ethnic groups across North America (Juntunen et al. 2001). In 2002 The British Columbia Ministry of Education released a report indicating the 61% of Aboriginal youth did not graduate within six years of beginning grade 8. Other statistics included high dropout rates for Aboriginal students compared with non-Aboriginal students, and the overrepresentation of Aboriginal students in special education and under-representation in gifted programs (B.C. Ministry of Education, 2002). Further statistics from British Columbia's Ministry of Education (2002) and British Columbia Statistics (2001) site a 62.9% labour force participation rate for Aboriginal peoples with a 48.7% employment rate and a 22.5% unemployment rate. These statistics contrast markedly with non-Aboriginal participation rates (65.3%), employment rates of 59.3% and an 8.5% unemployment rate.

The increasingly depressing statistics do not reflect the gains that have been made by Aboriginal people in this time. In a mere 5 years Aboriginals experienced a 5.5% increase in real earned income over previous reported statistics. These improvements come in the face of many obstacles. It is vital for future generations of First Nation's youth to be privy to these stories of success in employment and real gains made so that these successes can

be replicated or at the very least, celebrated by the communities. Within this context, the main purpose of this study was to listen to the voices of First Nations' youth in order to understand their experiences of successful transition between adolescence and adulthood in terms of career development.

Transition theories have been proposed by many including; Super (1969), Schlossberg, Waters and Goodman (1995), Sugarman (1986), and Bridges (1995). Models of transition attempt to describe the responses to change that each individual encounters, including changes in environment and in personal life. There are many types of change and different degrees of impact of these changes. However, it has been recognized through the research regarding life role, life-span development and life stage theories (Super, 1969; Sugarman, 1986; Schlossberg, Waters and Goodman, 1995; Bridges, 1995), that transition is a primary cause of stress. It is also noted that stress arises from both positive and negative change, not merely negative.

Vega, Lhoury, Zimmerman, Gil, and Warheit (1995) observes that research about social psychological adjustment of minority populations (in this case immigrants), has been limited to adult observations with little research focusing on children and adolescents. Simply put, little research has been done with regard to this transition in any population, let alone First Nations youth. Borgen, Amundson, and Tench (1996) conducted a study of 172 high school leavers to assess "psychological well-being during the transition from adolescence to adulthood" (p.189). One finding from the study was that there is a scarcity of research related to successful transitions and that this attributed well being to "satisfying work" and adult identity. Another study entailed dealing with the transitions into adolescence and the roles of significant adults that aided in this journey. Lang-Gould (2001) identified a number of themes and factors which adolescents identified as helping them in the transition into adolescence including open communication, a sense of belonging, connection, messages about feeling special and role models.

For indigenous people it is often not possible to separate an individual from their family, society, community, environment and beliefs and in order for health and wellness to be achieved all of these elements must be integrated (McCormick, 1995; Kirmayer, Brass and Tait, 2000; Crofoot Graham 2002; Weaver, 2002). In McCormick's study the participants found balance and direction in life through the achievement of both "self-transcendence" and "connectedness". The connections that were expressed by participants as being important included "family, nature, community and spirituality".

In summarizing what was found in the literature, while there was some mention of minorities with regard to transitions, and there are some references to First Nations people with regard to career development, most literature on the First Nations population has focused on wellness and mental health issues. Our study was conducted to begin to address the need to understand career related transition from adolescence to adulthood with a focus on successful transition experiences.

2. The Research Question

The research for this study centres on the question: How do First Nation's youth do well in their journey along the path of career development during the transition from adolescence into adulthood? Participants were asked to discuss what "doing well" meant to them. They were also asked what career and career development meant. Further, these participants were then asked to provide examples of challenging or problematic situations that they felt they had overcome and what had helped and hindered them in this process.

3. Methodology

As a result of many previous impositions upon this culture in the form of racism, governmental policy, illness, isolation and disempowerment a qualitative design was chosen for this study that embodied a spirit of wholeness and integrity, as well as providing a vehicle for "voice". The Critical Incident Technique seemed to be appropriate because it has been used successfully with this population before (McCormick, 1995), and because there was a particular interest in finding out what helped and hindered in the career related transition from adolescence to adulthood. Furthermore, the open-ended interviews allowed participants an opportunity to tell their own stories and to change or modify any items they did not feel appropriate in follow-up interviews.

According to Tripp (1993) the vast majority of critical incidents are not obvious and dramatic but rather simple "accounts of very commonplace events that occur". For Tripp (1993) the reason these events are critical comes from within the person who experiences the event. The critical incident technique was chosen because at many

levels it addresses the need to explore an unknown area of research. It also has been identified as an efficient method for gathering rich qualitative data and has been shown to get at deeper levels of social processes (Angelides, 2001). Such success with a more holistic understanding of a phenomenon is central to the paradigm of indigenous research. Furthermore, the critical incident technique can be used in a participatory way (Angelides, 2001; Butterfield, 2001) as seen in terms of the participant second interview cross-check and verification of identified categories.

3.1 The Participants

A total of 8 (n=8) First Nations young adults aged between 20 and 28 years from the Vancouver, Canada area were recruited to participate in this study. The primary inclusion criteria were that the youths were out of the school system for at least three years, were between the ages of 19-29 years, and self-identified as doing well in their career related transition from high school. The eight participants were aged between 20 and 28 years of age and all had been out of the high school setting for a minimum of three years. The participants' indigenous status ranged from Metis, Cree, Coast Salish to half-white/half-Native.

3.2 The Interview Process

Pre-screening questions were asked and a mutually agreeable, safe location for the interview was decided upon. The first interview involved building rapport with participants and then asking them what they experienced as helping and hindering in their process of transition, and what would have been helpful that did not occur – the "wish list". A second interview was conducted to check on the accuracy of the categorization of the incidents described by each participant.

3.3 Data Analysis

Three suggested steps are recommended for analyzing critical incident data: 1) selecting the frame of reference, 2) category formation and 3) gauging the level of specificity or generality that would lead to appropriate reporting of the data (Flanagan, 1954; Woolsey,1986). This method has been used by a number of researchers in the analysis of data by qualitative researchers (Angelides, 2001; McCormick, 1995; Butterfield, 2001; Carney, 2001; Farr & Carroll, 2003). Since the purpose of the study was to investigate the ways in which indigenous young adults successfully manoeuvred through the transition from high school to post secondary life, the focus the analysis was on identifying incidents that helped or hindered participants along their successful career transition journey. Once the incidents were identified they were grouped into categories. In addition, six methods of checking the credibility of the data analysis were employed: a) a second person listened to interview tapes to ensure that the interviewer was following the critical incident process and was not leading participants in telling their stories; b) a second person was also used to check that incidents had been correctly identified from the transcripts of the interviews and also correctly placed into categories. Andersson and Nilsson (1994) recommend that a minimum agreement of 75% is required for the information to be credible; c) interviews were conducted until no new categories emerged from them, d) categorized interviews were shared with participants to ensure that the summarized data corresponded with the perceptions of each participant, e) categories were only included if they had participation rates of at least 25% of participants (Borgen & Amundson, 1984); f) results were compared with existing research literature. All of these checks indicated that the categories that emerged from the interviews were credible and trustworthy.

4. Results

The eight participants in this study identified a total of 503 critical incidents and "wish list" items. After the first three interviews some major themes began to emerge and for many categories by the end of the fourth interview redundancy had been achieved. After these interviews were transcribed a total of 473 critical incidents were extracted and 30 wish list items were found. A total of 308 helpful incidents, 165 not helpful and 30 wish list items were identified in this study. These incidents were then sorted into eight helpful categories, five not helpful categories and seven wish list categories, as outlined in the table below.

Table 1: Critical Incident and Wish List Categories

| Categories | Helping Critical Incidents (N = 308) | | | Hindering Critical Incidents (N = 165) | | | Wish List Critical Incidents | | |
| | Participants (N = 8) | | Incidents | Participants (N = 8) | | Incidents | Participants (N = X) | | Incidents |
	n	*%*	*N*	*n*	*%*	*n*	*n*	*%*	*n*
Family	8	**100**	89	8	**100**	38			
School	8	**100**	46	8	**100**	47			
Wellness	8	**100**	50	7	**87.5**	44			
Achieving a New Level of Self-Understanding	8	**100**	28	0	0	0			
Work Experience	7	**87.5**	28	4	**50**	12			
Healthy Relationships	6	**75**	18	0	0	0			
Aboriginality	5	**62.5**	32	0	0	0			
Family Support							6	**75**	7
Challenges/Focus/ Motivation							4	**50**	6
Community Support/ Giving Back							3	**37.5**	4
Financial Support							3	**37.5**	3

- Note figures in bold represent participation rates over 25%

4.1 Helping Categories

The eight helping categories were: Family, Wellness, School, Aboriginality, Achieving a New Level of Understanding, Work Experience, Healthy Relationships and Community.

4.1.1 Family

The first category, which emerged from all participants and represented a total of 89 incidents (29%) of the incidents over all, was family. Family is defined as the group of people most closely aligned by blood relations to the participant, including the nuclear family, extended family including aunts and uncles, cousins and grandparents. The helpfulness of family was seen by the participants as an integral component of their success in being where they are today. It involved two mayor components – role models and being part of a supportive and stable environment. "Role models" is a term which covers the idea of people in the participant's lives who had either been a role model for them, or for whom they had been a role model. Critical incidents included: a) providing a useful model to copy from (running a business, operating a fishing boat, skills in employment, the responsibility of managing time and organizational skills, academic skill   attainment, and respecting the environment/community);   b) accepting responsibility for others and wishing to prove a good role model for family members whom they could influence; c) providing support and encouragement, including financial support, and hope and d) providing inspiration. For example:

> ..he tries everything he can to get me to do well, like offering us a down payment
> for a house and he's always coming through—like he replaced the engine in our
> truck. So financially, from a dad perspective he's there. But he's also there
> as a friend to talk about schooling and people and it's nice to—I can always phone
> him or e-mail him. Like it's safe. He's always there. … It takes a worry away.

The second major aspect of this category was having a stable person or environment and positive support systems within the family. Examples of this took the form of positive support, care, being able to participate in activities and do things with family members, as well as just having a strong, functional family unit as support.

4.1.2 School

In this category, the belief in the capability to succeed academically for themselves was highlighted, as was the individual influence of specific teachers and peers, and the feeling of being able to achieve good grades, or the feelings of success that good grades engendered within each participant that mentioned this category. All participants referred to school as helpful and 46 incidents were mentioned equaling 15% of the total number of incidents. Reference was also made to sports and the ability of being part of a team to help with social networking and a feeling of pride.

> I started playing basketball competitively when I was in gr. 6. So I played
> Until I was   in high school so in Gr. 12 I was playing and was competitive
> at that…, it helped in a number of ways. Like just physically it gave me a
> lot of exercise umm and it's nice to be part of a team to have that sort of
> bonding with other people in the school kind of friends that way and it was
> nice I guess outlet for frustration and stuff like that so kind of frustrations
> from school and then it was kind of like a social benefit. Like being on the
> basketball team was kind of a big plus for the social realms of school.

4.1.3 Wellness

This category was also mentioned by all of the participants and is defined as the participant's internal feelings of being healthy physically, emotionally, spiritually and being connected to others in positive relationships as well as to their culture and traditions. The participants mentioned 50 incidents comprising 16.5% of the total items. It included such terms as spirituality, rituals, physical and emotional health and well-being as well as connections to creativity through expressions of art and writing or cultural activities such as dance. It also included alcohol and drugs, which participants saw as a necessary phase of becoming more successful in life and as a result of experiencing the affects of substance use personally.

> I did drugs—crystal meth. And I did it for about six months when I was 17… So I tried it and I
> liked it. And I was chubby, chubby, chubby back then. Like really chubby. And I .., I lost
> weight. I lost a lot of weight. So I did it for about six months… it's helpful—that experience was
> helpful because I was at the point where if I would have kept doing it I would have become a drug
> addict.

4.1.4 Achieving a New Level of Self-understanding

One of the most interesting and hard to define categories that emerged from the research was that of "Achieving a New Level of Self-understanding". While all participants referred to this only 28 incidents were recorded for a total of 9% of the combined total. It reflected the participant's growing knowledge of themselves at varying points in their lives, as well as at certain epiphanous moments. This category is defined as a time when the participants were reflecting upon themselves, and using previous experiences, or the relationships within which they found themselves to be was both edifying and elucidating for the participants in their knowledge about themselves. This category included such things as maturation, building self-confidence, increased awareness of individual needs, self-awareness or personal acceptance and skill development. Means by which this new level of self-understanding varied but journaling was mentioned as a good reflective tool, as well as doing independent reading and research. For example:

> I think even though I was irresponsible for some amount of years, in the end, it's
> taught me so much responsibility cause now you can look back over those years
> and say okay that's exactly where I messed up right there. I won't do that again…

4.1.5 Work Experience

Work experience, both paid and volunteer, emerged as the next most frequently cited category for helping individuals to succeed. 28 incidents were recorded equaling 9% of the total. Such variables as exposure to previously unknown jobs, the networking opportunities, the increased feelings of self-worth and new abilities derived from being in a job were all considered to be important helping factors for the participants. Work fell into many different categories but a predominant theme was feeling competent and confident about one's ability to do a good job or to feel valued. For example:

> …when I was volunteering at (a high school).. I think it was helpful in that I got out of the
> university frame of mind where we're talking about people as a general populace, and it made me
> realize sitting in the classroom with these kids, one of them—I wasn't allowed to let her go to the
> bathroom because she's such a risk for suicide. I never realized how real the problems that most
> First Nations kids are experiencing are. It was really helpful because I saw how the kids reacted to
> teachers who were doing everything wrong to them and how the kids reacted towards teachers
> who seemed to be doing the right things. Or better things than the other ones were.

4.1.6 Healthy Relationships and Community

The last two helping categories that emerged from the data were that of "Healthy relationships", and "Community". 6 participants recorded a total of 18 incidents in this category for a total of 6% of helpful incidents. Healthy relationships reflected participants being able to understand that their own emotional health was a factor that was important in their own lives and to have any healthy relationships with others. A healthy relationship was defined as the relationships outside of blood relatives that were influential upon the participants. These relationships could take the form of friendship, role models and partnerships. The feeling of having such people in their lives was one of fulfillment, connectivity and also feeling there was someone with whom they could connect to be more successful. Similarly, the need for a healthy "community" emerged as helpful to the participants in a number of ways. The community that is discussed here refers not only to the aboriginal community, but the wider community which wielded a sphere of influence over the lives of each participant. Such factors as support from within the various elements of the community including Caucasian and multicultural populations, and the actual Native band community also, the socioeconomics of the surrounding neighborhoods and schools, the various sporting, educational and extracurricular programs offered on a communal basis and the general feeling of safety within a community were all significant components in the success of the participants.

> I went to a women's workshop for 4 months it was really helpful…. It's helpful to know that you
> don't have to be ashamed of what happened and you know you don't have to hide it…I also
> wanted to mention that being here at the Centre also it's like umm being involved in the
> community.

4.1.7 Aboriginality

The final category that emerged from this study was that of aboriginality. In this category, only five participants referred to this as helpful and a total of 32 incidents were recorded (10.5% of the total). The definition of this category includes the factors of a growing sense of identity as an aboriginal combined with the ever present need for contact with people and rituals/programs associated with the aboriginal culture from which the individual came. Support from the aboriginal community was important not only in terms of a sense of pride in oneself and being Native, but also valuable in terms of financial assistance and achieving a sense of aboriginal identity. Being able to work with or see Native people in positions of authority, or being able to connect with other First Nations and enjoy programs or activities within the community were all important to the various participants who related incidents in this category. While no First Nations community is the same as another across Canada, the differences were not accentuated in this category; rather it was the need for connections with people who identified themselves as First Nations.

> …now I just go by [my Native surname]. So…After my dad died…. helped me realize it's a beautiful last name and why should I be ashamed of where I am or who I am? Just because of my last name. So even though—and it changed me too—the reason why I changed it is after my dad died…. I get a really good feeling, though, when people are like—because it's an obvious Native name. It's not a Caucasian or a German, or anything ..—it's just—it's Native. It's just a good feeling I get because every time I hear it or I'm at the bank or I'm paying a bill or something like that. Somebody always says something about it and it's never bad. It's always good, and it's almost like a boost of confidence. And even today I just got one—or yesterday—and it's … because in the Native culture … when it's like Running Horse, when the baby was born they'd seen a running horse. So it's like when I was—or not when I was born but when somebody in my family—my great-great grandmother or whatever, it's that [my Native surname] is just … a good image… in my mind. And …it suits me. I think it suits me.

4.2 Hindering Categories

Those items identified by the participants as not being helpful (hindering) had considerable overlap with the categories identified as helpful. Hindering items included family factors such as the lack of positive role models and negative environment/ or lack of support, as well as school factors that were similar to those identified previously. Peers that were negative in outlook or behaviors were also viewed as not helpful and a high report was found to occur within the category of self-esteem. Negative work places and stressful environments were also found to be not helpful but on the whole the hindering items were 165 in total or approximately 33% of the total number of incidents identified. The smaller amount of hindering items is not unusual given that the participants self-identified as "doing well". The five hindering categories that emerged were: school, wellness, family, work experience, and community.

4.2.1 School

This category contains incidents that predominantly reflected the lack of expectations for success on the part of both teachers and sometimes, the school as a whole. As with the helping category all 8 participants referred to this category with 47 incidents recorded equal to 28.5% of the total. In contrast with the helping school category, the factors the participants saw as not being helpful included: the size of the school, the feeling of being ignored, or not receiving the attention they needed, the relative lack of experience of teachers with the indigenous culture, a cultural and physical divide, and, the feeling of a lack of a relationship or connection to either the school or the teachers themselves. One example of an incident that arose in this category is as follows:

> I ended up in [private school] it was pilot school very fancy private school and, uh, there was very few children that attended this school but it was just the worst school because it was so slack… Too much leniency… It led me to believe I guess that I could do, I could slack off in every area in life because you can get away with it, you can manipulate, and do these kind of things….You can get by of not so good, I mean there is nothing good about anything that I learned in that school… I didn't really didn't want to do anything at all except to be a slack off.

4.2.2 Family

"Family" was found to be the next major hindering category. All 8 participants recorded 38 incidents representing 23% of the total. The specifics of lack of role models, poverty, the physical and emotional environment of the familial home and instability, including moving or separation, all fell under the broader category of the family environment and support. This section also mentioned foster family situations and the various difficulties associated with moving. For example:

> …We were very poor. I grew up on welfare. My dad never really worked…… we were even more poor because we didn't have anything when we moved out here. We moved in like a transition house for like a couple of days and then that's when we moved to [suburb].

4.2.3 Wellness

The third hindering category to emerge was "wellness". 7 participants recorded 44 incidents, or 27% of the total. The significant aspect of wellness in the hindering category was the predominance of low self-esteem or feelings of lack of value and self-worth. Spirituality and rituals were noticeable for their absence from the hindering category. Ill health within the immediate family, as well as on an individual basis for the participant was also deemed a factor which hindered success. As with the helpful category, the incidence of drug and alcohol usage arose as a hindering factor but the most significant hindrance, in terms of wellness, was self-esteem with 20 incidents cited. As a result of the overlap this category was not broken down into divisions. In the hindering section it was felt that the usage of drugs and alcohol should be included in this category as was done in the helpful section, but without any subdivision due to the close link between wellness and substance usage.

> …one of the major battles is, well there's lots of them. Alcohol is one of the major battles.
> And a further example of "wellness" was identified by one participant in the following way: I'm
> my worst critic. I criticize myself constantly in my mind…. It's not helpful to me because I'm
> so down on myself… the self criticism. It really affects me. It's the only thing that brings me down.

4.2.4 Community

The next most common hindering category emerging from the data was "community". Again, 7 participants mentioned this category and recorded 24 incidents for a total of 14.5% of the hindering factors. The factors that participants cited as being not helpful in this category included the lack of role models, the lack of community support and also the presence of racism within the community, racism from the native community towards members of mixed races, and racism from the mainstream community, as well as the more general issue of negative influences of friends within the community, especially after high school. The negative environment was seen to be a hindrance in a variety of ways but these three situations were the most commonly cited. It was decided that this category should not be broken down into two subdivisions. This was due to the existence of the general ideas of role models, racism, and negative influences as well as the reference to alcohol and drugs by five participants, within the broader context of the community as a whole, as hindering factors in participants lives. This category specifically looked at racism, from the Native community and the wider community, as well as socioeconomic variables, violent neighborhoods, and the negative feeling of neighbourhoods that were not necessarily violent, but hostile.

> It's a small community everybody knows your business and
> everybody gossips and some people are feeling negative so
> they kind of bring you down. Just the addiction and stuff like
> that there.

Additionally, the concept of a community environment that did not feel safe was described as:

> ...because there is a lot of violence, first of all there's people who get jumped, you know gang
> violence like there's a lot of guys that just follow you round, a lot. And it's just umm I don't
> know how many times we've experienced people following us…. scary when you can't go out by
> yourself..

4.2.5 Work Experience

Participants identified a number of significant challenges that did not help them feel successful. 4 participants felt their work experience was not helpful. They recorded 12 incidents equaling 7% of the total. In terms of employment, both volunteer and paid, the significant hindering factors were grouped into being overwhelmed by the enormity of tasks, the lack of challenge or progress in a job, the failure to provide support training for new positions and the downturn in an industry due to environmental and economic factors. Also mentioned was the need for provision of finances for training and the frustration with getting certificates in terms of education but being unable to find positions that were related to the desired position. One participant described the experience in the following way:

> I was working at [a] Café …, and it was my first or second day. I only worked there two days.
> But I didn't understand like when he told me that this place is really busy that it was really busy.
> And… meaning there needs to be working at all time at least like six people in the little cafe. I
> worked and it started to become really busy, so I have to …they were trying to train me and it's
> busy. Like how are you going to train me on the till if it's really busy? And so the girl's just

> okay… well I'll do it. You go over there and you do whatever else you're supposed to do. I'll do it…, and so I got in trouble because I was supposed to be on the till and they're [saying] she's supposed to be trained, and so because of the pressure of it being so busy and then having a customer …, "Hurry up," you know or I'm not doing it right, or I did the order wrong. I quit. I just didn't go… the pressure of …the people, the customers, the time and stuff. I quit. I couldn't. I hated it working there. It's very nerve-wracking. Nerve-wracking. I get really scared, almost. Stupid, if I can't do it.

As can be seen from the above examples and explanations of the categories there is considerable overlap between the hindering factors and those that were cited as helpful. The emergence of the general categories of lack of support, familial dysfunction, failure of the school environment, the overall sense of holes existing in the wellness of the personal systems of the participants and the stress associated with some work place environments clearly identified the gaps in the participants lives, but also showed their strengths and resilience in overcoming what could sometimes be seen as overwhelming obstacles.

4.3 Wish List Categories

The final element of the results was the "Wish List". The wish list categories are comprised of responses to the question "Are there any things that would help you to continue doing well in the future?" As was seen with the overlap between the helpful and hindering categories, there is some overlap between the wish list categories also.

The seven categories that emerged in order of occurrence under the wish list were: Familial support/healthy relationships, Challenges/Focus/Motivation, Community Support & Giving Back, Financial Support, Self-Confidence, Further Education, and Spirituality. Two of the participants could not think of anything that they thought might help them more than what they were already doing, and so did not come up with any wish list items. Also necessary to note is the limited number of these items in all categories as seen in Table 1 above. The categories showed the impact of their experiences and self-reflection that the participant's had undergone. A number of items overlapped with those mentioned in the helping and hindering categories but had a slightly different angle. This led to a total of seven wish list categories, 3 with less than 25% participation rate; Self-confidence, Further Education and Spirituality.

4.3.1 Family Support

As with the helping and hindering categories the wish for continued familial support (including the current partners of the participants) was the number one wish. 6 participants equalling 75% of the total recorded 7 incidents desiring the continuance of family support. Participants simply asked for such things as "continuous support from the family" and further,

> having my parents, having them support me and kind of love me and give me respect kind of keeps me going.

4.3.2. Challenges/Focus/Motivation

One category emerged as distinct from the helpful and hindering categories, and that was the need for challenges, motivation and focus. A total of 4 participants (50%) recorded 6 incidents in this category. The idea of being motivated by challenges, or the desire to stay focused was central to this category. Simply put as one participant said it was to "Keep focused" or in the words of another participant, "having a challenge".

4.3.3 Community Support and Giving Back to the Community.

These items were also related to the idea of being a member of something "bigger than themselves" not just the success of First Nations people, but also as a member of the global community. 3 participants, (37.5%) recorded 4 incidents in this category. The expression of doing well for both Natives and also within the wider community suggests that the bridge between cultures is not as wide as is often implied. Participants simply expressed the desire for "giving back to the community" and also the ties to the wider social networks within the community, for

example in the words of one participant "maintaining what I have now in terms of having that kind of close friends and social network."

4.3.4 Financial Support

A total of 3 participants made specific reference to the desire for continued financial support from their band or others, representing 37.5% of the total incidents for a total of 3 incidents. As mentioned above this financial support was seen in the more holistic idea not only of the monetary aspect but also the interest in how the participant themselves was progressing.

> my band… They are sponsoring me to go to school. So I feel like I need their support, like financially and when I call and talk to them about what I'm up to they are happy to hear it.

4. Discussion

The most frequent occurring category in all three sections was familial support/healthy relationships overall. The participants mentioned as their most frequently cited helpful factor the support, or continuing support of their family and/or current partner in life. This was an indication of the significance that this support had had upon the success they had experienced in their lives. The key to continued success for seven participants was the same factor as had been most helpful in their current situation, familial support and healthy relationships.

One of the most interesting emerging categories in this section was challenges/focus/motivation. Participants mentioned the need for focus, motivation, results and the perception of success through as a means of motivation to continue to do well as important factors to help them to continue to succeed in life and career aspirations. Aligned to expectations for success this category is specific in that it looks directly at internal and external factors of motivation rather than imposed standards of expectation for success as was seen in the schooling system. In terms of the further education category it was clear that although somewhat different to the "school" category of both the helpful and not helpful categories, education was defined in terms of post secondary opportunities for the participants. Recognition of the benefits of continued education was evident in many participants but only one expressed the need for it on a continuing basis as being relevant to her continued success. Simply put in the words of a participant "Education!"The wish list category was an important component of the study. It allowed participants to reflect upon their interview and suggest items that they believed would help them to continue along their current paths of success.

5.1 Implications for Research

A number of implications for future research arose from this study but I will limit the discussion to those factors most interesting for further research. Firstly the issue of narratives and narrative therapy as being helpful to First Nations young adults with regard to transitions needs further examination. (Butterfield, 2001; Crofoot Graham, 2002) The personal observations of how interesting and how helpful the telling of their stories was during the data collection component of this study indicated further study is needed in this area so as to understand whether Native oral traditions are respected and fulfilled more positively by the opportunity to present personal stories in a respectful and safe atmosphere**.**   Secondly, the failure of education and counseling to provide safe environments and nurture feelings of success or at least offer success, in the eyes of the participants, is evident. Further study of how schools can better address the problematic issues identified by participants is warranted. . A third area of study that needs to be examined further is the concept of self-esteem and resiliency in this population. Noticeably absent from the literature is how First Nations youth identify themselves, gain self-esteem, live through trauma and succeed.

The participants showed extraordinary levels of self-understanding and the category "achieving a New Level of Understanding" underscored the relevance of validating and helping youth grow in their own terms. This study sheds some light on some of the factors that helped young people to navigate the sometimes stormy waters of the transition from being part of a family to establishing their own family and doing well in the process, but it is only a sliver of light onto this phenomenon. Each participant's story had markedly different familial situations however, the concept of the importance of the family and the future of their own families was a key part in the success that each participant felt in navigating the often difficult path of being from non-mainstream, and sometimes poverty

stricken families, that suffered dysfunction or were struggling to survive. This phenomenon needs to be further examined.

5.2 Implications for Practice

Many participants made reference to lack of connection with counselors and teachers in school and this indicates a need for professionals in the field to develop skills with regard to working with this population and at the very least, to make an attempt to connect with any client who walks into their sphere of influence regardless of cultural affiliation. (Curwen-Doige, 2003) In addition, the significance of creativity for Aboriginal populations and the high participation rate in the ritual, spiritual and creativity category suggests that for counseling practice to be effective, some form of creativity within the sessions could be helpful. Art was mentioned as being very important to three participants and journaling was specifically cited as a helpful factor by two. Previous literature also indicates that such expression is helpful to the well-being of the indigenous population. (Crofoot Graham, 2002; McCormick, 1995) This suggests that practitioners could incorporate such methods into their counseling practice to ensure that First Nations clients can use that creative, spiritual side as a means of healing. (McCormick, 1995) and the continued reference to such self-expression would seem to be tentatively borne out through the data collected in this study and many other studies into wellness.

6. Concluding Comments

It is salient to note the struggle that has been experienced with regard to the reporting of these findings. The study was initiated to provide voice to the participants through telling their stories of what has helped and hindered them and in paying honor and respect to the oral nature of their storytelling traditions. While their individual narratives have been audio-recorded, the written presentation of their stories may have fallen into the trap of scientific jargon and report writing. It is our hope that the participants understand and forgive any loss of original meaning in reporting the findings of the study.

Wi-cah-ca-la kin he-ya pe lo ma-ka kin le-ca la te-han yun-ke-lo e-ha pe-lo e-han-ke-con wi-ca-ya-ka pe-lo!
The old men say the earth only endures. You spoke truly. You are right.
All my relations!

References

Angelides, P. (2001). The development of an efficient technique for collecting and analyzing qualitative data: The analysis of critical incidents. *Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education, 14(3)*, 429-442.

Andersson, B., & Nilsson, S. (1964). Studies in the reliability and validity of the critical incident technique. *Journal of Applied Psychology 48(6),* 398-403.

Borgen, W.A., & Amundson, N.E. (1984). The experience of unemployment.Scarborough, Ontario: Nelson.

Borgen, W.A., Amundson, N.E & Tench, E. (1996). Psychological well-being throughout the transition from adolescence to adulthood. *The Career Development Quarterly, 45,* 189-199.

Bridges, W. (1995). *Managing transitions: Making the most of change.* Reading, MA:Addison-Wesley.

British Columbia Ministry of Education. (2002). *How are we doing? Demographics and performance of aboriginal students in British Columbia public schools, 2001-2002.* Retrieved from http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/abed/perf2002.pdf, October 15, 2004.

British Columbia Statistics (2001). *The health and well-being of Aboriginal People inBritish Columbia.* Retrieved from BC Ministry home page, October 10, 2004.

Butterfield, L.D. (2001). *A critical incident study of individual clients' outplacement counselling experiences.* (Unpublished master's thesis), University of British Columbia, Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada.

Carney, M. (2001). The development of a model to manage change: Reflection on a critical incident in a focus group setting. An innovative approach. *Journal of Nursing Management, 8(5),* 265-275.

Crofoot Graham, T.L. (2002). Using reasons for living to connect to American Indian healing traditions. *Journal of Sociology and Social Welfare. XXIX (1),* 55-75.

Curwen-Doige, L.A. (2003). A missing link: Between traditional Aboriginal education and the Western system of education. *Canadian Journal of Native Education. 27(2),*144-160.

Flanagan, J. (1954). The critical incident technique. *Psychological Bulletin, 51,* 327-358.

Farr, S.R. & Carroll, J.J (2003). Critical incidents in student counselor development. *Journal of Counseling and Development, 81(4),* 483-490.

Juntunen, C.L., Barraclough, D.J., Broneck, C.L., Seibel, G.A., Wonrow, S.A., & Morin, P.M. (2001). American Indian perspectives on the career journey. *Journal of Counseling Psychology, 48(3),* 274-285.

Kirmayer, L.J., Brass, G.M., & Tait, C.L. (2000). The mental health of Aboriginal peoples. *Canadian Journal of Psychiatry, 45(7),* 607-617.

Lang-Gould, S. (2001). Listening to the voices of adolescence: Descriptions of significant adults and their qualities which aided in the transition into adolescence. (Unpublished master's thesis), University of British Columbia, Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada.

McCormick, R. (1995). The facilitation of healing for the First Nations people of British Columbia. *Canadian Journal of Native Education. 21(2),* 252-319.

Schlossberg,N.K., Waters, E.B. & Goodman, J. (1995). *Counseling adults in transition: Linking practice wtih theory.* (2nd Edition). New York, N.Y.: Springer.

Sugarman, L. (1986). *Life span development: Theories and interventions*. Methnen & Co.Ltd. London.

Super, D.E. (1969). Vocational development theory: Persons, positions and processes. *Counseling Psychologist,* 1, 2-9.

Tripp, D. (1993). *Critical incidents in teaching.* London: Routledge. van der Woerd, K. A., & Cox, D.N. (2003).

Vega, W.A, Lhoury, E.L., Zimmerman, R.S, Gil, A.G. & Warheit, G.J. (1995). Cultural conflicts and problem behaviours of Latino adolescents in home and school environments. *Journal of Community Psychology, 23,* 167-180.

Weaver, H.N. (2002). Perspectives on Wellness: Journeys on the Red Road. *Journal of Sociology and Social Work. XXIX(1),* 5-15.

Woolsey, L. (1986). The critical incident technique: An innovative method of research *Canadian Journal of Counselling, 20,* 242-254.

Acknowledgement

Author Note

Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Lianne Britten, Department of Psychology, Macquarie University, NSW 2109, Australia. E-mail: lianne.britten@students.mq.edu.au

Log in to My Ulrich's

Macquarie University Library   --Select Language--

Search   Workspace   Ulrich's Update   Admin

Enter a Title, ISSN, or search term to find journals or other periodicals:

1877-0428

▶ Advanced Search

ingentaconnect™   ScienceDirect

Search My Library's Catalog: ISSN Search | Title Search

Search Results

Procedia: Social and Behavioral Sciences

Title Details

Related Titles

▶ **Alternative Media Edition** (1)

Lists

Marked Titles (0)

Search History

1877-0428

🔖 Save to List ✉ Email ⬇ Download 🖨 Print ✎ Corrections 📋 Expand All 📋 Collapse All

▼ **Basic Description**

Title	Procedia: Social and Behavioral Sciences
ISSN	1877-0428
Publisher	Elsevier BV
Country	Netherlands
Status	Active
Start Year	2009
Frequency	6 times a year
Earliest Volume Note	Feb.
Language of Text	Text in: English
Refereed	Yes
Abstracted / Indexed	Yes
Serial Type	Proceedings
Content Type	Academic / Scholarly
Format	Online
Website	http://www.elsevier.com/wps/find/journaldescription.cws_home/718288/description#description
Email	a.corney@elsevier.com
Description	Aims to rapidly publish high quality conference proceedings in the social and behavioral sciences.

▶ **Subject Classifications**

▶ **Additional Title Details**

▶ **Publisher & Ordering Details**

▶ **Online Availability**

🔖 Save to List ✉ Email ⬇ Download 🖨 Print ✎ Corrections 📋 Expand All 📋 Collapse All