Interim Report
of the
Urban Aboriginal Education Project

StonePath Research Group:

StonePath Research Group is a collective of First Nations, Métis and Native advocate researchers. StonePath contracts in different team members for each project it is involved in, selecting those who will bring an expertise to the project. The Urban Aboriginal Project Team (referred to as Team henceforth) is comprised of four Team Members for this project (listed in alpha order). Dr. Susan Hill is Mohawk from Six Nations and on faculty at Laurier Brantford Campus' Indigenous and Contemporary Studies Department. Dr. Carole Leclair is Métis and also on faculty at Laurier Brantford Campus' Indigenous and Contemporary Studies Department. Lynn Nicholson is new to Aboriginal research and is working with this project specifically on the local research and literature review. Sabrina Saunders, Mohawk/Delaware from Six Nations, is ABD in her Ph.D. from OISES-UT's Theory & Policy Studies Department in Educational Administration. She is also an elementary teacher and the current Director of the Six Nations Public Library.

Progress:

The Team has been busy at work meeting with pilot communities and conducting interviews of high population urban communities where programs of excellence are in place. To date Barrie and Thunder Bay have been visited with school visits to several of the Thunder Bay Public (Lakehead District) and Catholic schools as well.

British Columbia visits have also been completed with interviews conducted of both the Vancouver District and their partnering agencies involved with in-school and alternative programs and services. Additionally research pertaining to both Hawaii and New Zealand has been conducted consisting of both research and interviews.

The month of July will see interviews/visits to Winnipeg, Saskatoon, Calgary and Edmonton. August will see the Buffalo Native American Magnet—School #19 and a selection of Arizona and New Mexico schools. Additionally educators involved in Ontario education are currently being recruited for focus group discussions to occur in the months of July and August.

Reportable Themes:
Preliminary discussions have yielded themes surrounding the equity of outcomes, deficit programming, character education, modes of support and means of measuring success. These are briefly addressed below but will be further explored (along with other relevant themes) in the final report.

The *equity of outcomes* is a common political statement pertaining to minority education across Ontario, but not in great deal outside of the province. This is most likely a case of Ministry terminology specific to the Neo-liberal stance of the last decade working its way into the everyday terminology of administrators, teachers and academic educators alike. Most commonly understood as an antigen to the lack of equal access, the paradigm suggests that all possible access, service and programs should be given in order to bridge the gap and have an equal attainment, graduation rate and success rate as other Ontarians.

Deficit programming has been addressed from both perspectives. In some instances respondents have spoken to the need to have programs which will offer pull out/alternative education in order to bridge the divide and allow those who are not succeeding to have access. In other cases, respondents have spoken to the need to limit the need for such deficit model planning and create successes on site so that no alternatives are required.

Character education has been a decade long initiative in Ontario (often paired with Citizenship Training). Character education was addressed again in differing manners by different communities. In most instances however, the character building was for the most part referring less to the Aboriginal student and more to the larger urban community in order to counteract and eliminate racism. Educational curricula across the divisions were seen as a means of training new citizenry among the heterogeneous populations of the urban schools. Further, community involvement of the Aboriginal parent/community was addressed as a means to again change stereotypical perceptions of the education system and therefore make character training of Aboriginal students more in tune with the school plans.

In all cases to date, *modes of support* for the schools, students and curricula have been expressed. Highly successful schools and districts each have Curriculum planners on staff to assist with the infusing of Aboriginal content across the curricula. Additionally, these districts are providing training for staff on teaching strategies as well as "Sensitivity and Awareness Training".

Most commonly expressed is the means of *measuring success* and the significance the various measurement holds for the Aboriginal community. This is a main focus of the study and will be presented in its final state. Of note at this time is that, although most districts are stating that

success is more than literacy and numeracy (including community involvement, positive identity and self-worth, awareness of culture and language), none of the alternate aspects of success are measured or, in any cases, worked towards within the individual schools. [e.g. "Teaching culture isn't our role within the school, although we do offer language at the senior years as an elective and we do incorporate the traditional values. … [although we do not offer language to our elementary students] we believe language is directly tied to identity which is a directly related to how successful one is".

Reportable Concerns & Suggestions:
To date a top 5 list of concerns and suggestions are as follows:
1. Sustainability—How will what we start be maintained in following years, at various grades, and in different schools across the district?
2. Content—Who will infuse the curriculum with Aboriginal content when most staff are untrained, fearful of saying the wrong things, or ignorant of accurate historical/contemporary facts.
3. Content—Where is the time necessary to create strong lessons infused with content? Why are we all recreating the wheel?
4. Success—Who defines success of the Urban Aboriginal student when we cannot even define who the Urban Aboriginal student is within our schools and community (e.g. nation, language base, identity)?
5. Where is the voice of the Youth in this research?

Of the Team, there are three main concerns. Initially is the short duration for the study. This plays into the second concern, lack of youth voice in the study. Due to the short timeframe there is no time for ethics reviews within each district, and therefore, no youth could be spoken to. This is a serious concern of the Team and should be addressed within the individual pilot community research. After all, *Students will support what they help Create!* The third and most serious of the Team concerns to this project is that pilot communities and partner agencies were often unclear of the purpose of both the project and the initial research. Communities and Districts regularly stated that the role of StonePath was to assist in the planning of the pilots and in some cases, pilots were being planned for action outside of the urban setting. This note is placed here in this report as it should be addressed immediately so that pilot districts and community partners are aware of their own obligations and research expectations, thus limiting struggles further on in the implementation process.

Deliverables:
As outlined within the proposal and contract, StonePath will deliver a comprehensive literature review of Aboriginal Education. Since many questions from both community partners and educators have been raised about the literature review we will use this interim report to both outline the draft paper, as well as explain the purpose and intention of an academic literature review.

A literature review is just that—a review or summary of the body of literature available on a given topic. It is not new or primary research pertaining to Aboriginal education and may have sections which are well understood or completely new to any member of the readership. As such we have chosen a format which will run through the historical aspects of Aboriginal education which frame the political and social aspects in which contemporary education renders its message. We will also address many of the current issues within Aboriginal education as outlined by both the know needs within communities according to the literature as well as some lesser discussed concerns addressed by community members early on in the interview process.

The outline below is a working outline of a document which will be a lengthy paper. It is a work in progress and has morphed on several occasions by the literature discovered as well as the concerns expressed by participants. In this later case, it remains the intention of the Team to attempt to find literature which speaks to the concerns made by community and educators in hopes of the final product being both an academic piece as well as a platform for which people can advocate from.

The Literature Review, at this time, is outlined below. It is anticipated that this outline will continue to change throughout both the review as well as the interview processes.

1. Introduction
2. Historical Overview
   a. Pre-Contact Indigenous Education
   b. Effects of Contact
   c. Methods of Change
3. Current State of Education
   a. Attainment / Drop-out
   b. Employment/Employability
   c. Criminology, Incarceration, Gang Involvement
   d. Children in Care
   e. Homelessness
   f. Teen Pregnancy
4. Successes in Aboriginal Education
   a. Programs of Interest
   b. Models
   c. Success Factors
5. Gaps in Research
   a. Limitation of research
   b. Speculation of decline in research after RCAP decade
6. Conclusion

Additional to the Literature Review, a significant report broken down by communities across Canada will be presented where demographics and explanations of programs can be presented. Second, a discursive presentation of themes expressed and how they vary from community to community or advocate to advocate will be presented. Next examples of successful models of

practice will be presented. Fourth, a success matrix will be devised based on the body of primary and secondary research. The final deliverable will be a Bibliography of Aboriginal Education for those pilots and future districts who wish to have further understanding on any given areas of Aboriginal and Aboriginal urban education.

Timeframe:
The pre-determined project timeframe is to run through September 30, 2008. The Team will have completed the designated tasks within this timeframe but it should be noted that this is a highly unrealistic timeframe for the quantity and quality of work required. Additionally, this research should have been completed well before the onset of the pilot planning as the intention of Phase I research was to inform not only the later provincial implementation, but also the Pilot District planning.
Relevant dates to this project include:
- July 7 CODE/Steering Committee Meeting with StonePath
- July 7-11 Winnipeg Research Trip
- July 14-19 Saskatoon, Calgary & Edmonton Research Trip
- July TBD Focus group of Aboriginal urban educators
- August TBD Focus group of urban Aboriginal educators
- August 21-26 New Mexico and Arizona Research Trip
- Mid September CODE/Steering Committee Meeting with StonePath—findings presented
- September 30 Final Report presented to CODE
- October Feedback, Revision Request submitted to StonePath (if needed); followed by final revised report.

Expenses to Date:
50% of the total project line has been delivered to StonePath. Funds have been used primarily for the travel arrangements with expenses to date including:

Area	Details	Anticipated	Expense to date
Travel			
	Thunder Bay	$ 2,540.00	$ 402.50
	Barrie	$ 1,340.00	--
	Toronto	$ 1,580.00	--
	AB, SK, BC,	$ 10,960.00	$ 5,166.27
	Winnipeg	$ 3,420.00	$ 1,322.25
	Albuquerque/Phoenix/Tucson	$ 3,890.00	--
	Buffalo	$ 640.00	--
	CODE/MET Meetings	$ 0	--
Consultant Fees	Team of 4 Researchers	$ 48,000.00	$ 10,968.22
Honoraria		$ 2,500.00	$ 460.61
Communications		$ 130.00	$ 42.99
	TOTAL	*$75,000.00*	*$18, 362.84*

Notes:

(1) Only minimal Consultant Fees have been paid to date to allow for final expenses on all travel. Hours worked do not necessarily equate to what has been paid out.

(2) Costs listed in travel are often for airfare only, without additional travel costs yet incurred.

(3) Expenses incurred during the second half of June will not be paid until June 30. As such they are not reflected in the above balance sheet.

(4) Initially only a final presentation was expected as travel for CODE/MET discussions. As additional meeting times are requested by CODE/MET these will be covered out of Travel funds with money being allocated from other lines to cover the costs of travel. To date there appears that the team will be attending a total of 3 meetings with MET, CODE or Steering Committee Members.

(5) In cases where it is possible, the Team has limited the number of members traveling in order to lessen the airfare costs. The rate of travel projected in April has significantly inflated with summer rates and increased fuel and air fees.