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**EDUCATIONAL CLIMATE IN  
A NATIVE EMPLOYMENT PREPARATION PROGRAM:  
THE PERCEPTIONS OF NATIVE LEARNERS**

by

Paulette C. Brown-Tremblay

A thesis submitted to the School of Graduate Studies and Research  
in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the  
degree of Doctor of Philosophy

University of Ottawa

September, 1995

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## **ABSTRACT**

In Canada, many undereducated Native adults have not experienced positive educational climates in formal education systems. In fact, a high percentage of Native people have dropped out of the educational process prior to the completion of grade twelve to join the ranks of the undereducated and unemployed. This has created a pressing need to focus on Native literacy and the creation of positive learning environments which encourage Native adults to excel in educational settings.

The purpose of this exploratory, qualitative research was to describe and analyze the salient factors in a Native literacy program which created an optimal educational climate for Native adult learners. As a research construct, educational climate relates to the total environmental quality in a learning facility as perceived by the participants. To focus and guide the data collection and analysis processes, a conceptual framework of educational climate was developed. Operationally defined, educational climate includes five major dimensions: learner milieu, instructional environment, social environment, cultural environment, and learner outcomes.

The Employment Preparation Program, which was delivered by staff of the Grand River Polytechnical Institute and located on the Six Nations Reserve, was the research site selected for the study. The program was community based and administered by Native staff for Native adult learners.

Multiple data collection strategies were employed in the research. They included participant observations of learner and instructor interactions inside and outside the classroom context; reactions and reflections of the researcher recorded in a journal; quasi-

focus group interviews with Native adult learners in levels one and three of the program; and in-depth semi-structured interviews with individual staff members.

Data were collected at the site over a continuous nine week period which started in September 1994 and ended in November 1994. Eight program learners participated in level one and eleven learners participated in level three; level one was six weeks in length while level three was seven and a half weeks long. A data reduction analysis approach was used as a means to process research findings. Miles and Huberman (1994) indicated that this approach "refers to the process of selecting, focusing, simplifying, abstracting, and transforming the data that appear in written-up field notes or transcriptions" (p.10). Data were analyzed individually and then across participant perspectives. Research findings were compared to the basic tenets of three alternative adult learning frameworks: andragogy, proficiency, and whole language.

The findings of the study indicated that the cultural environment of educational climate was the key dimension which contributed to an optimal learning environment for Native literacy learners. The cultural environment components which emerged as influential included values, cooperation, and supportiveness. The findings relating to the learner milieu and learner outcomes are presented in the form of rich, narrative descriptions using the words of the Native adult learners. When the results were compared to the humanistic, holistic, and learner-centred frameworks of andragogy, proficiency, and whole language, research findings confirmed many of the tenets of these frameworks. Furthermore, the findings indicated that the program participants perceived the Employment Preparation Program to be one which was characterized as humanistic, learner-centred, holistic, and

empowering.

Future research needs to replicate the study to examine educational climate in different settings with participants from the same ethnic group to confirm the findings. Furthermore, the study may be replicated using different ethnic groups in order to generate comparative findings. There is also a need to refine the focus of educational climate to determine how the different components and elements of the social, instructional, and cultural environments interact to create a quality environment.

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## **CHAPTER I**

### **INTRODUCTION**

#### **General Problem Statement**

In Canada, many Native adults have not experienced positive educational climates in formal education systems. In fact, a high percentage of Native people have dropped out of the educational process prior to the completion of grade twelve to join the ranks of the undereducated and unemployed. The exploratory study is about this group of Native adults and their perceptions of educational climate in a Native literacy program. It is about the salient components in a formal educational environment that impact on the experiences of learners and affect the outcomes of the learning process. It is about ways to challenge undereducated Native adults in a formal educational environment to persist and progress in a literacy learning process. It is about ways to empower these learners to accept responsibility to acquire knowledge and skills which assist in finding employment and to continue their personal growth.

To fully comprehend the complexity of the issue and the need for the research, chapter one presents a variety of perspectives from the literature which highlight the scope of the problem for this Native population in Canada. This is followed by an overview of the knowledge base concerning adult education, literacy, and Native literacy. The intent is to determine what research has been conducted in relation to the learning environment for adult learners and identify the gaps in the literature which require further study. The chapter concludes with a definition of educational climate and the purpose and relevance of the study.

### Scope of Problem

To fully explore the scope of the problem, this section begins by providing the reader with a definition of terms such as status Indian, non-status Indian, aboriginal peoples, and Native people. Next, the extent of the problem is delineated with statistics which show the discrepancies between the percentages of status Indians who are undereducated, unemployed, and employed and the comparative percentages for the Canadian population. Using information from a number of federal reports, the seriousness of the problem for Native adults is further described. Finally, to place the problem of undereducated and unemployed Native adults in a broader perspective, a picture of the societal context within which they are required to function socially and occupationally is outlined in terms of the rapidly changing demographic, technological, and economic conditions.

According to the terms of the Indian Act, a registered or status Indian is defined as "a person who is registered as an Indian in the Indian Register; most registered Indians are members of an Indian band". (Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, 1991, p.3). A non-status Indian is defined as a "person of Indian ancestry who is not registered as an Indian" (p.3). Furthermore, aboriginal peoples of Canada are defined by the 1982 Constitution as status Indians, non-status Indians, Inuit, and Métis. For the purposes of the research, reference to Native people includes both status and non-status Indians in Canada.

The extent of the problem for Native people who are status Indians becomes evident when comparing relevant statistics of this group with the Canadian population. According to the Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs (1990), the following statistics are taken

from the 1986 census data provided by the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs Canada. The percentages of status Indians, fifteen years of age and older, with less than grade nine education were found to be 28% higher for Indians (45%) living on reserves and 7% higher for Indians (24%) living off reserves when compared to the Canadian population (17%). Unemployment rates for the same populations were found to be 7% higher for status Indians (13%) living on reserves and 8% higher for status Indians (14%) living off reserves when compared to the Canadian population (6%). Employment rates for status Indians (21%), fifteen years of age and older, with less than grade nine education living on and off reserves were found to be 13% lower than that of the Canadian population (34%).

While statistics of this nature were not available for non-status Indians, based on this data, it is evident that status Indians of Canada have a higher percentage of undereducated adults, higher unemployment rates and fewer opportunities of being employed, as indicated by lower employment rates, than other Canadians. It is obvious that distinct educational and employment discrepancies exist between Native and Canadian populations. Clearly, Native peoples are at a disadvantage.

This disadvantage is explicitly noted in a number of federal reports. According to the Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs (1990), Native youth experience high drop out rates, second-rate education, and lack exposure to curricula which acknowledge the contribution of Native cultures and create positive images of Native people. The Committee indicated that immediate action was absolutely essential in order to improve aboriginal literacy and employment rates. More recently, the Steering Group on Prosperity (1992) substantiates this viewpoint by indicating that severe obstacles such as illiteracy and the lack

of quality education has restricted the ability of Native peoples to fully participate in Canada's economy. Action 46 of the Action Plan for Canada's Prosperity emphasizes the need to focus on Native literacy by creating positive learning environments that respected and promoted Native values and encouraged excellence in basic and advanced education. According to Bruner (1991), "literacy is linked with virtually all aspects of our national life, public and private. It is a passport to employment and a key ingredient to a fulfilling life. And without requisite literacy (a matter still to be defined), we can neither survive as a democratic nation nor prosper as an economic power"(p.viii). It is therefore clear that the problem of undereducated and unemployed Native adults becomes a major issue of extreme importance to Canada as a nation.

To fully gain an appreciation of the complexity and magnitude of this problem, it is important to note that the Native population in Canada is required to function socially and occupationally in a societal context which is characterized by rapid, dramatic and ever accelerating change (PAE Research Associates, 1992; Geis, 1991; Merriam & Caffarella, 1991; Rachal, 1989; Spear & Mocker, 1989; Beder, 1989). PAE Research Associates (1992) clearly indicate that "social change is now the norm, influencing all institutions and organizations"(p.i). Three major forces driving this change include demographics, technology, and economics (Merriam & Caffarella, 1991; Spear & Mocker, 1989).

Demographically, the North American population is changing. The composition of the population is culturally and ethnically more diverse and this trend is predicted to continue to escalate. According to Bruce Petries, the Assistant Chief Statistician for Canada, 31% of the Canadian population is of ethnic origin with 16% of this population consisting

of immigrants (CPAC Broadcast, May 1994). Furthermore, based on information from Statistics Canada, the Globe and Mail notes that since the early 1970's, Canadians have not been bearing enough children to replace themselves and therefore the government has tried to maintain high levels of immigration. The percentage of immigrants born in Asia rose from 14% in 1981 to 25% in 1991 with this population comprising almost half of all the immigrants who came to Canada between 1981 and 1991 (December 9, 1992).

In general, the population consists of more adults who are living longer, have higher educational levels and higher incomes, therefore, fewer young people are entering the labour market resulting in greater numbers of older workers (Merriam & Caffarella, 1991; Spear & Mocker, 1989; Rachal, 1989). While this is true of the Canadian population, this is not the case for the status Indian population of Canada. According to Loh (1990), Canada's status Indian population comprised 1.6% of Canada's total population in 1986 and this proportion was projected to increase to 2.3% by 2011. For the 25 year period from 1986 to 2011, the percentage of young status Indians aged between 0-17 is expected to increase by 37%, the status Indian youth population aged from 18 to 24 could grow by 43%, and the status Indian working age population (18-64) is expected to double. Thus, with the future projected growth of the Indian population at a time when Canada will require greater numbers of young workers, it is crucial that the issue of the undereducated and unemployed Native adult be addressed immediately.

Spear and Mocker (1989) indicate that the growth of technology has brought societies around the world into the information age. PAE Research Associates (1992) provide confirmation of this trend in Canada, "In recent times, Canada, along with many other

countries in the world, has moved from an industrial era into a global age of information and technology" (p.4). With the invasion of computer and satellite technology, communication and information have become more available and the social distance among different nations has narrowed considerably. These advancements have paved the way for the shift from independent national economies to an interdependent global economy. The global economy has provided the stimulus for the redefinition of work, the labour force and productivity. Geis (1991) points out that many publications have written about the changes in the nature of the organization, workplace, workforce and the work of the future.

The transformation of the workplace from labour intensive work to knowledge work is deemed essential to compete in a global economy, to achieve greater economic growth and an enhanced quality of life (The Information Technology Sector Advisory Committee, 1993; Merriam & Caffarella, 1991; Spear & Mocker, 1989). Indeed, according to the Hudson Institute (1990), "the jobs of the nineties are in service industries, in research, retailing, business services, engineering, education, government, food services, and other industries which require a high level of literacy and communication skills" (p.12). Rubenson (1989) suggests that to remain competitive on the world market a nation depends on the knowledge, learning, information and skilled intelligence of its resources. This is confirmed by Hart (1991) who indicates that the key to Canadian competitiveness and economic success in the future will be provided by training and education.

With these changing environmental conditions, the ability of the workforce to learn becomes crucial (Rubenson, 1989). According to Merriam and Caffarella (1991), technology is making learning mandatory and educators, employers, and society at large have placed

considerable attention on the development of skills required to be productive and informed members of a fast-changing and highly technical society. PAE Research Associates (1992) support this finding and state that Canada requires a high-performing and well-educated labour force in order for businesses to succeed in the light of the many changes in the world economy. Finally, Beder (1989) indicates that because of the rapid social change occurring in society, knowledge quickly becomes outdated and irrelevant; thus, what was learned previously must constantly be updated, revised, and supplemented.

Spear and Mocker (1989) suggest that information era workers will be required to have technical expertise of the job, the ability to access systems and manipulate large bodies of information, and the skills of differentiation, recognition, synthesis, and abstraction. "Their labours will be essentially mental, and educational preparation will be the key to their participation in the information society" (p.646). More recently, this position is substantiated and promoted by the Information Technology Sector Advisory Committee (1993) in its' vision of a knowledge-based Canada. Strategies developed to transform the workplace of the future include the creation of a highly skilled, trained and educated workforce; the promotion of lifelong learning among all Canadians; the creation of an empowered, adaptable workforce; a workforce with improved management skills; a workforce with increased professionalism; and the expansion of the scope of training from functional and technical skills to include areas of problem-solving, communications, working effectively in groups, learning to learn, and project team leadership. Thus, as indicated by Taylor (1992), "knowledgeable adults are key to the social and economic success of our country" (p. 21).

PAE Research Associates (1992) suggest that "low levels of schooling are

increasingly associated with high unemployment and low skills with poor wages" (p.10). This is supported by the findings of a national survey conducted by Statistics Canada (1990a, 1990b), in which the completion of high school was found important for the acquisition of requisite knowledge and skills used to perform daily functions in society and to find employment. Noteworthy findings indicate that high school completion is key to everyday reading, writing and numeracy skills; higher income is associated with higher reading skills; and numeracy skills are found to be closely linked to level of schooling. Using estimates from Employment and Immigration Canada, the Hudson Institute (1990) indicates that two-thirds of the new jobs created by the year 2000 will require more than twelve years of education and nearly half of these will require more than seventeen years of education. It is clear that previously noted societal changes have and will continue to have a profound impact on the way undereducated adults function daily in their societal context; accessible adult learning opportunities may prove to be the stepping stone necessary to enter the job market, find better employment opportunities, and enhance personal growth. Jones (1991) supports this notion: "The empowerment provided by literacy is the best hope for breaking out of the vicious cycle of poverty and dependence...literacy training may be the critical step toward a solution" (p.40).

In summary, statistics found in the literature highlight the disadvantaged position of the Native population in Canada. This population has a higher percentage of undereducated adults and higher unemployment rates which are coupled with lower employment rates. This situation is exacerbated by societal demands for higher levels of education to obtain employment: the completion of grade twelve has been described as a "passport" to find

employment, to perform daily functions in society, and to lead a fulfilling life. Furthermore, by the year 2000, two-thirds of the new jobs created will require more than twelve years of education. It is clear that literacy training becomes an important stepping stone towards a solution for this population. Furthermore, as indicated in the literature, there is a need to focus on Native literacy by creating positive learning environments that respect and promote Native values and encourage excellence in basic and advanced education.

An examination of the literature relating to adult education and literacy was undertaken to determine what research had been conducted in relation to the learning environment in the education of adult learners. Thus, a brief overview of the knowledge base of the literature reviewed is delineated next.

### **Overview of Knowledge Base**

The knowledge base pertaining to undereducated Native adults and learning environments falls within the purview of three specific areas: (1) adult education; (2) literacy, which is a specialized field within adult education; and (3) Native literacy, which is an area of concentration within literacy.

Reviews of the adult education literature relating to adult learning are provided by Merriam and Caffarella (1987, 1988, 1991). These authors indicate that theory building attempts have focused on self-direction in learning, explaining and predicting participation in adult education, and perspectives of adult learning based on adult characteristics, the life situation of adults, and changes in consciousness. Merriam (1987) notes that theory building in adult learning is in its infancy, taking the form of tentative formulations which lack empirical testing and the support of a substantial body of research.

According to Merriam and Caffarella (1991), the predominant models of adult learning in formal settings were found to be highly structured and set in a systems framework. In this context, learning fell within the behaviourist paradigm. Being characterized as behaviourally oriented, the learning process focused on the attainment of observable, quantified, performance objectives; learner performance was measured against standard performance. Furthermore, problem solving was procedural and rational; and instructors took responsibility for designing and directing the learning process. Thus, adult learning in these types of environments has a very narrow focus; training in this paradigm involves changing the behaviour of the learners in very specific, pre-determined ways. While Merriam and Caffarella (1991) highlight the work of authors who present alternative conceptions to conduct adult learning, they note that, for the most part in actual practice, adult learning remains instructor designed and directed.

Future research in adult learning, as indicated by these same authors, should take into consideration the perspectives of the learners in the learning process and the sociocultural context within which the learning takes place. Furthermore, they indicate that, "few researchers have seriously addressed the issue of what constitutes a positive environment for learning. Certainly more attention needs to be given to delineating just how people, structure, and culture interact to shape the formal learning context...An awareness of context can lead to a better understanding of the learning that does occur, which in turn will improve the practice of adult education in this setting" (Merriam & Caffarella, 1991, p.40). The need for research that investigates the factors which constitute a positive learning environment and which considers the views of the learners points to a gap in the knowledge

base. It is this gap that is addressed in the study.

Anderson (1982), who conducted an intensive review of the research on school climate, tells us that as a broad concept, school climate "includes the total environmental quality within a given school building" (p.369). This focus provides a holistic view which more closely approximates reality. Findings from the review show that the construct of climate is influenced by the characteristics of the learners and the learning processes. Anderson says that students experience multiple outcomes as a result of the learning process. Those that are affected by climate include cognitive behaviour, affective behaviour, values, personal growth, and learner satisfaction. Thus, an understanding of climate will enhance the understanding of learner behaviour.

Anderson states that there are "many gaps in our knowledge of school climate" (p.411). Therefore, future research needs to examine "how the dimensions of an environment interact to create school climate and how the total system operates to produce student outcomes" (p.404). Anderson also describes design alternatives for the study of educational climate. Some of these include the use of a wide range of variables which apply to students as a whole and those which involve "doing"; the use of multiple outcomes and ways to measure them; and the use of in-depth observation and interviews since survey data provides "fragmentary evidence" of the environment. Highlighting the importance of the total environmental quality, the construct of educational climate provides the mechanism with which to explore the characteristics of the learners, the learning processes, and the learner outcomes within the teaching-learning context.

According to Ennis and others (1989), "only two studies were found which

investigated social climate in adult education settings" (pp. 76-77). Most of the research has focused on the elementary and secondary learning environments. These authors defined educational climate as "the social and contextual qualities of an organization as perceived by the participants" (p.76). They used an ethnographic design to examine the dimensions of educational climate with adult participants within a university setting. Focusing on the perceptions of the participants involved in the university classes investigated, the social system category emerged as influential in contributing to a positive learning experience. The results of the study indicated that shared decision making and communication were found to be the most influential factors. These authors suggest that the educational construct can be used to study climate in a variety of adult education settings. Furthermore, they indicate that "adult education programs which monitor both instructional and climate variables can provide a holistic experience which addresses the lifelong learning goals of students" (p.87). This study also referred to the lack of research regarding the construct of climate in adult education settings, therefore, further inquiry in this area would make an important contribution to the knowledge base in adult education.

Several authors provide comments on the limited amount of research that has been conducted in the field of adult literacy. While describing literacy as an area that was poorly researched, Hautecoeur (1991) suggests that it is now timely to conduct program-based research since literacy has become a national priority. Chang Barker (1992) supports this position by asserting that there is a lack of research in the field of adult literacy. She identifies the need to investigate the nature and effectiveness of various literacy programs and training methods. She calls for research to substantiate claims of program success and

to develop more and better materials and methodologies for literacy. She finds the need to conduct research essential to legitimize and professionalize the field with credibility.

Finding that much attention has been given to the number of undereducated adults, literacy programs, and people attending those programs, Taylor (1992) expresses the need to build on this information by shifting our attention to the effectiveness and quality of literacy services being provided. He indicates that one commonly held goal of literacy intervention is to help adults develop the power and freedom to control their own lives and meet the demands of a changing society. How effective a literacy intervention is in meeting this goal may be determined by focusing on the facilitation of adult learning and how the special needs of learners are met in relation to self-esteem issues, the enhancement of individual literacy proficiencies, the provision of supportive and challenging learning environments, and the significance of action and reflection.

Draper (1986) identifies that it is important to study specific programs to determine why they are successful or unsuccessful and the extent to which the results are influenced by instructional methodologies and learning environments. In addition, Draper (1989a) provides an overview of the adult literacy research process, the research spectrum in literacy education, principles and outcomes of research, examples of literacy research, dissemination of research findings and support of research through universities. While he describes the topics for research as limitless, some of the possibilities that he delineates for future investigation include the factors in learner motivation; the relationships between literacy and employment, health, poverty, and crime; a profile of adult learners, their perspectives, aspirations, and life-styles; the role models that are most beneficial to learners; and the

creation of the optimum climate for learning (p.338).

The overview of the knowledge base in the area of literacy, clearly highlights the lack of research in the field; many literacy authors promote the need to examine the quality, effectiveness, and success of literacy programs and services. Research investigating the influence of factors such as instructional methodologies, learning environments, learner profiles, learner proficiencies, and optimum climate has been suggested in the literature. It is evident there are many gaps in the knowledge base of adult literacy, therefore, research which explores the factors which create an optimum educational climate within the context of adult literacy program would make a meaningful contribution to the field.

The literature reviewed in the area of Native literacy was extremely limited. Again, there was a paucity of information in this area. The available literature was descriptive in nature and based on perceptions of literacy practitioners and administrators. Research regarding the perceptions of Native adult learners enrolled in literacy programs could not be found. Thus, it is evident that there is a knowledge gap in the literature relating to the perceptions of Native learners and the learning climate in a Native literacy context.

In summary, the overview of the literature in the areas of adult education, literacy, and Native literacy highlighted the need to conduct research that explores the total learning environment from the perspectives of adult learners. Within this context, it would be possible to examine the characteristics of adult learners, the instructional processes, the sociocultural teaching-learning context, and multiple learner outcomes. The study of educational climate includes all of these elements. Moreover, suggestions from the literature include the use of in-depth observations and interviews for research investigating educational

climate. This would ensure a comprehensive understanding of the environment that is not readily obtained from survey data. It is the intent of the research to conduct a study of this nature in a Native literacy context with Native adult learners. For the purpose of the study, educational climate is defined as "the social and contextual qualities of an organization as perceived by the participants" (Ennis et al., 1989, p.76).

### **The Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of the study is to describe and analyze salient factors in a Native literacy program which create an optimal educational climate for Native adult learners. The research addresses the following questions.

1. What are the characteristics of the Native adult learners participating in the program?
2. What instructional, social, and cultural factors in the teaching-learning context provide an optimum educational climate for Native adult learners?
3. How will the learner outcomes be described upon completion of the program?

### **Relevance of the Study**

The study contributes to the existing knowledge base by providing a total picture of a wide range of variables to capture the educational climate in a Native literacy context. The framework developed for the study may prove useful for future research. The findings of the research will contribute to the knowledge base of adult education by providing empirical support for tenets of the andragogical, proficiency, and whole language frameworks. Furthermore, the results provide evidence of an alternative way of approaching literacy training using a humanist paradigm. Therefore, Native literacy communities, programs, and

practitioners may find many aspects of the program findings useful for application. Finally, knowledge gained about the characteristics, learning needs, learning processes, and learner outcomes provided from the perspectives of Native adult learners offer valuable insights which will help literacy practitioners and educators create meaningful learning experiences for similar populations.

Chapter one of the study outlines the focus of the research by describing the general problem that the research hopes to address, the scope of the problem, a general overview of the knowledge base, the purpose and relevance of the study.

In chapter two a review of the literature is presented. It begins by outlining the knowledge-based perspectives of adult education, literacy, and Native literacy. This includes the definitions of each area and the purposes of adult education. In addition, the conceptual frameworks of andragogy, proficiency, and whole language are described. These frameworks show an alternative way to approach adult education. This is followed by a review of the field of practice in relation to the programs found in adult education, literacy, and Native literacy. This part of the review includes studies of educational climate in teaching-learning contexts which highlight the different elements that have been investigated such as the learners, instructors, and teaching-learning environments. Then the conceptual framework developed for the study of educational climate is explained. The chapter ends with a restatement of the research questions.

The design and methodology for the study is presented in chapter three. This includes a description of the design of the study, the research site, the role of the researcher, sampling strategies, data collection strategies, and data analysis strategies. Data collection

strategies include participant observation of the learners, quasi-focus group interviews with learners, in-depth semi-structured interviews with program staff, document review, and researcher journal. The chapter ends with a description of the confirmation of findings.

In chapter four, the research findings are delineated in three parts. The first part provides the results for research question one which relates to learner milieu. The second part outlines the findings for research question two which relates to the environmental dimensions of educational climate: instructional, social, and cultural environments. The third part provides the results for research question three which relates to the learner outcomes. The perspectives of the learners, program staff, and researcher are presented in relation to each research question.

A discussion of the emerging themes which relate to the five dimensions of educational climate is presented in chapter five. The components which emerged for each dimension are examined in relation to the relevant literature.

In chapter six, a summary of the key findings is presented along with sections on the contributions to the knowledge-base, the implications for practitioners, and recommendations for future research.

## **CHAPTER II**

### **REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE**

#### **Introduction**

The review of the literature is presented in this chapter. It begins with a review of the knowledge-based perspectives for adult education, literacy, and Native literacy. The reader is introduced to the broad scope of the field of adult education and the background information which helped bring the research design into focus. A review of relevant conceptual frameworks found in the adult education literature highlights possible alternative ways to approach adult learning: ways that place the learner at the centre of the learning process. This is followed by a review of the field of practice for adult education, literacy, and Native literacy. This gives the reader a glimpse of reality, of what is actually being done and how what is being done fits with the knowledge-based perspectives. Then, a description of the conceptual framework developed to investigate specific dimensions and components of educational climate is provided. The chapter ends by restating the research questions which guide the study.

#### **Knowledge-Based Perspectives**

The review of the knowledge-based perspectives, as illustrated in Figure 1, covers three specific areas which include adult education, literacy, and Native literacy. Within the area of adult education, the researcher describes the general state of the field, the many ways adult education has been defined, and the many purposes of adult education. In addition, three conceptual frameworks of adult learning, which include andragogy, proficiency, and whole language, are reviewed because they offer different ways to approach

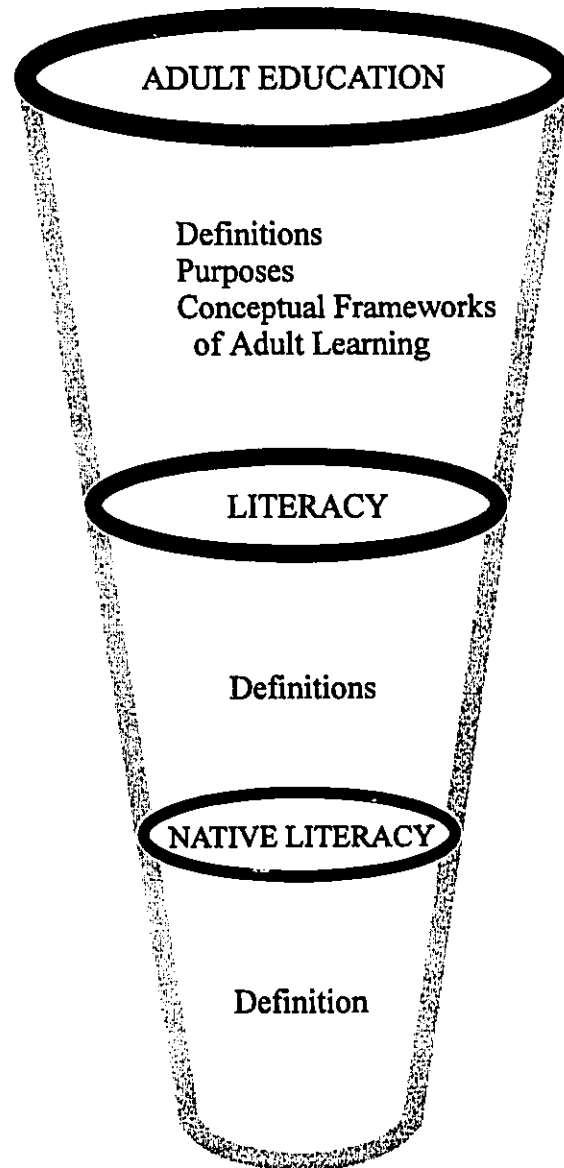


Figure 1. Review of knowledge-based perspectives.

adult learning which may be more effective with undereducated, Native adult learners. Definitions are then provided for literacy and Native literacy.

### Adult Education

While adult education is considered an academic discipline and a broad field of practice, it is also characterized as a young, emerging field which continues to evolve and change (Merriam & Cunningham, 1989; Long, 1983; Darkenwald & Merriam, 1982; Boshier, 1978). For a comprehensive overview of this professional field of practice refer to Merriam and Caffarella (1991), Merriam and Cunningham (1989), Merriam (1989, 1988, 1987), Long (1987, 1983), Jarvis (1983), and Darkenwald and Merriam (1982).

### Definitions

Darkenwald and Merriam (1982) indicate that a universally acceptable definition of adult education is not possible because the specific, context-based assumptions and value judgements brought to the practice would not be acceptable to everyone. As suggested by Rachal (1989), it is important to understand that adult education is a changing, dynamic, responsive and proactive field which reflects the society of which it is a part (p.12); "adult education both responds to societal change and tends to feed further change" (p.3). Thus, there are multiple definitions and terminologies depicting the vast field of adult education. Long (1983) prefers to use adult education as a general lexicon which includes different types of activities (informal, formal, or nonformal) at different grade, content, and purpose levels.

According to Courtney (1989), five basic perspectives have been used historically to define adult education and these definitions still apply. First of all, adult education has been

defined in association with the work of different special interest institutions and what they do. Secondly, adult education "has been described as a special kind of relationship, as in the concept of andragogy or as in the distinction between adult education and the education of adults" (p.17). Reference to adult learning as a formal activity, an informal activity, and a nonformal activity were thought to be included in this definition. Thirdly, it has been perceived as a profession or a scientific discipline; as such it focuses on organized learning, the development of a body of knowledge which explains how to best facilitate learning, and the competencies associated with an ideal adult educator. Fourthly, it has been associated with spontaneous social movements which have been defined by practitioners. Lastly, adult education has been defined in terms of goals and functions based on the needs of the individual, group, organization, or society.

### Purposes

It should not be surprising to find that adult education has a diverse array of purposes, orientations, programs, clientele and delivery systems (Merriam & Cunningham, 1989; Reed, 1988; Long, 1987 & 1983; Darkenwald & Merriam, 1982). Based on philosophical perspectives, Long (1987) categorizes the purposes of adult education into three general areas which include education for self-improvement, social change, or corporate or national goals. From a historical perspective which explains how education has been used, he developed five categories which describe the purposes of adult education as education for Americanization, application, enlightenment or personal liberation, social improvement or liberation, and literacy.

Reviewing the literature, Beder (1989) found that the functions and purposes of adult

education could be collapsed into four major categories which were interrelated. In the first category, the purpose of adult education has been to facilitate change in a dynamic society. It is viewed as a vital social function used continuously to upgrade, retrain and provide requisite knowledge so that people can adequately perform specialized tasks. It is also perceived as an important force in helping adults change their attitudes in order to view learning as a lifelong process and to make the role behaviour changes required to function appropriately.

In the second category, the purpose of adult education has been to support and maintain the good social order. This means that adult education has the function of promoting democracy by informing citizens about the democratic process, by developing citizens who are critical thinkers, by encouraging citizens to participate intelligently in the democratic process, by helping citizens to build groups within communities for the identification and resolution of problems, and by providing adult literacy as a means to equal economic opportunity.

In the third category, the purpose of adult education has been to promote productivity at both the organizational and societal level. This means that individuals within an organization are trained in order to enhance their individual job performance and thus increase organizational effectiveness. At the societal level, the human capital theory is used as the dominant rationale for public subsidy of adult education since the knowledge and skills attained by individuals who participate in these programs enhance the productivity of the general economy and benefit society.

In the fourth and final category, the purpose of adult education has been to enhance

personal growth. Personal growth has been described in a number of ways. It may refer to the lifelong development of the whole person intellectually, aesthetically, morally and physically. It may refer to the process of maturity in which an individual grows and develops towards wholeness in achieving spiritual, vocational, physical, political, and cultural goals. It may refer to the process of helping individuals learn how to make decisions or the process of self-actualization where individuals strive to become all that they are capable of becoming. It may also refer to the process of undergoing shifts in consciousness in which individuals perceive themselves and society in completely new ways.

### Conceptual Frameworks of Adult Learning

In the literature reviewed, a number of conceptual frameworks of adult learning provide important indicators of positive conditions for learning and effective practice in adult teaching-learning contexts. They include the andragogical framework, the proficiency framework, and the whole language framework. These selected frameworks are different from those found within the behaviourist paradigm. They do not focus on the modification of behaviour of all learners towards specific, predetermined goals. They do not promote teacher-directed learning. They do not ignore the previous experiences of the learners. Instead, these frameworks provide alternative ways to approach adult learning in formal settings and they are firmly rooted in the humanist paradigm. In this paradigm, the learner is at the centre of the learning process which is characterized as holistic, democratic, and collaborative. The purpose of adult education, within this context, is to promote personal growth and self actualization; learners are encouraged to explore their feelings, build self-concept, and value each human life (Draper, 1992).

Advocates of the andragogical, proficiency, and whole language frameworks prescribe optimal conditions and basic tenets for adult learning in relation to the setting, the learning process, the adult learners, and the facilitators. These frameworks are important to the research because the researcher expects to find an alternative approach to learning in a teaching-learning context with undereducated, Native adult learners. Thus, these frameworks provide conceptually ideal or optimal ways to view adult learning; they provide a reference point from which to compare practice. These conceptual frameworks are presented next.

Andragogical framework. Andragogy is a term which Malcolm Knowles (1970, 1984, 1992) introduced into American literature in April, 1968. At this time, he contrasted andragogy, which he defines as the "art and science of helping adults learn", with pedagogy, which he defines as "the art and science of teaching children" (Knowles, 1970, pp.37-38). Thus, pedagogy and andragogy, in their initial conceptualization by Knowles, were presented as two antithetical models of teaching. Pedagogy was a teacher-directed, content-centred model to be used with children and andragogy was a self-directed, learner-centred model to be used with adults.

Basing the andragogical model of adult education on the unique characteristics of adult learners, Knowles places the focus of learning on the learner as opposed to the content or teacher. He says that the purpose of education is to facilitate the development of the competencies required for performance in life situations; the process of learning is a lifelong process which is highly individualized and involves active inquiry and interaction with other learners.

Knowles (1970) initially advocated the following five key assumptions about

andragogy and adult learners.

1. Adults change their self-concept from one of dependence towards one of increasing self-directedness with maturity. Perceiving themselves to be autonomous, adults desire respect, the ability to make their own decisions and to be perceived as unique individuals.

2. Adults are rich resources for learning because they have accumulated different kinds and a greater number of experiences. With richer and broader bases of experience against which to relate new experiences and larger numbers of fixed habits, adults tend to be less open minded in the learning process.

3. The readiness of adults to learn is increasingly associated with the developmental tasks of their social roles. This means that they become ready to learn those things that they need to know in order to cope with real-life situations and to become more competent socially and occupationally. Moving from early adulthood, middle age, and later maturity, adults are ready to learn different developmental tasks.

4. The orientation of adults to learning is centred on their perspective of time. With maturity, adults tend to focus on the immediate application of learning rather than the future application of learning. This means that adults enter a learning activity in a problem-centred frame of mind rather than a subject-centred frame of mind. Thus they engage in learning to improve their ability to deal with life issues, to perform tasks and to resolve problems. Having a perspective of immediacy of application and a problem-centred focus, adults require learning activities which are learner centred, start with the needs of the learners, and help learners learn.

5. Adults are motivated to learn when they are stimulated by internal incentives such as self-esteem, job satisfaction, or curiosity rather than external rewards and punishments. Knowles says that learning is an internal process which engages the whole being (intellect, emotions, and physiology) of the learners. Controlling this process, learners identify their needs, set their goals, and strive to achieve these goals. Furthermore, he indicates that learning is influenced by the interaction between the learners and their environment and the educative potency of that environment. Therefore, techniques which enable learners to become deeply involved in self-directed inquiry will produce the greatest learning.

Using these assumptions as a guide for the design of adult learning activities, Knowles (1970, 1984, 1988) advocated the implementation of superior conditions for effective practice in the teaching-learning context. These superior conditions for adult learning involved climate setting, the role of the learners, the role of the teacher, and instructional techniques. Each of these conditions are further explained below.

According to Knowles, climate setting involves consideration of both the physical and psychological environments. It is important to create a comfortable physical environment in which learners feel at ease. This can be done by arranging the classroom informally to facilitate small group interaction, providing comfortable chairs, using round or oval tables to encourage learner interaction, using appropriate decor, providing adequate lighting, ensuring the acoustics are good, and ensuring that the temperature and ventilation are adequate. It is also important to create a psychological environment in which learners feel accepted, respected, supported and valued as unique individuals. The atmosphere is one

which is informal, open, friendly, collaborative, pleasurable, flexible, and human. The environment is one in which learners feel nonthreatened, accepted, and free to express themselves. Mutual trust and mutual helpfulness is cultivated between learners and teachers. Knowles (1984) indicates that climate setting is the key factor in the developmental process: "In my own andragogical model, climate setting is probably the most crucial element in the whole process of human resource development" ( p.121).

Learners are actively involved in the learning process; they help establish a climate conducive to learning. They participate in the planning process for learning by mutually diagnosing their learning needs with program staff. They assist in the formulation of learning objectives and the design and conduct of learning plans. They also take part in the evaluation of learning outcomes and the re-diagnosis of their learning needs.

The andragogical teacher is a resource person, co-inquirer, guide, facilitator, consultant, and change agent. The teacher provides opportunities to assist learners to become aware of unknown needs. Teachers help learners clarify their individual aspirations for improved behaviour; diagnose the gaps between their aspirations and their present level of performance; identify the life problems they experience because of the gaps in their personal equipment; and organize themselves to share responsibility in the process of mutual inquiry. Knowles indicates that "the behaviour of the teacher probably influences the character of the learning climate more than any other single factor" (1970, p.41). Furthermore, Knowles states that the most critical competency that schools should be helping people acquire is that of becoming self-directed learners.

Within the teaching-learning context, Knowles advocates the following practices and

instructional techniques to ensure the design and delivery of effective learning. He suggests that access to rich human and material resources is crucial to effective learning. He promotes the use of experiential techniques such as group discussion, case method, critical-incident process, simulation exercise, role playing, skill practice exercise, field projects, action projects, demonstration, counselling, and group therapy. Learner participation is highly valued: more active learners tend to increase the probability of learning. Practical application is also highly valued; this involves using examples from the experiences of the learners to illustrate new concepts and providing opportunities for learners to plan and rehearse how they are going to apply their learning in their daily lives. It is also important to provide opportunities for learners to look at themselves objectively, engage in activities which help them free their minds from preconceptions, learn collaboratively with the help of colleagues, and learn how to receive feedback on their behaviour. Learning activities need to be provided at the appropriate time and sequenced to match the developmental tasks of the learner; they need to address the real life concerns of the learners. Finally, the grouping of learners needs to be varied to give learners flexibility of choice.

Over the years, the andragogical model attracted a lot of attention and generated both supporters and opponents. Feuer and Geber (1988) state that the andragogical model advocated by Knowles "sparked a revolution in adult education and training" (p.31). Presented as a theory of adult learning, the key assumptions of the andragogical model were challenged. This caused an overwhelming amount of controversy and philosophical debate which far exceeded the attention received by any other proposed model in the field of adult education. According to Merriam and Caffarella (1991), andragogy did not qualify as a

theory of adult learning because it was not unique to adults and it appeared to be situation-specific. The only andragogical assumption which was well grounded as truly characteristic of adult learners was the quality and quantity of experience (Feuer & Geber, 1988; Brookfield, 1986). For a more detailed coverage of the issues involved in the debate, refer to Merriam (1987), Feuer and Geber (1988), and Merriam and Caffarella (1991).

Knowles eventually revised his original position regarding the assumptions of andragogy. He acknowledged that children as well as adults could be self-directed, task-centred, internally motivated, and problem centred learners. Thus andragogy and pedagogy shifted from dichotomous models to parallel sets of assumptions along a continuum which could be used by both adults or children depending on the situational requirements of the learners in a particular learning context (Knowles, 1992). With these modifications, Knowles now refers to andragogy as a situational model of human learning rather than a theory of adult learning. It is noteworthy to mention that even with these changes, much of the training world still proclaims andragogical methods to be superior to pedagogical methods on the grounds that adult learners are distinctly different from children (Feuer & Geber, 1988).

The andragogical model continues to focus on the learning process and is concerned with the provision of procedures and resources which help learners of all ages acquire information and skills. Pedagogical assumptions and methodologies are considered useful when adults come to the teaching-learning context as dependent learners. This may happen when adults: enter a totally new content area; lack experience in a content area; lack an understanding of the relevance of a content area to their life; need to learn specific content

to perform a task; and do not see a need to learn content that may be helpful to them (Knowles, 1984). In addition, Feuer and Geber (1988) suggest that pedagogical methods are useful to apply when the topic is technical, when there are established ways to perform certain tasks and when dealing with learners who are accustomed to and prefer structured formal school methods.

Rooted in humanism, andragogy provides an alternate way of structuring practice, however, there is very little research indicating how the assumptions of andragogy are applied in the real world of practice (Merriam & Caffarella, 1991; Feuer & Geber, 1988).

Proficiency framework. Writings by Knox (1986, 1980) provide comprehensive descriptions of ways instructors in all types of educational programs can increase their effectiveness in helping adults learn. Focusing on the life situations of adults, Knox (1980) advocates an adult learning framework which is based on the notion of proficiency. This is defined as "the capability to perform effectively if given the opportunity" (p.78). With most proficiencies consisting of a combination of knowledge, skills, and attitudes, a discrepancy between current proficiency levels and desired proficiency levels, creates the educational need to engage in learning activities.

In addition, the readiness of adults to learn is influenced by the personal and situational circumstances in an adult's life such as changes in role performance. Knox says that one of the most common reasons adults give for engaging in learning activities is to achieve goals that benefit the individual and others. Therefore, adults participate in the learning process to enhance their proficiencies in order to improve their performances. Furthermore, the desire to enhance their proficiencies encourages adult learners to persist

in learning activities until the desired performance is achieved.

Adult learning is assumed to be developmental and transactional. According to Knox (1986), the proficiency levels of adults change developmentally over the years, unused proficiencies diminish, and past characteristics influence current proficiencies which influence future choices. Learning is transactional because it results from the social interaction of individuals.

General characteristics associated with proficiency-oriented adult learning include the variability of the backgrounds and expectations of adult learners. Knox (1980, 1986) notes that individual differences and learning abilities become more variable with age, and with sufficient time and assistance, most learners can learn almost anything. An emphasis is placed on the clear specification of objectives, achievement of optimal standards of proficiency related to adult life roles, and the evaluation of learner achievement of objectives. Persistence is encouraged by helping learners clarify their purposes, agree on objectives, and understand how these experiences can be applied to role performance in family, work, and community.

A general goal of instruction is the self-actualization of learners which is achieved by using a holistic approach toward enhancing a range of proficiencies related to various life roles. Program planning and implementation are presented as highly significant responsibilities which involve learners, specialists and instructors prior to and throughout the duration of the program. Components involved in program planning include needs assessment, context analysis, objective setting, learning activities, program evaluation, and additional program arrangements.

The teaching-learning transaction is described by Knox in terms of the educational climate of the situation and the dynamics of the learning process. While Knox doesn't provide a definition for educational climate, he does indicate that objectives should be achieved in such a way that learners are sufficiently satisfied to persist in the learning endeavour; that learning activities should be learning and problem centred; and that both the instructor and learners should be actively involved in the teaching-learning transaction.

Beneficial learning-centred climates can be established by providing comfortable physical facilities: which are hospitable; which include areas for recreation, groups, eating, and informal conversation; which are decorated in a way that reduces distraction; and which include seating arrangements which encourage learner interaction, informal conversation and sharing. A climate conducive to learning is supportive, learner-centred, friendly, spontaneous, informal, open, and challenging without being threatening or condescending. Supportive and challenging climates for learning are established by providing warm up activities to help learners get acquainted; providing an overview of the program and clarifying procedures and logistics; and setting a tone of mutual respect. Learners are encouraged to become actively involved in sharing information about their backgrounds, expectations, experiences and insights. They participate in the formulation and modification of goals and objectives. They persist with their learning activities when they are worthwhile, meaningful, and relevant experiences. Receiving learner feedback about their reactions to sessions is essential for making required revisions which will enhance the learning process.

The dynamics of learning within the teaching-learning transaction provide ways in which teachers can help adults learn. Knox describes ways to select, organize, and sequence

learning activities; different instructional methodologies available to instructors; ways to assist learners with the application of the learning; and the importance of practice, reinforcement, feedback and evaluation. Effective learning dynamics are fostered when learners find the content of the program relevant to their life concerns; when familiar and challenging examples, problems, and issues are provided; when a variety of instructional methodologies are used; and when learners are provided with sufficient opportunities to practice new knowledge, attitudes and skills. Knox says that practice activities which are more realistic are more likely to encourage the learner to persist and apply what is learned. Finally, it is important to provide the opportunity to practice or apply what is learned as soon after presentation as possible.

Adults learn best when they are given feedback and reinforcement on their progress. Knox indicates that feedback includes all ways that learners receive information about their efforts and abilities to perform learning activities. It may include the use of self-assessments, reactions of the instructor, peers, or others, and it may be provided orally, in writing or through observation. While reinforcement is a form of positive feedback, Knox says that it can also take the form of praise or rewards. Feedback and reinforcement should be provided on an irregular basis, some of the time.

Adults also learn best when they are encouraged to take an active part in the learning process. This means that they clarify their preferences, make their own choices, ask questions, seek answers, select activities, practice procedures, provide feedback on progress and satisfaction, and evaluate learning activities.

Knox suggests that learners may need to engage in the process of "unlearning"

obsolete or dysfunctional prior learning to clear up misunderstandings, extinguish minor fears, or correct bad habits. This is done by noting the differences between the old and new, reinforcing aspects common to the old and new proficiency, extinguishing unwanted aspects of the old proficiency, and replacing them with preferred aspects of the new proficiency.

According to Knox, effective instructors exhibit self-confidence, emotional stability, enthusiasm, humour, creativity, flexibility, imagination, cultural awareness, clarity of explanation, empathy, sensitivity, cooperativeness, responsiveness, and patience. They are willing to devote time and effort to use a diverse array of methods to help adults learn. They possess areas of expertise and content mastery. Instructors respect learners as mature persons; they encourage learners to select learning tasks that fit their interests and backgrounds; they model desirable attitudes and performance; they use active questioning and inquiry; they use the expert viewpoints of learners as a major resource for learning; and they provide evaluation review and feedback frequently.

While research relating to this conceptual framework has not been conducted, Merriam (1987) suggests that Knox's proficiency framework offers research possibilities relating to the total teaching-learning transaction. Basic tenets of the proficiency framework are considered in the study in order to determine those which are supported by the findings of the research.

Whole language framework. Literature regarding the whole language framework was reviewed because it provides a holistic perspective of learners in relation to the educational climate in a teaching-learning context. This is one of the key frameworks that Native educators recommended for use with undereducated Native adults (George, 1993b;

Rodriguez & Sawyer, 1990; Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs, 1990).

In the literature reviewed, whole language is described in a variety of ways. Edelsky (1992) refers to whole language as "a theoretical, philosophical, and political perspective-in-practice" (p.325). Newman and Church (1990) see it as a philosophy of learning and teaching based on a number of fundamental assumptions; a practice theory; a belief system in a constant process of evolution and implementation. Watson (1989) calls it a perspective on education supported by beliefs about learners and learning, teachers and teaching, language, and curriculum which led to the acceptance of certain strategies, methods, materials, and techniques.

According to Edelsky (1992), the kinds of activity that take place inside and outside of the classroom are based on the theoretical positions of whole language. Altwerger, Edelsky, and Flores (1987) provide confirmation of this notion in the following way, "Like a liquid, practice takes the shape of whatever belief-container it is in" (p.149). Some of the essential principles which shape and guide the practice of whole language are presented in relation to the general approach, the environment, the learning processes, the learner, and the teacher.

In the whole language framework, the general approach is learner-centred (Freppon & Dahl, 1991; Goodman, 1986). This approach is embedded in the tradition of humanism which means that learners are respected and regarded positively regardless of age, ability, or background (Goodman, 1989). The educational goal is individual growth, therefore, learners begin learning at their existing level of understanding (Goodman, 1986). Furthermore, this approach focuses on what learners can do (Edelsky, 1992).

Learning occurs best in a learning environment which is democratic, rich, literate and inviting (Goodman, 1989). Learning is expected to be fun, enjoyable, practical, and successful. The environment is one in which discussion and sharing of knowledge and ideas is encouraged; learners are encouraged to try new strategies and make mistakes in the process; and ample opportunities are provided for learners to exchange information and seek the feedback and help of other learners. A literate setting with literature, books, magazines, newspapers, directories, posters and other materials is provided (Altwerger et al., 1987; Goodman, 1986; Scholastic-Tab, 1985).

The learning process in a whole language framework involves teacher demonstrations which are meaningful; the active participation of the learners; and the use of thematic units which provide a focal point for inquiry (Goodman, 1986; Scholastic-Tab, 1985). Furthermore, multiple sources of information and the use of oral language to read stories and texts aloud are used to enhance the learning process (Freppon & Dahl, 1991; Fountas & Hannigan, 1989). The use of whole groups, small groups, and individual learning situations provides a variety of effective ways to structure the learning process (Scholastic-Tab, 1985). The purpose of evaluation in whole language is to inform learners of their progress. Assessment takes the form of constant observation and feedback regarding the performance of learners; and a portfolio of their written work is also a meaningful evaluation tool illustrating what the learners can do (Newman & Church, 1990; Watson, 1989; Altwerger et al., 1987).

Learners in the whole language framework are perceived as "whole learners" who participate in deciding what will be learned; take ownership and responsibility for their own

learning; evaluate their own efforts; and develop self-regulating strategies (Watson, 1989; Fountas & Hannigan, 1989; Goodman, 1986). Learners also feel free to make guesses and corrections without the fear of criticism.

Teachers of whole language classrooms are co-learners, classroom researchers, participants, coaches, resource persons, and listeners. They develop curriculum with their learners. They are advocates and activists for students, themselves, and their curriculum (Watson, 1989). They believe in and respect learners by treating them with love and dignity; they build learner confidence and self-esteem (Goodman, 1986; Scholastic-Tab, 1985). They seek to create appropriate social settings and interactions; and they guide, support, monitor, encourage, and facilitate learning (Goodman, 1986). They create open learning environments and they observe learners as they engage in learning activities (Newman & Church, 1990; Fountas & Hannigan, 1989). Practice opportunities are encouraged and feedback focuses on meaningful communication which helps the learners. Teachers continuously evaluate themselves and actively model literate behaviour (Fountas & Hannigan, 1989; Goodman, 1986). How the whole language framework functions in practice in a Native literacy context has yet to be investigated.

### Literacy

The review of the literacy knowledge base provided an understanding of the diverse and complex nature of this specialized field of adult education. With the changing demands of society, literacy thresholds make responsive adaptations and definitions of literacy continue to evolve. In the late seventies, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) recommended that the following definitions of literacy

be used for statistical purposes: "A person is literate who can with understanding both read and write a short simple statement on his everyday life."

A person is functionally literate who can engage in all those activities in which literacy is required for effective functioning of his group and community and also enabling him to continue to use reading, writing, and calculation for his own and the community's development. (Thomas, 1989, p.6)

These two definitions point out different levels of literacy. The first definition denotes a very basic level in which an individual has limited reading and writing skills. The second definition involves a higher level of operation in which an individual is able to use reading, writing, and math skills to function effectively in the community.

Early attempts to define literacy were simple and included grade level completion as an indicator of ability. According to MacKeracher (1989), Canadians who had completed grade four or higher of elementary school were defined as basically literate; those who had completed grades eight, nine, ten or eleven were defined as functionally literate. Grade level completion was found to be inadequate for definitional purposes, however, this criterion was and still is often used in operational definitions of literacy (Jones, 1990; The Hudson Institute, 1990; Thomas, 1989; Mackeracher, 1989).

In 1989, statistics for literacy skill levels in reading, writing, and numeracy were gathered by Statistics Canada (1990a, 1990b). Findings indicated that 38% of the Canadian population possessed reading skill levels which were insufficient to meet most everyday reading demands; 38% of the Canadian population possessed numeracy skill levels which were insufficient to perform simple sequences of numerical operations to meet most everyday demands. These are noteworthy statistics because the focus on skill levels provides more detailed information about what this population can and cannot do. In addition, these

figures show much higher percentages of Canadian individuals who are considered deficit or undereducated. According to statistics presented in chapter one, 17% of the Canadian population, who were fifteen years of age and older, had less than grade nine years of education.

It is important to note that the Native population was not included in the survey. The omission of the Native population in these studies was acknowledged by the Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs (1990).

Functional literacy is a culturally relative concept and literacy statistics based on grade level achievement are at best rough benchmarks. Recent studies in Canada on levels of literacy based skills testing have not included aboriginal populations...Grade level achievements are the only national guide available to estimate the level of literacy skills among aboriginal people. (pp. 6, 8)

While grade level achievement is not an appropriate measure of literacy levels, it seems that it is the only existing means to measure the state of literacy for aboriginal peoples at this time. If the statistics for the general population of Canada reflect higher levels of deficit when using skill levels to measure literacy levels, one can only speculate that those for the Native population in Canada would be much higher. Thus, the extent of the problem would also appear to be much greater; the need for the research then becomes more urgent.

While a common operational definition of literacy is perceived to be unlikely in a pluralistic society with a broad array of cultural contexts, many authors clearly state that literacy involves more than reading, writing, and computation skills (Fingeret, 1991; Courts, 1991; Draper, 1991a; Thomas, 1990, 1989). Draper (1991) indicates that literacy education also involves learning about educational program goals, improving self-concept as a learner and as a person, diagnosing one's own needs, thinking critically and solving problems,

improving interpersonal relationships, and working as teams of learners. According to Courts (1991) genuine literacy is all about making meaning through the use of language which involves reading, writing, speaking, listening, viewing, and creating. Thus, literacy means more than upgrading skills to become employable or to gain financially; it means being able to deal more effectively with life situations, gaining more control over one's life, and functioning with greater success in social and personal contexts. It is also clear that the way literacy is defined will determine the goals, methods, content, and structure of a literacy program.

### Native Literacy

There is a paucity of literature in the area of Native literacy. The Ontario Native Literacy Coalition (ONCL), formed in 1987, defines Native literacy as "a tool which empowers the spirit of the Native people. Native literacy fosters and promotes sense of purpose and achievement, both integral to self-determination" (George, 1993b, p.1).

This definition is different from the general definitions of literacy which focus on the levels at which individuals are able to read and write to function effectively in everyday life of the community to which they belong. These skills are required for the benefit of the individual and the community. In the definition of Native literacy, literacy is seen as an instrument that can be used to provide personal growth. Once acquired, this knowledge is owned and used by the individual to see things from different perspectives, to understand different viewpoints, to open new pathways, to make decisions, and to solve problems. Literacy helps individuals find a direction; it helps them feel like they have been successful. Through this process, individuals build self-esteem and self-confidence. The definition of

Native literacy is much broader in scope; it places the individual at the centre, fully connected as one with the spirit of all the Native people in the community.

According to Finney (1993), an empowerment perspective provides students with motivation to acquire skills, obtain employment, and the opportunity for personal growth. This is done by deepening students understanding of themselves, others, and the social world; by increasing students rational abilities; and by strengthening students beliefs in their abilities to effect social change in the interests of greater social justice.

In summary, a review of the knowledge-based perspectives of adult education, literacy, and Native literacy highlighted the incredible diversity and complexity that is characteristic of each of the areas within the discipline of adult education. With multiple definitions and purposes being the norm for adult education and literacy, the dynamic, evolving nature of these young, emerging fields were noted.

Within the broad scope of adult education, three conceptual frameworks which provided indicators of positive conditions for adult learning and effective practice were identified. The frameworks of andragogy, proficiency, and whole language were found important because they presented alternative approaches to adult learning which were rooted in humanism, put the learner at the centre of the learning process, and focused on personal and individual growth. The lack of empirical research in relation to these three frameworks was clearly specified in the literature.

The review of literacy and Native literacy pinpointed the need to take a broader approach in literacy education. It was suggested that literacy training involved more than upgrading skills to become employable. It involved gaining control over one's life,

functioning more effectively in social and personal contexts, and being able to handle life situations appropriately. This broader approach was exemplified in the definition of Native literacy which referred to literacy as a tool which empowered the spirit of Native people.

### **The Field of Practice**

In this part of the literature review, as displayed in Figure 2, the focus is on the field of practice and the various programs that exist in adult education, literacy, and Native literacy. Once these are presented, studies which examined educational climate in teaching-learning contexts are reviewed. With an understanding of both the types of programs and educational climate research that had been conducted, a conceptual framework was developed for the study of educational climate. This framework is explained and the research questions are restated. Both the research questions and the conceptual framework of educational climate provide the guideposts for the research design, data collection, and data analysis.

### **Adult Education Programs**

A broad spectrum of adult education programs are available to the adult learner. These range from continuing education programs for different professionals who engage in learning to enrich their knowledge and improve their technical or professional qualifications, to an extensive array of non-credit programs in special interest areas (bridge, gourmet cooking), to a complex variety of adult basic education programs for adults who have not completed high school. These programs are fully outlined in the literature on adult education. For a more detailed discussion refer to Merriam and Cunningham (1989), Reed (1988), Long (1987, 1983), and Darkenwald and Merriam (1982). According to Reed (1988),

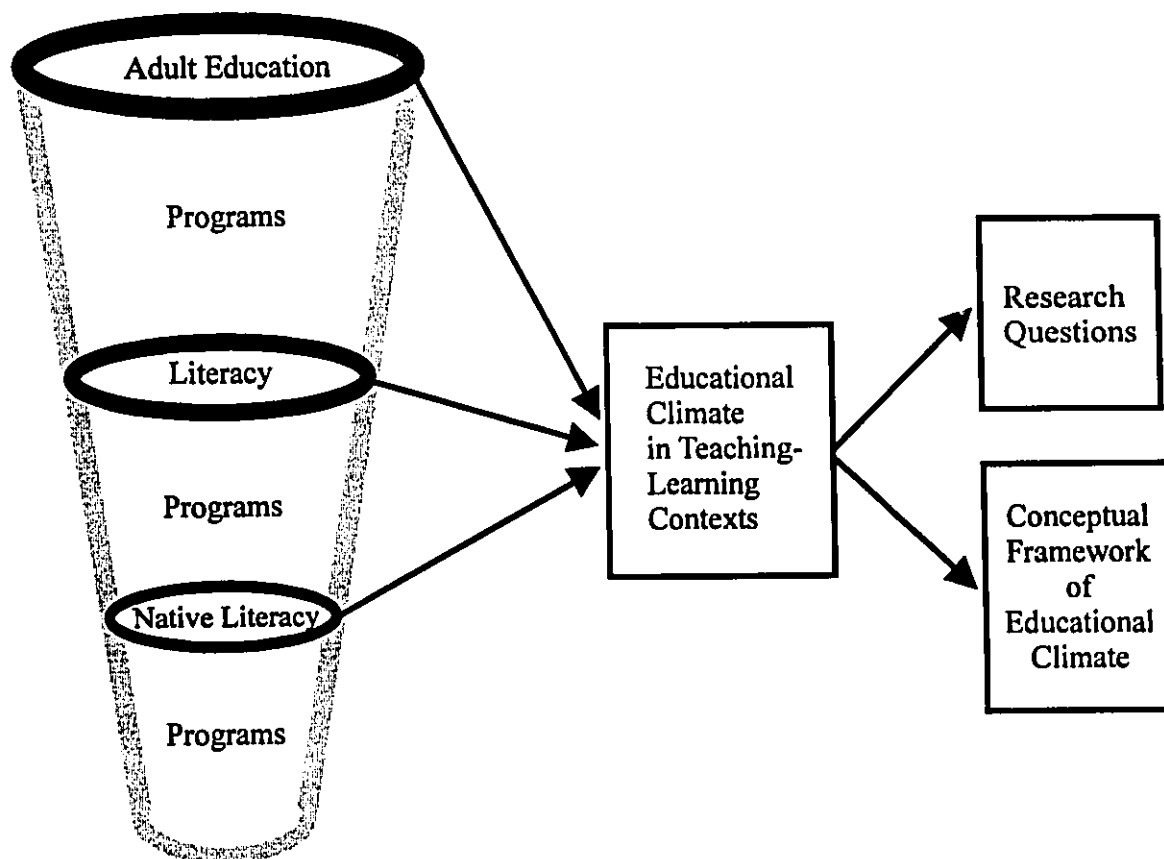


Figure 2. Review of the field of practice.

noteworthy characteristics associated with adult education programs include an hierarchial organizational structure with top-down decision making by administrators and staff; a considerable variation in program objectives; a focus on information and skills content; and an emphasis on individual growth. Furthermore, staff delivering these programs were found to be elementary or high school teachers or individuals who were not professional teachers. While the delivery variables for these programs differed to some degree, they were all strongly influenced by the traditions of formal education.

### Literacy Programs

Literacy education in Canada consists of many varied pathways which are multifaceted, situational, contextual, and characterized by constant change. While literacy programs are complex and challenging, they purport to provide educational opportunities which are accessible and available to everyone. Literacy is a universal right and an economic imperative rather than a privilege or luxury (Ministry of Skills Development, 1990). This is a position which is global. Draper (1989a) refers to UNESCO's advocacy for the right to education in which adult literacy is perceived as a universal necessity.

These many diverse contexts of literacy education provide a multitude of opportunities available for different purposes and at different ability levels for potential learners. The major portion of the funding for these programs is provided by the federal or provincial governments (Anderson, 1989).

Thomas (1989) defines Adult Basic Education (ABE) in the following way.

[ABE is] a field of practice whose target population consists of those persons above the statutory school-leaving age who, for one reason or another, have, by normative standards, educational deficits which are to be redressed by a program of instruction undertaken in a setting recognized by a funding organization. (p.3)

To add to this, Taylor (1989) describes ABE as follows.

In North America, adult basic education is a generic term used to denote the building blocks of the lifelong learning structure. Basic education refers to the fundamental areas of reading, writing, listening, speaking, and mathematics. These basic areas of communication and computation are the foundation that gives individuals the power and freedom to control their own lives and to meet the demands of an ever-changing society. (p.465)

General characteristics and components associated with ABE programs are noted by a number of authors (Thomas, 1990; Rachlis, 1989; Conger & Cameron, 1989). Rachlis (1989) indicates that characteristics typical of ABE programs include similar content areas, a diverse range of learner ability levels, female instructors, part-time teaching positions, instructors without teacher certification, and counselling as part of the program. Life skills, as a content area which helps learners interact socially, solve problems and function in groups, is also found to be an integral component of ABE (Thomas, 1990; Conger & Cameron, 1989).

ABE is an umbrella term which includes a variety of literacy programs for adult learners with low literacy levels ranging from basic levels (grades 4-8) to functional levels (grades 9-12). Examples of these programs include adult basic literacy, general educational development (GED) for grade twelve equivalency or high school equivalency, employment preparation training, English as a second language, French as a second language, citizenship training, and community-based programs (Taylor, 1989). Full descriptions of these programs can be found in Draper and Taylor (1992), Taylor, Lewie, and Draper (1991), and Taylor and Draper (1989).

Chang Barker (1992) found over 3000 programs listed in the National Adult Literacy Database in Canada. Of those listed, 63% were offered at or below grade eight level, 41%

specialized in basic literacy instruction, 38% focused on job search or life skills, 26% specialized in second language instruction, and 33% included classroom instruction.

Undereducated adults are encouraged to attend programs of this nature in order to upgrade or improve their knowledge and skills and acquire job experience so that they are capable of functioning in modern society. To illustrate the diversity of goals and approaches that is typical of these programs, a brief overview of some of these teaching-learning contexts such as adult basic literacy, workplace literacy and workforce education is provided below. For these literacy programs, the goals and the way these goals are accomplished are intimately interwoven with the context within which the literacy learning takes place.

The goal for adult basic literacy (ABL) programs is to improve performance in low skill areas of interest to the learner and to empower the learner. These types of programs are designed to assist learners with lower skill levels in reading, writing, mathematics, computers, and life skills; these learners usually have less than a grade nine level of education. The learning process is learner centred and responsive to the individual needs of the learner. Learners proceed through the program at their own pace to acquire the skills that they identify as necessary. Rachlis (1989) indicates that the watchwords of ABE have always been flexibility and responsiveness. These are non-credit programs which use one-on-one tutoring, individual work, and small interest groups. Volunteers act as tutors and many of these programs have counsellors.

The goal of workplace literacy programs is to upgrade or update the basic skills of adult workers in order to keep pace with changes in the requirements of the workplace and to improve the work performance of employees and increase workforce productivity. These

programs encompass a variety of basic skills and instructional programs.

Workplace training may include content areas relating to job-related knowledge and skills or skills such as listening, oral communication, reasoning, problem solving, teamwork, leadership and self-direction. It is important to keep in mind that the skills required are based on the needs of each employee and each workplace. According to Waugh (1990), the kinds of skills needed by employees will depend on the following factors: "industry and sector, job functions and tasks of employees, management and philosophy, workplace technology, and changing job requirements" (p.1).

Askov and Aderman (1991) make the distinction between workplace literacy and workforce education. While workplace literacy tends to provide instructional programs to employees who need knowledge and skills to keep current with the demands of the job or to upgrade the performance of specific job tasks, workforce education provides job training programs which prepare unemployed adults for the workforce or provides retraining to displaced workers. Thus, the major goal of workforce education would be to provide the knowledge and skills necessary to prepare learners for future employment.

Literacy educators and authors indicate that the narrow focus on ABE training is undergoing a fundamental paradigm shift to a broader focus on education, and as a result, alternative contextualized approaches to literacy instruction are required (Draper, 1991b; Merriam & Caffarella, 1991). Employers in the world of work substantiate the need for a more encompassing focus for ABE programs. Based on the perspectives of employers, Taylor (1991) developed a basic skills profile of the skills that employers found most desirable: basic literacy and numeracy skills; basic listening and oral communication skills;

creative thinking and problem solving skills; personal management skills; and teamwork skills. The Conference Board of Canada (June 1992) drafted an Employability Skills Profile highlighting critical skills required by the Canadian workforce. Requisite, critical skills include academic skills (communication, thinking, and learning), personal management skills (positive attitudes and behaviours, responsibility, and adaptability), and teamwork skills (work with others). The Conference Board suggests that these skills provide the basic foundation required to achieve the best results, to get and keep a job and to progress on a job.

### Native Literacy Programs

Most of the Native literacy writings reviewed were descriptive in nature and they consistently identified similar characteristics thought to be associated with successful Native literacy programs (George, 1993a, 1993b, 1992; Wabano, 1991; Goldgrab, 1991; Rodriguez & Sawyer, 1990; Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs, 1990; Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technologies, 1990; B.C. Ministry of Education, 1984). According to the literature cited, positive, effective and successful Native literacy programs are characterized as those which: are community-based and community controlled; are linked to the economic, social, political and spiritual development of the community; provide sufficient counselling services; employ instructors who are culturally sensitive and committed to the community; incorporate a strong cross-cultural component; and accept the learners' language.

More specifically, Native literacy programming in Ontario is described in depth by George (1993a, 1993b, 1992); she indicates that the ONCL was formed as a support agency for the Aboriginal literacy projects funded through the Ontario Community Literacy (OCL)

grants program of the Ministry of Education. She tells us that thirty-one community-based Native literacy programs started in 1987 with sixteen projects located in urban-centres, fourteen located on reserves, and one located in a Metis community. Band councils, local friendship centres, or training programs are the institutional bodies through which these projects were implemented and operated in the communities.

Thirty-nine Aboriginal literacy practitioners (31 female and 8 male) from local communities worked as tutors/instructors in these programs. According to George, the literacy practitioners in these programs use learner centred and whole language approaches and they actively network with other social services and educational programs in the community. Literacy practitioners in these programs are encouraged to use Prior Learning Assessment which is a portfolio development process where learners identify and record prior learning experiences, determine individual strengths, weaknesses, interests and needs, and share information with instructors and learners. Documents which form part of the portfolio might include resumes, resources, and references from work (George, 1993b). George (1992) indicates that these Native literacy programs are in a state of evolution and therefore the methodology and curricula are undergoing constant review and revision.

While practitioners and educators perceive that the program characteristics previously mentioned provide optimal conditions for Native learners, it was clear that research relating to Native literacy programs had not been conducted to verify these perceptions. Thus, the review confirms the need to explore the conditions in a Native literacy program which contribute to a quality educational climate in the teaching-learning context.

### Educational Climate in Teaching-Learning Contexts

Educational climate as a research construct has received very little attention in the literature relating to adult education, literacy, and Native literacy. Most of the literature reviewed in relation to this construct focuses on isolated dimensions of teaching-learning contexts such as the learners, the instructors, and the teaching-learning environments. Anderson (1982) tells us that "most climate studies have measured variables from only one or two dimensions" or "component elements" rather than concentrating on the total environment (pp. 404-405). An examination of this literature enabled the researcher to pinpoint key dimensions and components of climate which provided the information for the development of a conceptual framework of educational climate. The review is presented under three headings: learners, instructors, and teaching-learning environments.

#### Learners

The nature and perceptions of learners in teaching-learning contexts and the cultural and social characteristics that Native learners bring to the teaching-learning context are delineated by Whelan (1993), Sawyer and Rodriguez (1992, 1990), Steiger & Steiger (1991), Pepper and Henry (1992, 1986), and Couture (1987) .

Focusing on the learners, Whelan (1993) investigates the factors in an ABE program that affect the self-esteem of adult learners. Based on the perspectives of the learners, she examines how the programs at the selected site affect their self-esteem. Using a qualitative case study, she conducted a series of in-depth, individual interviews with eight learners; she held a focus group interview with all eight learners; and she made observations throughout the data collection period of one year.

She found that a number of factors interact to affect the learning progress and self-esteem of learners. First, adult learning may not be a joyful experience for learners; it may be "a perilous" and "painful" experience which is challenging and full of anxiety. Therefore, educators need to see the ambivalence of new learners as normal; they need to find ways to help learners alleviate their discomfort through appropriate levels of disclosure about fears and worries about the learning process. She found that learners want to learn on their own only when they are sure that they can do so successfully. Moreover, results indicated that learning takes place when the self-worth of learners is not threatened; when facilitators are perceived as understanding of the learners; when learners are encouraged to engage in self-reflection by means of external prompts; and when learners engage in ongoing dialogue that is collaborative and respects the individuality of the learners.

According to Whelan, the key factor that affects the self-esteem and learning progress of learners is the manner and frequency in which feedback, relating to personal development and academic goals is provided. Furthermore, Whelan says that "a shift in perspective is needed from viewing feedback as a mere corrective or rewarding process to seeing it as a tool learners can use to gauge and grow in their social and emotional goals" (p.296).

The results of this study are significant because they give the learners in an ABE program a voice which expresses their perspectives of the total learning environment and its impact on their self-esteem. Whelan suggests that educators need to work with learners to develop strategies for alternative ways of seeing and interpreting the world. The study of educational climate from the perspectives of learners may shed further light on this issue.

Sawyer and Rodriguez (1992, 1990) examine the perceptions of 56 undereducated

Native adults who were "potential" literacy learners. Potential learners were defined as undereducated Native adults who qualified as candidates for literacy education, however, they had not taken any literacy training. Using trained interviewers and a survey instrument with open-ended questions to gather qualitative data and forced choice questions to gather quantitative data, a representative sample of Native adults from seven geographically representative communities in British Columbia were interviewed. Since little or no substantial research had focused on the needs and aspirations of this population, the purpose of the study was to determine the perceptions of Native adults toward literacy.

Data was collected during the months of May through August, 1990 by interviewers who were mostly Native. Relevant findings from this research indicate that Native adults would participant in a literacy program in order to be able to perform tasks better, to be able to find a job and perform better on the job, and to get along better with others. They said that the personal, cultural, and language barriers prevented them from literacy success. On a personal level, these barriers include dysfunctional homes and families, poverty and the struggle to survive, and racism; and on a cultural level this includes the mismatch between the home and community culture and the school culture. These Native adults mentioned that the current barriers to participation in a literacy program were attributed to the lack of appropriate programs in their community; a lack of available information about programs and knowing where to find out about them; the lack of financial support; inappropriate instructional approaches; and being self-conscious.

When asked about preferred learning environments, 95% of the Native adults expressed a preference to learn using a "watch then do" technique; this was described as

"watching and trying things out" and learning by "watching, listening, and trying" (p.290). Fifty per cent of the respondents indicated that they would prefer to learn in an all-Native learning situation; and 45% reported that they would prefer to learn in small group structures.

The authors suggest that the research findings present the following challenges for Native adult educators. There is a requirement to understand how Native adults learn successfully so that these principles can be applied to academic instruction; a requirement for more appropriate instructional approaches; and a requirement to consider factors such as goals, methods, content, and structure in the creation of effective programs, from the perspectives of the learners.

This study is important because it provides some insight to the perspectives of "potential" Native adult learners and it specifies the need for research to examine the factors which make learning a success from the perspectives of Native literacy learners.

It is essential to understand the cultural characteristics which may shape the values and attitudes of Native adult learners in a teaching-learning context. Common cultural and social characteristics found for Native peoples are described in the literature by Sawyer (1992), Pepper and Henry (1992, 1986), Steiger and Steiger (1991), Four Worlds Development Project (1988), and Couture (1987). Some of those which may be important for consideration in a teaching-learning context are presented. To learn in a totally whole and balanced way, learners must involve the four parts of their being in the learning process; these four parts include the mental, spiritual, emotional, and physical. The concept of "being and becoming" focuses on the active involvement of learners in their own personal

development; this is a process of self-actualization in which learners take responsibility for developing their full potential and becoming all that they can become. Couture (1987) says that the traditional Native being-becoming posture requires trust of self and others and a sense of oneness with all dimensions of the environment. Within the context of learning, visual learning opportunities are provided in the form of observation, imitation, and practice; and the use of analogies in teaching were noted.

A strong sense of community exists among Native peoples. Elders are highly respected and their role is vital in providing Native people with advice, knowledge of the oral traditions of the tribe, and spiritual guidance. There is a wide spectrum of variation and diversity exhibited in the behaviour, attitudes, customs, habits, history, social and political systems, and the degree of acculturation of Native people. Extended family systems (including parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles, siblings, and cousins) provide Native people with opportunities to actively engage in social interaction and learn about cooperation, sharing, and caring for others. Individuals growing up in this setting are given the freedom to explore, to experiment, to make mistakes, and to make choices and decisions. Cultural values which are learned and supported include: respect for individual dignity and autonomy, generosity, sharing, cooperation, group harmony, placidity and patience, self-reliance, confrontation avoidance, the use of humour as a form of feedback in place of direct criticism, and consensus decision making.

Couture (1987) reports the "total absence of systematic and sustained investigation in all areas of Native educational need" (p.185). He emphasizes the need to find ways to help teachers, both Native and non-Native, develop an appropriate understanding of Native

behaviours and customs. He suggests that strategies emphasizing total or whole-mind development and holistic approaches, such as experiential learning or learning by doing models, require systematic study and application.

Understanding the learners in the teaching-learning context is of utmost importance. This takes on special significance when dealing with learners from a minority culture. Therefore, the need to examine the characteristics of Native adult learners in a Native teaching-learning context is clear.

### Instructors

Authors who focus on the characteristics and the role of the instructor in the teaching-learning context include Brookfield (1992a, 1992b, 1989, 1986), Ulmer (1980), Fellenz (1989), and Marlowe, Branson, Childress, and Parker (1991). Brookfield (1989) provides a comprehensive description of the different roles that facilitators are required to take when working in different adult education paradigms (behaviourist, humanist, and critical) and presents the characteristics of good facilitators.

In the behaviourist paradigm, facilitators focus on competency-based, task-oriented, instrumental learning to ensure that learners attain previously defined learning objectives. Facilitators take charge of the learning process by setting the learning objectives and sequencing the learning activities. Learning activities are deemed successful if learners demonstrate that they can perform the activities specified in the objectives.

Facilitators working in the humanist paradigm are democratic and collaboratively negotiate the learning objectives, methods and evaluative criteria with the learners. The integrity of the learners is respected, facilitators act as partners in the learning process and

assist learners toward self-actualization.

In the critical paradigm, facilitators encourage learners to critically analyze their values, beliefs, and assumptions. They help learners realize that their values and beliefs have been contextually created and serve the purpose of the dominant groups in society.

Brookfield (1989) says that "Different approaches will be called for depending on the class, ethnicity, cultural conditioning, and personality characteristics of learners. The demands of the context within which learning is occurring are paramount - in particular, the subject matter and learning domain involved, the varying levels of expertise and sophistication in a group, and the conflicting motives of teacher and learners" (p.207). An awareness of these roles serve to enhance the effectiveness of instructors when working in different teaching-learning contexts.

Facilitators engage learners in dialogue to help them find alternative ways to interpret their experiences. According to Brookfield, good facilitators value spontaneity and encourage risk taking; they focus on learning and help learners learn. They balance alternative approaches, use a mixture of methods, keep a range of materials on hand, and individualize the curricula as appropriate. They are alert to and build on teachable moments which engage the attention of the learners. Brookfield indicates that facilitators play the role of a very important guide. He describes facilitators as heroic because they engage in a process which is extremely complex, ambiguous, and contradictory.

Five myths and realities concerning the facilitation of adult learning are examined by Brookfield (1992). These are outlined below.

Myth one: Adult learning is joyful. Brookfield indicates that in reality, significant

learning involves both joyful and painful elements; the outcome of learning may be interpreted as positive and productive, while the experience may be described as unsettling or full of anxiety while immersed in the learning process.

Myth two: Adults are innately self-directed learners. According to Brookfield, in reality, facilitators find that the learners readiness for self-directed learning varies greatly according to the learner's familiarity with the area of self-direction, the nature of the task, the personality of the learner, the sub-culture of the learner, and the political ethos of the time and culture.

Myth three: Good teachers meet the felt needs of learners. In reality, the situation is much more complex and facilitators deal with the diversity of needs in a group of learners by democratically and mutually negotiating the direction that their energies and talents should be channelled. Facilitators also present learners with alternative frameworks of interpretation and encourage them to analyze their experience in different ways to become aware of the underlying assumptions of their habitual behaviour.

Myth four: There is a uniquely adult learning style. In reality, Brookfield says that it is misleading to talk about adult learning as a generically distinct phenomenon. He suggests that the complexity, fluidity, and ambiguity of learning prevents us from saying that learning styles for children and adults are mutually exclusive.

Myth five: There is a uniquely adult teaching style. Brookfield suggests that in reality there are more similarities than differences between the characteristics of child and adult educators from the perspectives of learners across the lifespan.

Characteristics considered essential for successful instruction of adult learners and

effective practice are noted in articles by Marlowe, Branson, Childress, and Parker (1991), Fellenz (1989), and Ulmer (1980). Successful adult instructors are knowledgeable about the characteristics and life circumstances of adult learners and they individualize instruction. They are knowledgeable in a content area and use appropriate instructional methodologies. They exhibit human skills such as listening, explaining things clearly, being encouraging, caring, patience, a sense of humour, and creativity. They are effective interpersonal communicators and they promote strong, supportive student-teacher relationships. They create a beneficial classroom climate for learning. They assist learners in effectively assessing their strengths and weaknesses and participate in meaningful program evaluation.

Without a doubt, an instructor's characteristics, perceived philosophy and instructional role are critical and major determinants which greatly influence what happens in the teaching-learning transaction. Darkenwald (1989) says that what is most important in teaching-learning contexts is an "awareness by teachers that they and their adult students are mutually obligated to create optimal conditions for learning" (p.68). Therefore, instructors must take the appropriate actions to bring these mutual obligations to fruition, whether the conditions require teacher-centred or learner-centred approaches to learning.

While the research does not specifically focus on the characteristics of instructors in the teaching-learning context, the significance of the instructor as part of the total teaching-learning context is acknowledged and examined indirectly.

#### Teaching-Learning Environments

Relevant articles relating to the educational climate within teaching-learning environments include those by Ennis and others (1989) and Anderson (1982). At the end

of this section, a brief overview of the optimal learning conditions in teaching-learning environments recommended in the literature by educators and practitioners for use with adult learners in a Native literacy program is included.

Ennis and others (1989) examine the social system and cultural components of the educational climate in eight physical education courses at a large university. Eight investigators set out to determine which variables were most influential in providing quality adult education based on the perceptions of the learners. Using microethnographic studies, which involve techniques of observation and interviews to collect data over a short and intense period of time, each of the investigators observed eight class sessions as non-participant observers. The observed classes ranged in size with 15 to 25 learners in the different courses. Data were collected in three areas which represent the perspectives of the instructors, learners and investigators.

Formal and informal interviews were conducted with the instructors and the learners, while investigators observed classes and recorded extensive field notes. Each investigator used the constant comparison procedure to analyze data and delimit the emerging theory. This involved an analysis of the field notes and interview data to identify common elements. These elements were then rescanned to detect common properties. Finally, to test for the integrity of grouped patterns, common properties were compared across categories and perspectives. Data from each investigator were consolidated to determine categories of climate which emerged across all eight courses. The emerging categories were then compared with classifications of the Tagiuri model. Tagiuri's taxonomy of environmental climate consists of the following four dimensions:

1. ecology which includes characteristics of the building or classroom;
2. milieu which includes the characteristics and morale of the learners and instructors;
3. social system which includes relationships among key participants and the variables of communication, rapport, shared decision making and opportunity for participation; and
4. culture which includes the belief systems and values which hold meaning for participants; it includes the variables of teacher commitment, cooperation, expectations, emphasis on academics, and clarity of goals.

The results of the study indicate that the social system dimension from Tagiuri's model plays an influential role in the quality of adult learning experiences. More specifically, the two variables of shared decision making and communication were found most influential across all the courses. Researchers felt that the construct of educational climate could be used to study climate in different adult education settings.

Anderson (1982) conducted an extensive review of school climate using over two hundred references from the literature. This article was important because it provided a comprehensive description of an extensive array of variables used to study educational climate. Anderson used Tagiuri's taxonomy, with the four dimensions of ecology, milieu, social system, and culture, to organize the findings. She lists and explains the components that had been investigated for these four dimensions. In relation to the milieu dimension, components listed include teacher's characteristics, teacher's morale, student body characteristics, student morale. In relation to the ecology dimension, the two components

of building characteristics and building size were included. In relation to the social system dimension, some of the components investigated include administrative organization, instructional programs, rapport between teachers and administrators, decision making shared by the teacher, good communication, teacher-student relationships, opportunities for student participation, and involvement in instruction. In relation to the dimension of culture, some of the components examined include teacher commitment, peer norms, cooperative emphasis, expectations, emphasis on academics, consistency, clear goals, and rewards and praise.

Furthermore, Anderson includes sections which describe individual input and outcome variables found in the climate literature. For input variables she lists elements of individual ability, background, self-concept, attitude, aspirations, and creativity. For outcome variables she includes intellectual knowledge, socialization effects, personality, skills, attitudes, and social behaviour.

In the literature, educators and practitioners of Native literacy programs describe the optimal conditions which foster effective teaching-learning environments (George, 1993a, 1993b, 1992; Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs, 1990; Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technologies, 1990; Rodriguez & Sawyer, 1990; B.C. Ministry of Education, 1984). Effective practice includes an environment which is learner-centred, holistic, and fosters a whole language approach. Effective learning conditions in an adult literacy context are created by focusing on the needs, experiences, and background of the learners; by using an experiential learning approach; by including life skills as a major content area; by using elders as resources in the learning process; by incorporating a variety of teaching

methodologies such as group interaction, small group work, cooperative learning and the watch then do technique; and by using instructional approaches which promote critical thinking, learning to learn, decision making, and interpersonal communication.

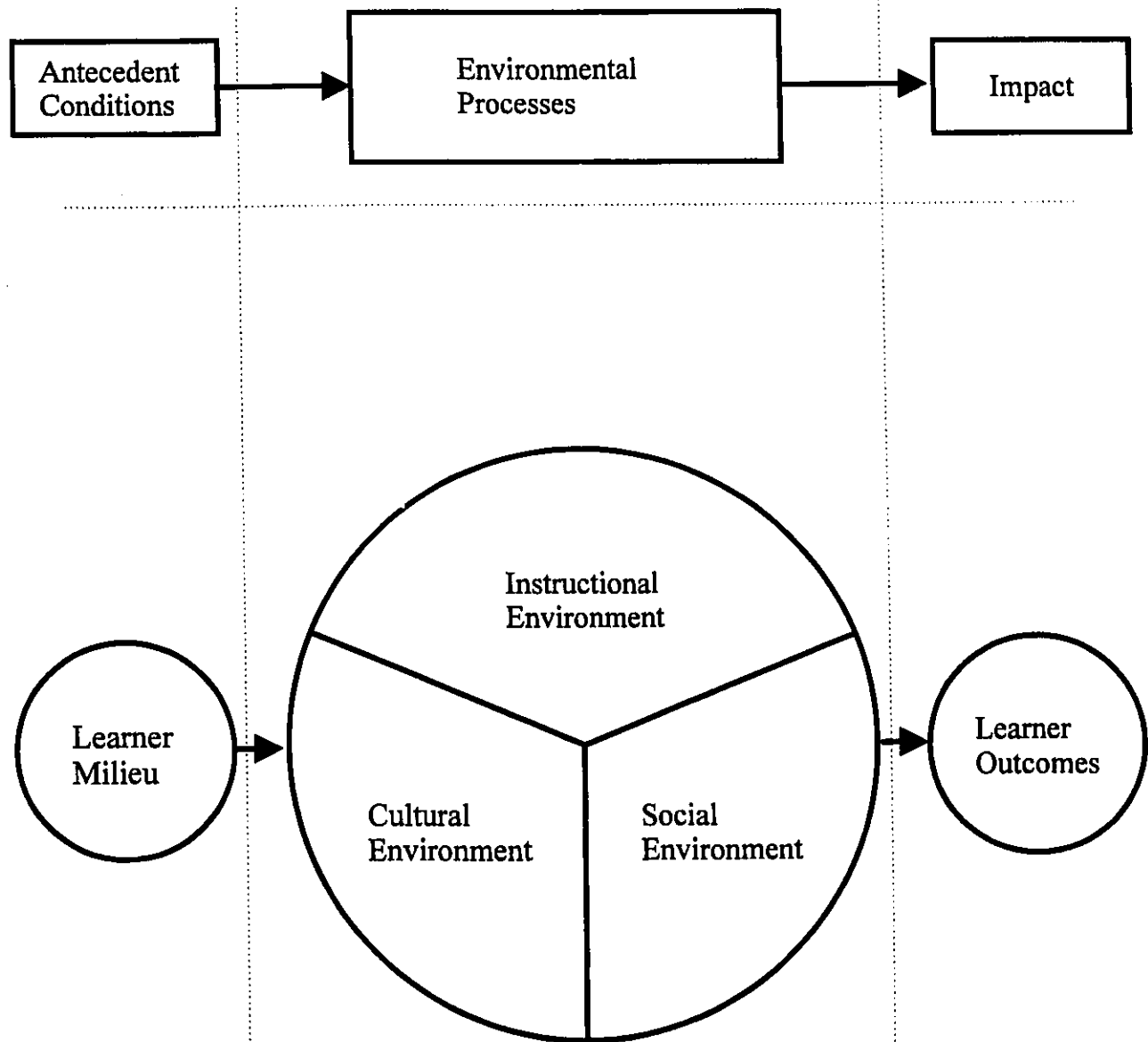
### Conceptual Framework of Educational Climate and Research Questions

Educational climate includes a comprehensive range of dimensions and components taken from a number of researchers in the literature (Tagiuri, 1968; Knowles, 1980 & 1984; Knox, 1980 & 1986; Darkenwald, 1989; Ennis et al., 1989; Anderson, 1982). Five dimensions have been selected to represent educational climate and provide the conceptual framework for this construct for the purposes of the research study. Figure 3 depicts this conceptual framework of educational climate.

The five key dimensions include the learner milieu, the instructional environment, the social environment, the cultural environment and the learner outcomes. The diagram displays that the learner milieu is viewed as an antecedent condition which is separate and distinct, these conditions existed prior to the learning process and are brought to the learning environment. Adult learners come to the literacy program as seasoned travellers, ready to expand their personal horizons. Thus, learners bring their background characteristics and experiences and participate in the environmental processes (instructional, social, and cultural environments) within the teaching-learning context. When the learners have completed the learning process the impact of the experience is examined in terms of the learner outcomes; how they have changed and what they leave the process with.

Each dimension and the associated components which make up each are listed below.

1. **Learner Milieu.** This dimension refers to the characteristics of the learners.



**Figure 3.** Conceptual framework of educational climate.  
(Adapted from Tagiuri, 1968; Anderson, 1982; and Ennis et al., 1989)

It includes the following components: demographic data, prior knowledge and experience, reasons for attending the program, learning expectations and goals, and learning interests and attitudes.

2. **Instructional Environment.** This dimension refers to the learning process. It includes components such as: course objectives, content areas of the curriculum, tasks, instructional methods, application which involves doing and practising, involvement which includes active participation in activities and sharing ideas, feedback, and evaluation of learner progress.

3. **Social Environment.** This dimension refers to the interaction patterns and social relations which exist among the program participants. These are defined by three components: communication patterns, types of communication, and social relations. The communication patterns include the following five interactions: the instructor interacts with class members in the context of the whole class; the instructor initiates one-to-one interaction with an individual learner; the learner initiates interaction with class members in the context of the whole class; the learner initiates one-to-one interaction with the instructor; and the learner initiates interaction with another learner on a one-to-one basis. The types of communication include making comments, asking questions, and providing responses. The social relations component refers to the nature of relationships and includes friendliness, smiling, being approachable, being available, being receptive to problems and concerns of others, and getting along with others.

4. **Cultural Environment.** This dimension refers to the values and beliefs of program participants. It includes components such as: values, a cooperative emphasis,

collaboration, respect, and supportiveness. Elements categorized under the values component include a warm and comfortable atmosphere, openness, a non-threatening atmosphere, risk taking, making mistakes, the importance of learning and doing well, consistency in the application of rules, a holistic approach, and an environment which is challenging, fun, and enjoyable. Elements categorized under the collaboration component include a learner-centred approach, focus on individual needs of learner, trust, sharing responsibility, sharing decision making, and working together. Elements categorized under the supportiveness dimension include caring, encouraging, listening, appreciating feelings, and accepting.

5. **Learner Outcomes.** This dimension refers to the ways learners have changed as a result of the learning experience. It includes the components of achievement, general skill development, personal management skills, team skills, personal growth, and future goals. Elements categorized under the general skill component include skills of communication, thinking, problem solving, assertiveness, decision making, and resolving conflict. Elements categorized under the personal management component include being on time, attendance, and adaptability. Elements categorized under the personal growth component include self-esteem, self-confidence, positive attitude, life long learning, setting realistic goals, and new perspectives.

With a clearer understanding of the research focus, it is time to revisit the three research questions for the study.

1. What are the characteristics of the Native adult learners participating in the program?

2. What instructional, social, and cultural factors in the Native literacy program provide an optimum educational climate for Native adult learners?
3. How will the learner outcomes be described upon completion of the program?

### Summary

In summary, the review of the knowledge base and the field of practice for adult education, literacy, and Native literacy provided some common patterns that existed across all three areas. First of all, there is very limited research in relation to positive learning environments or educational climate for adult learners, in general, and Native undereducated adults, in particular. There is a need to investigate this issue. Thus, by addressing the gap which exists in the literature, the study makes a valuable contribution to adult education and literacy. Within the context of adult education, the study adds to the body of knowledge by highlighting: the dimensions and components of educational climate that were found important in providing quality learning conditions for Native adult learners; and the tenets of andragogy, proficiency, and whole language which were supported by the findings of the study. Within the context of literacy, the study adds to the body of knowledge by providing information about quality learning conditions in a community-based literacy program, characteristics of Native adult literacy learners, and important learner outcomes.

There is a requirement for alternative ways to approach adult learning. These new approaches need to be broader in focus, holistic, learner-centred, and collaborative. These approaches fall within the humanistic paradigm which focuses on the personal growth of learners as opposed to the narrow focus of the behaviourist paradigm which is concerned with very specific changes in learner behaviour in accordance with pre-determined

objectives. It has been suggested adult learning is still behaviourally oriented in practice. The researcher expects to find an alternative approach to learning in the Native literacy context. Thus, the study attempts to contribute to the field by providing rich descriptions of this type of learning environment.

Next, there is a need to understand the perspectives of the learners; for the most part, the voice of undereducated Native adult learners has been cloaked in silence. The study meets this need. Native adult learners have the opportunity to express their views regarding educational climate in a Native literacy program.

Finally, it is important to study educational climate as a total environmental quality. This necessitates the use of a qualitative design which includes in-depth observations and interviews with program participants. Moreover, to ensure a thorough understanding of the total teaching-learning context, the researcher includes five dimensions within the conceptual framework of educational climate.

### **CHAPTER III**

#### **DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY**

In chapter three, a description of the design and methodology which was used to investigate the research problem is presented. The chapter begins by presenting the rationale for the design selected for the study. This is followed by a description of the research site and the Native literacy program that were chosen for the research. Next, the sampling strategies which outline who participates in the study are delineated. Then, the section on data collection strategies provides a description of the methodologies and how these methodologies were implemented in the context of the study. They include participant observation, a researcher journal, quasi-focus group interviews, in-depth semi-structured interviews, and a document review. The chapter ends with a description of the data analysis which shows what steps were taken to transform the data into findings and the confirmation of findings.

#### **Design of Study**

To investigate educational climate, it was necessary to select a design which would fit the requirements of the research problem and the research questions. Researchers of educational climate recommended that in-depth observations and interviews be used so that the total environmental quality and the views of program participants could be considered. Therefore, a literature review was conducted on qualitative design to determine whether this methodology would meet the requirements of the research focus.

Proponents of qualitative methods provide criteria that indicate when the use of qualitative methods is appropriate (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Bogdan & Biklen, 1992;

Fraenkel & Wallen, 1990; McMillan & Schumacher, 1989; Fetterman, 1989; Popham, 1988; Patton, 1987). These criteria are discussed in relation to the requirements of the research questions.

According to proponents of qualitative research, it is oriented toward exploration, discovery, and inductive logic; the research is guided by questions, issues, observations, and a search for patterns. There is a fit between these criteria and the research problem. It is clear, from the literature reviewed, that the perspectives of undereducated Native adults in a literacy setting have not been researched. It is also clear that educational climate in an adult literacy setting has received very little attention in the research. Therefore, how educational climate influences Native literacy learners is not known. Thus, the research problem is exploratory in nature; the research questions have been posed to gather information about the learner milieu, the environmental dimensions of the climate, the participants, the learning process, and the learner outcomes in a Native literacy setting.

Authors of qualitative research suggest that researchers strive to understand programs and situations as a whole, trying to find the unifying nature of particular contexts, its arrangements and rules. This criterion is very important to the research. As stated previously, educational climate research needs to include a wide range of variables to capture the total environmental quality. Therefore, a qualitative design enables to researcher to look at all five dimensions of educational climate in a Native literacy program.

Proponents of qualitative research tell us that an investigator goes into the field and conducts the study in the natural environment of the participants; the setting is the direct source of data. It is assumed that human behaviour is significantly influenced by the setting

in which it occurs. This is another criterion which is essential to the research problem. To understand how all the dimensions of educational climate are perceived by program participants, it is important to observe what happens in the teaching-learning context as events unfold naturally.

According to qualitative researchers, reality is viewed as multi-layered, interactive, and a shared social experience based on the perspectives of the participants. This has been referred to as a phenomenologically oriented approach because it is guided by the views of the participants being studied (Popham, 1988). It assumes that the reality of the situation is socially constructed by the individual and collective definitions of program participants (McMillan & Schumacher, 1989). Therefore, the researcher spends a continuous and intensive period in the field seeking to understand the thoughts, meanings, feelings and actions of the participants as they function naturally in the teaching-learning context. The researcher focuses on the routine and habitual patterns which portray the participants' everyday experiences in an attempt to address the uncertainty about which variables or interactions may be most important. This phenomenological approach provides a criterion that the current research is most concerned with: all three research questions focus on the perspectives of program participants in a Native literacy program. A major intent of the research was to give Native adult learners an opportunity to voice their views.

Two other criteria associated with qualitative methods include: the researcher as the key instrument in data collection and analysis; and the use of interactive techniques such as participant observation and in-depth interviews or non-interactive techniques such as document review. Both these criteria appropriately meet the requirements of the research

design. To gain a comprehensive understanding of the dimensions of educational climate, climate researchers have indicated that it is important to use observation and interview techniques. In addition, the researcher is the main data collection and analysis instrument used in the study for reasons associated with accessibility and economy.

Finally, proponents of qualitative design indicate that the research focuses on words or pictures and rich, verbal descriptions of data. This criterion also meets the needs of the research problem. Since the views of program participants are a major focus of this research, descriptions of their perspectives is critical. In addition, it was the intent of the study to give the Native adult learners an opportunity to share their views.

In summary, a qualitative design was selected for the study because it was an appropriate methodology to gather information about the research problem. This is an exploratory study which uses a naturalistic and phenomenologically oriented approach to investigate educational climate within a single research site.

### **The Research Site**

The research problem provided the direction needed to select an appropriate research site. First of all, the research focus on undereducated, unemployed Native adults narrowed the search to a Native literacy program. Second of all, the research requirement to examine the dimensions of educational climate in a holistic manner negated the selection of adult basic literacy programs because many of them used one-on-one tutoring rather than regularly scheduled classes with a routine number of participants. Thus, the number of available programs was narrowed considerably.

After further investigation, an appropriate Native literacy program, which offered a

program curriculum focusing on employment training and which provided classroom based instruction, was found. It provided the essential elements which would address the research problem. The program was community based, situated on a Native reserve, and administered and operated by Native staff for Native adult learners. This program was called the Employment Preparation Program and it was one of several programs provided at the Grand River Polytechnical Institute (GRPI) located on the Six Nations Reserve in southern Ontario.

#### Facility Description

A brief description of the facility is provided to give the readers a sense of the physical environment within which program participants lived and functioned while participating in the Employment Preparation Program. GRPI is a relatively new aboriginal institute which began program delivery in 1993; it is formally recognized by the Ministry of Education and Training and the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development. The mandate of GRPI is to address Aboriginal learning, issues, and needs; in doing so it provides a variety of culturally sensitive education and training programs, workshops, and courses. GRPI is governed by a community-based board of governors and it has a small core of permanent staff and contract employees.

GRPI is housed in one of the old abandoned school buildings on the reserve. The facility consists of one permanent building and three portables. Figure 4 is a computer generated graphic diagram of the GRPI. This diagram was created by one of the learners participating in the Employment Preparation Program. The permanent building is called the Applied Science Building and it includes administrative offices, the boardroom, an IBM

# Grand River Polytechnical Institute

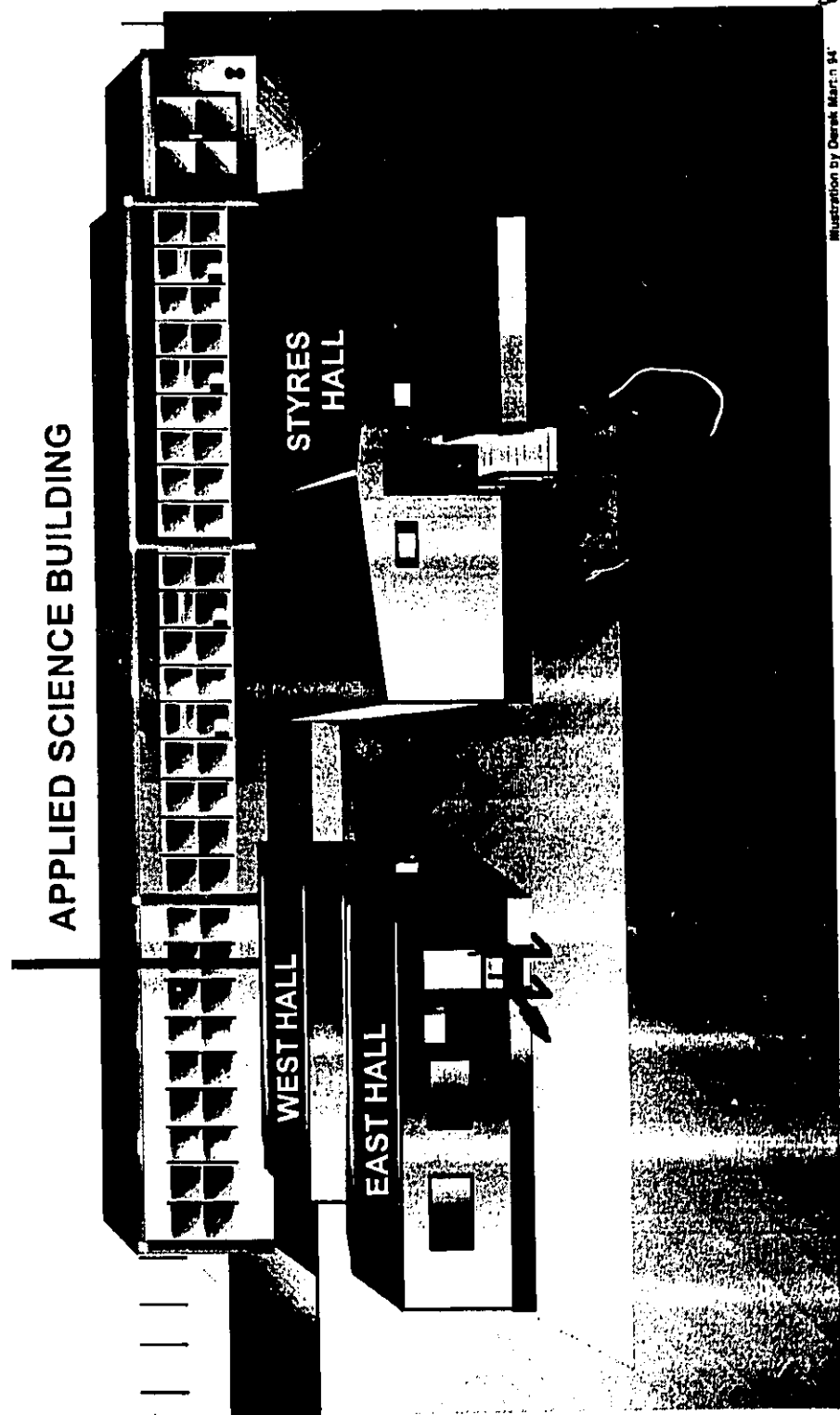


Figure 4. Computer generated diagram of GRPI.

Computer Lab, a MacIntosh Computer Lab and the New Start Program classroom. The Styres Hall portable includes the offices for the director, counsellor, and program instructors, the academic classroom, reference library, and a reading area. The West Hall portable is the classroom used for the Native University Access Program and the East Hall is the classroom used for Life Skills classes.

### Program Description

The Employment Preparation Program was developed to address the training needs of aboriginal people on social assistance, unemployment insurance, or with no income. The program was specifically designed to help this population develop skills for finding, acquiring, and keeping a job; and to encourage and motivate individuals to pursue life long learning. It has been described as a flexible program in which learners are given the opportunity to take what they need, in a timeframe which is flexible within program phases.

The program philosophy is one in which learners are seen in a holistic light. This was stated as follows on a program brochure, "It is GRPI's philosophy that one component of a person's life does not exist in isolation of another...all aspects of the learner must be considered in order for them to be successful".

To be eligible to participate in the program, candidates must be at least 18 years of age, out of high school for one year or more, and functioning at a grade eight level or higher. Furthermore, every candidate must participate in a screening interview to ensure that the program is the appropriate one for the candidate.

The program curriculum includes five components: Life Skills, Computer Skills, Academic/Occupational skills study, Native Perspectives, and Work Placements. The work

placement assignments provide hands on, practical job experience in various establishments in local and surrounding communities.

The program covers a 21 week period and is structured in three levels. Table 1 provides an overview of each level of the program according to the content level of difficulty of the material, the time period for each level in weeks, and the different classes and number of hours in each.

Table 1

Description of Program Levels

| Program Level and Information | Level One                                                                                        | Level Two                                                                                                                    | Level Three                                                                                                                  |
|-------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Content Level                 | Entry level                                                                                      | More advanced concepts                                                                                                       | Most advanced material                                                                                                       |
| Period                        | 6 weeks                                                                                          | 7.5 weeks                                                                                                                    | 7.5 weeks                                                                                                                    |
| Classes                       | Life Skills (60 hrs)<br>Academics (45 hrs)<br>Computers (30 hrs)<br>Native Perspectives (15 hrs) | Life Skills (37 hrs)<br>Academics (56 hrs)<br>Computers (37 hrs)<br>Native Perspectives (18 hrs)<br>Work Placement ( 7 days) | Life Skills (37 hrs)<br>Academics (37 hrs)<br>Computers (56 hrs)<br>Native Perspectives (18 hrs)<br>Work Placement ( 7 days) |

Role of Researcher

In qualitative research, the researcher plays an extremely important role as the primary conduit for data collection and data analysis. In performing such a role, the researcher is able to: consider the totality of the context; add depth and richness to the understanding of the social and environmental influences and therefore expand the knowledge base; collect and process data simultaneously; clarify, summarize, and respond

immediately; and explore atypical responses (Merriam & Simpson, 1989).

In this study, the researcher plays the role of an observer-participant. This is appropriate when the institution grants permission "to create the role for the sole purpose of data collection" (McMillan & Schumacher, 1989, p.393). This was the case for the research study. Social interactions and friendly relations were established with all program participants throughout the duration of the fieldwork. Bogdan and Biklen (1992) suggest that establishing good rapport sometimes requires hanging out and just plain socializing with the participants. The researcher made continuous efforts to blend into the setting and become a natural part of the scene. According to McMillan and Schumacher (1989), data results are valid when participants act in typical fashion and events unfold naturally in the presence of the researcher.

### **Sampling Strategies**

Miles and Huberman (1994) tell us that sampling involves making decisions about "whom to look at or talk with, where, when, about what, and why" (p.27). In addition, sampling parameters, regarding decisions about the setting, actors, events, and processes, are set by the conceptual framework and research questions which guide the research.

According to McMillan and Schumacher (1984), current qualitative researchers use single-site studies to investigate small, distinct groups such as all the participants in an innovative school or all the students in a selected classroom. The research study is of that nature. It is a single site study which focuses on all the learners enrolled in the Employment Preparation Program and the associated program staff. No attempt is made to generalize the results of the study to a larger population, the intent of the study is to gain a more

complete understanding of this particular teaching-learning context.

The five dimensions of educational climate, which addressed the three research questions of the study, were used as a guide to focus the fieldwork. In this capacity, they provided the key thrust for coding information during data collection. Table 2 depicts the sampling matrix which was developed for the study. Column one refers to the kind of information that was gathered during the data collection process in relation to the dimensions of educational climate. Column two lists the sources that were used to gather the research data. Information was gathered from all 19 learners enrolled in the program (8 learners in level one and 11 learners in level three), program staff, researcher, and progress reports of the learners. Seven staff members were actively involved with various aspects of the Employment Preparation Program. They included the program director, program coordinator, counsellor, financial administrator, and three instructors. In column three, the research questions which are addressed are noted.

The task of deciding what content areas of the literacy program to observe and at what levels was considered next. According to staff of the Employment Preparation Program, the program had recently been changed from a period of 15 weeks without levels to a period of 21 weeks with three levels. This change had been made to accommodate the needs of the learners. A program with levels would enable learners to enter and exit the the program more freely without the risk of not completing the entire program. The three levels of the 21 week program were stand alone learning modules, complete unto themselves. For example, a learner could successfully complete level one of the program,

Table 2

## Sampling Matrix for Research Focusing on the Educational Climate

| Column One                | Column Two                                                                                                                       | Column Three                    |
|---------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| What Information          | Sources of Information                                                                                                           | Why Important                   |
| Learner Milieu            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Counsellor</li> <li>* All learners</li> <li>* Researcher</li> </ul>                     | Answers research question one   |
| Instructional Environment | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* All Learners</li> <li>* Researcher</li> <li>* Instructors</li> </ul>                    | Answers research question two   |
| Social Environment        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* All Learners</li> <li>* Researcher</li> <li>* Program staff</li> </ul>                  |                                 |
| Cultural Environment      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* All Learners</li> <li>* Researcher</li> <li>* Program staff</li> </ul>                  |                                 |
| Learner Outcomes          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* All Learners</li> <li>* Instructors</li> <li>* Reports</li> <li>* Researcher</li> </ul> | Answers research question three |

take time off, then return to begin level two at the next program offering.

Since the program had just been revamped to the new format, the next offering would be available to entry level learners starting at level one and to previous course graduates starting at level three. Two distinct groups of learners were to start classes at the same time: one being a novice group with little or no previous content exposure and the other being an advanced group, graduates of the 15 week program. With research time constraints taken into consideration, it was decided that both groups of learners would be observed simultaneously for the duration of one complete level. Both groups of learners

were of interest to the study because they represented novice and advanced learners. One group was just starting and the other was in the final phase of the learning process. Both had valuable perspectives to contribute to the research. Another reason for the observation of both groups related to the program content. Level one learners were in the classroom five days a week while level three learners were in the classroom for four days and on a workplace assignment for the remaining day of the week.

All classes held in the content areas of Life Skills and Native Perspectives were observed since they best met the requirements of the research problem. These classes specifically addressed knowledge, skills, and attitudes relating to the preparation of learners for employment and the perspectives of various community members regarding the history and culture of the local Native community.

The planned weekly observation schedule for the research is displayed in Table 3. This schedule was implemented and the researcher observed level one learners for one class period five times a week, while level three learners were observed for one class period three times a week.

Since both levels one and three learners were observed for the duration of the program levels, the researcher spent eight consecutive weeks in the field. In addition, the researcher spent one week, prior to the commencement of the classes, at the research site. Thus, a total of nine consecutive weeks were spent at the research site conducting fieldwork. Classes for level one and level three learners commenced in the month of September, 1994 and finished in November, 1994.

The purpose of the research was fully explained to program learners during the

Table 3

Planned Weekly Observation Schedule for Level One and Level Three Learners

| MONDAY                                              | TUESDAY                                                     | WEDNESDAY                                                  | THURSDAY                                            | FRIDAY                                             |
|-----------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------|
| <b>9:00-11:30</b><br><b>LEVEL 1</b><br>Life Skills  |                                                             | <b>9:00-11:30</b><br><b>LEVEL 3</b><br>Native Perspectives | <b>9:00-11:30</b><br><b>LEVEL 1</b><br>Life Skills  | <b>9:00-11:30</b><br><b>LEVEL 1</b><br>Life Skills |
| <b>12:30-15:00</b><br><b>LEVEL 3</b><br>Life Skills | <b>12:30-15:00</b><br><b>LEVEL 1</b><br>Native Perspectives | <b>12:30-15:00</b><br><b>LEVEL 1</b><br>Life Skills        | <b>12:30-15:00</b><br><b>LEVEL 3</b><br>Life Skills |                                                    |

program introductions. All learners, instructors, and program staff involved with the Employment Preparation Program agreed to participate in the study and signed a letter of consent (Appendix A). This form was read aloud to the participants to ensure that everyone fully understood what their participation involved.

### Data Collection Strategies

In the research, the following multiple data collection strategies were employed.

1. Participant observation was used as a means to observe the formal classroom interactions and activities of the learners. Observations which took place in classroom context were recorded in a daily observation journal. Participation observation was also used to observe the informal interactions and activities of learners outside the classroom context.
2. A journal containing the researcher's impressions, reactions, and reflections regarding all aspects of the program was maintained throughout time spent in the field.

3. A total of four quasi-focus group interviews were conducted with the learners near the end of each level of the program. Two sessions were conducted with level one learners and two sessions were conducted with level three learners. Each session lasted for approximately two to three hours. These sessions were recorded on audio-tape.

4. In-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted with program staff throughout the research process. Each interview ranged from one to two hours in duration. All interviews were recorded on audio-tape.

5. A document review of curriculum materials and progress reports was conducted as a means to check other information collected.

Merriam and Simpson (1989) indicate that the five procedures commonly used in qualitative investigation include the procedures noted above. Each of these methods are further explained.

#### Participant Observation

Participant observation is one of the primary data gathering techniques of qualitative research. The researcher becomes fully immersed in the natural setting of the group or culture being studied and spends an extensive amount of time conducting fieldwork. While participant observation is considered a time-consuming and demanding methodology, and an intense, emotionally draining experience, it is perceived to be crucial to effective fieldwork (Merriam & Simpson, 1989; Fraenkel & Wallen, 1990; Fetterman, 1989). Patton (1987) says that the purpose of basic research using field methods is to unveil the basic complexities and patterns of the social reality in the setting under study in order to generate and verify theoretical propositions about how cultures or groups function.

In the research study, the researcher participated in the daily activities of the program participants in the Employment Preparation Program in order to develop an insider's view of what was happening by means of direct experiences of seeing and feeling in the environment. According to Patton (1987), "The challenge is to combine participation and observation so as to become capable of understanding the experience as an insider while describing the experience for outsiders" (p.75).

Balancing the roles of observer and participant in the classroom context proved to be challenging at the beginning of the research observation period. If the researcher was too aloof or quiet, learners withdrew and were quiet. If the researcher participated in the classroom discussions and shared information, then learners were inclined to be more interactive and expressive. After a number of weeks this seemed to take care of itself and learners treated the researcher as another program participant.

The central focus in most program observations is on activities and non-verbal and verbal behaviours of participants at the site. An attempt is made to capture a comprehensive overview of what takes place in the observed activity in relation to the full sequence of events (Patton, 1987). In the study, the researcher tried to maintain a detailed record of the events that unfolded in the classes observed. Over time, a pattern of note taking evolved which enabled the researcher to be more thorough in the data recording process. At the end of each day, summary notes of the daily observations were written. These included reflective remarks of noteworthy trends that were emerging or comments on social interactions noted. Patton (1987) indicates that "the impressions and feelings of the observer become part of the data to be used in attempting to understand a program and the people in it" (p.74).

The total observation period for Life Skills and Native Perspectives classes was continuous and intensive. It covered an eight week timeframe. The specifics of the schedule are delineated in Table 4. A total of 23 classes were observed for level one learners for a total of 57.5 observation hours and a total of 20 classes were observed for level three learners for a total of 50 observation hours.

Extensive field notes were taken throughout the nine week period spent at the site. Observations of classroom activities were recorded on a daily basis in a classroom observation journal. Reflective remarks were recorded in the journal during classroom sessions because this was a convenient way to maintain the flow of events and thoughts as they unfolded. In addition, after each observation period, a summary sheet outlining the class activities, methodologies, and the time learners spent listening, discussing, and doing was drafted. The daily attendance of the learners in each of the classes observed was taken and drafted on a summary sheet.

Table 4

**Total Observation Time of Designated Classes**

| Learner Levels &<br>Observed Classes | Level One Learners |             | Level Three Learners |           |
|--------------------------------------|--------------------|-------------|----------------------|-----------|
|                                      | Observation Time   |             | Observation Time     |           |
|                                      | Classes            | Hours       | Classes              | Hours     |
| Life Skills                          | 19                 | 47.5        | 14                   | 35        |
| Native Perspectives                  | 4                  | 10          | 6                    | 15        |
| <b>TOTALS</b>                        | <b>23</b>          | <b>57.5</b> | <b>20</b>            | <b>50</b> |

### Researcher Journal

An important part of qualitative research involves the personal reflections, general impressions, and ideas of the researcher in the field. This may be done in the form of reflective remarks which include the observer's comments written as part of the field notes (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Bogdan & Biklen, 1992; Fraenkel & Wallen, 1990) or more traditionally in ethnographies as a separate personal or field diary (Fetterman, Bogdan & Biklen, 1992). In the study, the researcher used both approaches because they were useful. Reflective remarks were placed in the daily classroom observation journal because this provided the easiest means to keep focused on classroom interactions and activities. It was difficult to switch back and forth between journals in the classroom context. The researcher's journal was a tool used to record events that occurred outside of the classroom. It provided an effective way to record the thoughts and feelings of the researcher.

Fetterman (1989) indicates that speculations, cues, lists and personal comments should remain separate from observation notes. He suggests that a personal journal is useful as a working document. It helps guide the research and provides a record of the topics and tasks which need follow up. The journal is a means to document the research process which enables the researcher to retrace steps to identify strategies used to uncover specific meanings. When research is difficult or dangerous, it serves as an effective coping strategy. The journal allows the researcher to note the mood, attitude, or prejudice being experienced during specific stages of data collection within specific contexts. It provides a quality-control mechanism for data collection and analysis.

### Quasi-Focus Group Interviews

Conducting group interviews is another methodology used in qualitative research. One special type of group interview is the focus group. The focus group interview is a qualitative data collection procedure utilized to collect information from people who interact in a series of discussions. "The purpose is to uncover factors relating to complex behaviour or motivation" (Krueger, 1994, p.45). According to Krueger, this methodology is used in exploratory studies to determine the perceptions, feelings, and attitudes of participants regarding an experience or event; to promote self-disclosure among participants; and to help professionals see reality from the client's point of view.

This method is appropriate for use in this study because it enables the researcher to gather information about the research problem from the perspectives of the learners; and because it allows the researcher to keep the discussion focused on the topic of educational climate. It is also possible to probe for a more in-depth understanding of topics. Rich descriptions are important in the investigation because the research problem has not been addressed in previous research; this type of information will make a meaningful contribution to the knowledge base. Moreover, this procedure was selected for use in the study because it is socially oriented and places people in natural, real-life situations; and the method has high face validity due to believability of the participants' comments.

In the study, quasi-focus group interviews were conducted with level one and level three learners in order to determine the what and the why of their views regarding educational climate in the teaching-learning context. Learners were invited to participate in a carefully planned discussion in which group interaction was promoted. An environment

which was permissive and nonthreatening was established.

Focus groups are conducted in a series of groups. According to Krueger, a focus group study will include a minimum of three or more groups with similar participants. This is done to detect patterns and trends across groups. Furthermore, it is possible to modify the procedure and use repeated focus groups with the same participants, the same topic, with a time interval between sessions. This format is helpful when the researcher wishes to note changes in perceptions over time. For the purposes of the research, quasi-focus group interviews were conducted. They are termed "quasi" because the researcher was not able to conduct a minimum of three sessions with different groups. There were only two groups of learners in the program. In addition, the researcher was restricted by the amount of time that learners were available to participate in these sessions. The use of the technique was considered important because it enabled learners to participate as a whole group to share their ideas; this was a pattern that they were used to. It was an effective tool to use with them. Furthermore, the restricted use of the methodology is not seen as detrimental to the results of the research because other methods were used to gain a broader understanding of the learners' views.

When using this technique, the researcher moderates, listens, observes, and encourages participants to provide both positive and negative comments. Care is taken to avoid judgments about the responses and to control body language that might communicate approval or disapproval. Different viewpoints and alternative explanations are encouraged. The researcher conducts the interview to learn from others, as such, the researcher is like a "sponge, soaking up and absorbing information from the participants" (Krueger, 1994,

p.84). Furthermore, a skillful moderator requires the ability to listen, mental discipline, careful preparation, and group interaction skills. The moderator influences quality and therefore should have a ready smile, a sense of humour, the discipline to listen without interjecting personal opinions, and the ability to remain detached from the issue.

Focus group interviews can be conducted prior to, during, or after programs, events or experiences. Two quasi-focus group interviews were conducted for level one and level three learners. These took place during scheduled class periods near the end of the program levels for each group of learners. A quasi-focus group interview guide was used to focus group discussions (Appendix B). During the quasi-interview sessions, learners were given the opportunity to speak freely and to fully explore their ideas. All quasi-focus group interviews were audio-taped and converted into written transcriptions; both transcribed notes and field notes were coded and indexed.

At the end of the quasi-focus group interviews, learners were asked to complete a questionnaire relating to the background of the learners (Appendix C). All learners were familiar with filling out questionnaire forms as they had done so regularly in Life Skills classes. At this point in the program, learners felt comfortable asking for assistance if they did not understand a question or the meaning of a word. Help was provided upon request and learners proceeded with this task with little difficulty. The purpose of the questionnaire was to gather background statistics from each learner and to check the consistency of comments made about the program by participants in the quasi-focus group interviews.

#### In-Depth Semi-Structured Interviews

In qualitative research, interviews may be employed as the dominant strategy for data

collection or in conjunction with other data collection techniques. The interview is "used to gather descriptive data in the subject's own words so that the researcher can develop insights on how the subject interprets some piece of the world" (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992, p.96). Semi-structured interviews follow an interview guide of questions, however, respondents are given the opportunity to talk at considerable length. Bogdan and Biklen suggest that "even when an interview guide is employed, qualitative interviews offer the subject a chance to shape the content of the interview" (p.97).

When conducting interviews, these authors indicate that it is important for the researcher to listen carefully, ask for clarification as required, and be as flexible as possible by trying different techniques, using jokes appropriately, and asking respondents to elaborate with stories. They also state that "interviewers have to be detectives, fitting bits and pieces of conversation, personal histories, and experiences together in order to develop an understanding of the subject's perspective" (p.101). Finally, if a tape recorder is used during an interview, the researcher must ask permission to use it.

In the study, the researcher used an interview guide (Appendix D) and conducted in-depth interviews with staff members during the last few weeks of fieldwork. These interviews were audio-taped and converted into written transcriptions.

### Document Review

Document review is used as research methodology in the study to gain an understanding of the program and the learners' progress. Documents reviewed in relation to the Employment Preparation Program included program and course descriptions, program pamphlets, minutes of meetings, course curriculum, and progress reports of learners. The

examination of the learners' progress reports added valuable information to the study.

### **Data Analysis**

Qualitative data analysis is a continuous, interactive, and iterative process which consists of three concurrent flows of activity: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. Data reduction is part of the analysis which "refers to the process of selecting, focusing, simplifying, abstracting, and transforming the data that appear in written-up field notes or transcriptions" (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p.10). Data are coded in meaningful chunks and these chunks are summarized in patterns. Data display is part of the analysis in which data are organized or compressed into a narrative text, matrix, graph or chart. Conclusions are drawn from the data by noting patterns and themes, making comparisons and contrasts, and clustering and counting data of a similar nature. These conclusions are then verified through the process of triangulation.

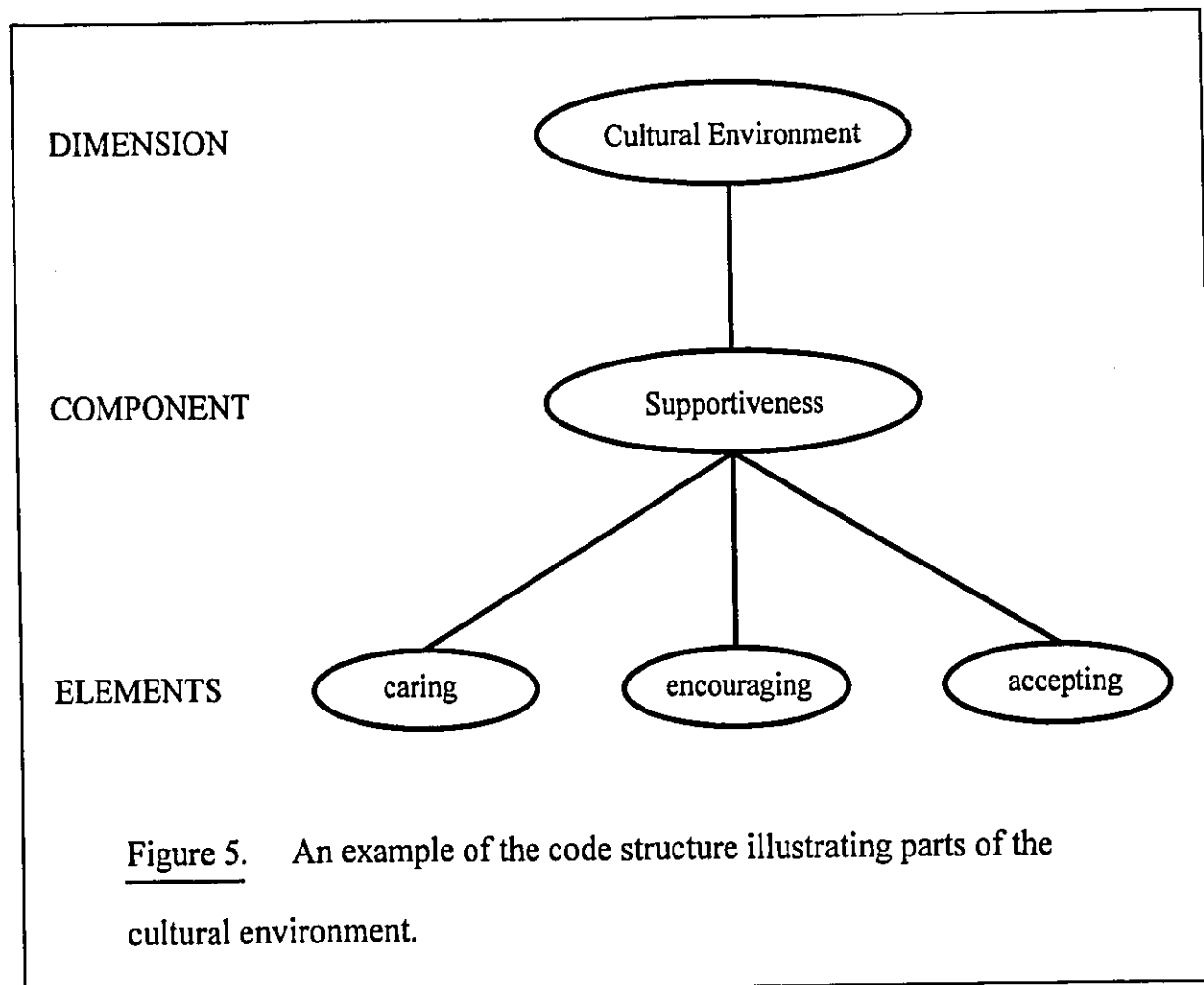
The three activities specified by Miles and Huberman are used in the study to analyze the data collected. Data were gathered from the perspective of the researcher by means of participant observations; observations were recorded in a journal. Data from the learners' perspectives were gathered using quasi-focus group interviews; these were tape recorded and transcribed. Data were also collected from the learners using questionnaires; these results were tabulated. Data from the perspectives of staff members were gathered by means of in-depth interviews; these were tape recorded and transcribed.

All of these field notes were reviewed and coded during and after the data collection process. The codes were developed in conjunction with the five dimensions (learner milieu; instructional, social, and cultural environments; learner outcomes) and the associated

components of educational climate, prior to the conduct of the research. These are listed in Appendix E. While the five dimensions remained the same throughout the study, components and elements were revised throughout the data collection period to accommodate meaning units (Appendices F and G) which emerged from the data.

Miles and Huberman (1994) define codes as "tags or labels for assigning units of meaning to the descriptive or inferential information compiled during a study" (p.56). For the most part, codes are attached to chunks of information which have a similar meaning or go together. For the purpose of the study, codes were structured into a three tiered system which included element, component and dimension codes. The codes at the most detailed or specific level were referred to as elements. These codes were then grouped together to form component codes which represented categories at a higher level of abstraction. Finally, the component codes were grouped together under the most abstract or general level which included the five dimensions of educational climate. An example of the code structure is shown in Figure 5. Only one component and some elements are listed. In this example, three specific elements which involved caring, encouraging, and accepting were subsumed into the more general component of supportiveness. Then the supportiveness component was subsumed into the most general level of the cultural environment.

Data across all perspectives were coded as elements and clustered into components and dimensions. Frequency counts of the number of times component and dimension codes emerged were calculated. Findings for the three environmental dimensions, which include the cultural, social, and instructional environments, are displayed in pie charts in chapters four and five as a means to simplify and enhance the understanding of the results.



Findings related to the learner milieu and learner outcomes were organized into narrative text which provided a profile of Native adult learners in the Employment Preparation Program.

#### Confirmation of Findings

According to Patton (1987), the use of several data collection methods permits a combination of strengths and a correction of deficiencies of any one source of data. He suggests that the process of "building checks and balances into a design through multiple

data collection strategies is called triangulation" (p.60). This process increases the strength and rigor of the design. Miles and Huberman (1994) add to this by suggesting that triangulation is a way of life; if an investigator collects and double-checks findings by using multiple sources and modes of evidence, then the verification process or confirmation of findings is built into the data collection on an on-going basis.

In the study, the researcher used different research sources which included the learners, program staff, the researcher, and program documentation; and different research methodologies which included participant observation, quasi-focus group interviews, in-depth semi-structured interviews, and document review. Thus, triangulation strategies were built into the research design. While findings for each research perspective are reported in chapter four, the overall findings presented in chapter five illustrate key themes which converged across multiple sources and methods. By applying this method to confirm the findings, the researcher is confident that the results of the study are valid and that an authentic portrait of the learning environment and learner profile has been presented. Since the views included in the study were repeatedly expressed by all participants, the findings were found plausible thereby augmenting the credibility of the results.

Furthermore, the validity of the study is enhanced because many of the findings provide confirmation of the basic tenets advocated by conceptual frameworks of adult education which include andragogy, proficiency, and whole language. These principles and effective conditions of adult learning helped explain the actions and activities that took place in the study in a broader context. This is fully explored in chapter five of the study.

In relation to the reliability of the study, questions relating to the consistency and

stability of the research process and findings were addressed. Great efforts were made to ensure that the features of the research design were congruent with the research questions. The five dimensions of educational climate specifically relate to the three research questions. Learner milieu is addressed by research question one; the instructional, social, and cultural environments are addressed by research question two; and learner outcomes are addressed by research question three. The research findings, which are reported in chapter four, are structured according to the research questions. Furthermore, the role of the researcher, the methods, and the procedures used to collect and analyze data are described in detail so that they can be followed and replicated.

Findings were found to be consistent across methods and groups; this is one indicator of reliability. For example, two different groups of learners in different levels of the program provided similar responses in relation to the environmental dimensions of educational climate. In addition, findings from the different methodologies used to gather information from the researcher, learners, and program staff, were similar thereby demonstrating the consistency of the findings across perspectives.

The generalizability of the findings from the research sample to other Native adult learners in other settings is a question that must be considered when referring to representativeness and transferability of research results. To ensure the representativeness of the findings, the researcher sampled all participants in the Employment Preparation Program and was on site continuously for the duration of the learning phases for levels one and three learners. Thus, patterns which emerged in the study were drawn from observations of routine daily activities which occurred in the learning environment.

To minimize the effect that the researcher might have on the participants at the research site, which could confound the natural characteristics of the setting, the investigator stayed at the site for a continuous period of nine weeks. Within this timeframe, the researcher was able to become part of the local landscape. At the beginning of the research period, it was necessary to spend time at breaks and lunch hanging out with the learners at the designated smoking spot. Within a couple of weeks, the learners treated the investigator as a regular member of the staff.

As a qualitative, exploratory study which focused on the written descriptions provided by the participants, the generalizability of findings to other settings or to the larger population was not intended. Instead, extrapolations regarding the findings were made in chapter six. Patton (1987) says that "extrapolations are modest speculations on the likely applicability of findings to other situations under similar, but not identical, conditions. Extrapolations are logical, thoughtful, and problem-oriented...Extrapolations can be particularly useful when based on information-rich samples and designs" (p.168).

In summary, researcher bias was carefully controlled in the study by means of the following measures. Different data sources and methods were used to triangulate the data. The purpose of the research and the role of the researcher were clearly explained to participants. The researcher stayed at the site for a continuous period of nine weeks and became part of the local landscape. Interview guides were used to collect data from learners and staff, therefore, the same questions were asked in the same order ensuring consistency. All interview sessions were tape recorded so that the accuracy of participant responses could be ensured. Data collection instruments and results are included in the appendices.

## CHAPTER IV

### RESEARCH FINDINGS

The research findings of the study are presented in three parts. These are delineated according to the three research questions of the study: part one focuses on the learner milieu of educational climate; part two highlights the environmental dimensions of educational climate; and part three presents the learner outcomes of educational climate. Throughout the chapter, research results are supported and illustrated with excerpts of comments from the research participants. For all three parts of the research findings, the perspectives of four distinct groups of participants are included: level one learners, level three learners, program staff, and the researcher. This is done as a means to accurately portray the views of all participants and to triangulate the data.

#### Part One: Learner Milieu

##### *Research Question # 1*

*What are the characteristics of the Native adult learners participating in the program?*

##### Learners' Perspectives

A profile highlighting the characteristics of the Native adult learners is presented from the perspectives of the eight learners participating in level one and the eleven learners participating in level three of the program. The profile includes a description of the demographic background, prior knowledge and experience, learning expectations, attitudes, and interests of the Native adult learners. Traits are described in terms of common patterns of similarities and differences which are characteristic of the majority of the learners.

### Demographic Data

Demographic data for levels one and three learners are illustrated in Table 5. Of the eight learners in level one, the majority were found to be female, single, and ranging in ages from 18 to 29. The majority of these learners were parents with one to three children. Of the eleven learners in level three, the majority were found to be female, single, and ranging in ages from 21 to 39. The majority were parents with one to five children. All level one and level three learners were status Indians of the Six Nations Iroquois; they were unemployed adults on social assistance, unemployment insurance or with no income.

### Prior Knowledge and Experience

The majority of level one learners indicated that they had completed grade 9 or higher of the provincial school system, with three learners completing grade 9, three completing grade 10 and one completing grade 12. Only one learner in level one had not completed grade 9. A similar finding was found for level three learners with two completing grade 9, four completing grade 10, and one completing grade 12. Three of the learners in level three indicated that they had not completed grade 8.

When asked why they had decided to leave school, learners revealed that they had left school for personal reasons and for school associated difficulties. Some of the reasons provided by level one learners included comments such as: "I couldn't see how it was going to help me", "I couldn't think of school respectfully", "I got pregnant" and "I had to take care of myself", "I missed too many days", and "I got kicked out". Level three learners provided comments such as: "I was young and didn't think I had to go. A lot of my friends dropped out, so I did too"; "I didn't feel like I belonged there"; "I wasn't interested"; "I went to jail

Table 5

## Demographic Data of Learners

| Demographic Elements      | Level One Learners | Level Three Learners |
|---------------------------|--------------------|----------------------|
| <b>GENDER</b>             |                    |                      |
| Male                      | 2                  | 5                    |
| Female                    | 6                  | 6                    |
| <b>AGES</b>               |                    |                      |
| 18-20                     | 4                  | 2                    |
| 21-29                     | 1                  | 3                    |
| 30-39                     | 3                  | 4                    |
| 40-49                     | 0                  | 1                    |
| <b>MARITAL STATUS</b>     |                    |                      |
| Single                    | 6                  | 8                    |
| Married                   | 1                  | 1                    |
| Separated                 | 1                  | 1                    |
| <b>BAND</b>               |                    |                      |
| Cayuga                    | 4                  | 3                    |
| Mohawk                    | 4                  | 8                    |
| <b>NUMBER OF CHILDREN</b> |                    |                      |
| None                      | 3                  | 4                    |
| One                       | 2                  | 1                    |
| Two                       | 1                  | 2                    |
| Three                     | 2                  | 0                    |
| Four or More              | 0                  | 3                    |

and then work". One level three learner who had difficulties in school reported, "It was difficult to understand. I had a speech problem. When someone was talking in class, I couldn't keep it in my mind...I was shy and scared".

Referring to the courses or training taken since leaving school, half of level one learners claimed that they had not taken any additional training, while the other half indicated that they had been involved in training. The types of courses taken were diverse in nature and included topics such as small engine repair, accounting, nurse's aid, welding, motor vehicle apprenticeship, small business bookkeeping, and holistic awareness. All of the learners in level three indicated that they had taken courses since leaving school: all had taken the 15 week Pre-Employment Preparation Program as a prerequisite to enter level three of the revamped 21 week Employment Preparation Program at GRPI. Other types of courses taken by level three learners included topics such as welding, speech therapy, auto body, hairstyling, office systems operation, computers, and other upgrading programs offered at different institutions.

When asked about previous work experience, five of the eight learners in level one indicated that they had been employed in a wide range of jobs. The types of work experience identified by level one learners included employment as a tour guide, day care worker, construction worker, taxi dispatcher, office worker, waitress, cook, hostess, barmaid, baby sitter, cashier, salesperson, nurse's aid volunteer, scrap yard labourer, building demolition labourer, welder, and mechanic. Three of the eight learners in level one reported that they did not have any previous work experience; two of these learners were in the 18-20 age group and the other learner had stayed home to take care of the family.

All but one of the eleven learners in level three had previous work experience. All ten learners with previous work experience had worked at three or more different jobs. The types of work experience identified varied by gender with male learners working in construction, carpentry, general labour, welding, carving, pumping gas, lawn maintenance, general maintenance, and gardening. Some held jobs such as a motel clerk, cab driver, computer graphic artist, visual aid resource developer, and publishing layout designer. Female learners listed previous positions such as a waitress, dishwasher, sales clerk, cashier, office clerk, hair stylist, nursing assistant, canteen truck driver, flower shop attendant, and camp counsellor.

#### Reasons for Attending Program

Learners indicated that they had participated in the program for two main reasons: the first focused on the desire to enhance their personal lives and the second focused on the desire to improve their knowledge and skills or educational qualifications. Referring to the desire to enhance their personal lives, level one learners indicated that they had attended the program "to gain a better understanding of the working world and my place in it", "to find the career I'm best suited for", "to find out what I want to do with my life", and "to make a better future for myself". Focusing on the improvement of knowledge and skills, these learners said that they had come to the program "to better my skills" and "to work towards my high school diploma".

Level three learners who provided personal life enhancement reasons for attending the program made comments such as: "to get over my shyness and being scared", "I wanted to find out what I wanted to do for a job", and "to try and get a steady, full time job and to

get off general welfare assistance". Focusing on the improvement of knowledge, skills, and qualifications, these learners said that they had come to the program to "learn English, math, and Life Skills"; and "upgrade my skills, learn new material, and get my grade 12 diploma".

### Learning Expectations and Goals

The majority of level one learners indicated that the program met their expectations. These learners revealed that more was being learned at GRPI than in other places. One learner stated, "It has helped me a lot in finding out what I wanted to do in school and how to better cope with my children". Another said,

It's a lot different than I thought it was going to be. I went to another program for upgrading in math and English. It was the same old boring stuff. Learners there worked alone on individual assignments with no sharing, no learner interaction, and no interest on the part of the coach. There was a feeling of isolation and aloneness. It was cold. I didn't learn anything. That program was a waste of my time. But when I got here, they had all these different things. I was scared at first. I didn't like Life Skills. I didn't like having to take part in activities. But then after we started doing more things, I started learning more and now I really like the way everything is being taught. It's friendlier here. We talk and share ideas all of the time. Everyone here is caring, interested, and supportive. I have learned so much. There is a lot of humour and learning is fun. I am thrilled to be here. I really enjoy coming to classes.

Level one learners shared the feelings of fear that they had experienced when they had first started the program. One learner expressed this in the following manner, "When I first started, I only wanted to work on the academic part of the program. I was scared of the computers. I didn't want to do Life Skills. However, as it went on, I realized how much I was going to need the information that I was learning about". Another learner indicated that having been out of school for eighteen years, "I was kind of scared to come here...I thought I'd be too old or something".

All of the learners in level three unanimously agreed that the program met their expectations. Representative comments made by learners include the following remarks: "This program is very informative. A classroom setting has always been the best way for me to learn"; and "I'm learning a lot about computers, Life Skills, myself, my abilities, and things I need to change about my attitude towards my future".

When asked about their learning goals, all level one learners indicated that they needed more education. Four learners said that their learning goal was to finish grade 12 and get their high school diploma. Three learners stated that their immediate goal was to finish the Employment Preparation Program. The learning goal of another learner was to attend university. In addition to the completion of high school, two learners expressed the desire to take more specialized training in areas of Native community care counselling and mechanical skills upgrading.

The majority of learners in level three indicated that their learning goals revolved around their need to acquire more education. Eight learners said that their learning goal was to finish grade 12 and get a high school diploma. One learner expressed the desire to open a business in the following way: "I would like to open my own business. I feel our community needs an optical outlet for the families of the reserve".

### Learning Interests and Attitudes

To determine the learning interests of the participants, they were asked to identify the kinds of academic courses that they were working on to earn credits toward their Ontario Secondary School Diploma (OSSD). The majority of level one learners indicated that they were working on two academic credit courses. Most of the learners took courses

in English and math. Of the five learners taking English courses, three were working at the grade 11 level and two were working at the grade 10 level. Of the five learners taking math, four were working at the grade 10 level and one was taking a refresher math. Three learners selected personal life management courses at the grade 11 level in content areas of parenting, aging, and law. One learner chose a grade 10 drafting course and another selected a grade 11 accounting course.

The majority of level three learners also indicated that they were working on two academic credit courses at a time. Five of the learners were taking English and math. Of these five learners, three worked on grade 11 English, two on grade 12 English, four on grade 10 math, one on grade 11 math, and one was taking a refresher math. Three learners selected personal life management courses at the grade 11 level in content areas of parenting, resource management and law. All learners in level three were required to complete a personal portfolio which included a resume and information about the learner's past experiences, academic qualifications, career goals, personal abilities, skills, and values.

As part of the program, only level three learners were involved in workplace assignments. When asked to describe the type of work placements that they had been interested in pursuing, level three learners made the following comments. Learners indicated that their work placements involved working at: a small video machine repair shop as an assistant, a youth lodge as a youth worker, a local elementary school as a teacher's assistant, the local newspaper as a reporter, GRPI as a computer tutor, social services as a community development worker, a talent agency as an administrative assistant, the housing office as part of the maintenance crew, a medical pharmacy as a trainee, and GRPI helping students

in the night classes work on computers. Eight of the eleven learners said that they liked the work that they were required to perform on their workplace assignments, while three learners indicated that they did not. Five learners stated that they would pursue careers in similar job areas as those of their work placements, while six learners indicated that they would not.

Another way of assessing the interest of the learners in the learning process was to note their attendance patterns. An examination of the daily recording of the attendance of level one learners indicated that the average attendance for classes observed was 80%. Furthermore, on average, 82% of the learners were on time for classes observed. A review of the attendance patterns of level three learners revealed that the average attendance for classes observed was 86%. On average, 84% of level three learners were on time for classes observed.

To glean insight about the learning attitudes of the learners, they were asked to indicate what helped them understand and learn the content during the program. The majority of level one learners emphasized the importance of application as an instructional strategy in the classroom. In the words of the learners: "It's about doing it", "Here, we get to do it and experience it. This way it sticks with you", and "We do it together, the class does it. You get to know the people better. It's easier doing it that way". These learners also mentioned the importance of participation and cooperation as a means to help them learn the content. One learner reported,

It's how everybody talks with each other and tells about things that have happened. That helps a lot. If you hear about a situation that someone else has gone through, it makes it easier, you know it's about real life. It's not just out of a book or just about here. It's also about doing it. That's how I learn the best.

Other level one learners indicated that learning was "about participation" and "I get a lot out of the classes because we are always sharing ideas or sharing something. So it's not so hard".

Two major factors which emerged as helpful in the learning processes for level three learners centred on the quality instructors at GRPI and the comfortable learning environment. Level three learners indicated that the instructors: "made you feel like a real being, not like somebody who doesn't know anything or isn't educated"; "let you work at your own pace. They don't put any pressure on you"; "are all open, friendly and approachable. They really set the mood for the whole place"; and "they are awesome". With respect to the total learning environment, one learner said, "You're in an environment where you're not the only Native in class. You feel comfortable and people are willing to listen to you". Another learner remarked, "The comfortable environment. It's easier to talk. You didn't feel funny asking questions. That's what I found hard about going to school before". In the words of yet another level three learner, "First, the instructors talk to you, not down to you....They tried to create a comfortable atmosphere. That is the major hurdle for learning".

As another indicator of the learning attitudes of learners, they were asked if they were enjoying the program. The response was unanimous, all level one learners indicated that they were enjoying level one of the Employment Preparation Program. Level one learners identified two factors which contributed to their enjoyment of the program: their personal development and the social environment. Comments regarding personal development included statements such as: "it changed my perspective on a lot of things", "I

realize that I'm smart", and it "eases my fear". Some of the social environment factors which contributed to the enjoyment of the program included comments like: "I've met a lot of really nice people", "I am learning a lot about people in the workplace", "Everyone here is very supportive and friendly", "The warm feeling that you get from everybody", and "You feel that you are making progress in the things that you are doing". One learner suggested that the respect provided by the instructors was one factor that made learning enjoyable. In the learner's words, "Here, the instructors never push you to do anything. You're given the choice of doing it or not doing it".

The response was also unanimous for level three learners, they all indicated that they were enjoying level three of the Employment Preparation Program. The two main factors which contributed to their enjoyment of the program included the social environment and the new design of the program curriculum. Typical comments regarding the social environment were expressed in the following ways: "Everybody is so friendly and open, it's a fun place to be"; "Class discussions help you get to know everyone's background"; and "The friendly instructors, classmates, and the instructors' attitudes towards you and their job make a difference in learning". With respect to the second factor, the new design of the program, level three learners repeatedly pointed out the importance of two program changes: the work placements and the Native Perspectives classes. Learners perceived these two program additions to be essential and meaningful to their development. Comments provided by the learners indicated that: "they really liked the job placements"; "You are able to see what you want to do or you find out what you don't want to do in a job"; and "I found the Native Perspectives classes to be the most meaningful. I liked the respect that was given to different

viewpoints. They cover the majority of residents in this community. To see all the different community perspectives was very valuable".

### Staff Perspectives

The perspectives of program instructors and administrative staff are included in chapter four as a means to triangulate the data and verify the researcher's understanding of learners' views. The researcher wanted to check the validity of what the learners said, with what the staff said, with what the researcher observed. In relation to the learner milieu, program staff were asked to describe the entry criteria for learners, the tests used to determine learner entry levels, typical characteristics of the learners, and the instructional methods which helped the learners learn most effectively.

### Entry Criteria

Program staff highlighted the following requirements typical of the learner population. Potential learners had to be 18 years of age or older and out of high school for at least one year or more. They had to be functioning at a grade 8 level or higher. One staff member indicated that potential learners "have to be functioning academically at a grade 8 level. Anything lower than that starts to interfere with a person's basic skills". Another staff member commented,

It seems that some people have come in at a grade 7 or 8 reading level and have still managed to complete the program. It really depends on the person's motivation. A lot of the handouts are geared to people that have grade 10 education. So I thought that might be a concern. But I find that if I spend a little extra time with those people who don't have that literacy level and we do more of a verbal exchange, then that works well for them.

Another requirement for program entry relates to the employment status of the potential program candidates. According to program documentation, the goal of the

Employment Preparation Program was to assist unemployed adults on social assistance, unemployment insurance, or without an income, gain an understanding of their individual lifelong goals and provide a channel to start.

Once program candidates have met the minimal entry requirements mentioned above, they are asked to attend an orientation session. At this time they participate in a screening interview to determine if the Employment Preparation Program is the program that will best meet their existing requirements for training and development. A staff member made the following comment regarding potential learners.

[They need to] have the desire to be involved in a learning environment, the desire to set goals, and the desire to make plans for their lives....It's a nurturing or revitalizing [process which helps] them get back on track with their education. Each individual is required to determine their own learning needs.

### Entry Level Tests

Prior to admission to the program, potential learners are asked to provide an indication of the existing levels at which they function in reading, writing, and math on the application form. Then they are given a set of entry tests (the Gates MacGinitie for English and a math test) during the screening interview process. Comments regarding the testing process are noted by a staff member in the following way.

When I assess their level of functioning, I use the Gates MacGinitie for vocabulary and comprehension. The writing component is not so standardized. I have something that I give them and ask them to give me a sample of their writing....Then I look at it and based on what I read, I can tell where a person is in writing. Math is a test... broken down into areas. The first ten questions are at a grade 8 level, the next set of questions are at a grade 9 level and so on. I can tell by where they've made their mistakes, roughly at what level that they are functioning at.

Another staff member adds the following remarks regarding the entry level testing.

For the Employment Preparation Program, we found that the Gates MacGinitie test

was more appropriate. It is encouraging because even if individuals didn't finish grade 9, they could perform at a grade 11 level on the test....If they kept up their reading and if they used math in any way, it shows up. It showed that they had continued to learn even after they were out of school.

### Typical Learner Characteristics

When describing typical characteristics of the Native adult learners, staff members referred to the many life issues facing this population, the diverse backgrounds of the individual participants, and the increased awareness of the learners of the requirement for higher levels of education to obtain employment. One staff member remarked, "These people have a lot of life issues that have nothing to do with education or training. They may have a social problem or a family problem. There are all kinds of barriers that they have been facing all of their lives. It's just a start here". Being more specific, another staff member mentioned the problems that learners had which were linked to alcoholism and sexual abuse. It was suggested that these kinds of personal problems hinder the thinking processes of the learners. This staff member commented,

I have found that there are a fair number of people who come from problems where there is alcoholism and sexual abuse....We have a lot of people in this community who think in black and white and that's related to the alcoholism....But I know that right and wrong, all or nothing thinking certainly is a big hindrance to many, many people. Not being able to compromise, not wanting to learn different ways of doing things, not staying in the present, but instead always looking towards the past or future.

Furthermore, a staff member expressed the need to acknowledge the courage of entry level learners in taking the initial steps to start the program.

Some of the people that come to the program are fairly shaky. This is the first time, or the first time in a long time, in a learning environment. People have a hard time breaking out of the passive role that they've been in for so long....[They] go through a self discovery process while they are here....People are asked to do a lot of self analysis and goal setting. For people who are coming from largely dysfunctional

families and problem beset families, that's asking a lot of them. One of the most important things that I've learned is to have compassion for the courage of the people that come here.

Referring to the problem of colonialized thinking, one staff member said,

The difficulty we've had is the belief that a lot of our people have, 'What's the sense, even if I do go to school, no one is going to hire me anyway'. It's the integration into ourselves of that colonialized thinking. We are our own worst enemies when it comes to that. We've been told for so long, we believe it, we profess it. We don't act to change it.

One staff member made reference to the diverse backgrounds of the learners and how the program was able to assist each individual learner in the learning process because traditional values of the Native culture allowed for diversity. This staff member explained,

In conventional schools, a great effort is made to group people in like categories and to create similar types of people with similar types of interests and goals....You end up learning how to follow instructions more than you learn how to think. Coming here with a diverse background, we're forced to think, there's less following instructions. There's more understanding of how things work and how to make them fit the situation....We have our traditional values of diversity, we allow for diversity. It enhances the learning of everyone, the total combined diversity. The fact that everyone has different experiences enriches the course.

Some staff members mentioned that the learners were becoming aware of the need to have higher credentials to find employment. One staff member said, "Participants are noticing that they are going out and applying for jobs that they might have obtained before, but now they can't get because they don't have grade 12". Another commented,

Typically, the participants are people who were in school and weren't too overly motivated about being in the educational system....Now as the economy is changing, they see the need to get their grade 12, to start learning how to learn, and...to update those skills to keep [themselves] employable, to keep them on the path that they have chosen to improve themselves. Not all of them come here and want to go to university. Not all of them come here and want to go on and on. They just want to be able to continue with what they are doing and realize that what they had before that was working, is not enough. So they need more.

### Effective Instructional Methods

Commenting on how learners in the program were best able to learn, staff members indicated that the experiential learning model, role modelling, skill practice, skill application to real life situations, the use of different classroom teaching methodologies, providing opportunities for learner interaction, and dealing with learners on an individual basis, were effective ways to enhance the learning process for Native adult learners. In relation to the experiential model, a staff member said the following.

They learn best by using the experiential model, role modelling, and practising....I ask people how they feel about a particular skill or how they've done it in the past, what their experience has been. The next step is to...ask them what they know about doing the [task]....I then add in anything that they hadn't covered. Then we would actually do a simulated experience, a skill practice....I give them feedback on that and ask them how they thought they could improve. In fact, I often get them to...exchange work and give each other feedback. Then we go on to the next step which is the skill application....I would then give them feedback on things that still needed to be improved. In the evaluation stage, they are asked: Do you feel that there are things that you still need to practice with this? How could you use this in your daily life? What situations could you transfer this knowledge to?

A staff member referred to the use of different methods and made the following comment.

I have basic objectives for them to learn and once they learn them they can enhance their learning by trying other content areas. I expect that everybody is going to enhance their learning by picking an area that is of interest to them. I use different approaches so that they become familiar with [the concepts]. We go through linear, logical thinking skills when we're doing Lotus 123. We go to circular, relational thinking skills when we're doing Macintosh or Windows applications. I try to allow them room for thinking, for coming up with original ideas, to be creative.

Referring to the importance of learner interaction, another staff member revealed,

In academics, there is not a lot of classroom instruction. People work independently. I allow people 15-20 minutes during each class, to have an informal exchange....For example, one of the students was having a hard time writing a poem. So we decided to do it as a group....We are very adaptable and flexible in the class; we have the ability to interact verbally and this is the best way for people to learn in academics.

And yet another, focusing on the importance of the individual needs of learners, explained,

We try to create win/win situations and that's what flexibility is about in the learning environment. Learner individuality is very important and certainly that's what we have to deal with....We determine what each learner needs and adapt to meet learner needs. The program provides information about who we are, where we came from, why we are where we are, and what we have to be proud of. We have been asked what this has to do with employment preparation. It has a lot to do with it. If I know who I am, why I am here, and why I am where I am, then I can work anywhere.

### Summary

In summary, an examination of the components of the learner milieu provided a profile of the Native adult learners participating in the Employment Preparation Program. The five components used to determine the characteristics common to the learners included demographic data, prior knowledge and experience, reasons for attending the program, learning expectations and goals, and learning interests and attitudes.

Characteristics common to Native adult learners in both levels one and three of the program were noted. All learners were status Indians from the Mohawk or Cayuga Bands of the Iroquois from the Six Nations; all were unemployed. The majority of learners in both levels were female, single, parents, who had completed grade 9 or higher of the provincial high school system. Most of these adult learners had left school for personal reasons; they had taken a diverse array of training in various occupational areas; and they had previous work experience in one to three different jobs. In addition, the majority of learners indicated that they had attended the Employment Preparation Program to enhance their personal lives and improve their knowledge, skills, and qualifications. Academic courses taken by most of the learners in both levels of the program included English and math. The average attendance for learners in both levels was 80% or higher. All learners stated unanimously

that they enjoyed the program. The key learning goal for all learners in both levels was to acquire more education.

Some of the differences noted for the majority of Native adult learners in levels one and three included the following. The majority of learners in level one of the program were younger, ranging from 18-29 years of age, than the learners in level three who ranged from 21-39 years of age. Most of the learners in level one identified their personal development as the key element which contributed most to their enjoyment of the program while the majority of level three learners found the friendly, open social environment within the teaching-learning context, the key element which most contributed to their enjoyment of the program. The majority of level one learners indicated that they were best able to learn in the program because they had ample opportunity to apply or practice the concepts that they were learning; they learned through interaction and sharing their experiences with others; and they were given the opportunity to actively participate in the learning activities. Most of the learners in level three found that the quality instructors and the comfortable learning environment were the two key factors which best enabled them to learn.

Program staff commented on the entry requirements for program learners and described the entry level tests used to assess the existing skill levels of program learners. All learners in both levels one and three were in compliance with the entry requirements of the program and had written the entry level tests in math and English. Three typical characteristics ascribed to Native adult learners by program staff were general in nature. Staff suggested that program learners came from diverse backgrounds; they had many different life issues or personal problems; and they had an increased awareness of the need

for higher levels of education to find employment. Furthermore, program staff indicated that Native adult learners were best able to learn when learning was experiential, when learners were dealt with on an individual basis, and when instructors acted as role models, used a variety of instructional methods and provided opportunities for learner interaction, practice, and involvement.

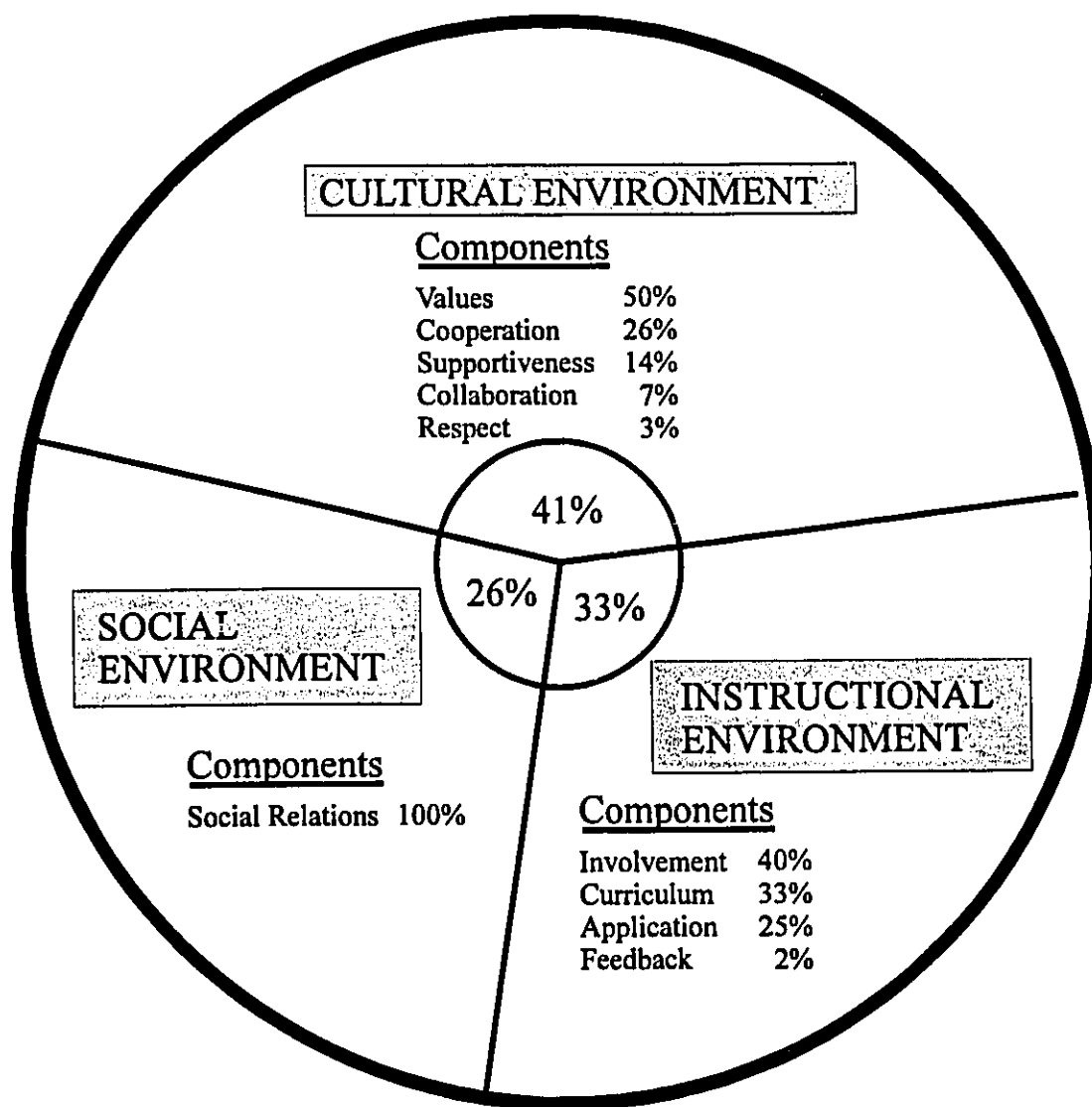
## **Part Two: Environmental Dimensions**

### *Research Question # 2*

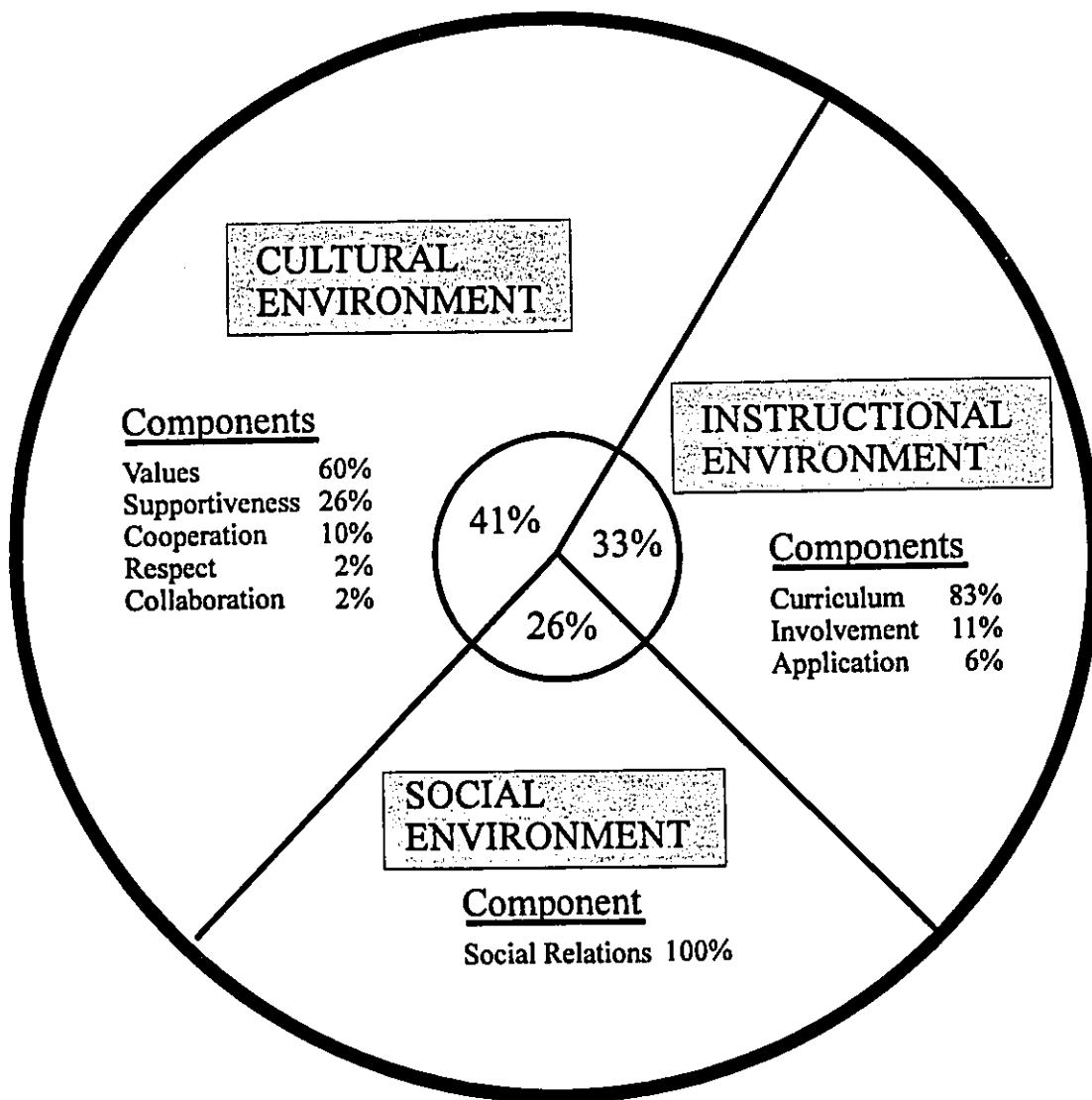
*What instructional, social, and cultural dimensions and components in the teaching-learning context provide an optimum educational climate for Native adult learners?*

### Learners' Perspectives

The overall results which emerged from the data regarding the perspectives of level one and level three learners, in relation to the instructional, social, and cultural dimensions and components of educational climate are displayed in Figure 6 and Figure 7, respectively. Findings, based on data from quasi-focus group interviews and questionnaires, revealed that the cultural environment emerged as the most influential factor affecting the quality of the educational climate for both levels of learners. Three components of the cultural environment that were found influential in contributing to a quality learning environment include values, cooperation, and supportiveness. For learners in levels one and three, the instructional and social environments emerged as secondary factors which contributed to an effective learning environment. The instructional components of involvement, curriculum, and application were recurring themes which were found influential and the social relations component of the social environment was also perceived to be important. The overall percentages provided for findings highlighted in Figures 6 and 7 have been calculated by



**Figure 6.** Level one learners' perspectives of the environmental dimensions and components of educational climate.



**Figure 7.** Level three learners' perspectives of the environmental dimensions and components of educational climate.

tabulating the frequency of occurrence by code across responses from questions posed in the quasi-focus group interviews and the individual survey questionnaires.

The learners' perspectives of the three environmental dimensions of educational climate are presented using excerpts of comments made in response to quasi-focus group interview questions. References to the specific dimensions and components of the cultural, instructional, and social environments are made in relation to each quasi-focus group question. These questions covered five areas: interactions with program participants, most meaningful parts of the program, description of the learning environment, and why learning was enjoyable. Subheadings for each area act as signals for a distinct set of findings in relation to the environmental dimensions and components.

#### Interactions with Program Participants

Learners were asked to describe their interactions with other learners, instructors, and program staff. Responses reflected the importance of the values, cooperation, and supportiveness components of the cultural environment and the social relations component of the social environment. Comments that were categorized as part of the values component of the cultural dimension referred to the warm, open, and comfortable atmosphere that learners enjoyed at the GRPI. Responses categorized within the cooperation component referred to the help that learners regularly received from other learners, instructors, and staff. Supportiveness was illustrated by the acceptance, care, and encouragement that learners experienced. The social relations component of the social environment was illustrated by references made to other learners who smiled and were friendly, approachable, and receptive to problems. In the words of the learners, they indicated that they "feel fairly

comfortable now", "I find it a lot easier to talk", "People are very friendly and you can say just about anything you want to", "Everybody is really helpful", and "Everybody talks to each other...they're pretty open and honest with each other".

When commenting about the instructors and staff, learners made statements such as: "I feel pretty good about the teachers here. They're not stuffy. They'll talk to you about anything...They're really friendly and helpful", "They have really helped me develop my self-confidence. It has made me feel better about myself since I've been here", "the instructors care about you as a person. They're not just here to do a job", and "They're always smiling when I see them in the hallways or when I pass them outside".

#### Most Meaningful Parts of the Program

Learners were asked to indicate which parts of the Employment Preparation were most meaningful to them. While level one learners stated that the learning outcomes dimension was the most meaningful part of the program, they acknowledged the importance of the instructional environment as a secondary theme. The components of the learner outcomes that were identified as most meaningful include personal growth and general skill development. With respect to personal growth, level one learners said that they could now control their emotions, they learned about themselves, and they learned about their feelings. Reporting on personal growth, level one learners made comments such as: "What has changed for me is the way I feel about myself", "It's changed my perspective on a lot of things", "I realize the importance of learning and I like learning", "I'm smart", and I'm "now able to handle my fears". In relation to general skill development, they made comments which indicated that they were able to communicate better and be more assertive. The

application and involvement components of the instructional environment were mentioned as secondary themes of importance. Level one learners indicated that in relation to the application component, content learned could be applied in real life situations and therefore help them deal more effectively with everyday life. With respect to the involvement component, they felt that they were now better able to ask questions and share their ideas with others.

Level three learners indicated that the instructional environment was perceived as the most meaningful part of the program. The curriculum emerged repeatedly as most influential. While Native Perspectives was identified as the major content area of importance, computer classes and workplace assignments emerged as secondary areas which made the program meaningful for these learners.

#### Description of Learning Environment

When asked how they would describe the learning environment at GRPI, level one learners indicated that it was a happy, friendly place that they enjoyed. One learner expressed this in the following way, "I think of people with happy expressions on their faces, with their arms outstretched, welcoming new ideas and thoughts". Another learner said, "I think about that happy, smiling face".

Level three learners indicated that they saw learning as: "a circle with no beginning and no end"; "a spiral staircase"; "a tunnel and there's a light at the end of the tunnel"; "a sphere. It's a circle but it's three dimensional. It has both light and dark. I see this place as the light"; and "a dreamcatcher. You can only go so far and your dream is still on the other side of the dream catcher. Once you attain a goal, you set new ones. You move forward

instead of standing still. There is always another one ahead".

### Why Learning was Enjoyable

When asked why learning was enjoyable, level one learners identified the importance of all three environmental dimensions: the cultural, instructional, and social environments. Referring to the values component of the cultural dimension, level one learners mentioned the warm feeling that they experienced within the teaching-learning context and stated that it was easier to learn in this environment. Highlighting the collaboration component of the cultural dimension, learners indicated that they were given opportunities to make choices about the learning goals they wanted to achieve, the courses they wanted to work on in academics, and the kind of work or career they wanted to pursue. In addition, level one learners said that the instructors didn't push them to do things, they engaged in tasks because they themselves had made the decision to do so.

Both the involvement and application components of the instructional dimension were found important in making the learning process enjoyable for level one learners. With respect to involvement, learners made frequent reference to the opportunities they had to share their ideas with the whole class and in small groups with other learners, to actively participate in the learning process, and to apply their knowledge and skills by "doing everything" with the whole class, in small groups, and individually.

The social relations component of the social environment emerged as influential for level one learners; they found that the atmosphere was friendly and people were approachable, available, and accessible to chat or discuss personal problems or concerns.

Level three learners identified the social environment as the major factor which made

learning an enjoyable experience. One learner stated, "I have a great time when I'm here. Everybody is so friendly and open. It's a fun place to be". Another learner commented, "I enjoy my time here with my people. I enjoy talking with them, learning, and teaching".

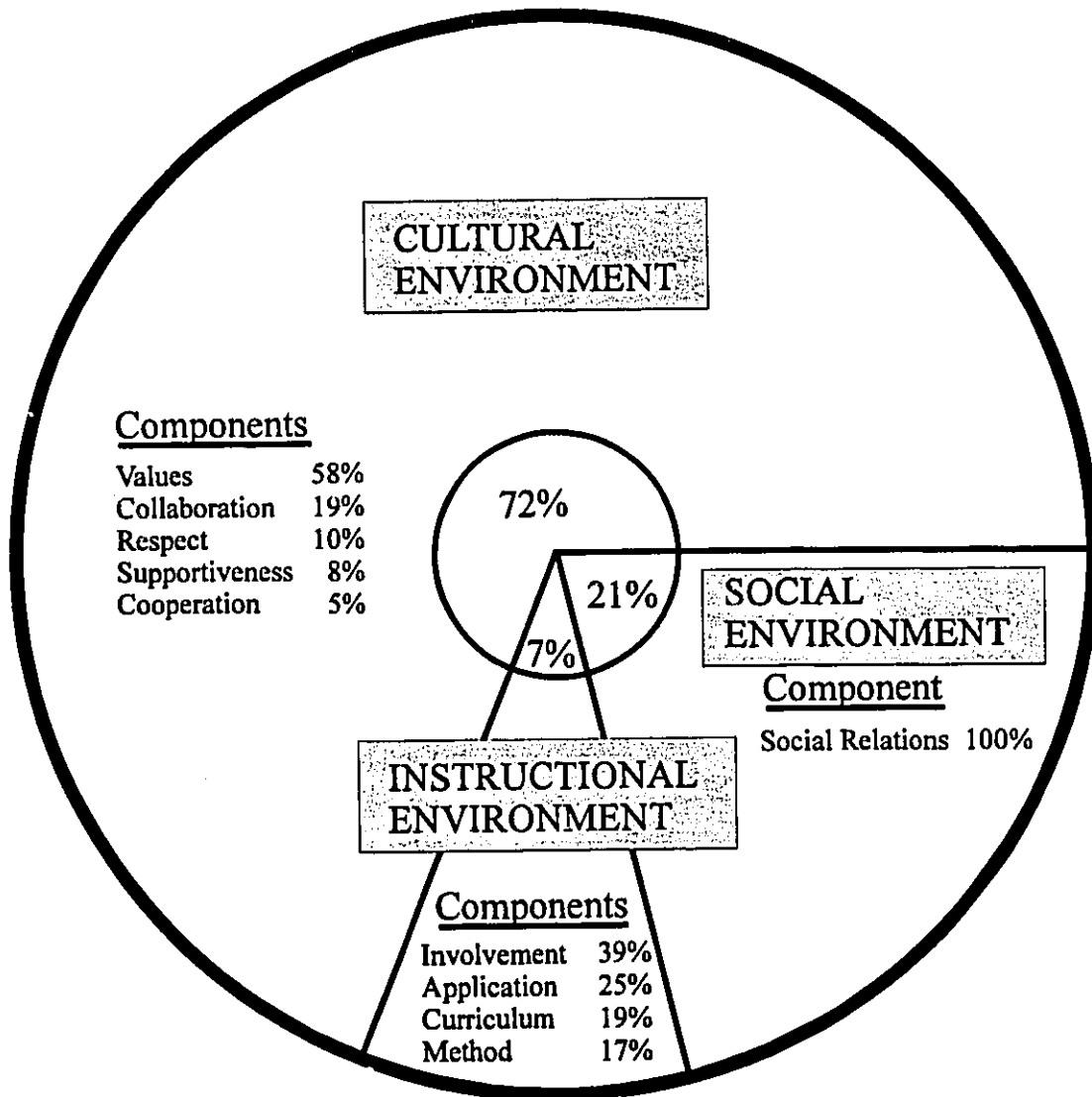
Both the instructional and cultural environments were found to be secondary factors which helped make the learning experience enjoyable. Learners suggested that the curriculum areas of the instructional environment which were found most enjoyable were Native Perspectives, workplace assignments, and computers. Another component of the instructional environment that was found important was involvement; learners enjoyed class discussions and sharing ideas.

The components of the cultural environment that were mentioned frequently by level three learners included supportiveness and cooperation. Learners found that the instructors were caring and genuinely interested in them; and they found the instructors very helpful in relation to the learning process and the resolution of personal problems.

#### Staff Perspectives

Results which emerged from the interview data of program staff regarding the cultural, social, and instructional environments of the Employment Preparation Program, are illustrated in Figure 8. The cultural environment emerged as the most influential factor affecting the quality of the educational climate in the program setting. Two components of the cultural environment which recurred repeatedly were values and collaboration. The social environment emerged as a secondary theme of importance.

The perspectives of staff members are presented using excerpts of comments made in response to interview questions. References to the specific dimensions and components



**Figure 8.** Program staffs' perspectives of the environmental dimensions and components of educational climate.

of the cultural and social environments are provided in relation to each interview question. These questions cover four main areas: description of relationships, relevant classroom experiences, description of the atmosphere, and the climate established for learners.

### Description of Relationships

When asked about relationships with others, comments provided by program staff highlight the importance of the cultural environment. Staff referred to the importance of values and pinpointed the following elements which were found influential: independence, equality, consistency in the application of principles, empowerment, commitment and dedication. One staff member said, "I think I have a good relationship with other staff. It's hard to put it into context because the part I value the most is the part where I don't have a lot of interference. What that says to me is that they trust what I'm doing". One staff member replied, "Everybody comes to work on an even keel so our relationship is very friendly, very honest, and functional. We get things done". Another stated,

The equality value that is taught in the old ways (traditional teachings), that no-one is better than anyone else....A lot of people don't understand that we are equal. I can choose to do something different with my equality. Whatever that might be. Everyone is given the same amount of time, sunshine, rain, snow....How we deal with it is very individual.

Referring to consistency in the application of principles, a staff member commented,

I've got a really good working relationship with everybody here, administrative staff, instructors and learners. It's because I use the same principles; I use the same approach; I use the same attitude and behaviour with all of them. I'm not different with anyone of them. People respect and like that.

Mentioning program policies and staff empowerment, a staff member made the following statement.

My relationships with staff are very good....[They] see what is happening and help in

whatever way they can....They are committed, dedicated and work many extra hours. If you give them the responsibility, then I believe that you empower them. The more you empower them, the more they take responsibility and identify with the organization.

Collaboration was another component of the cultural environment which was found influential in contributing to effective relationships in the program setting. One staff member revealed,

I get along very well with everyone....It's not about agreeing with each other, it's about working together as a team. When we have conflicting views...we find a way to resolve the problem so that it doesn't interfere with our own individual differences....We're very cooperative here.

Another staff member commented,

Every one of the staff know that if they have a recommendation for change or if they think something needs to be changed, they have the responsibility to go with it....I'm sure that the staff will say, 'I feel like I'm part of the decision making process here. I feel like I have a voice and I feel that I can change things if I have to'.

With respect to the cultural environment, program staff indicated that their relationships with learners were comfortable and consisted of opportunities to learn, to share, and to talk. A staff member stated,

My relationship with the learners helps me learn. Sometimes, I get into a conflict when a person doesn't understand my approach....What I try to do is help them work it out. I do what I can to accommodate their needs without changing the guidelines too much.

Another said,

In this atmosphere, we are much more able to share personal things with learners. I risk just as much as they risk in the group. I think that sharing between us is very good. It's a learning atmosphere, but, it's learning that happens at a very different level than what you see in a normal classroom.

With respect to the social environment, program staff consistently mentioned that they were approachable, friendly, and had good rapport with other staff members and

learners. A staff member explained,

The most important thing to understand about my relationship with the learners is that I'm available to talk to them. When I see them in the community, I don't know their names, but I know their faces. I smile and say hello. I think it's that kind of comfort level that they have to have with everybody on staff.

### Relevant Classroom Experiences

When asked specifically about classroom experience that would make learning most relevant for learners, program instructors responded by suggesting that assertiveness training and application (hands on, doing things) were very important for learners. One instructor expressed this as follows.

It's all relevant, it's all important. But if I was to pick the most important topic that I'd want people to acquire....I think the assertiveness training...would be most important. Assertiveness training involves taking responsibility for one's own feelings, standing up for one's self while not stepping on the rights of others.

Another instructor commented,

Hands on doing. It seems, from my experience from many years of teaching many groups of people, that non-native people who grew up accustomed to conventional education, had a style of learning where...they had to spend months learning the reading material, taking the tests, providing answers, and following instructions [before they even touched the computer]. When they did well on the reading material, then they were given the chance to do hands on learning, working on the computer. Here we give them hands on from day one....You can get through this course without opening a book because what you learn by actually doing is far better. We as a people learn better that way.

It was also suggested that the flexibility in the presentation of the curriculum helped learners learn. The instructor said the following.

In other conventional schools, they have a linear course outline which determines what comes first, what comes second, what comes third. Our language doesn't have a procedural order like that. Our language is interchangeable....Our learning can be interchangeable, it doesn't have to be procedural....Here, within the first two weeks of their exposure to lotus, they are doing macros and they love it. Because they operate best at the higher levels and they aren't screened from it.

### Description of the Atmosphere

When asked about the atmosphere in the Employment Preparation Program, program staff highlighted the importance of the cultural environment. They described the atmosphere as caring, respectful, encouraging, relaxed, open, and comfortable; and they noted the growth and learning that takes place at GRPI. Staff members suggested that the atmosphere "feels like being at home"; "it's like coming into a nice, friendly, family place where everybody gets along. It's welcoming, it's comfortable. No-one is afraid to ask for anything because you don't feel like you are going to be rejected".

Another commented,

The atmosphere...[is] highly positive. I've heard a lot of positive comments from people who have gone through the school, who have struggled and had a hard time....You go through a growth process when you come here....I think that there's a big advantage here because a lot of people who have trouble in school, especially a lot of our own people, have trouble because of the way it's run, the way it's set up, the way it's presented. By eliminating that, they eliminate many of things that give them problems.

### Climate Established for Learners

Instructors were asked to comment on the type of climate that they strived to establish for learners in the classroom context. Comments provided by the instructors focused mainly on aspects of the cultural environment such as values and respect. Using their words, the following quotes express the views of the instructors. One instructor said, "I try to make it a very relaxed climate. I like to have the background music. Most people are used to that at home....I like to make it as comfortable as I possibly can". Another instructor explained,

The first day, I ask people what their expectations are. What they expect to get out of a program like this....I ask them to write themselves a letter so that they will be

able to tell themselves at the end if they got what they wanted or not, that's a self evaluation tool. I explain that...for any group to be growth enhancing, we need to have confidentiality, participation, and respect....People like that, that's an important thing that we do at the beginning so that they get a sense that this is a place where [they] can be safe. It's a safe learning environment.

Another remarked,

I try to establish a friendly climate. One where they can ask questions. One where they can speak out and aren't afraid to answer. One where they don't feel like they are being penalized for volunteering information. I try to make it...more human which is a big factor in our culture....I want people to feel comfortable, to dress the way they want to dress...[to make] their own choices.

### Researcher's Perspectives

Using participant observation as a key methodology to collect data, classroom activities and patterns which emerged routinely in the daily lives of the learners were noted by the researcher. Since a total of 83 hours was spent observing the activities and interactions that took place for learners in both levels of the Life Skills classes, it is important to portray a picture of a typical class.

Next, a description of the findings relating to the environmental dimensions of educational climate are presented. Data, based on the researcher's observations of formal activities inside the classroom and informal activities outside the classroom, were used to gain an understanding of how these dimensions functioned within the context of the Employment Preparation Program.

### A Picture of a Typical Class

A typical Life Skills class for all learners was highly interactive, experiential, and learner-centred. Learners normally began the class involved in some sort of warm up activity. This usually occurred as a discussion in which comments were randomly volunteered

by members of the whole class or a round robin format was used. In round robins, learners were asked to take turns sharing their views or experiences regarding a specific topic. The instructor usually began the activity by modelling or demonstrating the appropriate behaviour. The instructor said that "as a change agent, facilitator, enabler, and role model within the group...she must build positive supportive relationships with group members by sharing opinions, beliefs, and experiences that will help the learners know her as a person".

Class members then engaged in an individual assignment for approximately 10 to 30 minutes in which they completed surveys, questionnaires, or statements regarding specific content areas. This was followed by discussions with the whole class in which findings were shared, questions were asked, and different insights and perceptions were entertained.

Introductions to new content areas were normally prefaced with inquiry or brainstorming sessions in which learners were asked questions about the content or they shared their views about the content. These ideas were listed on flip charts which were displayed on the walls for easy reference. Then, the instructor added the required information in the form of a short lecture. Lectures usually lasted for a period of 10 to 20 minutes; they were rarely longer than 30 minutes at a time. Within the lecture period, the instructor frequently used personal and culturally relevant examples to illustrate major teaching points. Handouts relevant to the lesson were usually read aloud in round robin fashion by the learners, once distributed. The instructor shared the following.

Traditional teachings can help learners to understand the importance and value of choosing to walk the wellness path. The medicine wheel provides a holistic learning approach which increases our awareness and appreciation for the four power areas of life - body, mind, heart, and spirit....In the Mohawk language, the closest translation for health is our well-being; individual health was a foreign concept to Iroquois people. Understanding historical cultural differences can help learners to progress

in the healing process.

Learners were then given a hands-on activity to practice or apply the content that they were learning about. At times this involved individual work in which learners were asked to select individual responses which were appropriate from the list that had been previously generated by the group. However, most often learners were randomly assigned to small groups ranging in size from two to four members to complete the task. Throughout the practice activity, the instructor observed the work of the individual learners or groups of learners and provided appropriate feedback regarding task performance as required. Once the activity was completed, responses were shared with the whole class. At this time, learners were asked to provide feedback about their progress in relation to the content area. The instructor then took the opportunity to provide encouragement, make clarifications or corrective suggestions. The instructor indicated that "observing behaviour and providing specific non-judgmental feedback that the learner can understand and build on are key skills. It is essential for the learners to develop trust and confidence in the coach's competence as a helping professional". Furthermore, the instructor highlighted the importance of encouraging the learners to apply the skills that they were learning. She said,

Learners are encouraged to internalize and use the skills and knowledge which will help them to become balanced self-determined individuals. They know that they have the power to change themselves and become who they choose to be rather than who they were told they were.

The content unit was then linked to the next content area and the process was repeated varying methodologies of whole class, small group and individual work with techniques such as brainstorming, role playing, round robin reading, discussions, lectures, inquiry, and making presentations. Depending on the complexity of the content, a lesson for

a content unit varied. Therefore, at times, the above process was observed to take one whole class period, while in other instances, the instructional process was observed to repeat itself one to three times within one class period.

The instructor made the following comment.

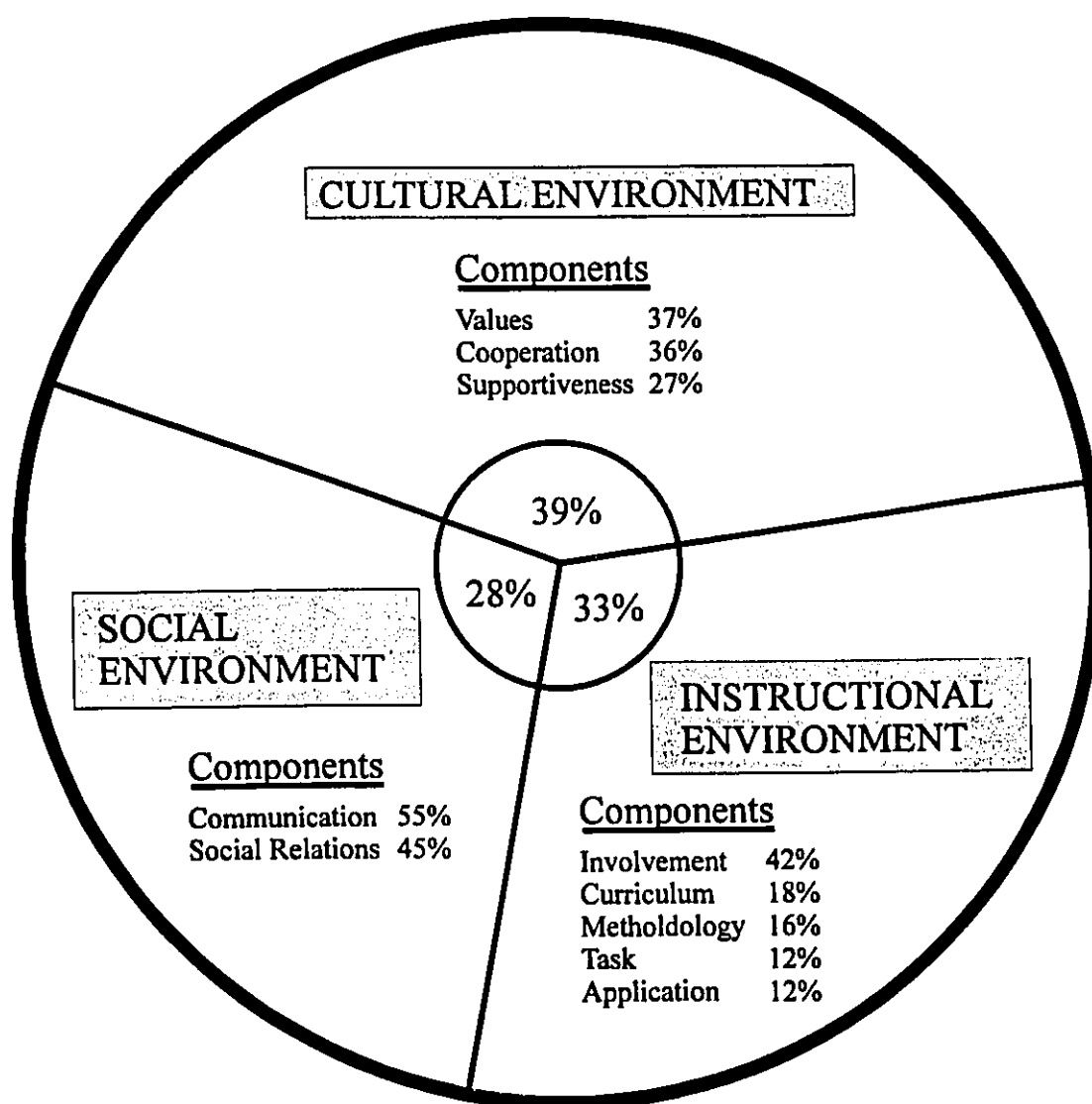
Life Skills training is a highly effective experiential learning process which empowers individuals to take responsibility for their attitudes, feelings, and behaviour choices. Participants are in charge of their personal commitment to learning and change. Building confidence and healthy self-esteem through self-awareness assessments and skill practice exercises is essential throughout any program. Assertive communication skills, problem solving, conflict resolution, stress management, and goal setting are all integral components that challenge learners to develop skills that can help them to manage their personal and professional lives more effectively.

### Cultural Environment

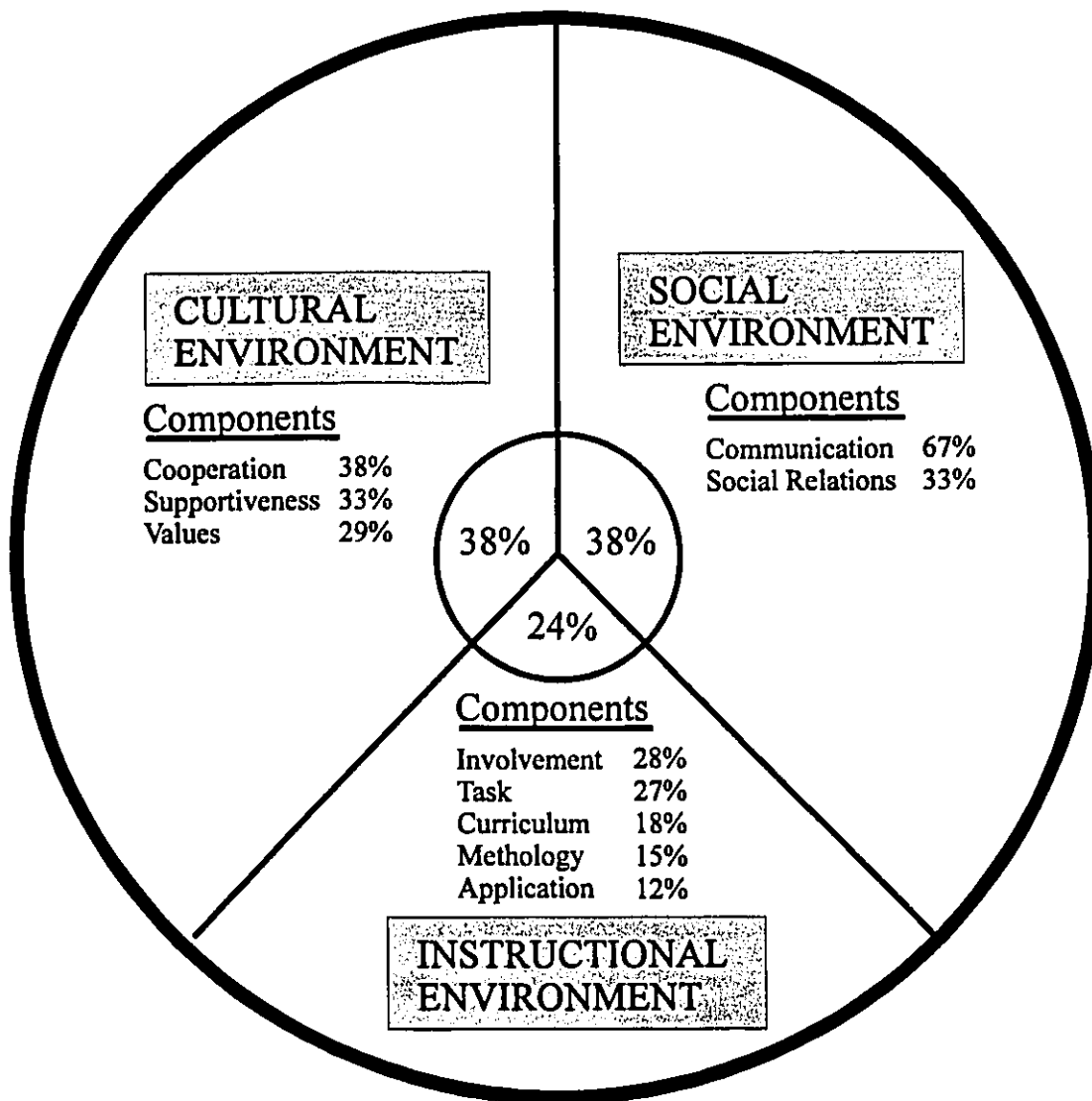
Figure 9 and Figure 10 depict the overall results of the observations of the researcher regarding the cultural, instructional, and social dimensions and components for level one and level three learners, respectively.

For learners in both levels, the cultural dimension emerged as a key influential factor which contributed to the quality of the adult learning experiences. Three components of the cultural dimension were repeatedly identified as most important: values, cooperation, and supportiveness.

The values component was a recurrent theme which emerged as an important factor contributing to effective learning conditions. The researcher repeatedly observed an environment that was characterized by warmth, comfort, openness and free from threat; participants felt that they were able to take risks and make mistakes. One learner stated, "GRPI is a shelter. It represents freedom and mobility. I like coming here. In this educational setting, you can talk to people without having them freak out. It's empowerment



**Figure 9.** Researcher's observations of the environmental dimensions and components of educational climate for level one learners.



**Figure 10.** Researcher's observations of the environmental dimensions and components of educational climate for level three learners.

from knowing who you are".

Rules regarding the use of the facility, program activities, attendance, student council, open access times for the computers, and the professional conduct policy for learners were clearly explained on the first day of classes. These rules were applied with consistency throughout the observation period; each learner received a handout with this information.

Learning was found to be process oriented, holistic, challenging, fun, enjoyable, and focused on real life concerns. The use of humour was observed as a typical behaviour pattern inside and outside of the classroom. Humour was manifested in the form of teasing and joking among the participants, that is, learners with learners, staff with learners, and staff with staff. Observations of this type of behaviour were noted frequently throughout the fieldwork. An example of the kind of humour shared by the staff and learners was provided in one of Life Skills classes. Learners were discussing their workplace assignments. The instructor said to the class, "I'm here to answer any questions that you may have regarding your work placements". One learner responded by asking, "Will you pick up lunches?" The whole class joined in laughter when the instructor replied, "It depends on how much you tip".

A cooperative emphasis was displayed when program participants willingly helped each other. Throughout class sessions, learners were observed interacting in cooperative ways to solve problems, to discuss content issues, and to learn and grow. They asked for assistance when they didn't understand concepts, or how to spell a word, or when they needed clarification regarding an assignment. Instructors provided individual assistance to learners before, during, and after classes; they made themselves readily available. A typical pattern noted throughout the observation period was the inordinate amount of time

instructors spent working with individual learners to help them meet their learning goals. Instructors were repeatedly asking learners if they could be of assistance.

A third influential component of the cultural dimension was supportiveness. Learners in both levels one and three were found to be supportive of other learners, and instructors were found to be supportive of learners. An example of the supportiveness displayed in the learning environment occurred when circumstances required one learner to bring a child to class rather than being absent from the class. The instructor and other learners simply accepted this and carried on with the learning process. In addition, staff demonstrated support by arranging potluck lunches for staff and learners, by celebrating Halloween with costumes and decorating the school, and by organizing a Career Day with input from learners and various community agencies. Furthermore, being physically housed in an old school, a lot of renovations were being made to the facility throughout the research period; it was interesting to note the general acceptance of these conditions by staff and learners. There were no observations of displeasure or complaints; people would acknowledge the noise due to construction, smile, nod, and get on with their learning responsibilities.

### Social Environment

Two components of the social environment that were observed include communication patterns and the types of communication within the classroom context. The communication patterns involved five kinds of interactions: the instructor interacting with members of the class, the instructor initiating communication with a learner on a one to one basis, a learner interacting with other members of the class, a learner initiating communication with the instructor, and a learner interacting with another learner on a one

to one basis. Three types of communication observed in the classroom context included asking questions, providing responses, and making comments.

For level three learners, the social environment emerged as equally influential as the cultural environment. The communication pattern with the highest level of interaction was observed to occur when individual learners communicated with the whole class. The type of communication observed most frequently in the classroom context was that of making comments. Comments were most often initiated by learners when interacting with the whole class, by learners communicating with other learners on a one to one basis, and by instructors communicating with the whole class. Throughout the observation period, the friendliness, the cohesiveness, and the highly interactive nature of level three learners with other learners and program staff were noted. It was evident that the social relations component of the social environment played an important role in creating a positive learning environment.

The social environment emerged as the dimension with the least amount of influence for level one learners. However, in keeping with level three learners, similar patterns were noted for the communication pattern and the type of communication observed for level one learners. The highest level of interaction was observed to occur when individual learners communicated with the whole class. The type of communication observed most in the classroom was that of making comments.

### Instructional Environment

The instructional environment emerged as a secondary theme of importance in the creation of an optimal learning environment for both level one and level three learners. Two

components of this dimension were found influential: involvement and curriculum.

Classroom activities were observed to be learner-centred with high levels of learner involvement. One common pattern which emerged regularly in the classrooms was the active participation of the learners in class activities. Within the component of involvement, learners listened carefully; they respected the views of others and provided encouragement to other learners; they took an active part in discussions by sharing their ideas and experiences; they paid attention in class and stayed alert to the task at hand; and they asked questions. The different types of learner involvement which were frequently observed included lively class discussions, brainstorming, asking questions, initiating comments, reading aloud, and making presentations. Of these, class discussions emerged as the type of learner involvement used most frequently in the classrooms.

Daily summaries of observations of classroom activities, methodologies, and the actual amount of time learners spent listening, discussing, and doing, were tabulated. Results, based on these tabulations, indicated that in the Life Skills classes, level one learners spent 45% of their time discussing, 42% of their time doing, and 13% of their time listening, while level three learners spent 61% of their time discussing, 29% of their time doing, and 10% of their time listening. In the Native Perspectives classes, which were taught by different community members and offered once per week, results indicated that level one learners spent 58% of their time listening, 21% of their time discussing, and 21% of their time doing, while level three learners spent 76% of their time listening and 24% of their time discussing. These percentages are important because they provide an indication of the amount of time that the learners were actively engaged in the learning process.

A staff member commented on the different methods of teaching and learning used in the Life Skills and Native Perspectives classes.

If you look at traditional learning...you sat and listened. Traditionally, we have the orators who plant the seeds for learning. That's what we do in the Native Perspectives classes. There is very little interaction in these classes. You need to remember that a lot of the people sitting in these classes have heard these things before. Many of them do know the stories. Hearing them again is a way of reinforcing it. The people that are coming in are not familiar with the Life Skills type of teaching. In the Life Skills classes, you observe it and then you practice it. This is also a traditional learning style. You sat, listened, and watched someone else do it. You didn't do it until you felt comfortable.

The curriculum component of the instructional environment refers to the different content courses offered within the context of the Employment Preparation Program. Level one learners started the program expecting to take credit courses in the academic portion of the program; they knew this was a requirement to obtain credits toward a grade 12 diploma. Most of level one learners had little previous experience with Life Skills or computers and were somewhat apprehensive of these curriculum areas at the beginning of the program. However, with daily exposure to the new content areas, learners became less fearful and more absorbed in the learning process.

As the weeks went by, the researcher observed a slow transformation in the attitudes of level one learners toward Life Skills classes. When asked, all of level one learners stated that the Life Skills course was found especially meaningful in their development. Learners said that Life Skills helped them "communicate with other people better", "I'm not afraid to ask questions", "I can say I don't know what you mean, can you explain it better", "I learned that nobody controls my feelings except me. If I want to be happy, I'm the only one who can do that", and "I learned that it's okay to say no and you don't have to feel bad. It's

okay to tell people how you feel".

And yet another learner commented,

When I first started Life Skills, I didn't know what the purpose of this class was...I thought we were going to be doing interviews. It's not like that. It's about feelings and assertiveness...it's a life skill, it helps you with everyday life. I know if I didn't understand something, I would just let it go....But now, I can ask more questions about what is expected. It's really helping me.

Both levels of learners repeatedly expressed how much they were learning in computer and Native Perspectives classes. They expressed how much they enjoyed learning about the local history of their culture from the perspectives of their own people.

#### Summary

In summary, the key findings regarding the cultural, social, and instructional environments which emerged from the perspectives of the learners, program staff and the researcher were presented.

For both level one and level three learners, the findings highlighted identical patterns of influence in relation to the environmental dimensions of educational climate. All learners identified the cultural environment as the most important factor which contributed to an optimum learning environment. Values, cooperation, and supportiveness emerged as influential components which enhanced the learning conditions for Native adult learners. The warm, open, comfortable, and non-threatening learning atmosphere was consistently noted by learners in relation to the values component. The amount of help that was received by learners and the availability and accessibility of the instructors was mentioned repeatedly in relation to the cooperation component. Learners consistently referred to the acceptance, care, and encouragement that they experienced in the learning environment in relation to

the supportiveness component.

The instructional and social environments emerged as dimensions of secondary importance for both levels of learners. In relation to the instructional dimension, learners consistently referred to the importance of learner involvement in the learning process and being able to apply the learning to real life situations. In relation to the curriculum component, level three learners repeatedly referred to the importance of the Native Perspectives classes, the workplace assignments, and computer classes, while level one learners found the Life Skills classes to be of major import. With respect to the social environment, both levels of learners described the learning environment as a friendly, open, fun place where people smiled and were available and accessible to talk. All learners found that learning was enjoyable and meaningful due to these factors.

For staff members, the cultural environment emerged as the major factor which contributed to the quality of the learning environment. The values component was found to be very important with repeated reference made to an atmosphere that was safe, positive, relaxed, comfortable, equal, and empowering. Staff members indicated that they were given the freedom and responsibility to input to the decision making process, to make necessary changes, and to do things their way. They stated that they were treated with respect and trusted to make professional decisions regarding their content area. Furthermore, they suggested that they got along well with everyone and worked as a team.

In relation to the researcher's observations of level one and level three learners, the cultural environment emerged as an influential factor with the components of values, cooperation, and supportiveness making important contributions to effective learning

conditions. An atmosphere that was warm, comfortable, non-threatening, and where learners were able to take risks, was observed on a regular basis. Learning was found to be holistic, challenging, fun, and focused on real life concerns. The use of humour by learners and staff was repeatedly noted both inside and outside the classroom context. Learners helped other learners and instructors helped learners continuously within and outside the classroom context. The extra-curricular activities and the dedication and commitment of the instructors and staff provided ample evidence of the supportiveness that existed in the learning environment.

The researcher noted that level three learners found the social environment equally important as the cultural environment in providing quality learning conditions. The communication pattern most frequently observed for both levels of learners involved individual learners interacting with the whole class. The type of communication used most often by learners in both levels involved making comments.

The instructional environment was found to be of secondary importance for both levels of learners. The components of involvement and curriculum were found influential in contributing to effective learning conditions. It was noted that learners spent most of their time in classes involved in discussions and actively engaged in activities. Level three learners found the Native Perspectives classes and computer classes most important, while level one learners identified the Life Skills classes as most important.

### **Part Three: Learner Outcomes**

#### *Research Question # 3*

*How will the learner outcomes be described upon completion of the program?*

Learner outcomes were defined broadly to include six dimensions: achievement, general skills, personal management skills, personal growth, and future goals. Perspectives regarding learner outcomes are provided by level one and level three learners, program staff, and the researcher's views of the progress reports.

### Learners' Perspectives

Learners were asked a variety of questions in the quasi-focus group interviews regarding the progress that they had made while attending the Employment Preparation Program. Questions included topics such as: learner changes, successful learning experiences, information that would help learners find employment, and future goals.

### Learner Changes

When asked to describe the ways that they had changed as a result of their learning experiences at the GRPI, the key theme of personal growth emerged from the data for learners in levels one and three. Level one learners provided the following comment regarding personal growth: "I don't get mad as much. I haven't hollered at my kids in I don't know how long"; "I think my personality is coming back...I can see all the good things instead of the negative things about my kids, myself, and everybody...I feel better about myself since I've been here". Another learner stated, "what has changed for me is the way I feel about myself...If [people are] going to like me, they're going to like me for myself, not for what I can do for them". And yet another learner reported, "Not being so shy. I didn't talk to anybody if I didn't have to. Now I don't mind talking to people...I get along with people better".

Examples of perceived personal growth are presented in the words of level three

learners: "It makes me want to keep learning more"; "Well, I don't wear track pants all of the time now. That says a lot, because when you look at somebody who wears track pants all the time, it's like you're saying I give up"; "It helped me become more mature. It helped me deal with situations in and outside the home"; "I've changed in a lot of ways. I quit drinking. That allows me to look at things a lot differently. I'm a little more responsible".

Another component which emerged as equally important in contributing to change for level three learners was the improvements that they had made in general skills. Commenting on the development of general skills in the areas of communication, conflict resolution, and assertiveness, one learner stated;

I found the class that I liked the least to be the most useful, that was the Life Skills class....When I was at work, I found out that I had to use what I learned a lot. I found that it was the only means that people had to be able to talk to you. It was the only means to get things done effectively in the workplace. Like conflict resolution and using the broken record or fogging....This prevents you from blindly being angry or frustrated....You'll discover that you'll have a lot fewer problems with your co-workers and other people. All of that stuff was useful to survive in the workplace.

Other level three learners indicated that they were "able to meet people and talk in front of others".

### Successful Learning Experiences

When asked what made the program a successful learning experience, both level one and level three learners identified the importance of the personal growth component of the learner outcomes dimension in contributing to their feelings of success. One level one learner remarked, "When I started the program I was unsure of what I wanted to do, but this program steered me in the right direction and cleared up what I wanted to do." Other level one learners indicated that they had "more self-esteem and self-confidence", they were

able to deal with their children and other people more effectively; they viewed the world more positively; they found that they were smarter than they thought they were; and they learned how to manage their emotions. Referring to personal growth, one level three learner said, "The program helped me open my eyes to see the potential I had within me". Another learner stated that the program "helped me get over my shyness and learn how to speak more clearly to someone". Other level three learners indicated that the program helped them: "realize what my goals are and how I must strive to achieve them"; "I want to learn more through education and through life experience"; and "feel more confident".

Level three learners perceived the achievement component of the learner outcomes dimension as another key influential factor which contributed to their success. Learners made comments such as: "I was able to acquire more education"; "I gained the knowledge and skills to use a computer in bookkeeping"; "Having completed my portfolio was a successful learning experience"; "I started phase three two weeks late and was able to complete most of the assignments"; and "When you achieve your goals, whether they're education or job related, it means you have been successful".

For level one learners, two other dimensions of educational climate which were found equally important in enhancing their learning experiences included the curriculum component of the instructional dimension and the components of supportiveness, cooperation, and collaboration of the cultural dimension. Level one learners indicated that the Life Skills classes were the most influential part of the curriculum which enhanced their learning experience. Highlighting the importance of the cultural environment, one learner noted the supportiveness within the program environment by suggesting that the "warm

feeling of teachers and classmates" made the learning experience successful. Another found the cooperative emphasis important by saying that the "helpful instructors" contributed to their successful learning experience. And yet another learner referred to the importance of collaboration in the learning environment: the learner liked "the way that everyone worked together as a group to work out problems".

### Information That Would Help Learners Find Employment

Learners were asked to comment on the information that they had learned that would help them find employment. Level one and level three learners highlighted different components of the learner outcomes dimension as important. Level one learners indicated that information learned in the general skills component emerged as the major factor of importance, while achievement in content areas was named as a secondary factor. Learners identified the general skills of being more assertive and being able to communicate as key skills which would help them find and keep a job. In addition, learners suggested that enhanced knowledge and skills in the content areas of Computer Skills and Life Skills would enhance their personal repertoire of skills and assist them in finding employment.

For level three learners, achievement in content areas was described as a key factor that would assist them in finding and keeping a job, while the component of personal growth was found important as a secondary factor. Noting the importance of achievement, level three learners indicated that the information learned from the Life Skills classes and the development of portfolios for the academics class were very meaningful on a personal level and useful on a professional level. One learner remarked,

I learned about writing a portfolio. I had to think it through on my own. I wanted to know what I had to offer an employer. That was what I found most important to me.

I wanted people to know what my skills were....I didn't value myself very highly before. Now it's changed. I want people to know how valuable I am.

Another level three learner commented,

I've learned about myself, the potential that I have. With the portfolio, it makes you look at yourself and put it on paper. I've learned how to research for a job. To get a better paying job you need a grade 12 diploma and then a college diploma....I won't find anything without it. I'll have to go to school, but this gives me a lot of practice. Being in school, I want to go back to school.

One learner mentioned the importance of Life Skills and how this class helped the participants learn "how to approach everything". Another commented on how important "working on the computers" was in acquiring skills that would be useful in finding a job.

Personal growth was perceived as an important secondary factor which would help level three learners find and keep a job. Participants indicated that they learned the following: "It is important to display a good attitude and to be on time"; "how to be more open and ask questions. I also learned that you need an education to get a better job"; and how to identify goals and "say what I want to say".

### Future Goals

Learners were asked to specify their future plans in relation to the kind of work that they would like to pursue, their level of readiness for work, and the next steps that they would be taking upon completion of the program. Responses regarding the kind of work that learners would like to pursue were diverse for both levels of learners. Level one learners indicated that they would like to find work in the following areas: computer work, bookkeeping, social work, criminology, office work, banking, drafting, and starting a small business in auto repair. The majority of level three learners indicated that they would like to own their own businesses. One learner expressed the desire to open an optical company

on the reserve, another wanted to own a lawn maintenance and landscaping business, another wished to open a computer repair shop, and yet another wanted to have a company which built houses. The remaining learners indicated that they would like to work in education or land claims.

All level one learners unanimously agreed that they were not ready to go to work. Learners indicated that they needed more education before they would be ready to get a job. One learner stated, "I want to come back for the job placement. I want to see if I'll like the field I want to go into". Another reported, "I don't think I'm ready for work. I'm starting to get confused about what I want to do. I'd like to stay here for all three levels. I think there's a lot more to learn". The majority of level three learners stated that they would not be ready to go to work at the end of the program because they needed to learn more; they needed to complete grade 12. Even those learners who felt that they were ready for work indicated that they needed more education.

Upon completion of phase one of the program, all level one learners stated that they planned to continue learning. Four learners said that they planned to go on and complete the remaining two phases of the Employment Preparation Program, three learners stated that they planned to complete grade twelve, and one learner planned to attend the University Access Program at the GRPI. The majority of level three learners said that they planned to continue their education by taking upgrading courses to complete high school.

#### Staff Perspectives

Focusing on learner outcomes during the interview process, program staff were asked to describe the knowledge and skill areas that they thought learners made the most

improvement, the factors that made the Employment Preparation Program a positive learning experience for learners, and the readiness of learners to make the transition from training to employment.

#### Areas of Most Improvement

When asked about areas in which learners made the most advancement, an instructor indicated that learners made the most improvement in the outcome area of personal growth. More specifically, level one learners enhanced their ability to share and participate in the learning process while level three learners became more independent. The instructor commented,

For level one learners, the area that they develop most in is in their ability to share, just to participate. That takes some time for them to get into that mode of wanting to learn. Just being able to figure out what's going on, to be part of the group, and to start to get things going. So I think that's the major growth that I've seen so far. For level three learners, the major growth area is that they are more prepared now to take the ball themselves. When they leave here they are more independent.

#### Positive Learning Experiences for Learners

With respect to the factors that make the Employment Preparation Program a positive learning experience for learners, program staff indicated that the cultural environment was the most influential factor with the components of values and collaboration being recurring themes of importance. Examples illustrating the values component include elements such as: an accepting, relaxed, and comfortable atmosphere; an approach which empowers learners; confidentiality; background music in the learning environment; a holistic approach; and providing opportunities for success. One staff member said,

The accepting atmosphere....We don't set them up for disappointment. We empower them to make of their lives what they will rather than following our design, our instruction. We teach them to use their own abilities, their own skills, their own ideas

to get what they want.

A staff member explained,

I think those things like the respectfulness, the confidentiality, the participation, and that everybody contributes to the best of their ability. I know that the classroom environment has to be as pleasant and as relaxed as possible. It needs to be pretty, it needs to be eye catching. There need to be things around when people are not able to stay focused on what we are talking about. There needs to be [inspirational] things in the room that they can focus on for 10 or 15 seconds....Having things displayed, like the medicine wheel, that constantly reinforce what we're talking about. This helps them relate all these different little pieces to what the goal is in their personal self development....I find that friendly faces are so important....I really reinforce the importance of smiling and saying hello to everybody.

Another commented,

I'm personally one of the few people who don't like to use the word positive. I try not to use a positive approach. I try to use a holistic approach so that you can see a full picture. It's more important to me that a person knows why they don't like computers and knows why they don't want a particular job. To me that's real important....I'd rather them see the whole story and make their own choice.

And another suggested, "The atmosphere and the teachers help the learners feel more comfortable. In a casual atmosphere they can learn more". And yet another remarked,

I think their instructor has a lot to do with it. I think they have to feel success right at the beginning. Even if its in a little way. If they feel successful at something in the beginning then they are going to continue on and strive to do it again....Learning needs to be something real, something that they can relate to.

Referring to the component of collaboration, program staff mentioned the importance of being learner centred, focusing on the needs of each individual learner, and providing opportunities for learners to share decision making and take responsibility for learning. One staff member revealed that "the respect for freedom of choice is there. It's not like I'm telling you what job you should be looking for. I'm not telling you what direction you should be going in". Another staff member said,

They have to be treated as adults. They have to be motivated to learn, they have to want to learn, they have to see the value in it. A lot of adults, if they can't see how they are going to use it in the real world then they can't see the sense in doing it. Once you show them, the more likely they are going to understand the concept behind it.

One yet another expressed the following.

Success and a feeling of accomplishment and achievement...learning has to be set up for every individual based on individual needs...They have to feel and experience success first...I really believe the instructors here work hard at that...Once they've accomplished success, they develop a good self-esteem, confidence and then they can start working on the harder challenges as they go through.

### Work Readiness

Program staff were asked to indicate whether they thought learners were ready to make the transition to employment upon completion of all three phases of the program. It is not surprising to find that staff responses were mixed. They indicated that some learners were work ready while others were not. Staff members suggested that learners had enhanced their self-esteem and confidence while participating in the program and were ready for more meaningful challenges which might include more education or training. All staff members acknowledged that the completion of grade 12 was important for learners. Comments made by staff are included below. One staff member said,

I think employment preparation helps people get focused. It helps them determine what they want to do and how they can get there. That's what we are involved with here. By the end of the program, people have developed a step plan. They realize that they have to complete grade 12. People who have been in the program experience a change....They want to go further in their education. It's a start for them....They build their self-esteem.

Another commented,

Most of the people who leave here aren't ready for employment. There have been some who have found positions. Most of them went on to school and more training. Some have gone on to another program to complete high school or...to university

from here.

And yet another expressed the following.

There are those who need more training. They don't know what they really want to do. They're still not sure if they really want to go to work. Then there are others who have not followed through with their plans. There are those who still have doubts about themselves and their abilities. At the end of this program there needs to be availability in other programs to keep that learning momentum going. Our program tries to flow into the start dates of other programs. We have people who are ready to apply to other programs.

### Progress Reports and Researcher's Perspectives

Progress reports for level one and level three learners were reviewed as a means to determine how well learners were actually performing upon completion of different program levels. This information provides a picture of what learners actually accomplished; it provides a means to check what the learners said with what they did. Actual learner outcomes in terms of the progress reports compiled by the Employment Preparation Program instructors are presented as a profile for level one and level three learners from the researcher's perspectives.

In relation to the review process, one instructor indicated that the three program instructors completed the appropriate content sections (Life Skills, Computer Skills, and Academic Skills) of the student reports. Each learner was then given a copy of the report and asked to review the contents and provide written comments in the Student Feedback section on the report form. When this was completed, the Counsellor and Life Skills coach conducted one-on-one interviews with each learner as a means to ensure that the individual needs of each learner were being addressed within the program. The review process involved a discussion of the step plan that each learner was required to develop during level

one of the program. This is perceived as an essential part of the process. One of the instructors said the following.

The step plan lays out how the [learners] see themselves progressing in the next year or two or however far they want to go; what their long term goals are. So it's very much a goal setting process for them, a support process, a problem solving process. If they want to go to college in two years, they can see all the steps that have to happen before they can go. They become aware of all the different agencies and all the different networking that needs to happen to meet their goals.

Progress reports are compiled three times for each learner: five weeks into level one of the program and then at the end of levels two and three.

These reports provide a general indication of the performance of the learners in relation to attendance, punctuality, participation, and progress in the different content areas. Attendance and punctuality are considered important measures of reliability and responsibility; the Counsellor for the Employment Preparation Program keeps track of attendance and punctuality on a daily basis. One instructor said that some people "have ongoing problems with reliability and employers just won't put up with that". Furthermore, it was indicated that learners "are not recommended for employment if their attendance is below 70%".

A review of the reports for learners completing level one of the program indicated that all eight learners who started the program, successfully completed level one and progressed to level two. While six out of the eight learners maintained an average attendance rate of 80% or higher, punctuality was noted as a problem for five of the eight learners in level one. One instructor made the following comment about attendance and punctuality.

The thing that I remain concerned about is the punctuality, the attendance, and the

reliability factor. People have been part of a lifestyle where things are pretty laid back. They have a hard time being in an environment where much of their learning is within their own control. It seems like they lack problem solving skills. If it's a decision between taking their son to the doctor at one o'clock or being in class at one o'clock, they choose to take their son to the doctor at one o'clock without thinking about taking him to the doctor at four o'clock. People who have strong goal setting skills are quick to realize that they can't miss class time to do things like that. They buy into that very quickly. But people who do not have a clear goal, won't buy into that for a long time; those other life events take precedence over the education that they need to get.

The majority of level one learners were described as active participants in program activities; they readily volunteered their ideas and shared their experiences. All were described as neat in appearance, cooperative, helpful, supportive, respectful of other people, and making progress in developing their self-confidence. In addition, all learners were found to be productive because they completed assigned tasks willingly and were making progress in the development of their personal step plans. In relation to their verbal skills, six of the eight learners had enhanced their development in this skill area and were able to express themselves clearly; two of the learners were still somewhat reluctant to share information. It was interesting to note that the younger (ages 18 to 20) learners in level one were the ones with descriptors such as "sometimes preoccupied", "reluctant to share ideas", "can be distracted by side conversations", "inconsistent levels of energy" or "hesitant to ask questions". Short-term goals listed on the progress reports highlighted two major themes: to graduate from the Employment Preparation Program and to obtain a grade 12 diploma. Most of level one learners expressed the desire to go to college as a long-term goal; others listed a desire to own a business or find a job.

A review of the reports for learners completing level three of the program showed that all eleven learners who returned to complete the final level did persist with the learning

process for the duration of the program. Seven of the eleven learners successfully completed all the requirements of the program. The remaining four learners made progress in certain content areas and completed many of the required assignments, however, attendance, punctuality, and reliability factors were below the acceptable levels for the program. It is interesting to note that the three learners who were having problems with attendance and punctuality were learners in the younger age range of 20 to 28 years of age.

For the most part, level three learners actively participated in program activities and were described as cooperative, cheerful, friendly, and very focused. According to the report data, these learners completed tasks efficiently, possessed strong computer skills, and produced excellent portfolios. In addition, report comments relating to the performance of the majority of learners on the workplace assignments were very favourable with employers providing positive feedback. With respect to the academic credit courses that the learners were working on, it is noteworthy to mention that seven of the nine learners did not hand in any assignments during the final phase of the program; this finding is discussed in chapter five. Furthermore, the academic instructor recommended that the majority of learners would benefit by taking classroom learning as a means to help them maintain interest while completing credit courses to earn their grade 12 diploma. For nine of the eleven learners, future plans involved taking more education: seven learners planned to complete their grade 12 diploma and the remaining two planned to take specialized training in the areas of income tax preparation and computer skills. One learner planned to open a lawn maintenance business and another planned to look for a job.

### Summary

In summary, the learning outcomes dimension of educational climate was examined from the perspectives of the learners, program staff, and the researcher's views of the progress reports. The personal growth component emerged as the most influential factor which contributed to learner changes and successful learning experiences for learners in levels one and three. Learners indicated that they had changed as a result of the program: they were better able to control their emotions; they felt better about themselves and had increased self-esteem and self-confidence; they were able to set and attain goals; they were able to deal with situations more effectively; they looked at things differently and were more positive in their approach; and they wanted to keep learning.

With respect to the information that would help them find employment, level one learners identified the importance of general skills such as assertiveness and communication, while level three learners suggested that the knowledge and skills acquired from the Life Skills classes, computer classes, and the portfolio development, would help them find work. All learners indicated that they needed more education and most expressed the desire to continue formal learning.

Program staff attributed the positive learning experiences of learners to the warm, comfortable, and relaxed atmosphere of the cultural environment. They cited elements of respect, empowerment, physical comfort, a holistic approach, and providing opportunities for success, as influential in creating positive learning experiences for Native adult learners. Furthermore, they indicated that the component of collaboration was essential in providing effective learning conditions which were learner-centred, focused on the needs of individual

learners, and fostered shared decision making. While staff members had mixed feelings about the readiness of learners for employment upon completion of the program, they indicated that the learners were ready for more learning challenges. They indicated that the Employment Preparation Program provided the learners with a start in the right direction; the program helped learners build their self-esteem and self-confidence and the desire for more education. These learners had yet to complete grade 12 in order to be able to find employment.

In relation to the researcher's perspectives of the progress reports, it was found that the majority of learners in both levels of the program were successful in completing their respective phases. In addition, the majority of learners in level three received favourable work placement reports from their employers. All learners indicated that they wanted to pursue more education. The majority of learners in level one experienced problems with punctuality. Since the majority of these learners were young, between the ages of 18 and 29, this may be a factor which needs to be further explored. It is important to note that three of the four learners in level three who experienced problems with attendance and punctuality were also younger learners between the ages of 20 and 28. Furthermore, the majority of level three learners who were working on academic courses, failed to hand in any assignments.

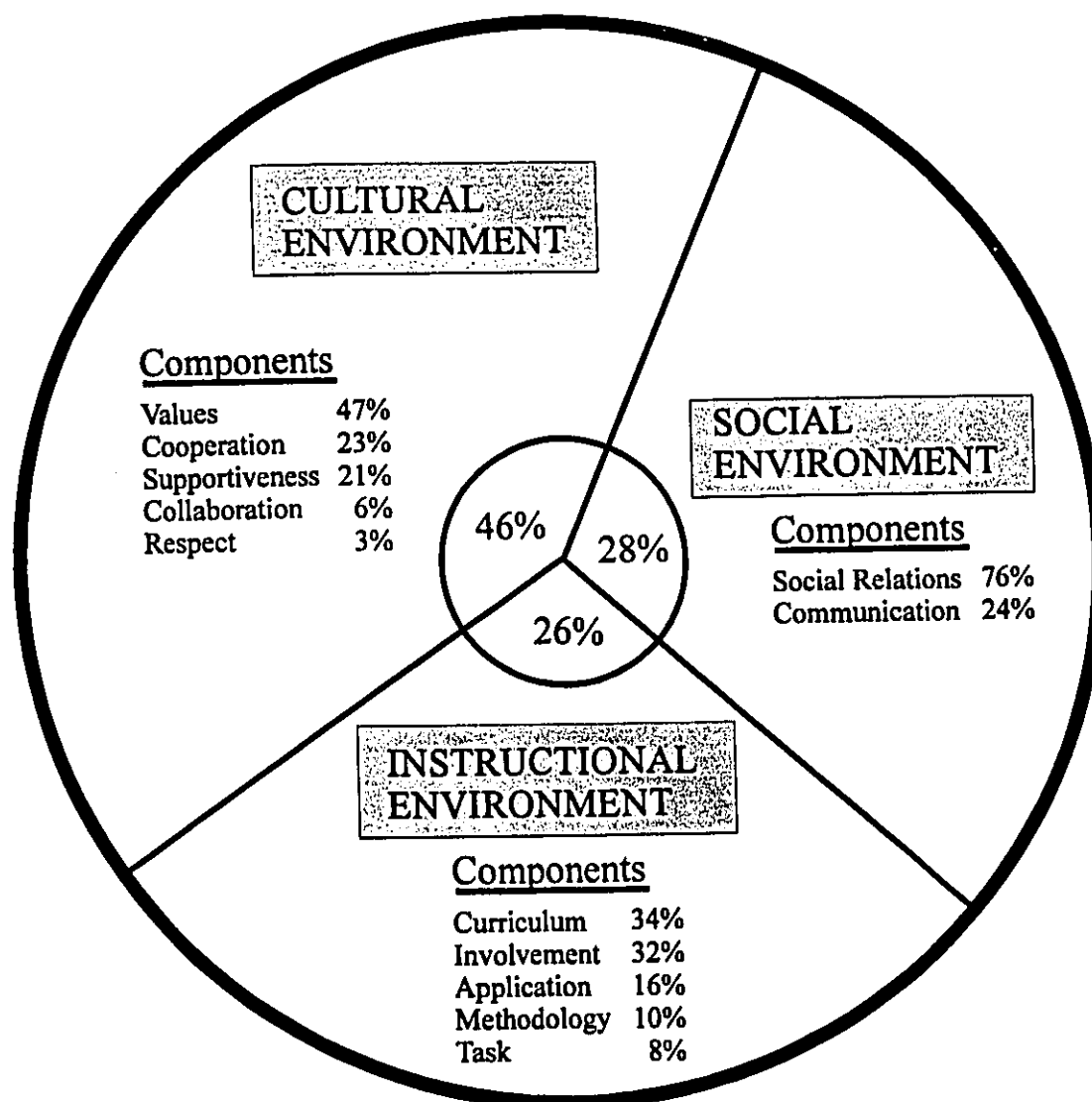
## CHAPTER V

### DISCUSSION OF EMERGING DIMENSIONS

In general, the results of the study have been reported in three separate parts which address the three research questions relating to the five dimensions of educational climate: learner milieu, environmental dimensions (instructional, cultural, and social), and learner outcomes. The perspectives of the learners, program staff, and the researcher were presented within this framework. The views from these different perspectives provide a holistic account of what was happening in the total teaching-learning context. The search for common patterns across the perspectives of different participants enabled the researcher to portray a complete picture of the environment and the learners.

The conceptual framework of educational climate developed for the purposes of the study was a useful classification mechanism for the examination of the influential dimensions and components of the research construct. For the first dimension of learner milieu, the common characteristics and differences in behaviour of both groups of Native adult learners are discussed. A summary of the findings across the different perspectives of all participants for the three dimensions of the instructional, cultural, and social environments are presented. These results are illustrated in Figure 11. The cultural environment emerged as the most influential factor in creating an optimum learning environment while the social and instructional environments emerged as secondary factors of influence. With respect to the last dimension of educational climate, learner outcomes, the components which emerged as important indicators of effective learning conditions are examined.

The five dimensions of educational climate and their associated components form the



**Figure 11.** Summary of key findings for the environmental dimensions and components of educational climate across all participants' perspectives.

basis upon which the discussion in this chapter is structured. Those which were most influential in contributing to a quality learning environment are analyzed in relation to the relevant literature.

Conti (1989) suggests that the literature in the field of adult education strongly supports the credos of a learner-centred approach to practice, however, in reality, a teacher-centred approach is still widely used. Merriam and Caffarella (1991) confirm this by indicating that adult learning in formal settings was found to be highly structured and set in a systems framework. In this context, learning was typically behaviorally oriented with quantified performance outcomes. Instructors designed and directed the learning process and the performance of learners was measured against standard performance criteria.

Prior to the conduct of the research, it was anticipated that an alternate way of approaching employment training in a Native context would emerge from the data. According to Clarke (1989), "There is little question that our dominant paradigm is inadequate to the challenge of the present and the future...Activities that often act as a bridge between the 'emerging' and the 'traditional' paradigms are co-operative education and similar work placement programs" (p.464). The Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs (1990) recommended support for community-based Native adult literacy programs which provided a holistic, learner-centred approach to learning. Findings from the research study confirm some of the basic tenets of alternative conceptions of adult learning such as the andragogical framework, the proficiency framework, and the whole language framework. These frameworks include a broad focus on education which is learner-centred, experiential, and holistic. Evidence from the research findings indicates that the Employment Preparation

Program provides Native adult learners with an alternate, contextualized approach to literacy instruction which is steeped in humanism and culturally sensitive to the needs of the Six Nations community.

A major aim of the research was to provide Native adult learners with the opportunity to voice their views about educational climate and the learning process within the context of the Employment Preparation Program. Since very little attention has been given to this minority population in the literature, the voices of Native adult learners have been cloaked in silence. The study addresses this issue, the views of this population shine through in the various excerpts presented in the previous chapter. These perspectives are now considered in relation to those advocated in the literature.

#### **Learner Milieu**

Two distinct sets of Native adult learners were studied. Level one learners were entry or beginner learners who had limited exposure to literacy programs; level three learners were in the final phase of the program and had already completed fifteen weeks of training in the initial version of the Employment Preparation Program.

All level one and level three learners were from a similar cultural background being from the Iroquois of the Six Nations. All learners were status Indians from the Cayuga and Mohawk Bands. Common characteristics noted for both groups of Native adult learners include the following. The majority of Native learners were female, single, parents who had completed grade 9 or higher. They had taken various kinds of occupational training and worked in one to three different types of jobs. Most of these learners had left high school early for a variety of personal reasons.

The majority of learners indicated that they had attended the Employment Preparation Program to enhance their personal lives and improve their knowledge, skills, and qualifications. This finding provides support for the tenet that adults engage in learning to improve their ability to deal with personal life issues, resolve problems, and perform tasks (Knox, 1986; Goodman, 1986; Knowles, 1984). All of the learners identified the need to acquire more education as their key learning goal. This took the form of finishing the program, completing credit courses to obtain a grade 12 diploma, or engaging in more specialized training. This awareness and focus is in line with the literature which advocates the national requirement for completion of high school and higher levels of education to find employment (Statistics Canada, 1990; The Hudson Institute, 1990).

The majority of learners in both levels of the program were working on math and English courses in the academic part of the program. However, according to information in the progress reports, the majority of level three learners had not submitted any course assignments for the academics class. This was found surprising since most of the learners had readily achieved the course requirements of the Life Skills and Computer Skills classes.

One could speculate that the learners were not ready to engage in the type of self-directed learning that is required in correspondence type courses. Findings in the study by Whelan (1993) remind us that adult learners only want to learn on their own when they are sure that they can do so successfully. Brookfield (1992) indicated that the learner's readiness for self-directed learning varies greatly according to the learner's familiarity with the area of self-direction, the nature of the task, the personality of the learner, and the political ethos of the time and culture.

Perhaps the content areas (English and math) of the academic course, reminded learners of their previous school experiences. Therefore, they may have unconsciously created mental blocks that hindered the learning process. Barer-Stein (1992) tells us that "All learning is influenced by past experiences and present emotions and concerns" (p.36). Perhaps these learners are better able to learn when they can work collaboratively and share ideas about the content that they are learning. Knowles (1970, 1984) indicates that learning is enhanced by interaction with other learners and active participation of learners in the learning process. Whelan (1993) found that learning occurred when adult learners engaged in ongoing dialogue that was collaborative and respected the individuality of the learners. All three conceptual frameworks of andragogy, proficiency, and whole language provided literary support for learning which was cooperative, collaborative, and participatory. Certainly, the findings of this study support the importance of cooperation and the active involvement of the learners in the learning processes. Comments made on the progress reports recommended that classroom based instruction may be required to support these learners. This indeed may be the case, since this was the only part of the program where the learning process was not of a collaborative, cooperative or participatory nature. This is a problem area which needs further investigation.

Differences noted between the learners in the two levels related to learning attitudes and experiences within the learning setting. Level one learners had not yet had the opportunity to participate in the work placements and were totally involved in full time classes at the learning facility. This was reflected in their comments relating to what helped them learn the most. They mentioned that the application and involvement components

within the instructional environment and the cooperation component within the cultural environment were found most important in helping them learn. This finding supports the tenet found in the literature which states that learning occurs when learners are actively involved in the learning process and when they are provided the opportunity to apply the knowledge. Learners learn by doing (Goodman, 1989; Lesgold, 1988; Sternberg, 1988; Knox, 1986; Newman, 1985; Knowles, 1984).

Level three learners reflected the independence and confidence of more advanced learners. They attended classes four times a week and participated in the world of work one day a week. They had the opportunity to transfer the knowledge and skills that they had acquired in the learning environment to the real world of work in a meaningful way. One learner had commented, "when I was at work, I found out that I had to use what I learned a lot". In fact, Knowles (1970, 1984) indicates that learners have to rehearse how they are going to apply their learning in their daily lives. Knox (1980, 1986) recommends that learners be given practice activities which are realistic because these type of activities are more likely to encourage learners to apply what is learned. The work placement component of the Employment Preparation Program provides the opportunity for learners to rehearse and apply what they are learning in a real work context. This is a unique part of the program that has enhanced the learning experiences of the Native adult learners.

Level three learners indicated that the two components of the cultural environment that assisted them the most in the learning process included the comfortable learning environment and the high quality instructors. The provision of a comfortable learning environment confirms the importance of climate setting in relation to the physical and

psychological environments advocated in the andragogical, proficiency, and whole language frameworks. The importance of the instructors in providing an effective learning environment supports the literature which highlights the role of the instructor in the learning process. Knowles (1970) stated that "The behaviour of the teacher probably influences the character of the learning climate more than any other single factor" (p.41). Whelan (1993) found that adult learners were able to learn effectively when facilitators were seen as understanding by the learners and the self-worth of the learners was not threatened.

When asked why they enjoyed attending the program, level one learners attributed their enjoyment of the program experience to the personal development that they were undergoing. Level one learners noticed that they were changing their perspectives about themselves and becoming more confident about their personal abilities. Thus, the major focus of attention for level one learners revolved around the self discovery process that they were experiencing as entry level learners. This supports the role of focusing on what is perceived important by the learner in relation to their personal development. Barer-Stein (1992) tells us that "It is only when we recognise and accept that learning is an inner personal experience that we see the validity and the necessity of understanding learning from the point of view of the learner" (p.36). Level one learners also described the important roles that the friendly social environment and the supportive cultural environment played in making the learning experience enjoyable.

The major focus of attention for level three learners was on the teaching-learning context. Level three learners indicated that the friendly social environment was the number one reason that they enjoyed the learning experience at the facility. A friendly, pleasurable

atmosphere where everyone gets along with each other is advocated in the literature by Knowles (1970, 1984) and Knox (1980, 1986). Level three learners were also quick to point out that the new design of the curriculum which included work placements and Native Perspectives classes was almost equally important. Thus, the previous program experience in the 15 week program enabled level three learners to note and value the added features of the revised 21 week program. These two features of the Employment Preparation Program were found to contribute to the quality of the learning environment.

Level one learners used concrete images related to the social and cultural environments to describe the learning environment; it was described as a place where people were happy and smiled, where new ideas and thoughts were welcomed, and where it was a pleasure to be. Level three learners were more abstract and creative in their descriptions of the learning environment; these learners used the images of a circle, a three dimensional sphere, a spiral staircase, a tunnel, and a dreamcatcher to describe the environment.

### **Cultural Environment**

The cultural environment emerged as the most influential environmental dimension of educational climate in the study. Participants consistently identified the values, cooperation and supportiveness components as key factors which contributed to the quality of the learning environment. These findings support many of the basic tenets of the andragogical, proficiency, and whole language frameworks. Specific details are discussed in relation to each component of the cultural environment.

### Values

The values component emerged as the major cultural factor which influenced the quality of the learning environment. Values which were found conducive for creating a favourable atmosphere for learning in the Employment Preparation Program include the following seven elements: a psychologically comfortable feeling and a physically comfortable facility; a nonthreatening environment in which participants were able to take risks and make mistakes; an environment which placed value on being happy, having fun, the enjoyment of learning, and the appropriate use of humour; an open and warm environment; an environment where it was easy to talk, learn, and ask for things; an environment where learners felt respected as individuals; and an environment in which a philosophy of empowerment and responsibility for participants were advocated and practised.

The emphasis on the importance of the values component provides empirical evidence which substantiates beliefs advocated by proponents of andragogy, proficiency, and whole language (Knowles, 1984; Knox, 1986; Edelsky, 1992; Lehman et al., 1992; Keefe & Meyer, 1991; Newman & Church, 1990). With respect to andragogy, Knowles (1984) says that "climate setting is probably the most crucial element in the whole process of human resource development" (p.121). According to Knowles, climate setting takes into consideration both the physical and psychological environments of the context. For effective learning conditions, he specifies "the learning environment is characterized by physical comfort, mutual trust and respect, mutual helpfulness, freedom of expression, and acceptance of differences" (p.83). Furthermore, Knowles believes that "adults learn best in informal, comfortable, flexible, nonthreatening settings" (p.52). The majority of these ideas

have been upheld as influential in the study within the values component of the cultural environment.

Verification of the importance of the empowerment of learners supports two of the four basic characteristics of an educative environment that Knowles espouses: the participation of learners in decision making, and the mutual responsibility of the learner and instructor to plan, assess learning needs, set goals, conduct activities, and evaluate the learning experience. Results of the study illustrate that learners in the Employment Preparation Program do indeed participate in these processes. To gain entry to the program, learners must take an active part in the screening process where they identify their learning needs with the assistance of the program counsellor. They are required to select the academic courses that they need to earn their grade 12 diploma. Throughout the program, learners are required to reflect, evaluate, and discuss what is working and what is not working. Learners are expected to take responsibility for their learning. They are encouraged to be assertive, communicative, and actively participate in the learning process. The development of step plans, which highlight their short-term and long-term goals, and portfolios, which provide a profile of their learning and work experiences, are key learning activities which foster growth and empower the learners.

Again, most of the elements of the values component uphold many of the principles advocated by Knox (1980); he suggests that "a climate for learning must be quickly established that is supportive, friendly, spontaneous, informal, open, and challenging without being threatening or condescending" (p.89). The importance of comfortable physical facilities and a learning climate which provides humour and sets a tone of mutual respect for

individual learners are noted by Knox. The proficiency framework prescribes the need to empower learners by involving them in program planning and implementation in relation to needs assessment, context analysis, objective setting, learning activities, and program evaluation. Within this framework, learners are encouraged to clarify their preferences and make their own choices. Furthermore, Knox (1986) proposes that "a supportive physical and interpersonal setting in which participants feel secure and welcome is especially important for adults with little formal education or without recent educational experience" (1986, p.132).

Elements which emerged for the values component corroborate many of the principles advocated by proponents of the whole language framework. Watson (1989) indicates that "whole-language classrooms facilitate learning communities in which students live comfortably and productively" (p.137). Learning within the whole language framework is a process which encourages learners to take risks to try new strategies, to view mistakes as an opportunity for growth, and to have fun (Lehman et al., 1992; Keefe & Meyer, 1991). The learning environment is one which is open and individual learners are treated with respect and positive regard. Since instructors are considered co-learners in the learning process, learners are required to take responsibility for their own learning by making decisions about what is learned and evaluating their own efforts. Edelsky (1992) points out that "whole language is based on a desire to improve the conditions of education for students and teachers by giving them more power over their own lives - students over their learning and teachers over their teaching lives" (p.325).

The emphasis on an empowerment orientation within the context of the Employment

Preparation Program was noted across all levels which included both staff and learners. A program instructor suggested that learners were empowered "to make of their lives what they will, rather than following our design, our instruction. We teach them to use their own abilities, their own skills, their own ideas to get what they want". A staff member suggested that the staff were empowered to take responsibility, make decisions, and make changes; they have a voice. In addition this staff member said, "the more you empower the staff, the more they empower the students and the students empower themselves". A learner said, "GRPI is a shelter. It represents freedom and mobility...In this educational setting you can talk to people without having them freak out. It's also about empowerment - from knowing who you are". The program focus on empowerment confirms the call for this approach in the literature. The Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs (1990) states that "the purpose of Native adult education programs should be to empower learners to take greater control of their lives and become more effective, self-realized individuals" (p.64). Moreover, the definition of Native literacy specifies that it is "a tool which empowers the spirit of the Native people. Native literacy fosters and promotes sense of purpose and achievement, both integral to self-determination" (George, 1993b, p.1).

#### Cooperation

Cooperation, which emerged as a minor component of the cultural environment, involves influential elements which include participants who: willingly helped each other; asked for help when needed; knew where to go for help; found individual assistance available and accessible when required; and interacted in positive ways to solve problems, discuss issues, and complete tasks. These findings support the doctrines found in the

literature which suggest that instructors should be available to help learners learn; they should use a variety of methods which promote group work and cooperative interaction (Knowles, 1984; Knox, 1986). These same authors propose that adult learning is problem-centred and learning activities should be meaningful and help adults deal with life issues. Being an advocate of whole language, Newman (1985) indicates that learning is enhanced in a learning environment when learners are given the opportunity to seek the feedback and help of other learners.

### Supportiveness

The supportiveness component of the cultural environment emerged as a minor factor of influence in the study. The elements repeatedly found important include the caring, encouraging, and accepting nature of program participants. These results confirm the tenets of this nature which are promoted by Knox (1986), Knowles (1984), Lehman et al. (1992), and Keefe and Meyer (1991). Knox recommends that a supportive learning environment be created for learners through the process of encouragement; instructors should be genuine, approachable, enthusiastic and available. According to Fellenz (1989), "successful ABE teachers are marked more by their human skills than by their content expertise...highest acclamations went to teachers who listen, who explain things clearly, who are supportive and encouraging, and who care" (p.250). Knowles expresses the need for physical and psychological environments to provide a learning atmosphere in which learners feel accepted, respected, and supported. Lehman and others (1992) suggest that learners in a whole language environment are expected to succeed and they receive encouragement and feedback for their learning attempts. Keefe and Meyer (1991) state that one condition

required for adult learning to take place is the "development of warm and caring relationships" (p.181).

In summary, as the key factor influencing the quality of the learning environment, the cultural environment and associated components affect learners on both an emotional level and a physical level. Elements of the values, cooperation, and supportiveness components reach most learners on an individual basis, in a meaningful way. The creation of this type of learning environment provides fertile soil which enables learners to take root and cultivate their growth.

### **Social Environment**

The social environment emerged as a secondary factor of importance across all perspectives in the study. Within this dimension, the social relations component was found most influential in contributing to a quality learning environment.

#### **Social Relations**

The social relations component of the social environment emerged as an important factor which enhanced the learning environment within the context of the Employment Preparation Program. Elements which were repeatedly found important include those in which program participants were characterized as: friendly, smiling, receptive to problems and concerns, approachable, interactive, willing to talk to each other, and able to get along with everybody. These variables validate principles advocated by the andragogical framework, the proficiency framework, and the whole language framework. Within the framework of andragogy, Knowles (1970) tells us that a learner "tends to feel more adult in an atmosphere that is friendly and informal", the learner is known by name, and "valued

as a unique individual" (p.41). The elements of friendliness and active interaction with others in the learning environment are part of the philosophies of both Knowles (1984) and Knox (1986). Furthermore, Knowles (1970) states that "the quality and amount of learning is...clearly influenced by the quality and amount of interaction between the learner" and the environment (p.51).

These findings provide support for those found by Ennis and others (1989); the communication patterns within the social system emerged as a key factor of influence in the study of educational climate. The authors of this study suggested that "Communication patterns were central to the development of a comfortable and supportive social system for the young adult learners in this study" (p.83). Humour and teasing were elements found important in interactions with Native adult learners. Ennis and others noted a similar finding; teacher-learner communications were enhanced with teasing and joking during non-content related discussions. In addition, expressions of empathy for individual learner concerns was found influential. Learners indicated that their desire to engage in discussions with the instructor centred on the openness of the instructor. These informal discussions were found to enhance the learners understanding of the content and how it was relevant in their own lives. Furthermore, the authors noted that "Rapport created by open and fluid communication patterns appeared to be a facilitating factor in shared decision making" (p.85).

### **Instructional Environment**

The instructional environment was also found to be a factor of secondary importance across all perspectives. The three components of the instructional environment which made

important contributions to a quality learning environment include the curriculum, learner involvement and application.

### Curriculum

Within the curriculum component, course content that was influential in providing an optimum learning environment included three areas: Native Perspectives, Life Skills, and work placements in the community. The provision of content that was meaningful and relevant to their personal lives was repeatedly identified as an influential condition for adult learning. This finding supports the recommendations advocated in the literature. According to the B.C. Ministry of Education (1984), three content areas suggested for inclusion in Native literacy programs included Life Skills, Pre-Employment, and Native culture. Life Skills and content which was relevant to the needs, experiences and background of Native learners were recommendations made by George (1992), the Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs (1990), and the Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technologies (1990).

With respect to a learner's readiness to learn, Knowles tells us that learners are ready to learn things that they need to know to cope with life; things that will help them become more competent socially and occupationally. It is essential for learning activities to address life concerns of learners. He says that "adults are motivated to devote energy to learn something to the extent that they perceive that it will let them perform tasks or deal with problems that they confront in their life situations" (Knowles, 1984, p.59). Knox substantiates the premise that meaningful and relevant learning activities are important elements to consider when establishing effective learning environments. The results of the study confirm the importance of these two beliefs expounded by both Knowles and Knox.

### Involvement

Influential elements of the involvement component which had an impact on the learning environment include: the active participation of learners in the learning process; the ability of learners to share their ideas and participate in discussions; and the ability of learners to engage in active inquiry within the learning process. It is not surprising to find the emergence of the involvement component as an influential factor in creating quality learning environments. This finding provides support for a tenet which has received much attention in the literature by Knowles, Knox, and whole language advocates. Knowles (1970) says it this way, "Indeed, participation and ego-involvement are boldfaced words in the lexicon of the adult educator, with the assumption often being made that the more active the learner's role in the process, the more he is probably learning" (p.45). Another key credo that was validated by the research was the importance of sharing ideas and participating in discussions. Newman (1985) suggests the learning environment be structured "in such a way that students [have] ample opportunity to share with one another, exchange information...and sharing ideas as they solve problems" (p.4). Conti (1989) adds the following, "the key word for working successfully with adults is participation. Ideally the learner should be an active participant in a learning activity that is a cooperative venture" (p.5).

### Application

Another influential component of the instructional environment which emerged consistently across all participant perspectives was that of application. The elements of doing everything, practising, and using knowledge in practical or new situations were highlighted.

Again confirmation of this principle for learning is not surprising. Knowles, Knox, and whole language proponents assert the importance of these elements. Knowles (1984) purports that learners "learn new knowledge, understandings, skills, values, and attitudes most effectively when they are presented in the context of application to real-life situations" (p.59). Knox (1980) suggests that "some form of practice, rehearsal, or review is essential for almost any type of learning" (P.91). Clarke (1989) says that "programs are best when they provide students with the opportunity to make practical use of what is being learned" (p.465).

### **Learner Outcomes**

The major component of the learner outcomes dimension that shone through the data was that of personal growth. General skill development was of secondary importance, however, still influential because it was noted across all perspectives. The next steps planned by the learners are also mentioned.

### **Personal Growth**

The most influential elements of personal growth that emerged from the data were those of enhanced self-esteem and self-confidence. These findings confirm the need for a broader focus on the multiple outcomes of literacy training. Native adult learners in the Employment Preparation Program were adamant about the importance of the personal discovery process in the literacy learning environment. Draper (1992) says that "often the first task of an educational program is to begin, not with the teaching of content or skills but to focus on eliminating negative internalized labels, in order to revive individual self-esteem and dignity. Only then can education provide an open door to learning" (p.10). Fellenz (1989) adds to this perspective by stating that "growth in self-confidence frees the learner

to be and to do...human growth is the main effect that makes other objectives possible" (p.251). Whelan (1993) found that the key factor that affected the self-esteem and learning progress of undereducated adult learners was the manner and frequency with which feedback relating to personal development and academic goals was provided.

Furthermore, it is important to acknowledge how Native adult learners are defining success. In the Employment Preparation Program, Native adult learners clearly associated success with the personal growth component of the learner outcome dimension; this involved enhanced self-esteem and self-confidence. According to George (1992), "First and foremost in evaluating the effectiveness of an Aboriginal literacy program is the qualitative changes in learners" (p.8).

Other elements of personal growth which emerged as influential for Native adult learners in relation to the learner outcome dimension included an enhanced ability to set goals, the realization of the importance of learning, the desire to learn more, and the development of a positive attitude. These findings confirm suggestions made in the literature. According to Csikszentmihalyi (1991), "A goal is necessary so that we may get feedback on our actions, so that at any given moment we know how well we are doing in terms of the goal" (p.129). To make learning enjoyable, he advocates that instructors match the learning challenge with the skills of the learners, assist learners in the development of clear goals, and provide immediate feedback which informs learners why performance is lacking and how it could be improved.

The Information Technology Sector Advisory Committee (1993) called for the promotion of lifelong learning among all Canadians and improved management skills.

Draper (1991) indicated that literacy education involved learning about "the improvement of an individual's self-concept as a learner and as a person; the self-diagnosing of one's needs; the increasing ability to think critically and to solve problems; [and] the improvement of inter-personal relationships" (p.504). The Conference Board of Canada (1992, June) drafted an Employability Skills Profile which highlighted the need for personal management skills which included positive attitudes and behaviours, responsibility, and adaptability; academic skills which included communication, thinking, and learning; and teamwork skills which included the ability to work with others. Finney (1993) stated that an empowerment perspective provided learners with the motivation to acquire skills and the opportunity for personal growth. This in turn helped learners understand themselves, others, and the social world.

#### General Skill Development

The general skill component of the learner outcomes dimension emerged as a secondary factor of influence for Native adult learners in the Employment Preparation Program. With increased confidence, learners indicated that they had enhanced their communication skills. They were more assertive and able to present information in front of others both in the teaching-learning context and in their personal lives. These findings support ideas regarding the importance of communication in the literature. According to Hayes (1989), cooperative communication styles are characterized by active support for group members, by taking turns speaking, and by active listening. Certainly, all of these elements were promoted within the context of the Employment Preparation Program. Furthermore, she says that "patterns of cooperative communication reflect respect for others

and thus support the development of trust and openness to new ideas" (p.61).

In a study of educational climate conducted by Ennis and all (1989), the importance of communication patterns to the development of a comfortable and supportive social system for learners was noted. Interactions among the participants in the learning environment played an important role in the program for adult learners. Sgroi and Cavaliere (1992) note the power of interaction in the learning process; they indicate that it works because "people make connections with, challenge, respond to, teach, and learn from other people" (p.118). In addition, The Conference Board of Canada (1992) indicated that the acquisition of communication skills provides learners with one tool which will help them move towards employability.

#### Next Steps

All learners in level one indicated that their next steps involved the acquisition of more education or training. Some planned to complete the remaining phases of the program, some planned to complete their grade 12 diploma, and some planned to go on to university or take more specialized training.

Seven of the eleven learners in level three planned to continue with their education by completing their grade 12 diploma, while the remaining four planned to look for work. Whether their visions were near-sighted or far-sighted, all the learners in both levels were somehow richer from the learning experience, they had set their sights and focused on moving forward with renewed self-esteem and self-confidence.

Program staff indicated that the Employment Preparation Program was a place for Native adult learners to start the learning process. They suggested that upon completion of

the program the learners were ready for further learning as opposed to work. This finding confirms the views that were voiced by the majority of learners.

### Summary

A summary of the findings for the five dimensions of educational climate across the different research perspectives of the learners, program staff, and researcher were discussed in relation to the relevant literature. The discussion highlighted research findings which confirmed some of the basic tenets regarding adult learning. The Employment Preparation Program was found to be an alternate way of approaching Native literacy training which was learner-centred, holistic, experiential, and culturally sensitive to the needs of the Six Nations community. A portrait of the learners described in terms of common patterns and differences in learner milieu for both sets of learners was presented.

The cultural environment emerged as the most influential environmental dimension of educational climate. The components of values, cooperation, and supportiveness were found important in contributing to a quality learning environment. These three components confirmed credos espoused by advocates of andragogy, proficiency, and whole language.

The social and instructional environments were found to be secondary factors which contributed to effective learning conditions for Native adult learners. The components of social relations, curriculum, involvement, and application supported ideas advocated by proponents in the field of adult education.

Personal growth emerged as the major component of the learner outcomes dimension. Two key elements which were found important included enhanced self-esteem and self-confidence. These elements confirmed the requirement for a broader focus for

literacy training. Other elements of importance included an improved ability of learners to set goals, the acknowledgement of the importance of learning, the desire to continue learning, and the development of a positive attitude. These elements provided support for ideas proposed by various authors.

## CHAPTER VI

### SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

#### Summary of Key Findings

Concerned with the problem of undereducated and unemployed Native adults, this qualitative, exploratory study sought to describe the dimensions of educational climate which were influential in providing optimal learning conditions for Native adult learners in a Native Employment Preparation Program. Research questions relating to the learner milieu, dimensions of the cultural, social, and instructional environments, and learner outcomes were examined from the perspectives of the learners. Two distinct groups of learners were described in relation to the dimension of learner milieu: they included profiles of level one and level three learners. Characteristics of Native adult learners which were highlighted in the study include descriptions of demographic data, prior knowledge and experience, reasons for attending the program, learning expectations and goals, and learning interests and attitudes.

The cultural dimension of educational climate emerged as the most influential environmental factor which contributed to a quality learning environment in this setting. A detailed examination of the cultural environment revealed the importance of the values, cooperation, and supportiveness components in providing effective learning conditions for Native adult learners. Both the social and instructional dimensions emerged as environmental factors of secondary importance. The social relations component of the social environment was found influential in contributing to an effective learning environment; and the instructional components of curriculum, involvement, and application emerged as

important factors which contributed to a quality environment for learning.

The learner outcomes dimension of educational climate was defined in broad terms. It included descriptions of learner changes, successful learning experiences, areas of most improvement, information that would help learners find a job, and the future goals of the learners. Findings of the study revealed that the personal growth component emerged as the major area of influence for Native adult learners in the Employment Preparation Program. While participating in the program, these learners experienced growth associated with enhanced self-esteem and self-confidence. They had learned how to set goals. Learners found that their perspectives had changed; they had become more positive in outlook and realized the importance of learning. Moreover, they wanted to continue to learn. While learners identified noted improvement in the dimension of general skill development, it was secondary in importance. Learners had enhanced their ability to communicate and to be assertive. The program had provided Native adult learners with the opportunity to open a door and "start" the learning journey. Along the way they discovered new perspectives which enabled them to see new possibilities.

Results are further discussed in terms of the implications they have regarding the knowledge base of adult education. This is followed by a discussion of the implications of the findings for practitioners. The chapter ends with recommendations for future research and concluding remarks.

### **Implications for the Knowledge Base**

Findings from the study which are perceived to have implications for adult learning and contribute to the knowledge base of adult education are considered.

First of all, the construct of educational climate was found to be a meaningful tool which enabled the researcher to gather a complete picture about the total teaching-learning context of a literacy program from the perspectives of program participants. Ennis and others (1989) indicated that "the educational climate construct can be used to structure and study climate in a variety of adult education settings" (p.87). This was found important because very little research existed in the literature in relation to effective learning environments from the perspectives of adult learners in an adult learning setting (Chang Barker, 1992; Merriam & Caffarella, 1991; Ennis et al., 1989; Draper, 1986; Anderson, 1982). Even less information was available for the minority population of Native adult learners (Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs, 1990; Rodriguez & Sawyer, 1990; Couture, 1987). Thus, the need to conduct exploratory, qualitative research which would provide a detailed description of the teaching-learning context for minority learners was evident.

The study of educational climate and the findings which emerged for Native adult learners in the Employment Preparation Program provide rich descriptions of the total learning environment based on the perspectives of this minority population. The study provided a vehicle for Native literacy learners to voice their views about learning. This study addresses gaps in the literature and makes a contribution to the knowledge base of adult basic education. It provides a baseline, regarding the environmental dimensions of educational climate, the learner milieu, and learner outcomes for Native adult learners, upon which other research can build.

The conceptual framework of educational climate developed for the study has been

an effective and useful way of looking at this construct. The five dimensions of educational climate which include the learner milieu, cultural environment, social environment, instructional environment, and learner outcomes, enabled the researcher to examine the total teaching-learning context in a way which portrayed the learner and the learning process in a realistic manner. A learner enters a learning environment fully loaded with prior knowledge and experience, learning expectations, interests, and attitudes, and real life problems. According to Draper (1986), "in order to deal with the problem of illiteracy in society, it is important to understand illiterate adults in terms of their personal context or environment in which they live, their life style, values, and aspirations" (p.3). Thus, in the examination of learning environments, the learner milieu is an important dimension that must be entertained.

Furthermore, to gain a thorough understanding of the environmental dimensions of educational climate, the cultural, instructional, and social environments were included in the design. Ennis and others (1989) tell us that "adult education programs which monitor both instructional and climate variables can provide a holistic experience which addresses the lifelong learning goals of students" (p.87). The findings of the research show that all three dimensions provided invaluable insights about the quality conditions in the learning environment. The inclusion of the fifth dimension of educational climate, learner outcomes, was absolutely essential because it provided the evidence of how the learner had changed as a result of the learning experience. Anderson (1982) indicated that the dimensions of educational climate should ideally be linked to multiple learner outcomes. This framework contributes to the knowledge base by providing a useful structure to examine educational

climate. The use of this framework is recommended for further research which replicates this study with adult learners of different ethnic origins, ages, and gender.

Research findings provide empirical evidence for many of the tenets of the andragogical, proficiency, and whole language frameworks. A list of some of the key findings and the associated principles are listed below.

1. The majority of learners from both levels indicated that they had attended the Employment Preparation Program to enhance their personal lives and improve their knowledge, skills, and qualifications. This finding provides support for the tenet that adults engage in learning to improve their ability to deal with personal life issues, resolve problems, and perform tasks (Knox, 1986; Goodman, 1986; Knowles, 1984).
2. Level one learners indicated that the application and involvement components within the instructional environment and the cooperation component within the cultural environment were found most important in helping them learn. This finding supports the tenet found in the literature which states that learning occurs when learners are actively involved in the learning process and when they are provided the opportunity to apply the knowledge. Learners learn by doing (Goodman, 1989; Lesgold, 1988; Sternberg, 1988; Knox, 1986; Newman, 1985; Knowles, 1984).
3. Level three learners participated in work placements one day a week; they had the opportunity to transfer the knowledge and skills that they had acquired in the learning environment to the real world of work in a meaningful way. Knowles (1970, 1984) indicates that learners have to rehearse how they are going to apply their learning in their daily lives. Knox (1980, 1986) recommends that learners be given practice activities which are realistic

because these type of activities are more likely to encourage learners to apply what is learned.

4. Level three learners indicated that the two components of the cultural environment that assisted them the most in the learning process included the comfortable learning environment and the high quality of the instructors. The provision of a comfortable learning environment confirms the importance of climate setting in relation to the physical and psychological environments advocated in the andragogical, proficiency, and whole language frameworks. The importance of the instructors in providing an effective learning environment supports the literature which highlights the role of the instructor in the learning process (Whelan, 1993; Knox, 1986; Knowles, 1970).

5. The emphasis on the importance of the values component of the cultural dimension included elements such as a comfortable feeling and a comfortable facility in which learners felt that they were able to take risks and make mistakes; an environment which placed value on being happy, having fun, the enjoyment of learning, and the use of humour; and an environment where warmth, openness, and respect were displayed. These findings support these tenets advocated by all three frameworks (Lehman et al., 1992; Watson, 1989; Knox, 1986; Knowles, 1984).

6. The importance of the empowerment of learners emerged as an influential factor within the values component of the cultural dimension. The importance of the participation of learners in the decision making in relation to the learning process was advocated by proponents of all three frameworks (Edelsky, 1992; Knox, 1986; Knowles, 1984).

7. The cultural components of cooperation and supportiveness emerged as factors of

secondary importance. These components supported similar views advocated by proponents of the three conceptual frameworks (Lehman et al., 1992; Keefe & Meyer, 1991; Knox, 1986; Knowles, 1984; Newman, 1985).

8. The social relations component of the social environment emerged as an influential factor which contributed to effective learning conditions. Elements which were repeatedly found important include references to program participants who were friendly, accessible, available, and receptive to problems and concerns. This finding confirmed credos advocated by all three frameworks (Knox, 1986; Goodman, 1986; Knowles, 1984, 1970).

It is clear that findings from the study make important contributions to the knowledge base. Gaps in the literature relating to the construct of educational climate, positive learning environments, a community-based literacy program, and the minority population of Native adult learners have been addressed. In addition, the conceptual framework of educational climate which includes the learner milieu, cultural environment, instructional environment, social environment, and learner outcomes provides a meaningful structure from which to study the total teaching-learning context of any program. Finally, findings of the study contribute to the knowledge base by providing empirical support which confirms the importance of many tenets of adult learning found in the frameworks of andragogy, proficiency, and whole language.

#### **Implications for Practitioners**

The findings of the study have a number of implications for practitioners. First of all, the Employment Preparation Program was found to be an alternative, community-based literacy program which exhibited many characteristics of the humanist paradigm. The

learning environment was described as holistic, learner-centred, collaborative, and supportive of learner and staff empowerment. Decision making regarding learner goals, academic courses, work placements, and career choices was made by the learners with the assistance of program staff if needed. The atmosphere was characterized as highly interactive, warm, open, comfortable, encouraging, and participants felt close to one another. Individuals were recognized, appreciated, respected and valued as total beings on a spiritual, intellectual, physical, and emotional level. It was a place for learner renewal and growth. It provided a positive learning environment for all Native learners, therefore, practitioners who work with Native adult learners may find it useful to apply some of the elements and techniques that were employed in this teaching-learning context. Furthermore, the Employment Preparation Program provides evidence that a program of this nature may be one solution which addresses the literacy problem of undereducated Native adults. Jones (1991) pointed out that "The empowerment provided by literacy is the best hope for breaking out of the vicious cycle of poverty and dependence...literacy training may be the critical step toward a solution" (p.40).

Secondly, findings regarding the dimensions of educational climate may be used by practitioners to create effective learning conditions with any group of learners in any teaching-learning context. This would involve the implementation of the following learning conditions. Establishing a cultural environment characterized as warm, comfortable, nonthreatening, fun, enjoyable, open, respectful, and empowering is essential for creating an effective climate for learners to learn. Providing a cooperative cultural environment in which learners helped each other and instructors were available to provide individual

assistance is an important condition for learning. Developing a supportive cultural environment where staff were accepting, caring, and encouraging is another condition which enhances learning. Promoting effective social relations which include being friendly, smiling, being available and approachable, being receptive to problems and concerns, and getting along with everyone are conditions which enhance the social dimension of the learning environment. Providing relevant and meaningful curriculum contributes to effective learning conditions in the instructional environment. Actively involving learners in the learning process and providing ample opportunities for learners to practice and apply content in practical and new situations are key conditions which also enhance learning in the instructional dimension.

Practitioners working in literacy settings, may find the research results relating to the multiple kinds of learner outcomes worthy of consideration when looking at the way achievement and program success are defined. Learner outcomes may not be just about academic achievement or general skill development. The findings from the study show the need for a broader perspective which encompasses a multitude of possibilities. In the research, the major component of the learner outcomes dimension that emerged as most influential for both sets of learners was that of personal growth. Learners indicated that they had experienced many personal changes as a result of the learning experience. These included enhanced self-esteem and self-confidence, being able to set goals, realizing the importance of learning, the development of a positive attitude, and the desire to learn more. Therefore, practitioners, stakeholders, and funding agencies involved with literacy programs need to modify their expectations regarding learner outcomes. They need to clearly define

the criteria for learner and program success in broader terms which encompass multiple learner outcomes.

Findings from the research provide ample evidence that all learners in the Employment Preparation Program thoroughly enjoyed their learning experiences at GRPI. These Native adult learners indicated that they actively engaged in classroom assignments; they enjoyed working together and sharing their views; and they described program instructors as "awesome". Within this learning context, it was found that the majority of Native adult learners taking correspondence courses in the academic class did not complete the assignments. One may speculate that the learners at this stage of the learning and development process were not ready to work in isolation. It appears that these learners may need to be in a classroom environment where they can interact, study, and learn as a group. Practitioners need to be aware of this finding. If this is true of adult learners in other settings, this issue requires serious consideration on the part of literacy practitioners. New ways must be found to address the completion of academic course work for literacy learners. This is essential because these learners need to complete grade 12 in order to increase their chances of finding future employment. Further research is needed to investigate this issue.

In relation to the learner milieu, the age of the Native adult learners emerged as a noteworthy finding. Differences were found in the performance of younger learners (18-25) and older learners (26 years or older) in both levels of the program. It was the younger learners in the study who had problems associated with attendance and punctuality both within the program setting and the community work placements. One might speculate that younger learners may be limited by their lack of experience; they may not be ready to

change their existing behaviour patterns. Perhaps they do not feel the urgency to change, they are young. Perhaps, they are more interested in having fun and feel that there is still plenty of time for learning in the future. Perhaps they do not have the outside support which provides the encouragement to engage and persist in the learning process. Perhaps they simply enjoyed attending the program because it was supportive, friendly, and helped them experience new ways of relating. This is an important finding because over half the learners in both levels of the program were young adult learners. Practitioners need to be aware that the age of the learners might affect the performance of younger adults. This is a research issue that demands further investigation.

### **Recommendations for Future Research**

As an exploratory study, the findings of the research provide rich descriptions from the perspectives of Native adult learners about the five dimensions and associated components of educational climate. This study lays the foundation for future investigations because very little research of this nature exists in the adult education literature. Many questions remain. Would the study of educational climate with Native adult learners in other literacy programs produce similar findings? Would the findings for Native adult learners be similar for adult learners from different ethnic groups? How successful are adult learners in completing the academic course work in other literacy programs? How much time does it take and how does the age of the learners affect learner performance? How is program success defined in terms of learner outcomes in other literacy programs by adult learners, by program staff, and by program funding agencies?

Future research regarding the study of educational climate or positive learning

environments requires the use of a qualitative design. This is necessary in order to capture the total teaching-learning context which includes all five dimensions of educational climate. A qualitative design is also essential in order to portray a comprehensive understanding of the environment by means of in-depth observations and interviews, to present a phenomenologically oriented approach, and to study participants in their natural environment over a continuous and extensive period of time in the field. This type of design more closely resembles the reality of the situation.

A replication of the research study is recommended with Native adult learners in other literacy programs to determine the consistency of the findings in relation to the dimensions and components of educational climate. Furthermore, research replicating the study of educational climate with adult learners from different ethnic groups, different age groups, and different gender groups is also recommended.

A more detailed examination of how the different components and elements of the social, instructional, and cultural dimensions found in the research interact to create quality learning conditions is also suggested.

### Conclusion

In conclusion, a qualitative investigation of five dimensions of educational climate in a Native literacy program found that the values, cooperation, and supportiveness components of the cultural environment emerged as the key factors which contributed to an optimal learning environment for Native literacy learners. Many rich descriptions were provided by Native program participants in relation to the learner milieu, cultural environment, social environment, instructional environment, and learner outcomes. These

descriptions paint an important picture of the total teaching-learning context of the Employment Preparation Program.

The findings make a valuable contribution to the knowledge base of adult education because Native literacy learners are given the opportunity to voice their views and describe the dimensions of educational climate within a Native literacy program which made the most meaningful contributions in providing a quality learning environment. There is a paucity of research of this nature. Thus, the findings of the study may lay the foundation for future research in these areas.

Furthermore, the results provide confirmation of many of the tenets advocated by proponents of the andragogical, proficiency, and whole language frameworks. Finally, the findings show that the Native Employment Preparation Program provides an alternative approach to literacy learning which is humanistic, learner-centred, holistic, and empowering.

A replication of the study using Native adult learners in different literacy settings and adult learners from different ethnic groups, age groups, and gender groups, is recommended for future research. Efforts to investigate how the components and elements of the instructional, cultural, and social environments interact to create a quality environment needs to be undertaken.

In relation to the importance of this research study, I would like to close with a comment made by one program participant, "The learners have been unacknowledged for so long that this way of acknowledging them is really exciting. It provides esteem building and it is powerful".

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## APPENDIX A

### NATIVE LEARNERS PERSPECTIVES OF EDUCATIONAL CLIMATE

205

#### IN A NATIVE EMPLOYMENT PREPARATION PROGRAM

##### LETTER OF CONSENT

When a research project is undertaken by a member of the University of Ottawa, the Ethics Committee of the university requires the written consent of the participants. The intention is simply to assure the respect and the confidentiality of the individuals concerned.

This research is conducted by Paulette C. Tremblay, Ph.D. candidate, under the auspices of the Faculty of Education. The purpose of the research is to describe the salient factors in a Native Employment Preparation Program that create an optimum educational climate for learning.

I understand that my participation is voluntary and that my participation has no effect on the marks I receive for my performance on this course. None of the information gathered will appear in any program records. All information will be seen only by the researchers involved in this study and will be used solely for research purposes.

I understand that I may be present in classroom and other program settings where the researcher is conducting observations of learner interactions and may be asked to comment on activities in which I am participating. I also understand that I may participate in one focus group interview with other learners near the end of the program. This focus group interview will last approximately 90 to 120 minutes, be tape-recorded or video-taped, and take place on the premises of the program facility.

I further understand that I am participating in this study anonymously. Personal and place names as well as any other information which might serve to identify me in this study will be edited out of the transcripts. I understand that I may withdraw from the study at any time.

I have been given the opportunity to ask any questions regarding the research and these questions have been answered to my satisfaction.

##### CONSENT FORM ONE

I willingly agree to participate in this study on the understanding that my answers will remain strictly confidential and that I will not be identifiable in the presentation of the results. I agree not to reveal the results of the focus group discussions and to respect the confidentiality of the individuals concerned.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Participant

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Researcher

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

##### CONSENT FORM TWO

I grant my permission to Paulette C. Tremblay to use anonymous extracts of my comments in written form.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Participant

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Researcher

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

**APPENDIX B****QUASI-FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR LEARNERS**

1. What kinds of things do you enjoy doing in your spare time?
2. What kinds of previous experiences have you had with life skills, computer skills, and academic skills? What courses are you working on in academics?
3. What did you think about this phase of the program?
4. What parts of the program did you find most meaningful? What did you like most?
5. What kinds of things at the school and in the classes helped you learn and understand the content?
6. How would you describe your interactions with other learners?...the instructors?...the administrative staff?
7. What kinds of things at GRPI and in the classes made you feel comfortable?
8. What made learning an enjoyable experience?
9. Describe how you have changed as a result of your learning experiences?
10. As a result of this program, in what areas do you think you have grown or made improvements?
11. What have you learned to do that will make it easier to find a job?...to keep a job?
12. What kind of work would you like to do in the future?
13. Describe whether you are ready to apply for the work that you wish to pursue?
14. What metaphor, image, or symbol would you use to describe the learning environment at the GRPI.
15. What does success mean to you? What made the program a successful experience?

**APPENDIX C****LEARNER BACKGROUND QUESTIONNAIRE**

Please read the questions listed below and write the answers in the spaces provided.

BAND:\_\_\_\_\_ CLAN:\_\_\_\_\_ SEX:\_\_\_\_\_ AGE:\_\_\_\_\_

MARITAL STATUS:\_\_\_\_\_ NUMBER OF DEPENDENTS/  
CHILDREN:\_\_\_\_\_

1. What was the last grade at school that you completed?
2. Why did you leave school?
3. List any courses or any type of training that you have taken since you have left school.
4. List the jobs or work experience that you have had since you have left school.
5. Why did you decide to attend the Employment Preparation Program?
6. What goals have you set for yourself while participating in this program?
7. Is this program what you expected it to be? Are you learning the things that you wanted to learn?
8. Are you enjoying the time that you are spending in the program? Please explain why.
9. So far, what do you like most about the program?
10. What would you change to make the program better?
11. What do you plan to do after you finish this phase of the program?

**APPENDIX D****INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR PROGRAM STAFF**

1. What is your job/role at GRPI? Explain your responsibilities and job functions. Explain things you do to support the Employment Preparation Program. How long have you performed these functions?
2. Describe your perceptions of the reputations of the GRPI and the Employment Preparation Program.
3. Describe your relationships with administrative staff, instructors, and learners.
4. How would you describe the atmosphere at GRPI?
5. Describe how you work with other community agencies in relation to the Employment Preparation Program.
6. In relation to the Employment Preparation Program:
  - a. How are learners recruited?
  - b. What are the entry criteria for learners?
  - c. Describe the tests used to determine learner entry levels in reading, writing, and math. Are these tests suitable for program requirements?
7. With respect to the Employment Preparation learners:
  - a. Describe typical characteristics of learners who participate in the program.
  - b. Describe the instructional methods used to facilitate the learning of adults. How do they learn best?
  - c. Describe the kind of climate you try to establish for learners and their response to that climate.
  - d. What classroom experience seems to be most relevant for learners?
  - e. Describe the evaluations or review process used to determine how well each learner is performing.
  - f. Describe the achievement levels of learners in your classes for levels 1 and 3.
  - g. Describe the knowledge/skill areas in which learners seem to grow the most or improve the most.
  - h. How many learners in levels 1 and 3 received credit for successful completion of the program level?
  - i. Describe how level 3 learners performed in their workplace assignments. How were learners described by their work supervisors?
  - j. Are learners ready for employment by the time they complete level 3 of the program? Explain why.
  - k. What are the next steps for learners?
8. Describe the factors that make the Employment Preparation Program a positive learning experience for learners and a successful community program.
9. Describe ways that the Employment Preparation Program could be improved.
10. Why do you like working at the GRPI?

## APPENDIX E

## EDUCATIONAL CLIMATE DIMENSIONS, COMPONENTS, AND ELEMENTS

| Learner Milieu                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           | Instructional Environment                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | Social Environment                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | Cultural Environment                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       | Learner Outcomes                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <u>Demographic Data</u><br><br>gender<br>age<br>marital status<br># of children<br>ethnicity<br>socioeconomic status<br><br><u>Prior Knowledge &amp; Experience</u><br><br>grade completed<br>why left school<br>courses/training taken<br>job/work experience<br><br><u>Reasons for Attending Program</u><br><br><u>Learning</u><br>expectations<br>goals<br>interests<br>academics<br>attitude<br>helped learn content | <u>Objectives</u><br>class & content<br><br><u>Curriculum</u><br>content of courses<br><br><u>Directions</u><br>instructions<br>assignments<br><br><u>Task</u><br>learner<br>commitment<br>meets deadlines<br>works in class<br><br><u>Methods</u><br>lecture<br>inquiry<br>give information<br>explanation<br>video<br><br><u>Feedback</u><br>reinforcement<br>praise<br><br><u>Evaluation</u><br>assessment of<br>learner progress<br><br><u>Application</u><br>doing<br>practising<br>using knowledge/skills<br>in practical or<br>new situations<br>apply what is<br>learned<br><br><u>Involvement</u><br>active participation<br>listening<br>respect views of others<br>discusses<br>shares ideas<br>pays attention<br>stays on task<br>asks questions<br>reads aloud | <u>Communication Patterns</u><br><br>Instructor-Class<br>Instructor-Learner<br>Learner-Class<br>Learner-Instructor<br>Learner-Learner<br><br><u>Types of Communication</u><br><br>Asking a question<br>Providing a response<br>Making a comment<br><br><u>Social Relations</u><br><br>friendly<br>smiling<br>approachable<br>available<br>receptive to problems<br>& concerns<br>get along with people | <u>Program Values</u><br><br>openness<br>non-threatening<br>able to take risks<br>able to make mistakes<br>promote importance of<br>learning & doing well<br>warm & comfortable<br>atmosphere<br>rules applied with<br>consistency<br>holistic approach<br>deal with real life<br>concerns<br>informal<br>challenging<br>fun & enjoyable<br>humour<br><br><u>Cooperative Emphasis</u><br><br>helping each other<br><br><u>Collaboration</u><br><br>learner centred<br>focus on needs of<br>learner<br>trust<br>sharing responsibility<br>shared decision making<br>work together<br><br><u>Supportiveness</u><br><br>caring<br>encourage<br>listen<br>appreciate feelings<br>accepting<br><br><u>Respect</u><br><br>trust<br>treat with dignity<br>genuine | <u>Academic Achievement</u><br><br>successful<br>performance<br>in different<br>content areas<br><br><u>Improved Skills</u><br><br>communication<br>thinking<br>learning<br>problem solving<br>assertiveness<br>making decisions<br>resolving conflict<br><br><u>Personal Management Skills</u><br><br>responsibility<br>being on time<br>attendance<br>reliability<br>adaptability<br><br><u>Team Skills</u><br><br>work well with<br>others<br><br><u>Personal Growth</u><br><br>self-esteem<br>self-confidence<br>positive attitude<br>life long learning<br>setting realistic<br>goals<br>new perspectives<br><br><u>Future Goals</u><br><br>next steps |

## APPENDIX F

**EDUCATIONAL CLIMATE CODING GRID**  
**COMPARISON OF MEANING UNITS BY DIMENSIONS AND**  
**COMPONENTS ACROSS METHODOLOGIES AND FRAMEWORKS**

Meaning units were chunks of information taken from tape recorded responses and observation notes. They were then classified by component and dimension and compared across methodologies and the frameworks of andragogy, proficiency, and whole language. The coding grid has five columns which include: (1) the meaning units which are classified by dimension and component; (2) the observations of the researcher, (3) the quasi-focus group interview responses of the learners; (4) the interview responses of the program staff; and (5) the three frameworks of andragogy, proficiency, and whole language. When participant responses have been provided for a meaning unit, a star is placed in the appropriate cell. The abbreviated terms are explained in the key.

**KEY:** OB = Observations by researcher  
 FG = Quasi-focus group interview responses of learners  
 L1 = Level one learners  
 L3 = Level three learners  
 IS = Individual interview responses of program staff  
 FW = Conceptual frameworks which provide tenets of effective practice regarding the meaning unit  
 AN = Andragogy  
 PR = Proficiency  
 WL = Whole Language

| 1. DIMENSIONS, COMPONENTS,<br>& MEANING UNITS   | OB |    | FG |    | IS | FW |    |    |
|-------------------------------------------------|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|
|                                                 | L1 | L3 | L1 | L3 |    | AN | PR | WL |
| <b>Cultural Dimension - Values Component</b>    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |
| 1. comfortable learning environment             | *  | *  | *  | *  | *  | *  | *  | *  |
| 2. relaxed, casual, at ease, informal           | *  |    |    |    | *  | *  | *  | *  |
| 3. take risks, make mistakes, nonthreatening    | *  | *  | *  | *  | *  | *  | *  | *  |
| 4. fun, enjoyable, happy (place & other people) | *  | *  | *  | *  | *  |    |    | *  |
| 5. use of humour                                | *  | *  |    |    |    |    |    |    |
| 6. holistic                                     | *  | *  |    |    | *  | *  | *  | *  |
| 7. open, warm atmosphere                        | *  | *  | *  | *  | *  | *  | *  | *  |
| 8. easy to learn                                | *  | *  | *  | *  | *  | *  |    |    |
| 9. focused on real life concerns                | *  | *  | *  | *  | *  | *  | *  | *  |
| 10. liked being with other Natives              |    |    | *  | *  | *  |    |    |    |

## APPENDIX F

| 2. DIMENSIONS, COMPONENTS,<br>& MEANING UNITS                        | OB |    | FG |    | IS | FW |    |    |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|
|                                                                      | L1 | L3 | L1 | L3 |    | AN | PR | WL |
| <b>Cultural Dimension - Values Component</b>                         |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |
| 11. treated like real people, more human                             |    |    | *  | *  | *  | *  |    |    |
| 12. positive                                                         |    |    | *  |    | *  |    |    |    |
| 13. equality                                                         |    |    |    |    | *  |    |    |    |
| 14. philosophy of empowerment, responsibility & decision making      | *  | *  | *  | *  | *  | *  | *  | *  |
| 15. commitment & dedication of staff                                 | *  | *  |    |    | *  |    |    |    |
| 16. flexibility                                                      | *  | *  |    |    | *  | *  |    |    |
| 17. provide opportunity for success                                  |    |    | *  | *  | *  |    |    |    |
| 18. challenging                                                      |    |    |    |    | *  |    | *  |    |
| 19. promoted importance of learning & doing well                     |    |    | *  |    | *  | *  | *  | *  |
| <b>Cultural Dimension - Cooperation Component</b>                    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |
| 20. willingly helped each other                                      | *  | *  | *  | *  | *  |    |    | *  |
| 21. interacting to solve problems, discuss issues & complete tasks   | *  | *  | *  | *  | *  | *  | *  | *  |
| 22. asked for help when needed (clarification, directions, spelling) | *  | *  | *  | *  | *  |    |    |    |
| 23. knew where to go for help                                        |    |    | *  | *  |    |    |    |    |
| 24. instructors provided individual assistance as required           | *  | *  | *  | *  |    |    |    |    |
| 25. staff worked well together                                       | *  | *  |    |    | *  |    |    |    |
| 26. everybody is helpful                                             | *  | *  | *  | *  | *  | *  |    | *  |
| <b>Cultural Dimension - Supportiveness Component</b>                 |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |
| 27. caring                                                           | *  | *  | *  | *  | *  |    |    |    |
| 28. encouraging                                                      | *  | *  | *  |    | *  |    | *  | *  |
| 29. accepting                                                        | *  | *  | *  | *  | *  | *  |    | *  |

## APPENDIX F

| 3. DIMENSIONS, COMPONENTS,<br>& MEANING UNITS         | OB |    | FG |    | IS | FW |    |    |
|-------------------------------------------------------|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|
|                                                       | L1 | L3 | L1 | L3 |    | AN | PR | WL |
| <b>Cultural Dimension - Respect Component</b>         |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |
| 30. genuine                                           | *  | *  |    |    |    | *  | *  | *  |
| 31. trusting                                          | *  | *  |    |    | *  | *  | *  | *  |
| <b>Cultural Dimension - Collaboration Component</b>   |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |
| 32. learner centred                                   |    |    |    |    | *  | *  | *  | *  |
| 33. focus on needs of learner                         | *  | *  |    |    | *  | *  | *  | *  |
| 34. shared responsibility                             |    |    |    |    | *  | *  | *  | *  |
| 35. shared decision making                            |    |    |    |    | *  | *  | *  | *  |
| 36. work together                                     | *  | *  | *  | *  | *  | *  | *  | *  |
| 37. could do things your own way                      |    |    |    | *  | *  |    |    |    |
| 38. learn at own pace                                 | *  | *  |    | *  | *  |    |    |    |
| <b>Social Dimension - Social Relations Component</b>  |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |
| 39. smiling                                           | *  | *  | *  |    | *  |    |    |    |
| 40. friendly                                          | *  | *  | *  | *  | *  | *  | *  | *  |
| 41. approachable                                      |    |    | *  | *  | *  |    | *  |    |
| 42. available                                         |    |    | *  |    | *  |    | *  |    |
| 43. easier to talk                                    |    |    | *  | *  | *  |    |    |    |
| 44. receptive to problems and concerns                |    |    | *  |    | *  |    |    |    |
| 45. everybody talks to each other, interactive        | *  | *  | *  | *  | *  | *  | *  | *  |
| 46. honest with each other                            |    |    | *  |    | *  |    |    |    |
| 47. get along with everyone, good rapport             | *  | *  | *  | *  | *  |    |    |    |
| <b>Instructional Dimension - Curriculum Component</b> |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |
| 48. enjoy computer classes                            |    |    | *  | *  |    |    |    |    |
| 49. enjoy Native Perspectives                         |    |    | *  | *  |    |    |    |    |
| 50. enjoy life skills                                 |    |    | *  | *  |    |    |    |    |
| 51. enjoy work placements                             |    |    |    | *  | *  |    |    |    |

## APPENDIX F

| 4. DIMENSIONS, COMPONENTS,<br>& MEANING UNITS                 | OB |    | FG |    | IS | FW |    |    |
|---------------------------------------------------------------|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|
|                                                               | L1 | L3 | L1 | L3 |    | AN | PR | WL |
| <b>Instructional Dimension - Curriculum Component</b>         |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |
| 52. content meaningful                                        |    |    | *  | *  |    | *  | *  | *  |
| 53. content relevant to life and learning needs               | *  | *  | *  | *  | *  | *  | *  | *  |
| <b>Instructional Dimension - Feedback Component</b>           |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |
| 54. reinforcement                                             | *  | *  |    |    | *  |    |    |    |
| 55. praise & helpful comments                                 | *  | *  | *  | *  | *  | *  | *  | *  |
| <b>Instructional Dimension - Evaluation Component</b>         |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |
| 56. check progress regularly                                  | *  | *  |    |    | *  | *  | *  | *  |
| 57. interim reports                                           | *  | *  |    |    | *  |    |    |    |
| 58. step plans                                                |    |    |    |    | *  |    |    |    |
| 59. portfolios                                                |    | *  |    | *  |    |    |    |    |
| <b>Instructional Dimension - Involvement Component</b>        |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |
| 60. active participation in class activities                  | *  | *  | *  | *  | *  | *  | *  | *  |
| 61. careful listening                                         | *  | *  |    | *  |    |    |    |    |
| 62. opportunity to share & discuss ideas                      | *  | *  | *  | *  | *  | *  | *  | *  |
| 63. ask questions, active inquiry                             | *  | *  | *  | *  | *  | *  | *  | *  |
| 64. respect for views of others                               |    |    |    | *  | *  |    |    |    |
| 65. read aloud                                                | *  | *  |    |    |    |    |    | *  |
| <b>Instructional Dimension - Application Component</b>        |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |
| 66. doing everything                                          | *  | *  | *  |    | *  |    |    |    |
| 67. practice                                                  | *  | *  | *  |    | *  | *  | *  | *  |
| 68. use knowledge/skill in practical or new situation         | *  | *  | *  | *  | *  | *  | *  | *  |
| <b>Learner Outcomes Dimension - Personal Growth Component</b> |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |
| 69. control emotions                                          |    |    | *  | *  |    |    |    |    |
| 70. learned about myself                                      |    |    | *  | *  |    |    |    |    |

## APPENDIX F

| 5. DIMENSIONS, COMPONENTS,<br>& MEANING UNITS                 | OB |    | FG |    | IS | FW |    |    |
|---------------------------------------------------------------|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|
|                                                               | L1 | L3 | L1 | L3 |    | AN | PR | WL |
| <b>Learner Outcomes Dimension - Personal Growth Component</b> |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |
| 71. learned about feelings                                    |    |    | *  |    |    |    |    |    |
| 72. realized importance of learning & want to learn more      | *  | *  | *  | *  | *  | *  | *  | *  |
| 73. get along with people better                              |    |    | *  | *  |    |    |    |    |
| 74. changed attitude, view things more positively             |    |    | *  | *  | *  |    |    |    |
| 75. feel better about self                                    |    |    | *  | *  | *  |    |    |    |
| 76. more self-esteem & self-confidence                        | *  | *  | *  | *  | *  |    |    | *  |
| 77. know how to set goals                                     |    |    |    | *  | *  | *  | *  |    |
| 78. more responsible                                          |    |    |    | *  |    |    |    |    |
| 79. more outgoing                                             |    |    | *  | *  |    |    |    |    |
| 80. handle situations in and outside home better              |    |    | *  | *  |    |    |    |    |
| 81. new perspectives                                          |    |    | *  | *  | *  |    |    |    |
| <b>Learner Outcomes - General Skills Component</b>            |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |
| 82. better able to communicate                                | *  | *  | *  | *  | *  |    |    |    |
| 83. more assertive                                            | *  | *  | *  | *  | *  |    |    |    |
| 84. make presentations                                        |    |    | *  |    |    |    |    |    |
| 85. respect views of others                                   |    |    |    | *  | *  |    |    |    |
| 86. recognize differences                                     |    |    |    | *  |    |    |    |    |
| 87. resolve conflicts                                         |    |    |    | *  |    |    |    |    |
| 88. make decisions                                            |    |    |    | *  | *  |    |    |    |
| <b>learner Outcomes - Achievement Component</b>               |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |
| 89. computer skills                                           |    |    | *  | *  | *  |    |    |    |
| 90. career plans                                              |    |    |    | *  | *  |    |    |    |
| 91. personal portfolio                                        |    | *  |    | *  | *  |    |    |    |

## APPENDIX G

**EDUCATIONAL CLIMATE CODING GRID**  
**MEANING UNITS BY DIMENSIONS & COMPONENTS WITH**  
**EXAMPLES OF DIRECT QUOTES FROM PARTICIPANTS**

| 1. DIMENSIONS,<br>COMPONENTS,<br>& MEANING UNITS                                        | EXAMPLES OF DIRECT QUOTES                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Cultural Dimension - Values Component</b><br><br>1. comfortable learning environment | <p>OB - Very comfortable atmosphere was noted. Background classical music was played quietly to stimulate the brain (OB32,1).</p> <p>FGL1 - I feel fairly comfortable now (L1-6,28).</p> <p>FGL3 - They made you feel comfortable (L3-5,5-6).</p> <p>IS - I try to make the learning environment as comfortable as I can (I17,42-43).</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| 2. relaxed, casual, at ease, informal                                                   | <p>OB - The learning atmosphere was warm and relaxed with learners working in pairs (OB25,19).</p> <p>IS - This is my home away from home. It's a very relaxed atmosphere (I7,17-18).</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| 3. take risks, make mistakes, nonthreatening                                            | <p>OB - The role play enacted between a learner and the coach demonstrated that the learning environment was perceived as nonthreatening. Learners felt that they could take risks (OB195,19).</p> <p>FGL1 - Before, I would sit in class and just try to do the work. Now, I'm not afraid to ask questions during the lesson. I can say, 'I don't know what you mean, can you explain it to me' (L1-5,10-12).</p> <p>FGL3 - I was afraid to talk and ask questions. I felt stupid speaking up in class. Now, I find it easy to talk and I don't feel funny asking questions (L3-5,7-10).</p> <p>IS - Here, you are allowed to make mistakes (S22,14).</p> |
| 4. fun, enjoyable, happy (place & other people)                                         | <p>OB - It has been suggested by several staff members that learning should be fun and enjoyable (J3,17-20).</p> <p>FGL1 - Being friends with everybody does make you happy. You enjoy coming to this place (L1-8,34-35).</p> <p>FGL3 - I enjoyed my time here. I'm not a stranger or an outcast (L3-11,2-3).</p> <p>IS - I enjoy my job and the people I work with (S22, 9-10).</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |

## APPENDIX G

| 2. DIMENSIONS,<br>COMPONENTS,<br>& MEANING UNITS | EXAMPLES OF DIRECT QUOTES                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
|--------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Cultural Dimension - Values Component</b>     |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| 5. use of humour                                 | OB - There is a great deal of humour used by program staff and learners (J3,15-16).                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| 6. holistic                                      | <p>OB - The school staff is considerate of the whole person in the learning environment. They hold social and career events and have a counsellor on site daily. Learners and staff have access to the lunch room (J27,7-10).</p> <p>IS - I try to use a holistic approach so that people can see a full picture. They are then able to make their own choices (I21, 31-32).</p>                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| 7. open, warm atmosphere                         | <p>OB - The openness and rapport that exists between the instructor and learners demonstrated the respect and high level of trust that has developed between them (J37,8-14).</p> <p>FGL1 - The program was successful because of the warm feelings of the teachers and classmates (L1-13,16).</p> <p>FGL3 - I find that the atmosphere is more open here (L3-7,8).</p> <p>IS - The atmosphere is very open here (I7,18).</p>                                                                                                                                              |
| 8. easy to learn                                 | <p>OB - It is easy to learn in this environment because the instructors use a variety of methods in the classroom. They provide relevant examples and promote active participation in activities. Learners are encouraged to share their views (J45,18-25).</p> <p>FGL1 - It's so much easier to learn here (L1-9,18).</p> <p>FGL3 - The instructor's attitude towards you and their job really makes a difference in learning. It is easy to learn with the support of the instructors (P3-5,1-2).</p> <p>IS - This is a place where you really can learn (I7,10-11).</p> |
| 9. focused on real life concerns                 | <p>OB - Since some learners found it difficult to be on time for class, time was spent brainstorming ways for learners to be on time. This illustrates the concern for real life issues (OB150,23).</p> <p>FGL1 -The program has helped me find out what I want to do in school and how to be better with my children (P1-3,16-17).</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |

## APPENDIX G

| 3. DIMENSIONS,<br>COMPONENTS,<br>& MEANING UNITS                                     | EXAMPLES OF DIRECT QUOTES                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Cultural Dimension - Values Component</b><br><br>9. focused on real life concerns | <p>FGL3 - We had to go out into the community and do a work placement. You are able to find out what you want to do or what you don't want to do.</p> <p>IS - If they can't see how they are going to use the information in the real world, then they can't see the sense in doing it (S19,10-11).</p>                                                                                                                                                 |
| 10. liked being with other Natives                                                   | <p>FGL1 - I felt comfortable because we're all Native here (L1-8,27).</p> <p>FGL3 - I was able to learn because you're in an environment where you're not the only Native in class (L3-5,11).</p> <p>IS - It's all Native here. There's a big difference...By coming here, they have access to the same knowledge base in the community, plus they get the support. Learning is explained in a way that they are used to hearing (I10,43-45).</p>       |
| 11. treated like real people, more human                                             | <p>FGL1 - It seems that the instructors care about you as a person. They're not just here to do a job. They want to help you (L1-7,11-12).</p> <p>FGL3 - The instructors made you feel like a real being, not like somebody who doesn't know anything or isn't educated, That helped me (L3-4,25-26).</p> <p>IS - I try to make the class more human...The human factor weighs higher in our culture than it would in other environments (I17,7-9).</p> |
| 12. positive                                                                         | <p>FGL1 - The program was a successful experience because I look at the world more positively now (L1-13,13).</p> <p>IS - The feedback from the people who have been in the program is very positive...Even those who chose not to finish were very pleased and positive about what's going on here (I3,42-44).</p>                                                                                                                                     |
| 13. equality                                                                         | <p>IS - The equality value where no-one is better than anyone else is important here (S9,33-34).</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| 14. philosophy of empowerment, responsibility & decision making                      | <p>OB - Learners were responsible for making decisions about their academic courses, work placements, and many class assignments (J62,24-27).</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |

## APPENDIX G

| 4. DIMENSIONS,<br>COMPONENTS,<br>& MEANING UNITS                                                                               | EXAMPLES OF DIRECT QUOTES                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p><b>Cultural Dimension - Values Component</b></p> <p>14. philosophy of empowerment, responsibility &amp; decision making</p> | <p>FGL1- Now, I make choices when someone asks me to do something. Before, I used to miss school to do things for other people. Now, I think it's more important to go to school (L1-9,3-6).</p> <p>FGL3- I've learned how to be more responsible. I go to school and I don't skip classes. That's a bad habit which is hard to break. I don't sleep in now. I've learned to care more about my future in relation to school, a job, and myself (L3-7,1-3).</p> <p>IS - The more you empower people, the more they take responsibility for the organization and the more the organization becomes part of them...The more you empower staff, the more they empower the students and the students empower themselves (S10,25-30).</p> |
| <p>15. commitment &amp; dedication of staff</p>                                                                                | <p>OB - The staff devoted many extra hours outside of the classroom to work with the learners. In addition, they held extra-curricular activities for the learners (J66,1-3).</p> <p>IS - The staff is committed and dedicated. They work many extra hours (S10,23-24).</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| <p>16. flexibility</p>                                                                                                         | <p>OB - The instructor was very flexible in the classroom. When appropriate suggestions were presented by learners, these were accepted and implemented immediately (OB11,6-7).</p> <p>IS - We are very adaptable and flexible in the class (I16,15-16).</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| <p>17. provide opportunity for success</p>                                                                                     | <p>FGL1 -I thought that I was successful because I was able to finish what I set out to do (L1-13,2).</p> <p>FGL3 - The program was a successful experience because I was able to achieve one goal after another (L3-10,23-24).</p> <p>IS - Learners have to feel and experience success first, then they can be taken from where they are to the next step in the learning process (S18,21).</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| <p>18. challenging</p>                                                                                                         | <p>IS - Once learners have accomplished success, they develop self-esteem and then they can start working on the harder challenges in the program (S19,5-7).</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |

## APPENDIX G

| 5. DIMENSIONS,<br>COMPONENTS,<br>& MEANING UNITS                                                     | EXAMPLES OF DIRECT QUOTES                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Cultural Dimension - Values Component</b><br><br>19. promoted importance of learning & doing well | FGL1 - I like how everyone wants people to learn and start new things (P1-3,37).<br><br>IS - Once the students learn the basics in computers, I expect them to pick an area of interest to enhance (I15,40-44).                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| <b>Cultural Dimension - Cooperation Component</b><br><br>20. willingly helped each other             | OB - Learners helped each other with spelling and asked each other questions while working (OB24,3).<br><br>FGL1 - The program was a successful experience due to the way that everyone worked together as a group to help solve a problem (L1-13,8-9).<br><br>FGL3 - There was always somebody willing to help me when I needed it (L3-5,17-18).<br><br>IS - I like the kind of people in this environment. They are committed to helping others (S21,24-25).                                                                      |
| 21. interacting to solve problems, discuss issues & complete tasks                                   | OB - Interaction between the instructor and learners was observed repeatedly during this class. Learners were finding ways to reinforce positive thinking (OB52,33-35).<br><br>FGL1 - I get a lot out of the classes because we are always sharing ideas or sharing something (L1-9,33-34).<br><br>FGL3 - I found the interactions that took place among the students in the life skills classes very meaningful (L3-4,14).<br><br>IS - In this environment, we share ideas and help each other (S10,32-33).                        |
| 22. asked for help when needed                                                                       | OB - During classes, it is common for the learners to ask each other and the instructor for help when they need it (J8,10-11).<br><br>FGL1 - I really feel comfortable here because if you ask a question or say something, no one says, "what did she ask that for?" No one says anything (L1-8,25-26).<br><br>FGL3 - I have learned how to ask questions when you don't know how to do something (L3-8,5).<br><br>IS - I encourage students to ask questions when they need help and they can talk with me after class (I17,5-6). |

## APPENDIX G

| 6. DIMENSIONS,<br>COMPONENTS,<br>& MEANING UNITS          | EXAMPLES OF DIRECT QUOTES                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
|-----------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Cultural Dimension -<br/>Cooperation Component</b>     | FGL1 - The instructors are really friendly and helpful. If you want to know something, they'll take the time and talk with you (L1-7,19-21).                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| 23. knew where to go for help                             | FGL3 - I knew where to get help if I needed it (L3-6,2).                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| 24. instructors provide individual assistance as required | <p>OB - The instructor worked with the learner to help find an appropriate solution to the problem (J7,16-19).</p> <p>FGL1 - The instructor showed me how to do it but I still didn't understand. So I asked him to explain it again. He then showed me again by drawing a diagram on the board (L1-6,15-20).</p> <p>FGL3 - The program was a successful experience because the instructors were there to help me (L3-10,15).</p> |
| 25. staff worked well together                            | <p>OB - The Life Skills instructor and the counsellor worked together as a team to conduct formal interviews with each learner regarding their interim report (J60,7-11).</p> <p>IS - We all work as a team (S10,35). We all get along really well (S12,16).</p>                                                                                                                                                                  |
| 26. everybody is helpful                                  | <p>OB - Staff members helped the learners and each other as required (J50,27-29).</p> <p>FGL1 - If someone is having a hard time with something, someone will help (L1-4,36-37).</p> <p>FGL3 - I find that the instructors here are very helpful (P3-5,6-7).</p> <p>IS - It doesn't matter what I ask for, people are willing to help me out (I5,20-23).</p>                                                                      |
| <b>Cultural Dimension -<br/>Supportiveness Component</b>  | OB - Instructors provide a learning environment which is warm, nurturing, and caring (J40,6-7).                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| 27. caring                                                | <p>FGL1 - The instructors care about you as a person (L1-7,33).</p> <p>FGL3 - The instructors talked to you, not down to you (L3-4,16).</p> <p>IS - I've got the support and care of people here while I do my job (I25,31-32).</p>                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| 28. encouraging                                           | OB - The instructor encouraged learners by providing positive comments. She told the learners that she valued every minute that she had with them, that it was very important (OB41,26-27).                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |

## APPENDIX G

| 7. DIMENSIONS,<br>COMPONENTS,<br>& MEANING UNITS         | EXAMPLES OF DIRECT QUOTES                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
|----------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Cultural Dimension -<br/>Supportiveness Component</b> | FGL1 - The instructor didn't say that I had to do it, but, she gave me reasons why I should (L1-9,11-12).                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| 28. encouraging                                          | IS - People here are very encouraging (I25,35).                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| 29. accepting                                            | <p>OB - To avoid missing class, a learner had to bring her three year old to class. This was totally accepted by everyone (OB119-20-21).</p> <p>FGL1 - Instructors don't try to push you into anything, you make the choice and the instructors accept your decision (L1-9,12-13).</p> <p>FGL3 - Instructors don't put pressure on you (L3-4,22). They help because they let you be yourself (L3-5,5).</p> <p>IS - The accepting atmosphere makes the experience a positive one (S18,12).</p> |
| <b>Cultural Dimension - Respect<br/>Component</b>        | OB - Staff in the learning environment were genuinely interested in the needs of the learners. Learners were asked to elect a representative to keep staff informed of learner requirements (J65,1-10).                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| 30. genuine                                              |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| 31. trusting                                             | <p>OB - The tone of the class was warm, respectful and trusting (OB269,1).</p> <p>IS - I don't have a lot of interference. That says to me that they trust what I'm doing. They trust that I am a capable individual (I4,31-33).</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| <b>Cultural Dimension -<br/>Collaboration Component</b>  | IS - We teach the participants to use their own abilities, their own skills, their own ideas to get what they want. We empower them to make of their lives, what they will (S18,15-17).                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| 32. learner centred                                      |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| 33. focus on the needs of learner                        | <p>OB - Instructors in the program work very hard to accommodate the needs of the learners. The instructor willingly reviewed the learner's request to revise the work agreement forms at the request of the learner (J37,16-25).</p> <p>IS - Individuals determine their needs and then we help them fulfill them (S14,27-28).</p>                                                                                                                                                           |
| 34. shared responsibility                                | IS - If something needs to be changed, the staff know that they have the responsibility to go with it (S11,19-20).                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |

## APPENDIX G

| 8. DIMENSIONS,<br>COMPONENTS,<br>& MEANING UNITS         | EXAMPLES OF DIRECT QUOTES                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
|----------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Cultural Dimension -<br/>Supportiveness Component</b> |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| 35. shared decision making                               | IS - I respect their freedom of choice. I don't tell participants what direction to take (I22,14-16).                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| 36. work together                                        | <p>OB - The instructor worked with the learners to find ways in which they could become more committed to their work placements (OB209,2-3).</p> <p>FGL1 - Here, you do everything. We do it together, the class does it (L1-6,1-2).</p> <p>FGL3 - The group discussions and working together have helped me become more outgoing (L3-6,27-28).</p> <p>IS - Staff work together to help in whatever way they can...If somebody needs to be here in the evening to lock up, every one of them will volunteer (S10,13-14).</p> |
| 37. could do things your own way                         | <p>FGL3 - I do not want somebody to control me, give me orders, or tell me that this is the way that something is to be done. Instructors acknowledge that there are many ways to do things and they let you decide (L3-4,18-21).</p> <p>IS - Each instructor has control over what is included in the curriculum in their area...Polytech is very trusting and they trust that we are all professionals (I12,6-9).</p>                                                                                                      |
| 38. learn at your own pace                               | <p>OB - Learners in the academic class work on the correspondence course work at their own pace (J21,1-2).</p> <p>FGL3 - They let you work at your own pace (L3-4,22).</p> <p>IS - Instructors have the flexibility to work with people individually at their own pace so they can be successful (S19,3-5).</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| <b>Social Dimension - Social<br/>Relations Component</b> |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| 39. smiling                                              | <p>OB - Learners were observed laughing and smiling while engaged in classroom discussion (OB49,26-27).</p> <p>FGL1 - Staff are always smiling and they come right out and talk to you (L1-8,10-11).</p> <p>IS - I reinforce the importance of smiling and saying hello to everybody (I21,28-29).</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |

## APPENDIX G

| 9. DIMENSIONS,<br>COMPONENTS,<br>& MEANING UNITS                         | EXAMPLES OF DIRECT QUOTES                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
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| <b>Social Dimension - Social Relations Component</b><br><br>40. friendly | <p>OB - Staff and learners in the program are friendly and approachable (J3,23-24).</p> <p>FGL1 - People are very friendly and you can say just about anything you want to (L1-6,36-37).</p> <p>FGL3 - Instructors and staff are approachable, friendly, and outgoing (L3-6,1).</p> <p>IS - I try to establish a friendly climate (I17,4).</p> |
| 41. approachable                                                         | <p>FGL1 - The instructor told me that if I was having problems that he would be available to help after class. I went and we worked until eight o'clock (L1-8,2-4).</p> <p>FGL3 - Instructors and staff were approachable and friendly (L3-6,1).</p> <p>IS - I let them know that they can come to me if they have problems (S12,20-21).</p>   |
| 42. available                                                            | <p>FGL1 - Staff members will stop whatever they're doing to talk to you or to help you (L1-8,17-18).</p> <p>IS - My door is open so that people feel that they can just walk in (S13,12-13).</p>                                                                                                                                               |
| 43. easier to talk                                                       | <p>FGL1 - I find it really easy to talk to the coaches (L1-7,15).</p> <p>FGL3 - You can talk with people (L3-5,13).</p> <p>IS - Students feel comfortable coming in and talking to me (S12,33-34).</p>                                                                                                                                         |
| 44. receptive to problems & concerns                                     | <p>FGL3 - You can talk to the instructors and tell them anything - personal problems. They try to help you as much as they can (L1-7,22-24).</p> <p>IS - In this atmosphere, we are much more able to share personal things with people (I6,22-23).</p>                                                                                        |
| 45. everybody talks to each other, interactive                           | <p>OB - Throughout the observation period, learners had ample opportunity to share and discuss ideas in the classroom context (J60,12-17).</p> <p>FGL1 - Everybody talks to each other (L1-7,7).</p>                                                                                                                                           |

## APPENDIX G

| 10. DIMENSIONS,<br>COMPONENTS,<br>& MEANING UNITS     | EXAMPLES OF DIRECT QUOTES                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
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| <b>Social Dimension - Social Relations Component</b>  |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| 45. everybody talks to each other, interactive        | FGL3 - I like all the staff. I could talk to everyone of them (L3-6,7).<br><br>IS - Everybody talks to everybody instead of letting someone sit back and be an outsider (S13,10-11).                                                                                                                                                     |
| 46. honest with each other                            | FGL1 - Everybody is pretty open and honest with each other. I really like that (L1-7,8-9).<br><br>IS - Everybody comes to work on an even keel so our relationship is very friendly, very honest, and functional - we get things done (I6,3-5).                                                                                          |
| 47. get along with everyone, good rapport             | OB - Learners got along really well with each other. There was a lot of laughter and sharing in the class (OB182,19-20).<br><br>FGL1 - I get along with the people here (L1-7,13-14).<br><br>FGL3 - I get along with everyone really well (L3-5,15).<br><br>IS - I feel there is good rapport here...I get along with everyone (S12,35). |
| <b>Instructional Dimension - Curriculum Component</b> |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| 48. enjoy computer classes                            | FGL1 - I like the computer part of this program (P1-3,33).<br><br>FGL3 - I like the computers and being introduced to the Macintosh environment (P3-6,11-12).                                                                                                                                                                            |
| 49. enjoy Native Perspectives                         | FGL1 - I like Native Perspectives (P1-3,36).<br><br>FGL3 - I found the Native Perspectives classes to be the most meaningful (L3-4,3).                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| 50. enjoy Life Skills                                 | FGL1 - I found Life Skills most meaningful (L1-5,7).<br><br>FGL3 - I found Life Skills and how to approach everything most helpful (L3-8, 2).                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| 51. enjoy work placements                             | FGL3 - I like the work placement. It helps you figure out if that type of job is what you really want to do (P3-6,6-7).<br><br>IS - People are finding the work placements very useful because they find out what they like and don't like (S9,17-18).                                                                                   |
| 52. content meaningful                                | FGL1 - At first, I didn't want to do Life Skills, however, I soon realized how much the information was going to help me (L1-4,2-4).                                                                                                                                                                                                     |

## APPENDIX G

| 11. DIMENSIONS,<br>COMPONENTS,<br>& MEANING UNITS                                             | EXAMPLES OF DIRECT QUOTES                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
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| <b>Instructional Dimension -<br/>Curriculum Component</b><br><br>52. content meaningful       | FGL3 - I liked the Native Perspectives classes...They opened my eyes. Now I want to go on and learn a Native language (L3-3,22-25).                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| 53. content relevant to life &<br>learning needs                                              | <p>OB - The content of the Life Skills course which included assertiveness, communication, problem solving, career planning, and goal setting, was relevant to life and the learning needs of the participants (J81,22-24).</p> <p>FGL1 - The Life Skills class has helped with deal with things that are going on in my life (L1-4,40-41).</p> <p>FGL3 - The work placement was a great idea. Even though I don't like journalism, my placement was a great experience (P3-6,2-3).</p> <p>IS - Topics need to be relevant to the daily lives of the participants (I15,36).</p> |
| <b>Instructional Dimension -<br/>Feedback Component</b><br><br>54. reinforcement              | <p>OB - The instructor reinforced learning by providing relevant and meaningful examples which the learners could easily relate to (OB29,7-8).</p> <p>IS - I provide feedback on how learners have done and ask them how they might improve. I often get them to exchange work and give each other feedback (I15,19-21).</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| 55. praise & helpful comments                                                                 | <p>OB - While learners worked in pairs, the instructor provided comments and assistance to each pair (OB307,1-2).</p> <p>FGL1 - The instructors aren't here just for the money. They're here to help you (L1-7,31-32).</p> <p>FGL3 - The instructors were awesome and the feedback from the rest of the group was also very helpful (L3-4,23-24).</p> <p>IS - Instructors work hard at helping the people experience success and a feeling of accomplishment (S18,18-19).</p>                                                                                                   |
| <b>Instructional Dimension -<br/>Evaluation Component</b><br><br>56. check progress regularly | <p>OB - The instructor interacted with learners during and after classes to check their progress and assist their developmental progress (J27,22-25).</p> <p>IS - We have ongoing and regular sharing and assessment of what's happening and what needs to be changed. Everybody inputs to this process (S20,36).</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |

## APPENDIX G

| 12. DIMENSIONS,<br>COMPONENTS,<br>& MEANING UNITS                                                              | EXAMPLES OF DIRECT QUOTES                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
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| <b>Instructional Dimension -<br/>Evaluation Component</b><br><br>57. interim reports                           | <p>OB - Interim reports for the learners were reviewed. Overall, the majority of learners were successful in completing the program (OB366,15-16).</p> <p>IS - We provide written reports and conduct interviews with the participants near the end of each level (I19,33-35).</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| 58. step plans                                                                                                 | <p>IS - As part of the review process, we go over the step plan that people have developed. It lays out how they see themselves progressing in the next year or two (I18,46-49).</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| 59. portfolios                                                                                                 | <p>OB - Learner portfolios were very informative and very well presented (J82,15-16).</p> <p>FGL3 - We had to produce portfolios and write resumes. It was hard work to compile all the information (L3-3,19-21).</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| <b>Instructional Dimension -<br/>Involvement Component</b><br><br>60. active participation in class activities | <p>OB - Learners actively participated in class activities by engaging in discussion, brainstorming, asking questions, and working on individual assignments (J80,18-21).</p> <p>FGL1 - Here, you participate in everything. You do everything and it seems easy. I learn a lot just by participating (L1-9,28-30).</p> <p>FGL3 - I had to produce a portfolio. I had to think it through carefully. It was important to include information that I wanted employers to know about me (L3-7,12-14).</p> <p>IS - In Life Skills, you observe then you practice (S11,7). We encourage active participation and sharing in class activities (I18,27-28).</p> |
| 61. careful listening                                                                                          | <p>OB - The learners listened carefully to the oral presentation of the Longhouse Chief for the entire class (OB98,26-27).</p> <p>FGL3 -In this environment people are willing to listen to you (L3-5,12).</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| 62. opportunity to share & discuss ideas                                                                       | <p>OB - Throughout the observation period, learners had ample opportunity to share and discuss ideas in the classroom context (J60,12-17).</p> <p>FGL1 - It's friendly and people are talkative (L1-9,14-15).</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |

## APPENDIX G

| 13. DIMENSIONS,<br>COMPONENTS,<br>& MEANING UNITS          | EXAMPLES OF DIRECT QUOTES                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
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| <b>Instructional Dimension -<br/>Involvement Component</b> | FGL3 - Group discussions helped me learn to talk more effectively in front of people (L3-5,4).                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| 62. opportunity to share & discuss ideas                   | IS - People interact verbally and share their ideas in classes, this is the best way for people to learn (I16,16-17).                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| 63. ask questions                                          | <p>OB - Learners were asked questions to find ways in which they could become more committed to their work placements (OB156,7-8).</p> <p>FGL1 - Now, I can ask more questions about what is expected (L1-5,30-31).</p> <p>FGL3 - I have learned how to be more open and how to ask questions (L3-8,5).</p> <p>IS - I provide the opportunities for participants to ask questions (I17,4-5).</p> |
| 64. respect for views of others                            | <p>FGL3 - The Native Perspectives classes brought in speakers who represented the different community perspectives. We learned to respect the different viewpoints (L3-4,3-4).</p> <p>IS - I want to feel that people here are going to respect what I'm thinking or feeling (I16,44-45).</p>                                                                                                    |
| 65. read aloud                                             | OB - Learners took turns reading aloud the information about self-esteem assessment in a round robin fashion (OB40,23-24).                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| <b>Instructional Dimension -<br/>Application Component</b> | OB - As a task assignment, learners worked individually to produce portfolios and display them on Career Day (J77,14-16).                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| 66. doing everything                                       | <p>FGL1 - The actual doing part. In high school they would just give us information and we'd have to know it. Here, we get to do it, experience it, and it sticks with you (L1-5,35-38).</p> <p>IS - Hands on doing...Here, we give them hands on computer experience from day one...doing it is far better (I15,14-16).</p>                                                                     |
| 67. practice                                               | <p>OB - Learners took turns practising win scripts using sample situations (OB300,34).</p> <p>FGL1 - Being able to practice what we're learning helps me learn things better (L1-9,31-32).</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                   |

## APPENDIX G

| 14. DIMENSIONS,<br>COMPONENTS,<br>& MEANING UNITS                                             | EXAMPLES OF DIRECT QUOTES                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
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| <b>Instructional Dimension -<br/>Application Component</b><br><br>67. practice                | IS - I ask participants what they know about the topic and draw from their experience. Then we actually do a simulated experience - a skill practice (IS,14-16).                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| 68. use knowledge/skill in<br>practical or new situation                                      | OB - Many learners are finding that the information from Life Skills is useful and meaningful in their personal lives (J35,16-21).<br><br>FGL1 - The Life Skills have really helped me. I am able to talk to my children instead of screaming at them (L1-10,2-4).<br><br>FGL3 - While at the work placement, I found that I had to use the skills that I had learned in Life Skills to be able to get things done effectively (L3-6,10-14).<br><br>IS - The bottom line is that the skills that the participants are learning need to be transferable and valuable in their daily life. We discuss how the knowledge can be used to help them (I15, 30-34). |
| <b>Learner Outcomes Dimension -<br/>Personal Growth Component</b><br><br>69. control emotions | FGL1 - I found the way we learned to control our emotions in Life Skills meaningful (L1-5,4-5).<br><br>FGL3 - I found the broken record and fogging techniques learned in Life Skills useful in reducing my frustration and anger when I was on my work placement (L3-6, 17-20).                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| 70. learned about myself                                                                      | FGL1 - I learned about myself. I learned that I control my feelings and if I want to be happy, then I'm the only one who can do that (L1-5,16-18).<br><br>FGL2 - I've learned about the potential that I have (L3-7,31).                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| 71. learned about feelings                                                                    | FGL1 - I learned that I control my feelings and if I want to be happy, then I'm the only one who can do that (L1-5,16-18).                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| 72. realized importance of<br>learning & wanting to learn<br>more                             | OB - Learners stated in their interim reports that they wanted to pursue more education (J82,18-22).<br><br>FGL1 - I still have a lot more to learn (L1-11,28).<br><br>FGL3 - I've learned that you need an education to get a better job (L3-8,3-4).<br><br>IS - The participants want to go further in their education (S9,2).                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |

## APPENDIX G

| 15. DIMENSIONS,<br>COMPONENTS,<br>& MEANING UNITS                 | EXAMPLES OF DIRECT QUOTES                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
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| <b>Learner Outcomes Dimension -<br/>Personal Growth Component</b> | FGL1 - I get along with people better. I realize that people have reasons for doing different things (L1-10,14-15).                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| 73. get along with people better                                  | FGL3 - I get along with everybody. I like meeting people and I like seeing people that I knew before (L3-5,15-16).                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| 74. changed attitude, view things more positively                 | <p>FGL1 - Before, I didn't have many nice things to say about anyone. Now, I can always find something nice and I can see the good things about my kids, about myself, and about everyone (L1-10,16-20).</p> <p>FGL3 - I've changed in a lot of ways. I quit drinking. That allows me to look at things differently (L3-7,6-7).</p> <p>IS - Participants are really encouraged, motivated, and pleased about the changes that they've seen in themselves, their attitude and behaviour (I3,39-41).</p> |
| 75. feel better about self                                        | <p>FGL1 - I have learned that I am a lot smarter than I thought I was. I feel more confident and a lot better about myself (L1-4,17-18).</p> <p>FGL3 - I don't wear track pants all of the time now. That says a lot because when you look at somebody who wears track pants all the time, it's like you're saying, "I give up" (L3-7,4-5).</p> <p>IS - Learners feel better about themselves when they leave. They have a better attitude (S20,25).</p>                                               |
| 76. more self-esteem & self-confidence                            | <p>OB - Near the end of the program phase, learners exhibited greater confidence in themselves and the learning process (OB306,1-2).</p> <p>FGL1 - I have more self-esteem and self-confidence. I deal with my children and other people better (L1-13,12-13).</p> <p>FGL3 - I didn't value myself before. Now, it's changed. I want people to know how valuable I am (L3-7,16-17).</p> <p>IS - By the time learners leave here, they have built up self-esteem and confidence (S17,15-16).</p>        |
| 77. know how to set goals                                         | <p>FGL3 - I am able to identify my goals and this makes me more effective (L3-8,8).</p> <p>IS - Learners have a goal when they leave here. They want to do something (S20,27).</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| 78. more responsible                                              | FGL3 - I'm more responsible now. I've opened my mind (L3-7,7).                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |

## APPENDIX G

| 16. DIMENSIONS,<br>COMPONENTS,<br>& MEANING UNITS                 | EXAMPLES OF DIRECT QUOTES                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
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| <b>Learner Outcomes Dimension -<br/>Personal Growth Component</b> | FGL1 - I have learned how to talk to people (L1-10,36).                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| 79. more outgoing                                                 | FGL3 - I didn't talk to anyone before. Now I talk to people (L3-7,8).                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| 80. handle situations in &<br>outside home better                 | <p>FGL1 - I have an easier time with the way I feel and about what I think. If I talk about my feelings with my friends, then they are more honest with me. They tell me how they feel and why they feel that way (L1-10,5-10).</p> <p>FGL3 - Life Skills helped me deal with situations in and outside the home (L3-6,28-29).</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| 81. new perspectives                                              | <p>FGL1 - By being here, I look at things totally differently. I now look at my kids future. I never would have thought about that before. I lived from day to day, I never looked any further than that (L1-4,119-21).</p> <p>FGL3 - The program has been a successful experience because it has opened doors with better opportunities. I have opened my eyes and am able to see the potential that I have (L3-10,20-21).</p> <p>IS - Learners go through a growth process when they come here. They may come with an attitude that was similar to the one they had in high school. When they get here, it may take awhile to see the difference, but as soon as they do, they grow. All of a sudden, they understand and appreciate things differently (I6,34-38).</p> |
| <b>Learner Outcomes Dimension -<br/>General Skills Component</b>  | OB - Learners felt comfortable communicating with each other and the group (OB306,4).                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| 82. better able to communicate                                    | <p>FGL1 - Life Skills helped me learn to communicate better with other people (L1-5,7-8).</p> <p>FGL3 - I am now able to meet people and talk in front of others (L3-6,30).</p> <p>IS - For level one learners, the area that they develop the most is in their ability to share ideas (I19,36-37).</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| 83. more assertive                                                | <p>OB - Learners were able to state how they felt and what they needed upon completion of phase one (OB306,6-7).</p> <p>FGL1 - In Life Skills, I learned how to say no without feeling bad and I learned to tell people how I felt (L1-5,19-20).</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |

## APPENDIX G

| 17. DIMENSIONS,<br>COMPONENTS,<br>& MEANING UNITS                                           | EXAMPLES OF DIRECT QUOTES                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
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| <b>Learner Outcomes Dimension -<br/>Personal Growth Component</b><br><br>83. more assertive | FGL3 - I am now able to say what I want to say (L3-8,8-9).<br><br>IS - I think the assertiveness is probably one of the best things that we do here. My hope is that in having people practice the assertiveness and problem solving skills, they will have the skills and the confidence in their ability to approach other people and get what they want (I7,35-40). |
| 84. make presentations                                                                      | FGL1 - I learned how to make a presentation in front of the class (L1-10,41).                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| 85. respect views of others                                                                 | FGL3 - I learned to respect the different viewpoints in our community (L3-4,3-4).<br><br>IS - We are able to identify and appreciate cultural differences and blend them into respect for each other (I22,28-31).                                                                                                                                                      |
| 86. recognize differences                                                                   | FGL3 - I found that everyone had a different point of view about everything (L3-5,17).                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| 87. resolve conflicts                                                                       | FGL3 - Life Skills helped me learn how to resolve conflicts and I found this useful when I was at the work placement (L3-6,16-17).                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| 88. make decisions                                                                          | IS - The program helps learners determine what they want to do and how they can get there. They make these decisions before they leave (S5,31-33).                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| <b>Learner Outcomes Dimension -<br/>Achievement Component</b><br><br>89. computer skills    | FGL1 - I learned a lot about computers (L1-10,34).<br><br>FGL3 - I learned how to work with computers (L3-8,1).<br><br>IS - People who leave here have done very well on the job in the area of computers (I20,43-45).                                                                                                                                                 |
| 90. career plans                                                                            | FGL3 - The program has helped me realize my career goals and how to strive for them. I want to learn more through education (L3-10,25-26).<br><br>IS - Learners develop career step plans by the end of level three (S5,33-34).                                                                                                                                        |
| 91. personal portfolio                                                                      | OB - Portfolios were reviewed; they were extremely well done. Participants were very creative in style and presentation (J82,14-16).<br><br>FGL3- Completing my portfolio was a successful experience (L3-11,3-4).<br><br>IS - Level three learners are required to complete portfolios. They help people assess themselves (I2,25-26).                                |