

*SUMMARY REPORT*  
**SD #91 ABORIGINAL  
EDUCATION NEEDS ASSESSMENT**

*Prepared for*  
**SCHOOL DISTRICT #91 AND THE FIRST NATIONS  
EDUCATION COUNCIL OF SD #91**

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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Highlighted below are the key findings of the *Aboriginal Education Needs Assessment* commissioned by the First Nations Education Council (FNEC) of School District #91 (Nechako Lakes). Given the considerable participation of more than 1,760 students, parents and District staff in this research project, the results of this study can be viewed with considerable confidence.

***Analysis of Aboriginal student achievement/outcomes suggest that Aboriginal learners face considerable challenges.***

An analysis of Aboriginal student/household characteristics suggests that Aboriginal students continue to experience considerable difficulty in succeeding in SD 91. For example, in comparison to non-Aboriginal students, Aboriginal students in SD 91 have less “supports” to aid their education. For example, the proportion of Aboriginal students with access to a computer at home (58.5%) is lower than that of the non-Aboriginal population (82.1%). Similarly, the proportion of single-parent families among the Aboriginal population (29.2%) is much higher than that of the non-Aboriginal population. In addition, whereas 59.0% of the overall adult population of the Bulkley-Nechako Regional District has a high school diploma, among Aboriginal parents surveyed, a lower proportion (51.4%) indicated that they had graduated from high school. The results of the *Needs Assessment* suggest that an Aboriginal Education Strategy will address the academic home supports available to Aboriginal learners.

***Notwithstanding considerable additional supports provided to Aboriginal learners, student outcomes and achievement remains well below that of non-Aboriginal learners.***

Although a review of District programs indicates that considerable resources have been allocated in support of Aboriginal education programs, a review of student achievement and outcomes suggests that it is important to augment and enhance such supports. For example, an analysis of several key measures indicates that Aboriginal students have yet to achieve the same results as non-Aboriginal students:

- Aboriginal student attendance is 7% below that of non-Aboriginal students;
- Aboriginal students (19%) are three times more likely to be suspended as compared to non-Aboriginal students (6%); and,
- The proportion of Aboriginal students graduating with a Dogwood Certificate (34%) is less than one-half that of the non-Aboriginal student population (71%).

This data suggests that while there have been some improvements in outcomes for Aboriginal learners, considerable change is required to enhance the learning environment and, eventually, the outcomes of Aboriginal learners in SD 91 schools.

***Overall, while the majority of Aboriginal parents are satisfied with the equality of educational opportunities, parents and students cite several areas in which SD 91 could improve the quality of education provided to Aboriginal learners.***

Overall, while the majority (75.7%) of Aboriginal parents felt that Aboriginal students were given the same chances to learn as other students in the District, a lower proportion (62.0%) of such parents were satisfied with the quality of education provided to Aboriginal students. In particular, parents indicated the need for schools/staff to become better aware of Aboriginal culture and customs, and for the schools to adopt curriculum/programs/extracurricular activities that reflect the local Aboriginal community better. Similarly, only 19.7% of Aboriginal secondary students felt that their teachers were knowledgeable about Aboriginal culture.

The results of the *Needs Assessment* suggest that there are several programs/activities that could be implemented that would be seen to be as pro-active steps in enhancing the quality of education provided to Aboriginal learners and Aboriginal parents, including:

- provision of workshops to help Aboriginal parents better understand the school system;
- changes to the curriculum to incorporate Aboriginal issues; and,
- focus on training to better prepare Aboriginal students for both the work and the academic world.

***Aboriginal students and parents seek an “inclusive” model whereby Aboriginal needs can be accommodated within existing structures.***

Results of the study suggest that most Aboriginal parents and students prefer a learning environment that accommodates both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students. Less than one-third (31.9%) of parents felt that there should be a separate curriculum for Aboriginal students. Among Aboriginal students surveyed, less than 4% indicated that they would like to see “Aboriginal only” schools.

***The Aboriginal community has some concerns about the receptiveness of schools towards Aboriginal students/programs.***

Information obtained from the survey suggests that additional work can be done to address Aboriginal parent concerns about racism in SD 91 schools. For example, while only 5.3% of staff surveyed felt that racism was a major problem in their particular school, more than 20% of Aboriginal parents considered racism to be a major problem in their particular school. Similarly, a significant proportion of both Aboriginal (intermediate 14.5%, secondary 19.2%) and non-Aboriginal students (17.7%) considered racism to be a major problem in their school. More importantly, only one-third (31.0%) of Aboriginal secondary students were satisfied with how racism was addressed in their particular school.

***There is a need for better dialogue and communication between the Aboriginal community and SD 91 schools.***

Information collected during the *Needs Assessment* indicates that there is considerable frustration among teachers regarding communication with Aboriginal parents. For example, while two-thirds (63.7%) of Aboriginal parents were satisfied with the communication they had with their child's teacher, only 21.8% of teachers expressed a similar level of satisfaction with the communication they had with Aboriginal parents. To improve this communication, it is important that both groups – schools and the Aboriginal community – enhance their efforts to improve communication between schools and Aboriginal parents.

***Providing better academic and counselling support could increase retention rates among Aboriginal students.***

Given the marked disparity between Aboriginal (34%) and non-Aboriginal (71%) graduation rates, it is critical that the District implement activities/programs that could enhance Aboriginal transition in SD 91 schools. As a result of the *Needs Assessment* project, several supports were identified, including:

- establishment of counselling or “intervention” supports (Aboriginal counsellor, Youth Outreach Worker, other);
- implementation of a formal tracking system that would provide early indications of changes in student attendance, achievement, suspensions, etc.);
- provision of academic supports (tutorial programs);
- provision of supports (i.e., extended bus service) to encourage Aboriginal participation in extra-curricular activities; and,
- establishment of peer support groups or “buddy systems” for new students entering secondary schools.

***Improving Aboriginal education will require a partnership and commitment from both the District and the Aboriginal community.***

As a result of this study, the Consultant has identified in excess of 40 recommendations that could be implemented to enhance the learning environment for Aboriginal learners in the Nechako Lakes School District. It should be emphasized, however, that improving the quality of education for Aboriginal students is a joint responsibility between the District, schools, the Aboriginal community and Aboriginal parents. While the Consultant has identified in excess of 40 recommendations as to how the educational environment could be improved for Aboriginal learners, the long-term success of any Aboriginal education strategy will be dependant on the extent to which all parties agree to make, and then carry out, the necessary changes that would enhance the learning environment for Aboriginal learners.

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## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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The *Aboriginal Education Needs Assessment* project was initiated jointly by School District #91 (Nechako Lakes) and the First Nations Education Council (FNEC) of School District #91 in the autumn of 2000. This project was undertaken to improve the delivery of education services and programs to Aboriginal students in the Nechako Lakes School District, with the goal of improving the academic success and retention of Aboriginal students.

R.A. Malatest & Associates Ltd. was responsible for the administration, tabulation and statistical analysis of the *Aboriginal Education Needs Assessment Project*, and acted as consultants for the general development of the survey instruments. The following research staff completed this project:

Mr. Robert A. Malatest	Project Leader
Ms. Irene Huse	Project Researcher
Ms. Sharon Krebs	Project Researcher
Ms. Mary Bumstead	Project Consultant

We are particularly grateful for the involvement and assistance of Ms. Libby Hart, Principal – Aboriginal Education, SD 91, in helping facilitate and coordinate this research.

We are also indebted to the interest and involvement of the Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students, parents, community members and school district staff who participated in this project. Without the participation and cooperation of these people, this research could not have been completed.



## INTRODUCTION

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The *Aboriginal Education Needs Assessment Project* was initiated so that Nechako Lakes District schools could identify and implement changes to enhance the quality of education provided to Aboriginal learners. The objectives of the research project were:

- to ascertain how well Aboriginal students are being served in the schools of the Nechako Lakes School District;
- to determine the needs of the Aboriginal students; and
- to determine how the educational system could be improved to serve Aboriginal students better.

The research plan developed by the First Nations Education Council of School District #91 (SD 91), in consultation with R.A. Malatest & Associates Ltd., was designed to fulfill the research objectives as well as meet strict statistical research requirements to ensure the validity of the results obtained at school and District levels.

Given the need to obtain both quantitative (statistically valid) and qualitative (in-depth descriptive) information using the most cost-effective approaches available, the following research vehicles were utilized by the Consultant:

- a telephone survey of parents of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students;
- a mail-out survey to all staff in Nechako Lakes District schools and district facilities;
- an intercept (in-school) survey of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal intermediate (grades 5 to 7) and secondary (grades 8 to 12) students;
- in-person interviews of key internal/external stakeholder groups;
- focus groups with students (2 groups) and Aboriginal parents (1 group); and,
- a telephone/e-mail survey of other Aboriginal Education Coordinators in a sample of other northern school districts

A key aspect of the research was to identify opinions, and differences in opinions, among the various target groups in order to gauge current perceptions of the education system, and to gather information on suggested areas for improvement or enhancement.

The *Aboriginal Education Needs Assessment Project* was administered from February to April of 2001 to a sample of all target groups located throughout the District. 1768 usable surveys were obtained prior to the processing cut-off date, including intercept surveys from 330 students (approximately 30%) of Aboriginal descent and 549 non-Aboriginal students (approximately 16%). The overall response rate for the *Needs Assessment Project* was 77.3% which compares favorably to similar surveys administered by R.A. Malatest & Associates Ltd. for other school districts in British Columbia. Readers are encouraged to consult the Technical Aspects section for additional information pertaining to research methodology, response rates and survey delivery.

It must be emphasized that the findings of the *Aboriginal Education Needs Assessment Project* are a "snapshot" of survey responses as of Spring 2001. In addition, given the

considerable volume of information collected, the identification of over 100 short- and long-term recommendations and goals represents the Consultant's interpretation of both the quantitative and qualitative findings of the needs assessment. Given the diversity of opinion, it is possible that additional recommendations could be identified from the data in order to improve the quality of education provided to Aboriginal students in Nechako Lakes District schools.

## TECHNICAL ASPECTS

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### 1. Research Requirements

The *Aboriginal Education Needs Assessment Project* was commissioned to identify current issues of concern with respect to Aboriginal education in the Nechako Lakes District and to provide recommendations as to how the educational system could be improved to more effectively meet the needs of the Aboriginal community.

As outlined in the proposal and in discussions with the First Nations Education Council of School District #91 (Nechako Lakes), the Consultant was required to provide the following services:

1. Canvass the opinion of key individuals to identify the needs of Aboriginal students in the Nechako Lakes School District through a comprehensive survey process. The research included:
  - a telephone survey of a sample of parents/guardians of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal children attending Nechako Lakes District schools;
  - an in-school written survey of both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students in selected classes at both the intermediate (Gr. 5-7) and secondary (Gr. 8-12) levels (ten schools in the District that were identified as having a significant proportion of Aboriginal students);
  - a telephone survey of Aboriginal former students of School District #91, who were in grade 11 in the 1998/99 or 1999/2000 school years;
  - a mail-out survey to administrative, instructional and support staff at Nechako Lakes District schools and district facilities;
  - in-person interviews with educational staff, and individuals within the Aboriginal community;
  - two focus group meetings with Aboriginal secondary students;
  - one focus group meeting with Aboriginal parents; and
  - telephone survey of a sample of other Aboriginal Education Coordinators from other school districts.
2. Review available administrative records to identify potential issues/problems with the current educational system (review of Aboriginal students' attendance patterns, graduation rates, and scholastic achievement);
3. Data entry of completed surveys; proofing and verification checks of entered data;
4. Word processing and coding of the comments provided by all respondents;
5. Data analysis of survey, interview, and administrative data;
6. Development of a set of recommendations;
7. Provision of a Summary Report (including Executive Summary, Technical Aspects, and Recommendations) and a Technical Appendix (including statistical tables,

respondent comments and copies of the survey instruments and pre-survey information letters); and

8. Presentation of the final report.

## **2. Survey Design**

Given the scope of the research objectives and the diversity of the sampling frame, several different surveys were developed. While not all groups were required to answer the same number or types of questions, there were questions common to most surveys to facilitate the cross comparison of data findings. The various survey instruments were developed in consultation with the First Nations Education Council of SD 91 to ensure that the information obtained would meet the project objectives.

Eight different surveys/interview forms were developed and administered to the following respondent groups:

1. Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal elementary students (Grades 5 to 7)
2. Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal secondary students (Grades 8 to 12)
3. Aboriginal former secondary students who had graduated or who had dropped out before graduation
4. Parents of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal children in elementary and secondary schools (grades 1-12)
5. Instructional and support staff at schools and district facilities in the Nechako Lakes District
6. Administrative staff from the Nechako Lakes School District, and First Nations education coordinators of selected school districts that have a similar profile of Aboriginal students (interview format)
7. Individuals from the Aboriginal community in the Nechako Lakes District (interview format)

## **3. Survey Delivery**

Survey samples were drawn from seven major target groups in the Nechako Lakes District:

- parents of Aboriginal students (grades 1 through 12)
- parents of non-Aboriginal students (grades 1 through 12)
- Aboriginal students (elementary and secondary)
- non- Aboriginal students (elementary and secondary)
- Aboriginal former high school students
- school staff of SD 91 schools (instructional, administrative, support/non-teaching and trustees), and
- educational stakeholders in SD 91 (administrative, support/non-teaching and trustees).

Personnel of R.A. Malatest & Associates Ltd. administered all surveys except the school staff mail-out survey. Where school distribution systems were used, every effort was made to minimize the possibility of the identification of, or influence on, the respondent by supervisory staff members.

Consultant researchers visited the Nechako Lakes District from April 2 to April 5, 2001 and administered surveys to intermediate and secondary students, and conducted survey-style interviews with educators and other stakeholders.

### 3.1 Parents

Parents/guardians of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students from Nechako Lakes District schools were surveyed. The school lists of parents were compared, and repeated phone numbers were eliminated in order to minimize duplication.

In February 2001, letters outlining the purpose of the survey were forwarded to parents of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students identified from school lists. On February 21, telephone administration of the survey to parents began and continued until March 5. In total, 834 households were contacted and 469 surveys were completed. In total, 196 of the identified households could not be reached due to wrong/unknown numbers or no answer; therefore, a valid response rate of 73.5% was achieved. This response rate compares very favorably to the response rates obtained for telephone surveys undertaken by the Consultant for other school districts within British Columbia.

As an additional means of encouraging communication and garnering parental opinion about the quality of Aboriginal education in the Nechako Lakes District, a focus group was conducted with a group of parents of Aboriginal students. The focus group took place at Fraser Lake Elementary Secondary School on April 4, 2001. A total of 15 parents of Aboriginal students had agreed to attend, but the comments from parents who *did* attend indicated that the choice of focus group location discouraged attendance; four parents participated.

### 3.2 Staff

A staff survey was distributed to the administrative, instructional, and support staff of SD 91 schools. A memorandum outlining the survey's purpose and procedure was circulated to the schools by the District. Each staff member received a survey kit (mail-out envelope, questionnaire and return envelope) that was distributed by the District and collected by the Consultant and the District. Of the 600 staff surveys distributed, 300 completed surveys (50.0%) were returned for data processing.

In addition to a mail-out survey, 19 in-person interviews were scheduled with school and District administrators, and local First Nations chiefs: a total of 17 interviews were ultimately conducted with three principals, one vice-principal, ten Aboriginal support workers/education coordinators, and three district staff/administrators.

### 3.3 Students

The survey of students encompassed Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students in selected classes of grades 5 through 12 at ten schools in the District (Babine Elementary/Secondary, Decker Lake Elementary, Evelyn Dickson Elementary, Fort St. James Secondary, Fraser Lake Elementary/Secondary, Lakes District Secondary, Nechako Valley Secondary, William Konkin Elementary, and W.L McLeod Elementary). Administration and supervision of the completion of the surveys and survey collection was undertaken by the Consultant. Where possible, classes with a high proportion of Aboriginal students were chosen. The surveys were completed by 913 students (330 Aboriginal students, 549 non-Aboriginal students, and 34 who did not identify their ancestry).

Surveys were conducted in an intercept format by R.A. Malatest & Associates Ltd. researchers, with pre-arranged classes in the ten schools. Before the questionnaires were handed out, the researcher explained the purpose of the survey and instructed the students to raise their hand if they had a question, and made it clear that the researcher would come to their desk to answer the question. Students were also told that they could skip any question that they did not want to answer, and that if they were of Aboriginal descent they could fill in Part B of the survey *if they wished*. The researchers made every effort to consider the sensitivity of students who may be reluctant to identify themselves as of Aboriginal descent.

Elementary students and secondary students were given two similar surveys, with only a few differences in the first part of the survey (Form A1 for elementary and Form A2 for secondary) and no differences in the second part of the survey (Form B). At the end of the first section of the survey, in both elementary and secondary surveys, the survey asked students to continue to Part B if they were of Aboriginal descent.

At each of two secondary schools, a cross-section of eight to ten Aboriginal students from various secondary schools participated in discussion periods with the researchers. Topics such as racism and the need for Aboriginal programs and services such as counselling and tutoring were introduced, and the students were encouraged to voice opinions and/or concerns about their school and education.

### 3.4 Former Students

To ascertain the opinions of Aboriginal former students, a telephone survey was conducted with a sample of former students from seven district secondary schools and learning centres (Fort St. James Secondary School, Fort St. James Enterprise Centre, Fraser Lake Elementary Secondary School, Lakes District Secondary, Nechako Valley Alternative School, Nechako Valley Secondary School, and Stoney Creek Learning Centre). The students had been registered in grade 11 in either the 1998-99 or the 1999-2000 school year, and were no longer registered in secondary school, having either graduated or stopped attending secondary school. The telephone survey of former students was conducted from February 27 to March 13, 2001, and of approximately 242 students who had been registered in grade 11 in those years, 61 completed the survey.

### 3.5 Survey of Other Similar School Districts

The Consultant conducted a brief telephone/email survey with Aboriginal Education Coordinators in five other school districts in the north and interior of the province to gather information about Aboriginal education practices. Questions pertaining to Aboriginal education programs, and the number of Aboriginal Support Workers, Aboriginal Counsellors and Aboriginal Education Coordinators were asked of the following school districts:

- *School District 28 (Quesnel)*
- *School District 52 (Prince Rupert)*
- *School District 54 (Bulkley Valley)*
- *School District 60 (Peace River North)*
- *School District 82 (Stikine)*

## 4. Response Rates

### 4.1 Response Rates by Group

Overall, a total of 1768 individuals participated in this research project, yielding a response rate of 77.5%. As highlighted in Table A, the response rates varied considerably across the survey strata. Bearing in mind the survey vehicle chosen for each target group, all response rates were quite high. The return rates ranged from virtually 100% for Aboriginal elementary students to 59.2% for Aboriginal secondary students. 73.5% of the sample of parents/guardians of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students and 50.0% of school staff members participated in the *2001 Aboriginal Education Needs Assessment Project*.

**Table A**  
**Response Rate by Target Group**

<b>Respondent Group</b>	<b>Population Size (Approx.)</b>	<b>Sample Size (Approx.)</b>	<b>Valid Sample</b>	<b>Non-Qualifier/ NIS<sup>1</sup></b>	<b># Surveys Completed</b>	<b>Valid Response Rate<sup>2</sup></b>
Elementary (Gr. 5-7) (non-Ab.)	1661	268	268	N/A	268	100.0%
Secondary (Gr. 8-12) (non-Ab.)	1670	281	281	N/A	281	100.0%
Ab. Elementary (Gr. 5-7)	641	117	117	N/A	117	100.0%
Ab. Secondary (Gr. 8-12)	566	213	213	N/A	213	100.0%
Students who did not designate their ancestry	N/A	34	34	N/A	34	100.0%
<b>Total Students (Gr. 5-12)<sup>5</sup></b>	<b>4538</b>	<b>913</b>	<b>913</b>	<b>N/A</b>	<b>913</b>	<b>100.0%</b>
<b>Total Aboriginal Students</b>	<b>1207</b>	<b>330</b>	<b>330</b>	<b>N/A</b>	<b>330</b>	<b>100.0%</b>
<b>Aboriginal Former Students</b>	<b>242</b>	<b>242</b>	<b>103</b>	<b>139</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>59.2%</b>
Parents of Non-Ab. Students	2562	N/A	N/A	N/A	243	N/A
Parents of Aboriginal Students	928	N/A	N/A	N/A	226	N/A
<b>Total Parents</b>	<b>3490</b>	<b>834</b>	<b>638</b>	<b>196</b>	<b>469</b>	<b>73.5%</b>
<b>Total District Staff</b>	<b>600</b>	<b>600</b>	<b>600</b>	<b>N/A</b>	<b>300<sup>4</sup></b>	<b>50.0%</b>
<b>In-Person Interviews<sup>3</sup></b>	<b>19</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>--</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>89.5%</b>
<b>Other School Districts</b>	<b>N/A</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>--</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>55.6%</b>
Overall response rate	N/A	N/A	2,282	235	1768	77.5%

<sup>1</sup> Refers to telephone respondents who were non-qualifiers, or were not contacted because of not-in-service, fax number, or respondent whereabouts unknown/out of province, etc.

<sup>2</sup> Number of Surveys Completed divided by Valid Sample.

<sup>3</sup> One interview was completed over the telephone.

<sup>4</sup> Includes 165 instructional staff, 105 support staff, 13 administrative officers, 8 other and 9 respondents who did not provide data on job area.

<sup>5</sup> Includes Form A1 for Elementary, Form A2 for Secondary, and Form B for all Aboriginal students.



## 4.2 Number of Student Responses by School

**Table B**  
**Number of Responses by School**

School	All Students		Approximate Participation Rate (%)	Aboriginal Students (Gr. 5-7, 8-12)		Estimated Participation Rate (%)
	School Population <sup>1</sup>	Students Surveyed		School Population	Students Surveyed	
Babine Elementary	63	32	51%	35	24	68.6%
Decker Lake Elementary	138	39	28%	12	6	50.0%
Evelyn Dickson Elem.	240	80	33%	16	11	68.8%
Fort St. James Secondary	417	117	28%	161	71	44.1%
Fraser Lake Elem/Sec	427	148	35%	100	43	43.0%
Lakes District Secondary	486	152	31%	114	40	35.1%
Nechako Valley Sec.	698	147	21%	127	60	47.2%
Sowchea Elementary	165	39	24%	41	15	36.6%
William Konkin Elem.	249	86	35%	97	33	34.0%
W.L. McLeod Elementary	270	73	27%	84	27	32.1%
<b>Elementary Totals</b>	<b>1,237</b>	<b>398</b>	<b>32%</b>	<b>237</b>	<b>117</b>	<b>49%</b>
<b>Secondary Totals</b>	<b>1,916</b>	<b>515</b>	<b>27%</b>	<b>550</b>	<b>213</b>	<b>39%</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>3,153</b>	<b>913</b>	<b>29%</b>	<b>787</b>	<b>330</b>	<b>42%</b>

<sup>1</sup>From list provided by First Nations Education Council of SD 91, and includes grades K to 12. However, only grades 5 through 12 were surveyed.

## 5. Report Structure

Results from the *Aboriginal Education Needs Assessment Project* are presented in three parts:

1. Summary Report: This volume includes the technical aspects and main report detailing the results of the data analysis of the *Aboriginal Education Needs Assessment Project*, and the Key Recommendations of the Consultant.
2. Technical Appendix: Contained in this volume are the statistical tables for all questions on all surveys, and examples of the surveys and information letters.
3. Respondent Comments: Contained in this volume are the comments submitted by respondents to the open-ended questions on the various survey instruments.

## 6. Sample Characteristics

In general, sample characteristics data are utilized to ascertain the "representativeness" of the obtained sample with the known characteristics (usually census-based data) of the target population(s). As, however, there is little data available for the population groups that

were administered surveys (e.g., demographic characteristics of Aboriginal parents and students), the sample characteristics are compared to the entire population (including Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal populations) for illustrative purposes only. Income was not addressed in the survey of parents, in order to increase participation rates, as some adults are sensitive to be questioned on this issues, and the sample size of parents of Aboriginal children was relatively small to begin with.

## 6.1 Aboriginal Parent Sample

**Table C**  
**Sample Characteristics – Aboriginal Parent Group**  
**Sample Size = 226**

<b>Characteristic</b>	<b>Parent Sample (Parents of Aboriginal Students)</b>	<b>Total Adult Population – Nechako Lakes District Area<sup>1</sup> (Aboriginal and Non- Aboriginal)</b>
<b>Gender:</b>		
Male	19.0%	49.9%
Female	81.0%	50.1%
<b>Highest Level of Education:</b>		
Less than Gr. 12	48.6%	42.7%
High School Grad	26.5%	15.3%
Some PSE/Completed Trade	15.0%	34.6%
Some University (no degree)	3.5%	N/A%
University Degree	5.7%	7.6%
Proportion Living on Reserve	54.6%	N/A

<sup>1</sup>Source: 1996 Census (includes Native and non-Native population), of Vanderhoof and Burns Lake, as being representative of the area.

## 6.2 Aboriginal Student Sample

Highlighted below are the characteristics of the Aboriginal student sample surveyed during this research. Two sets of comparative data are presented:

- comparison to the general student population (Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal) in ten Nechako Lakes District schools (surveys completed in April 2001);
- comparison to a sample of Aboriginal students from British Columbia (survey data collected in June 1996 by R.A. Malatest & Associates Ltd.). It should be noted that given the small size of the provincial Aboriginal student sample, the data for this group should be interpreted with caution.

**Table D**  
**Sample Characteristics – Aboriginal Student Group**  
**Sample Size = 330**

Characteristic	Nechako Lakes Aboriginal Student Sample	Northern BC 1996 Student Sample <sup>1</sup>	SD 91 Student Average <sup>2</sup>
Date of Survey	April 2001	June 1996	April 2001
Sample Size	330	107	913
% Elementary (Gr. 5-7)	35.5%	67.3%	43.6%
% Secondary (Gr. 8-12)	64.5%	32.7%	56.4%
% Planning to attend university	41.5%	49.5%	48.2%
% Planning to attend college/trade school.	30.4%	28.6%	27.9%
% Without access to a computer at school or home	6.7%	9.3%	4.4%
% Agreeing that they feel safe at school	64.8%	62.7%	68.2%
% Not living in a single-parent home	64.8%	56.6%	75.5%
% Living on Reserve	45.5%	24.0%	N/A

<sup>1</sup>Data based on a study conducted by R.A. Malatest & Associates Ltd. for the Ministry of Education, June 1996.

<sup>2</sup>Includes Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students surveyed, n = 913

Of the Aboriginal students surveyed, 51.8% were male and 47.9% were female. Most (81.8%) were living with one or two parents, 7.3% lived with other relatives, and 6.7% lived with foster parents.

Over one-half (55.5%) of Aboriginal student respondents reported that they were recognized as a Status Indian by the government, and 26.1% were unsure.

### 6.3 Staff Sample

A survey of staff was completed for District facilities and the schools in School District 91:

➤ <i>Babine Elementary</i>	➤ <i>Mapes Elementary</i>
➤ <i>David Hoy Elementary</i>	➤ <i>Mouse Mountain Primary</i>
➤ <i>Decker Lake Elementary</i>	➤ <i>Muriel Mould Primary</i>
➤ <i>Evelyn Dickson Elementary</i>	➤ <i>Prairiedale Elementary</i>
➤ <i>Fort Fraser Elementary</i>	➤ <i>Nechako Valley Secondary</i>
➤ <i>Fort St. James Secondary</i>	➤ <i>Topley Elementary</i>
➤ <i>Francois Lake Elementary</i>	➤ <i>Sinkut View Elementary</i>
➤ <i>Fraser Lake Elementary Secondary</i>	➤ <i>Sowchea Elementary</i>
➤ <i>Grassy Plains Elementary/Secondary</i>	➤ <i>William Konkin Elementary</i>
➤ <i>Lakes District Secondary</i>	➤ <i>W.L McLeod Elementary</i>

All instructional and non-instructional staff were given the opportunity to complete a survey. Outlined below are the characteristics of the sample of staff who participated in the *Aboriginal Education Needs Assessment Project*.

**Table E**  
**Sample Characteristics - Staff Group**  
**Sample Size = 300**

Characteristic	Instructional staff	Support Staff	Administrative Officer	Other <sup>1</sup>	Staff Average
Number of respondents	165	105	13	17	300
Respondents of Aboriginal Ancestry	6.1%	28.6%	0.0%	11.8%	14.0%
Extent of contact with Aboriginal students:					
Daily	97.0%	90.5%	100.0%	76.5%	93.7%
Occasionally	1.8%	3.8%	0.0%	5.9%	2.7%
Rarely	1.2%	3.8%	0.0%	0.0%	2.0%
Almost Never	0.0%	1.9%	0.0%	5.9%	1.0%
% Staff Sample	55.5%	35.0%	4.3%	5.7%	100.0%

<sup>1</sup> School/District clerical, janitorial, maintenance, other, no response.

#### 6.4 Aboriginal Former Student Sample

The Consultant attempted to contact all Aboriginal former students who had been enrolled in grade 11 in September of 1998 or 1999 in one or more of the Nechako Lakes District secondary schools. Of the approximately 242 students identified, surveys were completed with 61 students. Detailed below is the demographic profile of the former student sample.

**Table F**  
**Sample Characteristics – Aboriginal Former Student Group**  
**Sample Size = 61**

Characteristic	Former Student Average
<b>Gender:</b>	
Male	36.1%
Female	62.3%
% Who did not graduate from Grade 12	52.5%
<b>Last grade completed while attending high school (non-graduates only):</b>	
Grade 9	9.4%
Grade 10	43.8%
Grade 11	37.5%
Grade 12	3.1%
<b>High school last attended:</b>	
Fort St. James Secondary	26.2%
Fraser Lake Elementary Secondary	19.7%
Lakes District Secondary	31.1%
Nechako Valley Secondary	16.4%
Other	4.9%
Proportion Living on Reserve	42.6%
<b>Type of Aboriginal Ancestry:</b>	
Status	73.8%
Non-status/Other	9.8%
Metis	6.6%
Inuit	1.6%
No response	8.2%

## 7. Aboriginal Affiliation of Parents and Students in School District #91

An overview of the Aboriginal population in Nechako Lakes District (parents and students) is shown below in Table G. As highlighted in the table, the Lake Babine Nation had the highest representation among students and parents. A much higher proportion of students (30.6%) than parents (2.3%) did not respond or were unsure of their Aboriginal ancestry. The proportion of respondents recognized as Status Indian was higher for parents (77.0%) than it was for students (55.5%). It should be noted that a significant proportion (23.0%) of parents surveyed were not of Aboriginal descent, although their children were of Aboriginal descent.

**Table G**  
**Sample Characteristics – Overview of Aboriginal Ancestry**

	Aboriginal Students	Parents of Aboriginal Students
% of Aboriginal Ancestry	100%	77.0%
		<b>Of Parents <u>With</u> Aboriginal Ancestry:</b>
Aboriginal Ancestry:		
Lake Babine Nation/Tachet	18.5%	23.6%
Tl'azt'en Nation	12.1%	10.3%
Saikuz First Nation/Stoney Creek	15.8%	7.5%
Nak'azdli Band	8.8%	6.9%
Stellat'en First Nation	4.2%	5.7%
Nadleh Whu'ten Band	3.6%	2.9%
Other (less than 2% each)	30.2%	39.0%
Don't know/No response	6.7%	2.3%
Live on a reserve	45.5%	54.6%
Recognized as Status Indian	55.5%	77.0%

## 8. Interpretation of Results (Statistical Confidence)

The results obtained in an opinion survey are a cross-section of the actual opinions of the population studied. The use of random sampling techniques allows one to determine the range in which the actual or true proportion would occur. For example, based on responses provided by 226 households, the estimates derived from the survey of parents of Aboriginal students are within an estimated maximum of plus or minus 5.7% of the true value at a 95% confidence level. As the proportion of responses either decreases or increases from the 50% level, the variability or sampling error declines. For example, if 80% of these participants had provided the same or similar responses, the maximum variation would have declined to plus or minus 4.5%. Outlined in Table H is the allowance for sample errors (as a percentage) given an estimated proportion for the student, staff and parent surveys.

**Table H**  
**Estimates of Sample Error for Proportions (in Terms of Percentage)**  
**Aboriginal Education Needs Assessment Project**  
**– Student, Staff and Aboriginal Parent Surveys**

For Proportions Near	Plus or Minus Range:		
	Aboriginal Students	Staff	Aboriginal Parents
Percentages near 10	2.8%	2.4%	3.4%
Percentages near 20	3.7%	3.2%	4.5%
Percentages near 30	4.2%	3.7%	5.2%
Percentages near 40	4.5%	3.9%	5.6%
Percentages near 50	4.6%	4.0%	5.7%
Percentages near 60	4.5%	3.9%	5.6%
Percentages near 70	4.2%	3.7%	5.2%
Percentages near 80	3.7%	3.2%	4.5%
Percentages near 90	2.8%	2.4%	3.4%

For example, parent respondents were asked to state whether they were satisfied with the information received from their child's school; 78.8% of parent respondents indicated that they were satisfied with information they received from the school, and 11.1% indicated that they were not satisfied with the information they received. From the table, for percentages near 80%, the sampling error is plus or minus 4.5%. Thus, 19 times out of 20 (at the 95% confidence level), the actual value will be between 74.3% and 83.3%, with the most probable value being 78.8%. It should be noted that for sub-group responses, the sampling error will be higher.

## 9. Interpretation of Scores Used

Respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement with a statement or to rate the importance of an issue on a five-point scale. Respondents could also indicate that they had insufficient knowledge to comment on a particular statement.

**Table I**  
**Interpretation of Scores Used to Indicate Agreement or Satisfaction**

Value	Response
1	Strongly disagree/Not at all important
2	Disagree/Relatively unimportant
3	Neutral
4	Agree/Important
5	Strongly agree/Very important
DK	Don't know/No opinion

To reflect those respondents who provided an opinion, a mean score was occasionally calculated for a particular question. Use of a mean score provides a better measure of

overall agreement as weights were assigned to each of the five levels (e.g., very dissatisfied = 1; dissatisfied = 2; neutral = 3; satisfied = 4; and very satisfied = 5). The mean score values represent the average for those respondents who had an opinion. Care must be taken in the interpretation of mean score values when the proportion of undecided (no opinion) respondents becomes very high. Although the issue could have a very high mean score value, this score might represent the opinion of only a small proportion of the surveyed population.

## 10. Identification of "Key Findings"

In general, educational survey results should be interpreted with caution, particularly when examining issues for which there is a high proportion of no opinion responses. In instances where the proportion of "no opinion" responses is high, it is often better to identify areas of dissatisfaction rather than rely on satisfaction ratings. A general rule in the interpretation of dissatisfaction scores is provided below:

0% to 10% dissatisfaction:	This is generally below-average levels of dissatisfaction, which would imply that the issues do not require further investigation/action.
11% to 20% dissatisfaction:	In general, dissatisfaction ratings of between 11% and 20% imply that there is some concern among stakeholders, and that this level of dissatisfaction suggests that some changes need to be considered.
20%+ dissatisfaction:	Dissatisfaction ratings of over 20% suggest that this issue requires attention and/or that this is a major weakness as perceived by respondents.

## SECTION 1: ABORIGINAL EDUCATION IN SD 91 SCHOOLS: A REVIEW OF ADMINISTRATIVE DATA

Several activities were completed in order to define more accurately the challenges faced by Aboriginal learners in School District #91 schools, and to provide answers as to how these challenges can be best met. In addition to the detailed information collected through extensive survey and focus group activities completed as part of the *Aboriginal Education Needs Assessment Project*, project researchers reviewed a variety of administrative data associated with Aboriginal learners in School District #91 and several other northern school districts.

Issues addressed in this section include:

- 1.1 *The Aboriginal Population in SD 91: An Overview*
- 1.2 *Review of Aboriginal Student Attendance and Achievement*
- 1.3 *Review of Language and Culture Programs*
- 1.4 *Review of Administrative Data – Summary*

### 1.1 The Aboriginal Population in SD 91: An Overview

A review of Ministry of Education data and an analysis of the information available from school/District data provides an overview of the profile of the Aboriginal population served by the Nechako Lakes School District educational system.

- As highlighted in Table 1-1, the proportion of Aboriginal learners in SD 91 is similar to that of many districts in northern and interior British Columbia. In 2000/2001, approximately 22.5% of the student population in Nechako Lakes schools were of Aboriginal descent – close to the 23.4% average for the ten northern and interior districts listed below.

**Table 1-1**  
**Aboriginal Students in SD 91 – An Inter-District Comparison**  
**2000/2001 School Year**

District	Total # of <sup>1</sup> Students	# Students of Aboriginal Descent <sup>2</sup>	% of Student Pop. of Aboriginal Descent
SD 91 (Nechako Lakes)	6,033	1,356	22.5%
SD27 (Cariboo-Chilcotin)	8,512	1,622	19.1%
SD28 (Quesnel)	4,917	820	16.7%
SD52 (Prince Rupert)	3,509	1,763	50.2%
SD54 (Bulkley Valley)	3,052	528	17.3%
SD59 (Peace River South)	5,140	1,143	22.2%
SD60 (Peace River North)	5,971	892	14.9%
SD81 (Fort Nelson)	1,247	316	25.3%
SD82 (Coast Mountains)	7,349	2,100	28.6%
SD87 (Stikine)	398	257	64.6%
<b>Average</b>	<b>46,128</b>	<b>10,797</b>	<b>23.4%</b>

<sup>1</sup> Ministry of Education, Report #1580 source 1701

<sup>2</sup> Ministry of Education Report #1587C source 1701



- To obtain statistically valid information while minimizing the resources to be allocated to this study, the evaluation of Aboriginal student opinion was limited to Aboriginal students in grades 5 to 12 in ten SD 91 schools in which there was a significant number of Aboriginal students. For comparative purposes, a sample of non-Aboriginal students from each of the ten schools was also surveyed. A cross-section of large and small schools was selected for this study to provide a representative portrayal of student opinion with respect to Aboriginal education issues in SD 91. As highlighted below in Table 1-2, there were 330 Aboriginal students and 549 non-Aboriginal students who completed the surveys as part of this project. The selected schools included:

**Table 1-2  
Populations and Survey Completions for Selected SD 91 Schools**

	Total Number of Aboriginal Students <sup>1</sup>	Surveys Completed <sup>2</sup>	Total Number of Non-Aboriginal Students <sup>1</sup>	Surveys Completed
Babine Elem/Secondary	43	(Gr. 5-7)/24	25	(Gr. 5-7)/8
Decker Lake Elementary	13	(Gr. 5-7)/6	144	(Gr. 5-7)/31
Evelyn Dickson Elementary	21	(Gr. 5-7)/11	250	(Gr. 5-7)/65
Fort St. James Secondary	197	(Gr. 8-12)/71	241	(Gr. 8-12)/35
Fraser Lake Elementary Secondary	110	(Gr. 5-12)/43	318	(Gr. 5-12)/101
Lakes District Secondary	125	(Gr. 8-12)/40	350	(Gr. 8-12)/107
Nechako Valley Secondary	134	(Gr. 8-12)/60	527	(Gr. 8-12)/85
Sowchea Elementary	50	(Gr. 5-7)/15	123	(Gr. 5-7)/24
W.L. McLeod Elementary	82	(Gr. 5-7)/27	192	(Gr. 5-7)/43
William Konkin Elementary	97	(Gr. 5-7)/33	149	(Gr. 5-7)/50
Total	872	330	2,319	549

<sup>1</sup> Includes Aboriginal students in all grades (K-7, 8-12), however, elementary school surveys were administered to students in Grades 5-7 only. Numbers from list supplied by SD 91.

<sup>2</sup> n = 330 for Aboriginal Student Surveys.

These ten schools accounted for approximately two-thirds of the total Aboriginal enrolment in the Nechako Lakes District and were deemed to be representative of the Aboriginal students' learning environment.

## 1.2 Review of Aboriginal Attendance and Achievement

Attendance data is being collected for elementary and secondary schools in the school district for the 2000-2001 school year. Currently, only secondary school attendance data is available for the 1999-2000 school year. As highlighted in Table 1-3, the Aboriginal student attendance rate was lower than that of the non-Aboriginal students.

**Table 1-3  
Secondary School\* Attendance, 1999-2000  
Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal Students, SD 91\***

	Aboriginal Female	Aboriginal Male	Non-Ab. Female	Non-Ab. Male	Total Aboriginal	Total Non-Aboriginal
<b>% of students in attendance</b>	83.2%	83.4%	90.4%	90.8%	83.3%	90.6%

\* Data from FSJSS, FLESS, LDSS and NVSS.

Suspension rates of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students were also examined. As highlighted in Table 1-4, suspension rates among Aboriginal students were generally higher than suspension rates of non-Aboriginal students. SD 91 and the First Nations Education Council of SD 91 are currently addressing the issue of suspensions to determine effective alternatives.

**Table 1-4**  
**Suspension Rates, 1999-2000**  
**Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal Students, SD 91\***

	Aboriginal Female	Aboriginal Male	Non-Ab. Female	Non-Ab. Male	Total Aboriginal	Total Non-Aboriginal
% of suspended students – in school	2%	4%	0%	2%	3%	1%
% of suspended students – out of school	10%	20%	2%	8%	15%	5%
% of suspended students – total	12%	25%	2%	10%	19%	6%

\*Data from FNEC Report on Aboriginal Education in School District No. 91 (Nechako Lakes) 1999-2000.

High school completion rates were compared between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students in Nechako Lakes schools. As displayed in Table 1-5, while Aboriginal student graduation rates have increased over the past two school years, Aboriginal students are still graduating at less than half the rate of non-Aboriginal students (34% versus 71%).

**Table 1-5**  
**Rates of Graduation with Dogwood Diploma**  
**Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal Students, SD 91**

	Aboriginal Female	Aboriginal Male	Non-Ab. Female	Non-Ab. Male	Total Aboriginal	Total Non-Aboriginal
1998-1999: % of students graduating with a Dogwood Certificate**	29%	25%	77%	68%	27%	71%
1999-2000: % of students graduating with a Dogwood Certificate**	36%	33%	76%	68%	34%	71%

\*Data from FNEC Report on Aboriginal Education in School District No. 91 (Nechako Lakes) 1999-2000.

\*\*This data reflects *only* students who received a Dogwood Diploma within 6 years of entering grade eight.

For the *Aboriginal Education Needs Assessment Project*, additional analysis focussed on Aboriginal student achievement in Language Arts and Mathematics. The First Nations Education Council Report on Aboriginal Education in School District 91 provided some data that indicated the academic achievement of Aboriginal students was lower than that of the non-Aboriginal student population in several curriculum areas, including the critical areas of Language Arts and Mathematics. For example, as highlighted in Table 1- 6, smaller proportions of Aboriginal primary students (Grades K to 3) than non-Aboriginal students met or exceeded expectations in Language Arts and Math programs. Only 55% of Aboriginal primary students met or exceeded expectations in their Language Arts programs, as compared to 83% of non-Aboriginal students, and 63% met or exceeded expectations in the Mathematics programs, as compared to 88% for non-Aboriginal students.

**Table 1-6**  
**Language Arts and Mathematics**  
**Primary Grades – Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal Students\***

Program	Meets or Exceeds Expectations		Percent Difference
	Aboriginal Students	Non-Aboriginal Students	
Language Arts	55%	83%	-28%
Mathematics	63%	88%	-25%

\*1999-2000 School Year, School District 91

As shown in Table 1-7 below, this trend continued into the intermediate and secondary grades, with fewer Aboriginal than non-Aboriginal students receiving passing grades in Language Arts and Math. Additionally, Aboriginal students were more likely to be placed in a modified program. In the Language Arts, 25% of Aboriginal students were placed in the modified program, and 20% of the Aboriginal students in the Mathematics programs were placed in the modified programs. The figures for non-Aboriginal students in these programs were 5% and 3%, respectively (students in modified programs may or may not receive a letter grade, depending on the school's policy).

**Table 1-7**  
**Language Arts and Mathematics**  
**Intermediate and Secondary Grades – Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal Students\***

Program	Received Passing Grade (C- to A)		Percent Difference
	Aboriginal Students	Non-Aboriginal Students	
Language Arts	65%	88%	-23%
Mathematics	59%	92%	-33%

\*1999-2000 School Year, School District 91

The FNEC report also included information on the honour role achievements of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students for some of the SD 91 schools. As highlighted in Table 1-8, honor role achievements of Aboriginal students were significantly lower than those reported for non-Aboriginal students.

**Table 1-8**  
**Honor Role Achievement – Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal Students\***

Grade	Honour Role Achievement (%)		Percent Difference
	Aboriginal Students	Non-Aboriginal Students	
Grade 4	39%	62%	-23%
Grade 5	29%	52%	-23%
Grade 6	37%	53%	-16%
Grade 7	18%	54%	-36%
Grade 8	17%	41%	-24%
Grade 9	10%	36%	-26%
Grade 10	10%	37%	-27%
Grade 11	8%	30%	-22%
Grade 12	21%	27%	-6%

\*Note: Data was unavailable for 7 of the 23 schools in SD 91.

### 1.3 Review of Culture and Language Program Utilization

During this project, it became apparent that the Carrier Language program is an integral component of the Aboriginal education program in SD 91. Many survey and interview respondents spoke positively about the program. Table 1-9 highlights the participation rates of language and culture programs across the eight comparative northern and interior school districts. Note that the participation rate of non-Aboriginal students is significantly higher in SD 91 than in the other school districts. Participation rates of Aboriginal students, however, are slightly less than average for the listed districts.

**Table 1-9  
Participation in Language and Culture Programs,  
Across Districts\***

School District	# Students of Aboriginal Descent	% of Aboriginal Students in Language/Culture Program	Total Number of Students (Ab. and Non-Ab) in Program	% of Participants who are Non-Ab
SD 91 (Nechako Lakes)	1,356	36.7%	831	40.1%
SD27 (Cariboo-Chilcotin)	1,622	41.7%	742	8.9%
SD28 (Quesnel)	820	57.9%	517	5.7%
SD52 (Prince Rupert)	1,763	87.7%	1,560	0.8%
SD59 (Peace River South)	1,143	27.1%	310	0.0%
SD81 (Fort Nelson)	316	81.0%	256	0.0%
SD82 (Coast Mountains)	2,100	50.1%	1,155	8.4%
SD87 (Stikine)	257	75.0%	239	18.8%
<b>Average – listed Districts</b>	<b>1,172</b>	<b>53.5%</b>	<b>5,610</b>	<b>9.8%</b>

\*Ministry of Education Report #1587C source 1701

### 1.4 Review of Administrative Data – Summary

A review of the administrative data shows a significant difference in academic achievement and participation levels between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students. For example:

- Aboriginal secondary students had higher levels of absenteeism than did non-Aboriginal students, with Aboriginal secondary student absenteeism rates being, on average, approximately 80% higher than that of non-Aboriginal secondary students. This level of absenteeism would suggest that Aboriginal students do not have the same motivation to attend school in SD 91 as do non-Aboriginal students.
- Aboriginal students were almost three times as likely to be suspended in SD 91 schools as compared with non-Aboriginal students.
- Although there has been improvement over the past year, Aboriginal students are still graduating at less than half the rate of non-Aboriginal students (34% versus 71%).
- Academic achievement of SD 91 Aboriginal students in Language Arts and Mathematics was 25% to 33% below that of SD 91 non-Aboriginal students, in both elementary and secondary grades.

It is important to remember, however, that there are other issues aside from academic achievement that are being addressed in School District 91, such as increasing awareness

of Aboriginal culture, history and language for both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students, staff, and parents. A more inclusive school social environment is one of many factors that can contribute to improvements in school retention and academic achievement for Aboriginal students.

These social strategies may be making positive changes that are only beginning to impact academic success. For example, positive impact of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal student participation in the Carrier Language programs in SD 91 is notable, and such issues will be further examined in this report.

Notwithstanding the positive trends in several areas (such as graduation rates among Aboriginal students), the review of administrative data underscores the considerable disparity between the outcomes/experiences of Aboriginal students relative to that of non-Aboriginal students. In this context, it is clear that continuation of the “status quo” in terms of Aboriginal education programs and services will result in Aboriginal learners experiencing educational outcomes that are well below that of the non-Aboriginal student population.

## SECTION 2: OVERALL PERCEPTIONS OF ABORIGINAL EDUCATION IN THE NECHAKO LAKES DISTRICT

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In order to identify the strengths and weaknesses of Nechako Lakes District schools in terms of meeting Aboriginal educational needs, the *Needs Assessment Project* encompassed the comprehensive canvassing of opinion from parents (of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students), intermediate and secondary students (Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal), educational staff, school administrators, and other internal and external stakeholders.

While not all groups were selected to comment on the same issues, in general most respondents were asked to provide information about a range of similar topics. The following cross-group issues are examined in this section:

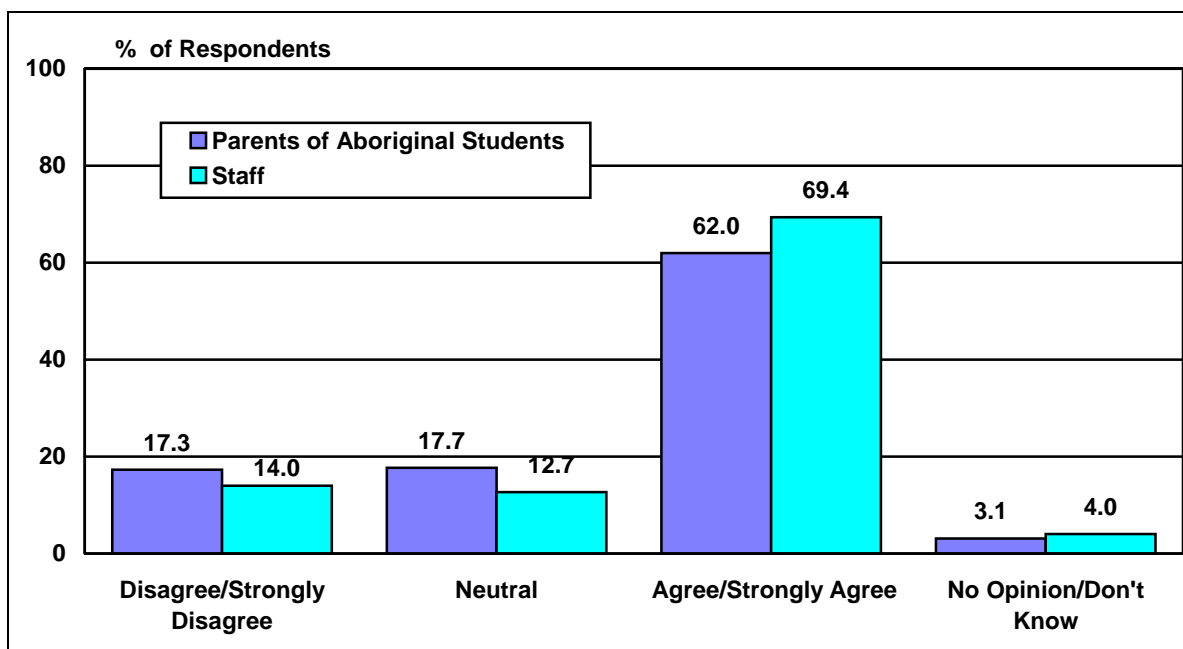
- 2.1 *Perceptions about the Quality of Education Provided to Aboriginal Learners*
- 2.2 *Equality of Educational Opportunities Provided for Aboriginal Learners*
- 2.3 *Respondent Opinion about the Strengths and Weaknesses of Aboriginal Education in Nechako Lakes Schools*

### 2.1 **General Perceptions about the Quality of Education Provided to Aboriginal Learners**

Parents, staff, and Aboriginal former students were asked to provide comments about their satisfaction with the education provided to Aboriginal students. As highlighted in Chart 2-1, survey results indicate that:

- Of the 226 parents of Aboriginal students who responded to the survey, approximately two-thirds (62.0%) agreed or strongly agreed that they were satisfied or very satisfied with the education provided to Aboriginal students.
- School staff (including instructors, administrators and support staff) and parents of Aboriginal students were generally equally satisfied with the quality of education provided to Aboriginal students; over two-thirds of school staff (69.4%) stated they agreed or strongly agreed that they were satisfied with the quality of education provided.
- While 17.3% of parents of Aboriginal students disagreed or strongly disagreed that they were satisfied with the quality of education provided, a lower proportion of staff (14.0%) were critical of the education provided to Aboriginal learners.

**Chart 2-1**  
**School Staff and Parents of Aboriginal Students**  
**Satisfied with the Quality of Education Provided to Aboriginal Students**



n = 226 parents and 300 staff

- Almost two-thirds (60.7%) of Aboriginal former student respondents, when asked to rate their satisfaction with the education they received in Nechako Lakes schools, reported that they were satisfied or very satisfied. Only 11.5% reported that they were dissatisfied or very dissatisfied.
- Current Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students, when asked to indicate the extent to which they felt that what they were learning in school was useful, had positive responses. As highlighted in Table 2-1 Aboriginal intermediate students were very positive, as 70.1% agreed or strongly agreed that what they were learning in school was useful. Over half (54.4%) of Aboriginal secondary agreed or strongly agreed that what they were learning was useful, and it is interesting to note that only 13.7% of Aboriginal intermediate students and 17.3% of Aboriginal secondary students were critical about the usefulness of what they were learning in school.
- Aboriginal former students had the highest level of agreement that what they had learned in school was useful (70.4% agreed or strongly agreed).

**Table 2-1**  
**Aboriginal Student Perceptions**  
**of the Usefulness of What is Learned in School**

**“What I am learning/did learn in school is/was useful”:**

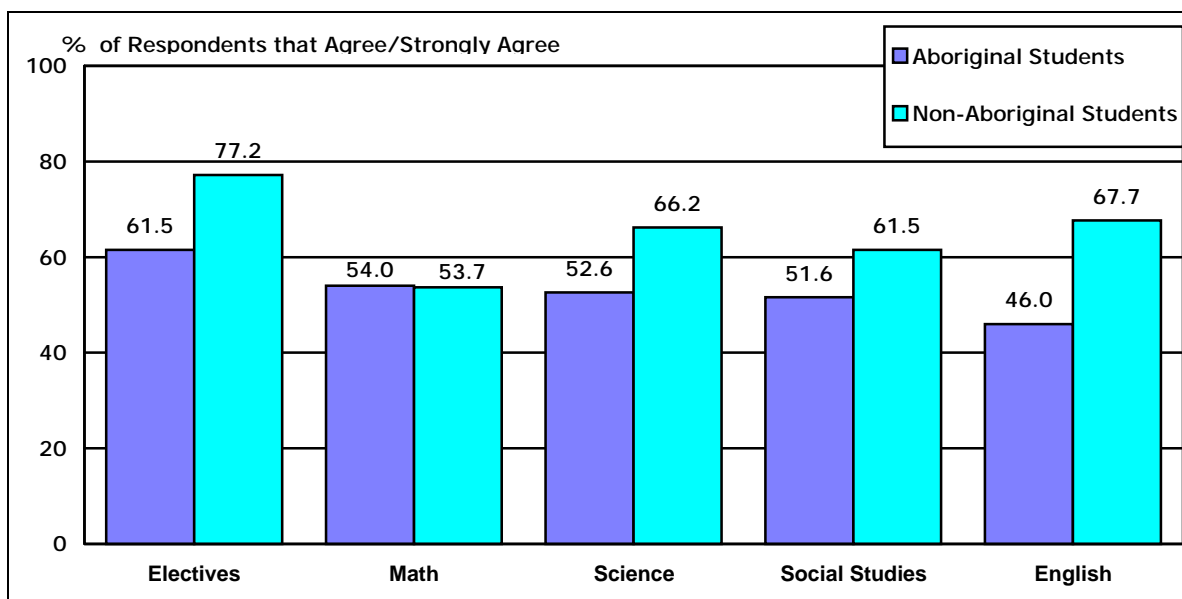
<b>Group/View</b>	<b>Sample Size (n)</b>	<b>Disagree/Str. Disagree</b>	<b>Neutral</b>	<b>Agree/Str. Agree</b>	<b>No Opinion</b>
Aboriginal Intermediate Students	117	13.7%	12.0%	70.1%	4.3%
Aboriginal Secondary Students	213	17.3%	25.4%	54.4%	2.8%
Aboriginal Student Average	330	16.1%	20.6%	60.0%	3.3%
Aboriginal Former Students	61	4.9%	24.6%	70.4%	0.0%
Non-Aboriginal Student Average	549	13.7%	25.7%	60.0%	0.7%

During the focus group meetings with Aboriginal secondary students, the participants discussed the issue of the future usefulness of what they were learning in school. There was consensus on the usefulness of specific courses, as follows:

- Students agreed that what they were learning in their Math, English, and Science courses would be useful to them in the future, although they felt that the Math courses could be changed to be a little more practical to real-life situations. They felt that English courses were particularly valuable.
- Students suggested that Social Studies courses should focus on topics more relevant to the lives of students. They questioned the value of learning about historical events that seemed irrelevant to their lives, when they could instead be learning about Aboriginal culture and Aboriginal issues like current treaty negotiations.
- When asked to rate their satisfaction with specific subject areas, Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal secondary students had very similar responses, except for satisfaction with English. As highlighted in Chart 2-2, only 46.0% of the Aboriginal secondary students agreed or strongly agreed that they were satisfied with English as a subject area, as compared to 67.7% of non-Aboriginal students.



**Chart 2-2**  
**Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal Secondary Students**  
**Satisfied with the Specific Subject Areas (% Agree/Strongly Agree)**



n = 213 Aboriginal students/281 non-Aboriginal students

- Interestingly, when the Aboriginal former students were asked what the three most important things they learned while in high school were, almost one-half (43.3%) of the 60 who responded to this question mentioned social skills and life skills, and 41.7% mentioned that they had learned about goal setting and the importance of education. Math skills and English language skills were mentioned by 16.7% and 10.0%, respectively, of former students who responded to this question.

Related to the perceptions of the quality of education provided at SD 91 schools are student impressions of whether their teachers care about students in the school. Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students had similar levels of agreement that their teachers cared about the students in their school (53.7% of Aboriginal students agreed/strongly agreed, and 59.8% of non-Aboriginal students agreed/strongly agreed). However, there was a large difference between intermediate students (74.4% agreed/strongly agreed) and secondary students (43.9% agreed/strongly agreed). As well, a smaller proportion (45.9%) of Aboriginal former students agreed/strongly agreed that their teachers cared about the students in their school.

## **2.2 Equality of Educational Opportunities Provided for Aboriginal Learners**

Several questions were included in the surveys of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students, Aboriginal former students, school staff, and parents of Aboriginal students to ascertain opinion about the extent to which Aboriginal students were provided with the same educational opportunities as other students. As shown in Table 2-3, survey data reveals that:

- In general, survey participants agreed that Aboriginal students had the same access to educational opportunities available to other students in Nechako Lakes schools. For

example, over three-quarters (75.7%) of the surveyed parents of Aboriginal students indicated that they agreed or strongly agreed that Aboriginal students have the same access to educational opportunities available to others in Nechako Lakes schools. Results were consistent across parents of children in elementary (79.0% agreed or strongly agreed) and secondary schools (72.0% or agreed strongly agreed).

- The majority of staff (91.0%), Aboriginal students (69.1%), and former students (80.3%) agreed or strongly agreed that Aboriginal students had the same access to educational opportunities as other students at school.

**Table 2-3**  
**Satisfaction with the Equality of Educational Opportunities Provided to Aboriginal Learners – by Target Group (% Agree/Strongly Agree)**

Question/Group	Parents of Aboriginal Students (n=226)	Aboriginal Students (n=330)	Staff (n=300)	Aboriginal Former Students (n=61)
Given the same chances to learn in Nechako Lakes schools as other students/same access to education	75.7%	69.1%	91.0%	80.3%
Teachers encouraged me to do my best in school	N/A	66.3%	N/A	67.2%
Satisfied with the quality of education provided to Aboriginal students	62.0%	N/A	69.4%	N/A

n = 917

When asked whether they agreed that, overall, their school does a good job of helping them learn, Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students had very similar levels of agreement (63.6% and 62.3%, respectively).

### **2.3 Respondent Opinion about the Strengths and Weaknesses of Aboriginal Education in Nechako Lakes Schools**

At the conclusion of the survey, school staff and parents of Aboriginal children were asked to list what they considered to be the strengths of Aboriginal education in Nechako Lakes schools, and suggestions for improvement. In addition, all students were asked what they liked best about their school, and Aboriginal students were asked how their school could be made better for Aboriginal students. It should be noted that as the comments were subjectively classified by the Consultant, additional review of the actual comments provided could yield a different interpretation of the information.

#### **Aboriginal Parents and School Staff**

As highlighted in Table 2-4, approximately one-half of parents of parents of Aboriginal students and one half of staff respondents provided a comment about the strengths of Aboriginal education in Nechako Lakes schools. Strengths cited include the provision of special support staff and First Nations personnel (29.7% of parents and 35.2% of staff) and the access to the Carrier Language program and other specific skills courses (27.1% of parents and 36.3% of staff who responded to this question), and a sense of pride/cultural awareness for Aboriginal people (25.4% of parents who responded to this question).

Parent and staff suggestions for improving the Nechako Lakes schools included increasing parental involvement/support (13.6% and 35.7% for parents and staff who responded, respectively), and increasing access to counselling and tutoring for students who need it (25.2% and 13.3%, respectively). As well, 16.3% of parents and 17.9% of staff who offered suggestions mentioned increasing Aboriginal culture/language classes and programs.

**Table 2-4**  
**Strengths and Weaknesses of Aboriginal Education in Nechako Lakes Schools**  
**Parents and School Staff (% Group Citing Strengths/Areas for Improvement)**

<b>Issue</b>	<b>Parents of Aboriginal</b>	<b>Staff</b>
<b>Strengths:</b>		
Special support staff/First Nations personnel	29.7%	35.2%
Access to specific skills/courses like Carrier language/crafts	27.1%	36.3%
Sense of culture/pride for Aboriginal people	25.4%	--
Teachers and staff committed to Aboriginal education	--	22.5%
Equal treatment for all students	--	17.0%
Lots of resource materials/programs/workshops/counselling	--	13.7%
More heritage awareness between Aboriginal/non-Aboriginal	12.7%	--
Lots of one-on-one (L.A., Special Ed., etc.)	--	9.9%
Flexible education (alternative programs, etc.)	--	6.6%
Good funding available	--	3.8%
Other	12.7%	23.1%
There are no strengths	6.8%	--
<b>Areas for Improvement:</b>		
Increase parental involvement/support/attendance	13.6%	35.7%
More counselling and tutoring for students who need it	25.2%	13.3%
More Aboriginal culture/language classes and programs	16.3%	17.9%
Provision for all students – no segregation	10.2%	17.9%
More teachers/counsellors/aides/Aboriginal staff	12.9%	7.1%
More community/Band support	2.7%	15.8%
Education programs for parents	--	15.8%
Start programs before kindergarten (preschool, workshops)	--	11.2%
Less absenteeism	--	9.7%
More career guidance, post-secondary guidance	8.8%	--
More communication between parents/teachers/coordinators	--	8.7%
More cross-cultural Aboriginal awareness programs	7.5%	--
Address FAS (Fetal Alcohol Syndrome)/other disabilities	--	4.1%
Concentrate more on academic basics	3.4%	
Work to eliminate racism	2.7%	--
No improvement necessary/possible	--	2.0%
Other	17.7%	20.9%

n = 118 parents, 182 staff.

One key issue brought up by parent (10.2%) and staff (17.9%) respondents was that services and treatment should be the same for all students, with integrated classes and programs so that the needs of all students are addressed without segregation

A sample of parent comments on suggested improvements to the educational system has been provided below:

*“The education could be improved if they told the students how important school is, what is available for them in terms of post-secondary, and how important education is in this world.”*

*“They should not single out students to try and provide them with Native tradition classes. These classes should be equally important to all students.”*

*“I think it could be improved by involving all the kids in learning about Aboriginal issues. If we taught non-Aboriginal kids about Native history/cultures, there would be more awareness in the community and it would go a long way toward addressing the ignorance encountered in the community.”*

*“There could be more time provided for Carrier language classes. They could increase the time from a half hour to three hours a week.”*

*“I think the education system could be improved by having more Aboriginals working in the school district as teachers and teachers aides.”*

### Elementary and Secondary Aboriginal Students

- Highlighted in Table 2-5 are the things Aboriginal students liked best about school: the friends and other students (cited by 31.1% of the Aboriginal students), the athletics/sports programs (cited by 28.0%), and their teachers and school staff (cited by 19.5%).
- When asked to indicate how their particular school could be made better for Aboriginal students, close to one-quarter (24.1%) of students suggested having better availability of Carrier language classes, or longer Carrier language classes, or other Aboriginal language classes. This opinion was particularly strong with the intermediate students, with a full 36.2% making this suggestion. Further, 14.6% of students suggested that schools could be improved with the addition of more Aboriginal culture/history/crafts in the curriculum, 13.1% of students indicated that their school could be made better for Aboriginal students by addressing racism in the schools, and 13.1% felt that school could be improved by having more Aboriginal teachers and support workers.

Comments from students included:

*“I think school would be made better for Aboriginal students if there was more Aboriginal teachers and Carrier teachers so the people could learn their own language.”*

*“We could have more time than just a half an hour so we could learn more about our people and language.”*

*“To have more time in Carrier class, like an hour.”*

*“How about for all students? Why should [only] we be treated good?”*

*“That Carrier teachers teach more of our culture, history, and language.”*

**Table 2-5**  
**School Strengths and Weaknesses – Aboriginal Elementary and Secondary Students**

<b>Strength/Weakness</b>	<b>Aboriginal Intermediate Students</b>	<b>Aboriginal Secondary Students</b>	<b>Aboriginal Student Average</b>
<b>Things liked best about school:</b>	n=121	n=197	n=318
Friends/communication with others	26.4%	34.0%	31.1%
Gym/sports/P.E./playground	50.5%	14.2%	28.0%
Teachers/staff	16.5%	21.3%	19.5%
Other specific subjects/programs (not extracurricular)	21.5%	12.2%	15.7%
Vending machines/concession	N/A	5.1%	3.2%
Extracurricular activities/trips	N/A	6.1%	3.8%
Computers	8.3%	1.0%	3.8%
Feeling safe	2.5%	0.0	1.0%
Other	7.4%	20.3%	15.4%
No comment/don't know	27.3%	8.1%	15.4%
<b>How could school be made better for Aboriginal students:</b>	n=58	n=141	n=199
More/longer Carrier/other language classes	36.2%	19.1%	24.1%
Teach more Aboriginal culture/history/crafts	10.3%	16.3%	14.6%
Reduce racism	1.7%	17.7%	13.1%
More Aboriginal teachers/support workers	8.6%	14.9%	13.1%
More interesting/fun activities	8.6%	12.8%	11.6%
More help for students who need it	5.2%	4.3%	4.5%
Better teachers	8.6%	2.8%	4.5%
An Aboriginal school	3.4%	2.1%	2.5%
Other	24.1%	30.5%	28.6%
Don't know/not sure	3.4%	1.4%	2.0%

n = 58 to 197

Note: Totals may add to more than 100% due to multiple response.

### Aboriginal Former Students

Most surveyed Aboriginal former students offered responses the question “What suggestions would you make regarding the educational program in Nechako Lakes that would benefit future Aboriginal students going through the school system?” The most-mentioned topic (by 18.9% of respondents) was to offer more Aboriginal classes and subjects. A selection of typical comment is provided below:

*“More academic Aboriginal courses, and more activities with Aboriginal people.”*

*“Offer more help to guide them toward what direction to take after high school, and how to get into post-secondary. Offer more help to find funding.”*

*“More Aboriginal classes and teachers, [and] more attention from teachers.”*

*More education for the staff on the possibility of other options for Aboriginals instead of just slacker courses.”*

*“More classes on Native issues, history, and language. Further, make Native classes available to all. Last, discuss issues with the whole school.”*

## SECTION 3: ABORIGINAL CURRICULUM ISSUES

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Another area of review in the *Aboriginal Education Needs Assessment Project* was perceptions of current and potential Aboriginal curriculum content in Nechako Lakes schools. Examples of Aboriginal curriculum content are classes that include Aboriginal cultural practices, history, and languages. This section examines the following:

- 3.1 *Review of Educational Curriculum Issues*
  - 3.1.1 *Meeting the Needs of Aboriginal Students*
  - 3.1.2 *Current Levels of Awareness of Aboriginal Culture/Issues*
- 3.2 *Support for Selected Aboriginal Programs/Initiatives*
- 3.3 *Aboriginal Role Models*

### 3.1 Review of Educational Curriculum Issues

In the surveys of parents, staff, students and former students, several questions were asked regarding the extent to which Nechako Lakes schools promoted Aboriginal culture through the curriculum.

#### 3.1.1 Meeting the Needs of Aboriginal Students

Staff, secondary students, and parents of Aboriginal students were asked about the extent to which the educational curriculum met the needs of Aboriginal students in terms of Aboriginal cultural practices, history and language. As highlighted in Table 3-1, student, parental and staff opinion varied in terms of satisfaction with the extent to which the curriculum addressed the cultural practices, history, and language of Aboriginal people:

- While only approximately one-third of Aboriginal secondary students agreed that the curriculum met the needs of Aboriginal students with respect to culture (34.8% agreed/strongly agreed), history (36.7%), and language (33.3%) of Aboriginal people, staff were generally more satisfied with the curriculum in these areas. Cultural and historical curriculum were seen to meet the needs of Aboriginal students by 43.7% and 49.7% of staff, respectively, and 41.7% of staff agreed or strongly agreed that language needs were being met.
- Parents of Aboriginal students also had comparatively high levels of agreement that the cultural (45.1% agreed/strongly agreed), historical (38.1%), and language (45.2%) needs were being met by the curriculum.

**Table 3-1**  
**Extent to Which the Curriculum Met the Needs of Aboriginal Students**  
**Aboriginal Parents and School Staff**

Area/Group	Aboriginal Secondary Students (n=213)	Parents of Aboriginal Students (n=226)	Staff (n=300)	Combined Average	
Cultural Practices	– Agree/Str. Agree	34.8%	45.1%	43.7%	41.4%
	– Disagree/Str. Disagree	26.8%	25.7%	19.0%	23.3%
History of Aboriginal People	– Agree/Str. Agree	36.7%	38.1%	49.7%	42.4%
	– Disagree/Str. Disagree	21.6%	30.0%	15.7%	21.7%
Language	– Agree/Str. Agree	33.3%	45.2%	41.7%	40.2%
	– Disagree/Str. Disagree	26.8%	27.9%	24.6%	26.3%

n = 739

Note: Totals will not add to 100% as “neutral” and “no opinion” responses are not shown.

As well, Aboriginal former students and Aboriginal *and* non-Aboriginal intermediate students were asked to comment on the extent to which Aboriginal issues were taught well in their particular school, and whether they would like more about Aboriginal cultures to be taught:

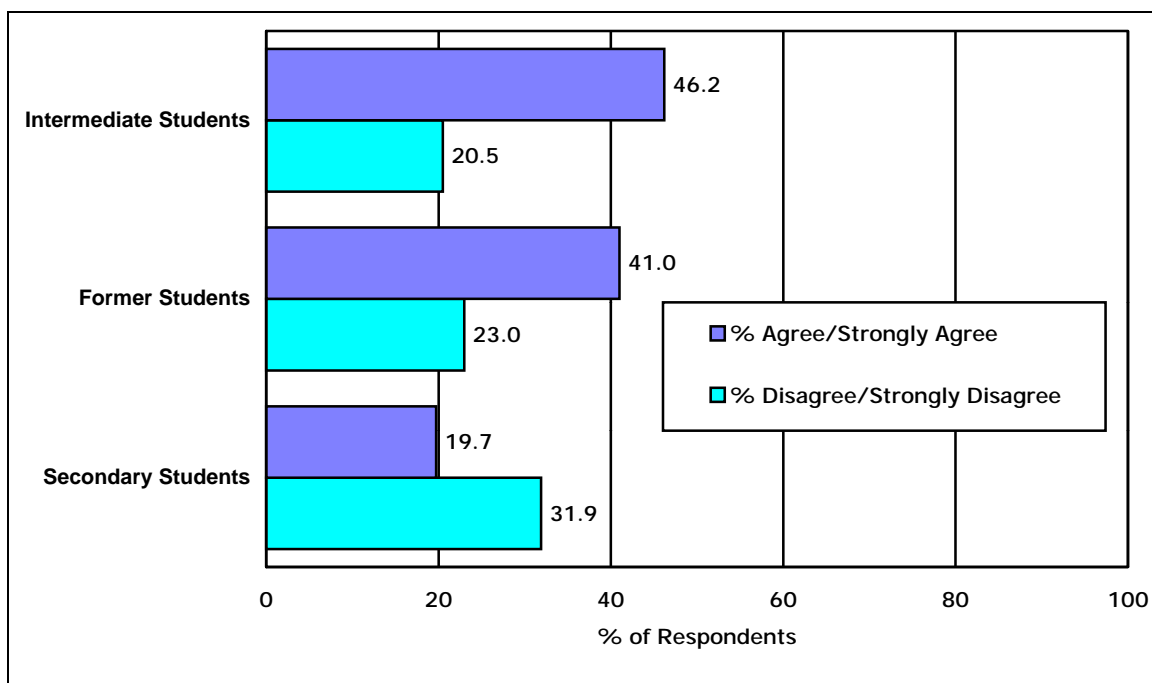
- Overall, current students were generally more positive than former students regarding the extent to which studies and lessons on Aboriginal issues were taught in Nechako Lakes schools. While 48.7% of Aboriginal intermediate students agreed or strongly agreed that Aboriginal issues were taught well in Nechako Lakes schools, only 29.5% of Aboriginal former students agreed or strongly agreed with the statement. Notably, the *non-Aboriginal* intermediate students’ responses were very similar to those of the Aboriginal intermediate students, with approximately half of each student group agreeing or strongly agreeing that Aboriginal issues are taught well.
- When asked about whether they would like more about Aboriginal cultures to be taught in their school, 69.7% of Aboriginal current students and 72.2% of former students agreed or strongly agreed. However, only 30.1% of non-Aboriginal current students agreed or strongly agreed that they would like more about Aboriginal cultures to be taught, and 34.3% disagreed or strongly disagreed.

### 3.1.2 Current Levels of Awareness of Aboriginal Culture/Issues

When asked to comment on their teachers’ knowledge of Aboriginal culture, overall rates of student satisfaction varied. Only one-fifth (19.7%) of Aboriginal secondary students were positive about their teacher’s knowledge of Aboriginal culture, yet 41.0% of Aboriginal former students and 46.2% of Aboriginal intermediate students agreed or strongly agreed that their teachers knew a lot about Aboriginal culture. A comparison of student opinion is illustrated in Chart 3-1. The gap between Aboriginal secondary and intermediate student satisfaction with their teachers’ knowledge may be related to the Aboriginal education programs that are currently more widely available in elementary school, such as the Carrier language program.



**Chart 3-1**  
**Student Agreement with: “My Teachers Know A Lot About Aboriginal Cultures (Customs/Beliefs)” – by Student Aboriginal Group**



n = 391

Related to cultural awareness, a significant proportion of staff (78.0%) and parents of Aboriginal children (61.5%) surveyed felt that their school encouraged students to have self-respect and pride in their cultural heritage, although parents of elementary school students had a higher level of agreement (71.4% agreed/strongly agreed) than those of secondary students (54.0% agreed/strongly agreed).

### **3.2 Support for Selected Aboriginal Programs/Initiatives**

Although approximately one quarter of all groups surveyed were not satisfied with the current curriculum in terms of Aboriginal culture, history, or language, there was less agreement about *how* Nechako Lakes schools should change the educational curriculum to serve the needs of Aboriginal students better. The following comparisons of support for various curriculum options are highlighted in Table 3-2:

- While 31.9% of parents of Aboriginal students thought that a separate curriculum should be developed for Aboriginal students, approximately one-half of parents of Aboriginal students (50.9%) and over three quarters of the staff (76.7%) *disagreed or strongly disagreed* with the introduction of a separate Aboriginal curriculum.
- There were contrasting opinions regarding mandatory Aboriginal studies: 64.2% of parents of Aboriginal students, 53.5% of Aboriginal secondary students, and 59.0% of Aboriginal former students agreed or strongly agreed that credit in Aboriginal studies should be mandatory for graduation. In contrast, there were significant proportions of staff and non-Aboriginal secondary students who did *not* want the educational curriculum

modified to include mandatory credits in Aboriginal issues as a graduation requirement; over one-half of staff (53.4%) and non-Aboriginal students (54.5%) disagreed with the inclusion of mandatory Aboriginal studies in the Nechako Lakes school curriculum. Focus group discussions with Aboriginal students indicated students did not want Aboriginal studies “forced” on other students, but rather included in the curriculum for voluntary selection.

- There was a very high level of support among parents of Aboriginal students for specialized training courses that would prepare Aboriginal students for the work world (80.1% agreed/strongly agreed). Similarly, among school staff, 55.3% of respondents were supportive of this concept. The support for specialized training courses to prepare Aboriginal students for the academic world was higher among parents (85.4%) than among staff (50.3%).

**Table 3-2**  
**Support for Changes in the School Curriculum**  
**Selected Options – by Target Group**

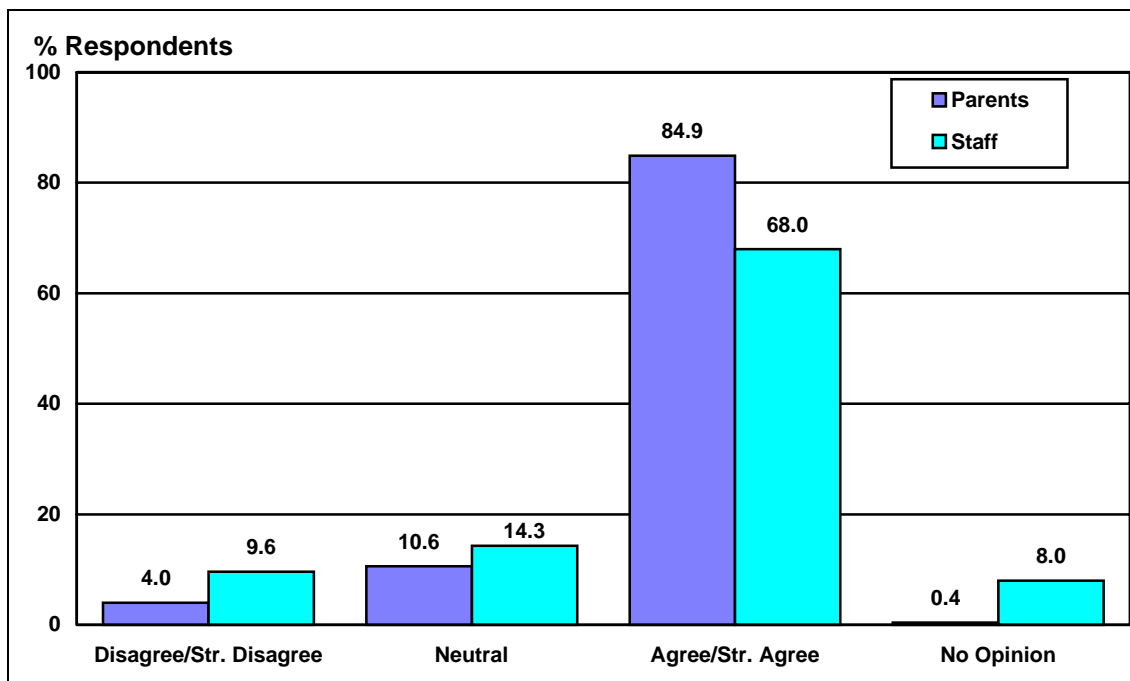
Issue/Group		Parents of Aboriginal Students (n=226)	Staff (n=300)	Aboriginal Secondary Students (n=213)	Non- Aboriginal Students* (n=281)
Aboriginal studies should be mandatory for graduation	% Agree/Str. Agree	64.2%	17.7%	53.5%	18.1%
	% Disagree/Str. Disagree	18.6%	53.4%	15.9%	54.5%
A separate curriculum should be developed for Aboriginal students	% Agree/Str. Agree	31.9%	7.0%	N/A	N/A
	% Disagree/Str. Disagree	50.9%	76.7%	N/A	N/A
Relevant training courses should be provided to prepare Aboriginal students for the work world	% Agree/Str. Agree	80.1%	55.3%	N/A	N/A
	% Disagree/Str. Disagree	6.2%	17.6%	N/A	N/A
Relevant academic courses should be provided to prepare Aboriginal students for the academic world	% Agree/Str. Agree	85.4%	50.3%	N/A	N/A
	% Disagree/Str. Disagree	4.5%	19.0%	N/A	N/A

n = 1,020

The results of the *Needs Assessment Project* suggest that there is considerable scope to initiate programs to enhance Aboriginal parent awareness of the school system:

- As highlighted in Chart 3-2, over four-fifths of Aboriginal parents (84.9%) and over two thirds of school staff (68.0%) surveyed agreed or strongly agreed that schools should provide workshops to help Aboriginal parents better understand the school system. In contrast, only 4.0% of parents and 9.6% of staff surveyed felt that such workshops were not necessary.

**Chart 3-2**  
**Schools Should Provide Workshops to Help Aboriginal Parents Better Understand the School System – Aboriginal Parents and School Staff**



n = 226 parents/300 staff members

Section 5 of this report further examines the issue of parental communication and involvement with the school system.

## SECTION 4: EQUALITY OF TREATMENT OF ABORIGINAL STUDENTS

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In addition to identifying the extent to which Aboriginal students were provided with equal educational opportunities in Nechako Lakes District schools, the *Aboriginal Education Needs Assessment Project* also investigated perceptions of the extent to which Aboriginal students received equal treatment from school staff and other students. The following issues are reviewed in this section:

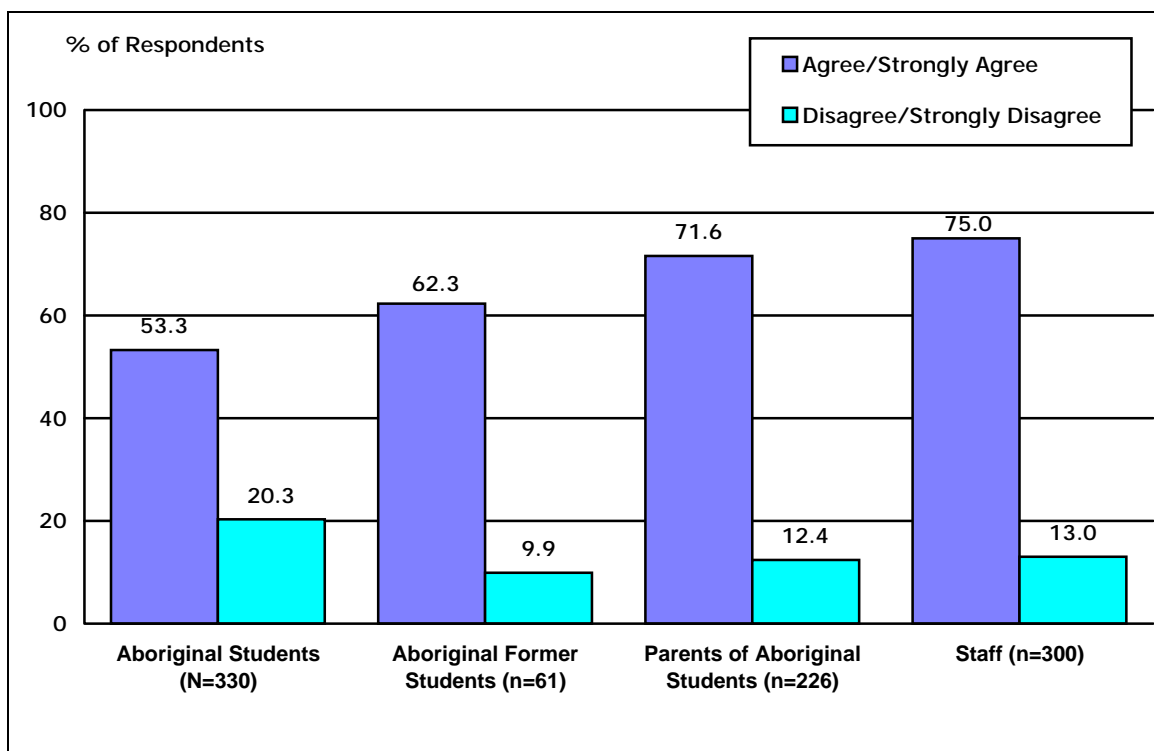
- 4.1 *Treatment of Aboriginal Students in Nechako Lakes District Schools*
- 4.2 *Perceptions of Racism in Nechako Lakes District Schools*

### 4.1 Treatment of Aboriginal Students in Nechako Lakes District Schools

Analysis of the survey data highlights the differences in opinion, and the consistencies, among survey participants (students, parents and school staff) in terms of treatment of students. For example, as illustrated in Chart 4-1:

- There was generally strong agreement among staff and parents of Aboriginal students that school staff treated Aboriginal students equally: 71.6% of parents and 75.0% of staff agreed or strongly agreed that Aboriginal students were treated the same as other students by the school staff.
- Aboriginal staff had lower levels of agreement (59.6% agreed/strongly agreed) than did non-Aboriginal staff (78.0% agreed/strongly agreed) that Aboriginal students were treated the same as other students by staff, and secondary staff had lower levels of agreement than did elementary staff (63.6% and 83.3%, respectively).
- Levels of agreement were also consistent across Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal current students when asked whether he/she was treated the same as other students by school teachers (not specifically about Aboriginal students): Of the Aboriginal students, 53.3% agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, and of the non-Aboriginal students, 54.6% agreed or strongly agreed with the statement. It is notable that Aboriginal intermediate students had higher levels of agreement (59.9% agreed/strongly agreed) than did Aboriginal secondary students (49.8% agreed/strongly agreed).

**Chart 4-1**  
**Attitudes about Whether Aboriginal Students Receive the Same Treatment as Other Students from Nechako Lakes School Staff – by Target Group**



n = 1,466

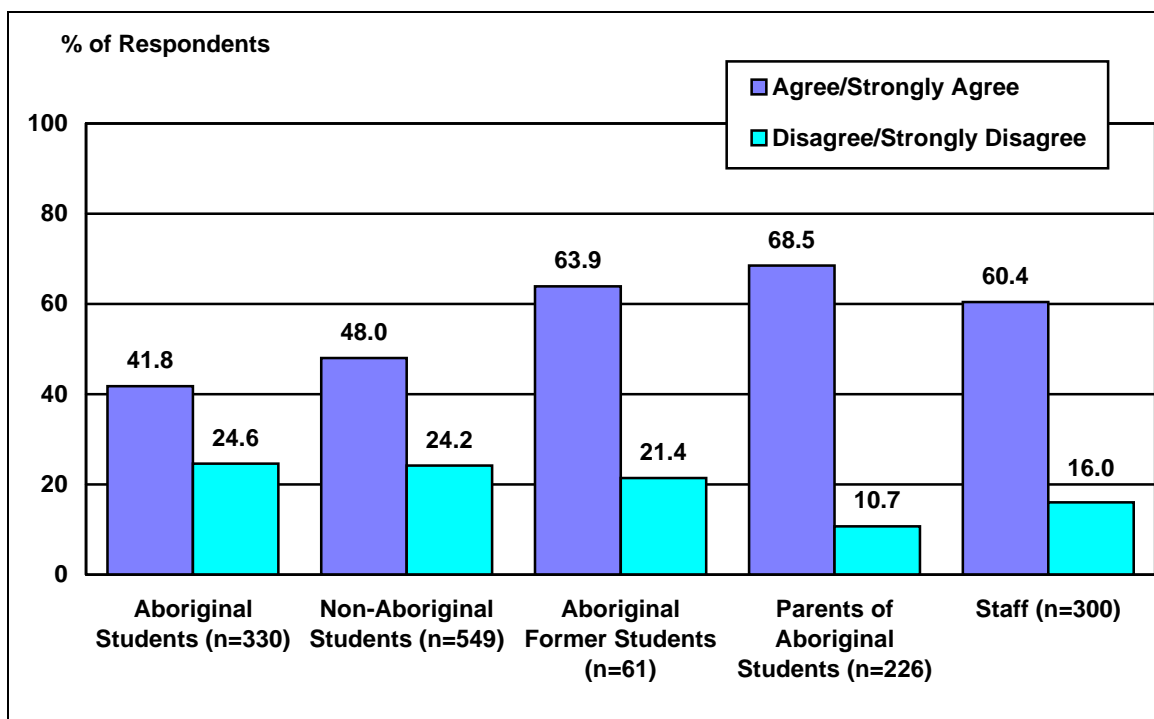
Whereas approximately two-thirds of staff (60.4%) and parents of Aboriginal students (68.5%) agreed or strongly agreed that Aboriginal students were treated the same *by other students*, a lower proportion of Aboriginal intermediate students (41.9%) and Aboriginal secondary students (41.8%) agreed or strongly agreed with this statement.

Interestingly, there was little difference in opinion between Aboriginal and *non*-Aboriginal students: Compared to the 41.8% agreement level of the Aboriginal students, a similar proportion (48.0%) of *non*-Aboriginal students agreed or strongly agreed that he/she was treated the same as other students in the school, by other students.

Again, there was a difference in opinion between elementary and secondary staff: 71.6% of elementary staff responded that they agreed or strongly agreed that Aboriginal students are treated the same as others by students, yet only 45.7% of secondary staff agreed or strongly agreed with the statement.

Chart 4-2 presents a comparison of the opinions of some of these groups on this issue.

**Chart 4-2**  
**Opinions on Equality of Student Treatment from Other Students,**  
**by Target Group**



n = 1,466

Table 4-1 contains, across target groups, the levels of agreement with additional survey items related to treatment of Aboriginal students. In terms of being taught to respect others, feeling welcome at school, and feeling welcome to participate in activities outside the class, all response groups had relatively high levels of agreement. There were notable similarities between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students, with the exception of the Aboriginal secondary students' levels of agreement that they felt welcome to participate in activities outside of class: Of the *non*-Aboriginal students, 72.2% agreed or strongly agreed that they felt welcome to participate in activities outside of class, whereas only 51.1% of Aboriginal secondary students agreed or strongly agreed correspondingly. From information gathered during the Aboriginal student focus groups and from student survey comments, the more competitive nature of activities in secondary school, as opposed to elementary school, may contribute to this difference. Comments included:

*"After school sports should be open to everyone, not just people who are good at them."*

*"I think they should allow more people to participate nomatter what their race."*

**Table 4-1**  
**Treatment of Aboriginal Students**  
**Views Across Target Groups (% Agree/Strongly Agree)**

	Aboriginal Students		Non-Aboriginal Students	Aboriginal Former Students
	Intermediate	Secondary		
Your school teaches/ taught you to respect others	71.8%	50.7%	59.0%	52.5%
You felt welcome at your school	67.6%	62.4%	63.7%	73.8%
You felt welcome to participate in activities outside of class	68.4%	51.1%	72.2%	73.7%

n = 974

#### **4.2 Perceptions of Racism in Nechako Lakes District Schools**

Questions were included in the student, parent and staff surveys to ascertain the extent to which respondents considered racism to be an issue in Nechako Lakes schools. In addition, students were asked about their satisfaction with the way racism was addressed in their school. Survey data indicates that:

- Perceptions of the extent of racism in their school varied across respondent groups. Perceptions of racism as a problem (to some or a great extent) ranged from 29.0% for Aboriginal intermediate students to 54.0% for parents of Aboriginal students. Table 4-2 shows the levels of perceived racism across the various respondent groups. Evidently, the non-Aboriginal students have perceptions similar to those of Aboriginal secondary and former students regarding the levels of racism in their schools, as approximately half of each of these groups saw racism as a problem to some or a great extent.
- The differences in opinion among elementary and secondary staff (not shown in table) mirrored those of Aboriginal intermediate and secondary students. While 25.0% of elementary staff felt that racism was a problem in their school to some or a great extent, 59.3% of secondary staff held the same opinion about their school.

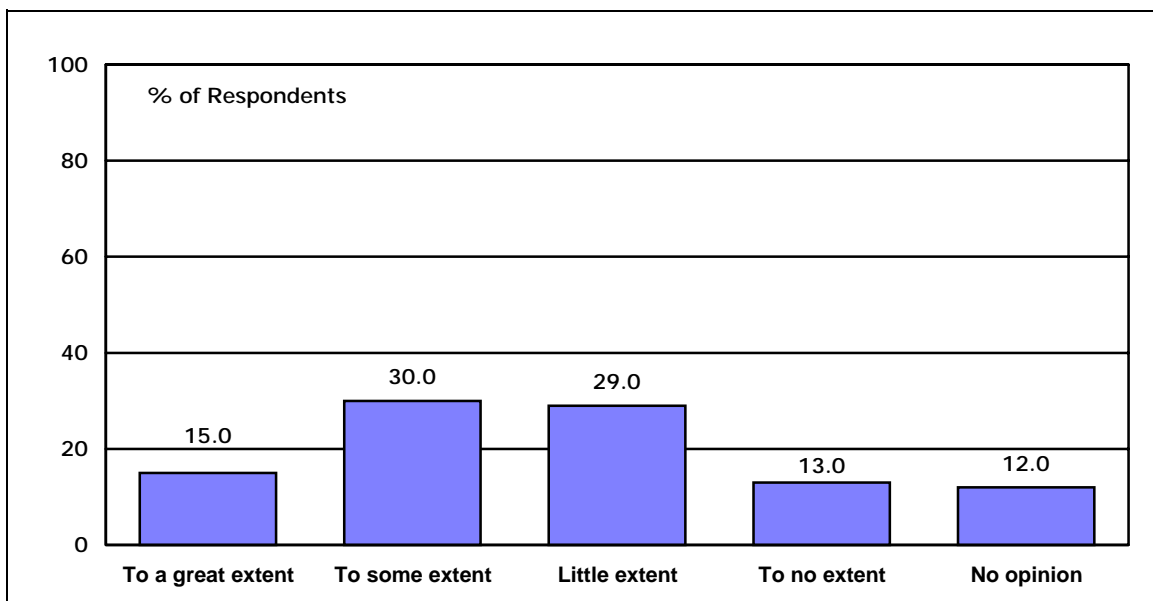
**Table 4-2**  
**Extent to Which Respondents Consider Racism**  
**to be a Problem in their School**

View/Group	Parents of Aboriginal Students	Aboriginal Students			Non-Aboriginal Students	Staff
		Intermediate	Secondary	Former		
To a great extent	20.8%	14.5%	19.2%	11.5%	17.7%	5.3%
To some extent	33.2%	14.5%	31.9%	41.0%	27.9%	33.3%
To a little extent	28.8%	29.1%	23.0%	37.7%	30.2%	30.0%
To no extent	14.2%	17.1%	8.5%	9.8%	9.1%	23.3%
Don't know/No opinion/No response	3.1%	24.8%	17.4%	0.0%	15.1%	8.0%
% Some/great extent	54.0%	29.0%	51.1%	52.5%	45.6%	38.6%

n = 1,466

Overall perception of the extent of racism in the Nechako Lakes District schools is highlighted in Chart 4-3.

**Chart 4-3**  
**Extent to Which Respondents Consider Racism to be a Problem in Their School**  
**Combined Response**

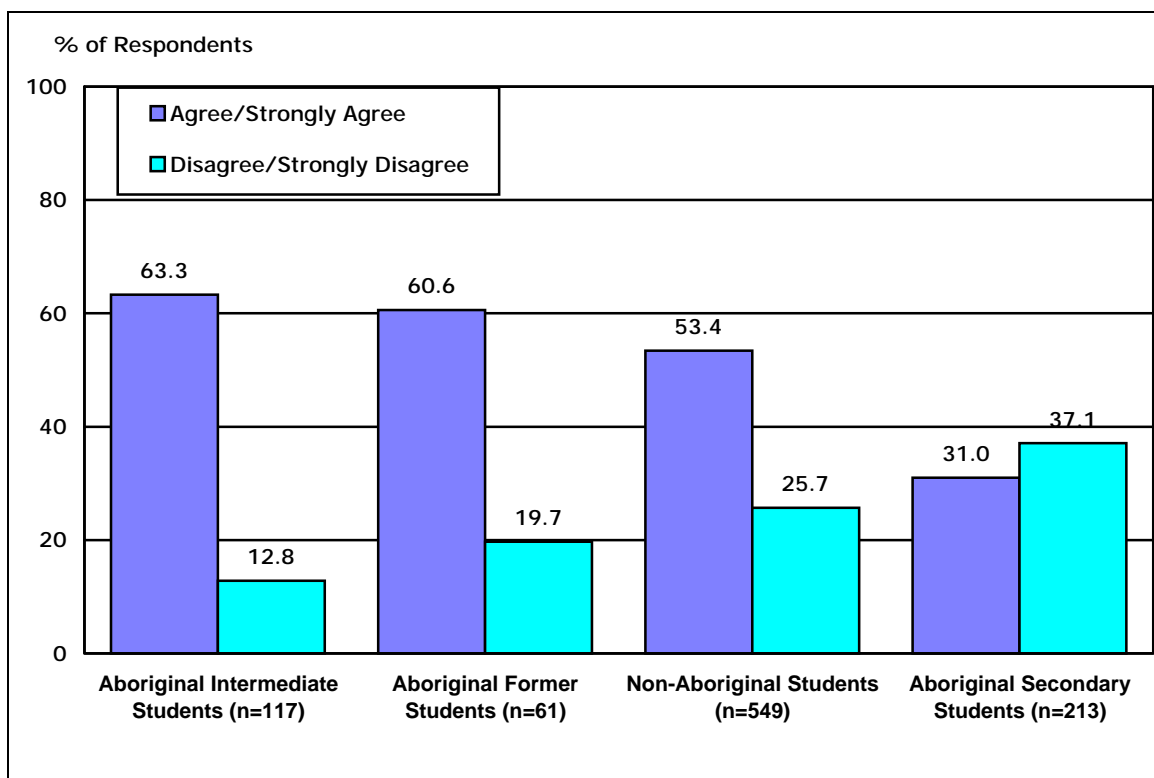


n = 1,466 (parents, staff and Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students)

In addition, current and former student respondents were asked about their satisfaction with the way racism was addressed in their school. Illustrated in Chart 4-4 are the highlights of the differences between groups. Aboriginal intermediate students had the highest level of agreement that they were satisfied with the way racism is addressed in their schools (63.3% agreed/strongly agreed), and Aboriginal secondary students had the lowest level of agreement with this statement (31.0% agreed/strongly agreed). As the *Aboriginal Education Needs Assessment Project* is not a longitudinal study, it is difficult to speculate whether the differences in perceptions of racism between elementary and secondary schools is the result of the successes of programs instituted at the elementary school level, or the result of increased racism as students get older.



**Chart 4-4**  
**Satisfied with Way Racism is Addressed in School**  
**Views Across Target Groups (% Agree/Strongly Agree)**



n = 940

Overall, the comments received from respondents regarding racism indicated that it occurs in varying degrees and stems from a variety of sources (students, teachers, parents and community). It was also clear from the comments that students from a variety of cultures were subjected to racism. A sample of staff comments with regard to this issue have been provided below:

*"The racism in the school is obvious and is directed both at Aboriginal students as well as back to white students."*

*"Programs and activities should be based on need, not on race. This [activities and programs exclusive to First Nations] does not help improve relationships and understanding between Native and non-Native students."*

Parents voiced similar concerns:

*"The racism at the school is very general. It is not limited to one race; just to anyone who is different. Visible minorities appear to be the target. Students are stereotyped based on appearance."*

*"They should have more programs to promote multiculturalism."*

*"There is still enough racism to be a concern. White people are picking on non-white people and vice versa."*

## SECTION 5: COMMUNICATION WITH PARENTS AND ABORIGINAL COMMUNITIES

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Several questions were included in the parent and staff surveys to ascertain perceptions and ideas about parent communication and Aboriginal parental involvement in the school system. Both groups were asked to comment on several issues including:

- *satisfaction with teacher-parent communication;*
- *extent to which parent input is valued at parent-teacher meetings;*
- *provision of sufficient information about school events, programs and accomplishments to parents;*
- *satisfaction with the level of support and input received from Aboriginal parents (staff only);*
- *ease of contact between school and parent;*
- *provision of information about student progress; and,*
- *Aboriginal parents serving as a resource for schools.*

This section of the report is comprised of two parts:

- 5.1 *Aboriginal Communication and Interaction with Nechako Lakes District Schools*
- 5.2 *Some Scope to Enhance the Use of Aboriginal Parents/Individuals as Resources*

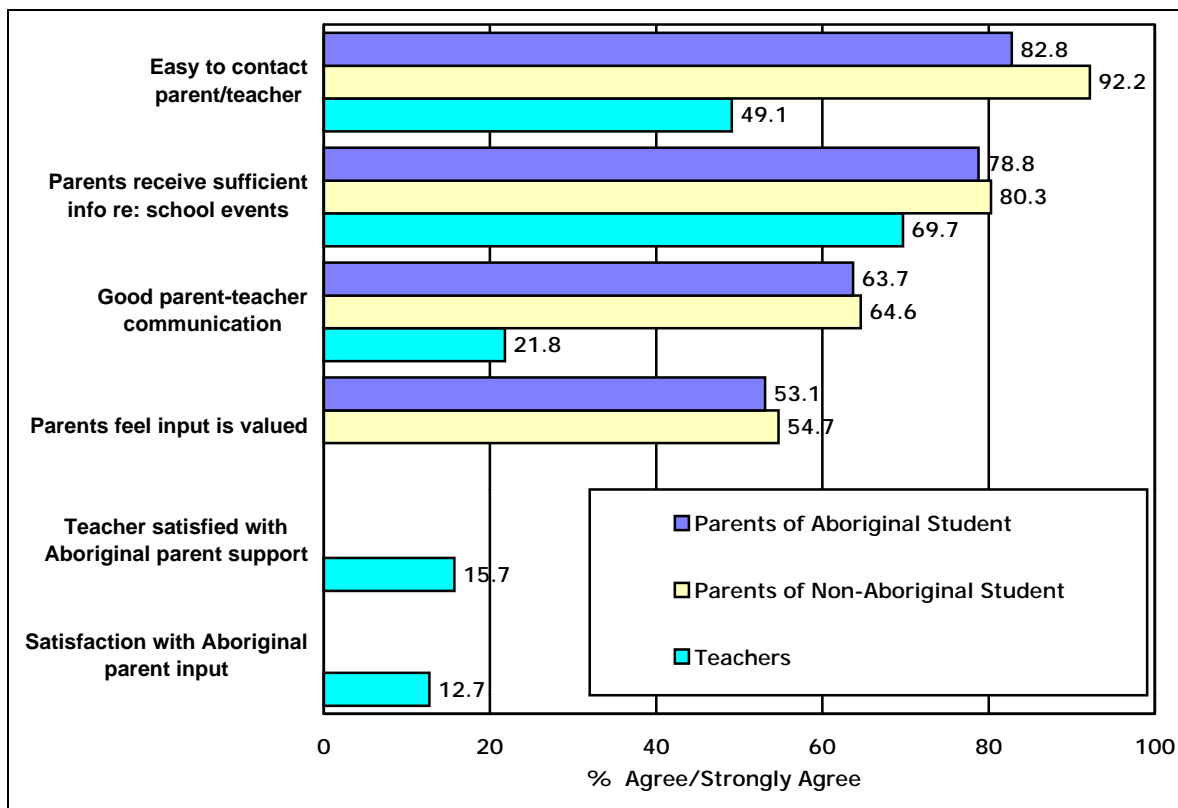
### **5.1 Aboriginal Communication and Interaction with Nechako Lakes District Schools**

As highlighted in Chart 5-1, there was a marked difference in opinion regarding several communication issues, for example:

- The largest divergence in opinion occurred between parents and teachers on the issue of parent-teacher communication. While two-thirds (63.7%) of parents of Aboriginal students agreed or strongly agreed that they were satisfied with the communication they had with their child's teacher, only 21.8% of teachers were correspondingly satisfied with the communication they had with Aboriginal parents. Among the parents of Aboriginal students, parents of elementary students had higher levels of agreement that they were satisfied with parent-teacher communication than did parents of secondary students (72.4% agreed or strongly agreed, versus 54.0%).
- A similar divergence in opinion occurred between parents of Aboriginal students and teachers regarding ease of parent-teacher contact. Whereas 82.8% of parents of Aboriginal children agreed or strongly agreed that they felt welcome to contact their child's teacher when necessary, only 49.1% of teachers agreed or strongly agreed that they could easily contact Aboriginal parents when needed.
- The majority of parents of Aboriginal students (78.8%) agreed or strongly agreed that they received enough information about school events, programs and

- accomplishments at their child's school, and 69.7% of teachers agreed or strongly agreed that parents received enough of this information.
- Over three-quarters (79.2%) of parents of Aboriginal students were satisfied with the amount of information they received from the school regarding their child's progress, and 63.7% of school teachers/administrative staff were satisfied with the way Aboriginal parents received this information. Overall, 84.0% of elementary and 69.7% of secondary Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal parents agreed or strongly agreed that they were satisfied with the information they received about their child's progress (not shown in Chart 5-1).
  - Over one-half (57.6%) of teachers *disagreed or strongly disagreed* that they were satisfied with the support received from Aboriginal parents, and only 15.7% agreed or strongly agreed that Aboriginal parental support was satisfactory.
  - Only a small proportion (12.7%) of teachers were satisfied with Aboriginal parent participation in parent/teacher meetings.
  - Among the parent sample surveyed, approximately one-half (53.1%) of parents of Aboriginal students agreed/strongly agreed that their input was valued at parent/teacher meetings, which differed very little from the results elicited from the parents of non-Aboriginal students (54.7% agreed/strongly agreed).

**Chart 5-1**  
**Satisfaction With Communication/Interaction of Parents**  
**With Nechako Lakes Schools – Parents and Teachers\***



n = 226 parents of Aboriginal students/243 parents of non-Aboriginal students/165 instructional staff

\*Teachers were asked these questions specifically about their communication with *Aboriginal* parents.

A number of suggestions were provided by parents and staff on how the communication between both groups could be enhanced. The two most mentioned themes by parents of Aboriginal students who provided comments on improving communication were increased contact in general (32.7%), and sooner contact from teachers or the school when problems begin to arise (25.7%). Responses from parents of Aboriginal students were very similar to responses from parents of non-Aboriginal students.

A sampling of parent comments:

*"I suggest that the school information letters be mailed out instead of sending them home with the students."*

*I suggest contacting the parent earlier when there is a problem rather than waiting for the interim report."*

*"The agendas we have are working well. They have made a big difference."*

*"There should be more time for parent-teacher meetings. I went in to talk with the teacher and it seemed very rushed. I was not able to find out the things I wanted to."*

*"I don't like the style of the report card. Things are judged to be 'very poor' or 'poor'. I'd like to know what the expectations are if things are not done very well. What*

*could I do at home? What is required to be learned for grade 3? That would all be useful information to me.”*

And staff comments:

*“Efforts must be made to go to parents and meet them on their own terms. They must be willing to accommodate this also.”*

*“Some of the difficulty is in the lack of phone numbers [phones] for some parents. Individual meetings seem more ‘successful’ than a parent-teacher night.”*

*“Education from the Bands about the importance of involvement in their [the parents] child’s education may help.”*

*“We have been exploring this in the past couple of years. We held a potluck supper on the reserve which was well received and attended. Our Native Home School Coordinator has been essential to this process.”*

**Table 5-1  
Suggestions for Improving Communication Between  
Schools and Aboriginal Parents**

<b>Suggestions from Parents</b>	<b>% of Responses</b>
In general, more contact from teachers/school	32.7%
Sooner contact from teacher when problems begin to arise	25.7%
Currently satisfied	16.8%
Encourage more involvement from parents	8.9%
Mail or email information home, rather than send with child	6.9%
Other	8.9%
<b>Suggestions from Staff</b>	
Parental participation/involvement in child’s education	28.1%
More/better attendance at parent-teacher meetings	18.0%
Communication through Bands, going to reserves	14.8%
Better use of Home School Coordinators/Liaisons	14.8%
Working phones available	10.9%
More parental communication (calling school re absence, etc.)	9.4%
Parents need to read newsletters, and respond to them	7.0%
Newsletters, phone calls, email	5.5%
Better understanding of Aboriginal culture	3.1%
Other	21.9%

\*Percentages based on percentage of responses. n=128 staff and 100 parents

## **5.2 Some Scope to Enhance the Use of Aboriginal Parents/Individuals as Resources**

School staff and parents were asked to indicate the extent to which Aboriginal parents and/or Aboriginal people were utilized as a resource for Aboriginal issues in their particular classroom. Specifically, staff and/or Aboriginal parents were asked to comment on their experience with the following:

- *had the Aboriginal parent been asked to serve as a resource for Aboriginal issues for the class or school?*
- *had an Aboriginal parent/individual ever offered to serve as a resource for Aboriginal issues for the class or school?*
- *was the parent a member of the Parent Advisory Committee?*

The results of the survey suggest that there is scope to enhance the utilization of the Aboriginal community as a resource for Aboriginal issues in Nechako Lakes schools. For example:

- As highlighted in Table 5-2, over one-half of the teachers and administrative officers (58.0%) in the selected schools had asked an Aboriginal parent to serve as a resource for Aboriginal issues in their particular classroom, although only 23.8% of elementary parents and 13.5% of the secondary parents responded that they had been asked. Similarly, only a low proportion (37.0%) of teachers/staff could recall an Aboriginal parent/individual having offered to serve as a resource for Aboriginal issues for their class or school, and only 21.9% of secondary parents and 11.7% of elementary parents stated that they had ever offered to provide additional information about Aboriginal issues for their child's class or school.

**Table 5-2**  
**Utilization of Parents as an Aboriginal Resource in**  
**Nechako Lakes Schools – Aboriginal Parents and Staff/Teachers**

<b>Issue/Response</b>	<b>Parent of Elementary Student</b>	<b>Parent of Secondary Student</b>	<b>Staff</b>
Has staff member asked Aboriginal parent to serve as resource?			
Yes	23.8%	13.5%	58.0%
No	75.2%	84.7%	27.7%
Unsure	1.0%	0.9%	6.3%
Has an Aboriginal parent/member offered to serve as a resource person?			
Yes	21.9%	11.7%	37.0%
No	78.1%	87.4%	41.0%
Unsure	0.0%	0.9%	15.7%

n = 216 parents and 300 teachers/staff

- Only 4.8% of elementary parents, and 2.7% of secondary parents, stated that he/she was a member of the Parent Advisory Committee (PAC). In contrast, 14.8% of parents of non-Aboriginal students were members of Parent Advisory Committees.

Interestingly, when parents of Aboriginal students and parents of non-Aboriginal students were asked whether they knew what their child needed to graduate with a Dogwood Certificate, approximately the same proportion of parents responded positively (43.8% and 46.9%, respectively). As well, only slightly fewer parents of Aboriginal students than those of non-Aboriginal students responded that they had attended parent/teacher meetings (65.0% and 79.0%, respectively).

Parental and Aboriginal community involvement in the schools was an issue that was raised by many of the teachers, staff and administrators in the interviews and surveys conducted for this project. Comments indicated that increased parental and community Aboriginal involvement in the school system is a constructive and beneficial objective. One of the clearest issues brought forward in the *Aboriginal Education Needs Assessment Project* was the agreement level to the question "Schools should provide workshops to help Aboriginal parents understand the school system". Not only did 68.0% of teachers/staff agree or strongly agree that these workshops should be held, but 81.9% of parents of Aboriginal elementary students and 88.3% of secondary students agreed or strongly agreed with the provision of workshops. The workshops would likely have a higher attendance if held at a location other than the schools, as focus group and interview comments indicated a reticence of some Aboriginal parents to attend functions at the schools.

## SECTION 6: ABORIGINAL EDUCATION SUPPORT PROGRAMS

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A key objective of the *Aboriginal Education Needs Assessment Project* was to determine the level of awareness of existing Aboriginal education support programs, and to solicit opinions regarding potential changes or additional programs.

This section of the report will highlight the following:

- 6.1 *Current Awareness of Aboriginal Education Support Programs*
- 6.2 *Issues Concerning Aboriginal Education Support Programs*
- 6.3 *Views on Aboriginal Support Mechanisms: Native Tutorial Services, Counselling Services, and Other Support Services*

### **6.1 Current Awareness of Aboriginal Education Support Programs**

School staff, Aboriginal secondary students, and parents of Aboriginal students were asked about their familiarity with the Aboriginal support programs available in School District 91 including their awareness of the work and/or function of: Native Home School Coordinators, Native Classroom Assistants/Native Education Workers, Carrier Language Teachers, and the District Principal-Aboriginal Education. In addition, the school staff were asked about their level of familiarity with the First Nations Education Council. Below, and in Table 6-1, the awareness levels among respondents are summarized.

#### **Familiarity with Native Home School Coordinators**

- The results of the survey suggest that over one-half (54.4%) of parents of Aboriginal students, and the great majority of all staff members (82.3%), were familiar with the role of Home School Coordinators. However, only a small proportion of secondary students (28.6%) stated they were aware of the services provided by Home School Coordinators.
- Parents of elementary *and* secondary students had similar levels of awareness (52.4% and 56.8%, respectively) of Native Home School Coordinators.

#### **Familiarity with Native Classroom Assistants/Native Education Workers**

- Staff members were more familiar with Native Classroom Assistants (86.8% were familiar) than were parents (62.8%) and secondary students (52.1%).
- Approximately two-thirds of parents of elementary students and secondary students were aware of Native Classroom Assistants (65.7% and 58.6%, respectively).

#### **Familiarity with Carrier Language Teachers**

- More than three-quarters of staff (79.7%) and parents of Aboriginal students (79.6%) were familiar with Carrier Language teachers. As well, 62.0% of Aboriginal secondary students were familiar with Carrier Language teachers.



- Of the parents of Aboriginal students, those of secondary students had higher levels of familiarity with Carrier Language teachers than did those of elementary students (82.0% and 77.1%, respectively), although both groups had high levels of familiarity.

### **Awareness of the District Principal – Aboriginal Education**

- Only 22.1% of parents of Aboriginal students and 15.0% of Aboriginal secondary students, were familiar with the work of the District Principal – Aboriginal Education. Over half (54.9%) of staff respondents, however, were familiar with the work of the District Principal.

### **Familiarity with First Nations Education Council**

- Most survey respondents were not familiar with the work of the First Nations Education Council (FNEC). Of the parents, 54.0% of parents of Aboriginal students and 70.0% of parents of non-Aboriginal students were *not* familiar with the FNEC. Overall, 30.0% of staff respondents were not familiar with the FNEC, and 23.0% were “unsure”. Of the staff members who were of Aboriginal descent, 31.0% were unfamiliar with the FNEC, and 21.4% were “unsure”.

The highest proportion of comments about the function of and the work done by the various support programs referred to the benefits of these programs. Of all staff who gave comments, 26.0% spoke of the importance of these support services, and of the helpfulness to the school. Of the parental comments, 29.6% were general positive comments about these support services (including 8.6% specifically about the Carrier Language program). The following issues were also raised:

- Of those who commented, 16.3% of staff respondents and 13.3% of parent respondents stated that more information should be made available about the work and function of these support services.
- In addition, 8.9% of staff who provided comments on this issue felt that the support programs needed more parental support and involvement from Aboriginal parents.
- Notably, while only 8.1% of staff raised lack of training/education of Aboriginal support staff as an issue, 21.0% of parents commented that improved training was an issue of concern.

Typical comments included:

*“Home School Coordinators are essential in keeping contact with parents. The Language/Cultural program is beneficial, not only to First Nations students, but to others, in building pride and tolerance.”*

*Staff member*

*“[We] need a little handout/pamphlet discussing who’s who and what the job description consists of.”*

*Staff member*

*“The Native Classroom Assistants, when they are Native themselves, seem to get the kids’ attention and respect. They have a way with quietly dealing with the Native kids that doesn’t get the kids upset.”*

*Parent*

*“It would be good to have a letter or something from these people introducing themselves to the parents and explaining their functions or service.”*

*Parent*

*“They should hire more qualified people to work in these jobs.”*

*Parent*

*“They should make these programs available to all students.”*

*Parent*

The Carrier Language program was specifically praised by 8.6% of parental respondents, and 13.8% of staff respondents mentioned expansion or improvements to the program. Comments from the parents:

*“The Carrier language gives the children a bit of pride.”*

*“I think it’s really important that we have a Carrier language program in the schools, and that even more could be done.”*

And from staff members:

*“Language teachers – should be more history and the language teaching more intensified.”*

*We no longer have a Carrier teacher at our school and I think it’s a real shame. It was so valuable for everyone (Native and non-Native) when we had a Carrier program.”*

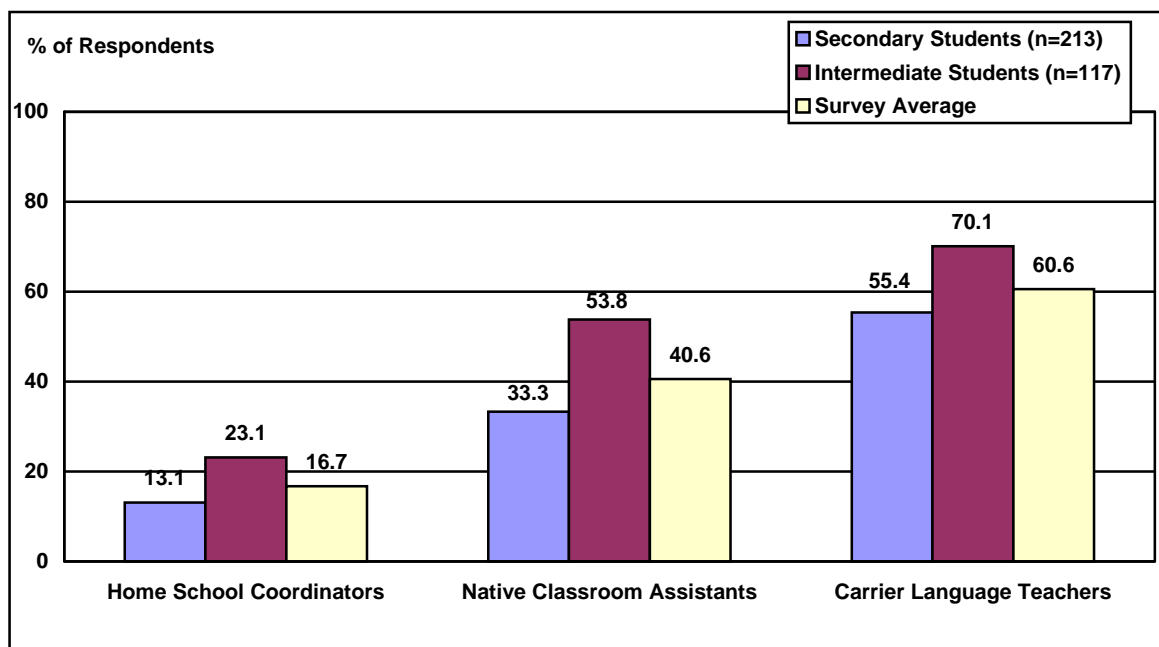
Table 6-1 encapsulates the levels of awareness among respondents of the various Aboriginal support mechanisms currently in place in SD 91 schools.

**Table 6-1**  
**Familiarity with Current Aboriginal Support Programs**  
**by Target Group**

<b>Awareness Level</b>	<b>Parents of Aboriginal Students (n=226)</b>	<b>Staff (n=300)</b>	<b>Aboriginal Students Grade 8-12 (n=213)</b>
<b>Native Home School Coordinators</b>			
Yes	54.4%	82.3%	26.8%
No	42.9%	9.0%	46.0%
Unsure	2.7%	6.3%	21.6%
<b>Native Classroom Assistants</b>			
Yes	62.8%	86.8%	52.1%
No	32.7%	5.6%	23.9%
Unsure	4.4%	6.9%	16.0%
<b>Carrier Language Teachers</b>			
Yes	79.6%	79.7%	62.0%
No	18.6%	8.3%	23.5%
Unsure	1.8%	9.0%	8.9%
<b>District Principal – Aboriginal Ed.</b>			
Yes	22.1%	54.9%	15.0%
No	72.6%	21.5%	44.6%
Unsure	5.3%	22.2%	32.9%
<b>First Nations Education Council</b>			
Yes	43.4%	41.0%	Not asked
No	54.0%	27.1%	Not asked
Unsure	2.7%	29.9%	Not asked

Overall, the Carrier Language program had the highest level of parental awareness (79.6% were familiar) of all the programs mentioned, although Home School Coordinators and Native Classroom Assistants/Education Workers also had relatively high levels of awareness (54.4% and 62.8%, respectively). This high level of awareness was mirrored in the responses of Aboriginal students when asked whether they had had any contact with Native Home School Coordinators, Native Classroom Assistants, and Carrier Language Teachers. As shown in Chart 6-1, the students had the highest level of contact with Carrier Language Teachers, and a higher proportion of intermediate students than secondary students had had contact with each of the support services.

**Chart 6-1**  
**Aboriginal Students who had Contact with Support Services**



Generally, respondents seemed satisfied with the function/work that Aboriginal programs provided, but thought that by both promoting Aboriginal programs and redefining roles/qualifications of Aboriginal program staff, the programs could only improve in the coming school year.

## **6.2 Issues Concerning Aboriginal Education Support Programs**

In addition to examining the awareness of current Aboriginal education programs, the *Aboriginal Education Needs Assessment Project* aimed to establish the perceived student tutorial and counseling needs.

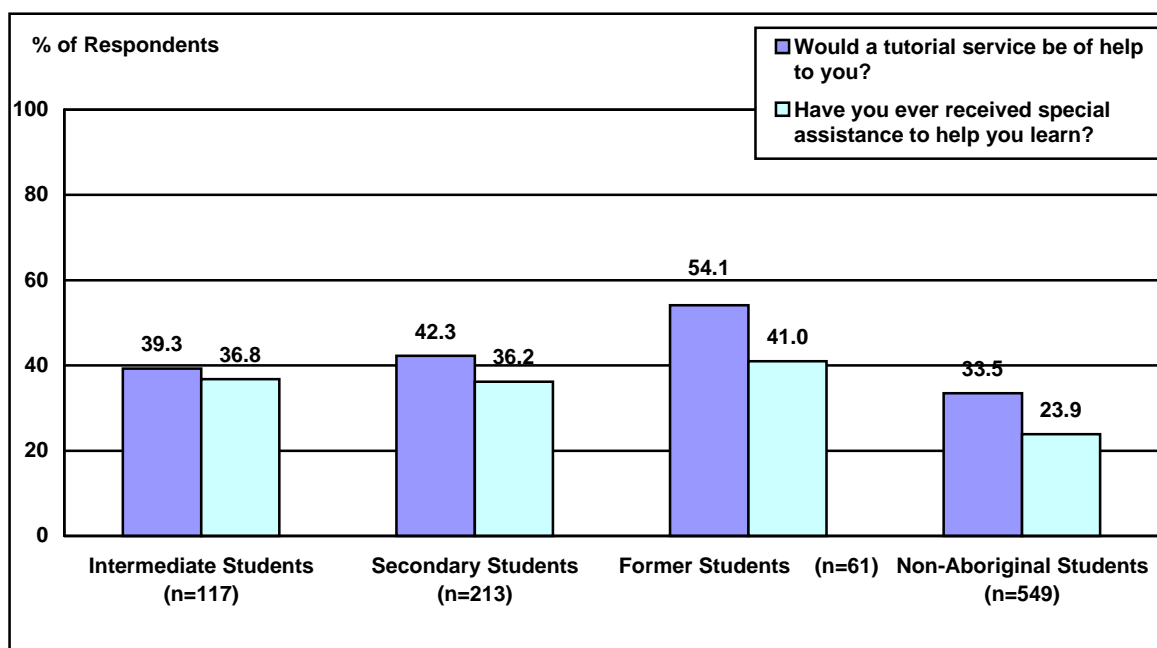
Current and former students were asked about their perceptions of the availability of help with schoolwork when needed, and whether a tutorial service would be beneficial. Presented in Table 6-2 are the student responses, which indicate there is scope for added tutorial services for the Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students.

**Table 6-2**  
**Need for Tutorial Services in Nechako Lakes Schools**  
**– Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal Students**

Issue/Response	Intermediate Aboriginal Students (n=117)	Secondary Aboriginal Students (n=213)	Aboriginal Former Students (n=61)	Non- Aboriginal Students (n=549)
Do you get help after school with your schoolwork?				
Yes	42.7%	27.7%	N/A	N/A
No	53.8%	66.7%	N/A	N/A
Unsure	3.4%	5.6%	N/A	N/A
If there was a place to get help with your school work, would you use it?				
Yes	49.6%	49.8%	N/A	N/A
No	26.5%	22.1%	N/A	N/A
Unsure	21.4%	23.9%	N/A	N/A
Would a tutorial service to help you with any problems you are having with your studies be of benefit to you?				
Yes	39.3%	42.3%	54.1%	33.5%
No	35.0%	17.8%	42.6%	30.1%
Unsure	23.1%	39.4%	3.3%	34.6%
Have you ever received special assistance to help you learn?				
Yes	36.8%	36.2%	41.0%	23.9%
No	51.3%	52.6%	57.4%	68.1%
Unsure	12.0%	10.8%	0.0%	7.1%

- Approximately one-half (42.7%) of intermediate students received help after school with their school work; only 27.7% of secondary students reported receiving help after school.
- Half of intermediate (49.6%) and secondary (49.8%) student respondents indicated that if they had a place to go to get help with their schoolwork, they would use it.
- As shown in Chart 6-2, for each student respondent group there was a gap between the proportion that agreed that a tutorial service would be of help, and the proportion that had actually received any special assistance. Although there is special assistance currently available, it may fall short of meeting the needs of the students. Indeed, while 65.8% of Aboriginal intermediate students and 57.8% of Aboriginal secondary students agreed or strongly agreed that they could get the extra help when they needed it, 13.7% of intermediate and 15.0% of secondary Aboriginal students disagreed or strongly disagreed. This response was similar to that of the non-Aboriginal students, where 12.7% disagreed or strongly disagreed that they could get extra help when they needed it.

**Chart 6-2**  
**Tutorial Service Usage/Potential Usage**  
**Across All Student Respondent Groups**



### **6.3 Views on Aboriginal Support Mechanisms: Native Tutorial Services, Counselling Services, and Other Support Mechanisms**

Aboriginal secondary and former students had relatively high levels of agreement that they were satisfied with career planning counseling in their schools (respectively, 55.4% and 70.5% agreed/strongly agreed). However, they reported lower rates of satisfaction with personal counseling at their schools; just 28.6% of secondary students and 50.9% of former students agreed or strongly agreed that they were satisfied with this service. The *Aboriginal Education Needs Assessment Project* further explored parent and staff views on the provision of Native tutorial services, counselling services, and other support services.

Staff and parents of Aboriginal students were asked;

- Should community-based tutorial services be made available for Aboriginal students?
- Should District Aboriginal counsellor services be made available for Aboriginal students?
- Should enhanced bus services be made available for Aboriginal students?

In addition, parents were asked whether they thought their child would use these services if they were made available. The results are highlighted in Table 6-3 below:

**Table 6-3**  
**Community-Based Tutorial Service, District Aboriginal Counseling Services, and Enhanced Bus Services – Parent and Staff Opinion**

<b>Issue/Response</b>	<b>Parents of Elementary Ab. Students (n=105)</b>	<b>Parents of Secondary Ab. Students (n=111)</b>	<b>Staff (n=300)</b>
Should community-based tutorial services be made available to Aboriginal students?			
Yes	90.5%	91.9%	57.7%
No	3.8%	3.6%	14.3%
Unsure	5.7%	3.6%	18.7%
Should a District Aboriginal Counsellor Service be made available to Aboriginal students?			
Yes	84.8%	91.0%	61.0%
No	4.8%	4.5%	14.0%
Unsure	9.5%	3.6%	16.7%
Should enhanced bus services be made available to Aboriginal students?			
Yes	76.2%	82.9%	34.3%
No	15.2%	12.6%	33.0%
Unsure	7.6%	2.7%	23.0%
Would your child personally make use of community-based tutorial services?			
Yes	80.0%	78.4%	N/A
No	15.2%	10.8%	N/A
Unsure	4.8%	9.9%	N/A
Would your child personally make use of a District Aboriginal Counsellor Service?			
Yes	68.6%	68.5%	N/A
No	18.1%	18.9%	N/A
Unsure	12.4%	11.7%	N/A
Would your child personally make use of enhanced bus services?			
Yes	65.7%	66.7%	N/A
No	28.6%	27.9%	N/A
Unsure	5.7%	4.5%	N/A

Results of the surveys of staff and parents of Aboriginal students indicated that there were high levels of support for Aboriginal support mechanisms such as provision of a tutorial service and/or District Aboriginal Counsellor Service, especially among parents. For example:

- The majority of parents (90.5% to 91.9%) and over half of the staff respondents (57.7%) were supportive of establishing a tutorial service for Aboriginal students. Also, the majority (78.4% to 80.0%) of Aboriginal parents stated that their child would make use of such a service.

- Parents (84.8% to 91.0%) and staff (61.0%) were also supportive of the provision of a District Aboriginal Counsellor Service for Aboriginal students, and over two-thirds (68.6%) of parents stated that their child, would access the service. Only 14.0% of staff felt a counseling service should not be provided.
- Parents were much more supportive of enhanced bus services than were staff. Over three-quarters of parents of Aboriginal elementary students (76.2%) and secondary students (82.9%) favoured enhanced bus services, yet only 34.3% of staff favoured enhancing this service. Approximately two-thirds of parents (65.7% of elementary and 66.7% of secondary parents) felt that their children would make use of enhanced bus services.

Table 6-4 offers highlights of respondent comments regarding the provision of tutorial, counseling and/or enhanced bus services to Aboriginal students.

**Table 6-4**  
**Respondent Comments on the Provision of**  
**Aboriginal Tutorial/Counselling/Enhanced Bus Services**  
**by Target Group\***

Comment	Parents (n=71)	Staff (n=160)
All students to receive services – no segregation	16.9%	45.0%
Need more/better qualified counsellors/personnel	32.4%	--
General positive: Yes, they are needed	7.0%	15.0%
We have these services already	--	8.8%
No, we don't need them/responsibility of the parents	--	8.1%
Need to better inform parents/guardians/public	7.0%	--
Providing only for Aboriginal students promotes racism	--	6.9%
Funding issues: Where will funding come from?	--	3.8%
Other	36.7%	18.8%

\*Not all parent and staff respondents provided comments, and respondents could provide more than one comment.

As shown in the table, of the staff and parent respondents who provided a comment, a significant proportion (16.9% of parents and 45.0% of staff) felt that all students should have access to any services offered, and that segregation of tutorial, counselling, and bus services should not occur on the basis of ethnicity. An additional 6.9% of staff who provided a comment to this question stated that providing special services restricted to Aboriginal students promotes racism.

A sample of respondent comments on the provision of tutorial, counselling, and enhanced bus services for Aboriginal students is provided below:

*"Yes for tutorial services if available for any needy student."*

*Staff member*

*"If there is enhanced bus service, this should be available to all district children, many of whom live too far from school to participate in extracurricular activities."*

*Staff member*

*"All of these things should be available to all students in the school."*



*Staff member*

*"I worry when services and adjustments to courses and programs are provided for Aboriginal students. All students must be looked at individually so their needs can be met. I believe that we can always learn more about cultures other than our own."*

*Staff Member*

In addition to concerns about providing services equally for Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students, 32.4% of parents who responded to this question expressed a desire for more or improved counselling services. A sample of parents' comments is included below:

*"More services would be better. Anything to get them interested in learning and spending time in school."*

*Parent*

*"I think there should be more counselling to give them better self esteem; just learning how to read properly would do wonders for them, but they kind of start out with a disadvantage and it never gets better before it's too late."*

*Parent*

*"Services should be made available to all students, regardless of race. Cross-culture awareness is vital."*

*Parent*

As well as providing comments and feedback on the provision of tutorial, counselling, and enhanced bus services for Aboriginal learners, parents and staff were asked if there were other specific Aboriginal support services that they thought should be made available in the District.

- Of the other support services suggested, increasing the amount of Aboriginal cultural and language activities/content was the most-mentioned support service identified by parents of Aboriginal students (39.4%) and staff (21.1%) as a necessary District resource.
- Support was also given to increasing the availability of counselling services and personnel in the District (18.1% of parents and 8.9% of staff), and to increasing the number of Aboriginal teachers and staff in the District (16.0% of parents and 6.7% of staff).

Table 6-5 highlights the various suggestions for additional support services offered by staff and Aboriginal parents who gave a response.

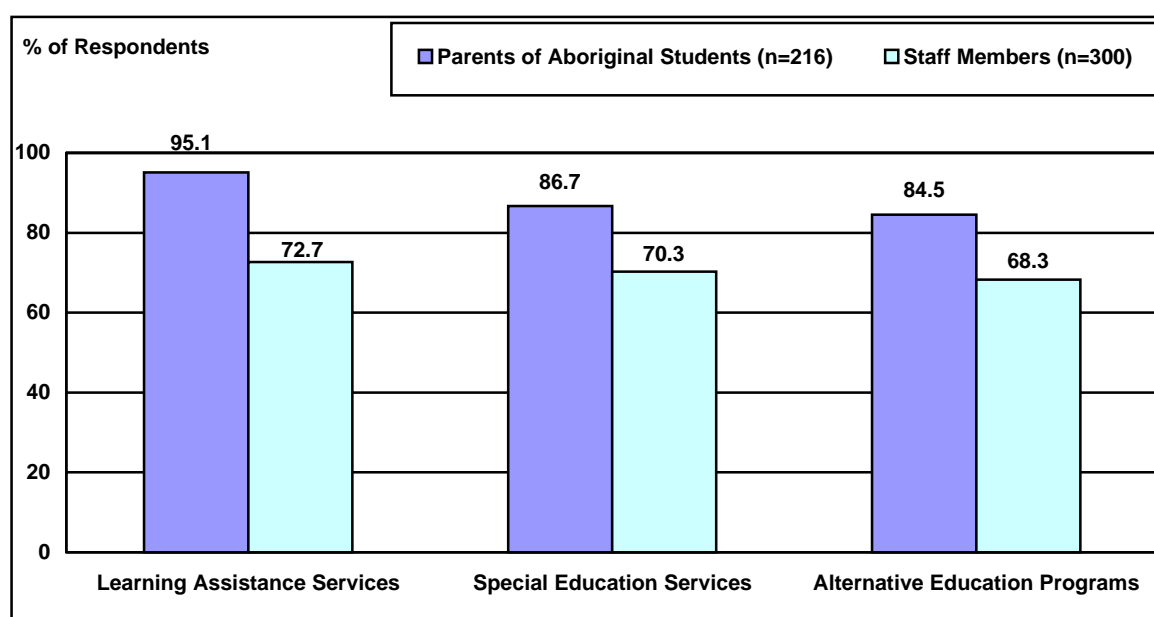
**Table 6-5**  
**Comments on Aboriginal Support Services that Should Be Offered**  
**by Target Group\***

Comment	Parents (n=94)	Staff (n=90)
More Aboriginal culture/Carrier language classes/activities	39.4%	21.1%
More counselling/more Aboriginal counsellor personnel	18.1%	8.9%
More/better Aboriginal/Carrier teachers/staff	16.0%	6.7%
Parenting classes (nutrition, bedtimes, etc.)	--	8.9%
More/better special education/Language Arts programs	--	8.9%
No more services are needed	--	7.8%
Pre-Kindergarten Head Start program	--	6.7%
Breakfast/meal program	--	5.6%
Extra-curricular activities	--	4.4%
Increased cross-cultural awareness	4.3%	--
Increased awareness of programs	4.3%	--
Other	14.9%	17.8%

\*Respondents could offer more than one suggestion

Results of the surveys of staff and parents of Aboriginal students indicated that there were high levels of support for Learning Assistance Services, Special Education Services, and Alternative Education Programs. A large majority of parents of Aboriginal students agreed that support should be provided for Learning Assistance Services (95.1%), Special Education Services (86.7%), and Alternative Education Programs (84.5%). As shown in Chart 6-3, over two-thirds of staff respondents also supported these initiatives.

**Chart 6-3**  
**Agreement for Provision of Special Support Services**  
**Staff and Parents (% Agree/Strongly Agree)**



In the surveys of other northern and interior school districts, the respondents spoke of a wide variety of programs that have been developed and are considered innovative or effective. For example: First Nations student advocacy done through Aboriginal Student Support Workers; integration of First Nations curriculum into standard classes such as Social Studies; Aboriginal early literacy programs; guided reading programs; career preparation programs; and First Nations Art and Design programs. When asked *why* they consider these programs to be most effective, the common themes were *involvement of the First Nations community and/or First Nations Education Council* and *incorporation of Aboriginal education programs and content into the classroom teaching environment*.

## SECTION 7: STAFFING AND TRAINING ISSUES

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One component of the *Aboriginal Education Needs Assessment Project* was to identify issues associated with staffing and training in Nechako Lakes District schools. In addition to including several questions on parent and staff surveys, information was obtained from the in-person interviews of key internal/external stakeholders as well as from the focus groups of Aboriginal students and parents.

The structure of this section is as follows:

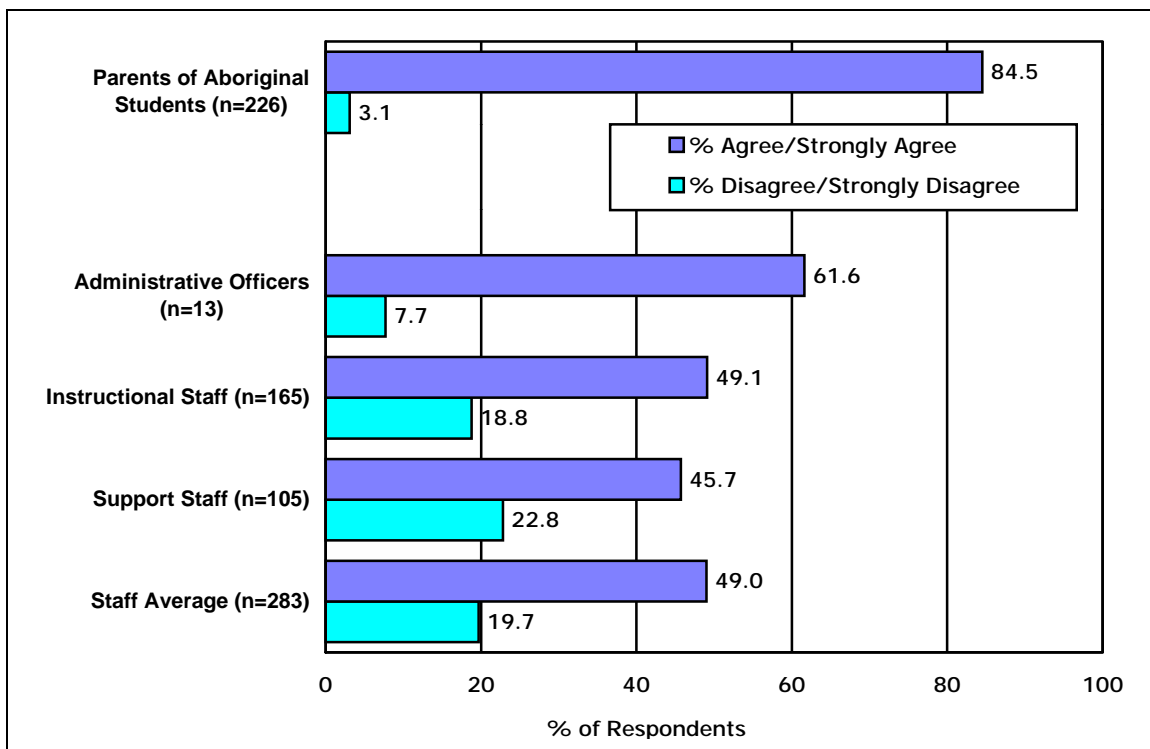
- 7.1 *Increasing the Proportion of Aboriginal Staff in Nechako Lakes District Schools*
- 7.2 *Determination of the Appropriate Number and Role of First Nations Support Staff: An Inter-District Comparison*
- 7.3 *Training and In-Service Issues*
- 7.4 *Summary – Staffing and Training Issues*

### **7.1 Increasing the Proportion of Aboriginal Staff in Nechako Lakes District Schools**

Aboriginal parents and school staff were asked to comment on the importance of actively recruiting Aboriginal candidates for teaching and educational staff positions in Nechako Lakes District schools. The in-person interviews and focus group discussions also included questions associated with Aboriginal representation as school/District staff.

- The results of the survey suggest that proactive recruitment of Aboriginal staff would be welcomed by the majority of parents (84.5%), but is a more uncertain issue among school staff, as less than one-half (49.0%) of staff agreed or strongly agreed that the District should be actively seeking to recruit Aboriginal teachers and staff. As highlighted in Chart 7-1, the proportion of school staff who thought that the schools should actively recruit Aboriginal teachers and staff ranged from 45.7% among school support staff to 61.6% among administrative officers surveyed. Overall, only 19.7% of staff members disagreed or strongly disagreed that the District should be actively seeking to recruit Aboriginal teachers and staff.

**Chart 7-1**  
**Extent to Which SD 91 Schools Should Actively Recruit Aboriginal Candidates for Teaching and Educational Staff Positions, by Target Group**



## **7.2 Determination of the Appropriate Number and Role of First Nations Support Staff: An Inter-District Comparison**

During the course of the *Needs Assessment Project*, a number of participants noted the large caseloads managed by First Nations Support Workers. Respondents also indicated that First Nations Support Workers often spent time on tasks that were not appropriate to their job description and, as a result, Aboriginal students and parents were not being adequately served. The problem of a high workload in the educational system, however, is not unique to First Nations support staff, as administrators pointed out that most support services, including counsellors and other learning assistance staff, were also carrying large workloads and experiencing the same demands as First Nations Support Workers.

To establish a benchmark upon which the District could evaluate the extent to which the Aboriginal community required additional First Nations Support Staff and the ways in which the community could best be served, R.A. Malatest & Associates Ltd. administered a brief telephone survey to First Nations education contacts in similar northern and interior school districts with similar demographic profiles. The results of this survey suggest that the role and staffing of First Nations Support Staff is not uniform across B.C. school districts. Table 7-1 presents an inter-district comparison of First Nations Support Staff caseloads in proportion to the number of Aboriginal students represented in each district.

In summary, it appears that each district surveyed has developed a model for First Nations Support Staff based on the requirements particular to its region, as roles of First Nations Support Staff appear to vary from region to region.

**Table 7-1  
Aboriginal Students in SD 91 – An Inter-District Comparison  
2000/2001 School Year**

District	Total # of Students <sup>1</sup>	# Students of Aboriginal Descent <sup>2</sup>	% of Student Pop. of Aboriginal Descent	Number of First Nations Support Staff (FNSS) <sup>3</sup>	# Aboriginal Students per FNSS
SD 91 (Nechako Lakes)	6,033	1,356	22.5%	22.5	60
SD27 (Cariboo-Chilcotin)	8,512	1,622	19.1%		
SD28 (Quesnel)	4,917	820	16.7%	9.0	91
SD52 (Prince Rupert)	3,509	1,763	50.2%	6.0	294
SD54 (Bulkley Valley)	3,052	528	17.3%	8.0	66
SD59 (Peace River South)	5,140	1,143	22.2%		
SD60 (Peace River North)	5,971	892	14.9%	12.1	74
SD81 (Fort Nelson)	1,247	316	25.3%		
SD82 (Coast Mountains)	7,349	2,100	28.6%	15.0	140
SD87 (Stikine)	398	257	64.6%		
<b>Average</b>	<b>46,128</b>	<b>10,797</b>	<b>23.4</b>	<b>72.6</b>	<b>148.7</b>

<sup>1</sup> Ministry of Education, Report #1580 source 1701

<sup>2</sup> Ministry of Education Report #1587C source 1701

<sup>3</sup> Full Time Equivalent staff, as reported in District questionnaires

### **7.3 Training and In-Service Issues**

Questions were included in the surveys of parents, students, and staff to ascertain the extent to which respondents felt that school staff could benefit from additional exposure to, or training in, Aboriginal activities. Survey data suggests that Nechako Lakes District school staff could benefit from increased exposure to Aboriginal culture, history and issues.

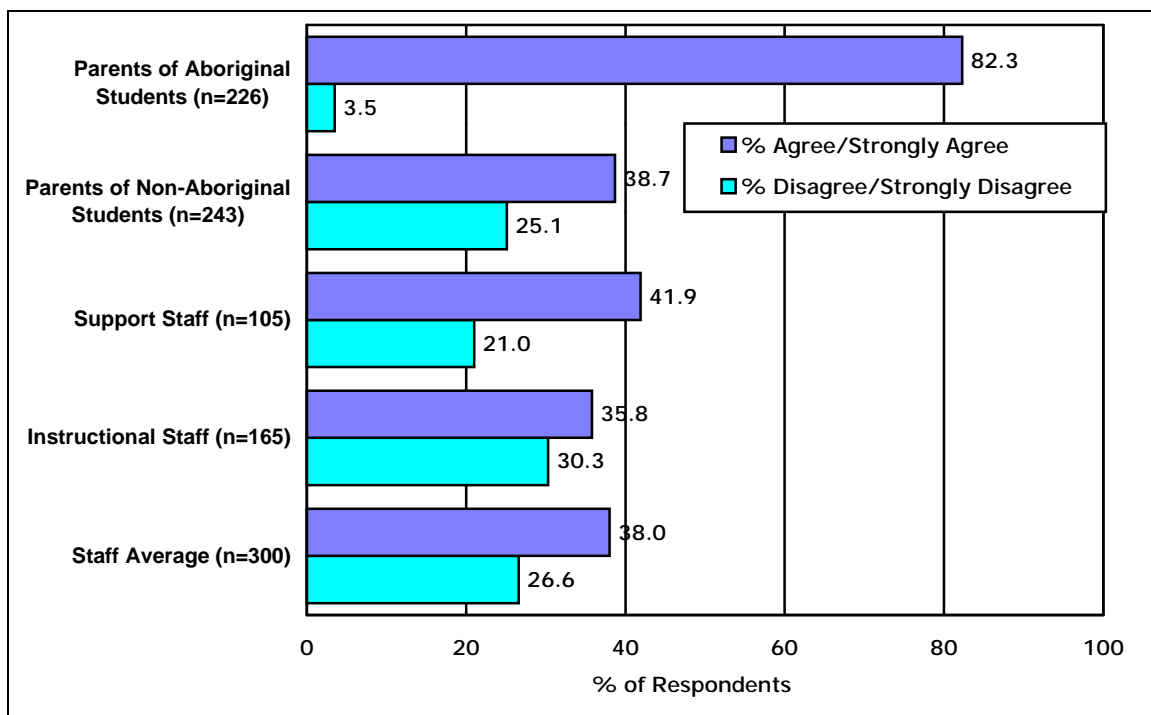
#### **Aboriginal Students Critical of Teacher's Knowledge of Aboriginal Culture**

- Of the 330 Aboriginal students who participated in the student survey, only 96 (29.1%) agreed or strongly agreed that their teachers knew a lot about Aboriginal culture. In comparison, approximately one-quarter (27.9%) of Aboriginal students felt that their teachers did not have a good understanding of Aboriginal culture. A much higher proportion of elementary students (46.2%) than secondary students (19.7%) agreed or strongly agreed that their teachers knew a lot about Aboriginal culture.

**Aboriginal Parents and Staff Saw Value in Greater Multicultural Awareness and Training for School/District Staff**

- Over one-third (38.0%) of overall school staff agreed or strongly agreed that greater emphasis should be placed on greater Aboriginal awareness and training. However, not all staff groups shared the same opinion; the proportion of instructional staff (35.8% agreed/strongly agreed) who were supportive of such training was below that of support staff (41.9%).
- Almost two-thirds (58.0%) of school staff indicated that they had good knowledge of Aboriginal studies. In comparison, only 12.7% of staff surveyed indicated that they were *not* knowledgeable about Aboriginal studies.
- As highlighted in Chart 7-2, 82.3% of Aboriginal parents surveyed agreed or strongly agreed that greater emphasis should be placed on Aboriginal awareness and training for school staff.

**Chart 7-2**  
**Support for Greater Aboriginal Awareness and Training for School/District Staff**  
**By Target Group**



In discussions with school staff and District administrative officers, there was consensus that more in-service activities should be allocated to multicultural awareness and training activities, particularly with respect to Aboriginal cultural and language issues. Others felt in-service activities on Aboriginal issues were adequate, but that more teachers should be participating in these activities.

#### **7.4 Summary – Staffing and Training Issues**

Research conducted for the *Needs Assessment Project* highlights the need for the Nechako Lakes District School District to take a proactive approach in promoting the use of Aboriginal people as resources, as well as providing for greater multicultural awareness and training among all school staff. The key findings regarding staffing and training issues are summarized below:

- Numerous study participants noted the need for Aboriginal students to have positive role models in the education system – as instructors, administrators and resource aides. More Aboriginal representation in school/District staff would partially address the concerns of racism and the lack of First Nations role models as voiced by some members of the Aboriginal community.
- Increasing the proportion of Aboriginal support staff, either First Nations Support Workers, First Nations teachers and/or counselling/tutorial services, would provide Aboriginal students with additional resources that are not currently provided or not provided adequately to students and/or parents. Promoting more awareness of Aboriginal support services would provide a focal point for the development of educational programs relevant to the Aboriginal community in the Nechako Lakes District area.
- The results of the surveys of Aboriginal students and Aboriginal parents suggest that Nechako Lakes District staff could benefit from a greater understanding of Aboriginal issues. For example, while 30.6% of students agreed or strongly agreed that their teachers had a good understanding of Aboriginal culture, 23.3% disagreed or strongly disagreed, and 27.9% were neutral. As well, more than three-quarters (82.3%) of parents thought that Nechako Lakes District staff could benefit from multicultural awareness and training activities.
- Staffing, training and in-service activities may be a contentious issue among current school staff. A significant proportion of school support staff (21.0%) and instructional staff (30.3%) did not see a requirement for greater multicultural awareness/training. Clearly, implementation of staffing programs to address the needs of Aboriginal learners will require consultation and dialogue with the affected staff groups.



## SECTION 8: TRANSITIONS, AND STUDENT RETENTION ISSUES

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Student transition and retention issues are key components of Aboriginal student success and improved graduation rates. In this section we will examine survey results for the following:

- 8.1 *Kindergarten entry*
- 8.2 *Transition from Elementary to Secondary School*
- 8.3 *Student Retention Issues*
  - 8.3.1 *School Attendance*
  - 8.3.2 *Aboriginal/Non-Aboriginal Mean Scores Comparison – 49 Issues*
  - 8.3.3 *Extracurricular Participation*
  - 8.3.4 *Computer Access*
- 8.4 *Transition from Secondary School*
  - 8.4.1 *Aboriginal Students Post-Secondary Aspirations*
  - 8.4.2 *Aboriginal Former Students Transition Experiences*
  - 8.4.3 *Aboriginal Former Students Post Secondary Outcomes*

### 8.1 **Kindergarten Entry**

Although there were no questions asked specific to kindergarten entry, the subject of school readiness was raised in several of the stakeholder interviews. Early childhood development and early literacy training, including pre-school programs on the reserve, were suggested as means of giving Aboriginal students a more positive start in the school system. It was suggested that education programs for young parents could also help bridge the way into kindergarten, to give students a more positive start. The subject of early childhood development, though not explored as extensively as other issues in this project, is a critical component of academic and social success for all children.

### 8.2 **Transition from Elementary to Secondary School**

The transition from elementary school to secondary school was identified as a concern during several stakeholder interviews, as it was noted that Aboriginal student attendance rates drop off from elementary school to secondary school. When students were asked about whether they felt that the transition went smoothly, the majority reported that they felt that it had gone smoothly. Additionally, there was not a large difference between responses of Aboriginal students and non-Aboriginal students.

- Of the secondary students surveyed, 58.6% of Aboriginal students and 66.2% of non-Aboriginal students agreed or strongly agreed that the transition had gone smoothly. Perhaps surprisingly, the highest level of agreement originated from Aboriginal grade 9 students (71.4% agreed or strongly agreed). Additionally, of all Aboriginal student respondents, only 11.7% *disagreed or strongly disagreed* that the transition had gone

smoothly. In comparison, 14.2% of all non-Aboriginal secondary students disagreed or strongly disagreed that the transition to secondary school had gone smoothly.

- When elementary school students were asked whether they looked forward to attending secondary school, 78.6% of Aboriginal and 72.0% of non-Aboriginal students agreed or strongly agreed. Both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal elementary students, however, had a high proportion of respondents who were not aware of what a “Dogwood Certificate” was (62.4% and 69.0%, respectively).

### **8.3 Student Retention: Comparison of Aboriginal Student Responses with those of Non-Aboriginal Students**

The design of the *Needs Assessment Project* facilitated the comparison of the opinions and perceptions held by a sample of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students in several SD 91 schools. The purpose of administering surveys to both groups was to highlight the similarities and differences in opinion between Aboriginal students and the general student population with respect to a range of educational issues that would likely impact student achievement and retention. Topics included issues such as student attendance, interaction with school staff, extent to which school teaches Aboriginal issues, extent to which the school addresses social issues, and assessment of satisfaction with specific courses and extracurricular activities.

#### **8.3.1 School Attendance**

Although there was not a wide disparity between self-reported attendance ratings for Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students overall (89.1% of Aboriginal students and 93.6% of non-Aboriginal students described their attendance as “Good” or “Very Good”), there were some notable points when intermediate and secondary student groups were examined separately.

- In the intermediate grades, only 2.6% of Aboriginal students and 3.0% of non-Aboriginal students consider their attendance to be “Not Good” or “Poor”;
- In the secondary grades, 9.9% of Aboriginal students and 7.5% of non-Aboriginal students consider their attendance to be “Not Good” or “Poor”;
- In comparing proportions of secondary students who rated their attendance as “Very Good”, 54.4% of non-Aboriginal students had this response, yet only 30.5% of Aboriginal students had this response. However, 55.4% of Aboriginal students rated their attendance as “Good” compared to 35.9% of non-Aboriginal students.
- Administrative data show that Aboriginal students have a higher absenteeism rate than do non-Aboriginal students, but their responses to the attendance question in the survey seem to indicate that many still consider their attendance to be at least “Good”.

Of the 41 Aboriginal secondary students who responded with suggestions for encouraging students to attend school more regularly, 24.4% addressed the difficulty of arriving on time for the first classes in the morning. (This was also the most-mentioned area by non-Aboriginal students). Some students suggested having classes begin later in the morning and, indeed, this strategy has been implemented in some North American schools. In

addition, about one-fifth (19.5%) of the Aboriginal students who responded to this question mentioned that making school more interesting would help with the attendance rates.

### 8.3.2 Aboriginal/Non-Aboriginal Mean Scores Comparison – 49 Issues

Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students selected to participate in the *Needs Assessment Project* were asked to comment, using a 5-point Likert type agreement scale, on 49 educational issues in Nechako Lakes District schools. Comparisons of the resulting mean scores of the attitudes of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students in SD 91 schools reveal the following:

- Of the 49 issues tested, there were significant differences in opinion between the two student groups for 19 issues. Issues in which there were statistically significant differences in opinion included opinions about:
  - the agreement that credit in Aboriginal studies should be a mandatory requirement for graduation (Aboriginal students had, on average, 82.6% more agreement with this statement than did non-Aboriginal students);
  - the wish for more inclusion of Aboriginal culture in the curriculum (Aboriginal students had, on average, 43.1% more agreement with this statement than did non-Aboriginal students);
  - the satisfaction with the subject areas of English and electives (Aboriginal students were 8.9% and 8.3% less satisfied than were non-Aboriginal students, respectively);
  - the way drug issues are addressed (Aboriginal students were 8.5% less satisfied than were non-Aboriginal students);
  - the extent to which students got along with principals at their school (Aboriginal students were, on average, 8.7% less satisfied than were non-Aboriginal students);
  - the extent to which the students got along with the teachers at their school (Aboriginal students were, on average, 5.9% less satisfied than were non-Aboriginal students);
  - the extent to which the students agreed that they talk to their parents or guardians about what goes on in school (on average, Aboriginal students had 5.4% less agreement than did non-Aboriginal students);
  - the extent to which the students agreed that they try to do their best in school (on average, Aboriginal students had 5.2% less agreement with this statement than did non-Aboriginal students); and
  - the extent to which the student felt he/she had the support of my family to do well in school (on average, Aboriginal students had 4.7% less agreement with this statement than did non-Aboriginal students).

As highlighted in Table 8-1, there were modest differences in opinion (greater than 5% difference) between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students for 17 of the 49 issues. However, there were *statistically significant* ( $p < .05$ ) differences in opinions with respect to 19 of the 49 issues associated with student relationship(s) with school staff, the ways social

issues are addressed, course satisfaction, extracurricular participation, and Aboriginal curriculum issues.

**Table 8-1**  
**Comparison of Aboriginal Student Opinion with Non-Aboriginal Student Opinion**  
**Selected Issues - Mean Score Basis<sup>1</sup>**

<b>Issue</b> (Issues with statistically significant differences are in bold)	<b>Aboriginal Students</b>	<b>Non-Aboriginal Students</b>	<b>% Difference</b>
<b>Credit in Aboriginal studies should be mandatory for graduation</b>	<b>2.63</b>	<b>1.44</b>	<b>82.6%</b>
<b>I would like more about Aboriginal culture to be taught at school</b>	<b>4.15</b>	<b>2.90</b>	<b>43.1%</b>
I look forward to going to secondary school	4.33	4.08	6.1%
<b>I know how well I am doing in school</b>	<b>3.63</b>	<b>3.80</b>	<b>-4.5%</b>
<b>I feel I have the support of my family to do well in school</b>	<b>4.27</b>	<b>4.48</b>	<b>-4.7%</b>
<b>I get along well with the support workers at my school</b>	<b>3.65</b>	<b>3.84</b>	<b>-4.9%</b>
I am satisfied with the way physical abuse issues are addressed	3.34	3.52	-5.1%
<b>I try to do my best in school</b>	<b>4.02</b>	<b>4.24</b>	<b>-5.2%</b>
<b>I get along well with custodians and bus drivers in my school</b>	<b>3.66</b>	<b>3.87</b>	<b>-5.4%</b>
<b>I talk to my parents/guardians about what is going on in school</b>	<b>3.48</b>	<b>3.68</b>	<b>-5.4%</b>
<b>The grades I get accurately reflect how I am doing in school</b>	<b>3.60</b>	<b>3.81</b>	<b>-5.5%</b>
<b>I am satisfied with the way alcohol abuse issues are addressed</b>	<b>3.36</b>	<b>3.56</b>	<b>-5.6%</b>
<b>My teachers know a lot about Aboriginal cultures</b>	<b>2.99</b>	<b>3.17</b>	<b>-5.7%</b>
<b>I get along well with the teachers at my school</b>	<b>3.53</b>	<b>3.75</b>	<b>-5.9%</b>
<b>I am satisfied with the way sexual abuse issues are addressed</b>	<b>3.31</b>	<b>3.53</b>	<b>-6.2%</b>
<b>I am satisfied with the way racism issues are addressed</b>	<b>3.24</b>	<b>3.46</b>	<b>-6.3%</b>
<b>I feel welcome to participate in activities outside my class</b>	<b>3.68</b>	<b>3.99</b>	<b>-7.8%</b>
<b>I am satisfied with the subject area of ELECTIVES</b>	<b>3.75</b>	<b>4.09</b>	<b>-8.3%</b>
<b>I am satisfied with the way drug abuse issues are addressed</b>	<b>3.35</b>	<b>3.65</b>	<b>-8.5%</b>
<b>I get along well with the principals at my school</b>	<b>3.37</b>	<b>3.69</b>	<b>-8.7%</b>
<b>I am satisfied with the subject area of ENGLISH</b>	<b>3.39</b>	<b>3.72</b>	<b>-8.9%</b>

n = 213 Aboriginal students and 549 non-Aboriginal students.

<sup>1</sup>Mean Score: 5 = strongly agree, 3 = neutral, 1 = strongly disagree. Excludes missing or no opinion responses.

The area of highest differentiation between the two student groups was the desire for inclusion of increased Aboriginal cultural and historical curriculum content. Lesser, though statistically significant, issues centred on areas where the Aboriginal students, on average, had lower levels of agreement than did non-Aboriginal students. These areas included family communication and support, positive socialization with teachers and principals, and feeling welcome at extracurricular activities. English, electives, and addressing drug abuse were also areas of lower levels of satisfaction between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students.

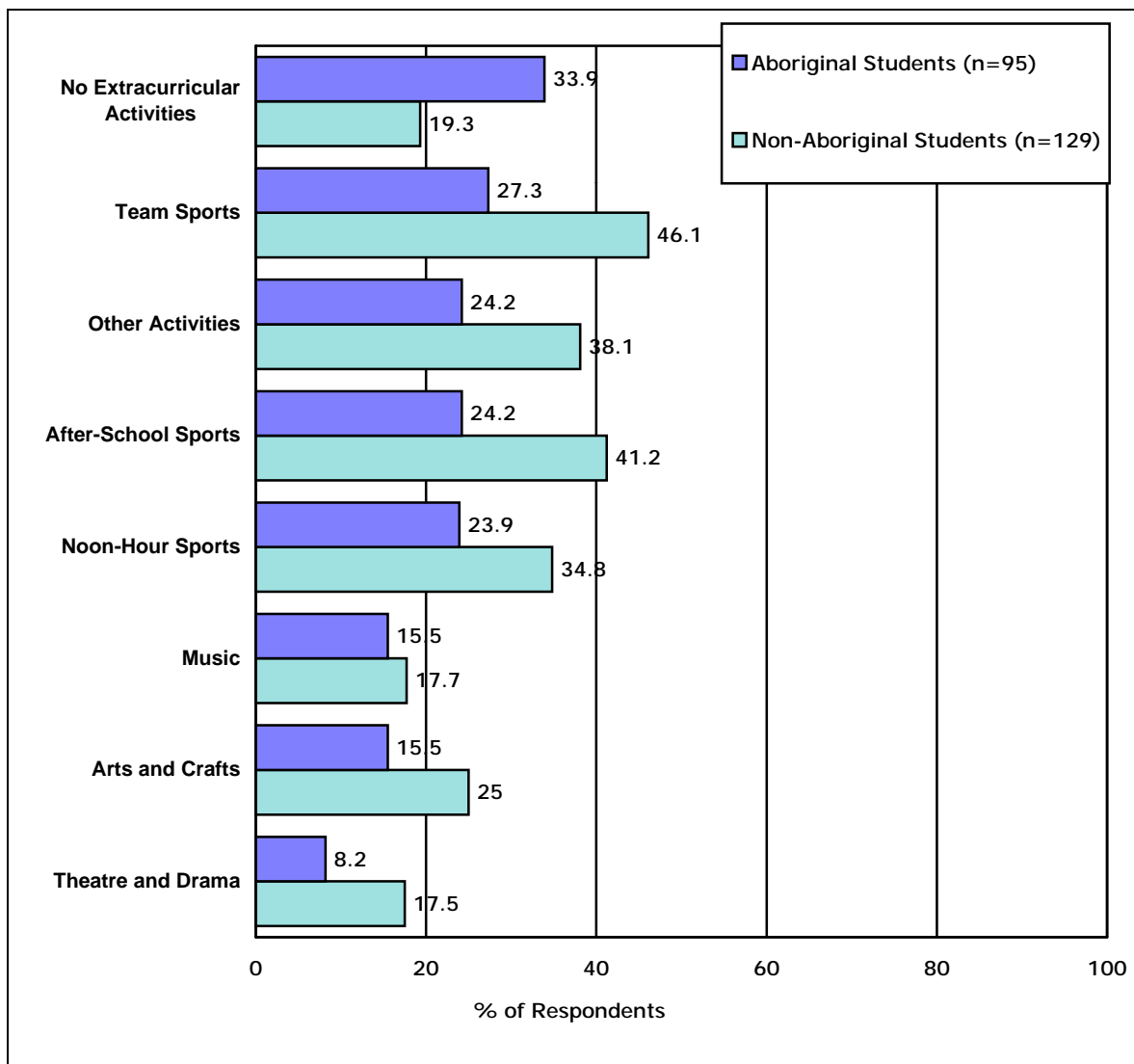
Issues in which there were no statistically significant differences in opinion between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students included:

- teacher encouragement to do best at school;
- grades really show how well student is doing;
- can get extra help when needed;
- school teaches respect for others who are different;
- treated same as other students by teachers and other students;
- encouraged to be creative, ask questions, talk to others about things being learned, work at own pace, stay in school until graduation;
- smooth transition from elementary to secondary and from urban to rural;
- what they are learning in school is useful;
- student looking forward to going to secondary school;
- teachers know a lot about Aboriginal culture;
- student gets along well with custodians, bus drivers, etc.;
- satisfied with career counselling services; and
- satisfied with the way /alcohol/physical/emotional/mental abuse and racism are addressed at school.

### 8.3.3 Extracurricular Participation

Involvement in extracurricular activities may encourage student retention for various reasons including interest, social inclusion, and development of goal-setting behaviors. For comparison purposes, intermediate and secondary students were asked about their involvement in extracurricular activities. Aboriginal students had much lower participation rates in almost all extracurricular activities; while only 19.3% of non-Aboriginal students stated that they were not involved in any extracurricular activities, the corresponding figure for Aboriginal students was 33.9%. The results are highlighted in Chart 8-1.

**Chart 8-1**  
**Extracurricular Participation**  
**Aboriginal Students and Non-Aboriginal Students**



When secondary students were asked about what would encourage their participation in extracurricular or leadership activities, 29.5% of Aboriginal and 17.1% of non-Aboriginal students suggested that offering a larger variety of sports (e.g., rugby, lacrosse, football) would be effective. Another 16.8% of Aboriginal and 8.5% of non-Aboriginal students suggested other activities, such as music and band activities. Having less competitive, more inclusive sports and activities was suggested by 5.3% of the Aboriginal and 17.1% of the non-Aboriginal students.

#### 8.3.4 Computer Access

As highlighted in Table 8-2, a higher proportion of Aboriginal students than non-Aboriginal students reported having computer access *only* at school (41.5% versus 17.9%, respectively). It should be also be noted that a significant proportion (6.7%) of Aboriginal

students indicated that they had *no* access to a computer, which was higher than that of non-Aboriginal students (3.1%). As noted in the table, a much smaller proportion of Aboriginal students had computer access both at home and at school than did non-Aboriginal students (42.4% versus 72.7%, respectively).

**Table 8-2**  
**Student Access to Computers**  
**SD 91 Aboriginal & Non-Aboriginal Students**

	Aboriginal Students (n=330)	Non-Aboriginal Students (n=549)
% citing access to a computer		
at school only	41.5%	17.9%
at home only	7.0%	4.7%
both at school and at home	42.4%	72.7%
neither	6.7%	3.1%

#### **8.4    Transition from Secondary School**

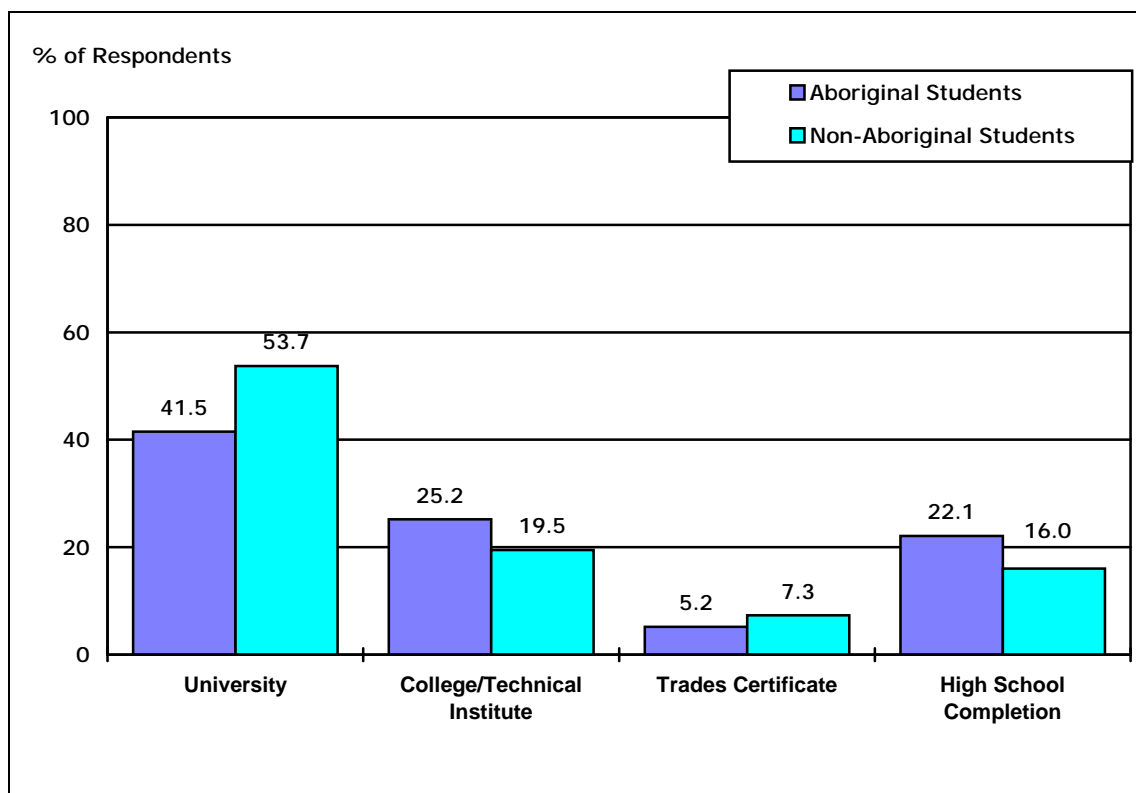
Current Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students, and Aboriginal former students, were asked several questions to examine student aspirations regarding post-secondary education. Former students were also asked about their post-secondary education outcomes and their work experiences. The survey questions developed in this *Aboriginal Education Needs Assessment Project* are comparable to other Ministry of Education and school district surveys administered by the Consultant. The administration of the student survey to both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students facilitated an analysis of SD 91 student aspirations on the basis of Aboriginal status.

##### **8.4.1   Aboriginal Students' Post-Secondary Aspirations**

The results of the survey indicate that while a smaller proportion of Aboriginal students than non-Aboriginal students planned on completing a trades certificate or a university degree, higher proportions of Aboriginal students than non-Aboriginal students planned on completing a college or technical diploma or only completing grade 12.

- Of the 330 Aboriginal students who participated in the *Needs Assessment Project*, over two-thirds (41.5%) indicated that they planned to enroll in a university program upon graduation, 25.2% planned to attend a college or technical institute, 5.2% planned to attain a trades certificate, and 22.1% planned to continue until having completed grade 12. Comparative figures for Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students are shown in Chart 8-2.

**Chart 8-2  
Educational Aspirations  
Aboriginal Students and Non-Aboriginal Students**



Based on several comparisons, it appears that the post-secondary aspirations of Aboriginal students in the Nechako Lakes School District are different than those of non-Aboriginal students. For example:

- While 41.5% of all Aboriginal students surveyed (Grades 5 to 12) in SD 91 planned to enroll in a university program, this was 12.2% below the SD 91 non-Aboriginal student average of 53.7%.
- In contrast, 30.4% of Aboriginal students surveyed planned to attend a college, technical institute, or attain trades training, compared to 26.8% of non-Aboriginal students.
- The “gap” between the post-secondary education aspirations of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students widened for students in grades 11 to 12. For example, whereas 52.1% of non-Aboriginal students surveyed in those grades planned to enroll in a university program, a much lower proportion of Aboriginal students surveyed (28.4%) noted that they planned to enroll in a university program. However, a slightly larger proportion of Aboriginal students (33.3%) than non-Aboriginal (25.7) students in grades 11 and 12 planned on attending a college/technical institute.

Both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal secondary students were asked what schools could do to encourage students to graduate. Resulting comments were very similar across both



groups of students, and of the 176 Aboriginal students and 234 non-Aboriginal students who responded to this question, the five top-mentioned suggestions were:

1. Offer more practical information about future job prospects and the importance of education (17.3%);
2. Offer rewards, scholarships, money incentives (17.3%);
3. Have teachers be more understanding, and give better encouragement (16.8%);
4. Make school more interesting and/or fun (12.8%); and
5. Give more help when it is needed (9.5%).

Comments from Aboriginal students included:

*"Make it more understandable so that subjects such as Math don't seem so difficult."*

*"Be very helpful with course selection to make sure graduates have all the credits they need to graduate."*

*"Schools could have more activities around the school that are fun."*

*"Make it a priority starting in the lowest grades. Offer every course needed in a realistic timetable."*

*"More school spirit. Let students know what they have to do to graduate, so they know they have a chance."*

*"They could teach more about what people want to learn."*

*"If some kids have bad grades, give them a tutor."*

Comments from former students included:

*"...better laying out of post-secondary and employment options would make finishing school seem more important and rewarding."*

*"I think the schools do encourage students to graduate by showing them the requirements for jobs. I really enjoyed the CAPP program. I think they could better develop the CAPP program."*

*"Talking to the students when they have problems one-on-one, because it's hard to express yourself in a crowd even though it helps to know other people have the same problems too."*

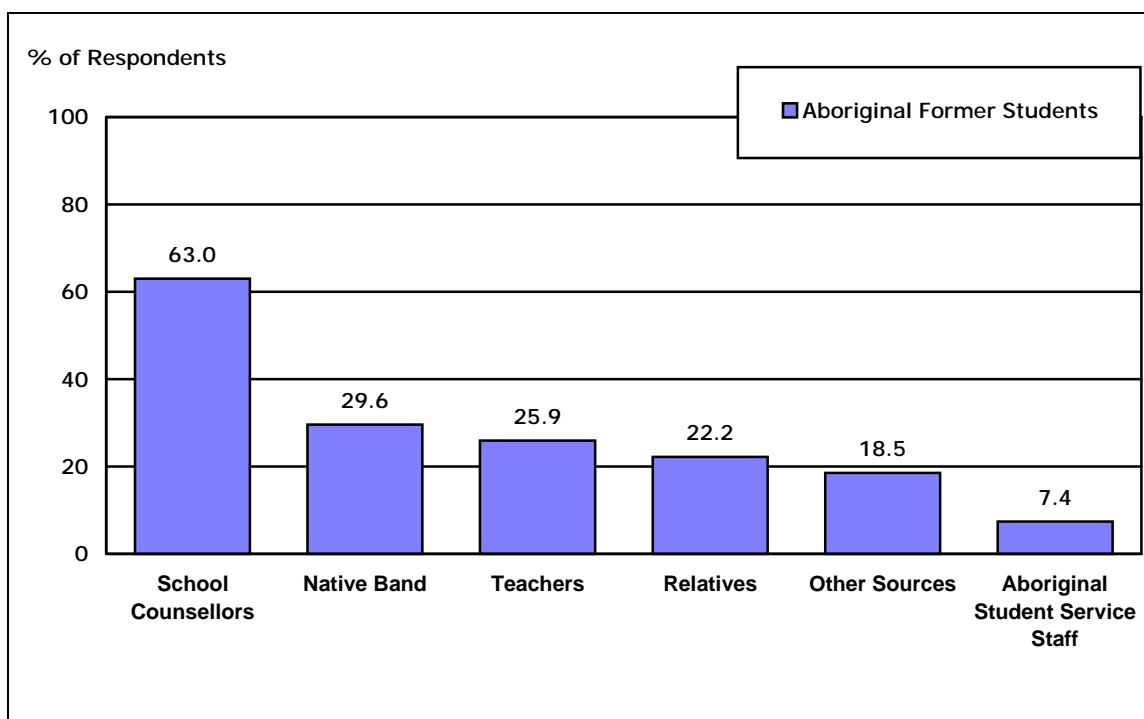
Over half of all Aboriginal (55.4%) and non-Aboriginal (57.6%) secondary students agreed or strongly agreed that they were satisfied with the career planning counselling services available to them. Of the Aboriginal grade 12 students, 71.4% agreed or strongly agreed.

Aboriginal former students were asked several questions about issues that would impact participation in post-secondary participation. For example, students were asked questions about the sources and availability of funding information.

- Of those who completed the requirements for graduation, 81.5% said they had access to funding information for post-secondary information. Only 34.4% of non-graduates, however, felt that they had access on how to get funds for schooling.
- Overall, 59.0% of former Aboriginal students felt that students were made well aware of funding opportunities. This included 70.4% of graduates and 53.1% of non-graduates.

- Chart 8-3 highlights the origins of sources for post-secondary funding information, for students who completed the requirements for graduation.

**Chart 8-3**  
**Sources of Funding Information for Post-Secondary Education,**  
**By Aboriginal Former Students who had Completed Graduation Requirements\***



\*Respondents could give multiple answers

- Suggestions for improving access to post-secondary funding information included
  - Teach about post-secondary funding sources in CAPP (Career and Personal Planning) class
  - Have a First Nations Centre at the school
  - Have better-informed Aboriginal Education Coordinators
  - Post information on bulletin boards and in newsletters at school

#### 8.4.2 Aboriginal Former Students Transition Experiences

Almost three-quarters (73.8%) of the Aboriginal former student respondents stated that their school in SD 91 provided them with the necessary skills for post secondary education. When asked about the ease of their transition from high school to the work force, 24.5% rated it as “hard” or “very hard”, 43.4% were neutral, and 30.2% said it was “easy” or “very easy”. Approximately one-third (32.8%) had found a job related to their career aspirations within six months of leaving high school, 45.9% responded that they had not tried to find a job related to their career aspirations, and 18.0% said they did not know their career aspirations.

The former students were asked what services or persons they utilized to make the transition from high school to post-secondary or the work force. Multiple responses were invited. While 23.0% reported that they had used *no* services to make the transition, and 32.8% said that they had done personal research to make the transition, only 3.3% had accessed Aboriginal student services, 6.6% had utilized career testing, 11.5% had accessed a teacher, and 11.5% had accessed a school counsellor.

#### 8.4.3 Aboriginal Former Students Post Secondary Outcomes

Of the twenty-seven Aboriginal former students who *had* graduated and responded to the survey, nine (33.3%) were working in a job not related to their career goal, seven (25.9%) were attending university or college full time, and four (14.8%) were unemployed as their main activity for the past six months. Of the thirty-two who had *not* graduated, eleven (34.4%) were unemployed and six (18.8%) were working in a job not related to their career goal.

Over two-thirds of the Aboriginal former student respondents had, when in high school, *planned* to attend a post-secondary institution within six months of graduation (74.1% of graduates, 62.5% of non-graduates). For the high school graduates who did not continue with a post-secondary education, the main reason was “not enough money” (29.6%) and for the non-graduates the main reason was that they had not met high school graduation requirements (53.1%).

These results are based on a small sample size, but still serve as an indicator of the main barriers to post-secondary attendance.

## SECTION 9: TARGET GROUP ANALYSIS

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While the development of the survey instruments allowed for some cross-group comparison, contained in each survey instrument were questions not always appropriate for other survey target groups. Outlined in this section are the issues of overall highest and lowest levels of agreement or support in Aboriginal education as perceived by the following target groups:

- 9.1 *Parents of Aboriginal Students – Highest and Lowest Agreement Issues*
- 9.2 *Nechako Lakes District School Staff – Highest and Lowest Agreement Issues*
- 9.3 *Aboriginal Elementary Students – Highest and Lowest Agreement Issues*
- 9.4 *Aboriginal Secondary Students – Highest and Lowest Agreement Issues*

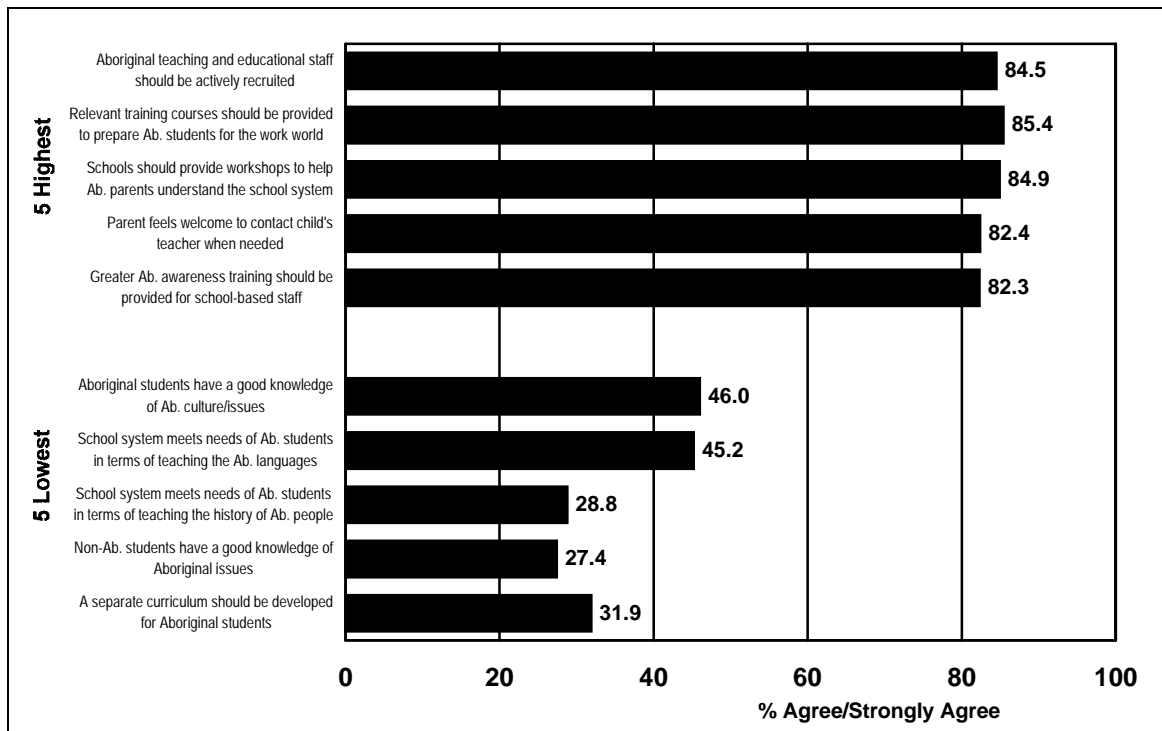
This was undertaken by analyzing the close-ended five-point scale questions on *each* of the survey instruments and ranking them in terms of the five issues that had highest levels of agreement and the five that garnered the lowest levels of agreement, using a mean score analysis.

### 9.1 Parents of Aboriginal Students – Highest and Lowest Agreement Issues in Aboriginal Education

To provide an overall perspective of what parents of Aboriginal students considered to be the strengths and weaknesses of Aboriginal education, an analysis was undertaken of the proportion of respondents who indicated agreement or strong agreement, on 24 survey issues.

- Chart 9-1 highlights the issues which parents *most strongly agreed* with or *did not agree* with. Based on a means comparison, parents were in most agreement that Aboriginal teaching and educational staff should be actively recruited for SD 91 schools (84.5% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with this statement). The second and third highest issues of overall agreement were that relevant training courses should be provided to prepare Aboriginal students for the work world (85.4% agreed or strongly agreed), and that schools should provide workshops to help Aboriginal parents understand the school system (84.9% agreed or strongly agreed). There were also high levels of agreement that the parents felt welcome to contact the child's teacher when needed (82.4%) and that greater Aboriginal awareness training should be provided for school-based staff (82.3%).
- The issue with the lowest level of agreement by parents, *based on the means comparison*, was that a separate curriculum should be developed for Aboriginal students (31.9% agreed or strongly agreed).
- Other areas for which there were low levels of agreement were that the Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students had a good knowledge of Aboriginal culture and issues (46.0% and 27.4% agreed/strongly agreed, respectively), and that the school system meets the needs of Aboriginal students in terms of teaching Aboriginal languages (45.2% agreed or strongly agreed) and history of Aboriginal peoples (28.8% agreed or strongly agreed).

**Chart 9-1**  
**Parents – Issues of Agreement**  
**Top 5 and Bottom 5**



n = 226

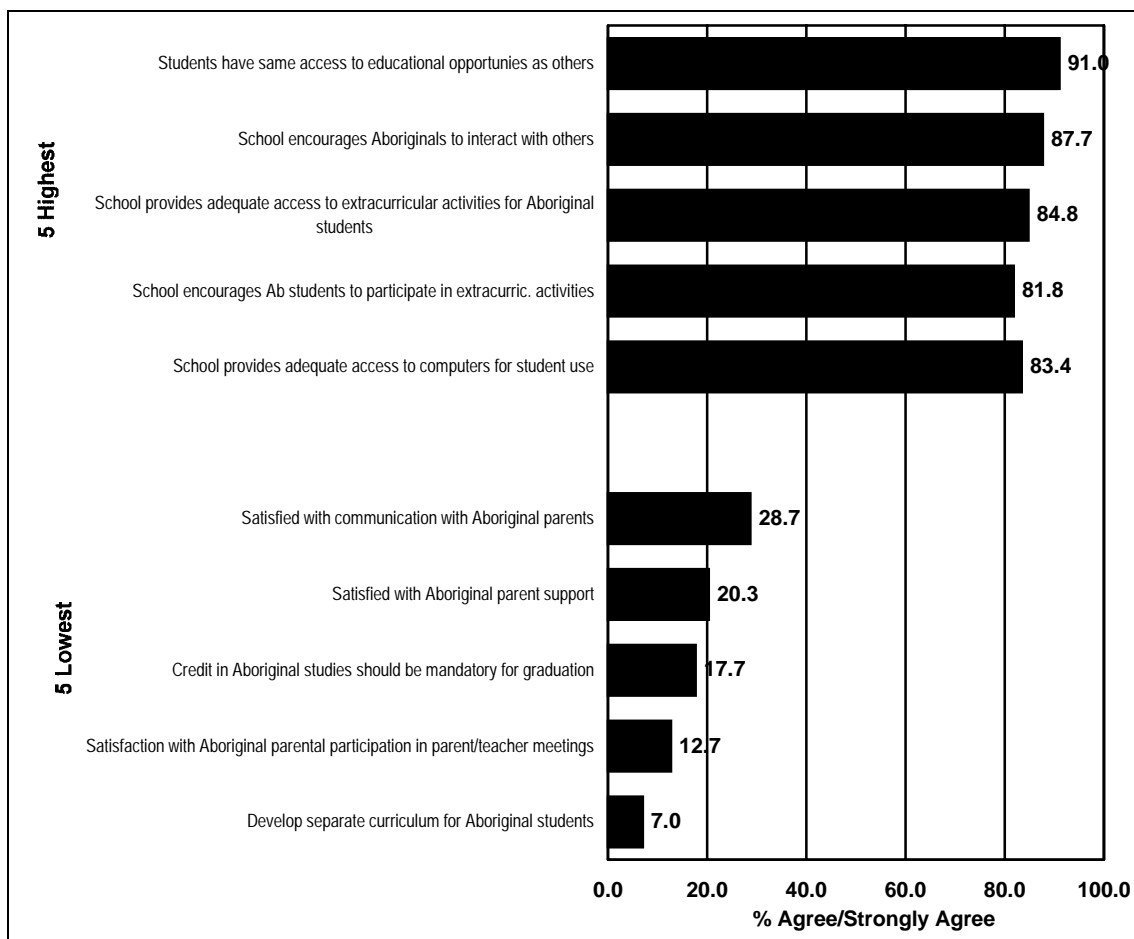
Note: issues have been ranked on the basis of mean score values.

## **9.2 Nechako Lakes District School Staff – Issues of Highest and Lowest Agreement in Aboriginal Education**

Analysis of the information provided by staff respondents from Nechako Lakes District schools reveals the following:

- Of Nechako Lakes District school staff, 91.0% either agreed or strongly agreed that Aboriginal students had the same access to educational opportunities as other students in SD 91 schools. In addition, 87.7% of staff also agreed or strongly agreed that their school encouraged Aboriginal students to interact with other students, and 84.8% felt that Aboriginal students were provided with adequate access to extracurricular activities.
- The majority of school staff also agreed or strongly agreed that the school encouraged Aboriginal students to participate (81.8%), and that their school provided adequate access to computers for student use (83.4%).

**Chart 9-2**  
**School Staff – Issues of Agreement**  
**Top 5 and Bottom 5**



n = 300

Note: issues have been ranked on the basis of mean score values.

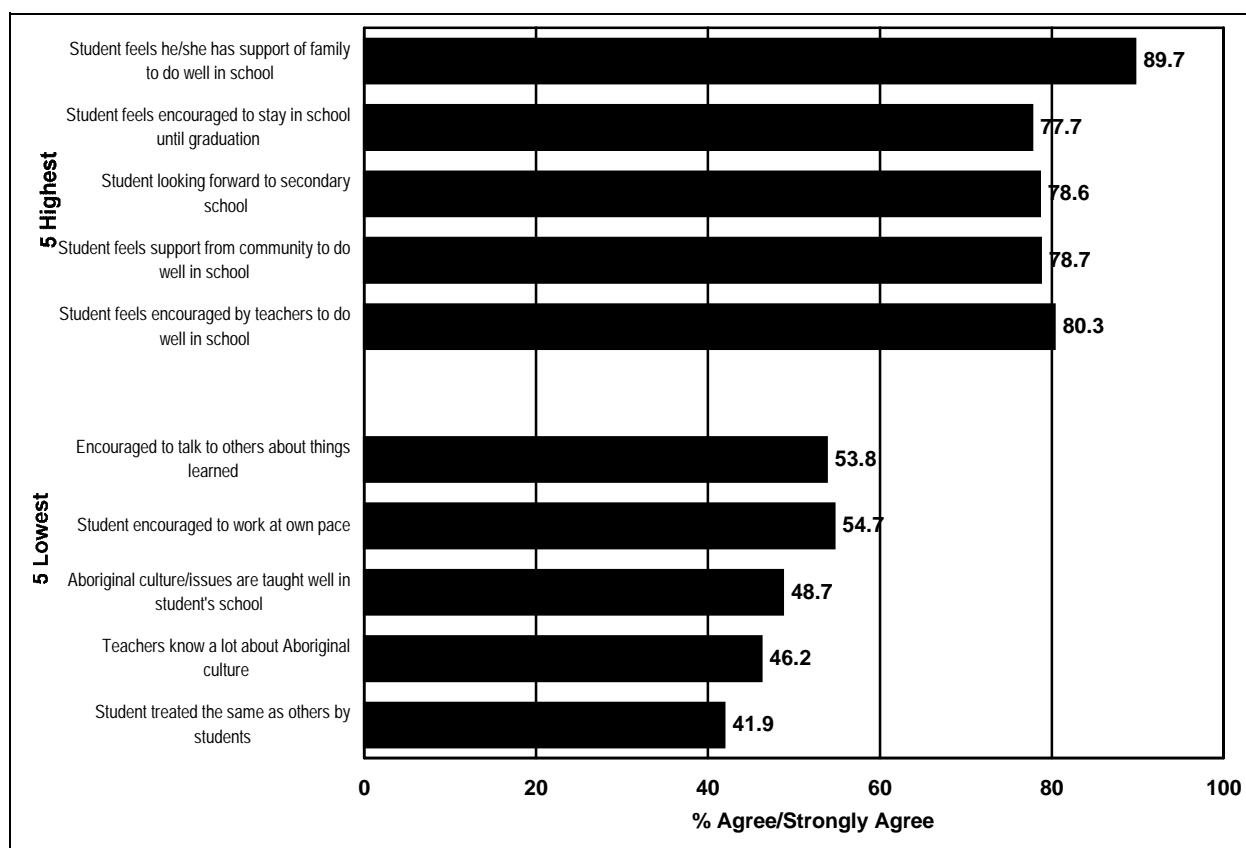
- There was little agreement from school staff that a separate curriculum should be developed for Aboriginal students (only 7.0% agreed or strongly agreed) or that Aboriginal studies should be mandatory for all students (17.7% agreed or strongly agreed).
- The other three areas that received low levels of agreement centred on parental involvement: only 28.7% agreed that they were satisfied with communication with Aboriginal parents, 20.3% agreed or strongly agreed that parental support was satisfactory, and 12.7% agreed or strongly agreed that parental participation at parent/teacher meetings was satisfactory.

### 9.3 Aboriginal Intermediate Students – Issues of Highest and Lowest Agreement in Aboriginal Education

Intermediate students were generally more satisfied with their education than were secondary students. Of the 38 five-point scale questions asked of Aboriginal intermediate students, the top and bottom five issues (based on means analysis) are outlined below:

- A large majority of Aboriginal intermediate students agreed or strongly agreed that they felt they had the support of their family (89.7%), teachers (80.3%) and the community (78.7%) to do well in school, and 77.7% agreed or strongly agreed that they felt encouraged to stay in school until graduation. A large proportion of intermediate students (78.6%) stated they were looking forward to going to secondary school.

**Chart 9-3**  
**Aboriginal Intermediate Students – Issues of Agreement**  
**Top 5 and Bottom 5**



n = 117

Note: issues have been ranked on the basis of mean score values.

- Even the survey issues with the five lowest levels of agreement from intermediate students had relatively high levels of agreement. Of the 38 issues included in this comparison, students were in least agreement that they were treated the same as other students by other students (41.9% agreed or strongly agreed), and that their teachers

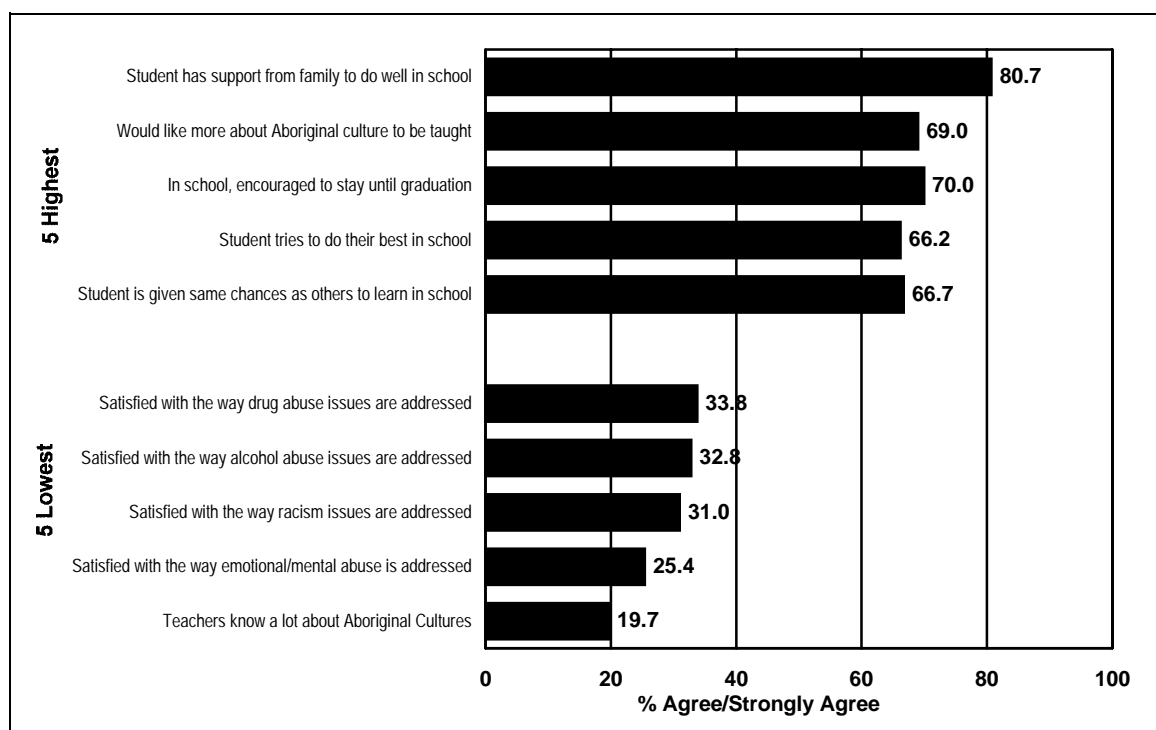
knew a lot about Aboriginal culture (46.2% agreed or strongly agreed). Students in Grades 5 to 7 were critical of the statement that Aboriginal culture/issues are taught well in school; only 48.7% agreed or strongly agreed with this statement. As well, only approximately one-half felt that they were encouraged to talk to others about what they had learned (53.8%) and that they were encouraged to learn at their own pace (54.7% agreed or strongly agreed).

#### 9.4 Aboriginal Secondary Students - Issues of Highest and Lowest Agreement in Aboriginal Education

Means analysis of the data (47 questions) provided by Aboriginal secondary students reveals the following:

- Aboriginal secondary students gave the highest levels of agreement to the issue of support for school: 80.7% of students agreed or strongly agreed that they had support of their family to do well in school, and 70.0% agreed or strongly agreed that in school, they were encouraged to stay until graduation. A significant proportion of secondary students indicated that they would like more about Aboriginal culture to be taught in school (69.0% agreed or strongly agreed). In addition, 66.2% agreed or strongly agreed that they try to do their best in school, and 66.7% of Aboriginal secondary students agreed or strongly agreed that they were given the same chances as others to learn in school.

**Chart 9-4**  
**Secondary Students – Issues of Agreement**  
**Top 5 and Bottom 5**



n = 213

Note: issues have been ranked on the basis of mean score values.



- Overall, the secondary students' lowest-rated issues indicated more dissatisfaction than did those of the intermediate students. For example, only 19.7% of secondary students agreed or strongly agreed that their teachers knew a lot about Aboriginal issues.
- The remaining four issues of lowest agreement concerned levels of satisfaction with the way social issues are addressed in the schools. Secondary students had low levels of agreement that they were satisfied with the way drug abuse issues (33.8% agreed or strongly agreed), alcohol issues (32.8%), racism issues (31.0%) and emotional/mental abuse issues (25.4%) are addressed.

## SECTION 10: RECOMMENDATIONS FOR NECHAKO LAKES SCHOOLS

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In addition to the identification of stakeholder opinion about Aboriginal education in the Nechako Lakes area, a key objective of the *Aboriginal Education Needs Assessment Project* included the development of appropriate initiatives/recommendations that would enhance the quality of education provided to Aboriginal learners.

The following list of recommendations was developed through extensive consultation with the First Nations community parents, students, teachers, administrators, and internal/external stakeholders (Aboriginal education support staff, other staff). The recommendations were based on a review of the data collected by researchers from R.A. Malatest & Associates Ltd. through surveys of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students and parents, public school staff, focus groups with students and parents, in-person interviews, surveys of other school districts, and the review of relevant documentation pertaining to Aboriginal educational issues.

In completing this educational needs assessment, it became apparent that the assessment should include recommendations for tangible activities that could be completed in the short term (next 12 to 18 months), as well as for longer-term goals that might require additional time to implement. In this context, for many recommendations, both short-term action items as well as long-term activities have been included.

Although some recommendations will undoubtedly overlap several areas, recommendations have been grouped under headings to facilitate the review of the proposed recommendations, including:

- 10.1 *Staffing and Training*
- 10.2 *Program Modifications (Non-Curricular)*
- 10.3 *First Nations Cultural Awareness/Curriculum Issues*
- 10.4 *Transition and Retention Issues*
- 10.5 *Communication and Public Awareness*
- 10.6 *Accountability*

### 10.1 **Staffing and Training**

#### Background:

Discussions with all participants involved in the *Needs Assessment Project* focussed on the insufficient number of First Nations instructors in Nechako Lakes schools. While there are a large number of Aboriginal support staff, there are limited numbers of First Nations teachers. Given the considerable problems faced by Aboriginal students, additional resources should be targeted to support systems to increase student retention and to address social and academic problems faced by Aboriginal students. Key staffing and training recommendations include the following:

### **10.1A Increase the Proportion of Aboriginal Staff in Nechako Lakes Schools**

As there is a shortage of First Nations instructors in most districts of British Columbia, the District might wish to initiate several short-term and long-term actions to enhance Aboriginal representation in Nechako Lakes schools.

Short-term action items:

- As fully qualified Aboriginal teachers might not be available, the District should recruit Aboriginal individuals as teacher assistants and/or resource aides.
- Efforts should be made to encourage First Nations student teachers to complete their practicum sessions in Nechako Lakes.
- An internship program should be created where those wanting to become teacher's aides and/or Carrier Language instructors can get on-the-job training. This should be accredited to give it legitimacy.
- Develop a strategy and/or action plan that addresses the need to increase Aboriginal representation among school/District staff.

Long-term goals:

- Increase the proportion of Aboriginal staff (instructional, administrative) to levels commensurate with the student population.
- Encourage the Aboriginal community to recruit and sponsor Aboriginal students to attend university to become teachers and also to increase the number of Aboriginal people working within the school system.

### **10.1B Clarification of the Role of First Nations Support Workers**

The *Needs Assessment Project* suggests that First Nations Support Workers are being asked to fulfill a variety of roles: counselling, liaison, advocating and focussing on specific, at-risk students. Clarification of their role would likely result in the increased efficiency and effectiveness of First Nations Support Workers. It was noted that to enhance the acceptance of the First Nations Support Workers in the Aboriginal community, the District should try to ensure such workers are of Aboriginal descent.

Short-term action items:

- Survey data suggests that there is considerable support for First Nations Support Workers to be tasked with the following activities:
  - focus on students with specific problems;
  - perform general liaison activities between the schools and the Aboriginal parents;
  - coordinate cultural awareness activities for staff/students/parents;
  - provide specific cultural activities to all students; and
  - offer academic support to students, with more time devoted to individual student instruction.
- Provide space (counselling/cultural activities area) for First Nations Support Workers and students to meet/interact within the school setting.

Long-term goals:

- Given that the role and responsibilities of First Nations Support Workers are quite demanding, their qualifications should be reviewed. It is clear that the individual in the position of a First Nations Support Worker would benefit from the following training and/or experience:
  - ability to provide instruction to SD 91 teachers about Aboriginal culture and/or Aboriginal learning techniques (“teach the teachers”);
  - teaching experience;
  - accredited social worker (BSW) and/or social work experience;
  - experience in dealing with “at-risk” adolescents.
- Review the scope for First Nations Support Workers to receive professional support from the First Nations Education Council in addition to regular school support services.
- Potential may exist to hire more First Nations Support Workers to manage the additional caseload requirements revealed by the *Needs Assessment Project*.
- Appropriate benchmarks should be established in which the workload, job functions and work performance of First Nations Support Workers are monitored and evaluated.
- Consider raising both the level of professionalism and salary potential of First Nations Support Workers to increase the qualifications of applicants to First Nations Support Worker positions.

### **10.1C Establishment of an First Nations Liaison Worker**

The need to bridge with the Aboriginal communities on reserves was also an issue raised by respondents. In this context, participants noted that there was a need for a “liaison worker” who would provide education system awareness, early childhood development awareness, and communication services to Aboriginal parents. Much of this service would be provided “out of school” rather than through the traditional school setting. This position could possibly be included in the work done by Home School Coordinators and established in conjunction with services provided by public health nurses and/or by the Ministry of Social Development and Economic Security.

Short-term action items:

- Evaluate the need for, and the duties of, a First Nations Liaison Worker.
- Examine the feasibility of establishing a parent support group.

Long-term goal:

- Develop policies and procedures to address the issues that affect parental support of Aboriginal student attendance and academic success.

### **10.1D Establishment of an Aboriginal Youth Outreach Worker**

A number of staff and stakeholder participants cited the need for schools to address several underlying social, educational, and health issues that undermine the success of the

Aboriginal student population. It was suggested that a Youth Outreach Worker, perhaps based outside of the school system, could initiate preventative and remedial action with Aboriginal students to overcome the challenges that often result in Aboriginal students leaving the school system before they graduate.

Short-term action items:

- Evaluate the need for, and the duties of, a Youth Outreach Worker.
- Examine the feasibility of establishing an Aboriginal youth support group.

Long-term goal:

- Develop policies and procedures to address the social issues that affect Aboriginal student attendance and academic success.

### **10.1E Clarification of the Roles of Native Home School Coordinators and First Nations Education Council**

Results of discussions with students, parents and staff suggest that the roles of the Home School Coordinators and the First Nations Education Council could be made more effective if awareness of their responsibilities were better publicized to the Aboriginal community and the general public, and if the FNEC had a higher visibility within the schools. Many parents and students had poor awareness of Home School Coordinators and the First Nations Education Council, as well as the District Principal-Aboriginal Education.

Short-term action items:

- Define and clarify the role of the Home School Coordinators relative to that of First Nations Support Workers to ensure that duplication of services does not occur.
- Utilize various sources (media, school newsletters and First Nations Support Workers) to ensure that the Aboriginal community is aware of this positions as well as other Aboriginal support programs offered in the District.
- Ensure that communication between the Aboriginal community (specifically parents) and the First Nations Education Council and District Principal – Aboriginal Education is direct and readily accessible with provision of all feasible avenues of communication (fax, phones, voice mail, e-mail, address, etc.).
- Incorporate higher visibility of FNEC within the schools, by increasing person-to-person communications with school students and staff.
- When publicizing, clearly outline the issues addressed by, and information provided by, the Home School Coordinator, First Nations Education Council, and District Principal – Aboriginal Education.

Long-term goals:

- As some confusion and possible overlap exists between the role of the Home School Coordinator and other First Nations Support Workers, it is recommended that the First Nations Education Council clearly define the roles and responsibilities of the various positions to minimize possible duplication in the services provided. Such clarification should also include

the identified new positions including First Nations Liaison Worker and/or Aboriginal Youth Outreach Worker.

- Alter the duties and job descriptions of Home School Coordinator and other First Nations Support Workers according to feedback from the Aboriginal community.
- Conduct regular monitoring of the work done by the Home School Coordinators, FNEC, District Principal – Aboriginal Education, and other First Nations Support Workers to ensure responsiveness to Aboriginal community needs.

### **10.1F Promotion of Native Teaching Techniques to School Instructional Staff**

A number of student and parent participants noted that the school learning environment did not reflect the learning environment of the Aboriginal community. Several participants cited the importance of modifying the school environment to make it more conducive to both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal learners with different learning styles.

Short-term action items:

- Utilize First Nations Support Workers to help promote Native learning techniques to school and teaching staff.
- Promote an in-service focussing on traditional Native learning styles between staff and elders (elders "teaching the teachers").
- Promote in-service activities focussing on alternative learning styles.
- Organize school staff visits to the various Native communities to promote cross-cultural understanding.

Long-term goals:

- Examine the feasibility of establishing alternative teaching methods (e.g., more visual learning/more hands-on instruction) that highlight the different learning styles and background of Aboriginal learners.
- Establish a pilot program that utilizes alternative learning techniques for selected schools/grades.
- Provide Carrier language instructors with teaching "mentors" (buddy system) when necessary, for instructor training and class control support.

## **10.2 Program Modifications (Non-Curricular)**

### Background:

The results of the in-person interviews, focus group meetings, and surveys of staff, Aboriginal students and parents of Aboriginal students suggest that Nechako Lakes schools can initiate several activities to enhance services currently provided to Aboriginal students. Recommendations include modifications to existing programs that are currently viewed as very important by Aboriginal parents and staff in Nechako Lakes schools.

### **10.2A *Expand Support Mechanisms to Reduce Aboriginal Drop-Out Rates***

Review of existing literature suggests that the identification and initiation of proactive support measures have a significant positive impact in terms of reducing Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal student dropout rates. Although these support mechanisms often address only the symptoms and not the underlying causes of student withdrawals, it is an important activity to enhance Aboriginal retention rates. Although the majority of Aboriginal students felt that their transition to a new school, or from elementary school to secondary school, went smoothly, concern of this transition was voiced by parents, stakeholders and staff. Given the concern over this transition and the high absenteeism of Aboriginal students, it is essential that the District implement activities to reduce student absenteeism and enhance school transitions.

#### Short-term action items:

- Regularly scheduled meetings should be held between the teachers, counsellors and the First Nations Support Workers to provide early warning of at-risk students.
- A formal tracking system monitoring attendance, achievement, suspensions, etc. should be established to facilitate the identification of at-risk students. Such information should be forwarded to the First Nations Support Worker or Student Counsellor on a weekly basis.
- Peer support groups or “buddy systems” should be established in secondary schools to provide counselling/support for new students as well as for students considering dropping out.
- Evaluate the feasibility of a mentorship program.
- Provide more support for alternative education programs targeting dropouts and/or students experiencing difficulty in a traditional school setting.
- Provide orientations of both the school and community to Aboriginal students re-locating from reserves (or out-of-town). During these orientations, ensure that new students are made aware of First Nations Support Workers and other Aboriginal support programs available in the District. Involve Aboriginal role models in these orientations as much as possible and encourage the participation of Aboriginal parents.

Long-term goals:

- Initiate activities to promote Native self-esteem (see First Nations Cultural Awareness/Curriculum Recommendations, Section 7.3) and make the school curriculum relevant to Aboriginal learners.
- Assessment of the success of Aboriginal educational programs should be partly based on the retention rates of Aboriginal students.

### **10.2B Consider Establishing a Tutorial Program**

Given that a significant proportion of parents of elementary students (90.5%), parents of secondary students (91.9%), Aboriginal secondary students (42.3%), and school staff (57.7%) were supportive of the provision of tutorial services, the District should consider the establishment of such services for Aboriginal students. Currently, several Districts offer such services, and in many instances, tutorial services are partially financed (funding or provision of facilities, etc.) by the Aboriginal community.

Short-term action items:

- Offer a pilot tutorial service to establish the demand for such a service among Aboriginal learners.
- Identify alternative funding sources (Aboriginal community, other) that would permit the District to cost-share the provision of the tutorial service.
- Investigate feasibility of having senior secondary students act as a tutor for younger students as part of their job experience requirements (CAPP).
- Make available SD 91 facilities for the use of an Aboriginal tutorial program (especially computers as a significant proportion of Aboriginal students do not have access to a computer at home or at school).

Long-term goal:

- Promote the use of Aboriginal instructors as tutors. This might involve the District assisting in the training of Aboriginal parents/elders as tutors.

### **10.2C Consider Establishing an Aboriginal Counselling Service**

The high dropout rates of Aboriginal students at the secondary level suggests the need for a more proactive intervention on behalf of secondary school staff. In discussions with students and parents, there was considerable support voiced for the establishment of an Aboriginal counsellor position. It was felt that an Aboriginal counsellor could work closely with students to identify career options and course requirements, as well as help students in terms of addressing personal/social needs.

Short-term action item:

- Designate a counsellor in each secondary school to address Aboriginal student needs. This designated counsellor should receive specific training/cultural awareness activities designed to ensure that the counsellor is familiar with Aboriginal issues.



Long-term goal:

- Hire a counsellor of Aboriginal descent to work primarily with Aboriginal students in SD 91 secondary schools.

### **10.2D Establishment of an Effective Alternative Education Program**

The results of the *Needs Assessment Project* suggest that parents are very supportive of alternative education programs (84.5% of parents noted that support should be provided for alternative education settings), although there is slightly less support for alternative programs among SD 91 staff (68.3%). As the dropout rate of Aboriginal students is quite high, alternative education programs should continue to be provided in the District.

Short-term action item:

- Establish an effective setting for an alternative education program such as at a Band office or possibly as an extension of the current Learning Centre program.

Long-term goals:

- Review should be initiated as to the feasibility of an appropriate accreditation of an alternative education facility for Aboriginal learners who have not dropped out of school but who are having difficulty in a traditional school setting.
- Identify appropriate delivery models with measurable benchmarks and tracking systems to effectively manage alternative education models.

### **10.2E Support Aboriginal Involvement in Extracurricular Activities**

Several students noted that participation in extracurricular activities was particularly effective in promoting student self-esteem and interest in the school system. As well, it was perceived by many staff and stakeholders as an encouragement to stay in school. However, a number of participants noted that cost and lack of transportation hampered participation in many of these extracurricular activities.

Short-term action items:

- Offer more support (financial/transportation or otherwise) to students who have limited access to extra curricular activities (cannot provide money for equipment, etc.).
- Offer traditional Aboriginal extracurricular activities (e.g., have a volunteer resource person teach the activity) and offer this to Aboriginal as well as non-Aboriginal students.

Long-term goal:

- First Nations Education Council should evaluate funding barriers that would prevent student participation.

### **10.2F Establish Aboriginal Support Groups**

A number of participants noted the need to implement several changes to increase student retention. A key issue raised was increasing the level of participation of parents in their child's education.

Short-term action items:

- The Aboriginal community should establish support groups wherein caregivers and interested support persons could meet to discuss school issues and identify "at-risk" students, and to assist First Nations Support Workers in the liaison between schools and the Aboriginal community.
- The Aboriginal community should meet with schools/social organizations to sponsor workshops at an off-school site in which parenting issues (such as communication with schools, discipline, drug and alcohol abuse, etc.) could be addressed.

Long-term goal:

- The Aboriginal community must promote the continued attendance of Aboriginal learners in Nechako Lakes schools and work with the schools/District to ensure that the school curriculum is relevant to the Aboriginal community.

### **10.2G Provide Better School to Career/Academic Preparation Mechanisms**

There is room for expansion of career and academic preparation mechanisms. Among the students surveyed, 55.4% of Aboriginal secondary students stated that they were satisfied with the career counselling provided at their school, 20.7% were neutral and 16.9% were dissatisfied.

Special work world preparation courses were identified by a majority of parents (80.1%) and staff (55.3%) as a program that should be available to SD 91 secondary students. Parents (85.4%) placed even more importance on the academic preparation of their children in SD 91 schools. Many respondents also commented on the need to ensure that post-secondary educational pursuits of Aboriginal students be expanded to include academic, as well as vocational, programs.

Short-term action items:

- Ensure Aboriginal students receive adequate counselling to enable them to determine and enter their preferred career/academic programs.
- Offer increased job-shadowing placements within the community to facilitate the process of career selection for secondary students.
- Provide opportunities for Aboriginal former students who have dropped out of the school system to return to the schools to discuss barriers/challenges associated with not having a high school diploma.
- Provide opportunities for former Aboriginal students who have post-secondary experience and work entry experience to speak with elementary and secondary students about goal setting and the value of high school and post-secondary education.

Long-term goals:

- Develop relevant work/training and academic preparation programs that will facilitate the transition of Aboriginal students to the work/academic world. The District should evaluate the merit of establishing apprenticeship programs that target Aboriginal learners. Apprenticeship programs could be established with the cooperation of local Aboriginal and/or non-Aboriginal industries and/or employers.
- Establish inter-community links with colleges/universities in other centres to support the transition of Aboriginal students into academic settings (university, college). As with the transition from elementary to secondary (rural to urban), post-secondary education also requires re-location and adjustment.

### **10.3 First Nations Cultural Awareness/Curriculum Issues**

#### Background:

There was widespread opinion among parents, staff and students that Nechako Lakes schools did not have a comprehensive understanding of Aboriginal issues in general. Given the diversity of the Aboriginal population in Nechako Lakes schools, it may be difficult to develop curriculum that address the needs of all Aboriginal students. Recommendations presented below provide a mechanism through which Nechako Lakes schools can, however, become more responsive to Aboriginal needs.

#### **10.3A Enhance Aboriginal Content in Nechako Lakes School Curriculum**

The results of the survey suggest that parents, students and school staff felt that the teaching system could better meet the needs of Aboriginal students in terms of teaching Aboriginal culture, history and languages. Respondents felt that these areas should be incorporated into the curriculum early in school, beginning at elementary school levels, and continuing into the secondary grades. Presentation of local, as well as national, Aboriginal history was a common suggestion among respondents.

##### Short-term action items:

- Instructional staff should make efforts to incorporate Aboriginal studies into the existing curriculum:
  - Aboriginal history (Social Studies)
  - Aboriginal art (Fine Arts);
  - Aboriginal sports (Physical Education);
  - Aboriginal stories (Language Arts);
  - Aboriginal foods/crafts (Home Economics);
  - Aboriginal music (Music).
- Use of Aboriginal individuals (parents, elders) to assist in the delivery of Aboriginal curriculum/activities.
- Use existing mechanisms to translate Aboriginal student experiences (e.g., potlatches, dancing) into a learning experience for all students.
- Expand availability of Carrier Language or other First Nations language courses.

##### Long-term goals:

- Nechako Lakes schools should actively work with the Aboriginal community to develop relevant curriculum. Curriculum development should be a joint effort between the District and Aboriginal community members.
- Increase the amount of Aboriginal material available in school libraries. The District should increase its acquisitions of Aboriginal literature (an inventory of Aboriginal holdings in B.C. is available at the UBC First Nations House of Learning: [www.longhouse.ubc.ca](http://www.longhouse.ubc.ca)).

- Evaluate the need to introduce additional senior level courses in secondary schools focussing on Aboriginal issues from the Aboriginal perspective (Aboriginal government and history) as an elective.
- Evaluate the feasibility of offering community courses (perhaps in conjunction with the local community college) to enable Aboriginal parents and the community to become more knowledgeable about Aboriginal issues and/or culture from an Aboriginal perspective. Such a program could help prepare Aboriginal people to work as resource aides in SD 91 schools.
- Evaluate what other school districts are doing on an ongoing basis (annually or bi-annually) in terms of Aboriginal curriculum and how it can be incorporated. This could be the responsibility of the First Nations Education Council and District Principal – Aboriginal Education.
- Investigate the development and the implementation of a three-year Aboriginal language course that will be accepted as a second language requirement for university and college entrance.

### **10.3B Cultural Awareness/Orientation for School/District Staff**

Although 58.0% of staff felt that they had a good knowledge of Aboriginal cultures and issues, 25.0% were neutral and 12.7% disagreed or strongly disagreed. In addition, 82.3% of parents of Aboriginal students felt that greater Aboriginal training should be provided for school-based staff, and only 19.7% of Aboriginal secondary students agreed that their teachers knew a lot about Aboriginal culture. The results of the stakeholder interview research suggest that a cultural awareness in-service would be viewed positively by most staff, as a way to increase cross-cultural awareness. Schools have the potential to be seen as “advocates” in promoting Aboriginal culture in the community. In this context, the Nechako Lakes School District should become a leader in showcasing Aboriginal events and accomplishments.

#### Short-term action items:

- Promote an in-service for staff focussing on multicultural awareness that also defines racism, creates an awareness of how unconscious it can be, and demonstrates social expectations.
- Schools to review survey data and develop action plans to address perceptions of differential treatment among Aboriginal parents and students.

#### Long-term goals:

- Promotion of dialogue and interaction between the Aboriginal community and Nechako Lakes schools through staff-Aboriginal community partnerships (social, sports, academic).
- Staff and the Aboriginal community should interact to promote positive reinforcement; meetings should not be limited solely to addressing "problem issues".

### **10.3C Enhance the Utilization of Aboriginal Individuals as Role Models in the School for All Students**

Short-term action items:

- Bring in Aboriginal persons (elders, parents, members of the community, etc.) to act as resource persons on a regular basis. These persons could more fully illustrate parts of the Aboriginal curriculum as well as act as successful role models for Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students.
- Demonstrate to Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students that Aboriginal persons have succeeded. This can be accomplished through newsletters, through the newspaper, and through other media means. This should not be specifically targeted to Aboriginal students, but should be for all students.

Long-term goal:

- Support the establishment of an Aboriginal graduates' society, in which past Aboriginal graduates are invited to maintain their contact with the District and serve as mentors for current Aboriginal students.

## 10.4 Transition and Retention Issues

### Background

Two of the key issues that were addressed in this research were student transitions (into elementary, from elementary to secondary, from one school to another, and from secondary school into post-secondary education or the work world), and student retention in elementary and secondary school. From survey and interview responses it was evident that there are critical times in a student's education that greatly impact whether school will be a positive or negative experience for the student.

- Many of the interview respondents cited early childhood development, and the skills set that a child enters kindergarten with, as crucial to the outcome of the child's education.
- Although most students rated their transition to secondary school as having gone smoothly, interviews with support staff indicated that while elementary school absenteeism was very low, it increased in secondary school, and too often culminated in a student dropping out of school around grade nine.
- While a great majority of Aboriginal secondary students aspire to attend university or college after graduation, few manage to actually continue on to post-secondary education.
- Problems with reading and math competencies, which for many Aboriginal students begin in the early grades, can cause repeated frustrations for the student that hamper school retention and successful high school graduation.

Recommendations made in this report all have the goal of increasing student retention, but this section is specifically drawn from issues raised by staff, parents, and students as important retention and transition issues.

### **10.4A *Early Childhood Development and Kindergarten Entry***

Analysis of academic achievement suggests that many Aboriginal students enter the educational system with vocabulary/reading skills well below that of non-Aboriginal students. To provide new entrants with the necessary skills, it is essential that the Aboriginal community consider implementation of early childhood programs with significant reading/vocabulary components.

Short-term action item:

- Access current early childhood education pre-school programs and identify opportunities to enhance foundation skills among Aboriginal children.
- Investigate feasibility of parental involvement in preschool and primary programs that promote literacy and school preparedness.

Long-term goal:

- Aboriginal children entering the educational system will demonstrate the same aptitude for selected foundations skills as that of the general student population.

#### **10.4B Provide Intensive Tutoring/Learning Assistance Services**

Many staff, stakeholders and students noted that Aboriginal students often perceived school to be “too difficult” and were having trouble in terms of maintaining an academic standard required for graduation. Staff and parents indicated that Aboriginal students were often placed in special education/alternative education classes, which further isolated the student. As an alternative, it was suggested that “at-risk” students be provided with additional academic supports (tutorial, enhanced learning assistance) that would help ensure that such students had access to the required academic supports to assist them in their school work.

Short-term action item:

- Elementary and secondary schools should identify Aboriginal students who are academically “at-risk” and provide intensive tutorial/learning assistance as required.

Long-term goal:

- Aboriginal learners in SD 91 schools will have will have similar academic achievement as the general student population.



## **10.5 Communication and Public Awareness**

### Background:

A consistent theme discovered in the *Aboriginal Education Needs Assessment* was the general level of dissatisfaction with the communication between the education system and the Aboriginal community. For example:

- almost one-half (45.3%) of school staff, including 57.0% of teachers, were dissatisfied with the communication they had with Aboriginal parents;
- almost two-thirds (60.3%) of school staff, including 69.1% of teachers, were dissatisfied with Aboriginal parent participation in parent/teacher meetings;
- only 15.7% of teachers surveyed agreed that they were satisfied with the support they received from Aboriginal parents.

Staff are generally more critical of the communication they have with Aboriginal parents than are parents of the communication they have with their child's teachers. The results of the research suggest that traditional communication mechanisms in the school/District have not adequately served either school staff or Aboriginal parents.

### **10.5A *Utilize Non-Traditional Communication Vehicles Between Parents and Teachers***

As it appears that the Aboriginal community is not comfortable with attending parent-teacher meetings in a school setting, the school/District should evaluate the following options.

#### Short-term action items:

- With First Nations Support Workers present, parent-teacher meetings to be held at non-school locations such as Band offices on an annual or bi-annual basis. Although such meetings would not be practical on a monthly basis, occasional utilization of an Aboriginal location would demonstrate the willingness of staff to meet with the Aboriginal community in an environment familiar to Aboriginal parents, and could increase parental involvement in their child's education.
- First parent-teacher meeting could be held at a reserve location when applicable;
- Incorporation of education meetings with other Aboriginal community activities (social/administrative).
- Assistance from the Home School Coordinators/First Nations Support Workers as conduits to the parent community would also be beneficial, as it was noted by survey participants that some families do not have telephones. Adequate time should be allotted into the workday of the Home School Coordinators or First Nations Support Workers to allow for liaison of this type with Aboriginal homes.

- Supply contact information (phone, fax and address) of the office of the First Nations Education Council and District Principal – Aboriginal Education to Aboriginal parents to encourage direct communication on Aboriginal issues.

Long-term goal:

- The First Nations Education Council should evaluate the most appropriate mechanisms to enhance communication between staff and Aboriginal parents.

### ***10.5B Formation of an Inter-Agency Aboriginal Education Committee***

The results of the survey suggest that Aboriginal issues are not limited to the K-12 education system. Many of the problems faced by Nechako Lakes schools are shared at the post-secondary level and among other social service organizations. In this context, the District should promote inter-agency coordination of Aboriginal programs/activities.

Short-term action items:

- First Nations Education Council to review interest in the establishment of an inter-agency First Nations Education Committee to share information as to the educational needs of Aboriginal learners at both the secondary and post-secondary level.

## 10.6 Accountability

### Background:

The results of the *Needs Assessment Project* shows that there is still concern for the lower levels of secondary school retention, and successful completion of graduation requirements, by Aboriginal students as compared to non-Aboriginal students. Strategies must be continually developed and refined to enhance the education provided to Aboriginal learners. Concerns of most constructive allocation of Aboriginal education funds were also voiced by respondents.

### **10.6A Establishment of Short- and Long-Term Goals**

A goal-setting session to be initiated by the First Nations Education Committee should be set up that includes Aboriginal representatives and elders, District personnel, and concerned parents and members of the community. This “roundtable” would list the tasks to be accomplished and would assign dates for follow-up and completion. These goals could be advertised to the community and as goals are met, enlarged upon in the media.

#### Short-term action item:

- Identification of short-term (2001/2002 school year) and long-term (2004/2005 and beyond) goals and objectives.

#### Long-term goal:

- Incorporation of Aboriginal issues into the District’s Strategic Plan/planning process.
- Establish a long-term Strategic Plan for Aboriginal education.

### **10.6B Formalization of the Services to be Provided by the School/District to the Aboriginal Community**

Several participants noted that they felt that the District should establish formal goals and objectives with respect to Aboriginal education. In addition, survey participants noted that a strategic plan should be developed wherein the services and resources needed to effectively meet Aboriginal education goals would be identified.

Review of other school district policies suggest that one option the Nechako Lakes School District might pursue is the establishment of a Local Education Agreement (LEA) in which the role and responsibility of both the District and Aboriginal community is identified, signed with either the First Nations Education Council or on an individual Tribal Council basis.

#### Short-term action item:

- Determine details of Local Education Agreement to be endorsed by SD 91 and the First Nations Education Committee and/or various Tribal Councils.

### **10.6C Establishment of Regularized Evaluation Component**

The results of the *Needs Assessment Project* suggest that Nechako Lakes schools have not adequately addressed the needs of the Aboriginal community. Regular, ongoing evaluations would enable both the Aboriginal community and the school/District to measure the extent to which the educational goals and objectives of the Aboriginal community are being met.

#### Short-term action items:

- District to prepare an annual evaluation of the extent to which the Nechako Lakes schools have met the needs of Aboriginal learners:
  - attendance levels;
  - graduation rate;
  - GPA;
  - Aboriginal programs;
  - staffing.
- Publication of results in the Annual Report and/or special report to the Aboriginal community.

#### Long-term goals:

- Incorporation of evaluation results into the Aboriginal Education Framework Agreement.
- Formalization of needs assessment prior to the re-negotiation of a subsequent agreement.

### **10.6D Encourage Aboriginal Participation in School/District Decision Making**

It has been commonly stated by the Aboriginal community that they need to feel that they are part of a partnership with the District. Although the First Nations Education Committee is working towards this, some other action items are as follows:

#### Short-term action items:

- Schools to work with Aboriginal community to have parents on school-parent advisory committees.

#### Long-term goal:

- Eventual election of Aboriginal individuals on the Board of Trustees and school parent advisory committees.
- co-evaluation of the job done by resources targeting Aboriginal students (First Nations Support Workers, Counsellors, other);
- inclusion of Aboriginal education "success indicators" in the evaluation of schools/administrators and staff in Nechako Lakes schools;
- review of Aboriginal programs by the First Nations Education Committee;
- establishment of mechanisms to facilitate evaluation of the success of Aboriginal educational programs in Nechako Lakes schools (e.g., attendance tracking system, graduation data, academic achievement data, etc.);

- approval of staff recruited for key Aboriginal education positions (e.g., First Nations teachers, First Nations Support Workers).