ABSTRACT

The Indigenous teachings of my parents, grandparents, great grandparents, and the Elders of my community have inspired my passion for education. My professional educational journey has taken me to many Indigenous communities throughout Canada, the United States and abroad. Through these experiences, I realized that not all Indigenous post-secondary institutions were in fact Indigenous. Many were named Indigenous but their systems and curricula mainly reflected those of mainstream society. Working at an Indigenous post-secondary institution that is based on Indigenous values and Indigenous Knowledge (IK), I knew there was a difference; it is that difference that this thesis addresses.

This thesis examines the governance structure, educational policies, programs, and student services offered by the Nicola Valley Institute of Technology (NVIT), which has become a leader in Aboriginal public post-secondary education in Canada. NVIT has two campuses in British Columbia, with its main campus located at Merritt and the other at Burnaby. Framed within an Eagle’s Perch metaphor, and an Indigenous Knowledge system, the NVIT story is told about how it achieves self-determination through its Indigenization processes, and how its leadership takes an anti-hegemonic stance to confront forms of hegemonic control.

A mixed methods case study is used to understand how the principle of self-determination is enacted within an Aboriginal public post-secondary institution. The study’s theoretical framework draws on Indigenous Knowledge and critical theory. Data from student and alumni surveys; interviews with Elders, Board of Governors and management; institutional documents; and reflections on my professional experience at NVIT indicate that community-based partnerships, IK educational approaches, the multi-faceted Elders’ roles, and the family cohort approach to learning contribute substantially to NVIT students’ post-secondary access, retention, and success.

The Eagle’s Perch at NVIT guides and challenges its leaders, students, faculty, Elders, and staff to create a learning and gathering place where the transformative power of the Eagle’s Indigenous teachings are sustained and shared with others. Drawing on the literature, research findings, and my reflections, I developed a Transformational Framework for Aboriginal Post-Secondary Education that includes seven principles of Indigenization, self-determination, anti-hegemony, good governance, educational values, program relevancy, and extended family.

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

Born: April 2, 1953

Academic Studies:
B.A., Simon Fraser University, 1994
Post Baccalaureate, Simon Fraser University, 1996
M.Ed., Simon Fraser University, 1998

Current Position: Ed.D. Candidate, UBC

GRADUATE STUDIES

Field of Study: Educational Studies, Leadership and Policy

Courses

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<td>Thesis</td>
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<td>L. Brown</td>
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<td>EDST 565</td>
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SELECTED PUBLICATIONS


SELECTED PRESENTATIONS

2011. Aboriginal Leadership-Conference. Thompson Rivers University, Kamloops, B.C


2008. Cohort Model for Graduate Studies, World Indigenous Conference Education held in Melbourne, Australia

2008. Nicola Valley Institute of Technology Elder Roles, Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs, Canberra, Australia

2008. Council for the Advancement of Native Economic Development Officers (CANDO) – Building Competencies, Standing Committee on Education. (June)

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

PROGRAMME

The Final Oral Examination
For the Degree of

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION
(Educational Studies)

VERNA IRENE BILLY MINNABARRETT

B.A. (Sociology/Anthropology), Simon Fraser University, 1994
Post Baccalaureate, Simon Fraser University, 1996
M.Ed., Simon Fraser University, 1998

Thursday, March 22, 2012, 9:00 am
Room 200, Graduate Student Centre

“Aboriginal Post-Secondary Education in British Columbia: Nicola Valley Institute of Technology – ‘An Eagle’s Gathering Place’”

EXAMINING COMMITTEE

Chair:
Dr. Paul Tennant (Political Science)

Supervisory Committee:
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