

**Honouring A Cultural Community:
EMBRACING ABORIGINAL VALUES AND TRADITIONS
IN A UNIONIZED ENVIRONMENT**

Nicola Valley Institute of Technology

By

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**Honouring A Cultural Community:
Embracing Aboriginal Values and Traditions
In a Unionized Environment**

ROYAL ROADS UNIVERSITY
MASTER OF ARTS IN LEADERSHIP AND TRAINING
MAJOR PROJECT
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SUBMITTED BY: KENNETH W. TOURAND

Abstract

This research project explores one organization's attempt to understand ways to maintain and embrace Aboriginal culture, values and traditions in an Aboriginal organization in a time of organizational change. With a newly certified trade union, the Nicola Valley Institute of Technology (NVIT) is at risk of losing its uniqueness as an Aboriginal Public Post-secondary Institution. The three key questions that serve as the foundation of this project are:

1. Is NVIT unique as an Aboriginal Post-secondary Institution?
2. What impact will the Trade Union have on the goal of maintaining Aboriginal culture, values, and traditions?
3. What steps should NVIT take to ensure the continuity of its stature as an Aboriginal institution in a unionized environment?

A review of the literature reveals a number of important points including:

1. Aboriginal people have struggled to gain their rightful place in society.
2. Aboriginal people have battled against periods of blatant racism from all walks of society, including the Federal Government.
3. The Federal Government believed that assimilation was a viable solution in dealing with Aboriginal people.
4. Aboriginal people have to fight to maintain their distinctiveness.
5. Aboriginal people have significant differences in culture and values.
6. The Elders bring wisdom to and are held in high regard by Aboriginal communities.
7. There is a need for education to take place in a culturally appropriate environment.
8. There is an emerging study of Aboriginal organizations.

Using one-on-one personal interviews, a number of employees of the Nicola Valley Institute of Technology shared their views, experiences and perceptions around the three key questions. The nine major findings include:

1. The Nicola Valley Institute of Technology is a unique Aboriginal institution.
2. It is not clear whether or not NVIT is “Aboriginal enough”.
3. NVIT should have a President that is Aboriginal and experienced in the public post-secondary system.
4. The majority of employees at NVIT should be Aboriginal.
5. The Board and Senior Administration must play a leading role in developing and maintaining the Aboriginal essence of NVIT.
6. There is a concern that unhampered unionization will have a negative impact on the Aboriginal uniqueness and operations of NVIT.
7. NVIT may be able to unionize and maintain its Aboriginal essence and qualities if Aboriginal concepts and ideas are captured in NVIT’s local collective agreement.
8. Ideally, everyone employed at NVIT must commit to maintaining and developing NVIT’s Aboriginal essence, especially given the potential negative impact of unionization.
9. NVIT should not participate at the “Provincial Common Table” if it is felt that this would jeopardize NVIT’s Aboriginal essence.

Eight recommendations emerged from the research findings and literature review.

1. NVIT should define its mission and vision, develop a shared set of organizational values, clearly describe the Aboriginal culture and traditions the institution should adopt, and define how these priorities can be maintained within a unionized environment.
2. NVIT must take every opportunity to honour its Aboriginal essence through events that celebrate Aboriginal culture.
3. NVIT should create a healthy organizational community that is committed to teaching indigenous curriculum in a culturally appropriate setting, while maintaining an environment of open communication.

4. NVIT should create a workplace environment that encourages creativity, innovation, safety, and supportiveness.
5. The Collective Agreement needs to recognize NVIT as a unique Aboriginal institution and include culturally sensitive language that supports traditional values and culture.
6. The NVIT Board of Governors, together with the rest of the NVIT community, must actively support the strategic initiatives and model the Aboriginal values, cultures and traditions highlighted in the strategic plan.
7. Elders must play a key role at NVIT, and training should be provided on how to choose and best utilize these unique human resources.
8. NVIT must strategically position itself within the BC post-secondary system to be recognized as the foremost authority in Aboriginal education.

The project concludes with a chapter on research implications, which explores the impact this study may have on the Nicola Valley Institute of Technology, as well as recommending a number of suggestions for future research.

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CHAPTER ONE BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The Nicola Valley Institute of Technology is an Aboriginal public post-secondary institution in British Columbia. Since its inception as a private post-secondary institution in 1983, to achieving public status in 1995, and certifying with a trade union in 1998, the institution has struggled to maintain its uniqueness as an Aboriginal organization. As the institution enters the next millennium, a number of issues remain outstanding: There is a need for strategic direction for the institution, recruitment will occur in both the President and Academic Dean positions, and the collective agreement will be finalized and signed off. As the institution enters this exciting period in its history, the ability of NVIT to further develop and maintain its uniqueness as an Aboriginal organization needs to be carefully considered.

1.1 The Opportunity

The purpose of this research project is to determine whether or not the Nicola Valley Institute of Technology (NVIT) is operating in a manner consistent with Aboriginal¹ ways and philosophies, and whether or not Aboriginal culture can be maintained during times of organizational change. This research project uses the Nicola Valley Institute of Technology, an Aboriginal Public Post-secondary Institution, as its research case.

The researcher's findings and recommendations were presented at the Nicola Valley Institute of Technology's April Board meeting. The project was also presented at an employee forum that was open to the entire NVIT community. The NVIT Board of Governors was given the option of acting on the recommendations or requesting further research. The NVIT

¹ Throughout the literature and during the personal interviews it became apparent that a number of terms were used to describe people of First Nations descent. For the purposes of this project, the terms will be used interchangeably, and will refer to individuals of Aboriginal descent.

Employees Association was also encouraged to consider how this research might influence their operations and how the union will function at the Nicola Valley Institute of Technology.

Aboriginal culture in the organization has an impact on the entire NVIT community, which includes the local Aboriginal communities, employees, Board, students and Elders. NVIT, as an Aboriginal organization, can benefit from this research.

1.2 Research Methodology

This research project uses a qualitative approach to investigate the maintenance and development of Aboriginal culture and traditions in a unionized environment. The research study utilizes both primary and secondary research. The primary research includes one-on-one interviews that were exploratory, in-depth, and semi-structured. The secondary research was achieved through a comprehensive literature review around the history of Aboriginal people, Aboriginal culture, Aboriginal values, Aboriginal education, assimilation and identity, and the wisdom of the Elders. The key questions fundamental to the research project are:

1. Is the Nicola Valley Institute of Technology unique as an Aboriginal Post-secondary Institution?
2. What impact will the Trade Union have on the goal of maintaining Aboriginal culture, values, and traditions?
3. What steps should NVIT take to ensure the continuity of its stature as an Aboriginal institution in a unionized environment?

The five main objectives of this research project are:

1. To determine how NVIT is operating as an Aboriginal institution and to elicit opinions on how it can improve as an Aboriginal organization.
2. To gain insight on how employees view the Union in relation to the Aboriginal culture of the organization.

3. To assess whether or not the employees feel that participating at the provincial common table would be beneficial for NVIT, and whether or not NVIT should attempt to incorporate Aboriginal concepts into its local collective agreement.
4. To learn who employees deem more important in leadership positions: An Aboriginal person or a person of Non-Aboriginal descent who is experienced in the public post-secondary system.
5. To develop a list of recommendations for the NVIT community outlining the steps required if NVIT is to maintain its Aboriginal culture, values, and traditions.

In order to fulfill the project's objectives, a comprehensive review of the literature has been undertaken and is outlined in Chapter Two. The research then focusses on one organization, as described in Chapter Three. Chapter Four presents the questions that were asked to the employees of the organization. Upon completion of the interviews, the researcher compiled the wisdom in both the primary and secondary research and presents the findings and recommendations in Chapters Five and Six. It is the hope that this project will assist the Nicola Valley Institute of Technology in beginning to recognize the importance of Aboriginal culture to its development and survival as an Aboriginal organization.

1.3 The Organization

When NVIT first opened its doors in 1983, it attracted twelve students and classes were held in the basement of a local band office. Today, NVIT has grown into an Aboriginal Public Post-secondary Institution that serves hundreds of Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal students from across British Columbia and Canada. Offering on-site courses in College Readiness, Natural Resources, Indigenous and Academic Studies, Administrative Studies, and Social Work, and off-site courses in Community Economic Development and Forestry, NVIT has been successful in providing quality education to Aboriginal students in a culturally appropriate setting. However, like any organization, NVIT has had its share of positive and negative organizational

experiences. To better understand the change that has taken place in NVIT over the past seventeen years, the historical overview of NVIT will be divided into three phases. The first phase consists of the early years, which provides a history from its inception in 1983 to 1995. In 1995, NVIT achieved Public Status, and therefore a second distinct phase is from public status to Union Certification -- 1995 to 1999. After becoming unionized, NVIT entered a third distinct phase. The unionization phase includes the time during the negotiating of the first collective agreement, and includes the challenges over the upcoming years as they become a unionized Aboriginal organization. These three phases will be expanded upon in Chapter Three.

1.4 Significance of the Project

As NVIT enters the year 2000, and approaches the end of its second year of the negotiation of its first collective agreement, the significance of becoming unionized continues to increase. The certification of the Nicola Valley Institute of Technology was one in a series of Aboriginal organizations that were beginning to negotiate wages and working conditions with their employees. Although the Native Courtworkers in British Columbia had been unionized for over five years, the Institute of Indigenous Government, the Interior Indian Friendship Centre, and the employees of both the Kamloops Indian Band and the Westbank First Nation are B.C. Aboriginal organizations entering negotiations. Aboriginal organizations in British Columbia and across Canada are struggling with issues of identity, and are increasingly concerned about the impact of unionization on Aboriginal ways.

The major question shaping NVIT's future is whether it can maintain its Aboriginal culture and traditions in a unionized environment. By identifying the traits that make an ideal Aboriginal organization, NVIT may be able to have an impact on the role that culture has both on the individual and on the organization at large. From a broader perspective, if the individual

employees determine that the workplace is reflecting Aboriginal values and culture, their behavior and attitudes will begin to have a positive affect on the students and their colleagues. Once the college community begins to understand the importance of culture and how an organization can maintain its culture and be unionized, then perhaps it will initiate a natural progression wherein the local First Nations communities become more interested in the growth and development of their school. Continuing the ripple effect, Aboriginal communities across Canada might then recognize that if NVIT could become a leader in reflecting and maintaining Aboriginal values, culture and beliefs in a unionized environment, perhaps they can make unionization succeed in their own Aboriginal organizations.

In effect, the collective agreement language that is eventually accepted by the employees and the Board of NVIT will have a significant impact on Aboriginal education for Aboriginal people. Perhaps other Aboriginal organizations will be able to use NVIT's agreement as a template to determine if, and how, culture may be maintained in a unionized environment. In addition, the BC Public Post-secondary system views NVIT as a unique institution, and will be anxiously awaiting the final outcome. The risks associated by doing research of this type are that the conclusion may be that Aboriginal culture cannot be maintained, or that it can, and yet the agreed upon collective agreement may not reflect it. Equally possible, NVIT may become a leader in maintaining culture in a unionized environment. If this were the case, NVIT would become a model for other Aboriginal organizations. In addition, it would gain national exposure attracting students to the institution from across the country.

The Nicola Valley Institute of Technology has the opportunity to have a positive impact on Aboriginal organizations across Canada. Together with its Union, the institution has the opportunity of creating a collective agreement that is specifically designed to assist Aboriginal

organizations, including language that recognizes the uniqueness of NVIT as an Aboriginal Post-secondary institution. However, if NVIT is not successful in its goal of maintaining Aboriginal culture and traditions in a unionized environment, the institution may be at a risk of becoming assimilated into BC's mainstream post-secondary system. The attempts at assimilation of Aboriginal people have been occurring for hundreds of years, and are well documented throughout the literature.

CHAPTER TWO LITERATURE REVIEW

In preparation for a major project that studies Aboriginal culture, values and traditions in a unionized environment, it is important to have a sound understanding of culture and traditions in Aboriginal organizations and in First Nations communities across Canada. By exploring a number of relevant themes, the knowledge and information is then used in the development of the questions that were asked in the semi-structured interviews. A major research goal of this section was to learn from and build upon the relevant literature that has touched upon the areas of Aboriginal culture and tradition. Through an extensive review, a number of themes emerged including:

- History of Aboriginal people
- Aboriginal Values
- Wisdom of the elders
- Assimilation
- Aboriginal Culture and Identity
- Aboriginal Education
- Contemporary Aboriginal Organizations in Canada

Overall, Aboriginal organizations are different from “mainstream” organizations in that they have emerged from a group of people who are culturally, socially, politically, and economically unique. According to Berger (1991) “the culture of Native people amounts to more than crafts and carvings. It includes the tradition of decision making by consensus, a respect for the wisdom of the elders, a belief in the extended family, and a special relationship with the land” (p.160). In addition, Aboriginal people hold a high regard for the environment, and are willing to share all of these beliefs in one form or another within their cultures, even

though they have been under unremitting pressure to abandon them. In addition, many researchers such as Couture (1996) have discovered through the Elders that Native identity is like a state of mind that is centered in the heart.

2.1 History of Aboriginal People

In order to gain a better understanding of the importance of reflecting Aboriginal culture and values in an Aboriginal organization, one must have an understanding of the history of Aboriginal people. The history of Aboriginal people is well documented throughout the literature. Cassidy and Bish (1989) provide an overview of the relationship between Canada and its Native peoples including a number of significant events that have transpired in the evolution of how Native people are treated today.

Prior to first contact, Aboriginal people in Canada lived in a way that was congruent with their Aboriginal traditions, values and culture. The Aboriginal people had not been exposed to the white mans ways, and therefore lived according to their traditional ways. Once the white man arrived in Canada, the fur trade was established, the railway was created, and the Aboriginal people began to be exposed to a new way of living. The relationship between the Aboriginal people and the settlers was formally acknowledged in the Royal Proclamation of 1763.

The Royal Proclamation of 1763 established the fact that all matters relating to Indian peoples were international matters until domestic agreements could be reached. Although most authors agree that the Royal Proclamation was the first significant document affecting Indian peoples, Berger (1991) argues that Native institutions, cultural values, and land and sovereignty were under attack even before the Royal Proclamation of 1763, starting at first contact in 1492.

In 1867, the British North America Act gave jurisdiction over Indians and Indian Lands reserved for the Indians to Canada. Essentially this created a relationship between Canada and its Aboriginal peoples. A great deal of controversy surrounded this Act. There was a discrepancy in opinions of whether the relationship was a “trust relationship” or a fiduciary obligation.

In 1876, the Parliament of Canada passed the Indian Act, which consolidated all existing laws concerning Indian peoples. The Indian Act was originally based on a piece of legislation called the Enfranchisement Act (1869). This Act was a contradiction between the federal government’s goals of providing a protective framework for the exercise of the Indian way of life and, at the same time, imposing alien forms of government on Indian peoples (Cassidy and Bish, 1989). According to Atleo (1991), “the Indian Act was used to destroy traditional institutions of Indian government and to abolish those cultural practices that defined Indian identity” (p. 36).

Throughout the late nineteenth and the early twentieth centuries the federal government gradually “gave” Indian people more authority to control their local affairs (Cassidy & Bish, 1989). In 1951, a revised Indian Act became law, and in 1958, registered Indians were given the right to vote in federal elections.

In 1969, the Minister of Indian and Northern Affairs, Jean Chretien, presented a paper on Indian policy popularly referred to as the White Paper. Several authors describe the White Paper as an attempt at assimilation and termination (Cassidy and Bish, 1989; Kulchyski, 1995; Voyageur, 1996.) Eventually, amidst organized pressure by Aboriginal peoples, the Trudeau government backed away from the White Paper as the formal statement of its approach on how to deal with the Aboriginal people.

In 1982, the Aboriginal peoples of Canada made significant gains within the Constitutional Act. Sections 25, 35, and 37 recognized and affirmed aboriginal and treaty rights and mandated a First Ministers conference on self-government. From 1983 through to 1987, meetings were held to discuss the aboriginal right to self-government. At the same time, Liberal M.P. Keith Penner released the Penner Report which listed a number of recommendations including the right to self government, the recognition of Indian governments as legitimate, and the right for First Nations to determine membership and develop policy. It was also suggested that the Department of Indian Affairs be phased out over five years, that a special dispute resolution mechanism be established between First Nations and other governments, that federal funding be by direct grant, and lastly, that land claims be settled in a fair and just process.

According to Cassidy and Bish (1989), although the Penner Report was seen as a significant step toward Indian Self Government, it did have some faults, including the failure to address many of the implications or problems of Indian Self Government in practice. The Penner Report was the first of a number of reports to be commissioned by the Federal government. In the 1980's, two additional reports were released. The Nielson Report was different from the Penner Report in that the former suggested that native communities need to solve their own problems. It also suggested that the land and self-government issues remain unaddressed at the Federal level. The second report was the Coolican Report, which contradicted the Nielson Report. The Coolican Report encouraged recognition rather than assimilation.

On June 12, 1985, Bill C-31 received consent in the House of Commons. This legislation removed 116 years of discrimination against Indian women. Joseph (1991) list the five criteria that make this new legislation appear to be fair:

1. No one gains or loses status through marriage.
2. Persons who previously lost status through sexual discrimination and enfranchisement are entitled to regain status.
3. First time registration of children whose parents lost status is now possible.
4. No one will have status unless at least one parent has, or would have had, status.
5. The concept of enfranchisement is now entirely abolished; no one can renounce or lose status. (p. 69)

Although this new legislation gave Indian Bands the authority to determine their Citizenship, the new bill received criticism. Joseph (1991) conclude that Bill C-31 became a more sophisticated instrument for the government to assimilate Indian people into Euro-Canadian society.

In 1988, the Indian Act was amended once again to provide bands with more financial powers. This was the first major Indian-led initiative to amend the Indian Act. The amendments were intended to strengthen the power of Band councils to levy property taxes and control development on reserve land.

As First Nations people strive toward self government, they will inevitably be faced with a number of organizational challenges. Although many challenges exist, two relate directly to maintaining culture. The first is described as a cultural engagement and recognizes that the organizational cultures of Indian governments are often quite different from those of other governments. The values and behaviors conflict, and they are often caught between two cultures. The second is the continuity of tradition. The areas of traditional authority, and how the traditional power of clans and hereditary chiefs be represented in modern rationalized

organizations. The need to maintain culture relates directly to the description and promotion of Aboriginal values.

2.2 Aboriginal Values

The First Nations people of Canada have values that demonstrate their uniqueness when compared to the rest of Canada. According to Berger (1991), First Nations people have a sense of community, and that places sharing and cooperation above individual economic initiatives. Consensus decision-making is also a very important Aboriginal value. Consensus decision-making occurs when Indian governments, or other groups of individuals, arrive at a general agreement based on a process of thinking and talking together. In order for consensus to work, members must share such common values as cooperation, commitment to other members, and tolerance of differing ideas (Cassidy & Bish, 1989). According to Ross (1992), “Native people are writing their own rules for cooperation among themselves, rules that can only be refined and accepted over considerable time” (p. 161). Government officials, however, believe that Natives are incapable of making a decision. Frideres (1991) explains further “that after Native people have reached a consensus decision, many still talk against it. This accusation of insincerity reflects a shallow understanding of Native culture” (p. 317). Consensus decision making is reaching agreement where one can agree with the decision. It does not require complete support.

Although it is generally agreed that Aboriginal people need to maintain their values, mainstream society puts tremendous pressure on Aboriginal people to shift their values to reflect mainstream views (Krotz, 1990). According to Ross (1992), white society is unwilling to acknowledge that North American Indians have different values and institutions that have not lost their relevance and application despite five hundred years of cultural and technological advances. Traditional structures such as the extended family and tribal groups are struggling to

maintain their importance in the lives of Aboriginal peoples. The struggle has been particularly difficult for the Aboriginal youth. As Native people move from generation to generation, Aboriginal values seem to get lost in the process (Krotz, 1990). Furthermore, values must be lived on a day to day basis. For example, in an interview with Ovide Mercredi, Slobodian (1997) uncovers traditional teachings about respect for parents and elders, where Mercredi mentions that Aboriginal people need to be reminded of their cultural values. He feels that Aboriginal people need to not only treat the white people properly, but also treat themselves properly. How Aboriginal people get along, and how they should treat each other, can best be learned through the teachings of Aboriginal Elders.

2.3 Wisdom of the Elders

The acknowledgement and promotion of the wisdom of Aboriginal Elders is critical to the success of Aboriginal organizations maintaining Aboriginal traditions and culture. The Elders bear the responsibility of passing down stories and ensuring that today's children are aware of their past. In an interview with George Erasmus, former National Chief of the Assembly of First Nations, Krotz (1990) discovers that the basic teaching of the elders is to respect and value diversity. Each person is no better or no worse than another. The Elders continue to hold Aboriginal people to the economics of need. For example, the Elders state that individuals should seek only what they need, not what they want. The teachings of the Elders are not necessarily read about and studied. In reality, if one wishes to learn from the Elders, then one must learn through "doing" over a long period of time (Couture, 1996).

The literature has provided a great deal of information from personal interviews with Native Elders. According to Ross (1992), the Elders know, better than anyone, how much of their culture and traditions have been lost over the last one hundred years. In an interview with

the Carrier Sekani Tribal Council, Cassidy and Bish (1989) learned that the Elders have brought both Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal people to a point where most understand the cultural differences. Aboriginal people must learn, understand, and utilize their knowledge, wisdom, and teachings in an effort to maintain the culture. Elders play a significant role in education, history, and politics, as they pass on the wisdom of their peoples (Ryan, 1996; Cassidy, 1991).

Couture (1996) describe the Elders as “the oral historians, guardians of the Secrets, interpreters of the Life of the People, and as unusual teachers and way showers to the People”. Although the oral traditions that the Elders pass on is crucial to the future of Aboriginal peoples, the ability to translate the meaning of the Elders from their Native language into the English language causes concern. Anthropologists often have difficulty understanding when an interpreter translates a lengthy response from an Elder into a few words. Often the information contains the meaning, but does not contain the context (Stevenson, 1996). Through the goal of maintaining Aboriginal culture and traditions, and resisting assimilation, the need to attend to the stories and thoughts of the Elders continues to increase, especially as more and more Aboriginal people are seeking to maintain their Native identity and survive as Aboriginal peoples (Couture, 1996).

2.4 Assimilation

Since First Contact, the explicit goal of the Canadian federal government has been to assimilate Indian peoples into the European way of life (Kulchyski, 1995; Cassidy & Bish, 1989). The federal government generally accepted the view that if the Indians do assimilate, they will no longer be Indians, and there will be no Indian view of the world (Berger, 1991; Cassidy & Bish, 1989). According to Ross (1992), when the Europeans arrived, they did everything in their power to prevent Native people from maintaining their own social and spiritual resources. Although many people were concerned with the treatment of the Aboriginal People, the generally accepted attitude highlighted the belief that the Aboriginal peoples can only hope to survive by adopting the white way of living (Cassidy & Bish, 1989; Salem-Wiseman, 1996).

The literature also supports the fact that Non-Aboriginal people of Canada wanted the Indians to adopt a “mainstream” way of life, regardless of the Aboriginals’ preference. Asch (1988) defines this attitude of the Non-Aboriginal people as ethnocentrism, a form of bias that favours what is familiar and denigrates what is different. Mainstream society viewed Aboriginal people as different, and its goal was to make them adapt to the European way of life. According to Kulchyski (1995), hegemony is any attempt on the part of the dominant society to assimilate Aboriginal peoples. However, to the Aboriginal leaders, assimilation meant the process of making Aboriginal culture irrelevant in the lives of Aboriginal peoples. Through the strength of the Aboriginal communities, and the wisdom of the Elders, Aboriginal people of Canada are a minority that has resisted assimilation. They are a people that are striving for the dignity of their culture, the integrity of their territories, and the right to manage their own affairs. The needs of

the Native people are not unreasonable. They simply want distinctly Native interests to be protected (Berger, 1991; Krotz, 1990).

A question to consider, however, is whether assimilation is actually occurring. As Aboriginal people fail to maintain their Native language, they are slowly losing more and more of their heritage. Some people believe that eventually the government will reach the end of its responsibility as the Indians progress into civilization and finally disappear as a separate and distinct people, not by race extinction but by gradual assimilation by their fellow citizens (Salem-Wiseman, 1996).

The Aboriginal people of Canada have resisted most attempts at assimilation. In fact, the ultimate goal of Aboriginal peoples was Aboriginal rights and Aboriginal control over their own affairs. One of the many differences between Aboriginal people and Non-Aboriginal people is how they view different issues. For example, Aboriginal people differ significantly from white people in the way they approach the issue of assimilation. According to Krotz, (1990) “the white people are seeking solutions, while the Indians want justice” (p. 20). Furthermore, when Aboriginal people consider Aboriginal Rights, they consider the right to the enjoyment of culture and the right to survival and self-determination (Asch, 1988).

While some authors make a point of articulating the differences among the First Nations, others describe the movement toward pan-Indianism as a response to assimilation. According to Frideres (1993), pan-Indianism emphasizes the values and beliefs central to the culture of all Canadian Natives, regardless of local and regional differences. Pan- Indianism is about Nation wide organization and opposition to those things which impact and affect all Aboriginal people, such as the 1969 White Paper. In this light, the pan-Indian movement has been the first step in fostering a spirit of unity and brotherhood among Native people across Canada. Frideres (1993)

describes pan-Indianism as a mixture of traditional Native and White values. He believes that the leaders of pan-Indian movements have extensive contacts with the White society; they are generally part white, well educated, and involved typically in White occupations. The spreading of information and values relevant to Native people facilitates the growth of pan-Indianism.

Pan-Indianism can be used as a tool to promote the maintenance of Aboriginal culture.

Aboriginal people from various cultures can commit themselves to the perseverance of Aboriginal values and traditions in order to maintain the Aboriginal essence throughout Aboriginal organizations.

Aboriginal people, however, have often resisted the idea that all Aboriginal people can be clustered together. One example of how the different Nations were treated the same occurred in the Residential schools, where it was assumed that the education of Aboriginal children in the East was the same as the education of Aboriginal children in the West (Barman, 1996). The various Nations have very different cultures. The potlatch cultures differ from the Sundance cultures, which differ from the sweat lodge cultures. The question of identity is a complex and crucial one in this terrain of struggle (Kulchyski, 1995). Aboriginal people throughout Canada are very proud of the unique cultures that identifies them. However, when observing Aboriginal organizations, it is the presence of Aboriginal people, Aboriginal culture, and an Aboriginal identity, which makes it Aboriginal.

2.5 Aboriginal Culture and Identity

The ability of Aboriginal organizations to maintain their culture is important to the survival of aboriginal people and to their fight against assimilation. Culture is a vital force in Native peoples lives because it distinguishes them from the rest of the dominant society (Kulchyski, 1995; Berger, 1991). The Native people endured years of pressure to forget their cultural heritage. The Indian Act prevented Aboriginal people from participating in an Aboriginal costume off reserve, the potlatch, as well as certain dances. The opinion was that any gathering that contributed to the preservation of Native cultures counteracted the goal of the Department of Indian Affairs (Salem-Wiseman, 1996; Joseph, 1991).

Duncan Scott, Deputy Superintendent and General of Indian Affairs in Canada from 1913 to 1931, was responsible for administering the Department of Indian Affairs policy of assimilation during his tenure. Scott believed that all aspects of Native culture belonged in the past. Native religions, traditions, and customs were viewed as meaningless and irrelevant rituals which had persisted from an earlier age of “savage” glory, and served only as a form of entertainment for “low white men” (Salem-Wiseman, 1996; Barman, 1996). Scott believed that it was in the best interests of the Native peoples to assimilate into the general population. Scott stated, in 1921, “that the object of the Department of Indian Affairs was to continue until there is not a single Indian in Canada that has not been absorbed into the body politic, and there is no Indian question, and no Indian Department (Minister of Public Works & Government Services Canada, 1995).

Although the goal of the Department of Indian Affairs was assimilation, the government of Canada did not realize how Aboriginal people would resist. In spite of social problems, Natives have relentlessly fought for a sense of identity, demonstrating the tenacity of Native

culture (Berger, 1991). Native groups exhibit a variety and diversity that is equal or greater than all of the other cultures and ethnic groupings that make up Canada (Cassidy & Bish, 1989). Further, the existence of Aboriginal people will depend on their ability to maintain their culture (Krotz, 1990). By being assertive about their beliefs, Native people do demean other cultures; instead they are attempting to be true to themselves (Krotz, 1990). According to Ross (1992) “the Native people are not asking the non-aboriginal people to adopt sweat lodges and sweet grass ceremonies; rather, they are only asking that they be permitted to make their own choices” (p.154). Non-Aboriginal people, and Aboriginal people from different Nations, should view the practices directed at the maintenance of Aboriginal culture as an opportunity to learn (Krotz, 1990; Asch, 1988).

It is, however, important to acknowledge that the communication between Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginals may break down as a result of key words meaning very different things (Cassidy, 1991). According to Ross (1992), the first step in coming to terms with people of another culture is to acknowledge that we interpret the words and acts of others. In a meeting of two cultures, the parties have an obligation to expect difference and to take the time to step back and ask whether the words and acts may be open to different interpretations.

During the first First Ministers conference on Aboriginal self-government in 1983, Aboriginal culture was a key issue. The preservation and the enhancement of Aboriginal cultures, customs, traditions, religions, and languages, including the education of their children within their own languages, was deemed to be a necessary requirement if their children were to be equipped to live in the cultural milieu of their choice (Asch, 1988). Critical to the perseverance of Aboriginal culture is the environment that the children and youth grow up in. This places an even greater demand on the importance of an Aboriginal education.

2.6 Aboriginal Education

Aboriginal schools aim to maintain academic credibility in a culturally appropriate setting. Often Aboriginal schools struggle to combine the teaching of Aboriginal identity with an academic credibility that is competitive in the twentieth-century world (Ryan, 1996; Krotz, 1990). There is often a belief that Aboriginal schools do not meet the standards and criteria of mainstream schools. “The perception is that Indian schools are for dumb children” (Krotz, 1990, p.98). However, there is a need for Aboriginal children to be taught in a culturally sensitive place. Unless children can be brought up with both an appreciation of Indian culture, and an education to function in the larger society, Indian people may be committing cultural genocide (Cassidy & Bish, 1989). Aboriginal people need the necessary skills to compete in the world, but they shouldn’t have to cease being an Indian in the process of getting those qualifications (Krotz, 1990). This section explores how Aboriginal people must begin to take control of their education.

It is apparent that if Aboriginal people are going to resist assimilation and develop their own sense of identity and culture, then they must do this through Aboriginal education. “Indian control of Indian education” is a phrase that is used often in Aboriginal educational institutions. According to Frideres (1993), the federal and provincial policies on Native education to date should be considered in two phases. The first phase, from 1867 to 1945, has been labeled as the “paternalistic ideology”. During this time, Natives were considered backward children, and the responsibility for these children was primarily passed on to religious agencies. The second phase, from 1945 to the present, is called the “democratic ideology”. The characteristics of this phase are represented by an ability of Native children to attend school off of the reserve.

In addition to this change of ideology, the National Indian Brotherhood submitted a policy paper on Indian Control of Indian Education in the 1970's that was influential in the movement towards self-government. The paper maintained that because the Federal government was responsible for Indian education, it was their responsibility to transfer the authority for education to the local Band level (Cassidy & Bish, 1989). Although the paper requested local control of education, the government has been reluctant to relinquish control. Yet, when the government denies First Nations people the control of their children's education, it demonstrates a lack of trust, respect, and status (Ryan, 1996).

A number of authors agree that there are three ways in which Indian people can achieve Indian control over Indian education. The first places Aboriginal education in the hands of the local Bands; the second, incorporates Native cultural values, including Native languages, into the curriculum, and the third, involves the parents and community members in education at a local level. (Roberts, 1982; Ryan, 1996). Those concerned with Native education should listen to what Native peoples have to say about these matters (Ryan, 1996).

Historically, residential schools were created to provide non-native educators a better chance of eradicating the debilitating influence of Native culture (Ryan, 1996; Ross, 1992). According to Frideres (1993), the religious missionaries felt that Natives would always live in isolation, so they made no attempt to prepare them for successful careers in modern Canadian society. Documentation shows that the residential school system put Aboriginal youth at a disadvantage. Aboriginal children were not allowed to speak their native language and were strictly disciplined, forced to conform to Non-Aboriginal teachings.

Aboriginal education today reveals a disturbing tension. On the one hand, Aboriginal people need the skills and knowledge to succeed in the dominant culture. However, on the other

hand, they have roots in a noble heritage from which they draw personal and collective strength (Roberts, 1982). In an interview, Krotz (1990, p.65) uncovers Thomas Berger's opinion about Indian education. Berger believes that "Native people should not just be the ones receiving an education at Aboriginal schools, they also need to be managing the institutions, rather than having the Native figureheads at the top, with the "white folks" managing the day-to-day operations."

The literature supports the need for culture-based education, yet the curriculum that the children receive does not reflect this ideal. In fact, some of the curriculum that is presented not only fails to reflect Native values, but also contradicts traditional Native beliefs and knowledge (Ryan, 1996). Several authors believe that there are two main styles of thinking (Frideres, 1993; Atleo, 1991). Analytical thinkers tend to solve problems using spoken language, and they think in words rather than meanings. Relational thinking deals with a tangible world and perceives that all things exist in a vast relationship with all others. While the present school system appears to be based on analytical thinking, Frideres (1993, p.172) maintains that "Indian culture promotes relational thinking, and that if such a statement is true, then the failure record of Native people is not surprising."

Although the importance of Indian control over Indian education is recognized, many of today's students continue to learn about things that are not connected to their life experiences or have very little to do with their cultural heritage (Ryan, 1996). British Columbia has 198 First Nations Bands throughout the province. In addition to these bands, there are numerous Aboriginal organizations that are providing goods and services to Aboriginal people in British Columbia and across Canada. Aboriginal people must continue to work for Aboriginal organizations that are committed to creating opportunities for Aboriginal people. Although the

number of Aboriginal organizations is increasing, some research has been conducted regarding the terms that define an Aboriginal organization.

2.7 Contemporary Aboriginal Organizations in Canada

With such a large population of Aboriginal people in British Columbia, and across Canada, it is not surprising that a number of Aboriginal organizations offer services directed at Aboriginal people. However, the question remains: “What makes an Aboriginal organization uniquely Aboriginal?” While little has been written about these organizations, a number of scholars have begun to explore this interesting and vital area of research. David Newhouse, in an unpublished interview with Warren Weir (1996) defines and describes the Aboriginal organization. He describes three tests that one can use when determining whether or not an organization is Aboriginal. First, are the majority of people within the organization Aboriginal? Second, is the organization Aboriginally controlled? And third, does the organization operate according to Aboriginal values and customs? Weir (2000) builds on this test and concludes that the “ideal” Aboriginal organization in Canada has the following five characteristics:

1. The majority of people within the organization are Aboriginal employees.
2. The organization has Aboriginal ownership and/or control.
3. The organization is practicing Aboriginal culture and traditions.
4. The organization is connected to the Aboriginal community.
5. The architectural design of the buildings reflects the Aboriginal essence of the organization.

Newhouse describes Aboriginal organizations from an organizational behavior point of view in which people have made a conscious decision to attempt to operate in an Aboriginal fashion. He feels the organization’s culture and the culture which surround it must “fit”.

Newhouse believes that organizations serve two purposes. One is the purpose for which they are designed, and the other is for the contribution they make to the revitalization of Aboriginal communities (Weir, 1996). Chapman, McCaskill and Newhouse (1991) research management practices in Contemporary Aboriginal Organizations in a paper published in the Canadian Journal of Native Studies. The research supports the idea that if the management scheme in Aboriginal organizations is based upon a collectivist orientation to life then the organization will be group oriented and non-hierarchical, and will operate by consensus, encouraging holistic employee development. The research also identifies elders as key elements to the organization. Chapman, McCaskill and Newhouse conclude that the management practices that the managers in Aboriginal organizations are practicing are surprisingly similar to those practiced by mainstream managers today, who incorporate the idea of flexible work teams, a move away from hierarchical systems, and a growing commitment to the “whole” employee.

2.8 Literature Summary

It is difficult to understand the importance of Aboriginal culture, values and traditions without having an understanding of the history and current situation of Aboriginal people in Canada. Aboriginal people have faced many pressures to succumb to the white mans ways. Although the government believed that assimilation of the Native people was the only way they would survive, Aboriginal people have resisted, and are beginning to be recognized as a separate people. The Elders have maintained that through the practice of Aboriginal values and traditions, they can take the best of both worlds to create a better place for the children. The Aboriginal children of today require the teachings of both the native and non-native ways, in a culturally appropriate institution. Unfortunately, except for NVIT, colleges and universities in British Columbia do not offer an environment that reflects Aboriginal culture. The Nicola Valley Institute of Technology has an opportunity to become a leader in maintaining Aboriginal culture, values, and traditions in a unionized Aboriginal post-secondary institution.

CHAPTER THREE THE ORGANIZATION

The Nicola Valley Institute of Technology (NVIT) is one of just two Aboriginal public post-secondary institutions in British Columbia. Created in 1983, the institution has endured a number of significant events that have contributed to its evolution as an Aboriginal post-secondary institution. One way of understanding NVIT is to look at its history chronologically. This chapter will do this, dividing it into four stages starting with the following dates and occurrences. First, in 1983 the institution was created as a private post-secondary society. In 1995, NVIT was designated a Provincial Institute by the province of British Columbia. In 1998, the employees of NVIT were certified as a trade union. As we enter the year 2000, NVIT is looking forward to a number of exciting challenges.

3.1 The Early Years: 1983 to 1995

The Nicola Valley Institute of Technology (NVIT) was created in 1983 through the efforts of the five First Nations bands in the Nicola Valley. The dream was to create a First Nations post-secondary institution that would teach relevant First Nations curriculum in an appropriate environment. The dream was formulated to address the gaps in the BC Post-Secondary educational system which presented barriers for Aboriginal students. Not only was the mainstream college and university environment not conducive to Aboriginal ways of learning, the opportunities for Aboriginal students to access post-secondary education was limited. In the early eighties, only one in twenty First Nations students who entered post-secondary education successfully completed their studies (NVIT, 1999). This statistic proved that First Nations students were not succeeding in the public post-secondary system. The five Bands of the Nicola Valley believed by creating an Aboriginal post-secondary institution that

provided educational services in a culturally appropriate environment, supplemented by the support services that Aboriginal students require, that the success rates of Aboriginal students would increase.

In 1983, the British Columbia Institute of Technology delivered a Natural Resource Technology extension program in Merritt for the Nicola Valley Tribal Council. In 1984, the Tribal Council took over the program and offered it independently through an accreditation agreement with the College of New Caledonia in Prince George. In 1987, The Nicola Valley Institute of Technology was formed as a legal entity, and separated from the tribal council. Between 1987 and 1995, the Nicola Valley Institute of Technology registered as a Private Post-secondary institution, and accreditation agreements were negotiated with Cariboo College, Saskatchewan Indian Federated College (SIFC), and the University of Victoria. The relationship with the College of New Caledonia also continued. During this period of time, NVIT experienced a rapid growth in program offerings, and was beginning to see increased success rates. In fact, NVIT began to prove that Aboriginal students could succeed, with success rates reaching 85% to 95% of its students. Compared to the studies that suggested one in twenty were completing their studies, at NVIT seventeen out of every twenty students were completing. NVIT's methods of delivering post-secondary education to Aboriginal students was soon adopted by other BC post-secondary institutions, which resulted in increased success rates for Aboriginal students in mainstream institutions (NVIT, 1999). In 1989, the British Columbia Ministry of Advanced Education began to provide operating funding to NVIT through Cariboo College, and in 1994, the facilities branch in the Provincial ministry began to fund NVIT's buildings.

Once NVIT became a private post-secondary institution and began receiving money through the BC Provincial government, the NVIT Board of Directors committed to a strategic planning process that was to assist in providing the overall direction for the institution. Initiated in the fall of 1993 a strategic planning process resulted in an approved strategic planning report in the spring of 1994. This strategic planning process resulted in a clear mission, vision, values, and a set of goals for the institution (Appendix One). As one of its goals, the NVIT Board was committed to achieving, through legislation, independent authority for NVIT's academic credentials. Although initially the credentials would be at the first and second year (diploma) levels, there was a long-term goal of achieving degree-granting status. On September 1, 1995, by the order of the Lieutenant Governor in Council, the Nicola Valley Institute of Technology was designated as a Provincial Institute (Appendix Two).

3.2 Public Status to Certification: 1995 to 1998

By achieving public status, the Nicola Valley Institute of Technology was able to offer their own one-year certificates and two-year diplomas. The initial accreditation agreements for certificates and diplomas were canceled in 1996. With NVIT now having the authority to produce their own certificates and diplomas, the institution began to focus on achieving course transfer credit articulation with other public institutions in the Province. The goal was to have NVIT courses recognized and accepted at other institutions, allowing students the option of transferring to another institution or continuing on to a degree program. As well, as an Aboriginal post-secondary institution, the NVIT Board of Governors felt that the addition of an Indigenous Studies program would be an integral part of the overall educational plan. The Board was committed to seeing NVIT offer a program in Indigenous Studies, agreeing that it was the type of program that an Aboriginal college should be delivering. In summary, the strategic

plan discusses the development of NVIT both in general terms, and as an Aboriginal organization, and specifically, a strategic plan for the next five years (Appendix One).

Between the years of 1995 and 1998, the institution experienced a great deal of turmoil, and yet because of the strong commitment of its staff, was able to persevere. NVIT was fortunate at the time to have employees who were committed to the institution and who believed in the education of Aboriginal students. Appendix 3 shows the demographics of the employees of NVIT since 1988, specifically the gender and ethnicity of the employees. As an Aboriginal institution, the hiring policy gives preference in hiring and promotion to Aboriginal candidates. NVIT's hiring policy prior to the collective agreement is attached in Appendix 4.

The Nicola Valley Institute of Technology has endured a great deal of change since achieving public status in September 1995. Since that time, the organization has had three presidents, and currently has filled the President's position on an interim basis. The academic leadership has been equally as challenging, as NVIT has had three different individuals in the position of Academic Dean. Currently this position is vacant, and the institution is actively recruiting to fill this position. The difficulty NVIT has experienced in these leadership positions is twofold. Firstly, with a commitment to filling vacant positions, and in particular senior management positions, with Aboriginal people, the institution has difficulty in recruiting suitable candidates. Secondly, by becoming a public institution, the roles of the President and Academic Dean had changed as compared to when NVIT was a private post-secondary institution. Accordingly, there was difficulty understanding and articulating the exact job that was required from these positions.

The rest of the leadership has been stable to the degree that the present Senior Management, consisting of the Bursar, the Director of Human Resources, and the Director of

Student Services has been intact since April of 1998. The employees in those three positions have a combined commitment to the institution of over fifteen years.

In 1997, NVIT experienced difficulty in their programs when admissions to the Bachelor of Social Work program was put on hold due to accreditation issues. At this time, NVIT had been partnering with the University of Victoria, and was feeling the effects of being such a small partner when compared with the vastness of the University. NVIT began looking for a new partner, and in 1998, secured an agreement with the University College of the Cariboo.

Difficulty with the programs, combined with difficulty in leadership positions, prompted the NVIT Board of Governors to hold a Board planning workshop in May 1997. The workshop focused on how NVIT could best serve First Nations: Should they offer a broad range of programs available in other public colleges, or should they focus on unique "Aboriginal" programs not offered in other institutions? The results of the workshop were a commitment to institutional uniqueness and a commitment to "Aboriginal" focused programs. It seemed as if, for NVIT, 1997 onward would be an era of self-legitimization. The Board emerged out of the planning session with the overarching goal of creating a community in the institution, while getting NVIT back on solid ground both in terms of its programs and its finances.

Financially, NVIT has endured some difficult times, and has implemented various restructuring plans to attempt to address a growing deficit. In 1997, a restructuring plan was implemented which resulted in a number of layoffs and program changes. At the time, the employees of NVIT remained one of only two public post-secondary institutions that had not certified as a trade union. During these difficult times, it is not surprising that the staff began to seek job security, as well as the goal of achieving the provincial norms in salary and working conditions.

A unionized NVIT was not a new topic. The faculty and staff of NVIT first considered certification in 1996. At that time, a representative from the College and Institutes Educators Association was invited to attend a meeting with the employees of NVIT to discuss the possibilities of certification. During this meeting, there was a clear division between the staff based on those who felt that a union would be good, and a large group concerned that a mainstream union may impose its values on an Aboriginal college. The resistance was quite strong, and the Union representative left with the message that unionization was not for NVIT.

Shortly thereafter, a group of employees began a “collective” whose aim was to work with Senior Management in moving NVIT towards the provincial norms in salaries and working conditions, in a culturally appropriate way. However, without the authority of a formal union body, the collective quickly lost interest and the staff were again without a collective voice. When NVIT entered into its restructuring phase, a number of staff were laid off without consideration for seniority. These actions, coupled with the desire to achieve the provincial norms, resulted in a renewed interest in certification. In May of 1998, the employees of the Nicola Valley Institute of Technology were certified as a trade union under the British Columbia Labour Code.

3.3 Unionization 1999 to 2000

Currently, NVIT operates like every other public post-secondary institution with a union in British Columbia. As NVIT began negotiating a first collective agreement with its employees, it became clear to both the NVIT Board and the employees that it would be a long process. In general, collective bargaining throughout a system usually involves a handful of items, as other post-secondary institutions have long standing existing agreements with terms and conditions that have been negotiated over many years. At NVIT, however, the negotiation process was

viewed by many as a unique opportunity to create a very special collective agreement. In this light, NVIT's agreement would recognize NVIT as a unique and vibrant Aboriginal public post-secondary institution, and this would in fact distinguish NVIT from other "mainstream" institutions in the province.

In BC, collective bargaining in post-secondary institutions has generally taken on a new direction. In 1998, a new common faculty agreement was negotiated that dealt with a number of issues that are common for all institutions. This included salaries, benefits, and a variety of other issues. The common agreement did not, however, completely replace local bargaining. Institutions were still responsible for negotiating certain issues at a local level.

After a review of the common agreement, in addition to a large number of local college agreements, it was determined by NVIT analysts that issues of culture, values, and traditions were not fully addressed. While there were a few exceptions, the agreements primarily instilled the values of the mainstream union culture. This culture is represented by values such as a concern for salaries, working conditions, and protection of employees.

Fifteen local agreements were reviewed from the web page of the Post-secondary Employers Association in June of 1999 (PSEA, 1999). Of those reviewed, few made reference to culture, values or traditions. Some of the exceptions were as follows:

- Capilano College, North Vancouver. An article in the collective agreement makes reference to a Native speaker and conversation seminars.
- The College of New Caledonia, Prince George. There is reference to a cooperative plan for opportunities in Northern BC.
- The Justice Institute, Vancouver. Language in their collective agreement pertaining to their uniqueness in the training programs they offer.
- Langara College, Vancouver. An evaluation process that contains a component around community service.

- North Island College, Vancouver Island. References a consultative model of decision making.
- Northern Lights College, Dawson Creek. A mission statement that recognizes the educational, cultural, social, and recreational source for people in Northern BC.
- Northwest College, Terrace. A preamble in their collective agreement that pays special attention to the training needs of Aboriginal people and women.

The exceptions above can be evaluated by their attempt to create an acknowledgment of a culture other than the typical union culture. For the most part, however, the collective agreements in the BC public post-secondary system do not reflect culture, other than a unionized mainstream culture. The Nicola Valley Institute of Technology viewed the negotiation of their collective agreement as an opportunity to create a learning environment that would reflect the culture, values, and traditions of Aboriginal peoples.

Although the opportunity to create a unique environment exists, the climate of organizational change, lack of long term leadership, fluctuating enrollments, and staff dissatisfaction, seemingly did not provide the foundation for moving ahead. Given this concern, the NVIT Board realized that the institution needed a renewed direction, and committed to facilitating a strategic planning exercise in January of 2000.

3.4 Strategies for the Future: 2000 and Beyond

Before looking at the importance of the next strategic planning session, another significant event has taken place that should assist in maintaining Aboriginal culture at the Nicola Valley Institute of Technology. The Provincial government has approved a new campus with construction beginning in the Spring of 2000.

The new campus is scheduled to open in September 2001. For the first time in the history of the institution, the entire organization will exist under one roof. The elders of the Nicola

Valley were involved throughout the planning of the new campus. In November 1999, a special naming ceremony was held on the site of the new campus. The elders informed the NVIT community that the site was to be called “Nmicaqtn”, which means “where the Eagle is perched”. In addition to the naming ceremony, the institution has taken a number of steps in an attempt to maintain the Aboriginal spirit of the college. The first step was to hire an architect who was Aboriginal, and who was committed to building an environmentally friendly structure. In addition, the planners have tried to incorporate as much of the circle, an aboriginal symbol, as possible. The building emerges out of the earth, and therefore is in touch with mother earth. The main entrance is from the East, which is significant in First Nations culture as the East is where the sun rises and indicates a new beginning. There will be a significant amount of wood throughout the building, and around the outside of the building, there will be a bandwidth of wood similar to that of a drum. When you enter into the building, there will be a meeting place complete with a ceremonial fireplace. The Elders office is located in the center of the building. When you enter the building, you will be able to look straight through to the heart of the circle where a ceremonial arbor will be located. The building will attempt to signify the Aboriginal culture of the institution. A schematic drawing of the new campus can be found in Appendix Five.

While the 1993 – 1994 strategic plan discussed how NVIT was to become an Aboriginal organization, a specific plan is needed that enables the NVIT Board of Governors to define NVIT, who it serves, and how it will operate now that it is unionized. The NVIT Board of Governors is committed to a new strategic planning in preparation for the move to the new campus. Realizing the importance of ensuring that all stakeholders are included, the participants in the January 2000 workshop will be drawn from students, staff, faculty, administration, and the

Board. NVIT elders will be invited to participate and to provide overall guidance. Each of these groups was asked to select five representatives to attend the two-day workshop. The basic premise of the workshop is: If NVIT is to maximize its success, then it needs a strategic plan (which is about the right things to do) that frames its choice of tactics and action (which are about doing those things right)(Jardine, 1999).

The proposed goals of the workshop are threefold:

- To develop a coherent view (or reaffirm the present view) of NVIT's mission and values among the participants using materials and results developed in previous planning activities as well as new ideas and information brought to this workshop.
- To identify **WHAT** (bold in the original) the "right things" are that NVIT must set out to achieve in order to maintain its mission and uphold its values.
- To sketch a preliminary action plan - **HOW** (bold in the original) to do these things right - that focuses on how best to use everyone's skillsets and builds teamwork, collaboration and knowledge sharing. (Jardine, 1999)

The proposed product of the workshop is twofold:

- A report, submitted to the acting president, that captures all the work and results of the workshop, offers my analysis and recommendations on the issues, and outlines what steps should be taken (Jardine, 1999). The draft report is attached as Appendix Six (Jardine, 2000).
- A draft of a strategic plan that the acting president may amend or place as-is before the board for its consideration (Jardine, 1999). The draft strategic plan is attached as Appendix Seven (Jardine, 2000).

Upon the completion of the strategic planning exercise, the NVIT Board of Governors will be responsible for using the material to formulate a new mission, vision, list of values and strategic goals for the institution. The NVIT Board is expected to receive the strategic planning reports, and will be asked to set the direction for NVIT in the spring of 2000. With the knowledge gained from this information based on a process that included all of the stakeholders, NVIT will have buy-in to a renewed mandate, and as a result, the institution should begin to see positive results.

Through the strategic planning exercise, and a commitment to creating an Aboriginal collective agreement, NVIT is poised to experience growth in programs and enrollments. However, as NVIT begins that journey, the question remains as to whether or not the institution can maintain its Aboriginal culture and traditions in the face of unionization. This further begs the question: was the institution actually reflecting Aboriginal culture and traditions in operating in the past, and if so, what were they?

CHAPTER FOUR RESEARCH APPROACH

This research project uses a qualitative, exploratory approach to investigate NVIT's ability to embrace Aboriginal culture and traditions in a unionized environment. Using one-on-one interviews that are exploratory, in-depth, and semi-structured, the results determine that the participants' responses provided enriched information on cultural values, and ideas on whether or not Aboriginal culture, values, and traditions could be maintained at NVIT when it becomes unionized. This section describes the research methodology that was used to collect qualitative research data from the employees of NVIT.

4.1 Research Methodology

The main approach used in this project was a methodology that is often described as Action Research. Action Research is a collaborative approach to inquiry or investigation that provides individuals with the ability to take action to resolve specific problems (Stringer, 1996). The researcher has demonstrated one phase of Action Research, and will demonstrate the second phase upon completion of the project. The first action research phase involved the collection of data. Once the personal interviews were completed, and the data was transcribed, the researcher provided a copy of the transcript to the participant to allow them the opportunity to enhance, correct and validate the research data. This provided the participants with an Action Research loop that allowed them to ensure that the information they contributed was accurate in representing their opinions.

As well, the research utilized naturalistic emergent inquiry, an academic term for research that involves one-on-one exploratory interviews. Kirby and McKenna (1989) describe interviews as a special form of interaction, which engages both the interviewer and the

participant. According to Glesne and Peshkin (1992) interviews are an opportunity to learn about what you cannot see and to explore alternative explanations of what you do see.

The second Action Research phase will be demonstrated upon completion of the project. Once the recommendations have emerged, the researcher will present the findings both to the NVIT Board of Governors, as well as to the employees of NVIT. The purpose of these presentations is to gain insight on whether the NVIT community believes that the implementation of the recommendations would ensure that an environment that supports Aboriginal culture, values, and traditions may be maintained in a unionized environment.

Stevenson (1996) believes that Participatory Action Research (PAR) has developed as a process to ensure that Aboriginal communities control the local research agenda. In the past, Aboriginal communities have encountered numerous researchers who have entered the community, asked a few questions, and then disappeared. Participatory Action Research allows the participants to control the information and the outcome. PAR is an important step in empowering aboriginal communities, as it provides an excellent opportunity for young people to gain an understanding and appreciation for their culture (Stevenson, 1996).

It is important that the researcher acknowledges the perceptions and personal reflections around the research topic. The concept of “interviewing down” occurs when the researcher suggests that s/he has greater authority than the participant (Kirby & McKenna, 1989). The research process being proposed may have the same difficulties since the researcher is a member of the Senior Management Team in the institution. It is equally important to remember that the researcher works with the participants on a day-to-day basis. Given these limitations, the researcher still assumes that the participants will be forthright and honest in their responses. The participants are choosing to share stories that relate directly to other participants, and are

demonstrating that they trust the researcher and realize that the researcher has intimate knowledge of the institution. The validity and reliability will depend on the trustworthiness of the participants, and the accuracy with which the researcher records the data.

4.2 The Research Process

The researcher prepared a number of questions to ask the participants. Using leads from the responses to these questions, the researcher investigated further into those that held particular significance to the project. The interview questions are the key to the research, as they determine the information that is received. While each participant was not asked the exact same questions, the following lists those questions that were asked to a minimum of two participants during the interview process:

- Is the Nicola Valley Institute of Technology unique and if so, how?
- Is there anything unique about the type of employees we have?
- How do we attract those types of employees?
- Is NVIT meeting the needs of First Nations communities?
- Should the President's position be filled with an Aboriginal person or someone with experience in the post-secondary system?
- Is NVIT reflecting Aboriginal values, customs, and traditions?
- What steps should we take to better reflect those values and traditions?
- What steps should the NVIT community be taking in order to maintain our Aboriginal culture?
- What is your opinion of the hiring policy?
- Should NVIT be 100% Aboriginal?
- Now that NVIT is negotiating a first collective agreement, do you think that it will be easier to maintain our Aboriginal culture, more difficult, or no impact?

- Over the last few years, do you think the employees at NVIT have felt informed?
- The public post-secondary system is moving towards common table bargaining. Do you think we can maintain our uniqueness if we participate at this table?
- Should the collective agreement attempt to incorporate Aboriginal concepts into the language?
- If you look at NVIT as a community, and consider the inherent nature of Unions to divide into an us versus them, how can we maintain our community and be unionized at the same time?
- The term window dressing has been mentioned in that we portray ourselves as an Aboriginal institution, and yet we are really mainstream. What is your reaction to that?
- As an organizational culture, are we Aboriginal enough?
- Do you think NVIT is growing at a comfortable rate?

While each interview was tape-recorded, during the interview process, the participant had the opportunity to request to have the tape player turned off at any time. Each participant was asked if they would like to add to the subject area before the interview was considered finished. Once completed, the interview was transcribed, and each participant was given the opportunity to review the transcript and to delete, change, or add to it. After reviewing their transcripts, the participants were asked to sign off on the interview. Themes that provide the foundation for the findings and recommendations for the project, emerged out of the transcripts. At the conclusion of each interview, the researcher asked the interviewee to consider the title of the research project: "Honoring a Cultural Community: Embracing Aboriginal Values and Traditions in a Unionized Environment".

The analysis of the information is not a process that is complete once the interviews are finished. Analyzing the data is a continuous process that commences at the same time as the

research, and includes not only compiling data, but also a time to consider relationships, meanings, and reflections (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992).

The research process consists of six phases:

1. Topic Selection
2. Project Prospectus
3. Major Project Proposal
4. Union Support
5. Data Collection
6. Final report

1. **Topic Selection:** During the first summer residency of the Master of Arts in Leadership and Training (MALT) program, the researcher began considering the possibility of doing a research project around unions in an Aboriginal organization.
2. **Project Prospectus:** The development of this phase included a meeting with the project sponsor and faculty supervisor. During these meetings, the concept, the purpose, and the timeline for completion were explained. Both parties were supportive of the project.
3. **Major Project Proposal:** This phase includes the commencement of the literature review. This was completed during the second residency in the summer of 1999. During the residency, students presented their topics to their seminar team. The sessions were very worthwhile, and the feedback was helpful.
4. **Union Support:** Because of the difficulty in achieving this support, the researcher has dedicated a section to discuss the challenges that were faced and eventually overcome.
5. **Data collection phase:** The researcher conducted personal one-on-one interviews with a cross section of employees from the Nicola Valley Institute of Technology. Each participant was asked to sign a sample release form prior to being interviewed. The interviews were conducted

either at the researcher's home, the researcher's office, or the participant's office.

Confidentiality was maintained at all times by keeping copies of the transcripts at home in a locked filing cabinet. A portable stereo was used to tape the interviews, and the researcher made hand written notes to supplement the taped interview. The data was then transcribed, and presented to the participant who was given the opportunity to review it and make changes.

The researcher interviewed thirteen employees in one-on-one personal interviews, while one employee submitted their opinions in written form after reading a first draft of the paper. The interviews were semi-structured in that the researcher had certain questions to ask, and certain information to ascertain, yet maintained the freedom to explore different themes. As a result, not every participant was asked the same questions. However, the questions that were asked were similar in nature, and contributed to providing in-depth research findings.

The first two interviews took the longest time to conduct. By the third interview, the researcher was becoming more skilled in interview techniques, and was able to cut the interview time in half so that the average time was approximately forty-five minutes. The participants in all of the interviews seemed to become more enthusiastic as the interview proceeded. Because of the reluctance of the Union to participate, a number of the participants were suspicious at the beginning. However, by the end of the interviews, they were pleased to have participated, and not one of the participants felt that the Union should be concerned about the types of questions that were being asked.

The sixth and final phase involved the analysis of the data, and the preparation of the final report. A presentation of the findings and recommendations will be presented to the NVIT Board of Governors at their April 2000 meeting. The researcher also provided a presentation to

employees of NVIT on the research findings and recommendations. A copy of the final report was provided to the NVIT Union, and made available to participants upon request.

4.3 Union Support

In preparation for the final project, the researcher presented the concept to the bargaining committees in the spring of 1999 in order to determine any concerns or reservations regarding the project. After completing the Major Project Proposal, the researcher re-presented the paper to the bargaining committee and presented an agreement that allowed the researcher to proceed with the interviewing of union members (Appendix Nine). Although supportive, the bargaining committee felt that it should go to the general membership for a vote. Unfortunately, the membership voted against the proposal, and the researcher received a written confirmation of a motion that indicated that the union membership did not think it was appropriate to participate while negotiations were on going (Appendix Ten).

Through some internal investigation, it was determined that not all of the Union members supported the motion, and that during the union meeting, there was a climate that was not conducive to opposing the motion. Although disappointed by the lack of support, the response did suggest that the unionization of NVIT was already beginning to have an impact on the operations of NVIT. In the past, a project of this nature wouldn't have received any attention, and yet with a new union, attitudes were beginning to change, and the Union was having an impact on the organization.

A number of options were discussed with the project supervisor, the project sponsor, the researcher's direct supervisor, and legal counsel. The outstanding questions were whether or not the motion by the Union could actually stop the research project, and whether or not the employees of NVIT would participate with the knowledge that the Union recommended against

it. After considerable deliberation and consultation with Masters of Arts in Leadership Training colleagues, the researcher determined that the project would proceed provided that a cross section of participants would participate.

4.4 Project Participants

When choosing to conduct in-depth, exploratory one-on-one interviews, a cross section of demographics is needed to ensure that all voices are heard. For this project, the researcher acknowledged the importance of having male, female, aboriginal, and non-aboriginal representatives from support staff, faculty, management, and the Elders. The researcher also attempted to have representation from the bargaining committee, and the five different educational departments. Because some of the instructional departments have a limited number of staff, the researcher went beyond full-time continuing employees, and in some instances interviewed sessional instructors. Using this method, the researcher was able to elicit representatives from all of NVIT's instructional departments.

Rather than quantify the number of personal interviews, the researcher was committed to interviewing as many individuals as necessary until the emergent themes became saturated. Theme saturation occurs when each additional interview is repeating themes that have already emerged from previous interviews. Initially, the researcher felt that between ten and twelve interviews would be conducted. In the end, fourteen interviews were completed. The researcher is currently employed in the Human Resources Department of the Nicola Valley Institute of Technology, and is knowledgeable around the ethnic status of the participants. Therefore, no questions needed to be asked regarding ethnic origin, as personal prior knowledge of the participants could be used.

Of the fourteen interviews conducted, 8 were conducted with females and six with males. Nine of the interviews were conducted with Aboriginal people, representing support staff who were excluded and included in the union, with faculty from all five instructional departments, and with Administration. The interviews ranged from twenty minutes to one hour and forty minutes. All but one of the participants who were approached agreed to the interview. The employees of NVIT appeared to appreciate the opportunity to participate and share their experiences, and in general, the research process was a positive one.

CHAPTER FIVE RESEARCH RESULTS

This chapter highlights the research findings that were discovered through the literature review and through the one-on-one personal interviews. After each finding, a short synopsis is provided that includes opinions from those interviewed. An analysis of the findings includes a number of conclusions and a series of recommendations to assist NVIT in maintaining Aboriginal culture and traditions in a unionized environment.

5.1 Research Findings

In order for NVIT to develop and maintain Aboriginal culture, values and traditions in a unionized environment, the institution must recognize a number of different perspectives that will influence their success. The research produced nine major findings that will be highlighted and discussed below.

1. The Nicola Valley Institute of Technology (NVIT) is a unique “Aboriginal” organization.

A number of factors support the finding that NVIT is, in fact, a unique “Aboriginal” organization. The interviews identified four main components, which are detailed below.

1.1 NVIT as an “Aboriginal” Organization

The participants had a number of significant ways in which NVIT is a unique Aboriginal institution. The fact that we are one of only two Aboriginal public post-secondary institutions is a common theme in their responses. NVIT has a significant Aboriginal student population, and a large number of Aboriginal employees. However, because we are not 100% Aboriginal, we are unique in that we bring together both Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal cultures. The mandates of the institution, as expressed through the mission, vision, values, and goals, support an environment that is conducive to Aboriginal learning. One respondent comments, “We all

have a mandate or mission to address the needs within aboriginal communities to strengthen their capacity, to take control of their own destiny, and manage their own affairs.” A number of participants express that the way NVIT does business, especially by having more one-on-one contact with its students, distinguishes it as unique. The curriculum is often presented with Aboriginal themes and content, and the smallness of the institution makes it unique when compared to other post-secondary institutions in the province. One participant sums up by saying, “When you walk into NVIT you see a lot of aboriginal people in the environment, and that is comforting to students who are coming into NVIT from outside of the local area. It makes it homey, a family unit.”

1.2 The integration of the Elders

A number of participants mention that having NVIT Elders on staff assists the institution in staying connected with the culture and with the communities. Furthermore, the Elders bring a strong presence to NVIT, and employees find comfort in their presence. The Elders are often brought into the classroom to assist in the curriculum. While bringing an Elder into the classroom is generally seen as a positive experience, one participant acknowledges the difficulty of giving an Elder a specific topic, or a specific amount of time. The Elders attend Board meetings and other meetings to provide advice, and to bring spirituality. One individual expresses concern that the Elders are sometimes used as window dressing. The participant feels that the NVIT elders are influential on a personal level, but from an organizational perspective, their roles are not well defined. Another participant stresses the need for Elders to be knowledgeable around the culture and traditions, and to speak up and share their wisdom with the staff and students. One participant responds, “The incorporation of the Elders into NVIT brings a really strong presence. I personally find comfort in the fact that we have Elders at

NVIT, and I think the students do to. The Elders have a lot of value, and I appreciate the value that NVIT places on them.” The Elders have tremendous wisdom to share, and NVIT needs to learn how to better utilize them.

1.3 Meeting the needs of the community

In a number of interviews, the ability to meet the needs of Aboriginal communities surfaces. The general consensus of the interview, which broach the subject is that NVIT is not meeting the needs of Aboriginal communities, yet we are moving towards achieving that goal. One participant suggests that if meeting the needs of the community is important, then perhaps a formal survey with some statistical analysis should be designed that would compare what we are currently offering, to what the needs are. One participant believes that “ NVIT has moved incrementally towards that goal, and that the desire of the institution as a whole is to do that. Perhaps this is part of the drawing card for First Nations people wanting to work here. But we have a ways to go.”

1.4 NVIT Employees

Throughout the interviews, a number of participants mentions the employees at NVIT. They believe that for the most part, the employees at NVIT are in support of the mandate for Aboriginal education. A few participants, however, mentions the internal racism that exists. The racism, however, is not from the normal fashion, but rather from the Aboriginal people. Individuals are viewed differently if they are status on reserve, a non-status, a Metis, or a Caucasian. When it comes to students, however, there is a genuine commitment to seeing them succeed regardless of ethnic origin. NVIT employees have open door policies, which allow students, and employees access to one another at any time. One participant comments, “NVIT

employees work cheap”, and qualifies this opinion with the statement that the faculty and staff, for the most part, are dedicated to NVIT and what NVIT stands for.

2. It is not clear whether or not NVIT is “Aboriginal” enough.

Throughout the personal interviews, it becomes apparent that determining whether or not NVIT is Aboriginal enough is a useful piece of information. The responses to that question vary from individuals saying that NVIT is Aboriginal enough, to individuals saying that it is not, to a few saying it is in the process of becoming so. Those individuals who believe that the institution is not aboriginal give similar reasons. One reason is that we have built an organization that is operated on mainstream processes. From the Board, down through Administration, and into the faculty and staff, employees work under an imposed structure that is hierarchical, and therefore not supportive of Aboriginal values. One participant feels that it is not about NVIT as an organization, but rather the bigger picture. The creation of an Aboriginal Act would give NVIT the flexibility it needs. On the opposing side, some participants that feel the environment that NVIT has created is Aboriginal enough. In fact, one interviewee feels that it is too Aboriginal in that we spoil our students by giving them opportunities other colleges don't. When presented with the opinion that by doing so NVIT helps students become unique, the participant rebutted saying that the idea does the students a disservice, because that is not reality in the real world. One participant believes that the way NVIT becomes Aboriginal is through an inclusive process that encourages people to communicate and make decisions about what is best for NVIT and have people support that. This has been NVIT's greatest difficulty to date.

After hearing one participant state that NVIT is simply window dressing, I began to ask participants their opinions on the subject. Is NVIT portraying itself as an Aboriginal institution, when really it is mainstream? The results of the question do not support the first participant's

claim. A number of participants either feel that the term window dressing is too harsh , or they simply do not agree. Although participants acknowledge that NVIT may have some deficiencies, when compared to other post-secondary institutions, there is no question that we are an Aboriginal institution. One respondent comments, “One of the things that would contribute to the fact that we are only window dressing is we haven’t really sat down very often as a staff, or as faculty, or as Administration, to say what does it mean to be an Aboriginal institution, what does that look like?” A few of the participants do not agree with the statement, but can understand how the statement could be made. Two of the participants feel that we simply parade our Elders, and placing them up front when convenient, and then putting them back in the closet when we are finished. For example, Elders sitting on the Board of Governors are not Ministry appointed, but NVIT says they should be a member of the Board, and put them there; but then they are just window dressing. However, window dressing suggests that it is premeditated and planned. NVIT has a desire to be different, and although we may not have achieved it yet, the people within NVIT believe in the mandate to be a strong Aboriginal post-secondary institution.

3. NVIT should have a President that is Aboriginal and experienced in the public post-secondary system.

Over the past three years, NVIT has had difficulty in creating stability in the President’s position. The institution has had three presidents during that time and currently has a fourth president on an interim basis. With the difficulty in recruiting a qualified Aboriginal person with experience in the public post-secondary system, participants were asked if it is more important to have an Aboriginal person as President or an individual with post-secondary experience. The participants who believe that experience is more important discussed the need for NVIT to establish a strong foundation and to create stability. There was a consensus that the

experienced President needs to be Aboriginal friendly. The individual needs to make a commitment to the values and the culture, and have a strong leadership presence. With all that is said around the need for an experienced President, the majority of the individuals feel that an Aboriginal institution such as NVIT should have an Aboriginal president. One participant felt strongly that “if NVIT is truly interested in growth and wellness in their Aboriginal communities then it goes beyond education. I think we have to start supporting and training the people as well.” One suggestion was to provide a mentorship where an Aboriginal individual can learn the ropes from someone who is experienced, with the intentions of taking over the position. It was pointed out that with the interim President we currently have, the timing may be right to commence the mentorship process.

4. The majority of employees at NVIT should be Aboriginal.

As an Aboriginal organization, the Board has set a mandate for an Aboriginal hiring policy that gives preference to individuals who are Aboriginal. This hiring policy is also being negotiated at the table for NVIT’s first collective agreement. A number of participants were asked two separate questions. First, do they support the Aboriginal hiring policy? Second, do they think NVIT should be 100% Aboriginal? Of the participants asked, all agreed that an Aboriginal hiring policy at NVIT is a good thing. One participant felt it was important that the policy refer to specifically Aboriginal people, not First Nations, in order to be inclusive. One of the reasons given for the need of the hiring policy is that the students demand Aboriginal instructors. A number of participants stress the importance of Aboriginal instructors being experienced and qualified. In order to maintain our integrity, we must ensure that our students have the best training that is available: “We state that our primary concern is for the student, and yet if we don’t look at qualifications and credentials, we are not doing the students any favours.” One

participant agreed with the policy, but felt that it was important that the institution support diversity, and therefore employ individuals who are status, non-status, Metis, disabled, gay or lesbian, and non-native, in order to expose our students to a broad diversity of opinion. We should not be hiring an Aboriginal person just because they are Aboriginal, we must look at credentials, and experience.

From the above question, a number of the interviewees went more in-depth and explored the question of becoming 100% Aboriginal. A common theme was recognizing the contributions of those staff and students that have contributed to the institution and have been Non-Aboriginal. One participant felt that “NVIT needs to be 100% Aboriginal in its governance and eventually in its President. Those are the two things that is going to make NVIT Aboriginal provided they are functioning properly.” The culture and tradition will flow down if the Board and President are committed to preserving them.

5. The Board and Senior Administration must play a leading role in developing and maintaining the Aboriginal essence of NVIT.

The participants were asked to consider the following question: “If the mandate of the institution is to be Aboriginal, what steps should be taken in order to maintain Aboriginal culture and traditions within the institution?” A number of the participants indicated the need for solid leadership from the Administration and the Board. A number of the participants asked why the NVIT Board of Governors has adopted mainstream ways of operating. There was a sense that if the Board began to display some solid commitment to Aboriginal values and traditions, these philosophies would then flow down through the President and amongst the rest of the employees. One participant commented, “The Board, as a leading entity at NVIT, needs to consider how they can support the President, the Administration, the faculty, staff, and students.” The

importance of integrity, values, culture, honesty, and consensus were noted as traits the Board and Administration must demonstrate. "I think if the Board would start with the directive that we are an Aboriginal Institute, that encompasses all Aboriginal peoples, and that will eventually come down through the organization, people will take more pride around who they are, and it just makes for a healthier organization" explains one participant.

In general, participants indicate that the institution needs to undertake a strategic planning exercise to become grounded in their identity and to define their mandate. This strategic planning exercise took place in January 2000 (Appendices Six and Seven). The Board needs to be present at cultural and traditional activities that are put on by the institution. A suggestion was also made that the institution should be holding a celebration each year on Aboriginal Day. Appreciation and recognition were two other themes that emerged out of the interviews. NVIT needs to become known as the Aboriginal college of British Columbia, and also needs to recognize the hard work that the employees of NVIT do.

The concept of support is also mentioned. Support from the Board toward the employees, but also support between departments. Establishing a strong sense of community within the institution could be achieved through cross-cultural training, and by including people even if they were not born in the community. This would include utilizing both Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal elders. One participant believes that the Aboriginal instructors should be assisting the non-aboriginal instructors in Indigenizing the curriculum. Another common theme amongst some of the participants is the role that money plays in the institution. Finance holds a number of good initiatives back, and it is suggested that administration needs to determine creative ways to fund different projects. Sometimes it takes money to make money. One participant believes that the President should live in the Nicola Valley, and that the

Administration should represent diversity, and therefore we should have a status reserve, a non status, a Bill C-31, and a Metis. Lastly, one participant feels that provided there is a Union in place, there are no steps that can be done to preserve Aboriginal culture. Unions create divisions, and divisions are not the Aboriginal way.

6. There is concern that unhampered unionization will have a negative impact on the Aboriginal uniqueness and operations of NVIT.

The Nicola Valley Institute of Technology is an Aboriginal organization working within a new organizational structure. After years of instability, the employees have certified with a Trade Union, and a first agreement is being negotiated. The participants were asked a variety of questions that attempted to determine what impact they felt the collective agreement was going to have on how the institution is operated.

All of the participants agree that the collective agreement will have an impact, whether positive or negative, on the way NVIT operates. One opinion was that as long as there is good open communication, the collective agreement will simply help NVIT in the way it does business. The opposing opinion is that the collective agreement is going to break NVIT. The Union creates divisions, and divisions are not the Aboriginal way. There is a question of how the institution is going to remain Aboriginal when a piece a paper dictates how it should operate. It is incomprehensible how NVIT is going to reflect collective decision making in a unionized environment. On the contrary, one participant feels that the collective agreement will force individuals to practice the values that the institution has. An Aboriginal group that is unionizing must treat its staff and management with a foundation of respect. A respect for differences, and a respect for each other. If there is a will on both parties to maintain an open and honest relationship, the experience may be positive. Some participants feel that becoming unionized is

the best thing that has ever happened to NVIT, and that it will not impact Aboriginal culture.

One participant believes the Union can be a very powerful and positive aspect of NVIT if the Union members look at it as a positive way of enacting change.

Participants were asked two questions around culture and unionization. The first question asked whether the participants felt it was going to be more difficult, easier, or have no impact on maintaining Aboriginal values and traditions. The second question considered the inherent nature of unions, and asked whether NVIT would be able to maintain its sense of community in a unionized structure.

The majority of those people interviewed indicated that it is going to be very difficult for NVIT to maintain our Aboriginal culture in a unionized environment. The general consensus was that the Union does not understand Aboriginal values, and therefore conflict will arise. Very few participants were knowledgeable about other Aboriginal organization that had been successful at staying Aboriginal and unionizing at the same time. A number of participants stressed that the negotiations should not be adversarial, and that the two parties should take as much time as they need to ensure a win - win situation.

One participant felt at odds with the prospect: "The union goes against everything traditional, yet at the same time, those individuals who joined the Union were standing up for themselves." There is a concern, however, and a hope that people do not stop communicating with each other. The Union is a white Union, and it is going to be impossible for them to find the language and values that NVIT requires. Two of the participants believe that the Union will have no impact on maintaining Aboriginal culture at NVIT, as the agreement simply reflects working conditions, not culture. One individual, however, believes, "The collective agreement

will actually enhance the Aboriginal culture as it will diminish the amount of Indian Politics within the institution, and will force people to abide by rules.”

To further explore this area, the researcher asked a number of participants to consider the inherent nature of Unions, and to reflect on whether the community of NVIT can be maintained. The participants, for the most part, agreed that with Unions, come division and that it will be very difficult to maintain community. One participant likened the unionized atmosphere to that of the parliamentary system. “ A debate, is not the same as a discussion. A discussion contributes, while a debate rips apart. It seeks to win, and the other party to lose. That is what a Union environment is like.” Another participant believes, “The Union is attempting to create an environment where everyone has a voice, yet they are using a mainstream model to do it. It then becomes about positions of power, and that is not how aboriginal communities operate.” An example of how the Union has already began the break up of the community has already been provided. Because some staff are excluded from the union, when a Union meeting is held, five or six employees remain uninvolved, and the rest of the staff come out of the meeting whispering. On the positive side, however, if the sense of community did not already exist, then those individuals would not feel excluded. One positive comment included the fact that a community is maintained by having both faculty and support staff within the same union which is contrary to most of the other colleges in the system. Lastly, one participant feels that “the community of NVIT must exist, and will continue to exist, because of the way NVIT operates, and the way that we are all committed to the same goal.”

7. NVIT may be able to unionize and maintain its Aboriginal essence and qualities if Aboriginal concepts and ideas are captured in NVIT's local collective agreement.

A number of participants were asked whether they felt it was appropriate to include Aboriginal concepts into NVIT's local collective agreement. The consensus was that Aboriginal concepts should definitely be included. One participant noted that the whole collective agreement process was contrary to the Aboriginal way, and that there is no point in making an Aboriginal statement just for the sake of making the statement. Aboriginal language should be used where it is appropriate and relevant. A number of participants indicate that they would expect the bargaining to include language around unique cultural situations such as Aboriginal Day and the Elders. One participant hoped that a definition of "Aboriginal" would be included in the collective agreement. The participant makes a good point when they ask how we can say we are "Aboriginal", and be an "Aboriginal institute", when there is no common understanding of what "Aboriginal" is. It was also suggested that the collective agreement contain a without prejudice clause, and that the clause be the foundation of the organization's values, morals, traditions, and culture. The final suggestion was to enhance our uniqueness by creating consensus management language, or conflict resolution language. Language that says we are a community and that we are working together in the best interests of the institution (Appendix Eleven).

8. Ideally everyone in the NVIT community must commit to maintaining and developing NVIT's Aboriginal essence, especially given the potential negative impact of unionization.

In order to have a healthy organization, open and honest communication must exist throughout the organization. Because NVIT has been through an unstable period over the last three years, participants were asked whether they felt the employees of NVIT feel informed.

Although there was a wide array of responses, the overall feeling was that although the employees may have been informed, communication could have been better. One suggestion for improving communication included a commitment to provide cross-cultural training so that new employees can learn about the Aboriginal culture of the Nicola Valley and therefore feel more included. Another point was around whether the employees want to be included. Although the consensus was that they should be, one participant pointed out that there are a number of employees who come to work, do a good job, and then go home, and are not interested in the organizational part of the institution. A second participant supported this saying, "After all of the turmoil over the last three years, it is becoming difficult to get employees to volunteer on various institution committees." Another participant is discouraged about the way NVIT operates. "Somewhere along the way, we have lost the safety to disagree. To be in opposition could cost you your job." A transparent, accountable decision making process needs to be adhered to throughout the institution. The NVIT Board meetings are public, and employees should be encouraged to attend these meetings. Finally, a college wide newsletter published once per month would improve communication by informing the employees and surrounding communities of what is happening at NVIT.

9. NVIT should not participate at the “Provincial Common Table” if it is felt that this would jeopardize NVIT’s Aboriginal essence.

In 1995, the post-secondary system began a process of common table bargaining. This involved the creation of a protocol agreement that listed a number of issues that would be bargained at the provincial table. The remaining issues would then be bargained locally. The protocol agreement was then taken to the various Boards of the institutions for ratification, and common table bargaining was born. The unions support this concept as there is strength in numbers, and they are able to get language that applies to all institutions across the province. The provincial government supports common bargaining because they are sitting at one table, and are dealing with one union, and the opportunity for labour peace is much better. The first common agreement began in 1995 and expired in 1998. A second round of common table bargaining was completed in the fall of 1998, and is set to expire in March of 2001. Because the Nicola Valley Institute of Technology was not certified when negotiations commenced, the institution did not become a member of the common table. However, the Union that is currently negotiating the NVIT local agreement has requested a March 2001 end date, to coincide with the rest of the provincial agreements. In preparation for the inevitable question of whether we should be participating at the common table, the researcher asked the participants their opinion.

With the exception of a few, the majority of participants felt that NVIT should not participate at the Provincial common table because the risk of losing our uniqueness was too high. There was a strong concern that NVIT would lose its control, lose its individuality, become mainstream, and in the worst case, may have to strike if the rest of the province is pressuring us to conform. On the other hand, a couple participants stated that NVIT is an Aboriginal institution, and regardless of what happens, we will remain an Aboriginal institution.

The provincial salary grid was seen as a positive aspect, as it allows NVIT to compete for instructors on an even playing field. An instructor will receive the same salary regardless of where they teach, and therefore, NVIT may be able to attract some qualified Aboriginal instructors. Lastly, one participant sees “provincial bargaining, and the Union in general, as completely opposite to Aboriginal values, and is therefore hoping that at the eleventh hour, the employees of NVIT will determine an Aboriginal way of having their voice heard, and will cancel the Union process.”

5.2 Research Conclusions and Analysis

The research provided an abundance of opinions and opposing views on whether the Nicola Valley Institute of Technology could embrace Aboriginal values and traditions in this time of organizational change and unionization. There is little disagreement that the last three years have been particularly unstable, yet for the most part, the participants indicated that NVIT has turned a corner and is beginning to move ahead and become more Aboriginal. There are four areas identified through the research analysis: 1. How NVIT is presently operating as an Aboriginal organization. 2. How NVIT will operate as an Aboriginal organization in the future. 3. How the union will impact NVIT. 4. How NVIT can minimize the negative impact of unionization.

1. NVIT in the present

While the respondents agreed that NVIT is a unique Aboriginal organization, it was unclear exactly what that meant. A myriad of responses, when put together, seem to reflect that Aboriginal uniqueness.

From its inception in 1983, through to achieving Public Status in 1995, and continuing to present day, the Nicola Valley Institute of Technology is a unique Aboriginal organization.

Although there are differing opinions on whether or not NVIT is Aboriginal enough, there is no disputing that through the students it serves, the employees it hires, and the mandate it commits to, that it is an Aboriginal institution.

An organization will struggle when its strategic focus is not clear, and when its leadership is being questioned. The employees of the Nicola Valley Institute of Technology agree that in order for NVIT to flourish, strong leadership is necessary. Although research suggests that, ideally, the President of NVIT should be an Aboriginal person, it is more important at this point in NVIT's history that the institution employ a President with strong academic leadership, and a wealth of experience in the public post-secondary system.

Research also suggests that it will be more difficult to maintain Aboriginal culture in a unionized environment. However, the Union is only as important as the employees it certifies. With that understanding, a strong assumption exists that the bargaining committees, both on the Union side and the Board side, will attempt to incorporate Aboriginal concepts into the language so as to make it a unique collective agreement. There appears to be no appetite for participating at the Provincial common table, for the risk of losing our uniqueness, coupled with our small size, would force NVIT into a mainstream way of operating.

2. NVIT in the future

The respondents were divided as to whether or not NVIT should be more Aboriginal. The differences of opinion raise the questions of where the institution is now and where it will go in the future. It must also decide what NVIT should be doing, and how they will go about doing it. Even within a mandate of Aboriginal education, there is a tolerance, and in fact a genuine willingness, to have an NVIT community that is both Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal. Little support for a 100% Aboriginal institution was shown, and there appears to be a commitment to

be inclusive and respectful of all cultures. Recognizing numerous differences in culture that exist even within the Aboriginal community, the NVIT community must learn to walk together hand in hand. NVIT has often been compared to a family, where the individuals you hurt the most, are often those that are the closest to you. There is need for NVIT to learn how to operate in an environment of open and honest communication in a transparent and accountable manner.

In order for the institution to remain an Aboriginal organization, there are a number of objectives to which the community of NVIT must be committed. In order to commit to a clear direction throughout the institution, the Board, together with the Senior Administration and the rest of NVIT's employees, must commit to a strategic planning process. Through a strategic planning process, the institution will gain a better understanding of the mandate of the institution. The process will involve all stakeholders, and commitment will flow from the Board down to each employee. Although more opportunities exist for the Board and Administration to show leadership in maintaining NVIT's Aboriginal culture and traditions, it too must include all levels of employees, and therefore the entire NVIT community must be committed to maintaining the institution's Aboriginal uniqueness.

3. Impact of Unionization

Interviewees had various perceptions about unionization's impact on NVIT's current and future modes of operation. The majority agree that the creation of the Union will impact the operation of NVIT. Because there are few other models to compare NVIT's situation to, the participants, together with the researcher, are hypothesizing what the impact will be. The opinions range from little to no impact, through to the demise of NVIT as an Aboriginal institution. However, with a willingness and understanding that NVIT is, and will remain, a

uniquely Aboriginal institution, some recommendations will assist the institution in maintaining Aboriginal values and culture.

4. Minimizing the negative impact of unionization

If the perceptions of the respondents are correct and the union will have a negative impact on the development and maintenance of Aboriginal values and culture, NVIT must then determine how they can minimize the impact of the union on its present operations, its external influences, and any new initiatives. The way in which NVIT can minimize the impact of the union can be found in the recommendation section in the next chapter. However, the respondents perceptions may be incorrect, and the Union may not have a negative impact. Regardless, this project has succeeded by increasing awareness of organizational change, by increasing awareness of the Aboriginal essence of NVIT, and lastly by increasing the awareness of the importance of Aboriginal culture, and of having a shared vision and beliefs throughout the institution.

Although the following recommendations are intended for use within the Nicola Valley Institute of Technology, they may be applicable to other Aboriginal organizations that have recently unionized, and are struggling with the issue of maintaining Aboriginal culture and values.

5.3 Study Recommendations

The following section will highlight the eight major recommendations that have come out of the analysis of the findings.

- 1. NVIT should clearly define its mission and vision, develop a shared set of organizational values, describe the Aboriginal culture and traditions NVIT would like to adopt, and define how these can be maintained within a unionized environment.**

The Nicola Valley Institute of Technology is planning on holding a two-day strategic planning session in the near future. This will be a perfect setting to begin to address the first recommendation. To ensure that the exercise is successful, the strategic planning session must involve all stakeholders, and be facilitated by a qualified facilitator. As its goal, the strategic planning session must define a shared vision for NVIT. Once defined, this shared vision will then set the foundation for the development and maintenance of NVIT's Aboriginal essence. As part of the strategic planning session, the remaining eight recommendations should be discussed, and, if deemed important, included in the strategic plan as part of the vision, mission or objectives. A common definition of "Aboriginal" is required so that the employees of NVIT will truly understand its identity. As an Aboriginal organization, the institution can then begin determining how to remain an Aboriginal organization within a unionized environment.

2. NVIT must take every opportunity to honour its Aboriginal essence through events such as the organization's celebration of Aboriginal culture.

The institution needs to commit time and resources to the celebration of Aboriginal culture. For example, events such as a monthly feast for the Elders could be held. The organization should ensure that staff, instructors, and students are able to attend. Aboriginal Day celebrations should be sponsored by NVIT every June 21st. These events will be well organized and meaningfully connected to the Aboriginal way in which NVIT operates. Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people must feel confident that NVIT does not do these things merely as "window dressing", and that NVIT is truly a uniquely Aboriginal educational institution. To assist in this movement, the institution should become more connected to the Aboriginal communities in the local area, and strengthen its ties with the cultural and tribal associations.

3. NVIT should create a healthy organizational community that is committed to teaching indigenous curriculum in a culturally appropriate setting, while maintaining an environment of open communication.

Without the commitment to operate in an environment of honesty and trust, the organization will remain unhealthy. The Elders need to develop a process whereby employees can leave the negative energy behind, and commence with a renewed beginning. The Board and Administration should take the time to acknowledge those individuals who are doing good work within the institution. Cultural training should be made available to assist employees in understanding the culture of the Thompson and Okanagan people. Aboriginal faculty should be assisting in indiginizing curriculum, and a monthly newsletter should be published to keep the NVIT employees, and the surrounding communities informed.

4. NVIT should create a working community that is creative, innovative, safe, and supportive.

The NVIT Board of Governors has mentioned that there needs to be support mechanisms in place to assist employees in growing into the job. NVIT needs to create an environment whereby employees learn from their mistakes in a safe and trusting environment. In order to have an Aboriginal person assume the role of President, a mentorship should be implemented. An individual should be hired as the Academic Dean, and be trained so that the individual, over a period of time, gains the experience and ability to become the institution's President. Such a process will enhance the institution's stability. Recognition and appreciation are other attributes that the institution must demonstrate. In essence, NVIT needs to strengthen the concept of community within its operations. The NVIT community needs to understand the

inherent nature of Unions to divide, and develop strategies to maintain a sense of community within unionization.

5. The Collective Agreement needs to recognize NVIT as a unique Aboriginal institution and include language that supports traditional values and culture.

As an Aboriginal organization, NVIT needs to ensure that its collective agreement recognizes its unique Aboriginal needs and aspirations. Articles such as the hiring policy, seniority, and the grievance procedure need to make reference to traditional values and culture. However, the importance of initiating the common salary scale should not be overlooked. This will assist NVIT in attracting qualified Aboriginal instructors, because the pay is the same regardless of where they instruct. Although it is more difficult and time consuming to create an Aboriginal collective agreement, in the end it will distinguish NVIT as unique organization. Regardless of whether or not an Aboriginal collective agreement is negotiated, NVIT should consider not consider participating at the Provincial common Table. The risk of NVIT losing its identity by being a small institution amongst the large post-secondary colleges is great. The common agreement attempts to negotiate the same bargaining for all institutions, and will not recognize an Aboriginal institution as unique.

6. The NVIT Board of Governors, together with the rest of the NVIT community, must actively support the strategic initiatives and must model the Aboriginal values, cultures and traditions highlighted in the strategic plan.

The NVIT Board of Governors, together with the employees, needs to begin exploring how NVIT can better reflect Aboriginal values and customs throughout the normal operations of NVIT. This includes looking at the way in which NVIT conducts its meetings and other day to day activities. When individuals look at the NVIT Board of Governors, they need to see an

Aboriginal Board committed to Aboriginal culture and values. If the commitment to Aboriginal values and traditions is supported and initiated at the Board level, it will inevitably trickle down throughout the rest of the institution. Activities should be put in place that support the interaction of ideas, including having employees attending NVIT Board meetings so they gain an understanding of the Board's commitment to Aboriginal education.

7. Elders must play a key role at NVIT, and training should be provided on how to choose and best utilize these unique human resources.

NVIT Elders need to become a more integral part of NVIT. Elders need to be providing advice and wisdom on decisions throughout the institution. There needs to be training of both the staff and the Elders to clearly identify the role that the Elders can play within the institution. Not only do the Elders provide a spiritual connection, they also have the ability to assist in indigenizing curriculum and helping the students learn traditional teachings. Through their presence, the Elders make NVIT a culturally appropriate environment, and bring a comfort to both staff and students. Elders need to be an integral part of the strategic plan, and should be involved in activities throughout the institution.

8. NVIT must position itself within the BC post-secondary system to be recognized as the foremost authority in Aboriginal education.

Similar to the recommendation around Aboriginal processes, in order for NVIT to embrace Aboriginal values and traditions, we need to be recognized as the foremost authority in Aboriginal education in British Columbia and throughout Canada. A solid marketing plan that demonstrates how NVIT will achieve such status provides the first step. The British Columbia provincial government has established funding that assists all of the colleges throughout the province to be sensitive to Aboriginal students through a position called a First Nations

Coordinator. In addition, a number of institutions are offering programs in First Nations studies, and are therefore actively recruiting Aboriginal students. As an Aboriginal provincial institute, NVIT's mandate is to provide education to Aboriginal students. With the increase in competition, NVIT must improve its public image, and be seen as *the* post-secondary institution to attend for Aboriginal education in a culturally appropriate environment.

CHAPTER SIX RESEARCH IMPLICATIONS

From the onset this project has been a small piece of a much larger research project. The community of the Nicola Valley Institute of Technology now has the opportunity to take the recommendations and findings in this project and use them to assist in the maintaining of Aboriginal culture at the institution.

6.1 Organizational Implementation

After years of instability, which essentially forced the faculty, and staff of the Nicola Valley Institute of Technology to unionize, the institution is now poised to enter the new millennium with a renewed commitment to Aboriginal Education. While the mandate of the institution remains the success of Aboriginal students, the institution has committed the time and resources to undertake a strategic planning process that involves students, faculty, support staff, Administration, Elders, and the Board of Governors. This two-day exercise will provide the institution with a renewed commitment to its mission, vision, values, and goals, and prepare itself for the journey that lies ahead.

Throughout all that has happened, NVIT remains a unique Aboriginal institution. Provided that NVIT's goal is to continue to embrace Aboriginal values and traditions regardless of organizational change, then NVIT must strengthen itself as a community. However, in order for us to remain uniquely Aboriginal, a variety of initiatives must receive attention. The Board has started the process, but the rest of the NVIT community must demonstrate that they are receptive. The respective bargaining committees must work together to create an Aboriginal collective agreement that not only works for NVIT, but that also provides a model for other struggling Aboriginal organizations.

The findings and recommendations that have been presented in this project are a beginning. One participant mentioned that the fact that by having this research done, and by asking these questions, people will be forced people to stop and consider the implications of their actions on the Aboriginal culture of the institution. The community of NVIT must commit to maintaining the culture, values, and traditions; otherwise, the institution will slowly become more and more mainstream. By considering this project, and recognizing the need to share the results and initiate dialogue, the institution will begin on the path of embracing Aboriginal values and traditions in a unionized environment.

6.2 Future Research

Throughout this study, the researcher was intrigued to find the varying opinions amongst the participants. Each participant provided a distinct opinion on each issue, and each interview was different. The recommendations and findings in this study represent the opinions of fourteen individuals and the researcher. Therefore, approximately forty staff members did not participate but would be without a doubt able to provide some unique perspectives on the topic of Aboriginal culture in a unionized environment.

Furthermore, without an experienced model of an Aboriginal public post-secondary institution facing the dilemma of unionizing and maintaining Aboriginal culture, the participants and the researcher were hypothesizing about whether culture can actually be maintained. As one of the Elders said, only time will tell. Some specific areas that are worthy of further research include:

1. A thorough review of other Aboriginal organizations or communities who have or are presently struggling with the concepts of unionization.
2. Reflecting Aboriginal values in mainstream operations.

3. The utilization of Elders.
4. Developing healthy organizations.
5. Unionization with minority groups
6. Developing an Aboriginal collective agreement.
7. Interviewing the remaining members of the NVIT community.

CHAPTER SEVEN RESEARCH LESSONS LEARNED

This chapter provides some personal insights into the learning that occurred throughout the research project. The research lessons learned reflect the researcher's personal thoughts around the project. The program lessons learned demonstrates the learning that occurred in the major competencies as defined by the Master of Arts in Leadership and Training (MALT) program.

7.1 Research Lessons Learned

When beginning a journey around the research of Aboriginal culture, participants reacted in interesting ways. The subject of culture, values, and traditions, is often spoken of, without concrete examples of what it is, and who is doing it. While individuals that work in Aboriginal organizations agree that these subjects are fundamental, they seldom rank high on a priority list. Often the cultural activities are the first to get cut when one is dealing with finances.

Overall, I enjoyed my interviews with the participants. Most of them felt at ease with me as an interviewer, and readily shared their experiences and stories. I found that the more interviews I completed, the better I was at conducting them. By the fourteenth interview, I was able to elicit the same amount of information in half the time. It was important to be open to new information and new ideas. Each participant provided a unique opinion, that was often contradictory to the researcher's own views. Recognizing this was crucial to remaining objective.

Having lived with the project concept for over a year, I was confident the project would come together. Yet one of the biggest lessons was to expect the unexpected. When the Union

passed their motion not to support the study, I was at a loss. I wasn't exactly sure how to move forward. But through the support of my supervisor, my project sponsor, and the wonderful employees, who agreed to participate regardless of the Union's opinion, I was able to complete a worthwhile project.

The need to be self-disciplined was extremely important throughout the project. With a wife, and two young children aged one and three, it was very difficult to remain self-disciplined and get the project done. However, now that the work is complete, I realize it really couldn't have been done any other way.

Another significant lesson was the value of setting a prolonged amount of time aside to immerse myself into the project in order to become focused on the project and exactly what I wanted to say.

Utilizing friends is another key learning. Throughout the project, I was in constant contact with my project supervisor, as well as various members of the MALT community. I continuously bounced ideas off my wife, my colleagues, and my parents. I was able to access a number of completed projects, which assisted me in developing a format that suited my project. Without this support, the project would have been difficult to complete.

7.2 Program Lessons Learned

1c. Provide Leadership

On my wall in my office I have a picture that states "Leadership is Action not Position". There are numerous ways that leadership was provided throughout the major project. The integrity that was shown when faced with the Union's decision not to support the project demonstrated leadership. To remain supportive and open-minded when faced with opposing

views demonstrated leadership. To undertake a project of such significance in the face of opposition shows the leadership and passion that the researcher has for the topic.

2b Apply systems thinking to solution of leadership and learning problems

The findings and recommendations that this study uncovered could provide a future model for Aboriginal organizations struggling with Aboriginal culture and Unionization. The ability to see the “big picture” in these results can have an impact not only on NVIT, but also on other Aboriginal organizations in British Columbia and across Canada. Systems thinking was also demonstrated through the understanding of the relationship that the Union had with its members, the Board, the Administration, and the institution as a whole. One faction of the institution can influence the rest of the organization. To reflect on the Union’s view of the project, rather than simply believing that they were not supporting it for no reason.

5a Identify, locate and evaluate research findings

The qualitative nature of this study provided ample opportunity to identify, locate, and evaluate research. The literature review was a worthwhile experience in determining the information that was relevant and needed to be included, and the information that was not. The personal one on one interviews provided a wealth of research that had to be condensed and reviewed until relevant themes emerged.

5b Use research methods to solve problems

The question of how to embrace Aboriginal values and traditions in a unionized environment posed a problem to the Nicola Valley Institute of Technology. Using research methods, the researcher was able to identify a number of findings and recommendations that will assist the organization in achieving their goal.

7b Communicate with others through writing

The final project will be presented to both the NVIT Board of Governors, and the NVIT employees. These groups will have access to the written project as we continue our journey of maintaining Aboriginal values and traditions in a unionized environment.

7c Communicate orally

The researcher will provide an oral presentation of both the findings and recommendations to both the Board and the employees. Throughout the project, the researcher had many conversations with the project supervisor. In addition, the researcher conducted interviews with the participants, demonstrating his oral capabilities.

1e Recognize ethical considerations

The researcher maintained ethical considerations throughout the project. Participants were informed of who would have knowledge of their participation. A participant consent form was signed by each participant, and the tapes and transcripts were kept safely in the researcher's home.

3b Provide consulting services to help organizations succeed

Through this project, Nicola Valley Institute of Technology has been provided with concrete findings and recommendations that should be considered in maintaining Aboriginal culture, values, and traditions within the organization.

4e Help others learn

By sharing the results, and being a role model, the researcher assisted others in learning how to act in a way that reflects Aboriginal values. The researcher has also assisted other MALT learners throughout the project, and, in turn, has received help from his MALT colleagues.

4c Create learning opportunities in the workplace

By sharing the results of the project, the researcher will provide opportunities for the NVIT community to participate and learn strategies for maintaining Aboriginal culture within the organization.

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APPENDIX ONE

NICOLA VALLEY INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY

The Final Report of the Strategic Planning Process
1993/94

**MISSION
VALUES VISION
&
INSTITUTIONAL GOALS**

Approved by the Board of Directors, March 17 1994

PUBLIC DOCUMENT

— MISSION —

NVIT's **mission** is to provide high-quality postsecondary education relevant to the diverse and evolving needs of First Nations communities, in an environment that fosters student success.

— VALUES —

At NVIT we seek to act, to make decisions, and to create an environment consistent with the following **values**:

- respect for the dignity, rights, cultures and beliefs of all peoples
- continual growth and development of individuals and communities
- honesty and trust in relationships
- openness in communication
- critical self-examination and a willingness to admit both strengths and weaknesses
- balance and harmony in all activities
- people making decisions for themselves
- care and support for others
- respect and care for the natural world

— VISION —

Our vision is for NVIT to be a college which:

provides a comprehensive range of postsecondary programs up to and including the bachelors degree level

has independent, legislated authority for its academic credentials

facilitates learning and research related to the history and development of First Nations peoples of Canada

occupies a modern, purpose-designed and well-equipped main campus in the Nicola Valley, which provides a full range of services for students and their families

is controlled by and accountable to the First Nations communities of the Nicola Valley

enrols at its main campus 700 - 1000 students, with substantial populations from the First Nations of the Nicola Valley and elsewhere in BC and Canada, as well as representation from non-aboriginal Canadians and international aboriginal peoples.

offers extension courses provincially, nationally and internationally

offers programs which are unique in curriculum, in approach, and in relevance to First Nations communities

facilitates a holistic approach to learning by providing opportunities for intellectual, physical, emotional and spiritual growth

can clearly demonstrate the success of its students, and continually strives to enhance this

is widely and deservedly recognized as a centre for excellence in all its activities

— INSTITUTIONAL GOALS —

In order for us to achieve our vision, and to do so in a manner consistent with our values, the Board of Directors has set the following **institutional goals**:

DIRECTION AND ACCOUNTABILITY

To undertake ongoing board development activities in order to ensure that board members receive an adequate orientation to NVIT, have knowledge of First Nations and non-First Nations postsecondary education and related issues, and possess the skills to function effectively as directors.

To organize board-management workshops on a regular basis (once or twice each year) to discuss strategic issues, and build understanding and trust.

To ensure that the bands of the Nicola Valley, and the Nicola Valley Tribal Council (as appropriate), nominate and appoint the members of the NVIT board.

To ensure that the board, through the board education committee, plays the major role in educational planning for NVIT.

To develop information systems which routinely provide the board with clear, concise, complete and meaningful data about instructional and financial activity.

No later than in five years time, to undertake an evaluation of the progress made in reaching the goals in this report, and planning update.

UNIQUENESS

To increase the proportion of aboriginal employees to at least 75%, in both instructional and non-instructional areas.

To implement a series of workshops designed to articulate the ways in which NVIT's curriculum is unique in its relevance to First Nations peoples and communities. These workshops will include board, staff and students.

To implement a series of staff-student workshops designed to articulate NVIT's approach to teaching, learning and personal development.

To support non-instructional activities designed to increase awareness and understanding between aboriginal peoples and non-aboriginal peoples.

To initiate as a priority courses in First Nations languages.

To initiate as a priority a First Nations Studies diploma and degree program.

COMMUNICATION

To regularly provide orientation and information for band education coordinators, to ensure that they are fully informed about NVIT, know how to facilitate student enrolment, and know what to expect from the college.

To implement a comprehensive program of community-liaison to increase awareness of and support for NVIT, and to assist in student recruitment. First Nations communities, the Nicola Valley community, and both public and band secondary schools should be included.

To ensure that potential students are given clear information about the programs available at NVIT, what to expect, and how to register.

To broaden the existing new-student orientation program to include an orientation to the Nicola Valley community, to NVIT as a whole, to postsecondary education, and to Student Council; to use the orientation to open ongoing channels of communication between students and the college.

To plan and initiate more effective methods for the institution to communicate with students and with staff both individually and collectively.

To ensure that the Student Services Department plays the leadership role for the college in communicating with applicants, with students and with the community - through program calendars, brochures, a student handbook and other promotional material.

To proactively assist Student Council in becoming established and organized; also to ensure that Student Council is elected in the spring and ready to function at the orientation in August.

To access systems of electronic communication for use both internally and externally.

FUNDING

To obtain an adequate and stable base of funding for existing programs.

To target additional funds to eliminate the deficit as a first priority.

To budget for program development, and to ensure that adequate, ongoing operating funds are in place before commencing a new program.

To pursue a diversity of base funding sources.

To obtain specific funding for leases, major & minor capital, and equipment.

To use fundraising as a means to supplement base funding, and when possible to establish fundraising staff.

To establish financial information systems and routine analyses which provide clear information about funding levels and costs of all programs and services.

To ensure that tuition fees are realistic in comparison with those of other institutions and in the light of services provided.

To use revenue from extension courses to fund an infrastructure to support extension development and marketing.

FACILITIES

To first obtain appropriate centralized facilities in the City of Merritt for temporary occupancy.

Once the temporary relocation has been achieved, to initiate a planning process for a permanent campus. Funding will be required to properly undertake the necessary planning, and external expertise will be needed.

To plan the permanent campus to be located in the Nicola Valley, on a site of at least 15 acres. The facilities will include a full range of well-equipped instructional space, accommodation and services for students' families and visitors, and recreational areas. The design will reflect NVIT's high-quality, unique, First Nations approach to learning.

When the design and location of the permanent campus is complete, to initiate a fundraising program.

To construct and occupy the permanent campus as funds become available (this may require a phased-in approach); the capacity when complete will be approximately 1000 students.

STUDENT SUCCESS

To plan and implement comprehensive data collection systems in order to track student progress both quantitatively and qualitatively. The following information should be included: applications; enrolments; student demographics; completions; grade distributions; employment and transfer; opinions and satisfaction from current and former students (both on-site & extension), information from students who fail or withdraw, opinions from communities and from employers.

To develop within the Student Services Department a full array of institutional support services for students, including financial aid and awards administration.

To implement a formal, documented and ongoing process of academic and career advising for all students; to ensure that students in academic difficulty receive timely advice and assistance.

To ensure the availability of adequate personal counselling and advising services, including the provision of workshops and external referrals where appropriate.

To organize regular staff/student forums to facilitate communication and discuss issues related to student success.

To improve the placement of students in programs through the effective use of assessment and prerequisite-checking systems.

To implement a system of course-prerequisite checking.

To provide a more comprehensive tutoring service (including peer tutoring), integrated with instruction.

To identify generic skill areas (eg communication, writing, computer use) and develop an integrated course structure to enable teaching "across the curriculum".

INDEPENDENCE AND STANDARDS

To develop a comprehensive set of NVIT educational policies including areas such as attendance, assignments, examinations, grading, promotion, graduation, academic discipline, appeals, probation, dismissal.

To establish advisory committees for all NVIT programs.

To build appropriate library services for all programs through obtaining the services of professionally-qualified staff, through electronic networking, and through the acquisition of resources.

To obtain for all programs, and for support areas, access to appropriate equipment.

To aggressively pursue (through legislation) independent authority for NVIT's academic credentials, initially at the first- and second-year (diploma) levels, and thereafter at the degree level. When academic independence is achieved, to ensure an ongoing, close relationship with the Nicola Valley Tribal Council.

To ensure the external accreditation of courses and programs until such time as academic independence is achieved, and thereafter to participate in the provincial articulation processes.

To initiate evaluations of all instructional programs on a regular basis.

To provide within the regular operating budget for curriculum renewal.

To increase the levels of full-time instructional staff, relative to part-time staff, in all programs.

To increase the levels of permanent instructional staff, relative to sessional staff, in all programs.

To continue, and when funds permit to increase, the support for professional development, and for human resource development, for both instructional and non-instructional staff.

To maintain institutional affiliations with relevant provincial, national and international groups (eg AFNPSI, AECBC,ACCC)

APPENDIX TWO
PROVINCE OF BRITISH COLUMBIA
ORDER OF THE LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR IN
COUNCIL

Order in Council No. **1069**

Approved and Ordered

SEP. -1. 1995

 (Original Signed)
 Lieutenant Governor

Executive Council Chambers, Victoria

On the recommendation of the undersigned, the Lieutenant Governor, by and with the advice and consent of the Executive Council, orders that the Nicola Valley Institute of Technology is designated as a Provincial Institute.

 (Original Signed)

**Minister of Skills, Training and Labour
 Council**

 (Original Signed)

**Presiding Member of the Executive
 Council**

(This part is for administrative purposes only and is not part of the Order.)

Authority under which Order is made:

Act and section: *College and Institute Act, section 5(1)(f)*

PUBLIC DOCUMENT

APPENDIX THREE
Nicola Valley Institute of Technology
STAFF PROFILE
1987 - 2000

Year	# of Employees	Type of Employment		Gender		Ethnicity		% of Aboriginal Employees
		F/T	P/T	F	M	Aboriginal	Other	
99/00	54	46	8	31	23	33	21	61%
98/99	61	45	16	41	20	39	22	64%
97/98	67	43	24	41	26	43	24	64%
96/97	64	49	15	41	23	42	22	66%
95/96	79	43	36	49	30	45	34	57%
94/95	82	46	36	52	30	42	40	51%
93/94	66	35	31	37	29	32	34	48%
92/93	74	31	43	38	36	32	42	43%
91/92	62	30	32	37	25	33	29	53%
90/91	47	30	17	33	14	20	27	43%
89/90	40	21	19	28	12	16	24	40%
88/89	26	9	17	15	11	9	17	35%
87/88	12	8	4	8	4	5	7	42%

PUBLIC DOCUMENT

APPENDIX FOUR

Hiring Policy

GENERAL

- Where possible, positions will be filled with existing personnel.
- All candidates should know or be willing to learn a First Nations language.

ABORIGINAL EMPLOYEES

NVIT reserves the right to favour persons of Aboriginal ancestry in hiring and promotion, as justified under an exemption to the BC Human Rights Act (Sec. 19 A1 & 2a). All non aboriginal staff who are employed on a permanent basis are welcome and encouraged to continue employment with the institute. If and when a position becomes vacant, NVIT will attempt to fill that position with an Aboriginal person.

PERMANENT EMPLOYMENT POSITIONS

Permanent, and temporary full time, employment positions must be posted internally for a two week period. Following this, short listing will take place by the relevant Department Head/Manager, in consultation with the Director, Human Resources. At NVIT's discretion, a posting may be advertised both internally and externally simultaneously.

If more than one suitably qualified employee applies, internal interviews will take place with qualified internal applicants receiving an interview. If only one internal suitably qualified employee applies, the employee may go through an interview process, or may be recommended for appointment by the relevant Department Head/ Manager, and the Human Resources Director. If no suitably qualified employees apply, the position will be advertised externally, and internal applicants may be interviewed together with the external candidates.

If an employee is laid off due to budget cutbacks, NVIT may, at its discretion, offer that employee a vacant position, without the position being posted, thus filling vacancies with existing staff resources.

PUBLIC DOCUMENT

HIRING COMMITTEE

After short listing, a hiring committee will be established through consultation between the relevant Department Head/Manager, and the Human Resources Director. The hiring committee shall have an elder, the hiring supervisor, and the Human Resources Director. The remaining positions on the hiring committee may include, a student, a Senior Administrator, and/or other employees who are familiar with the vacant position. The hiring process shall not be impeded as a result of the lack of availability of individuals on the hiring committee.

DECISION

After the hiring committee chooses a candidate, they will make the recommendation to the President. The President or the President's delegate, on behalf of the Board of Governors, makes the final decision on whether to make a job offer.

ACTING POSITION

At its discretion, NVIT maintains the right of appointing an employee into an acting position. The duration of the appointment will normally not exceed twelve months.

PART TIME/SESSIONAL/CONTRACT

NVIT may, at its discretion, fill temporary part time positions without posting.

TEMPORARY POSITIONS

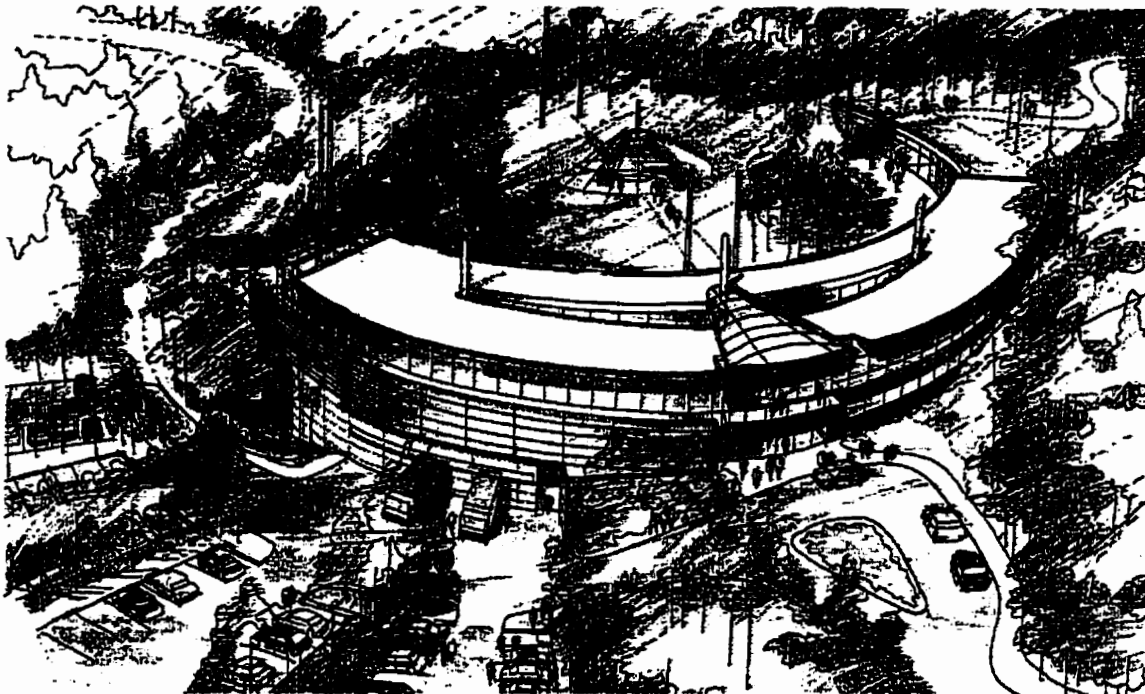
Temporary employees may be used in 2 instances, 1) funding is temporary, 2) position is permanent, but NVIT is unable to recruit a suitable candidate on a permanent basis.

SENIOR MANAGEMENT

Senior Management is defined as employees with line management responsibilities who report directly to the President. At their discretion, the Board may choose to use the standard hiring policy, or use an alternative method for hiring Senior Management.

Passed by Board Motion April 14, 1998

APPENDIX FIVE



PUBLIC DOCUMENT

APPENDIX 6

**A Report On A Planning
Workshop**

January 7 & 8, 2000

Coldwater Hotel

Merrit, B.C.

prepared by **THE NICOLA VALLEY INSTITUTE OF
TECHNOLOGY**
Douglas K. Jardine
Merrit, British Columbia
March 2000

DRAWN

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report presents the results of a planning workshop held at the Coldwater Hotel, Merritt, B.C., on January 7/8, 2000.

The 28 participants were drawn from students, staff, faculty, administration and the governing board of the Nicola Valley Institute of Technology (NVIT).

The primary purposes of the workshop were to develop among the participants a coherent view (or reaffirm the present view) NVIT's mission and values and to identify what "the right things to do" are in order to achieve the mission.

With respect to mission, the general conclusion of the participants is that:

NVIT is a public post-secondary educational institution founded in and keeping faith with Aboriginal traditions and culture as it delivers programs and services designed to meet the contemporary needs of Aboriginal communities.

In the view of the participants, certain trends, events and emerging issues have a direct bearing on the "what" and "how" of NVIT's efforts to fulfill its mission. Without intending to diminish the importance of any on the long list identified by the participants, perhaps the most important of these are:

- The strong competition for First Nations student by mainstream institutions.
- The emergence of Aboriginal issues in the public's consciousness.
- Issues around Aboriginal Title and rights.
- Treaty settlements and treaty processes.
- Important legislative changes and courts decisions.
- Self-government and self-determination.
- The matter of capacity building.
- The declaration of NVIT as a public post-secondary institute.
- Inadequate funding under the present provincial funding formula.
- The loss of the Elders.
- A lack of corporate identity.
- The instability of institutional leadership.
- The lack of Aboriginal leadership.
- Soft academic legitimacy.
- The use and application of NVIT's resources.
- The new joint-facility campus and making it work.
- The needs of Aboriginal youth.
- Development of appropriate instructional programs.
- The need for more technology and the greater use of technology in the teaching/learning process.

In the view of the participants, NVIT has a number of strengths that tie into clear opportunities for the delivery of an expanded set of programs and services. Equally, there are some threats to the organisation that NVIT must avoid and some weaknesses that it must overcome.

The opportunities open to NVIT flow from the significant changes occurring in Aboriginal communities. NVIT has the opportunity to be a change agent and an agency that delivers training and graduates qualified to meet the specific needs of Aboriginal communities.

The present strengths of NVIT are several fold. First and foremost among these is that NVIT is now, and strives to continue being, an Aboriginal organisation with Aboriginal values and processes. Its employees have a commitment and passion for the institute and its students. They are a resilient people.

But there are weaknesses and threats. Chief among these are a serious crisis of corporate identity and a pattern of organisational conflict and paranoia around issues of power, gender, race and institutional reputation. In recent years the institute has suffered from a lack of leadership in general and a lack of Aboriginal leadership in particular. The most serious external threat or weakness has to do with a lack of

funding. The lack of a shared vision and mission and a lack of systems and procedures are also serious impediments to progress at NVIT.

Nevertheless, there is much that NVIT can do to be of valuable service to the communities of the Nicola Valley and Aboriginal communities beyond. The body of the report is devoted to identifying all of these matters summarised above.

Finally, there are five steps that should now be taken.

1. The acting president (and senior management team) must complete the process of preparing a draft strategic plan for the board's consideration.
2. The board must adopt in principal a statement of mission and (bookmark) vision that management can use immediately in the daily operation of the institute. It must provide advice and/or specific direction to management regarding the draft strategic plan.
3. The board must authorise management to proceed with a process of external consultation and validation of the mission, vision, and draft strategic plan.
4. The acting president and senior management, acting on the board's explicit direction and support, must use every opportunity to present and articulate to the internal community the various aspects of the draft strategic plan. This is the time and place to develop institution-wide ownership in the vision, mission and plan for NVIT's immediate future.
5. The final step is the board adopting a statement of vision and mission and a strategic plan. For this step, the acting president will have prepared for the board's consideration documents revised on the basis of the board's earlier direction and the results of the external and internal consultations.

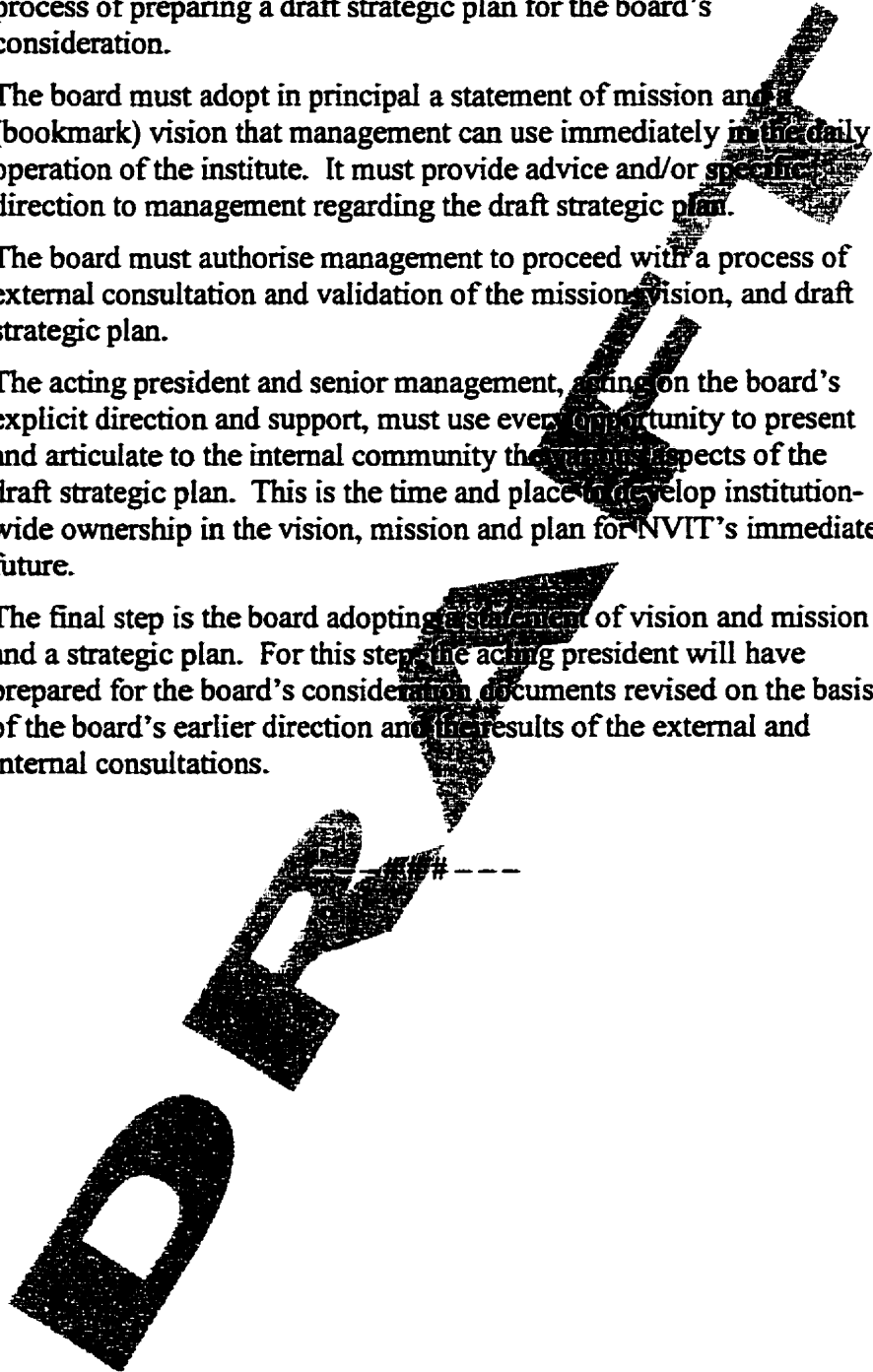


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DRAFT

INTRODUCTION

The acting president, Dick Bate, with the support and approval of the governing board, retained the author of this report to plan and facilitate a planning workshop.

The workshop was held on Friday and Saturday, January 7 and 8, 2000, at the Coldwater Hotel, Merritt, B.C.

The participants in the workshop were drawn from among students, staff and faculty, administration and the board. Each of these constituencies was asked to select and name their (five) representatives to the workshop. All elders were invited to attend and participate in the workshop.

My proposal for the workshop promises two products:

- One product is a report, submitted to the acting president, that captures all the work and results of the workshop, offers my analysis and recommendations on the issues, and outlines what next steps should be taken.
- The second product is a draft of a strategic plan that the acting president may amend or place as-is before the board for its consideration.

This report fulfills the first promise set out above. It is a report on the workshop itself; it is not a draft strategic plan for NVIT. The report is not a set of minutes of the workshop. Rather, the report is the author's effort to capture the important insights of the participants, in terms of both commonalities and in terms of divergencies of viewpoints.

BACKGROUND TO THE WORKSHOP

The Premise of the Workshop

The basic premise of the workshop is:

If NVIT is to maximise its success, then it needs a strategic plan (which is about the right things to do) that frames its choice of tactics and action (which are about doing those things right).

The strategic plan must be built on a coherent view of NVIT's mission and values; a view that is held in common by the people of NVIT. NVIT's mission and values can be all the more powerful if we can capture it in a "bookmark" phrase.

In attaining a mission and upholding values, there is often a wide array of "things that an organisation can do," i.e., results to achieve. However, being able to identify and choose the ones that are critical to mission-attainment is the mark of an effective organisation. Put another way, we can think of these "right things to do" as "strategic zones": the zones of effort where "things must go right," i.e., the intended results must be achieved, if the mission is to be attained. Taken together, these strategic zones represent the organisation's overall strategy.

The implementation of strategy involves tactics and action. While strategy needs review and resetting from time to time, tactics and action are the stuff of daily review, refinement and implementation.

In these days of continuous change, it is reasonable to expect a well-chosen mission to last for as much as a decade. By comparison, the strategic plan may not be useful beyond three to five years and the tactical plans are rarely useful beyond twelve to eighteen months.

This report captures the insights of the participants regarding these matters.

The Goals of the Workshop

The goals of the workshop are threefold:

- To develop among the participants a coherent view (or reaffirm the present view) of NVIT's mission and values using materials and results developed in previous planning activities as well as new ideas and information brought to this workshop.
- To identify **WHAT** the "right things" are that NVIT must set out to achieve in order to attain its mission and uphold its values.
- To sketch a preliminary action plan—**HOW** to do these things right—that focuses on how best to use everyone's skillsets and builds on teamwork, collaboration and knowledge sharing.

This report captures the insights of the participants regarding these matters.
Background Materials for the Workshop

In October 1995 the board adopted a policy on mission and vision. In the fall of 1997, there was at least one workshop, the "New Directions Workshop" held in November. In addition, there are six documents that address the issue of NVIT's future.

These documents contain content important to the process of setting mission and vision for NVIT. These documents are therefore included in a packet of materials provided all participants in advance of the workshop. For the record, these documents are listed below:

- "NVIT's Blue Print for the Future, 1999 – 2003." (draft No. 5), Andrew Bear Robe, December 15, 1998.
- "NVIT: New Directions," December 9, 1998.
- "NVIT Values and Ethical Pathways," May 6, 1998.
- "NVIT Education Plan To 2001 And Beyond," February 1998.
- "NVIT: New Directions Workshop – Flip Chart Notes," November 15/16, 1997.
- The board's policy on mission and vision, October 1995.

The Participants

The participants were drawn from five constituencies: students, faculty, staff, administration, and the board. Each of these constituencies selected five participants to the workshop. In addition, the acting president named five people as participants.

The intention was to have five groups of six people; that is, each workshop group would have a person from each of the five constituencies plus one person named by the acting president. Unfortunately, not all those selected to participate were able to attend and hence two groups had only five participants. As facilitator, I arranged the participants into the five groups as set out below:

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Bill WILLMS• Victor YORK	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Dick BATE• Janice ANTOINE
---	--

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maisie WRIGHT • Mel JURICIC • Sandra TIESEN • Mason MCINTYRE 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AI FUKISHIMA • Jim BILLY • Jason GORMAND
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grant VEALE • Ruby ADAMS • Brenda BANNERMAN • Victor TOM • Holly MEUSE 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Patti DEMPSTER • Elmer DERRICK • Gordon PREST • Ava DEAN • Jim BRUCE • Joe MARCOTTE
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ken TOURAND • John CHENOWETH • Sharon MCIVAR • Flora DESNOYERS • Bernice SQUAKIN • Moses WOODS 	<p>Elder Felix Squakin participated through out the workshop.</p>

The Process

The essentials of the workshop’s agenda are set out in **APPENDIX I: THE WORKSHOP’S AGENDA,**” page 120.

The process begins with the participants identifying the answers to four key questions:

1. who are we?
2. whom do we serve?
3. what services do we render?
4. what values do we hold?

We use the answers to these questions to build a statement of mission from which is distilled a vision for NVIT expressed as a “bookmark” phrase.

With the vision and mission in mind, the participants engage in an environmental scan structured around an examination of the trends, events and emerging issues that impinge on this mission and vision.

Then knowing the mission, vision, and the environment in which NVIT is to operate, the participants engage in an examination of the organization’s strengths and weaknesses, and the opportunities and threats it faces.

From this knowledge base, the participants then identify the “right things to do” if the vision is to be attained.

The final stage of the workshop is devoted to a brief examination of “how to do these things right”: who will do them, by when, and what resources are required. Unfortunately, there was not time to do the work of this final stage, although I did present an overview of how this work is approached and done.

This report captures the results of the work done by the individual groups and the work of the groups done in plenary sessions.

THE RESULTS OF THE WORKSHOP

The Four-Question Exercise

The four question exercise starts with a search for the answers to four questions, progresses to expressing these answers as a single statement of

purpose (i.e., a mission statement), and concludes with an effort to frame the organisation's vision with a "bookmark" phrase.

The Questions

The four questions used in the exercise are articulated below. I present the details of the groups' answers to these four questions in Appendices II, III, IV, and V. The questions are interrelated such that clear answers to one question tend to inform answers to one or more of the remaining questions. In the course of discussion and debate on each question, answers change and are refined. Ultimately the answers are collapsed into a single statement comprising the answers to the four questions. That statement is the mission, i.e., the purpose of the organisation.

Who Are We?

An effective organisation acts with common purpose. That is to say, the actions of the people in an effective organisation are such as to drive the organisation forward towards delivering on its mission and vision.

To do this successfully, the people of the organisation must, as a collective, know who they are. In an anthropomorphic sense, the organisation must know who it is.

"APPENDIX II: IDEAS ON WHO WE ARE," page 122, presents phrases the groups identified in a brainstorming exercise to express the answer to the question, Who are we?

Whom Do We Serve?

An effective organisation knows clearly who its customer is. An effective organisation cannot be all things, to all people, all of the time and hence must make choices about whom it will serve.

"APPENDIX III: IDEAS ON WHOM WE SERVE," page 123, presents phrases the groups identified in a brainstorming exercise to express the answer to the question, Whom do we serve?

What Services Do We Render?

An effective organisation does not set out to serve all of the needs of those who are its customers. An effective organisation provides products and renders services that are in keeping with its mission and values and that satisfy important needs of its customers. An effective organisation makes choices about which customer needs it will set out to satisfy and which ones it will leave to another organisation to satisfy.

"APPENDIX IV: IDEAS ON WHAT SERVICES WE RENDER," page 124, presents phrases the groups identified in a brainstorming exercise to express the answer to the question, What services do we render?

What Values Do We Hold?

An effective organisation has a set of values it espouses publicly and is seen to live by in every way. This means that the individuals of the organisation when acting on behalf of the organisation are seen to uphold these values, and when the organisation acts as an entity it too is seen to uphold these values.

"APPENDIX V: IDEAS ON WHAT VALUES WE HOLD," page 125, presents phrases the groups identified to express the answer to the question, What values do we hold?

Why these Questions?

These are important questions to answer because the answers define what the business of the organisation is and frame the individual and collective behaviour of the organisation's people.

Being clear about whom the organisation serves, i.e., knowing who the customer is, is the basis for all efforts at marketing and recruiting. Knowing who the customer is, is also the basis on which the organisation can match service to need. Taken together, the answers to these two questions allow the organisation to be clear about *whom it will not serve* and to some degree *what services it will not render*. Similarly, knowing "who we are" as an organisation is closely tied to the values we declare and uphold as we render our service to the customer. Indeed, being clear about who we are and what our values are will shape our choice of customer to focus on, and will influence what services we will render and how we will render them.

The Answers

The process of the workshop had each group consider and answer each of the four questions. At one point in the process, the groups were asked to answer each question with a short statement. These answers, presented below,² are important because they offer a sense of both the commonality of viewpoints as well as the divergence of viewpoints.

² The groups worked at different speeds and when the call to report their answers was made, not all groups had completed their answers.

1. NVIT is a First Nations institution which prepares and educates future leaders for all communities.
2. Our clients are post-secondary students in pursuit of excellence in education.
3. NVIT offers high quality publicly recognised programs and services in a learning environment that is based in Aboriginal philosophy and tradition.
4. NVIT's values include respect, accountability, honesty and trust in communication balanced with growth and development.

1. NVIT is an Aboriginal post-secondary education institute serving as an agent of change through innovative education.
2. We serve lifelong learners committed to the advancement of Aboriginal culture.
3. We offer programs that meet First Nations community needs in leadership and wellness.
4. We value a people-friendly service which exemplifies excellence in distinct specialties.

1. NVIT is an accredited public post-secondary institute serving as an agent of change through innovative education.
2. We serve lifelong learners committed to advancing Aboriginal culture.
3. We offer accredited academic, professional, and career-technical programs with services to enhance success.
4. We value a people-friendly service that exemplifies excellence in distinct specialties.

1. We are change agents and leaders committed to quality education of those who will become role models in our communities.
4. We value individual growth that would support community development and with the support of our ancestors we are leaders committed to anyone seeking higher learning in an aboriginal setting that values individual growth and promotes community development.

1. NVIT is B.C.'s Aboriginal public post-secondary institution.
2. Our clients are Aboriginal communities.
3. Our programs and services support Aboriginal communities to build capacity for self-determination.
4. Our values are holistic and culturally appropriate.

Statements of Mission

A mission statement is the answer to these four questions succinctly put in a single, short sentence. In the workshop, the participants were asked to craft a mission statement in 25 words or less.³ For this exercise, I asked the groups to work from the four individual sentences that they had already prepared (see the previous section). I present the results of the exercise below:⁴

NVIT is a public post-secondary [First Nations / Aboriginal / Indian / Indigenous] institute which offers programs, services and resources to [FN / Aboriginal / Indian / Indigenous] people based on values which respect traditional beliefs.

With the support of our ancestors, we are leaders committed to anyone seeking higher learning in an Aboriginal setting that values individual growth and promotes community wellness.

NVIT is a post-secondary institutional community that provides educational programs that are founded on First Nations philosophy and tradition, which empowers students to make meaningful contributions in their careers and communities.

NVIT is a post-secondary First Nations institute which offers programs, services, and resources to Aboriginal people based on values which respect traditional beliefs.

NVIT is a First Nations post-secondary educational community dedicated to traditionally based philosophy which empowers students to make a contribution in their career and communities.

NVIT is B.C.'s Aboriginal public post-secondary institution which offers holistic and culturally appropriate programs and support services to assist Aboriginal communities to build capacity for self-determination.

NVIT is an accredited Aboriginal post-secondary institute for people who want to learn and experience a distinctive education in a people friendly and supportive environment.

³ Frankly, this is a workshop "trick" to force people to think hard about, to focus on, the essence of the organisation's business. In practice, a statement of mission, in the form of a business concept, is an elaboration of the business purpose. However, when a mission statement exceeds about 200 words it has lost its capacity to motivate and inspire.

⁴ There are more mission statements than groups simply because some groups continued to fine-tune their statement during the course of the workshop.

Vision as a "Bookmark"

It is very useful and powerful to have a phrase—an educational institution might think of this as a bookmark—that expresses the vision of the organisation. In this regard, two quotes from *Visionary Leadership* by Burt Nanus make the point:

There is no more powerful engine driving an organisation toward excellence and long-range success than an attractive, worthwhile, and achievable vision of the future, widely shared.

and

A vision is a realistic, credible, attractive future for your organisation.

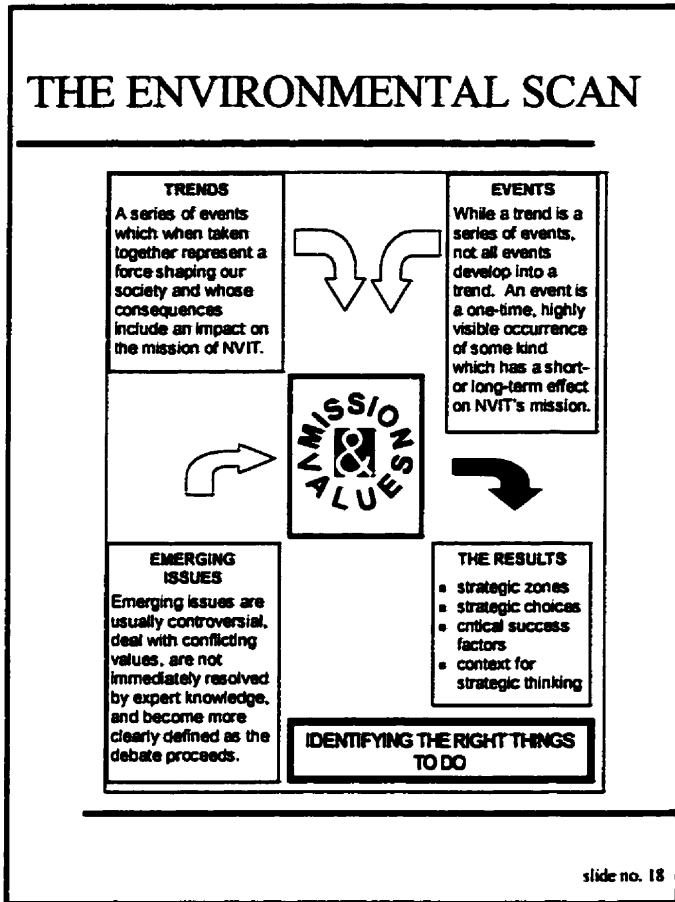
I asked the groups to brainstorm bookmarks that express the future they see for NVIT. Obviously, this vision has to embody the mission they have crafted for NVIT. I present these "bookmark" visions below:

STUDENTS TODAY, LEADERS TOMORROW
DEVELOPING ABORIGINAL LEADERS
NVIT: DEVELOPING ABORIGINAL LEADERS FOR TOMORROW
OUR BUSINESS — ABORIGINAL STUDENT DEVELOPMENT
NVIT: THE ULTIMATE IN EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCE
AN OPPORTUNITY IN FIRST NATIONS LEARNING
NVIT: DEDICATED TO EMPOWERMENT AND TRADITION
WHERE TRADITION MEETS THE FUTURE
PROUD TO BE FROM NVIT
NVIT FOR THOUGHT
THE ROAD TO EDUCATION
NVIT: WHERE YOU WALK THE EXTRA EDUCATIONAL MILE
NVIT: SUCCESS, SUCCESS, SUCCESS
NVIT: MY ANCESTORS TAUGHT ME!
NVIT: COME GROW WITH US

NVIT: TOMORROW'S FUTURE IS TODAY'S CHALLENGES
NVIT: PEOPLE WHO NEED PEOPLE
NVIT: TODAY'S CHALLENGE IS TOMORROW'S FUTURE
NVIT: GET SMART!
NVIT: ANCESTORS OUR EDUCATORS
NVIT: GOOD MEDICINE
NVIT: GREAT SNAKE OIL
NVIT IS GOOD BANNOCK
NVIT: PUT A FEATHER IN YOUR CAP
NVIT: THE HOUSE OF LEARNING
NVIT STANDS AS ONE
LEARN TODAY, LEAD TOMORROW
NVIT: WHERE COYOTE TALKS
CHANGE THROUGH EDUCATION
THE LEARNING TRAIL
NVIT: SUPPORTING ABORIGINAL LEADERSHIP
NVIT: LEARNING WITH FRIENDS
NVIT: EDUCATIONAL DISTINCTION

The Context For What We Do

Once, as an organisation, we know what our mission is, then we must choose the "right things to do" in order to achieve that mission. The right things to do are affected by what is happening in our business environment. An environmental scan is therefore crucial to creating an effective plan.



One means of scanning our environment is to identify and examine the trends, events, and emerging issues that impinge and interact with the organisation's mission. In the accompanying figure I define these terms.

The figure also illustrates the concept of trends, events and emerging issues impinging and interacting with the mission thereby shaping and influencing the choice of the right things to do in order to achieve the mission.

The reader needs to avoid the temptation to agonise over in which category to place a topic or issue. The categorisation is far less important than the capture of the topics and issues for it is the latter, not the categorisation, that paints the picture of the environment. It is of course helpful to have a sense about the items identified. Have they been around a while and are they likely to continue? Are they only now emerging as an issue and is their importance likely to persist? Are they a one-time occurrence whose impact will diminish with time or be long lasting?

Bearing in mind that the essentials of the mission, as identified to this point, place NVIT as an Aboriginal institution existing to serve the needs of the Aboriginal

community with programs and services designed to meet the needs of that community while professing and upholding the traditions and culture of the Aboriginal community, we now examine the trends, events and emerging issues that intersect with this mission.

Trends

The groups identified the following trends as being important in identifying what NVIT should do to achieve its mission.

There is **strong competition** for First Nations students by other educational institutions.

Increased government funding for mainstream institutions to serve Aboriginal students.

First Nations graduates of the K-12 system are **increasingly college-ready** and are therefore able to exercise a choice about which post-secondary educational institution to attend.

College educated parents have higher **expectations** of their children about attending a post-secondary educational institution.

Greater **family support** for education.

Low success rates of Aboriginal learners in public schools.

An increasing **number of Aboriginal** post-secondary students.

Healing communities have a **greater awareness** and interest toward higher learning.

A larger number of full-time students are **working** more.

There is **greater public support** for First Nations issues.

Important **legislative changes**, such as Bill C31, and important legal cases (re., for example, the closure of residential schools).

A recognition of the effect of residential schools.

A changing political climate (upcoming provincial elections).

A growing cultural awareness (i.e., a return to cultural values), e.g., Band schools, PowWow. People returning to the reserve; less product oriented; greater thirst for knowledge and healing.

Sobriety.

Labour market trends: recession, globalisation, NAFTA.

Employment equity

Technology: distance education, the InterNet. People living longer.

A growing youth population (75% of the Aboriginal population is under 25 years of age).
Self-government.

The emergence of Aboriginal issues.

Aboriginal communities need highly trained (Aboriginal) people.

Increasing government funding for capacity building.

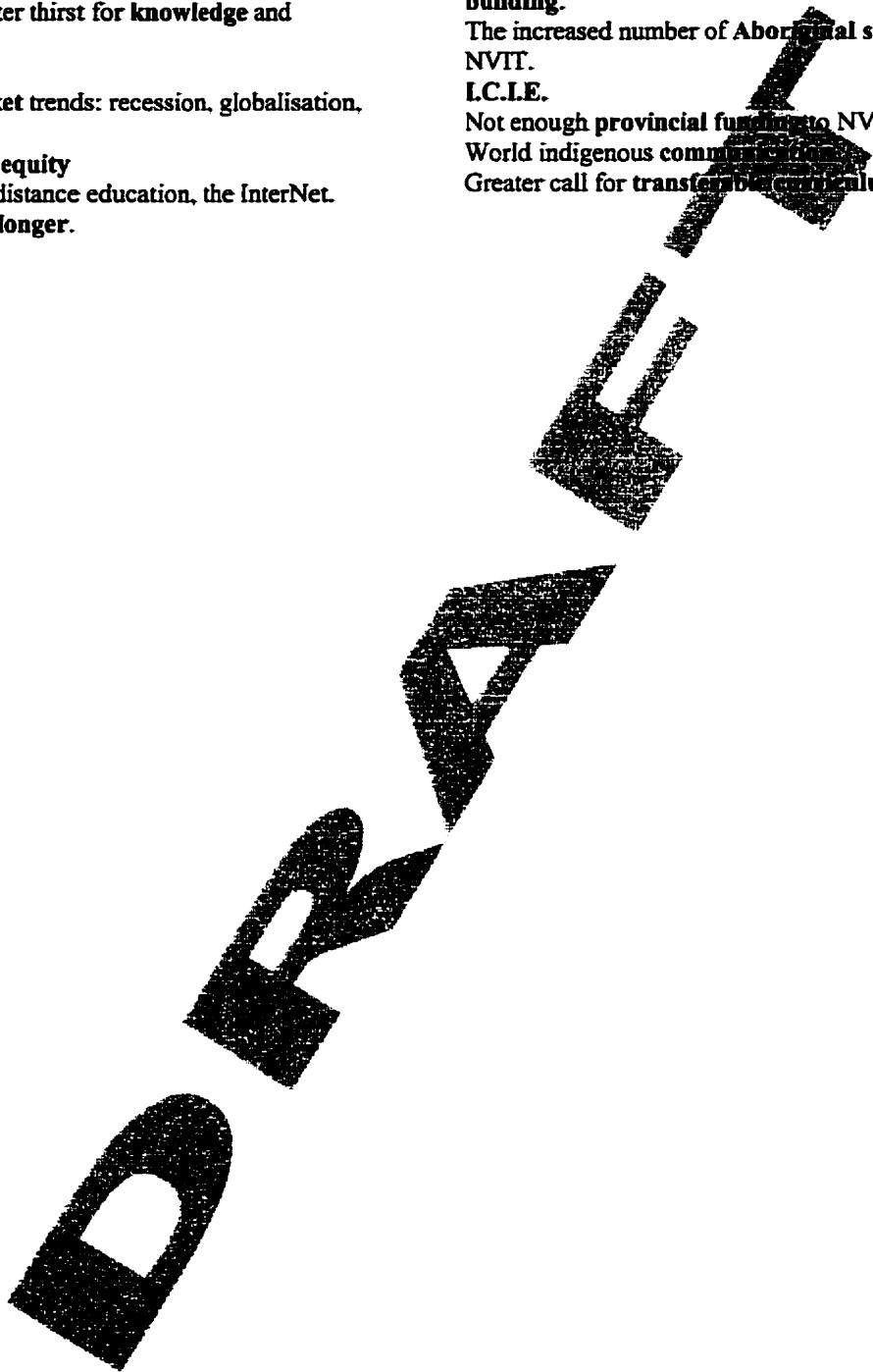
The increased number of Aboriginal staff at NVIT.

I.C.I.E.

Not enough provincial funding to NVIT.

World indigenous communities.

Greater call for transferable curriculum.



Events

The groups identified the following events as being important in identifying what NVIT should do to achieve its mission.

Becoming a public institution (in 1995).
Instability of organisation's leadership.
A new campus.
Funding for a new campus.
Aboriginal Title and rights.
Unionisation and a first collective agreement.
An Aboriginal president.
Degree granting (vs. other programs).
Loss of Elders.
A change in government.
Moving campus from (??).
Legislative action: closing residential schools; Bill C31; land claims; Delgamuuk(sp?); Marshall (commercial fishery); Corbert (taxation)
Aboriginal Healing Foundation.
More senior Aboriginal leadership at NVIT.
An interim (acting) president.

New board members and Chair of the board (governance).
Post-secondary Aboriginal policy framework (MAETT).
The Coquihalla (transportation).
Institutional traumas.
New information system (Colleges).
Loss of president and dean (organisational structure and personnel).
The (this one) planning workshop.
Board decision making (governance).
A new funding formula for the system.
Leadership instability.
Curriculum change: Indigenous Studies to Academic Studies.
Bill 22 (formation of Education Council, etc.)
The presence of Doug Jardine, consultant.
Completion of registration processes.

Emerging Issues

The groups identified the following emerging issues as being important in identifying what NVIT should do to achieve its mission.

Self-determination.
Self-government.
Student recruitment.
Recognition of Aboriginal Title and rights.
Future funding in the post-secondary sector.
Defining NVIT's identity.
Prior Learning Assessment for Band members.
Making a joint campus work.
How we use our funding.
Strong competition for students (market share).
To be community based.
Community based education.
Loss of funding from BC (reduced purchases from NVIT).
Academic legitimacy.

The role of technology in instructional delivery.
Controversy between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal at NVIT (racism)
Stability and effectiveness of leadership.
Treaty settlements and treaty processes.
Impact of new collective agreement.
Impact of Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples.
Capacity building.
"Decolonisation."
Reconciliation; residential school healing; The Healing Foundation.
Restorative justice.
White tongue, Eh? (Canadian millennium)
Compensation.

Governance.

Health and social services transfer payments.

Post-secondary funding for Aboriginal purposes.

Devolution.

Band politics (trust).

Stronger Band identity.

Grooming for leadership; women's issues (i.e., leadership).

Aboriginal youth identity.

Economies of scale.

The 4 "R's."

Aboriginal leaders in leadership positions.

Taxation.

The S.W.O.T. Analysis

Once an organisation is clear as to its mission, and having scanned its environment is also clear as to what are the "right things" to do, it must then examine itself to see how it can take advantage of strengths and opportunities and mitigate threats and weaknesses.

S.W.O.T. is an acronym for strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. Strengths and weaknesses are matters having to do with the organisation itself; opportunities and threats are matters having to do with the environment.

The reader will note what appear to be contradictions: an item being put forward as both a strength and a weakness, or a strength and a threat. The explanation is that some items are like double-edged swords; in other cases, the contradiction is real in that some see the item as a strength and others see it as a weakness. In these cases, the "leadership" of the organisation needs to pay attention and discern whether the item is something to be built on or something to be overcome or circumvented, and act accordingly.

The groups identified the following strengths on which NVIT can build as it sets about to fulfill its mission.

Our employees: their commitment and passion; their qualifications and caring, student-friendly attitude.

A warm, personal friendly service; an encouraging atmosphere.

The spirit and attitude of NVIT (the intangibles).

A "never say die" attitude.

People's resilience as individuals and as a collective.

The professional, interpersonal relationships among the people of the organisation.

The geographic location of NVIT.

The small class-sizes NVIT offers its students.

The quality of students, both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal.

The fact that NVIT is a financial institute.

Programs that do address the existing and emerging Aboriginal issues.

An Aboriginal organisation with Aboriginal values and processes, with appropriate cultural freedom and curriculum content.

The support of the community.

Reputation and community's respect.

Political support from Native and non-Native people.

Our interim president.

The support of the MAETT for NVIT.

The commitment of funds for the new campus.

Strong Aboriginal learning content.

Being a unique Aboriginal/First Nations organisation.

Our board and Elders.

A high level of internal peer support.

Flexibility and openness to new ideas.

A lack of diversity training.

Unclear how best to use our Elders to the

advantage of all of us.

Threats

The groups identified the following threats that NVIT must overcome or circumvent if it is to fulfill its mission.

Ineffective leadership.

Leadership instability.

Lack of leadership.

The present (and perhaps the new) funding formula.

Shrinking provincial funding and no federal financial support.

Our on-going identity crisis.

Internal politics.

Hidden agendas (sometimes not so hidden).

Complacency.

Learned victimisation; internalised oppression.

A lack of validation for NVIT in the system: curriculum and reputation.

A declining respect for Aboriginal culture.

The loss of Elders.

We are being left behind by our inability to adequately serve our Aboriginal communities.

The offering of degrees in First Nations Studies by other institutions.

Absence of a process to move towards degree granting status.

The non-fraudulent mis-management of our funds (resources).

Strong competition for students, for funds, for faculty and staff.

Limited numbers of First Nations/Aboriginal instructors and administrators.

Ineffective student recruiting and marketing.

The quality of our education (programs) – the credibility of our graduates.

Poor teamwork and cohesion of academic departments.

A "red neck backlash."

The next provincial election.

Opportunities

The groups identified the following opportunities that NVIT are available to NVIT as stepping-stones to fulfilling its mission.

Partnerships with others.

New relationships: recognition of Aboriginal Title.

Culturally appropriate programs.

Cultural awareness.

Increased public awareness of Aboriginal rights.

Increased number of Aboriginal post-secondary students.

Increased government funding for capacity building.

The Healing Foundation.

A focus on capacity building, business, economic development and land management.

The imaginative use of technology: ITV/InterNet.

The support of government.

Community respect.

Health/social service transfer.

Youth population.

The new campus.

Responding to Aboriginal community needs.

Responding to corporate/organisation needs.

NVIT's geographic location.

The global interest in Indigenous issues.

Marketing: setting and five Bands in Nicola Valley.

Labour market trends: nursing and teaching.

The Elders.

Increased Aboriginal population base.

Self-determination.

Program offerings: degrees, trades, etc.

Global linking and outreach.

To be an **educational leader**.

An **agent of change**.

Athletics.

An **extension program** of continuing education and outreach: courses and services.

A **holistic approach** to prevention: medicines, food and health.

Weaknesses

The groups identified the following weaknesses that NVIT must address and resolve if it is to fulfill its mission.

Internal identity crisis: we are not clear as to our identity.

Limited cash flow.

Lack of government funding.

Always looking for money.

Financial control: equity in budgeting.

Poor economies of scale because of present size.

Little infrastructure: no meeting space; facilities spread out.

A lack of trust (among each other).

Instability of organisational leadership.

Insufficient Aboriginal leadership: president, dean, department heads.

Lack of management experienced in post-secondary education.

Lack of confidence in ability to be successful.

Flawed communications between departments.

Internal organisational conflicts and power struggles.

Organisational paranoia: "sandbox" issues around power, gender and race; apprehension around legitimacy and reputation.

Inadequate facilities.

We are a dysfunctional family.

Minimal support for students with problems (e.g., substance abuse).

An unwillingness to listen to new ideas.

A lack of systems and procedures.

A lack of resources for staff.

A lack of a shared vision and mission.

Lack of long-term planning (around cultural activities and resources)

Wellness issues with staff.

Professionalism of staff.

The organisation's small size.

Limited program base.

Employee wage levels.

Lack of support for employees: professional development; high employee turnover.

Cultural competence (cross-cultural, anti-racist and gender bias training needed).

Lack of mentorship (for women and for students (Co-Op, internship)).

Lack of student numbers (enrolment crunch).

Public relations and credibility.

The Right Things To Do

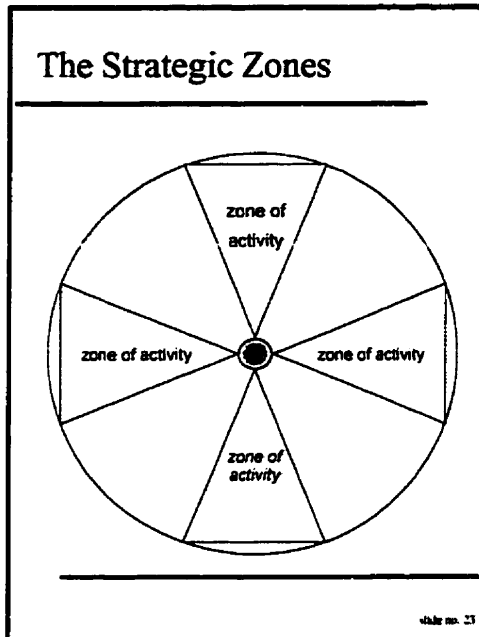
Leadership and strategy are about identifying the "right things to do"; management and tactics is about "doing those things right."

We should think of "the right things to do" as the results that are required for success. Hence, setting down in writing the "right things to do" is the essence of a strategic plan.

Without a strategic plan it is impossible to hold anyone in the organisation—not the board, or the president, or the managers, or the faculty and staff—accountable for success or failure in living the vision, achieving the mission and upholding the organisation's values.

If we think of the mission as the bull's eye of our vision, then the "right things to do" are the arrows we direct at the target.

There are undoubtedly many "right things" to do and it therefore makes sense to group these into what are called strategic zones of activity. This concept is illustrated in the accompanying figure. (The triangles pointing to the bull's eye are the arrows of the metaphor.)



Clearly, identifying the right things to do depends on three things:

first, having a vision and mission that is clear and is understood and accepted by the people of the organisation; **second**, knowing and understanding how the trends, events and emerging issues in the environment **impinge** on the mission and vision of the organisation; and, **third**, knowing, understanding, and accounting for the organisation's S.W.O.T.

The groups identified the following "right things" as results that NVIT must achieve if it is to fulfill its mission. Unfortunately, there was neither the time nor the (emotional) energy in the workshop to complete the exercises of grouping the "right things" and working on a macro action plan for "doing them right."⁵

- Secure adequate **financing** for the operations and capitalisation of the

organisation.

- Invest in educational technology.
- Create/deliver courses via the InterNet.
- Plan and implement programs and services (healing) to address the effects of the residential schools.
- Marketing and recruiting activities to attract Aboriginal students to NVIT.
- Marketing and recruiting activities to maintain market share among mainstream institutions for youth.
- Establish and maintain a commitment to cross-cultural training as part of a program of professional development.
- Create more K-12/NVIT partnerships.
- Leverage public support for First Nations on behalf of NVIT.
- Provide appropriate services for a growing population.
- Ensure more effective transferability (of programs and courses to other public post-secondary institutions).

⁵ For a reader who did not participate in the workshop it is difficult, if not impossible, to understand the energy expended by the participants in reaching this point in the process. A planning exercise such as this is not a dry, clinical exercise. NVIT is near and dear to the hearts of the participants and having to examine the organisation's situation, part of divining its vision and mission, its strengths and weaknesses, is emotionally exhausting. In retrospect, the timing and energy expenditure in the workshop could have been managed better, then I am solely responsible for this mis-management.

- Develop and offer programs designed to address the need for people skilled in self-government, capacity building, and other community needs.
- Programs for the needs of the Elders.
- A bridging program for low-performing Aboriginal students.
- Activities that focus on wellness.
- Make youth a specific target market.
- Prepare a strategy for a new premier, perhaps a new provincial government.
- Set priorities around community based education.

Sketching an Action Plan

For each component of the strategic plan, we need to:

- link the desired results to specific tasks to be done;
- assign someone to perform the tasks;
- set a date for successful completion;
- identify what resources are needed.

- Make the admissions and registration process be highly user-friendly.

- Focus on curriculum having to do with Aboriginal rights and title.

Doing things Right

“Doing things right” is essentially an exercise in good management. For this there needs to be an action calendar.

Although the workshop agenda calls for the groups to work on sketching an action calendar, this was not done. However, I did outline a well-known and useful approach to action planning in the context of strategic zones of activity. I make some comment here on this matter because this is work that remains to be done.

The action plan is constructed on a macro-level so that it is clear to everyone just what results are to be achieved by when, and who will be held accountable for the results.

The accompanying figure identifies the essentials of creating the action plan.

For each component of the strategic plan, i.e., for each result that is desired—for example it could be that of creating more K – 12/NVIT linkages—we identify the sub-component tasks that must be accomplished.

Someone is assigned the responsibility for each task; a completion date is agreed to; and, the resources necessary to perform the task are identified and provided.

The form shown below provides a useful means of presenting the important information in shorthand.

Strategic Component:			
TASKS	WHO	WHEN BY	WHAT RESOURCES
#1			
#2			
#3			
#4			
#5			

THE CONSULTANT'S COMMENTARY

There Remains Work To Be Done

The results of the workshop as captured in this report provide the basis for preparing a strategic plan for NVTT. But, there remains more work to be done.

1. The acting president and the senior management team, using further internal consultative processes as needed and as are appropriate, must prepare a draft strategic plan for the board's consideration.
2. The board, with this report and management's draft plan as context, must agree in principle on a statement of mission and a vision expressed as a 30 mark phrase. The board must also provide feedback on the draft strategic plan in the form of both advice and specific direction.
3. There must be an external process of consultation, feedback, and validation of these draft documents. The vision, mission, and key elements of the strategic plan should be tested on the Elders, the five Bands of the Nicola Valley, and other Bands and Aboriginal organisations as the board deems appropriate. It would also be helpful to consult with members of the MAETT, particularly those responsible for Aboriginal affairs. In the spirit of relationship building, consultations with other post-secondary institutions, school boards, and key business organisations in the Nicola Valley, Kamloops and Okanagan regions would also be helpful.
4. The leadership of NVTT, particularly the acting president and senior management team, must use every opportunity to present and articulate to the internal community the various aspects of these draft documents. But, the board cannot be invisible on this matter. The board must be seen as providing moral leadership and endorsement to a plan that is taking shape and which will ultimately be the template for NVTT's corporate behaviour. The desired end point is one of "ownership." The people of the organisation must own the plan.
5. At some point, sooner rather than later, but after the external validation, the board must adopt a vision, mission, and strategic plan. No matter how close these are to the existing versions of vision, mission, and values, the board needs to make this decision very public and prominent. This decision should be a symbol of renewal and rededication.

Issues Requiring Careful Thought and/or Resolution

During the course of the workshop it became clear to me that there are a number of issues that require careful thought and in some cases resolution. To be clear, I am not presenting a complete list of the issues that arose; I am presenting a list of issues that I think are impediments to progress if ignored.

Institutional identity: The board will need to declare whether NVIT is a First Nations institution or an Aboriginal institution.

This is a matter of identity and I have no advice for the board on what their choice should be. However some comments are in order.

As I understand the situation, First Nations is a subset of Aboriginal—much as Jesuits are a subset of Catholic. At a Jesuit college such as Boston College, the values are more narrowly Jesuitical even as the beliefs are Catholic. Thus NVIT can well be First Nations even as the larger affect of the institution is Aboriginal.

The primary implications are likely to be that the president would be First Nations, that the senior management would be predominantly First Nations, and that the employees would be predominantly Aboriginal.

Secondary implications are that the ethics of the curriculum and educational practices would be primarily Aboriginal (if not First Nations—as Boston College is Catholic if not Jesuitical) with enrolment that is both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal.

A public post-secondary institution: The simple fact is that NVIT is enabled by the College and Institute Act and hence is a public post-secondary institution. This means that NVIT is required to be like the other B.C. colleges even as it establishes itself as a FN/Aboriginal institution—just as the other colleges establish for themselves a certain ambience and specialisation. For example, someone wanting trades training might go to Camosun College but they certainly wouldn't go to Capilano College.

The issue for the board is how fulfill a FN/Aboriginal mandate—and no one disputes that this is the putative mandate for NVIT—while living within the obligations set out in the enabling legislation.

An Aboriginal curriculum: At first glance a FN/Aboriginal institution has a curriculum that is FN/Aboriginal. A second glance reveals that this is no facile an observation. The choices about curriculum are in large measure driven by what the customer wants—until you say, this is what we offer and we'll find customers who want that.

The crux of the issue here is related to where does NVIT's graduates (diploma and certificate) find employment and to where can they transfer their course credits for "upper division" study? As an example, will NVIT's Business Administration curriculum be designed to have the graduates dovetail into Aboriginal organisations? Or, will the graduates be somewhat more generalist in preparation so that they can compete effectively with graduates from other institutions for employment in non-Aboriginal organisations?

I think the wisdom of the workshop participants is clear: Declare that NVIT prepares its graduates expressly for work in Aboriginal organisations with a curriculum that does not disable them from competing effectively for employment in non-Aboriginal organisations.

There is a choice to be made. It needs to be made clearly, promulgated proudly, and delivered on effectively.

A vacuum of leadership: I hear the people of NVIT crying out for leadership. In my view it is the now too-long absence of leadership by those in leadership positions that is giving rise to the lack of trust, organisational paranoia and dysfunctionality that some workshop groups identified as weaknesses in the organisation.

It's easy to say and it's correct to say that NVIT needs leadership. But, do we know what it is we mean by "leadership"? Do we recognise that we need leadership at and from all levels of the organisation? Do we realise that the practice of leadership in contemporary organisations has changed significantly in the past decade or two?

In my opinion, the people of NVIT would do well to reflect carefully on "what it is that leaders do" before they embark on the search for a president. In fact, I commend a book by that name written by John Kotter of Harvard.

The need for an Aboriginal president: I first must say that I intend no offense with the remarks that follow. In my opinion there is no substitute for "the best" in an absolute sense. When searching for a president, or a dean, or a faculty member, or a staff member, NVIT needs and deserves the best person that can be found for the job at hand.

It is my belief, and it has been my experience, that if a search process is effectively limited to appointing the best person among those who apply, then mistakes are made. Regardless of what position is being filled, an organisation needs to be able to say, "the best person among the applicants is not the right person for our organisation," and simply carry on with the business of the organisation and the conduct of the

search until such time as the “right person” is found. This is never easy to do; but not doing this places the organisation at risk.

I do understand the good sense of and the legitimate desire for a FN/Aboriginal person to serve as NVIT’s president. My intention here is to encourage people to reflect on the good sense of ensuring that they appoint the right FN/Aboriginal person as president, not just the best on the list of applicants.

Healing, wellness and tolerance: At different points in the workshop, a subtext of the discussions was the need for healing and wellness by the people of NVIT. To this I add the notion of tolerance—although it may have surfaced in the workshop and I simply missed it.

In the past year, and prior to this planning workshop, it has been my privilege to work with the people of NVIT on the preparation of the 1999/2000 operating budget and the conduct of two investigations. These assignments provided me with the opportunity to have some private conversations in which people were remarkably frank. It was no surprise therefore to hear workshop participants identifying the presence of paranoia, power struggles, racism and gender issues in the organisation.

I have no advice to offer on these matters as part of this report other than to say that if these issues are left unattended, they will cause irreparable harm to the organisation.

Vision, mission and values: This workshop has made it clear to me that there is no pole star of vision, mission and values serving as a guide to the decisions at NVIT. Obviously, an intended result flowing from this workshop is that vision, mission and values will play a more explicit role than they have in recent times.

The problem is not that there are no such documents; it is that no one seems to make any explicit reference to them and use them as a conscience when issues are being debated. This is a behaviour that needs to change and the change should start at the board. The board should model the behaviour of explicitly measuring the merits of a decision against the declared vision, mission, and values of the organisation.

Customer and product: I have already touched on this matter from the perspective of NVIT as a public post-secondary institution. I now come back to the matter from the perspective of NVIT in the “business” of education.

Assuming that NVIT is clear about who its customers are and what their needs are, NVIT must engage in a vigorous campaign of marketing and recruiting. In my opinion, this is best done by

relationship building. This entails NVIT's people, president to faculty and staff, going to where the customers are and building a relationship. This is less about advertising and "trade fairs" and more about visits to high schools, Band offices, community and service organisations. It is about asking for and listening to a description of needs as much as it is about describing the opportunities available at NVIT.

As a public post-secondary institution, product at one level is circumscribed by the need for MAETT approval and funding. However, there is another level at which NVIT can operate and that is the delivery of contract and extension services on a for-profit basis. My sense is that there is a wealth of opportunity open to NVIT at this other level. My only caution is that success and financial return depends on approaching these activities with a private-sector, business-like mindset.

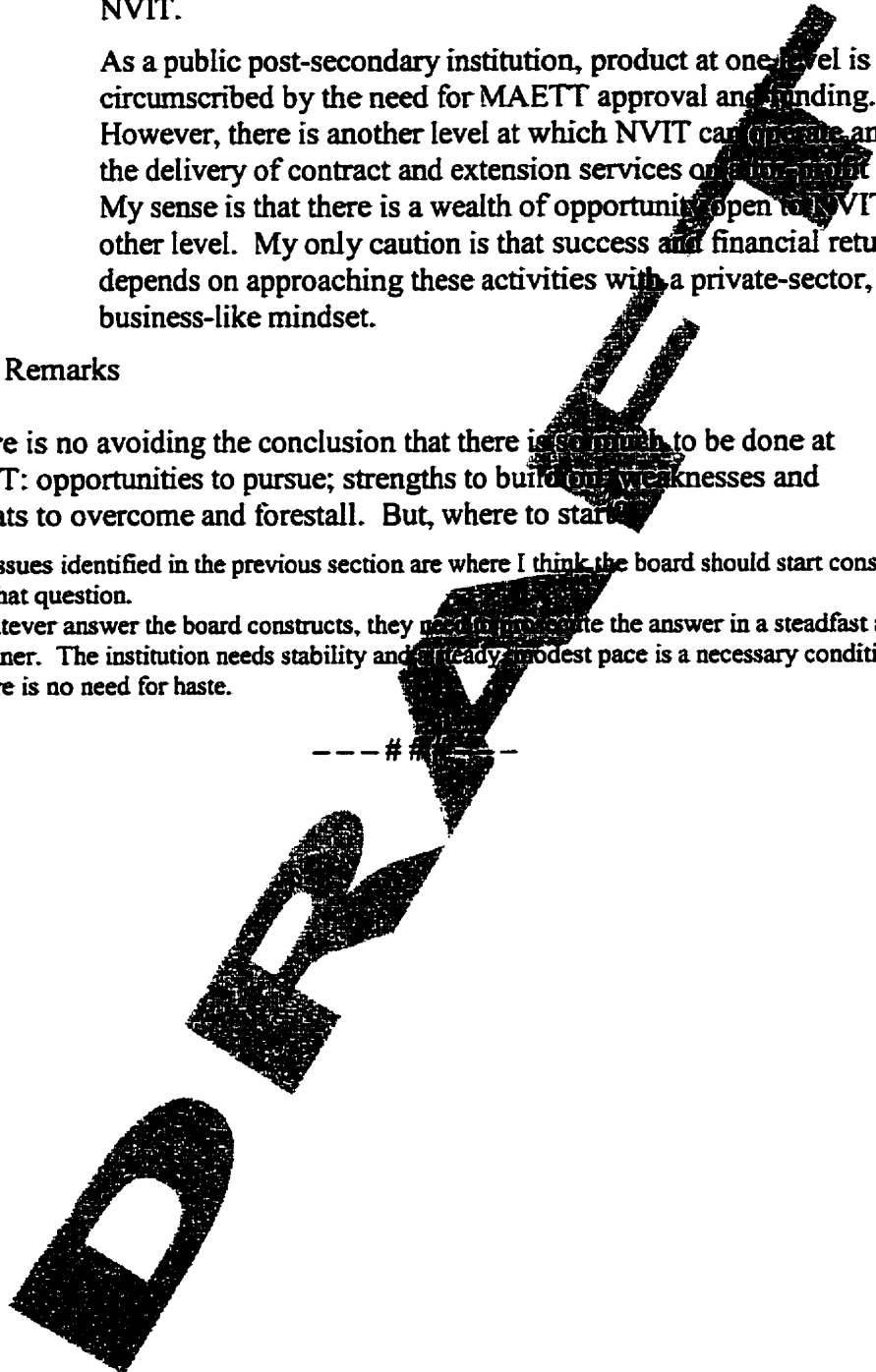
Concluding Remarks

There is no avoiding the conclusion that there is so much to be done at NVIT: opportunities to pursue; strengths to build on; weaknesses and threats to overcome and forestall. But, where to start?

In effect, the issues identified in the previous section are where I think the board should start constructing its answer to that question.

However, whatever answer the board constructs, they need to prosecute the answer in a steadfast and measured manner. The institution needs stability and a steady, modest pace is a necessary condition for stability. There is no need for haste.

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APPENDIX I: THE WORKSHOP'S AGENDA

The essentials of the workshop's agenda are set out below.

TIME	ACTIVITY
30 minutes	<p>INTRODUCTION</p> <p>A brief introductory session designed to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • set the scene for the workshop's activities • the necessary mindset • the goals • the agenda • the facilitator and his role
2 hours	<p>ACTIVITY I: GETTING A GRIP ON THE MISSION AND VALUES</p> <p>Working on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • who are we? • whom do we serve? • what services do we provide? • what values do we hold?
	<p style="text-align: center;">a break</p>
2 hours	<p>ACTIVITY II: THE CONTEXT OF WHAT WE DO</p> <p>Scanning our environment—what are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the trends • the events, and • the emerging issues <p>that shape and influence the work we do—what we do; how we do it; when we do it—on behalf of those whom we serve.</p>
	<p style="text-align: center;">a break</p>
1.5 hours	<p>ACTIVITY III: WHAT SEEMS IMPORTANT</p> <p>On the basis of the work so far, what appears to be important in terms of the "right things to do?"</p>
30 minutes	<p>wrapping up the first session</p>
	<p style="text-align: center;">Adjournment</p>

TIME	ACTIVITY
2 hours	<p>ACTIVITY IV: S.W.O.T.</p> <p>Using the results of the previous session's work to inform an examination of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NVIT's strengths • NVIT's weaknesses • the opportunities open to NVIT • the constraints/threats facing NVIT.
	a break
2 hours	<p>ACTIVITY V: THE RIGHT THINGS TO DO</p> <p>This exercise is designed to do two things:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. identify the key strategic zones in which "things must go right" if NVIT is to achieve its mission. This is the big picture, the overall strategy. 2. to identify the important components of each key zone. These are the strategic pathways and they flesh out the overall strategy. In effect these are the critical success factors - "the things" that must go right if NVIT is to be successful.
	a break
1.5 hours	<p>ACTIVITY VI: DOING THEM RIGHT</p> <p>This involves sketching an action calendar: who will do what, by when, with what resources for the key components of each strategic zone.</p>
	a break
45 minute	<p>ACTIVITY VII: TAKING STOCK</p> <p>This activity involves checking the results of ACTIVITIES V and VI against who we are, the environment we are in, and the S.W.O.T. that we have.</p>
15 minutes	<p>CLOSURE</p> <p>Wrapping up the workshop.</p>
	Workshop is concluded

APPENDIX II: IDEAS ON WHO WE ARE

The following phrases are taken from the flip charts the groups created as they considered the question, Who are we? By and large, I report the language used without change. However, I have clustered the phrases by content, removing phrases that are virtual duplicates but leaving phrases that are very similar; in some cases I have placed two or more phrases as a single item.

- we are a First Nations college
- we are an Aboriginal college
- we are an Aboriginal post-secondary institution
- we are a First Nations degree-granting institution
- we are a First Nations public institution
- we are a public B.C. post-secondary Aboriginal educational institute
- we are B.C.'s Aboriginal post-secondary institution
- we are a public institution; we are part of a system of public post-secondary education
- we are a B.C.-based, national in scope, public post-secondary institution
- we are a diverse people, with diverse ideas and diverse goals
- we are a diverse First Nations group
- we are First Nations based: founded on First Nations philosophies/values/needs and our programs flow from this
- we are a model for First Nations self-determination
- we are Aboriginal rooted
- we meet the needs of Aboriginal communities
- we are servers of the Aboriginal community
- we create future leaders within Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal communities
- we offer students Aboriginal information not offered elsewhere
- we are grounded in the Nicola Valley; we are Nicola Valley people
- we are founded by the Nicola Valley Bands

- we are people committed to self-actualisation, wisdom and love
- we are a national resource
- we are a destination learning institute
- we are a 2-year institution offering certificates and diplomas
- we are a community
- we are role models
- we are friendly
- we are inclusive
- we are multicultural
- we are leaders
- we are leaders of individuals concerned with the quality of First Nations education
- we are leaders in education for Native people
- we are teachers and facilitators, students and learners
- we are a community of adult learners and teachers
- we offer support services that, more than other institutions, are helpful; that support a high quality learning environment
- we are committed to success and quality
- we are newly accredited
- we go the extra mile
- we are an agent of change
- we are educational innovators
- we are an institute to be proud of, greater than the sum of our parts
- we are growth oriented (personal and community) and are lifelong learners
- we are participants that rely on all services in the municipality of Merritt

APPENDIX III: IDEAS ON WHOM WE SERVE

The following phrases are taken from the flip charts the groups created as they considered the question, Whom do we serve? Once again, by and large, I report the language used without change. However, I have clustered the phrases by content, removing phrases that are virtual duplicates but leaving phrases that are very similar; in some cases I have placed two or more phrases as a single item.

- | | |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● First Nations communities wanting on-site post-secondary programs ● non-First Nations people who wish to work with First Nations people ● students requiring cost-effective post-secondary education ● Aboriginal people from around the world ● primarily Aboriginal students ● Bands ● community members ● the NVIT community ● adult learners ● primarily mature students ● other institutions ● province and nation ● local Nicola Valley residents ● business/contractors ● high school graduates ● on-/off-reserve ● "not yet college-ready" individuals ● government organisations ● single parent students ● students wanting connections to Aboriginal culture ● "at risk" students ● Aboriginal students who want to go to school in a familiar setting ● qualified people looking for formal education ● students who want to go to NVIT ● (our clients are) our future ● post-secondary students pursuing excellence in education | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● those who are interested in learning or working within Aboriginal communities ● those who register ● our clients are equal to ourselves ● our clients represent diversity (race, class, gender, age, "ableism," etc.) ● First Nations students straight out of high school ● current students ● First Nations students requiring a supportive community ● potential employers ● out-of-towners ● First Nations people from B.C. ● families and government ● students requiring assistance in self-identity and visioning ● First Nations communities attempting to build capacity within their own communities ● First Nations people from across Canada ● people who want to learn ● people interested in Aboriginal world views ● Aboriginal people or people interested in working with Aboriginal peoples ● people who want to see Aboriginal culture survive and advance positively ● a broad cross-section of people ● innovative teachers ● organisations Aboriginal people relate to ● First Nations individuals of North America ● anyone wishing a higher education in an Aboriginal setting ● all people open to First Nations values ● Native communities |
|--|---|

APPENDIX IV: IDEAS ON WHAT SERVICES WE RENDER

The following phrases are taken from the flip charts the groups created as they considered the question, What services do we render? Again, by and large, I report the language used without change. However, I have clustered the phrases by content, removing phrases that are virtual duplicates but leaving phrases that are very similar; in some cases I have placed two or more phrases as a single item.

- programs that meet First Nations community needs (e.g., leadership and healing)
- programs that serve the Land, Governance, Wellness, and Economic Development of First Nations
- healing of students
- external accreditation
- advising services (personal, academic, career, life skills)
- learning assessment service
- student career needs
- financial aid
- college readiness/college preparation
- university transfer (Indigenous Studies, Academic Studies, Administrative Studies)
- credit courses (related to economic and social independence, leadership and political strength leading to interdependence)
- knowledge,
- accreditation
- relevant to/supportive of community needs
- cultural awareness
- facilities
- (curricula) designed to educate in subjects which are foreseen to be in demand in the future given the resources (trades/technology/ECE, etc)
- culturally relevant curricula (B.C.E.T.)
- First Nations Studies
- Natural Resource Technology
- Advocacy and Human Rights
- an intellectual resource for communities
- student services
- social work
- ECE/Day Care
- 2-year programs – certificate and diploma
- degrees
- ones that allow the client to get a good job (self-determination)
- degree programs in social work, natural resource technology, business management, indigenous studies
- programs and services that meet the needs of our clients
- programs and support services to assist Aboriginal communities to build capacity for self-determination
- Resident Elders in each program of study and student service (Elders with expertise, knowledge, and skills to work in specific areas)
- support services to address/counter First Nations students' historical conflict with mainstream education
- student services to include services for disabled students; and Resident Elders
- student council; extra curricular; community building
- post-secondary certificate, diploma, and transfer programs

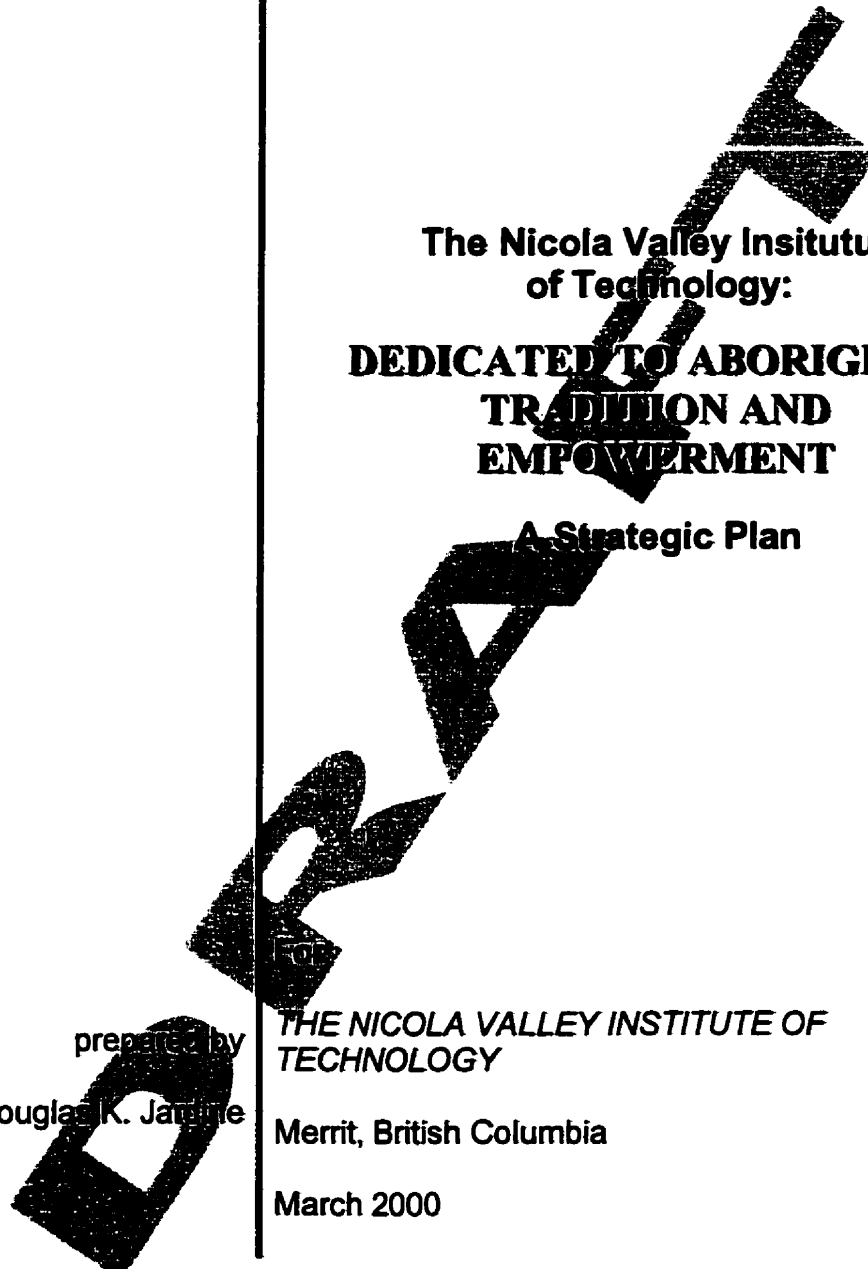
APPENDIX V: IDEAS ON WHAT VALUES WE HOLD

The following phrases are taken from the flip charts the groups created as they considered the question, What values do we hold? By and large, I report the language used without change. However, I have clustered the phrases by content, removing phrases that are virtual duplicates but leaving phrases that are very similar; in some cases I have placed two or more phrases as a single item.

- honouring Native culture
- respect for the dignity, rights, cultures and beliefs of all peoples
- personal and collective accountability
- continual growth and development for individuals and community
- taking the best of the "old" and the "new"
- (???) our ancestors a part of our existence today
- balance and harmony in all activities
- honesty and trust in communication
- people making decisions for themselves
- industriousness
- board policy E30 (which is a policy on values)
- being helpful to our community
- preparing leaders
- respect for Aboriginal traditions
- discipline
- integrity
- accountability (trust in our ability to do what is right)
- valuing the inherent worth of individuals
- valuing the earth and its resources
- dignity
- openness
- honesty and trust
- valuing the process of education
- a holistic approach/medicine wheel/balance
- success
- honorable
- professional ethics
- attitude
- empowerment
- excellence
- to be the best in a few specialties

- respect for all people
- honor diversity
- traditions of Aboriginal people
- forward looking
- treat the land and people like we would like to be treated
- helpful
- trust - dignity and honor
- balance
- people friendly
- respect
- to better our institution on a continuous basis with change of generations (growth and development)
- honesty and trust in communication
- balance and harmony
- ethical pathways
- community-based decision making
- cultural (student-centred programs and services)
- valuing of individuals (diversity - respect for and acceptance of)
- lifelong learning (sharing knowledge and skills with each other)
- respect for people and environment

APPENDIX 7



The Nicola Valley Insitutue
of Technology:
**DEDICATED TO ABORIGINAL
TRADITION AND
EMPOWERMENT**

A Strategic Plan

prepared by
Douglas K. Jardine

FOR
**THE NICOLA VALLEY INSTITUTE OF
TECHNOLOGY**

Merrit, British Columbia

March 2000

DRAFT

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The acting president of Nicola Valley Institute of Technology (NVIT), Dick Bate, with the support and approval of the governing board, retained the author as a consultant to assist in the preparation of a new strategic plan for NVIT.

This report, prepared for the acting president's consideration, presents a strategic framework for NVIT's short-term future. The expectation is that the contents of this report will go a long way, if not all the way, in helping him create a strategic plan for the board's consideration.

To be effective, an organisation needs a statement of mission or purpose that answers the questions: what the organisation is, who its customers are, what programs and services it renders, and what values it holds.

The mission statement suggested in the side bar does just this.

Without the need for additional words, the statement frames answers to the questions posed in the previous paragraph.

This mission and all that is behind it can be summarised in the following vision:

NVIT: Dedicated to Aboriginal Tradition and Empowerment

The effective organisation has and upholds a set of values. The overarching value that NVIT promises to uphold is a commitment to Aboriginal culture and tradition. Supporting this principle value are the values set out below. By and large, these are the values adopted by the board in October 1995. The effective organisation also knows well what its distinctive competencies are. In the case of NVIT, its distinctiveness due first to the fact that its staff are predominantly Aboriginal. They and the non-Aboriginal staff keep faith with Aboriginal culture and traditions. The second distinguishing characteristic is faculty and staff who are skilled in instruction and instructional design related to the needs of Aboriginal organisations and communities.

MISSION STATEMENT

The Nicola Valley Institute of Technology is a public post-secondary educational institute founded in, and keeping faith with, Aboriginal traditions and culture.

As the self-government and self-determination of Aboriginal peoples develop and expand, it is vital that the opportunities for education and skill training related to Land, Governance, Wellness, and Economic Development also develop and expand.

Our approach is to seek out the educational, service, and training needs of B.C.'s

Aboriginal organisations and Aboriginal communities. We will respond with distinctive instructional programs and services of the highest quality that are paid for either through government funding or through client fees.

VALUES

- a commitment to Aboriginal culture and traditions
- respect for the dignity, rights, cultures and beliefs of all people
- the continual growth and development of individuals and communities
- honesty and trust in relationships
- openness in communication
- critical self-examination and a willingness to admit both strengths and weaknesses
- balance and harmony in all activities
- people making decisions for themselves
- care and support for others
- respect and care for the natural world

- accountability: to ourselves, provincial government
the Elders and to the

To be effective in achieving its mission, an organisation needs to identify and prosecute a set of core strategies. These core strategies, or strategic zones, are the macro-level answers to the question, What are the "right things to do" in order to achieve the organisation's mission? Or, asked slightly differently, What "things must go right" in order to achieve the mission? In brief, these zones are as follows:

- **Relationship Building**
 - marketing
 - recruitment
 - political and moral support
 - fund raising
 - contracts for delivery of programs and services
- **Leadership and Governance**
 - moral, emotional, and spiritual leadership
 - a clear sense of identity
 - a clear sense of corporate purpose
 - high corporate self-esteem
- **Program Design and Development**
 - ministry approved programs and courses
 - degrees relevant to Aboriginal needs
 - programs and services on a fee-for-service basis
- **Management and Operations**
 - revenue development
 - allocation of resources
 - new campus operations
 - recruiting and enrolment management
- **Organisational Issues**
 - culture
 - racism
 - operating dysfunctionality
 - issues of gender
- **Administrative Systems and Infrastructure**
 - decentralised budget control
 - student-friendly, staff-useful admission and registration systems and procedures
 - technology for instructional and administrative use
- **Instructional and Academic Legitimacy**
 - publicly declared educational policies and regulations
 - clear (to the student) educational policy
 - consistent and coherent educational policies and regulations
 - highest standards of academic propriety
 - effective transferability of credits
 - a bridging program of college readiness

The essence of the strategic plan is an institution-wide attention to activities and results that fall within the ambit of these zones.

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INTRODUCTION

The acting president of Nicola Valley Institute of Technology (NVIT), Dick Bate, with the support and approval of the governing board, retained the author as a consultant to assist in the preparation of a new strategic plan for NVIT.

On January 7/8, I facilitated a planning workshop with participants drawn from among students, staff, faculty, administration and the board. The primary purposes of that workshop were to develop among the participants a coherent view (or reaffirm the present view) NVIT's mission and values and to identify what "the right things to do" are in order to achieve the mission.

The results of that workshop are published in the report, "A Report On A Planning Workshop." The report in hand is presented as the penultimate step in preparing a new strategic plan for NVIT. This report draws on the work of the planning workshop and the consultant's knowledge of NVIT as well as his own experience in B.C.'s college and institute system.

FRAMING THE STRATEGIC PLAN

Mission And Vision

Based on the results reported in "A Report On A Planning Workshop," I have refined the participants' statements of NVIT's mission into the following:

The Nicola Valley Institute of Technology is a public post-secondary educational institute founded in, and keeping faith with, Aboriginal traditions and culture.

As the self-government and self-determination of Aboriginal peoples develop and expand, it is vital that the opportunities for education and skill training related to Land, Governance, Wellness, and Economic Development also develop and expand. Our approach is to seek out the educational, service, and training needs of B.C.'s Aboriginal organisations and Aboriginal communities. We will respond with distinctive instructional programs and services of the highest quality that are paid for either through government funding or through client fees.

The above statement of mission is not so much a recommendation as a suggestion for the reader to consider in the light of the details presented in the report on the planning workshop.

Similarly, I suggest the following "bookmark" as expressing the vision of NVIT:

NVIT: Dedicated to Aboriginal Tradition and Empowerment

Values

As part of the planning workshop, the participants considered the matter of corporate values. The report on the workshop sets out the values that the participants identified as central to the integrity of NVIT.

In reviewing these, it is my opinion that they parallel very closely the values adopted by the board in October 1995.

The set of values I present below are the values in board policy E30 plus two drawn from the workshop.

NVIT's Values

- | | |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● a commitment to Aboriginal culture and traditions ● respect for the dignity, rights, cultures and beliefs of all people ● the continual growth and development of individuals and communities ● honesty and trust in relationships ● openness in communication ● critical self-examination and a willingness to admit both strengths and weaknesses | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● balance and harmony in all activities ● people making decisions for themselves ● care and support for others ● respect and care for the natural world ● accountability: to ourselves, the Elders and to the provincial government |
|--|---|

The Primary Driving Force

On the assumption that an organisation is “going somewhere,” the question is, What is it that is pushing or propelling the organisation? The answer to this question is the “driving force.” Of course, there are in every organisation several driving forces at play. What is important is to know which of these is the primary driving force.

In the interests of clarity, let me say further that the forces that drive an organisation are nothing more than a reflection of what the leadership of the organisation think is the organisation's competitive advantage. Put yet another way, it is these key driving forces that cause an organisation to favour certain products over others, and certain markets and customers over others.

To come full circle, it is the primary driving force that pushes the organisation along in a specific direction. So, in an educational institution, what are the likely drivers?

Product Driven

An educational institution that is product-driven ties its instructional activities to a limited number of programs. The institution's future looks much like its past because new programs are modifications and spin-offs of past programs. Growth is then about increasing the enrolment in those programs or increasing the entrance standards so the performance level of entering students is increased. Language schools are an example of a product-driven educational institution.

User Driven

A user-driven educational institution is one that ties its instructional activities to a specific, describable class of user. The efforts of the international schools that operate in Vancouver, for example, are focussed on meeting the needs of students from Hong Kong or south east Asian countries. Growth for these institutions could be the result of increased

enrolment for their existing programs and services, or it could be the result of identifying new and unfilled needs among this class of user.

The reader will undoubtedly realise already that these drivers are not mutually exclusive. The product-driven institution does, from time to time, add entirely new programs and services; the user-driven institution does its best to increase its enrolments in existing programs.

The point is that to ensure a focus of effort and a consistency of effort, one or other of these drivers must be seen and acted upon as the primary driver. The user-driven institution will place more effort on maintaining a continuous dialogue with members of its class of users to ensure it knows well their needs than will the product-driven institution. By the same token, the product-driven institution will place more effort on marketing and recruiting new students to its existing programs than will the user-driven institution.

Market Category Driven

A market category-driven institution is quite similar to a user-driven institution. The difference is that while efforts in the user-driven institution focus on members of the user class, the efforts in the category-driven institution are focussed on members of the market category. An obvious example of this would be an institution that focuses on the needs of Aboriginal organisations.

Selecting The Primary Driver

The results of the planning workshop make it clear to me that NVIT's opportunities, i.e., its future, is closely tied to meeting the needs of Aboriginal organisations and Aboriginal people. The many references in the workshop to:

- the need to educate and train Aboriginal people for leadership positions in Aboriginal organisations and communities,
- self-government and self-determination,
- the issues arising from Aboriginal title and rights,
- the needs of Aboriginal youth,
- and other like matters,

clearly suggest that the primary driver has to be the user, the market, or a skillful combination of these two closely related drivers.

By NVIT saying that it will be driven by the needs of Aboriginal people, it is declaring that its programs and courses, i.e., the details of its curriculum, will be shaped by and tuned to needs revealed through a continuous dialog with Aboriginal organisations and Aboriginal people at large. This may well mean, for example, that graduates of NVIT's Administrative Studies program are best suited for employment in an Aboriginal organisation while not being disabled from competing successfully for employment in non-Aboriginal organisations.

Distinctive Competencies

Educational institutions all have the same core mission or purpose: to educate people. What distinguishes educational institutions is the vision they have of their future. So, what are the distinctive competencies of NVIT?

Again, the results of the planning workshop make it clear to me that NVIT has two distinctive competencies:

1. NVIT is an Aboriginal institution focussed on meeting the needs of Aboriginal organisations and Aboriginal people.

2. The staff of NVIT is predominantly Aboriginal people; and both they and the non-Aboriginal employees are committed to keeping faith with Aboriginal traditions and culture.

Re-Reading the Mission

A mission statement to be effective needs to be concise and it needs to embody the answers to Who are we?, Who are our customers?, What are our products and services?, What are our values? What is our driving force?, and What are our distinctive competencies?

In my opinion, the mission and vision statements presented earlier (see page 131) do embody the answers to those questions. Further more, this mission statement:

- provides guidance to managers and governors regarding the courses and programs the institute will develop and deliver,
- it points to specific strategies to be followed for growing and developing the organisation,
- it defines where in the educational market place NVIT will compete, and
- it informs the organisation on the where resources should be allocated.

The Core Strategies

Restricted Degrees of Freedom

Strategy is always about “the right things to do.” Being strategic requires, among other things, the freedom to make important choices that bear on the future of the organisation and so be able to do the things the institution deem are right. Unfortunately, a public educational institution is not free to make many important choices. A public educational institution in B.C. has severely restricted degrees of freedom.⁶

I think it useful to review some of the important choices that the institute is not free to make on its own authority.

Revenue stream: It’s undoubtedly well known to the reader that the Minister must approve tuition fees for credit courses. Further, the Ministry takes a dim view of offering on a for-profit basis courses that are very similar to credit courses, even if they are not offered for credit.

Funded FTEs: the number of full-time equivalent students (FTEs) that the Ministry assigns drives Government funding to the institute. Growth in revenue and growth in service are therefore controlled by the Ministry in a “chicken and the egg” context. Without money it is difficult for the institute to deliver more FTEs than the number for which is funded; without demonstrating need on the basis of over-production of FTEs it is difficult to make the case for an increase in funded-FTEs.

The allocation of FTEs to programs: The funded FTEs are associated with specific programs. Technically, Ministry approval is required to

⁶ The author is not taking issue with this situation which is a product of the need for checks and balances when spending public money and addressing public needs. The author raises the issue because the people of the institute need to know and understand how their degree of freedom are limited and hence how they might operate legitimately on the margins of these restrictions or beyond.

reassign funded FTEs between programs. The need to reassign may be legitimately be based in the need to respond to a suddenly changing enrolment profile; on the other hand, it may be a ploy to get money on the basis of expensive programs and run less expensive programs. To their credit, the Ministry does not control this matter tightly.

The implementation of new programs: The College and Institute Act puts in place a careful process of review of matters academic, including the approval of new programs. The Ministry has its own application and approval process for new programs. This approval process reflects a view that educational institutions are primarily product-driven. Thus great care is exercised in approving new programs. As a consequence, institutions argue for growth in FTEs or for permission to reassign FTEs to what are modifications or spin-offs of existing programs. Considerable effort is spent by institutions in making the case that something is not new; that it is simply an extension of something old.

The significance of this matter for an institutions that are user driven and hence looking for a quick response to newly identified needs is obvious. They are severely restricted unless they seek to meet those needs through client fees with programming that is not credit or credit-like. This is a severe, practical limitation on an important strategic thrust.

When we come to contemplate new programs that are four-year degrees offered under the authority of NVIT, all of these difficulties are immediately more severe. A far easier approach is to form a partnership with a degree-granting institution and then argue to have the Aboriginal content and context accepted by the degree-approving authorities.

There are other restricted freedoms, but the above serve both to illustrate operational difficulties that NVIT will face and to set the context for a consideration of the core strategies.

Identifying the Core Strategies

As already noted, strategy is about “the right things to do.” The corollary is that management is about “doing them right.” In this section I simply identify what I think are the core set of strategic zones⁷ based on what the participants in the planning workshop had to say and my own experience in B.C.’s post-secondary system.

It is important that the reader understand that this section does not address the need for management action plans. Those come later as part of the implementation of a strategic plan adopted by the board. I present these strategic zones in no particular order.

⁷ Various people use different terms to describe what amounts to the same thing: the right things to do. I like the term “strategic zone” because it conveys the sense of a zone of activity: that the zone comprises a variety of tasks and results that need to be performed and achieved if the mission is to be fulfilled.

Relationship Building

A user-driven institution depends on knowing clearly, accurately, and in detail the needs of the users, and knowing when and how these needs are changing over time. As a user-driven institution, NVIT's competitive edge depends on having a continuing relationship with the users, both as individuals and as organisations. The essence of this strategic zone is therefore relationship building. The efforts in this zone will relate to:

- marketing
- recruitment
- political and moral support
- friend raising and fund raising
- contracts for the delivery of programs and services.

Leadership and Governance

A review of the threats, weaknesses and emerging issues identified in the planning workshop reveals that effective and inspired leadership and governance are among NVIT's critical needs at this time. The efforts in this zone will relate to:

- moral, emotional and spiritual leadership
- establishing and maintaining a clear sense of corporate identity
- establishing and maintaining a clear sense of corporate purpose
- developing high corporate morale and self-esteem.

Organisational Issues

As is the case for the previous zone on leadership and governance, it is clear to me that there are a number of organisational issues that need attention; that if left unattended, they be as a cancer in the institute. The issues in this zone relate to:

- culture
- racism
- issues of gender
- operating dysfunctionality.

Program Design and Development

To be successful, a user-driven institution needs to respond quickly and correctly to the user-needs that are identified. If new user needs are not being continuously identified, the institute has chosen the wrong business driver; and if the institute is not responding quickly to identified needs, the institute will fail because it is not living up to its mission.

Other than in trades training, the Ministry has no mechanism for quick-response credit education. NVIT will therefore have to focus on contract and fee-for-service arrangements to deliver a large measure of its mission.

The efforts in this zone will relate to:

- programs and services on a fee-for-service basis
- degrees relevant to Aboriginal needs in partnership with degree-granting institutions
- Ministry approved programs and courses.

Management and Operations

The issues in this zone are self-evident:

- revenue development
- allocation of resources
- new campus operations
- entrepreneurial, for-profit operations
- recruiting and enrolment management.

Administrative Systems and Infrastructure

The quick response to user needs requires the quick internal approval of courses and services, even though those will most likely not be for credit. NVIT will need to find a way to make what are often cumbersome approval systems work efficiently without any loss of quality control.

This and other issues in this zone are:

- effective and efficient course approval systems
- decentralised budget control
- student-friendly, staff-useful admission and registration systems and procedures
- technology for instructional and administrative use.

Instructional and Academic Legitimacy

The issues in this zone have much to do with academic reputation and the overall quality of the student's experience at NVIT. The two key issues relate to:

- publicly declared educational policies and regulations
- clear (to the student) educational policies and regulations
- consistent and coherent educational policies and regulations
- the highest standards of academic propriety
- the effective transfer of credits
- a bridging program of college readiness.

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APPENDIX EIGHT
ROYAL ROADS UNIVERSITY

Participant Consent Form

Research Project Title: Honouring a Cultural Community: Embracing Aboriginal values and traditions in a unionized environment.

Investigator: Ken Tourand, Masters student

Please read the following page carefully and sign it if you give your consent to participate in the study, which will follow the methods described below:

- You will be interviewed in an initial interview approximately 90 minutes in duration.
- The interviews will be recorded through written notes and by audio tape. All audio tapes will later be transcribed.
- You will have the right to turn off the tape recorder at any time during the interview, or to request that the tape not be transcribed.
- All interview data and conversations will be kept confidential.
- Your participation is entirely anonymous. The researcher and the Project supervisor are the only individuals who will know of your participation. You will be identified throughout the research notes and transcripts by a pseudonym.
- You will be given a copy of any transcript created from the tape to review and verify. Following the approval of the transcript, the interview tape will be erased.
- The data from your interviews may be used in other forms such as submissions to professional journals, maintaining the same standards of confidentiality and anonymity.
- There will be no monetary compensation to you for participating in this study. However, a summary of the study results will be made available to you at the end.
- Your participation in this study is voluntary and you may withdraw any time.

Your signature indicates that you have understood to your satisfaction the information regarding participation in the research project and agree to participate. You should feel free to ask for clarification or new information throughout your participation in this study. If you have further questions concerning matters related to this research, please contact Ken Tourand.

Participant

Date

Researcher

Date

APPENDIX NINE

August 10, 1999

The following agreement is between the Nicola Valley Institute of Technology Employee's Association, and Ken Tourand, Director of Human Resources and Masters Student at Royal Roads University.

1. Whereas the Nicola Valley Institute of Technology Employee's Association(NVITEA) is the sole bargaining unit at the Nicola Valley Institute of Technology; and
2. Whereas the NVITEA and the NVIT Board of Governors is currently involved in the negotiation of a first collective agreement; and
3. Whereas Ken Tourand, Director of Human Resources is the Chair of the Bargaining Committee on behalf of the NVIT Board; and
4. Whereas Ken Tourand is currently enrolled in a Masters Program at Royal Roads University; and
5. Whereas Ken Tourand has chosen to do a Major Project around the opportunity to maintain Aboriginal culture, values, and traditions in a unionized environment;

It is hereby agreed to that

6. Ken Tourand will be conducting and taping personal interviews with members of the bargaining unit, and bargaining committee; and
7. The said interviews will be anonymous and confidential; and
8. The interviewees will be able to stop the tape at any time; and
9. The interviews will be transcribed and will be reviewed with the interviewee; and
10. The interviewee will have the opportunity to delete, add, change, and modify the information on the transcript; and
11. The themes that emerge out of the interviews, together with the research, will provide information that could potentially be included into the Collective Agreement; and
12. Each individual that was interviewed, as well as the NVITEA, will receive a copy of the recommendations and will be asked to determine whether the implementation of the recommendations will demonstrate the maintaining of Aboriginal culture, values and traditions in a Unionized environment, and
13. If agreed to by the NVITEA, and the NVIT Board, the list of recommendations, or any part thereof, may be included as a letter of agreement to be added to the existing collective agreement.

We hereby agree to the above:

NVITEA

Ken Tourand

APPENDIX TEN

Nicola Valley Institute of Technology Employees' Association
Box399 Merrit, BC 2196QuilcheriaAvenue VIKIB8 T(250)378-3315 F(250)378-3332

MEMORANDUM

TO: Ken Tourand
FROM: Flora Desnoyers
RE: NVITEA Endorsement of Survey
DATE: 20 August 1999
CC: NVIT Board of Governors, Dick Bates, NVIT Interim President

Ken

As per our discussion yesterday afternoon, I am "officially" informing you of the decision made by the NVITEA members at our August 19' General Meeting.

Motion:

"NVITEA will not participate in Ken's survey until the Collective Agreement is signed." motion carried

opposed: 0
abstain: 0

Although it was felt that the timing was inappropriate as we are negotiating our first Collective Agreement, members of NVITEA were very interested in your project; both in participation of and the final results. If after the Collective Agreement is signed you would still like to interview various unit members I know you would not have any problem getting a high rate of participation.

Sincerely
NVITEA President

APPENDIX ELEVEN

Discipline, Suspension, Dismissal

This article provides a formal method for the handling of disciplinary procedures. Before formal disciplinary measures as stated below are initiated, the Employer should take all reasonable steps to discuss and resolve the issue with the employee. The Employer may choose to use the Aboriginal Traditional Method for conflict resolution as per article _____, or may choose to use a different method.

Job Postings and Vacancies

NVIT reserves the right to favour persons of Aboriginal ancestry in hiring and promotion,

as justified under an exemption to the BC Human Rights Act (sec. 19 A1 & 2A).

NVIT is committed to filling vacant positions with an Aboriginal person.

Hiring Procedure

A hiring committee will be established through consultation between the relevant Department Head/Manager, and the Human Resources Director. The hiring committee shall consist of the hiring supervisor, the Human Resources Director, and an employee who is familiar with the vacant position, appointed by the Union. The remaining positions on the hiring committee may include, an Elder, a student, a Senior Administrator, and/or other employees who are familiar with the vacant position. The hiring process shall not be impeded as a result of the lack of availability of individuals on the hiring committee.

Layoff

Layoff means an involuntary loss of employment that affects employees as a result of, but not limited to, decreased or insufficient enrollment, elimination of or a reduction of programs, courses, and activities, and/or a shortage of funds.

Where such event(s) occur, the NVIT Board may consider it necessary to reduce the number of employees through layoff.

Given that NVIT maintains the right to favour persons of Aboriginal ancestry, seniority is one of the deciding factors governing layoffs and recall after layoff.

PROPOSED LANGUAGE

FACULTY LAYOFF

If it becomes necessary to reduce the number of faculty employees in one (1) or more functional areas, the sequence of layoff within each of the functional areas shall be as follows.....

- Term and casual faculty employees (Non Aboriginal) with less than or equal to six months seniority.
- Term and casual faculty employees (Aboriginal) with less than or equal to six months seniority.
- Term and casual faculty employees (Non Aboriginal) with more than six months and less than two years seniority.
- Term and casual faculty employees (Aboriginal) with more than six months and less than two years seniority.
- Term and casual faculty employees (Aboriginal and Non Aboriginal) with two or more years seniority based on seniority date.
- Probationary continuing faculty employees.
- Continuing faculty employees (Non Aboriginal with less than or equal to six months seniority).
- Continuing faculty employees (Aboriginal with less than or equal to six months seniority).
- Continuing faculty employees (Non Aboriginal with more than six months and less than two years seniority).
- Continuing faculty employees (Aboriginal with more than six months and less than two years seniority).
- Continuing faculty employees (Aboriginal and Non Aboriginal) with two or more years seniority based on seniority date.

Aboriginal Day

June 21, National Aboriginal Day is not a statutory holiday. The Board of NVIT believe it is extremely important that NVIT, as a recognized leader in the First Nations community, show its support for this National holiday. Although NVIT does not have its own celebration at this time, it is probable that in the near future, NVIT will have its own Aboriginal Day festivities. Accordingly, the decision on how Aboriginal Day will be celebrated will be considered on a year to year basis, and be determined by the President.

UNIQUENESS

The parties agree and recognize that the Nicola Valley Institute of Technology is a unique Aboriginal post secondary institution, that has a preference for hiring Aboriginal staff, teaching Aboriginal curriculum, and maintaining Aboriginal culture, values and traditions.

The parties further agree that where ever possible, language in the collective agreement will reflect the uniqueness and those values.

The parties also agree to create an environment that respects the dignity, rights, cultures, and beliefs of all people, and to strive for balance and harmony in all our activities with each other.