Discussion Paper on Governance for an Aboriginal Focus School
Rasunah Marsden

The following review provides a sampling of literature surveyed for the purposes of identifying attributes of governance applied in successful Aboriginal schools which may be suitable for an Aboriginal Focus School.

Drawn from two major studies and additional literature, this review moves from a description of the current *Milieu* in Aboriginal Education and *Models of Governance* commonly represented in mainstream circles to specific examples of *Successes and Governance in Aboriginal schools* which have worked in conjunction with public school districts. The review concludes with a discussion surrounding *Key Success Factors* found in the major and other studies and closes with the view that successful governance is a story about *Good Relationships and what is Educationally Best*.

Milieu:

In Aboriginal circles, the contemporary milieu is perceived as a long accumulation of 'gaps' in education for First Nations students which historically have not been met. In a recent interview in December 2011 when Canadian Government Executive (CGE) contributor Vic Pakalanis interviewed Shawn A-in-chut Atleo, national chief of the Assembly of First Nations, Palankis asked him, "How should the education system for First Nations people be improved?" Atleo's reply:

> *It is time to fulfill the vision articulated in the 1972 policy paper 'Indian Control of Indian Education' and work with First Nations in the development of a framework to enable First Nations education systems to emerge.*
>
> *The current approach of funding First Nations schools through an outdated funding formula, combined with time-limited proposal-based programs, is not acceptable. The two percent cap on annual expenditure increases since 1996 has meant that classroom funding in First Nations education has not kept up with inflation or population growth. We estimate that a minimum increase of 6.3 percent was required over this time period simply to keep up.*
>
> *Comparability with funding for provincial schools and systems is a basic benchmark. More specifically, First Nations require funding which will cover the real costs of the programs and services that are comparable to what students in provincial systems receive. In remote areas and small schools, this may require additional funding support. First Nations education systems must be empowered to provide the necessary supports to First Nations schools, and share expertise with provincial systems. Who better than First Nations to develop culturally appropriate curriculum and provide culturally-based teacher education?*

> *The federal government is currently working with us on the National Panel on K-12 Education, which is an important effort to engage First Nations. The Panel will be reporting its findings soon. It will be important that we use this information to take deliberate steps forward. Post-secondary funding is an absolute necessity to ensure that our high school graduates have the promise of higher education. Our research shows that First Nations need an additional 65,000 university graduates to achieve parity with the rest of Canada.* (Pakalanis, 2011)

Atleo's remarks are reflective of the urgency felt by many First Nation's understanding of the lack of educational opportunities for their children, but it is also reflective of the massive resurgence of work being done in educational circles to provide resolutions and pathways forward.

Governance in First Nations communities is often reflective of traditional governance practices, some of which may be centuries old. The education of First Nations children is recognized as borne by the whole community, and is a major priority forwarded by the A.F.N. A selected bibliography of readings in traditional Aboriginal Governance has been prepared for the National Centre for First Nations Governance (NCFNG) in West Vancouver and is available on its website at:
http://nwlc.ca/files/NWLC/resources/FNGCbibliography.pdf
A link to the NCFNG's collection of videos about traditional governance is available at:
Here also is a link to NCFNG's Traditional Governance Videos
http://www.youtube.com/user/fngovernance

Current performance data collected by the Ministry of Education In B.C. for 2009/2010 indicates that 10.7% of Aboriginal students attend public schools in an aggregate population of 580,486.(B C Ministry of Education, 2010. p.5) Within the Vancouver School Board District, the number of Aboriginal students is estimated at 2,000, representing 600 bands and nations. (BCPSEA, 2012)

Within the contemporary milieu, improvements in First Nations education in B.C. remains an ongoing focus. Currently 37 school districts in B.C. share Aboriginal enhancement agreements with Aboriginal organizations, indicative of efforts in both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal circles to meet the needs of the Aboriginal student population. However, there is a lack of literature which identifies models of governance for successful Aboriginal schools, especially those located in B.C.

Signatories for the 2009 Aboriginal Enhancement Agreement (EA) in the Vancouver district included 12 representatives: a representative each for the steering committee, Ministry, Chairperson of VSB Board of Trustees, District Principal Aboriginal Education, Chief of the Musqueam First Nation, the Knowledgeable Aboriginal Youth Association, the Metis Nation (B.C.), Superintendent of the Vancouver Board of Education, the United Native Nation Society and the Urban Native Youth Association as well as a Parent and Student representative.

With regard to plans for the establishment of an Aboriginal Focus School in Vancouver, what would a governance model encapsulate and entail? How best can Indian control of Indian education, as noted in Atleo's quote and the literature surveyed, proceed under the auspices of the Vancouver School Board, which allows for the development of the Aboriginal Focus School to be guided by members of the Aboriginal community who are committed to the success of the school.

In order to ensure that the board model developed by the Aboriginal Focus School (AFS) is suitable and can address the need for Indian control of Indian education, it may be useful to look at some readily available descriptions of Board Models used in both mainstream and Aboriginal organizations.

A sampling of Board Models:
The role of the board, the relationship between the board and the principal of the School and the relationship between the board and its community (Garber, 1997) are all integral to the functioning of the board. Whether it is termed an Advisory, Patron, Co-operative, Management Team Model, Policy Board model or other type of model, what areas would the board govern?

The **Management Team Model** is used by many non-profit and volunteer organizations. In parallel with company functions, the board creates several committees which are responsible for the company's administrative activities in the areas of human resources, finance, fundraising, strategic planning and programs. Board members manning these committees may provide services at the administrative level as unpaid staff. The Management Team model may not be suitable for organizations which already employ full time professionals and one of its drawbacks is the tendency to micromanagement.

The Co-operative Model eschews hierarchy and is composed of all constituents as board members – principal, staff and student reps, board members, community members and parent members, each with an equal vote. It operates on the basis of shared, democratic decision-making without a CEO. This board is both a governing and managing body which operates without distance from functions of both management and board. When working well, the Co-operative board enjoys the benefits of shared responsibilities, high levels of commitment, consensus and compromise. However, personnel changes can dramatically alter the efficiency or dynamics of the board. As stated on his website, Garber's points out two concerns he has with the Co-operative model: "The first is that although the ability to compromise is an essential element in the successful functioning of this model, cooperatives often arise out of a strong ideological or philosophical commitment that can be inimical to compromise. The second concern is the difficulty of implementing effective accountability structures." (Garber, 1997) Questions surrounding these issues include how both self-governance and management are evaluated and how responsibilities are delegated and monitored. All members of the board are jointly responsible and therefore equally accountable for

successes and failures whether all are fully committed to their shared governance process or not.

Originating from the Carver model of governance and used by innumerable non-profit organizations, **the Policy Board model** provides policies and guiding principles to management, delegates responsibilities and ensures compliance and accountability at all levels. The policy board separates board and management functions, which results in increased accountability and reliance on capacity and confidence of the CEO. Policy boards may meet fewer times over a year, the exception being where unexpected matters require increased attention. Board sub-committes are assigned as needed and are not considered permanent. In the policy board, new members are carefully chosen and board development and review is a priority. The Policy Board also relies upon its internally elected executive for day-to-day urgencies and as signatories.

The following questions are a sampling of questions found on Garber's website. He recommends each board member should answer all questions to help determine whether there is consensus on the board model. The questions are applicable to governance in an Aboriginal Focus School and can be used to explore how board members apply themselves as a whole unit, as well as being characteristic of questions about which each board member should be able to reply.

Which Model is the Right One?
- Do we have a clear understanding and agreement on the purpose of our organization? Is it written down?
- What are the basic values which guide our organization and our board? Are they written down?
- How do we know whether the good our organization does is worth what it costs to operate it?
- How much time is each board member willing to give to the organization in the next year (or until the end of their term)
- How much trust does the board have in the ability of the CEO to ensure that the organization operates in an effective and ethical manner?
- How do we hold board members accountable?
- How useful has each committee proven to be?
- How much time and money are we willing to devote to increasing our own knowledge and skills to improve our performance as board members?
- How do members deal with decisions when we disagree?
- As board members, to whom do we wish to be accountable? (Garber, 1997)

Aboriginal Board members would need to decide if a fuller or modified list of questions are applicable for the purposes of an internal review or other form of assessment. Information supplied in response to the questions relates to forms of assessment and

how the board chooses to do this. A facilitator[1] or committee can be identified for these purposes. The way board members work on the questions - through discussion or written answers or how each board member approaches the questions can be used to assess how the board tends to apply itself. The questions draw out how decisions are made or whether or not a majority on the board needs to answer all questions or not.

Very different views are presented either by majority or consensus, who has voting rights, whether outsiders advise or whether the board's executive committee becomes most active as board authority rather than the full board. Other considerations include, for example, whether even chairing a meeting can be 'rotated' or assigned only to 1 or 2 persons. In other forms of assessment used by Aboriginal schools mentioned in the next section, board assessment is done by an external review committee yearly. These types of decisions are written up in the board's set of policies. Members of Aboriginal Boards or Education Councils tend to be drawn explicitly from the committed community membership.

Ordinarily, indigenous ways of knowing are implicit and embedded in full Aboriginal boards whose members bring their own qualifications and skills and experience in education to the work of governance. Many Aboriginally controlled boards include elders and other members of the community on their boards. When subsets of the boards work on committees (e.g. finance, human resources, governance, reviews, etc.), it is not unusual that the board will invite outside expertise to bear on proceedings.

The Aboriginal Focus School board may wish to consider whether consensus or majority applies to decision-making; whether standing or temporal sub-committees are required; whether leadership or chairmanship can be rotated; whether an executive committee member or any board member can respond to day-to-day urgencies which may arise between board meetings; whether parent and student reps have voting rights on the board or whether these will be represented on separate committees, etc. Answers to these questions will indicate whether the board focuses on policy governance or co-operative or management team style of board.

If the board is not already formulated, the planning committee would then need to plan a set of recommendations for features of the board's governance, including its maximum number of board members, their terms, quorum, voting rights, vision, mission, policies, how standing or temporal committees do their work, and a myriad number of other parameters.

However the board functions, a snapshot of how short-term and long-term governance considerations can be mapped out and modified will need to be identified. On his website, Garber provides some of the kinds of questions a management or educational caucus might want to include in governance discussions. Although not all of the questions will apply, the overall list can be modified and then be reduced to a checklist.[2]

---

[1] For comparison, see also a brief outline of questions in the Appendix which enable a board to review its own governance practices, created by Keith Henry, CEO of Aboriginal Tourism in B.C. and KCD Consultants, and Chairman of the Board of the Native Education Center in Vancouver, B.C.

[2] Also included on the Garber website is a second document, "Sample Application to the Board of Directors"

Successes and Governance in Aboriginal Schools

Successes in First Nations elementary and secondary schools can be attributable to board governance policies, mandates, vision, and the board's emphasis on management and strategic policies. Surveys of 20 successful Aboriginal schools done by the Society for the Advancement of Excellence in Education (SAEE) in 2004 and 2007 have shown that success in Aboriginal schools is directly attributable to:

- Strong leadership and governance structures, often with long tenure
- High expectations for students
- Focus on academic achievement and long-term success
- Secure and welcoming climates for children and families
- Respect for Aboriginal culture and traditions to make learning relevant
- Quality staff development
- Provision of a wide range of programs/supports for learning (Bell, 2004)

Governance models identified in the 2007 study of successful Aboriginal schools were classified as band-operated, provincial/territorial or hybrid. In the provincial/territorial model, governance is determined by the province or territory, whereas in the hybrid model a sharing of governance activities occurs, whereby, for example, contractual agreements outlining provision of resources, services, or personnel are derived from partnering with a local public school district. This matter also relates to qualifications, standards, credentialing, wages or similar matters guided by governance: principals and instructors, for example in band-operated schools are hired according to band criteria; in provincial/territorial models, principals and instructors would be supplied by the province or territory; and in hybrid models, the school might need to contract licensed instructors via the school district. These outcomes are dependent on the governance model operating, whether defined by the band, the province or territory, or the hybrid or blended form of governance.

A single visual model of governance provided in the literature survey is Figure 3.1.for the **Chief Jimmy Bruneau School**, categorized as a hybrid governance model. In 1969 when the Rae-Edzo School Society was formed through an agreement with the commissioner of the NWT, it became one of the first societies in Canada to establish Aboriginal control of education, and the Chief Jimmy Bruneau School was opened. However, increasing control of education on the part of the NWT saw a decrease of Aboriginal control and increasing failure of Aboriginal students.
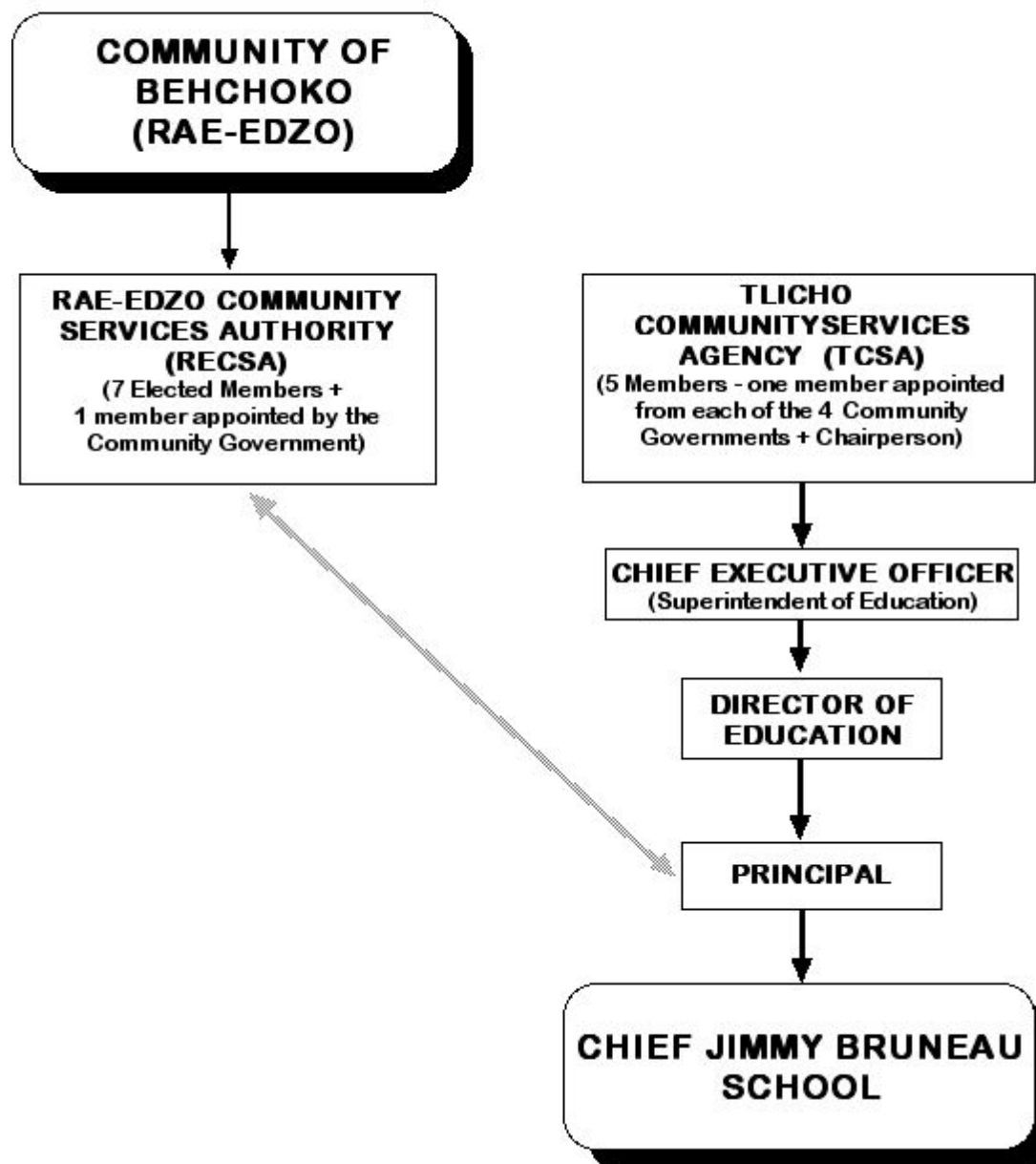
When a report of the "Special Committee" of the legislative assembly recommended communities have greater control of education, regional and local education bodies were created in the Tlicho (Tåîchô) region. After several consultation meetings held by the Tlicho bands which ensued, a statement made by respected elder Elizabeth McKenzie, "Strong Like Two People" became part of the vision statement in subsequent educational developments of the Chief Jimmy Bruneau School.

Following legislation in 1996 which enabled the Ministry of Education to approve "alternate forms of educational governance," (Fulford, 2007. p.65) the Tlicho Community Services Board was created. The partnership covers education, health and social services.

Within this partnership, the Rae-Edzo Community Services Authority (RECSA) provides community governance, while the Tlicho Community Service Agency (TCSA) provides services at the regional level. Of these several transitions which have transpired, the older Rae-Edzo Community Services Authority (RECSA) functions primarily as a parent council or in an advisory capacity. Core funding is forwarded by the Govt. of the NW Territories to the TCSA, but additional third-party funding has been secured through efforts of both the school and the TCSA.

Acting as a regional school board, the TCSA has a representative on board from each of the 4 surrounding communities and is directly responsible to the Dogrib Community Services board. Interestingly, the CEO of the TCSA was formerly a principal of the school, known for working tirelessly in the interests of the school. The Superintendent of Education is responsible to the TCSA, and oversees the operations of the Chief Jimmy Bruneau School which serves approximately 430 students in K-12 and younger children who attend its Child Development Centre.

EDUCATION GOVERNANCE IN BEHCHOKO

COMMUNITY OF BEHCHOKO (RAE-EDZO)

RAE-EDZO COMMUNITY SERVICES AUTHORITY (RECSA)
(7 Elected Members + 1 member appointed by the Community Government)

TLICHO COMMUNITYSERVICES AGENCY (TCSA)
(5 Members - one member appointed from each of the 4 Community Governments + Chairperson)

CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER
(Superintendent of Education)

DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION

PRINCIPAL

CHIEF JIMMY BRUNEAU SCHOOL

(Fulford, 2007.)

Partnerships initiated by the TCSA in 2004-5 for various programs amounted to approximately $150,000 and in the following year, the TCSA secured $2,000,000 over 3 years for the Tlicho Trades and Technology program in partnership with the Mine Training Society of the NWT.

From available descriptions of the Chief Jimmy Bruneau School, it can be shown that over several decades, even though members in communities who attended residential schools prior to the opening of their own Aboriginal school remain unsupportive, that sustained efforts on the parts of community members, band chief and council members, politicians both in the NWT and in the communities have joined forces to ensure that the school serves the Tlicho nations in ways which best suit the communities and their children.   As a result, the Chief Jimmy Bruneau School has been successful in several areas: School leadership (with a long term principal), funding, parent and community partnerships and engagement, a warm school atmosphere which showcases Tlicho culture and whose staff and students embrace 5 golden rules: "Have positive goals; Respect yourself; Respect those around you; Respect your school; and Ask for help when you need it." (Fulford, 2007. p.70)

Close communications with community and parents are maintained by teachers and the school community liaison officer as well as elders who visit the school. The school also has a post-secondary coordinator who prepares students for entry into post-secondary institutions and has strong political support at local, regional and government levels. For instance, the Tlicho government funds a $500,000 scholarship fund in addition to core funding from the NWT.

The **Ahkwesahsne Mohawk Board of Education (AMBE)** mentioned in the Fulford 2007 study assesses itself through a review committee struck which includes the Board's director, the Mohawk Council of Ahkwesahsne chiefs and interested members of the general public:

> At its first meeting the committee identifies key areas the Board needs to address, and develops an action plan, including specific goals and a timeframe for meeting them. This plan is then presented to the Board. Throughout the school year, Board members report regularly to the review committee on their progress in meeting established the goals. In May the review committee prepares a written report assessing the Board's performance in meeting its goals and the relationship with its Director, principals, teaching and support staff, MCA chiefs and the general public. The Committee's report is presented to the Board at its June meeting.(Fulford, 2007. p. 36)

Education for the three schools on the Canadian side (population over 10,219) of the reserve is managed by the AMBE, which in 2004/5 received over $4.3 million for core funding from INAC, from Health Canada (for the head start program), and additional funding for special education, paraprofessionals and teacher salaries. Funding from INAC is received yearly for five year periods, which frees the board to engage in long term planning.

The Akwesasne communities participate in support and maintenance of their schools through several avenues:

The schools run by the AMBE are able to train their own instructional staff, administrators and language teachers, with 82% of instructional staff of Mohawk descent in 2005/6.

The AMBE Director of Education, the school principals, and 9 board members provide "planning, policy, finance, personnel, evaluation, student transportation and community relations"(Fulford, 2007. p.35) and enjoys a mutually supportive relationship with the Mohawk Council of Akwesasne (MCA). Through long term efforts to implement Aboriginal control of Aboriginal education on the part of the AMBE, authority of the AAMBE in setting educational policies is now recognized both by INAC and the MCA. Functions of the AMBE Director of Education also include responsibility for all policies and procedures used in the schools and the hiring and evaluation of principals, while the Director of Education is assessed regularly by board members.

Parents support their schools through fundraising and other activities, or as members of the Parent Council. The schools also have partnerships with their own cultural center and health services centers which in turn provide cultural and social education to the schools.

Vancouver Island North, (S.D. 85) provides jurisdiction for the **Alert Bay Elementary School.** Both the district and school have worked closely together. "School District 85 has a First Nations Education Council with representatives from the nine local band councils."(Bell, 2004. p. 49) Its top 3 district goals from 2001 – 2004 were in the areas of literacy, social responsibility and numeracy.

Targeted federal and provincial funding enable the community to run pre-school, head start and summer school programs while the school district assists with provision of specialist services for special needs (hearing impaired, speech, and counseling) and the availability of district principals.

Even though the Namgis Band has its own school on reserve, the Band, community and parents support the school through fundraising and the matching of dollars per student, and it respects the decision of parents to send their children to the elementary school. The band supports the school through fundraising for each student and through funding a healthy food program, through provision of health services, and by providing agreements for the services of a social worker, first nations support worker and a counselor.

This school has moved away from 5 year evaluations of the principal in favor of a growth model plan, wherein the District Superintendent works with the principal on yearly plans for the school and these are linked to personal growth plans for instructors which are also presented to the school board yearly.

Atikameg School, allied with the Northland S.D.61 in Alberta ***treats jurisdictional conflicts as secondary "to the collective focus on what is educationally best for the students and the staff"*** (Bell, 2004. p.71). Improvements in student provincial

language arts achievement tests for grade 9 rose from 36% in 1999/2000 to 84.6% in 2002/2003. In the same year, the total overall September 30th enrolment increased from 309 students to 341, with a 93% annual retention rate." Another success in this school was stabilizing the teacher and administration turnover rate.

Part of the success of the school was aided by former legislation between the school district and the Alberta Government in 1981 with specific exemptions for First Nations schools in that district which later enabled "Chief and Council (to sign) a Contract of Services with the Board of Trustees of the Northland School Division and Alberta Minister of Education." (Bell, 2004. p. 72) While the contract itself outlines financial obligations of the band, "The Education Advisory Committee appointed by Chief and Council, has the power to expel students, deal with parental concerns, and make recommendations to Chief and Council concerning programming and operational issues at the School." ." (Bell, 2004. p. 72)

The Band enjoys partnership with the district for supply of accredited teachers while augmenting its process for selection with that of the district. "The administrators and teachers unanimously expressed their confidence and satisfaction in being an employee of a larger division while being hired in a process that supported their acceptance within the community". (Bell, 2004. p. 73)

The director of Education (band-appointed) and the Education Council separate "school policy governance and administrative decision making (which) is seen by the staff and community to support the best interest of student education." (Bell, 2004. p.73) Supportive inter-relationships between district, band and school, goal setting on the part of the principal and principal leadership which is trusted by all parties is treated as of primary importance.

Chalo School in Fort Nelson First Nation, B.C., set up its own school board to administer all of its own educational programs for the Band and Chalo school in 1985. The 5 member school board meets once every two weeks. Board, school and community also sees their principal, her intuitive leadership and strong communications of critical importance:

> A planned strategy of frequent and varied communications between teacher and parent and between school and community has resulted in very effective communication. A school environment of care and mutual respect has created a climate of trust and commitment and established an energetic, positive attitude. It is from this foundation that the school builds toward academic success. (Bell, 2004, p. 74)

However, because the band set up its own school board, "the shortfall in federal funding remains a contentious issue and in response, steps are being taken to gain Independent School status to qualify for greater funding. Despite such bigger issues, the board remains intimate with school affairs and can speak fluently on school events, curriculum, standardized test results, and intervention needs." (Bell, 2004, p. 101) Two

other drawbacks in this structure are that teacher standing with the BCTF and whether or not time spent teaching at the school is recognized remains at the discretion of the school board; the other drawback is that as of 2004, there was insufficient interest in setting up a Parent Advisory committee.

35% of the 600 students in **Merrit Secondary School (MSS)** are Aboriginal. The school draws its population from the 5 local reserves, the town of Merritt along with its "visible minorities from Southeast Asia". (Bell, 2004. p. 172) The school was chosen for inclusion in Bell's study of successful Aboriginal schooling because of high performance levels –
- 82% for Aboriginal groups performance Gr. 10 Provincial Grade Foundation Skills in 2001/02;
- "Fifty-two percent of Merritt's Aboriginal students scored at or above expectations in the FSA reading component – an achievement bettered by only two (school) districts in B.C.;" (Bell, 2004. p. 172);
- tripling of the Dogwood Certificate graduation rate over 10 years;
- and 100% English 12 pass rate for Aboriginal students in 2002.

Some of the elements attributing to success of MSS noted in the literature were:
Creation of a District Principal position for First Nations Programs; clarification of roles of FN support workers; and the inclusion of parents, students, teachers, support staff and administrators on the school advisory committee. As noted by the vice-principal: " There are very few administrative or top-down directives. We talk everything through. Any major changes that need to be implemented will have to go to discussions with staff… The staff is basically driving the system." (Bell, 2004. p.177) Here again, dynamic and lively communications through all levels of school involvement has been voiced as a major benefit to school success.

MSS also benefitted from partnerships within its community locally and with the First Nations Education Committee (FNEC), a long standing committee of education directors from the local bands originally formed in 1993. This committee administers "targeted Provincial funding, makes decisions on all First Nations programs, and has representation on hiring committees,"(Bell, 2004) which enables continuity through association with education directors at the band level and with the school district.

The Fulford study concludes with an extensive series of recommendations for policy makers in Aboriginal schools, along with interview guides for analysis of roles filled by Education Directors, Principals and teachers. Several of the recommendations are in line with Atleo's message, especially those which support increased services and appropriate funding on par with what non-Aboriginal children are given. Other recommendations support specialist services, teacher quality and supply, improving accountability and capacity, and that the holistic nature of Aboriginal learning be recognized in a more seamless delivery of programs from birth to adulthood and in the need to integrate these educational services with the school."(Fulford, 2007. p. 345)
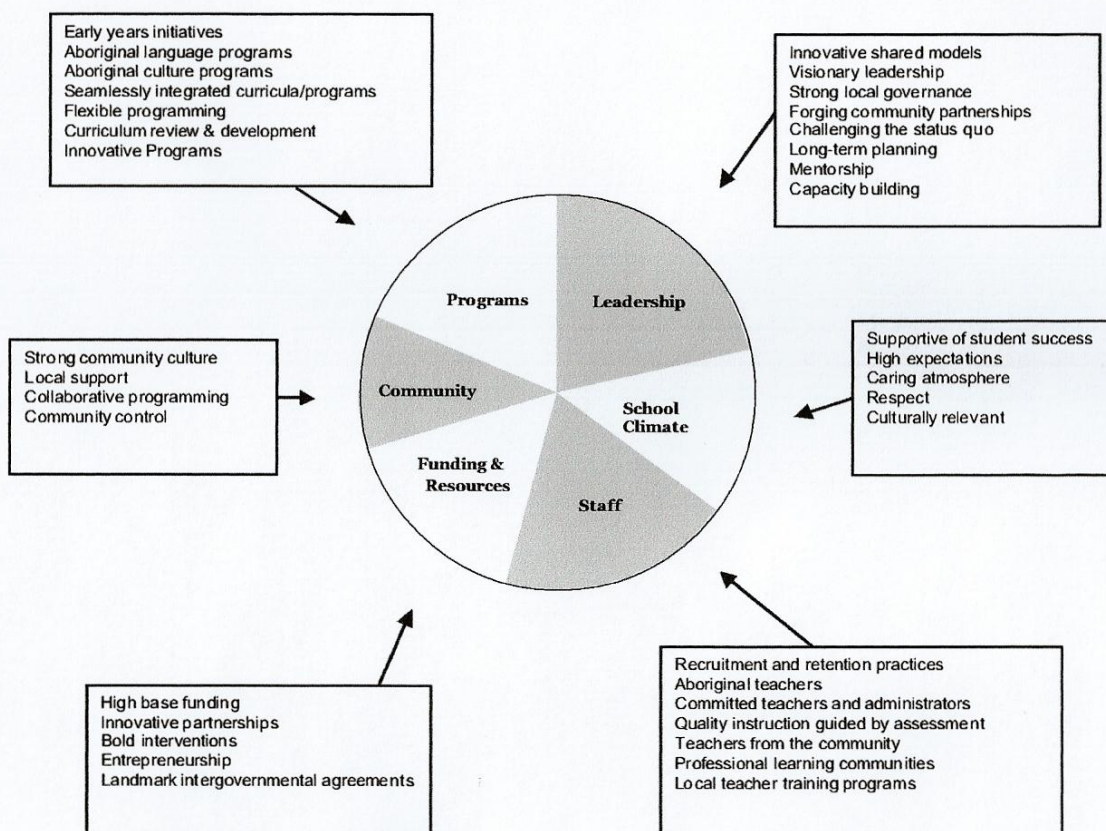
Suggestions for the improvement of governance and leadership include revision of the Indian Act to empower Indigenous School Boards, provide appropriate funding and services to Aboriginal schools by restructuring band allocation of funding with more comprehensive formulas, to provide equity in funding for First Nations students and to clearly articulate relationships and accountability between educational stakeholders. The study further recommends, in the governance area, that "educational leadership training and technical assistance be made available for local band councils and school boards responsible for Aboriginal education." (Fulford, 2007. p. 343)

Key Success Factors

For all of the 20 successful Aboriginal schools identified in the 2 SAEE case studies, **"**Governance and Leadership is the success factor identified most often by researchers in this study. Associated factors include visionary and exceptional leadership, innovative management models, strong local governance, the forging of community and research partnerships, challenging the status quo, long-term planning, mentorship and capacity building."(Fulford, 2007. p. 325)

Key success factors for the 20 schools identified in both "Sharing our Success" studies were summarized and mapped as follows:

Figure 12.1 Mapping Key Success Factors in the Case Studies

Early years initiatives
Aboriginal language programs
Aboriginal culture programs
Seamlessly integrated curricula/programs
Flexible programming
Curriculum review & development
Innovative Programs

Innovative shared models
Visionary leadership
Strong local governance
Forging community partnerships
Challenging the status quo
Long-term planning
Mentorship
Capacity building

Strong community culture
Local support
Collaborative programming
Community control

Supportive of student success
High expectations
Caring atmosphere
Respect
Culturally relevant

High base funding
Innovative partnerships
Bold interventions
Entrepreneurship
Landmark intergovernmental agreements

Recruitment and retention practices
Aboriginal teachers
Committed teachers and administrators
Quality instruction guided by assessment
Teachers from the community
Professional learning communities
Local teacher training programs

Programs — Leadership — Community — School Climate — Funding & Resources — Staff

(Fulford, 2007p.324)

"Challenging the status quo" in the box next to the leadership section of the circle refers at Kitigan Zibi school to long term planning for programs, working to secure funding over several years, and tireless work to ensure governance policies locally meet the needs of the school. These policies are published and made available to all community members and updated regularly. At Kitigan Zibi, the Education Council has been able to prove that local application to the running of the school is what best suits the students. Community leadership and a supportive school environment and strong governance are also considered characteristic of successful Aboriginal schools. What becomes clear about key success factors is that shared, continuous dynamic and supportive response from the Aboriginal community as a whole ensures success. It is these local, willing, many "Hands Back, Hands Forward" environments which provide the ingredients for success.

Good Relationships and What is Educationally Best:

Though it is predicated on the committed and unceasing efforts of rural and urban Aboriginal communities over the long term to secure Aboriginal control of Aboriginal education, (or at minimum, schooling which meets the needs of Aboriginal children,) the governance of successful Aboriginal schools is a story about a resolving of differences whose central theme is relationships. According to the earlier 2004 study of successful Aboriginal schools,

> Aboriginal education currently suffers from a lack of accountability for results (Auditor General's Report, 2002, Minister's Working Group Final Report, 2002) stemming from the jurisdictional confusion through which the Constitution delegates educational authority to the provinces in conflict with Section 114 of the Indian Act, which authorizes the Minister of Indian and Northern Affairs Canada to "establish, operate, and maintain schools for Indian children." (Bell, 2004. p. 35)

Notably, some of the confusion over jurisdictions arises where "DIAND (now the AANDC) interprets the Indian Act as allowing only provincial school boards, while the provinces have not established school boards for Indian bands, claiming that this is a federal responsibility." (Bell, 2004. p. 34) Seen from this point of view, the issue of "accountability" is closely tied to jurisdiction at all levels of government, rather than the perceived lack of accountability of Aboriginal schools.

Also of note in the literature about successful Aboriginal schools, self-governance treaties, such as the Nisga'a agreement in British Columbia, contain provisions for the transfer of full jurisdictional control of education reflective of their aspirations for and definitions of student success." (Bell, 2004. p. 35) Respectful relationships noted in the literature between provincial/territorial or school districts and successful Aboriginal schools show a growth of collaboration and response to needs of Aboriginal school children on the parts of provincial/territorial education ministries and Aboriginal school boards.

Much recent literature about Aboriginal education has been dedicated to the identification and removal of barriers to education for First Nations students. An appropriate question for boards of Aboriginal schools would therefore be to ask how the policies set for the school support the elimination or decrease of such barriers. The focus shown by the Atikameg school in *prioritizing what is educationally best for students serves as a good guideline* for answering this question.

Continued efforts on the parts of both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal interests can decrease barriers faced by Aboriginal students through the holistic dedication, collaboration and commitment of parents and community members, educational councilors and boards, school districts, principals, staff and students.

From the 1990's, the number of school districts in Canada has been reduced from 1000's over the past 100 years to 420, with a corresponding increase of provincial control of education. There is no reason to suppose a steady increase in the number of school boards. Additionally, research has shown that the provincial government plays the strongest part in shaping the policy of inner-city urban schools.

When the Toronto school board more or less refused to balance a decreased budget in 2002, the Province installed a supervisor to manage the affairs of the board, taking away control from the elected trustees. On the other hand, "Winnipeg retains a substantial amount of local budget autonomy. When Manitoba amalgamated its school divisions in 2001, Winnipeg School Division was left untouched, in part because of its distinct responsibility for inner-city issues.(Levin, Gaskell, & Pollock, 2007)

Aboriginal representation on school boards is also the exception rather than the rule; "Only once, (for example,) did the Winnipeg School Division have as many as two Aboriginal trustees out of its nine members."(Levin et al., 2007)

While Aboriginal schools continue to be subject to educational disbursements per student which vary from school district to school district Canada wide, and while they are critically influenced by several levels of provincial and federal government, it is still possible that within B.C., several independent Aboriginal schools might institute their own school boards to oversee the development of Aboriginal schools, but this will take many years of work and is part of the reason why relationships between Aboriginal schools at elementary, secondary and tertiary levels remains critical.

However, in response to educational needs within district levels, it is clear that only strong collaborative efforts between both district and Aboriginal schools can assure growth in the area of Indian control of Indian education. The concept of "relational trust" forwarded by Anthony Bryk and Barbara Schneider (2002) is described as being "developed through professional behavior and actions that exhibit respect and willingness to extend beyond the formal requirements of the professional role in contacts with the client."(Bell, 2004. p. 39)

In political climates which shift unexpectedly, even "as schools have increasingly come to be seen – and to see themselves – as agents for diversity instead of agents of assimilation,"(Levin et al., 2007) schools and their boards are vulnerable to external influences: "such factors are the changing relationship between local boards and provincial governments; the accidents and vagaries of political and other events as they play out in particular contexts, and the impact of growing population diversity in urban areas." (Levin et al., 2007. p. 10)

Successful schools for the SAEE showed a diversity of governance structures, the N'Swakamok Native Alternative Secondary School in Sudbury, for example, was highlighted in the 2007 study at the recommendation of the Ontario Ministry of Education "because of its highly individualized approach to learning and for its special support structures in a culturally inclusive environment."(Fulford, 2007. p.203) Band-

operated schools are able to assert greatest control over educational programs and to "integrate the delivery of education from Pre-K to post-secondary into an overall community plan, citing Peguis School as an example."(Fulford, 2007. p.301)

While most of the schools surveyed were band schools, in those which had successful partnerships with school districts:

> 'Stable leadership, long-term planning, and strategic alignment of available resources towards the goals they set marked these schools…Models of decision-making within the schools ranged from consultation to full power-sharing by staff, students and community, all of whom have the right to veto a proposal." (Bell, 2004, p.14)

A successful board can plan to resolve "systemic issues that may be seen as critical to the success of Canada's Aboriginal students: governance, funding, language and literacy, teacher supply, transitions, and performance measurement." (Bell, 2004. p.16) some schools reported unique partnerships with school districts through a focus on strengths and resources of each partner, which mediates and improves access to resources.

From a cursory review of governance in Aboriginal schools, whether band-operated and self-governed, or operated in conjunction with School Districts or other forms of partnerships, what is evident in descriptions of successful Aboriginal schools is the *organic, evolving nature of relationships*. Ongoing attention, sometimes over decades, to relationships forms the basis of good governance, cited as a first priority by successful schools, communities and school districts. Outcomes for successful Aboriginal schools have been shown to occur through the dedication and commitment of boards and their individual members who are committed to best practices over the long term.

If there were a silver bullet to the question of how good governance is affected, it would come through "good relations" between board, school, community and partners fully willing to navigate sometimes turbulent periods of change. It is precisely varying levels of response internationally, federally, provincially and locally to Aboriginal schooling which continues to provide opportunities for the advancement of Aboriginal education.

Bibliography:
AANDC. (2012, Jan. 12). *Tripartite Education Framework Agreement.* Retrieved Feb. 26, 2012, from Aboriginal Affairs & Northern Development Canada: http://www.aadnc-aandc.gc.ca/eng/1327671439967
Aboriginal Enhancement Agreement. (n.d.).*B.C. Ministry of Education.* Retrieved February 13, 2012, from http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/abed/agreements/sd39_moa.pdf

Battiste, M. (2002). Indigenous knowledge and pedagogy in First Nations education: A literature review with recommendations. Retrieved from http://www.afn.ca/uploads/files/education/24._2002_oct_marie_battiste_indigenous knowledgeandpedagogy_lit_review_for_min_working_group.pdf

B C Ministry of Education. (2010). Aboriginal Report 2005/06 - 2009/10 How Are We Doing ? B.C. Ministry of Education. Retrieved March 2012, from http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/abed/perf2010.pdf

BCPSEA. (2012). BC School District 39 Vancouver Metro Make a Future/Careers in B.C. Education. Retrieved March 2012, from http://www.makeafuture.ca/bc-school-districts/regions/metro/39-vancouver/

Bell, D. (2004). Sharing our success: Ten case studies in Aboriginal schooling. (Helen Ratham, Ed.). Society for the Advancement of Excellence in Education. Retrieved February 2012, from http://dspace.hil.unb.ca:8080/xmlui/bitstream/handle/1882/8733/SOS2004.pdf?sequence=1

Fulford, G. (2007). *Sharing our success : more case studies in aboriginal schooling*. (H. Ratham, Ed.)*Special Education*. Society for the Advancement of Excellence in Education. Retrieved from http://www.saee.ca/upload/SOSMoreCaseStudies.pdf

Garber, N. (1997). Governance Models: What's Right for Your Board. Retrieved January 25, 2012, from http://garberconsulting.com/governance models what's right.htm

Henry, K. (2012, Feb.). KCD Evaluation Template. Vancouver, B.C.: Unpublished Document.

Henry, K. (2012, Feb). KCD Team Visioning Exercise. Vancouver, B.C.: Unpublished Document.

Levin, B., Gaskell, J., & Pollock, K. (2007). What Shapes Inner-City Education Policy. *Canadian Journal of Educational Administration and Policy*, *61*(61). Retrieved from http://www.umanitoba.ca/publications/cjeap/articles/levingaskellpollock.html

Kavanagh, B. (2003; updated 2006). *Providing Educational Leadership: First Nations Schools Administration Handbook.* Retrieved from First Nations Education Steering Committee: http://www.fnesc.ca/publications/Copyrighted_Publications/Providing_Ed_Leadership_Updated06_Cpyrt.pdf

Pakalanis, V. (2011). A New Model for Aboriginal Governance: Interview of Shawn Atleo. *Canadian Government Executive*. Retrieved January 25, 2012, from http://cge.itincanada.ca/index.php?id=15553&cid=312

Peeling, A. C. (2007). Aboriginal Governance: An Annotated Bibliography. National Center for First Nations Governance. Retrieved December 28, 2011, from http://nwlc.ca/files/NWLC/resources/FNGCbibliography.pdf

Appendix 1: Selections from KCD Consulting:[3]

KCD TEAM VISIONING EXERCISE

Vision without action is a daydream. Action without vision is a nightmare.
- Japanese Proverb

 A vision statement is a picture of the community/administration – it is the inspiration and the framework for all the strategic planning. The vision statement includes values and answers the question, "Where do we want to go?" It doesn't tell you how you're going to get there; it sets the direction including how leaders/staff are expected to behave.

A mission statement prime audience is the leadership team and states the administration's core purpose and focus (overall purpose) which normally remains unchanged whereas strategies and practices are altered to changing circumstances. The Mission statement separates what is important with what is not and clearly states how community is to be served and how.

Difference between a mission and vision statement – a mission is something to be *accomplished;* a vision is something that needs to be done for that accomplishment.

VISIONING EXERCISE QUESTIONS

- We are sitting here in 20 years: what would you like to see?
- What would this community/administration look like?
- What would it have achieved?
- What would it feel like to be a family, youth, elder in this community?
- What would it feel like to be an employee with this administration?

Our vision is …….

---

[3] Sections of the documents provided in Appendix 1 and Appendix 2 by KCD Consulting have not been provided in full. It is recommended that a full set of exercises be facilitated by a person experienced in Board evaluation processes.

Appendix 2: **KCD Template Leadership and Management Assessment**

The following questionnaire will provide a guide to improving _____'s overall performance. A summary of the completed questionnaires, along with an assessment of the achievement of key organizational goals, will provide a measure of the _____'s effectiveness.

The benchmark used by this questionnaire is the expectation of performance of duties as outlined.

Instructions:

Please rank answers from 1–5, taken into account the following definitions:

1 - strongly disagree
2 - disagree
3 - agree
4 - strongly agree

Please include additional comments regarding the specific statements.

When completed, please keep your questionnaire for further discussions.

A. Governance - Direction of _____

1. Leadership reviews the Vision of _____ yearly, and seeks input if a new vision is being proposed.	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**
2. Given the mandate for _____, the leadership ensures the mandate remains current.	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**
3. The leadership articulates the value of _____ for the members.	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**
4. The leadership takes a proactive role in developing an open and strong relationship with the Management.	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**
5. The leadership strives to meet the _____'s philosophy, policy goals and information objectives.	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**
6. The leadership has established and maintains effective working relationships with key stakeholders.	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**

Comments: