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Breaking the Gridlock in Aboriginal Education

Jerry Paquette, Gerald Fallon, and J. Marshall Mangan

Introduction

With a few notable exceptions, there has been little attempt to integrate fully an understanding of Aboriginal issues with wider theoretical orientations, as evident in the tendency in mainstream social scientific and educational journals to concentrate the few articles that do appear on Aboriginal education into special thematic issues. (Wotherspoon and Schissel 1988)

This chapter offers a potential platform for authentic dialogue with and among Aboriginal communities and among policy-makers, scholars, and students interested and involved in Aboriginal education. In the wake of our work aimed at developing a comprehensive framework for understanding Aboriginal and, in particular, First Nations educational policy, we have come to view the central goal of Aboriginal education as nurturing “word warriors” (Turner 2006) and “fringe dwellers,” Aboriginal persons who acquire a deep philosophical and institutional understanding of mainstream society *while retaining the fullness of their indigeneity*, persons who can speak Aboriginal truth to mainstream power credibly and effectively. Cultivation of such Aboriginal word-warrior-fringe-dwellers offers the most promising way out of “parity-paradox paralysis,” that is, the need to provide education that is “equal” but also distinctively Aboriginal. We also believe that authentic dialogue and true interdependence require non-Aboriginal fringe dwellers, mainstream persons who have a deep philosophical and institutional understanding of mainstream society but who also *succeed in achieving authentic communion with Aboriginal ways of knowing and understanding*.

Our principal task here, however, is not to synthesize those broader literatures but rather to provide theoretically insightful, as well as practically useful, critique of recent and current Aboriginal and especially First Nations educational policy, critique situated clearly and consistently within those broader literatures. In doing so, we seek to “integrate fully an understanding of Aboriginal issues with wider theoretical orientations,” admittedly an ambitious (some, of course, would argue impossible) agenda but one that, as Wotherspoon insists, is very long overdue.

Ongoing Gridlock in First Nations Education

First Nations and non-First Nations communities are frequently portrayed as deadlocked in irreconcilable conflict. In this view, each has its own interests

to protect and neither is likely to give ground to the other. In this section, we examine critically the ways in which this conflictual stance of First Nations *versus* non-First Nations sustains and exacerbates ideological separation between First Nations peoples and mainstream Canada. Although a pervasive mainstream political narrative champions First Nations causes, it does so even as the Canadian political establishment and its policies in regard to First Nations subvert First Nation aspirations and worsen fragmentation and diseconomy of scale among First Nations communities.

Recent and current federal and Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC) policies focus on devolution of basic managerial oversight (instrumental agency) to the community level and on local (seen as synonymous with “community”) control of First Nations education. At best, such policies delegate low-level managerial responsibility and control. Furthermore, although often packaged as solutions to issues of First Nations empowerment, they completely overlook the dynamics of fragmentation. In the end, only a fundamental shift toward constructive engagement, collaboration, and aggregation among First Nations communities, areas, and regions offers the possibility of breaking the current gridlock that has characterized and paralyzed First Nations and non-First Nations relations in education as in other policy domains.

Policy for Compliance, Conformity, and Fragmentation

Until recently, federal policies aimed at improvement of Aboriginal communities’ capacity for self-governance have aimed mainly, if not exclusively, at delivery of educational outcomes as close as possible to those specified in mainstream provincial and territorial education. The oxymoronic intent behind such self-governance capacity-building measures, limited as they were, was to help First Nations communities conform to provincial educational purposes, programs, norms, and expectations. These capacity-building initiatives, in short, aimed at little more than enabling First Nations communities to assume *operational* control of their local education “system,” a deceptive euphemism for community school(s). Their architects never questioned whether provincial governments should retain responsibility for everything other than funding that really mattered in terms of educational outputs in First Nations schools (curriculum policies, assessment, and graduation standards). Such unquestioned and seemingly unquestionable overarching control by non-Aboriginal educational institutions undermined any significant local and especially *aggregated self-governance of Aboriginal education*. This “devolution” narrative of First Nations governance empowerment, moreover, ignored—and for the most part, continues to ignore—great disparity among First Nations communities in ability to participate in self-governance. Many First Nation communities are severely limited in human, financial, and material resources needed for meaningful self-governance of their schools. This lack of essential “building blocks” for capacity contributes to their marginalization and helps sustain pervasive fragmentation and diseconomy of scale in First Nations education.

Moving Beyond Gridlock: Self-Governance in a Fragmented Environment

Over the last three years we have conducted an extensive analysis of policy documents and reports dealing with capacity building for self-governance. This review and analysis exposed capacities crucial to making Aboriginal communities and education successful and sustainable but that were conspicuously absent from policy discourses (Hurley and Wherrett 1999, INAC 1982, 1997). Perhaps most fundamental among them—and most conspicuously missing from the status quo—is the capability of Aboriginal communities and entities to act, to organize themselves, and to influence others in a world where distinct but overlapping Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal groups compete for resources to build and sustain their capacity to engage in an ongoing open-ended process of self-definition (Schouls, 2003). Policy documents, for instance, are generally silent on the necessity for Aboriginal communities to develop capacities that enable them to relate productively to other policy players in the socio-cultural, political, educational, and economic context in which they exist. Similar silence envelops the challenge of building legitimacy in the eyes of key policy actors in mainstream society. The necessity for Aboriginal communities and aggregate entities to develop capabilities to adapt and self-renew, to master change within themselves or with and among other non-Aboriginal players, and to adopt new ideas also passes largely under a similar cloak of silence.

Accountability verges on impossibility where “self-governance” is implemented in a fragmented policy and administrative space. Numerous reports on Aboriginal policy (Breaker and Kawaguchi 2002, Dion, Hathaway, Helin, and Staats 1997, Hawthorn, Tremblay, and Bownick 1967, Hurley and Wherrett 1999, INAC 2004, RCAP 1996), distinguish between “exogenous” and “endogenous” accountability. The former is accountability that Aboriginal recipient governments have to provincial and federal governments; accountability that is driven by the audit and political accountabilities of these governments. Endogenous accountability is accountability of a system or organization (Aboriginal self-governed entities) to its own constituencies and members. Currently in First Nations education the sole binding accountability is fiscal accountability to INAC and thus exogenous. Authentic, formal, and effective endogenous accountability mechanisms that connect First Nations educational governance organizations to their constituents in regard to either program or financial matters seem to be next to non-existent.

At present neither rule systems nor related accountability mechanisms, where these exist at all, reflect the wide dispersion of authority within and among organizations overseeing Aboriginal education (from community and education authorities to local aggregated organizations and on to INAC itself). Policies formally intended to devolve control of Aboriginal education to the local level have resulted in an era of fragmentation and aggregation “*ad hocery*” among First Nations communities. This local and area “*ad hocery*” has fostered a policy arena

which has favoured, if not required, a broad array of local forms and modes of educational governance with few if any enforceable endogenous rule systems and accountability mechanisms. The one very partial exception to this rule is a tenuous program-accountability connection to provinces in the case of First Nations that operate “private” secondary schools.

Across Canada today, First Nations communities are simultaneously fragmenting and integrating. These two seemingly opposed tendencies, moreover, are in fact interactive and feed on each other. In the absence of any overarching rules and structure, effective forms of aggregated governance and accountability mechanisms to regulate and channel the resulting tensions have failed to emerge. Could endogenous and exogenous accountability mechanisms be developed that would constructively harness tensions between fragmentation and integration for First Nations that seek meaningful control over what it means to educate and be educated in an Aboriginal educational *system*? Currently, diseconomies of scale, government policies that encourage fragmentation, and pluralistic developmental aspirations and educational purposes among Aboriginal communities exacerbate rather than harness these tensions. A new form—really a new level or instance of Aboriginal self-governance—in education is urgently needed, one that ensures reasonable order and consistency over time and space in micro-macro interactions (interactions between local authorities and community members, among communities at a regional level, and among regions across Canada). Such a new self-governance form will require reasonable policy and funding coherence and fairness across the multiplicity of diverse Aboriginal communities implicated in the governance of First Nation education. Only functional aggregation of community-level units can lead to endogenous First Nations accountability within a context of responsible self-governance—“Indian control of Indian education” in other words. Only functional integration of community-level units can stem the tide of debilitating First Nations governance fragmentation and provide a basis for effective, efficient, and appropriate governance at the area, regional, and Canada-wide level.¹

Such a governance structure would require overlapping agreement on broadly shared purposes of education among area and regional Aboriginal communities, notwithstanding great diversity in languages, traditions, and developmental aspirations. No such agreement will emerge without considerable compromise and accommodation on all sides. The path to self-governance of Aboriginal education resting on broad agreement about fundamental purposes is fraught with potential difficulties and roadblocks, especially the problem of competing priorities. Communities within an aggregated self-governance structure might have substantially different developmental aspirations² and educational purpose. In that case, they are likely to have conflicting priorities on values and principles as well. In the end, no one can guarantee that such a self-governance model based on compromise and agreement can necessarily accommodate all the voices that may seek to be heard. However, *aggregation is a necessary limitation to Aboriginal pluralism;*

compromise is the price of functional aggregation. A central purpose of aggregation is to define fundamental limits to Aboriginal pluralism. Such limitations should be grounded in understanding human experiences broadly shared among Aboriginal communities (judgments made about common ends and purposes of Aboriginal lives and what constitute broadly shared foundations necessary to allow all—or at least most—Aboriginal communities to flourish).

Aggregation of Aboriginal education organizations should, then, seek out and respect shared purposes, values, and beliefs that reflect an overarching concept of human nature framed around capacities essential to a worthwhile life. Although the process of defining it would be a difficult one, we are convinced that an account of essential First Nations capacities could be framed in terms sufficiently general to encompass cultural and historical diversity among First Nation communities. We are also convinced that such an account could provide a uniquely promising basis for First Nations to flourish. Notwithstanding specific circumstances associated with particular socio-cultural settings and contexts, such an account of essential First Nation capacities should guide and shape the creation of aggregated self-governance institutions. Neither Aboriginal socio-cultural life, nor an efficient, effective, and appropriate educational preparation for it, of course, can be reduced to a set of rules or structural accommodations. But we believe that a framework in which tensions and conflicts could be substantially reduced and contained within limits set by policy aimed at functional compromise is possible. Within such a framework, moreover, true First Nations political “community” could at last be achieved. This framework would need to be essentially a First Nations one; it would need to specify at least generally what it means for a First Nation to flourish.³ Finally, it would need to provide a workable basis to evaluate political, cultural, social, economic, institutional, and governance practices in terms of their contribution to the realization of that ideal.

Such a broadly cooperative political and conceptual self-definition undertaken by First Nations could lead to a workable definition of accountability that has sufficient credibility, political appeal, and clarity to be acceptable both to First Nations and to non-First Nations communities and could thus provide a much-needed workable blueprint for overcoming the current gridlock in First Nations education. No one, of course, can predict how First Nations would ultimately organize themselves and, therefore, no one can know in advance the precise shape and evolutionary trajectory of resulting aggregated forms of self-government. Any such broadly cooperative process will almost certainly be shaped by underlying non-linear and hence difficult-to-predict dynamics.

Educational quality is locked in an ongoing symbiotic relationship with capacity to develop and administer aggregated forms of governance. Neither can *assure* the other, but poor education inevitably begets poor governance and, just as surely, poor governance yields poor education. There is no escape from this relationship. It can translate into either a vicious circle of incapacity, or a symbiosis of developing capacity and continual improvement in performance.

Past and Current Models of Self-Government in First Nations Education: Managing Compliance and Devolution While Fostering Fragmentation and Diseconomies of Scale

The federal government and, to a lesser extent, provincial governments have relied on devolution of operational management to Aboriginal education entities as their key strategy for increasing “local control” of Aboriginal education. In effect, they have “faxed the crisis” of chronic Aboriginal educational deficit—and much of the public blame for it—down the line to more “autonomous” local educational institutions. Ironically, devolution in First Nations education has tightened provincial and territorial control over formal curriculum, imposed at least nominal accountability based on provincially or territorially specified outcomes, and reinforced graduation standards of non-Aboriginal educational institutions. Aboriginality has been central to the policy-definition/implementation divide within the policy process; Aboriginal communities are virtually excluded from involvement in producing educational policy that they are nonetheless mandated to implement at the local level.

Awareness of the interrelatedness and interdependence of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal communities has arguably increased since the publication of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples report in 1996. This vision of interrelatedness and interdependence transcends conceptual boundaries of cultural separateness and difference generally used to frame contemporary discourse and jurisprudence on Aboriginal rights and is being pursued within various institutions still undergoing self-definition by Aboriginal communities (Schouls 2003, Turner 2006). Unfortunately no conceptual, much less institutional, framework has emerged that could provide a plausible basis for either Aboriginal self-government or Aboriginal control of Aboriginal education systems. No such framework currently exists to accommodate and channel creatively the tension and conflict among overlapping Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal groups competing for resources to secure their survival and foster their capacity for ongoing open-ended self-definition (Schouls 2003). Trace outlines of such a framework for autonomous self-definition, however, are already being tested by some individuals, communities, and networks.

Although much of the form and content of First Nations education has been and continues to be determined externally, the relationships of Aboriginal communities to education have, to some degree, varied over time in the wake of their evolving conception of what their societies ought to become. This overarching sense of social purpose is shaped by history, geography, current and potential modes of educational governance, forms of political representation within both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal institutions, and perceptions of appropriate governance arrangements for different educational levels and types (elementary, secondary, post-secondary education, continuing adult education, and non-formal

education). Within this complex web of influence, changes to Aboriginal modes of governance (or lack of such changes) have had multiple and complex effects on the purposes, quality, and relevance of Aboriginal education. This complexity calls for more nuanced historical analysis, especially of the assumptions and claims associated with “Indian control of Indian education.” In particular, we need to call into question the extent to which various Aboriginal communities, groups, and nations have been able to exercise meaningful choice in education within past and current policy frameworks and, even more fundamentally, the degree to which they *wish* to participate in defining the purposes, nature, quality, and relevance of the education provided to their children. Divergent perspectives on possibilities for reshaping power relationships between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal communities have produced various self-governance models. In this section we review critically existing and potential modes of First Nations self-governance in education.

Assimilation, Integration, and Devolution of Power: Policy Directions from the 40s to the 90s.

Until the 1990s the main policy directions in First Nations governance and education were assimilation and integration. Only through assimilation and integration, non-Aboriginals were convinced, could First Nations realize their potential as human beings within mainstream Canadian society. While sometimes allowing at least marginal accommodation to First Nations needs, interests, and capacities, First Nations education was designed to foster, indeed to present as the only conceivable possibility for education, a “universal” understanding of the self and acceptance that such an understanding was necessary to neutralize or eliminate divisive cultural differences and thus promote essentially undifferentiated membership in mainstream Canadian society. Such “universal” conceptions, in fact, framed ideas about what it means to be a “normal” human being—for all human beings including Aboriginal persons.

During this period, the overarching purpose for First Nations education was to contribute to minimizing cultural differences between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal communities in Canada by ensuring that Aboriginal communities conformed increasingly to mainstream Canadian cultural norms. Far from seeking to accommodate cultural differences between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal communities, policy-makers attempted to order power relationships so that these differences were either eliminated (through assimilation or integration or simply by divesting the federal government of the “Indian problem” in keeping with what Turner aptly labels “white paper liberalism”) or at least no longer caused conflict and division.

The main purposes of federal education policy for First Nations, then, remained unchanged from the time of the residential schools: subordination and marginalization of First Nations, First Nations cultures, and First Nations languages. Prior to 1972, policy discourse on First Nations education failed to imagine any

involvement of First Nations communities in the education of their young beyond a purely advisory role with regard to policies aimed at improving already existing educational programs or creating new ones patterned after provincial or territorial education programs (Hawthorn, Tremblay, and Bownick 1967). Capacity development in Aboriginal self-governance of education was thereby limited a priori to improving the ability of First Nations *to make suggestions relative to the delivery of educational programs and services* to First Nations students and communities—programs whose shape and content, however, would be determined exogenously. In the 70s and 80s, the National Indian Brotherhood's report entitled *Indian Control of Indian Education* (National Indian Brotherhood, 1972) spawned increasing interest in Aboriginal jurisdiction and control over education. This influential report called for control of education on reserves *by individual First Nations*. It envisaged eventual complete jurisdiction and autonomy over education, and, toward that end, called for First Nations representation on local school boards serving First Nations students. In its eventual response to *Indian Control* the federal government chose not to consider policies that might have enabled Aboriginal communities to assume full control eventually of their own education *systems*. Instead, the Federal government opted to delegate (“devolve”) managerial control over education to Aboriginal communities.

Because of such policy directions, First Nations protests that they were systematically denied a degree of educational agency comparable to that found in mainstream society fell on deaf ears in Ottawa. First Nations education continued to be largely defined by non-Aboriginal representational practices. These practices *shaped, controlled, and above all constrained production, transmission, and propagation of Aboriginal knowledge and identities*. In doing so, they made mainstream Canadian societal visions and courses of action appear normal and possible, indeed inevitable, and all others abnormal and impossible for First Nations.

This fundamental orientation toward assimilation, and later integration, of First Nations into non-Aboriginal learning institutions and programs as non-negotiable Aboriginal education policy directions was grounded in a “universalizing” conception of Aboriginality on the part of non-Aboriginals, which effectively denied distinctive Aboriginal needs and capacities by subsuming them within positivist industrial/post-industrial paradigm assumptions about human good and excellence. What First Nations people needed, according to this approach, was to become good mainstream Canadians. The assimilation objective was implemented through re-education and replacement of ancestral First Nations cultures by mainstream values. Aboriginal people after all, policy-makers imbued with liberal ideology reasoned, were *individuals*. For their well-being as individuals they needed to be subordinated to mainstream society as a whole, to become Canadian citizens like all other Canadian citizens. To achieve such mainstream identity, they needed to be trained never to think of or experience their indigeneity beyond the “script” of a socio-economic system in which they occupied, and still occupy today, the lowest position. Aboriginal persons, no less than non-Aboriginal

persons, had to come to regard individual “success” as “universal” human excellence achieved through hard work, self-discipline, and conformity to mainstream society and its social, cultural, and especially economic projects. “Aboriginality” needed to be redefined to that end. On the basis of that redefinition of Aboriginality, non-Aboriginal policy-makers pursued policies that would frame First Nation educational, cultural, political, economic, and social life in ways that disadvantaged and marginalized First Nation visions of human good, and silenced their voices in the process. Despite considerable policy-maker rhetoric about the need to build capacity and partnership, those who directed Indian Affairs in Ottawa were prepared to give up little, if any meaningful control, preferring instead to impose changes that *they* deemed best for First Nations peoples.

Policies imposing assimilation, and subsequently integration of First Nations students into non-Aboriginal public schools, were basically prescriptions for “normalizing” First Nations students into educational practices and institutions that would at last contain Aboriginal communities within a “hierarchical encapsulation” of mainly personal identity pluralism (Moon 1993). Hierarchical encapsulation is a way of managing and containing pluralism. Within it, the dominant group (non-Aboriginal society) excludes all others (First Nations) from genuine political participation.

Sometimes a subject group will play a specialized role in politics, one that they are given precisely because of their status as “outsider,” but one that also renders them ineligible to compete for higher or more significant forms of power. Hierarchical encapsulation can also be combined with indirect [partial delegated] rule, in which direct [local managerial] authority over particular groups is exercised by a “declared” elite group within the group who (e.g., Chief and Band Council), whatever...[its] traditional authority might have been, has come to owe...[its] power mainly to...[its] relationships to the ruling stratum. (Moon 1993, 15)

Framed within the assumptions behind these policies of assimilation and integration of First Nations into the mainstream Canadian society, First Nations education assumed specific socio-cultural, political, and economic functions. Its socio-cultural functions were twofold. First, education promoted acceptance by First Nations people of a society in which their beliefs and self-understandings as Aboriginal people were disallowed. It thus encouraged them to accept voluntarily the legitimacy of social, political, and economic inequality as it progressively enculturated them into believing that some groups in society are naturally better suited than others to fill certain socio-economic, cultural, and political roles.

Second, education for First Nations people was to initiate them into the industrial and post-industrial paradigm ideals (Valois and Bertrand 1980) of progress and consumerism and thus foster in them a vision of human creativity as synonymous with economic, technological, and scientific progress.

This assimilationist/integrationist policy promoted educational and institutional practices aimed at maintaining an “oligarchic social structure of society, acceptance that an elite minority makes decisions on behalf of the majority, and thus

[serves to] legitimate a hierarchical decision-making structure,” (Bertrand and Valois 1980, 173) in effect, an hierarchical encapsulation. Such educational policy goals for Aboriginal students “promote [suitable] intellectual aptitudes, contribute to reproducing the existing social division of work, and promote the legitimacy of the established order and its value” (Bertrand and Valois 1980, 178). Overall, policy-makers viewed education for First Nations students as but one among many tools for maintaining the status quo in society as a whole. Despite partial devolution of managerial authority over education to individual First Nation communities, “Along the way, Indian control of education became synonymous with local control. Admittedly, the policy paper was short on details in terms of what actually constituted Indian control. But local control as an objective was clearly enunciated in the document and INAC cheerfully accepted this interpretation of Indian control because it fit conveniently with its emerging policy on devolution” (McCue 2004, 4).

During the 90s, the RCAP (2006) outlined two basic educational options available to Aboriginal communities with regard to education. One option was to exercise their inherent right to define and organize their own education systems. Doing so, according to the Commission, would involve passing their own laws and regulating all dimensions of education including policies on educational goals and standards, administration of schools, tuition agreements, and purchase of provincial or territorial services. The second option was working to improve existing public education systems by increasing Aboriginal control over Aboriginal education in those systems through mechanisms of community and parental involvement to strengthen identity and resolve problems of quality, adequacy, and appropriateness of education and to implement culturally based curriculum. In both cases, the RCAP viewed capacity development for self-governance over education as learning and knowledge-generating processes aimed at empowering Aboriginal communities to develop and implement needed changes through educational entities or systems defined and controlled by Aboriginal people.

Gathering Strength: Canada's Aboriginal Action Plan (INAC 1997) eventually provided the federal government's response to the RCAP report. In it the federal government renewed its commitment to devolve program responsibility and resources to Aboriginal communities but also committed to assisting Aboriginal organizations in order to strengthen Aboriginal governance and to support education reform on reserves, with the objective of improving the quality and cultural relevance of education for Aboriginal students, improving the effectiveness of teachers and teaching practices, supporting parents and community involvement in the decision-making process in schools, and improving the management and support capacity of Aboriginal education systems across the country.

Gathering Strength marked a substantial shift in policy discourse with its emphasis on supporting First Nations organizations and capacity development. At least on paper, it moved beyond the micro-perspective of the traditional INAC development focus on the internal functioning of individual First Nations. It

began to embrace Aboriginal “cultural ownership” by at least acknowledging that Aboriginal communities should be able to express and analyze the conditions of their lives and, in theory at least, to collaborate on collective and sustainable solutions and actions to common problems, to think in strategic terms, and to see the contribution of non-Aboriginals in broader and more interconnected ways. With *Gathering Strength*, capacity development for self-governance arrived at least nominally on the “radar scope” of federal policy aimed at assisting Aboriginal communities in recovering the autonomy necessary to initiate and manage change, to resolve conflict, to establish networks, to manage institutional pluralism, to deepen and enhance coordination and collaboration among communities, to foster communication, and to ensure that knowledge generated in the course of self-governance is shared for the common good of all.

However, notwithstanding a policy discourse that espouses devolution of power and control of Aboriginal education to First Nations, the reality remains that

the education clauses in these agreements [SGAs] clearly indicate that the federal government still supports their 1950 policy of integration—every one of the SGAs referred to [The Federal Framework for Transferring Programs and Services to Self-Governing Yukon First Nations, 1998 (YFN); Mi’kmaq Education in Nova Scotia, 1997 (ME); The Manitoba Framework Agreement, 1994 (MFA); Nisga’a Treaty Negotiation: Agreement in Principle, 1996 (NTM); The James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement (JBNQA); The United Anishnaabeg Councils Government Agreement-in-Principle, 1998 (UAC)] includes a clause or clauses that in effect say that the education that the affected First Nation(s) provides as a result of the SGA must be comparable to the provincial system, or that students must be able to move from the First Nations education program to a provincial school without penalty. (McCue 2006, 6)⁴

McCue thus argues, rightly in our view, that supposedly new policy directions in First Nations educational governance have entailed little change in practice. Notwithstanding policy rhetoric that vaunts empowerment of Aboriginal communities in shaping their educational “systems,” changes necessary to authentic “Aboriginalization” of First Nations education have been systematically ignored by Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal policy-makers and their respective advocates. Like McCue, we doubt that significant change in the governance and content of First Nations education is occurring at all. We also share McCue’s concern that history is only repeating itself, that shifts in First Nations education policy, including those supposedly embedded in the SGAs, have not brought about any fundamental change.

The 90s and Beyond: Adaptive Policy Initiatives for Increased Aboriginal control of Education

It seems quite clear that as late as the late ‘90s, policy on First Nations educational governance remained essentially unchanged. Aboriginal control of education offered a convenient rhetorical packaging to foster the illusion of more autonomous First Nations governance in education and elsewhere as well as in economic

development of Aboriginal communities—all vaunted at the time as key elements of decolonization though devolution of power. The federal government, and some provincial governments as well, promoted self-government and control of education in particular as a means of ushering First Nations into a rapidly globalizing market society and thus, allegedly, free them from traditional colonial constraints. However, this view of the central purposes of self-government seems far more neo-colonial than “decolonizing” and effectively denies Aboriginal peoples’ capacity to formulate their own conceptions of person and society.

Once more, this model resulted in various kinds of advisory structures at the local community level in some provinces (such as guaranteed representation on local public school boards). This integrated model was followed in turn by a delegated-authority model which enabled Aboriginal communities to administer provincial laws and procedures for the education of Aboriginal children on behalf of the province. Within this model, the province retains ultimate authority over laws, regulations, and policies pursuant to education standards and criteria for academic success (See the Framework Agreement signed by the federal and provincial governments and First Nations in British Columbia, (*Bill C-34: First Nations Jurisdiction over Education Act*, 2006).⁵ Therefore, Aboriginal communities have acquired local managerial powers, but not the legislative or executive powers usually associated with self-government.

To date, then, no policy changes that reflect real change in attitudes, norms, values, or perceptions have emerged to frame authentic First Nations self-governance in education. No substantive policy has appeared that offers much hope of fundamentally changing and renewing Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal political and power relationships in the field of education. Current policies only seek to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of existing policy and practice without disturbing them, without disturbing basic organizational features, or without any real change in the way that Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal communities relate within the existing power structure. They simply bring forward in time the existing goal of conformity to provincial and territorial education programs—especially in regard to learning and socialization goals, structures, and roles in providing education to their people. Policy-makers continue to insist that First Nations schools and educational institutions should be organized according to a simple template whose only requirement is conformity—at least in formal terms—to programs set by provincial and territorial education ministries, an approach which obviously raises serious issues of legitimacy.⁶

Ironically the policy thrust toward increased Aboriginal self-governance in education during the late 90s and early 2000s preserved dynamics that sustained, indeed probably worsened, the existing tendency toward fragmentation among Aboriginal communities. Perverse fixation on radically local control has deprived First Nation communities of the capacity to establish relevant, healthy, and sustainable education *systems*. The dynamics of this fragmentation, encouraged at every turn by policy, have continued to contribute to the plurality and dispersion

of administrative authority. They have also increased significantly the probability of an eventual authority crisis in Aboriginal education among Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal communities. They have sapped the ability of Aboriginal communities to cope with deepening and increasingly rapid change, so that meaningful self-governance has diminished rather than increased as the complexities and contradictions of fragmentation and diseconomies of scale have become more pervasive and pragmatically consequential given the broader context of education both in Canada and within an increasingly globalized knowledge economy.

Therefore, notwithstanding that the call for local Indian control over Indian education remained at the centre of policy directions in the late 90s and early 2000s, the discourse of local control of Aboriginal education has failed to increase the capacity of leaders in Aboriginal education to know when, where, and how to engage effectively in collective action for self-governance in education. Despite ongoing preoccupation with the lack of relevance in Aboriginal education and with uncertainties associated with the current dynamics of fragmentation, no new policy direction has emerged to nurture effective collective action through functional, self-determining aggregated governance institutions that reflect Aboriginal conceptions of how authority should be organized and exercised in the field of education and for what societal purposes (Cornell, Jorgensen, and Kalt 2002).

Concluding Observations

First Nations education is fraught with complexity and uncertainty. Yet some of its features underscore the potential for functional aggregation in its governance. Educational and related social purposes, interests, and developmental aspirations on the national stage are so numerous, diverse, and disaggregated that a hierarchical national or even regional or province-wide structure with a single mechanism for self-governance seems unlikely in the near future. Nonetheless, although both informal and formal First Nations governance steering mechanisms exist, and although some have more potential scope for influencing what matters in education than do others, none is presently capable of orchestrating or catalyzing effective self-governance in Aboriginal education.

Development of functionally integrated aggregate models of self-governance in First Nations education will require further discussion and negotiation on the scope, mandate, and lines of accountability of First Nations aggregated governing entities. Notwithstanding, all First Nations are to some degree part local and part global. If meaningful self-determination for First Nations in education and elsewhere is ever to arrive, these two dimensions will have to meld in new and functional ways. Such melding would, within the parameters of aggregated self-governing entities, redefine to a significant extent who First Nation peoples are. Pure Aboriginal localists seek vainly to turn back the clock to an obsolete, discredited, and dysfunctional model of self-governing First Nation *communities*; pure aggregationists, on the other hand, might well be seen by critics as individuals who have lost their local footing. Aggregated self-governing educational entities

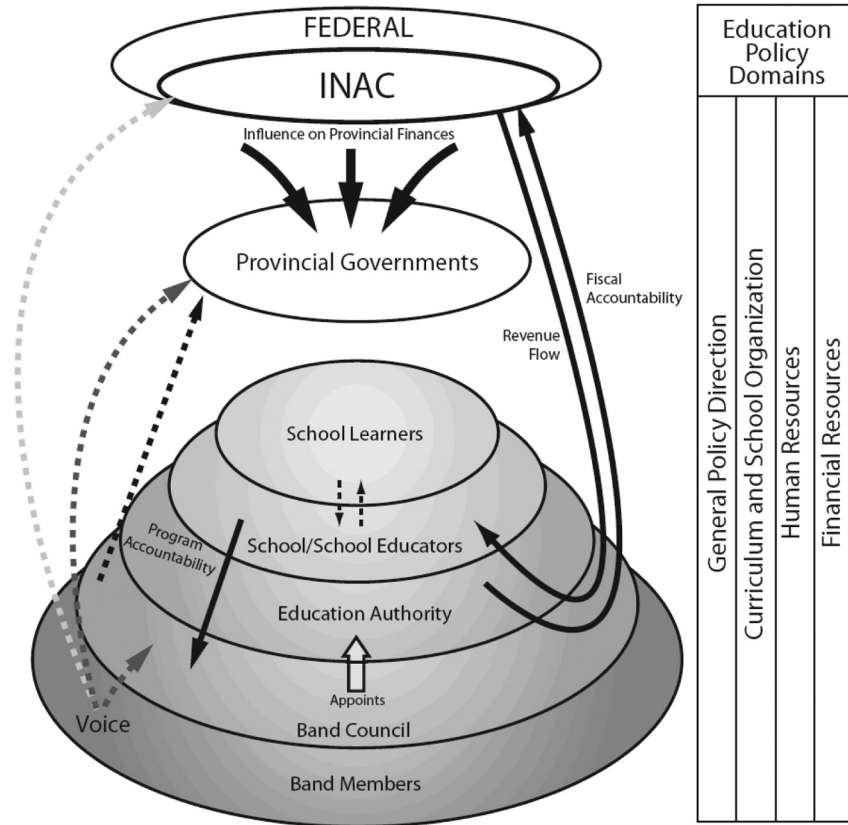
can only sustain and renew themselves by respecting, balancing, and nurturing diverse First Nations local cultures and by giving them *reasonable* autonomy to support their own ways of looking at the world on the one hand—but doing so with due respect for the unforgiving realities of economy of scale on the other.

Progress toward more effective, accountable,⁷ and legitimate⁸ self-governance in First Nation education can only occur incrementally so long as each individual First Nation community can continue to decide unilaterally whether it will participate in an aggregate organization at all, as well as when, under what circumstances, and to what extent. Our brief overview of self-governance in Aboriginal education provides a salutary warning that prospects for effective, efficient, legitimate, and accountable forms of self-governance are highly problematic, that such progress might take decades, and that the probability of evolution toward harmoniously interdependent political relationships between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal communities may not be greater than the chance of deterioration toward tension-filled and retrogressive political relationships. Beyond that troubling conclusion lies the inescapable bottom-line question in First Nations education governance reform: how, and in what time frame, might the current radically disaggregated Aboriginal education non-system be transformed into—or replaced by—effective, efficient, and appropriate self-governance?

Structural Failure

In this section of the chapter we focus tightly on governance, jurisdiction, and control, and thus on governance structures and processes. Nonetheless, questions of purpose inevitably frame that discussion if one believes that in governance form should follow function—in preference to “tail wagging the dog” approaches. However desirable it may be to craft form around purpose, even in the best of situations the tail often does wag the dog in educational governance. This unhealthy dynamic, however, has been strikingly evident in First Nations education. Broad agreement exists that First Nations people, even when the matter is examined purely in terms of conformity with mainstream educational standards, are, for the most part, collectively and individually victims of a major educational deficit. That deficit is, to a considerable extent, one of the principal legacies of the residential system and of the penury and myopia within which it was conceived and operated. First Nations students are systematically *behind*—and they are not catching up very fast. In fact, the Auditor General of Canada recently concluded in a now often-cited claim that, at the current rate of progress in closing the gap between the educational achievement of First Nations students and mainstream Canadian students, another 28 years would be required to complete the process (2004, 1). More ominously still, the gap between First Nations students and mainstream students in regard to completion of a university certificate or diploma seems to be growing (Clement, forthcoming).

Figure 12.1: Simplified Representation of First Nations School Governance



Brenda Mergel 2007

Adapted and extended from Smith, Paquette, & Bordonaro, 1995

First Nations Governance and Control

Figure 12.1 is a simplified⁹ schematic representation of First Nations school governance focusing on the flow of “voice,” “authority,” and “accountability.” We use these terms in ways that differ from the meanings many readers associate with them in everyday language, specifically:

- voice is the right, conferred by law, to participate in policy-relevant decision-making processes without having the right to vote or participate in any final decision
- authority is the right, conferred by law, to make decisions about a particular matter in an education system
- accountability is legal responsibility for defined results (program accountability) or use of financial resources (financial accountability); program accountability may be based on either effectiveness criteria (were results produced) or efficiency criteria (were results produced at a

“reasonable” cost), or both¹⁰

Band members are entitled to vote in federal elections. As with all other citizens, federal education programs, including education programs addressed to First Nations learners, are one area of potential voter interest and choice, *among a great many others*, to First Nation voters. While First Nations education is presumably of greater interest to those living in First Nation communities than to most other voters in federal elections, even for them, it can only count as one among many issues that shape their voting choice. Given the tiny *relative* importance of First Nations education in shaping federal voter behaviour, even, in all likelihood, in shaping the voting behaviour of First Nations voters living on a reserve, the relative electoral “voice” of First Nations citizen-residents in federal funding and policy affecting the education of children in their community school is very small and tenuous (hence the ephemeral “voice” connection to the federal level in **Figure 12.1**).

Notwithstanding, virtually all financial resources for most band-operated schools come from the federal government through INAC. Most of the political mandate for appropriation and allocation of First Nations *education funding comes from the Canadian electorate at large* and that mandate therefore “flows in” to the artificially closed-system representation we offer for simplicity’s sake. At the local level, band members do express their preferences with regard to education in band-council elections. In these same elections, however, they also simultaneously make choices with regard to a host of other issues, preferences, and allegiances. In most cases, band members elect band councillors who then appoint members of a band’s education authority. The electoral mandate of band-education-authority members have toward their school(s) differs in two fundamental ways from that of members of provincial boards of education:

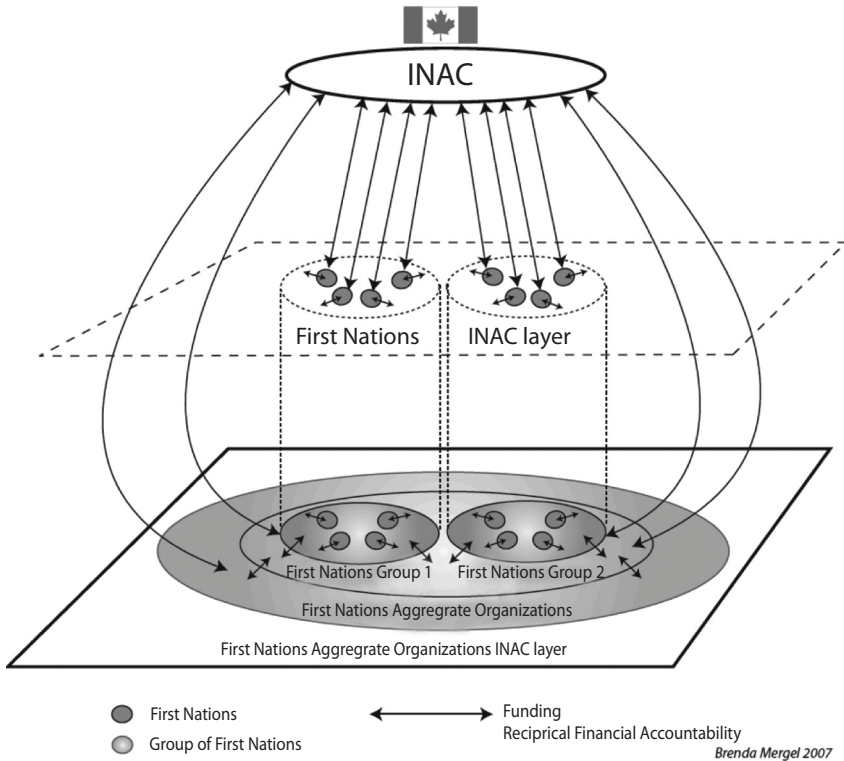
- in most cases band-education-authority membership results from an electoral process that melds education with a broad spectrum of social, infrastructure, and local political issues that, taken together, shape band-council election results; unlike school-board elections, band-council elections therefore generally *dilute* educational issues in a plethora of other local-governance issues
- generally in band-council elections band members elect “proxies” (band councillors) to decide band-education-authority membership; band elector voice in choosing band-education-authority membership is thus *indirect* in addition to being *diluted* by a host of non-educational issues and considerations (the reduced voice in education at the local level is shown schematically by an intermittent dot pattern in the “voice” line to the band council/band education authority level)

In addition, non-resident band members are eligible to vote in band-council elections. The voting behaviour of non-resident band members who choose to vote in band elections thus “flows into” our artificially closed-system depiction

of voice, financial accountability, and resource flow and further dilutes the flow of resident voice to community schools at the band level. In the band-education-authority governance mode, the only significant line of resident voice to band schools is through the diffuse band electoral process. It is, moreover, in every way that matters, almost completely separated from revenue flow from the federal government through the band education authority. Not surprisingly, therefore, band residents have little meaningful control over what occurs in their schools. A major reason for this state of affairs is that the band election process separates political/electoral mandate from band residents to their school(s) from the lines of funding that provide resources and financial accountability that bind school administrators and personnel.

Furthermore, **Figure 12.1** exposes another crucial problem. While the revenue–financial-accountability circuit (however imperfect the financial accountability mechanisms may be) is between the federal government, as represented by INAC, and the local band education authority, the line of program accountability, to the extent it can be said to exist at all, flows *to the province*—which, of course, is completely outside of the main revenue–financial-accountability circuit for First Nations schools. No meaningful program accountability to INAC exists. Furthermore, INAC has always insisted that band schools, like federal Indian day schools before them, conform to *provincial* curricula and standards. Such conformity, of course, is almost always more nominal than real, a fact to which the gaping and resilient educational-achievement gap between First Nations students and mainstream Canadian students testifies eloquently (Auditor General of Canada 2004, 1). In striking contrast to the situation of provincial public schools, then, the main, although not surprisingly tenuous and problematic, line of program accountability for First Nations schools diverges from the main revenue and fiscal accountability circuit.

The status quo in First Nations governance reflects a profoundly assimilationist stance and does so in a particularly insidious way. In our view, the recent and historic approach of INAC and the federal government to First Nations education can most accurately be characterized as one of “benign neglect”—fund the process with minimal attention to adequacy or purpose, and impose a diffuse and unclear mandate to follow provincial curricula. Otherwise, ostensibly in the interest of furthering “Indian control of Indian education,” INAC leaves First Nations to do what they want to do in their community schools. This self-defeating even oxymoronic approach to “Indian control” fails to address the issues of diseconomy of scale, fragmentation, and an urgent need for functional aggregation of community-level units (not merely purchase of services on an ad hoc perceived-need basis from so-called “second-level service” providers”) to make possible purposeful, coherent provision of services such as curriculum development (and implementation), or Aboriginal language and culture programs in particular—and, of course, supervision, administration, or administrative support.

Figure 12.2: Layers of Governance in First-Nations Education

Crossed Lines of Governance, Level 1: INAC and First Nations

Lines of governance in First Nations education, it should now be obvious, are severely “crossed.” They are crossed, moreover, in two dimensions. In fact, we believe it is both useful and appropriate to think in terms of two “layers” of crossed governance in First Nations education.

The First Nations–INAC layer is the one on which we have focused so far. **Figure 12.2** presents this layer only partially in that it shows only the INAC-to-individual–First Nations dimension of that crossed-governance layer (and thus omits, for example, nominal program accountability of First Nations education authorities to provincial and territorial ministries of education). **Figure 12.2** exposes clearly, however, the conflicting governance relationships across the two layers of First Nations educational governance.

The INAC-direct-to–First Nations layer includes all First Nations with band-operated education programs (elementary, secondary, and post-secondary). The top layer of **Figure 12.2** is best thought of, therefore, as a composite of single band-school-to-INAC governance relationships as depicted in **Figure 12.1**. Bands, however, as we have noted, frequently join together in aggregate

organizations such as tribal councils, educational councils, and band associations to pool capacity for certain purposes in education and in other social policy areas. As shown in **Figure 12.2**, moreover, these aggregate organizations themselves often join together in larger aggregations such as the Chiefs' Committee on Education (CCOE), National Indian Education Council (NIEC) initiatives, and/or ultimately the Assembly of First Nations (AFN). First-level aggregate organizations, moreover, sometimes establish links with one another for particular purposes and activities although more typically they are linked through second- and higher-level aggregations. These linkages range from nominal to authentically collaborative.

First Nations aggregate groups also compete with one another for recognition, credibility, and scarce federal dollars. They often receive funding, moreover, as **Figure 12.2** indicates, *both* from INAC and from member bands. This duality of funding sources often simultaneously pulls First Nations aggregate groups in very different directions.

Another telling point can be made regarding the First Nations–INAC structure of governance and lines of accountability illustrated in **Figure 12.2**. In the end, the government of Canada seems to be positioned as the only credible potential guarantor of stability for First Nations. The highly salient corollary is that any new forms of First Nation self-governance that might emerge without active support by the Canadian state would be marked by instability and disorder.

Overall, then, INAC's policy of devolving power to the local level has not created any new "political space" within which First Nations might exercise real control over their education system. Instead, informal and non-institutional local and aggregated forms of mainly *devolved low-level managerial power* have emerged to complement, not to replace, the long-established and centralized authority embodied in INAC.

Figure 12.2 can provide a useful basis from which to begin rethinking the current model of governance in Aboriginal education along the lines of a multi-level form, a web-like process of self-governance in education and especially for meeting the challenges of fragmentation. Such a multi-level, web-like model of governance would, however, have to employ rule and norm systems (anchored in binding mechanisms of governance and a common conception of human good). These rule and norm systems would be needed to steer educational issues through both hierarchical and networked interactions across levels of aggregation that would encompass all the diverse First Nations communities that would participate in the process of self-governance of education. It would also need to respect, as far as possible, the evolving individual identities of members of these communities. To overcome the current fragmentation in First Nations education, such a governance model would require authority over education that would be reasonably dispersed and decentralized, while at the same time avoid the incoherence of fragmentation. Functional governance in First Nations education, in short, will depend on authority that flows as much horizontally as vertically but

that does so through clearly defined participatory and accountability channels. To work effectively, such a governance model will require political acceptance of broad collaboration through aggregated forms of governance and of the need to undo the current fragmentation in part by renouncing the fallacy of community-level control as synonymous with “Indian control.” An immediate corollary is that success with such a governance model will also require capacity on the part of First Nations and non-First Nations communities to establish conditions conducive to convergence around shared values and substantial agreement about developmental aspirations.

Breaking Free of the Gridlock

Ironically, by constructing the concept of “Indian control” as a synonym for radically local control, INAC policy on devolution of control brought forward in time and applied to education a fragmented governance dynamic that led to dysfunctional diseconomies of scale and to paralysis and stagnation of First Nations education “systems.” In a further irony, it did so even as it presented, then justified, such fragmented governance dynamics within a discourse of community empowerment and capacity building. Agency, after all, is a process of social engagement that allows members of a community (in the broad sense of a distinct ethno-cultural identity group, not in the narrow sense of a village or small local municipality) to critically shape their own responses to problematic situations or catalytic events (Emirbayer 1998). Current fragmentation of control over First Nations education, and especially the radical disaggregation of First Nations authority over education that it has fostered, raise two crucial questions. First, do functionally aggregated forms of governance offer a relevant way of addressing current fragmentation challenges; and second, if the answer to the first question is affirmative as we believe it is, how could such functionally aggregated governance be achieved in the future?

In the final section, we explore further certain issues surrounding a “governance of fragmentation” (an oxymoronic concept at best). More importantly, we propose a way forward toward forms of governance in First Nations education that would alleviate diseconomies of scale while enhancing relevance of educational programs, effectiveness of educational services, quality, ethics, and the effectiveness and efficiency of governance. This vision of authentic governance is built around multiple levels of *functional* aggregation that would encompass all the relevant diversity of First Nations communities and peoples. Fragmentation dynamics, in our view, constitute the most difficult, complex, and pervasive challenge facing those who seek to exercise meaningful control over First Nations education. Our discussion is framed around two key questions that organize our thoughts on the current gridlock within which First Nations control of First Nations education is embroiled: (1) what are the probabilities that the current radical disaggregation of First Nations control over education can achieve efficient, effective, and ethical governance; and (2) in a context where First Nations communities and

institutions are simultaneously fragmenting and sometimes weakly integrating, what forms of First Nations governance can be developed in education and what process can be used to steer fragmentation-integration tensions in constructive directions towards creation of authentically self-determining aggregated forms of First Nations educational governance?

Disaggregation of First Nations Control over Education: Issues of Values and Purpose

Disaggregation of First Nation Control over Education

In any complex, pluralistic society, multiple levels of functional interdependence are embedded in aggregated organizational structures that link various levels of government with both public and private institutions. Among First Nations bodies in charge of governing education, this level of functional interdependence and aggregation is strikingly absent and its absence impedes most attempts to rework, coordinate, and integrate modes and instances of governance of First Nations education. This lack of inter-institutional interface is a major part of the perverse “Indian control of Indian education” (ICIE) legacy. The ICIE mode of thinking about governance of education offers only a balkanizing and debilitating fixation on strictly *local* control, a fixation that promotes endless competition and turf wars over education among and within individual First Nations. Each community wants to *control* every aspect of education in *its* school. The cruelly ironic result is that it controls next to nothing that counts. Instead of asking the key question, how can we collaborate strategically to improve the education of young First Nations persons in our area or cultural-linguistic group, those responsible for school operations and problems focus mainly on protecting the “turf” of *their* community school “*system*,” a perfect recipe for preserving and deepening dysfunctional diseconomies of scale.

Diseconomies of scale lead to an inescapable no-pain, no-gain control paradox in First Nations education. Unless, and only to the degree that, individual First Nations are willing, and empowered fiscally and in law and policy to collaborate in deep functional integration of key educational infrastructure services such as curriculum development, administration, supervision, program support, and so forth, *First Nations control of First Nations education will remain an illusion*. If First Nations control is the objective, *deep and comprehensive functional integration* will be necessary.

Schouls summarizes the broader dimensions of the diseconomies-of-scale problem in these terms:

Many First Nations are small in both population and reserve size, making it difficult and perhaps unrealistic for some of them to administer the services and financial resources necessary for self-government. First Nations may therefore choose to delegate authority to political entities such as tribal councils in functional areas beyond their capacity such as policy development, higher education, and human resource training. However, it is First Nations at the band level that are invested with

statutory political authority, and for this reason they are the focus of my attention (2003, 54).

The evidence is by now overwhelming; it seems to us, however, that simply “delegating” selectively certain support-service functions to an education or tribal council, while clinging to the illusion of a local community-based “education system,” has not been and almost certainly never will provide a platform for meaningful First Nations control of First Nations education. It remains true, of course, as Schouls notes, that the *Indian Act* invests First Nations political authority in local bands. This current legislative reality, however, should not be allowed to stand in the way of creating bodies with the scope and scale to integrate functionally and comprehensively educational services to First Nations communities. To some extent, at least initially, all that is needed is broadening, deepening, and reinforcing the mandate of existing organizations.

Entities which provide deep functional integration of services to First Nations communities need to be created and governed with respect for the wishes and evolving sense of identity of member communities although consensus on all issues will not be possible. Equally essential is the need to equip such organizations with appropriate professional knowledge, expertise, and skills—to ensure on an ongoing basis, that is, development and renewal of institutional capacity to deliver the direction and support needed. Above all, this *institutional-capacity* agenda means that the architects of such collaborative institutions must resolutely resist the temptation to use them as venues for “pork-barrel” appointments to key positions of unqualified but locally well-connected people.

Transforming Values and Purpose

The current balkanization of First Nations educational governance has generally resulted in organizational structures unable to resolve challenges facing First Nations education, challenges that are by their nature large in scale and scope. The task of thinking afresh in replacing fragmentation with solidarity involves more than sensitivity and openness to profound transformations in macro-organizational governance structure, however urgently these may be needed. Functionally aggregated governance in First Nations education also requires breaking out of the cultural and conceptual manacles that currently bind it. The present situation calls for a process capable of synthesizing the relevant knowledge from different Aboriginal perspectives about values and developmental purpose that should underpin First Nations education. Such perspectives should lead to a common, and ideally, a broadly shared understanding of values and overarching purpose for First Nations education on the part of major Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal parties/stakeholders. Without such a process, it is very unlikely that any future governance arrangement would serve adequately either Aboriginal youth or stakeholder requirements for an authentically self-determining education system. Such an exercise would involve Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal communities in a

way that would lead to reasonable integration of values and purpose as organizing principles for resolution of contemporary problems of large scale and scope in First Nations education, an exercise in fruitful interdependence, in short, just where it is most needed.

Unless solidly anchored in values, principles, and ethics respected in both Aboriginal and contemporary mainstream Canadian cultures, First Nations education, at least in any meaningful sense, is probably doomed. At its profoundest level, reformulation of governance in First Nations education needs to confront the underlying status quo value system and to recognize its deep ties to a long series of unworkable and unhealthy governance arrangements. To some extent, this focus on values, moral principles, and ethics may yield different nuances of meaning for each Aboriginal community. Nonetheless, most Aboriginal community members would probably agree, on reflection, that each of these things constitutes an important and inevitable dimension of any broad-scope Aboriginal self-determination, and its feasibility.

No significant progress in meaningful First Nations self-determination, in education or elsewhere, and especially in regard to the kind of functionally integrative aggregation we are proposing, will be possible without deep trust on the part of the gatekeepers of power and resources in Canadian society. This proposition is at the heart of what Turner calls “Kymlicka’s constraint” (2006, 58). Only in a context of mutual trust will First Nations be able to negotiate new arrangements and relationships that will provide them with appropriate “boundaries” for reasonable self-determination. Such trust is ultimately necessary because, as Turner insists, mainstream Canadian gatekeepers of power and resources are and will remain for the foreseeable future mainly non-Aboriginal. Renewing relationships between Aboriginal peoples and the Canadian state must therefore, however ironic it might seem to some, aim for a self-determination mechanism that reorients contemporary Aboriginal ways of doing things so they are *simultaneously* more responsive both to Aboriginal constituents and to ethical values of central importance in the larger Canadian society. To be effective and efficient, functionally aggregated First Nations educational organizations will need to act in ways consistent with ethical values and developmental purpose mutually acceptable to their own constituents and to the gatekeepers of power and resources in mainstream Canadian society, which is no mean challenge. Only in this way will they be able to enrich, reinforce, and sustain functional aggregative dynamics that harness in helpful ways the interaction of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal communities.

A Higher Vision—Moving to “Education Plus” from the “Parity Paradox” and Complacent Acceptance of “Education Minus”

The Parity Paradox: Basis for Alternative Educational Visions

The exact-equivalence rationale behind the only substantive INAC policy on education—the ability of any student to transfer to provincial or territorial schools *at any time* without penalty (INAC 2003, 4)—is grounded in what one author long ago labelled a “remediation” policy response to poor school performance on the part of minorities (Paquette 1989). The inescapable seminal assumption underpinning such exact-equivalence policy on the part of INAC is that Aboriginal culture and language have no significant part in the image of an educated person in Canada. All that *really* counts, in this view, is what provincial and territorial governments (and *their* constituents and *their* electors) decide counts. Aboriginal culture and language, in this view, is at best an ornament graciously tolerated by “real education.” Nothing could be further from Turner’s vision of “word warrior” education except perhaps residential-school-style all-out, no-holds-barred suppression of Aboriginal culture and language.

Cardinal long ago insisted that Aboriginal peoples should be regarded as “citizens plus” (Indian Chiefs of Alberta, 1970). In the same vein, we are calling for a vision of Aboriginal education as “education plus,” not as “education minus”—as is, with the rarest of exception, currently the case. To nurture a generation of Turner-mode “word warriors,” Aboriginal education will require more than equality. The only way to move beyond the parity paradox—the paradox that First Nations schools must provide meaningful grounding in First Nation cultures and language to justify their existence but must also provide reasonable parity in program and achievement if their students are to be able to participate fully in Canadian society and its economy (Jerry Paquette, 1986)—is to do *more* than provincial schools do. No alchemy, moreover, exists that would provide an easy way to meet this heady challenge. As Churchill told the British people during some of the blackest days of World War II, all we have to offer is the “blood, sweat, and tears” of very hard work necessary to develop the leadership, governance, and pedagogical capacity and commitment to reinvent First Nations education as Turnerian “education plus.”

Functional Integration

To be realizable within the First Nations context, “education plus” needs to be grounded in self-determining functionally aggregated mechanisms of First Nations governance and provision. Functionally aggregated forms of self-governance can usefully be thought of as governance that transforms, structures, and integrates knowledge and resources from multiple First Nations educational governance entities to produce a new holistic, integrated, and effectively self-determining organizational structure supporting and overseeing Aboriginal education in local communities and beyond. It is a synergistic whole that is potentially much greater

than the sum of its parts. Functional aggregation implies purposefully coherent and coordinated action and it comprises cross-sectoral collaboration, cooperation, as well as ongoing modification for improved performance (including initial transformative changes when necessary). The promises of aggregation include integrative thinking and a perspective on educational issues not possible with organizational fragmentation as well as efficient utilization of scarce resources. Such *functional* integration could go far toward remedying the pandemic diseconomy of scale in education among First Nations communities. Cohesion resulting from functional integration could enable First Nations to increase not only the breadth of self-governance in education but also its depth as well.

The potential advantages of aggregated forms of self-determining governance in First Nations education are hardly news. Despite the tight grip that the myth of “local control” as a synonym for “Indian control” has had on the whole devolution saga, individual First Nations have been working together for decades through various associations, tribal councils, and education councils. Functional aggregation, however, requires more than voluntary participation when and to the extent that such participation suits immediate community educational and political priorities or preferences. Voluntary, largely ad hoc affiliation fuels fragmentation. What is needed is *functional integration*, that is, school-board-like aggregations within regional First Nations education jurisdictions.

“Aggregation” and “deep comprehensive functional integration” are not, of course, neutral words. They are heavily value-laden. Aggregation and functional integration suggest “power” and power in First Nations hands suggests purposes—and especially the ability to define and choose among them. Purposes too are anything but neutral. Purposes, and the capacity to choose them, are central to functional aggregation and integration of First Nations educational-governance entities. These entities should set the agenda for First Nations education, or at least for the part of it over which they might reasonably exercise control. *They* should limit or expand and target the range of First Nations control over their education system. *They* should frame ends and means, ponder alternatives, and decide the key educational choices and trade-offs.

Clear and well-articulated developmental purposes are necessary to coherent, sustained pursuit of certain values in ways of being, acting, and communicating. Functional aggregation and integration are background conditions necessary for coherent and purpose-driven First Nations control over First Nations education; necessary but not sufficient conditions for “education plus.” Functional aggregation and integration should not be viewed as an automatic stimulus or foolproof recipe for action that leads to efficient, effective, and appropriate self-governance. *By themselves* they are much more in the nature of “second-order change” that shapes, contextualizes, assists, permits, or inhibits particular courses of action than of “first-order change” that transforms, fosters, or shapes major courses of policy action. The distinction is an important one. It differentiates *authentically self-governing* aggregated First Nations educational entities from aggregations

that are mere “agents” of policy crafted by others. It should thus prevent the reader from mistaking second-order for first-order changes, from viewing aggregated First Nations educational entities as an unseen hand that would somehow, in and of itself, “cause” First Nations communities and groups to pursue desirable purposes or goals and undertake action appropriate to that pursuit without awareness of why they do so and, most fundamentally, *without taking responsibility for their conduct and choices*.

Ironically, to exercise meaningful jurisdiction over education, First Nations *must* devolve, or “upload”—cede if you prefer—administration, supervision, and programing to aggregate entities. Aggregate entities, in other words, whether they are called “school boards” or something else, *must be the primary vehicle of control and jurisdiction*. Whatever they are called, in the end they will need to act much like school boards—yet avoid the worst pitfalls of bureaucratic dysfunction to which school boards often fall prey.

Funding should recognize “first-level” aggregation (school-board-like entities) as the main locus of power and administrative and program capacity in First Nations education. In particular, the inherently dysfunctional notion that aggregates are mere “service providers” to individual First Nations must come to an end, and with it, funding and funding mechanisms predicated on it. A new balance between community and regional autonomy is needed. Such a balance can only be struck in the context of a new approach to funding, one that takes account of a much larger and more functionally important role for First Nations aggregate organizations, including area school-board-like entities.

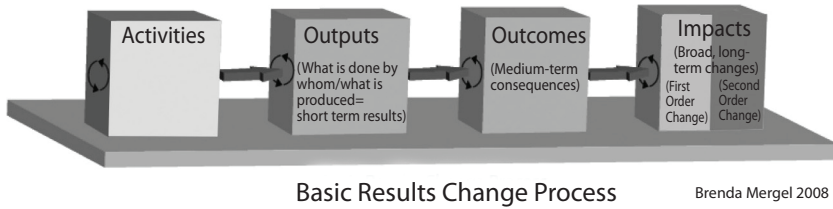
McCue (2004) summarizes persuasively the overall impact of scrambled lines of accountability on meaningful First Nations jurisdiction in education:

So, regardless of the amount of jurisdiction that the SGA provides to the First Nations (at least, in the ones examined), the affected communities must ultimately adhere to the provincial curriculum and provincial standards to educate their children. In effect, what these SGAs are saying is that, yes, a First Nation can have jurisdiction in education, but that jurisdiction must ensure that the status quo regarding the curriculum and education program are maintained in First Nations schools. There is no explicit recognition of First Nations jurisdiction in this regard. Provincial curriculum continues to be the baseline standard for First Nations education. (6)

Aboriginal education needs to be rendered accountable, in the first instance, to its Aboriginal constituents, particularly parents and community members. Ironically, that can only happen with functional aggregation beyond the community level.

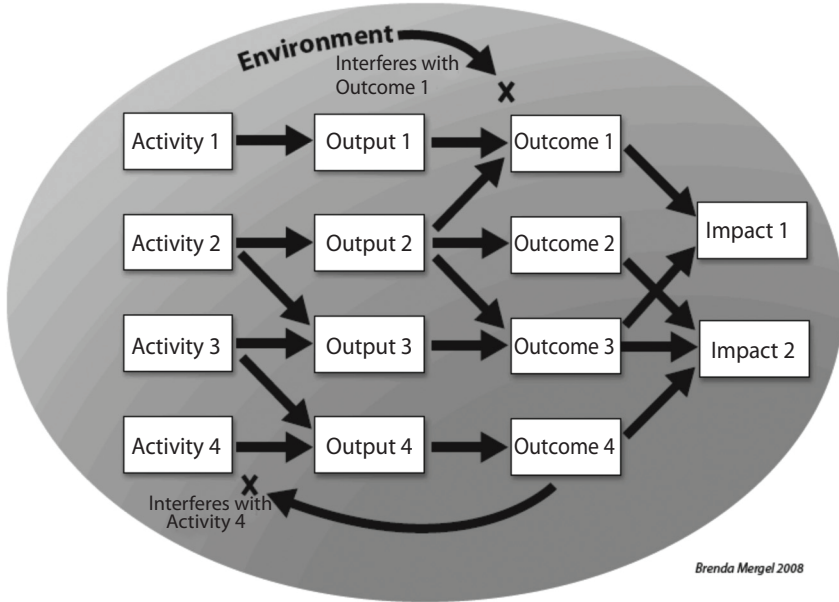
Processes for Creating a Meaningful Form of Jurisdiction

We believe that a strategic, iterative, results-based-management (RBM) approach offers the most promising method of linking and harnessing resource inputs to achieve the highly desirable impact of a creative, fruitful interdependence (culturally, socially, intellectually, economically, and so forth) between Aborigi-

Figure 12.3: A Results Chain

nal peoples and the rest of mainstream Canadian society. Such interdependence requires renewed relationships that offer appropriate—but by the same token, appropriately permeable—boundaries for Aboriginal self-determination. This type of RBM approach adopts a macro perspective and would deal with issues that underlie most current self-governance problems in First Nations education from an organizational and system perspective. RBM offers a process now broadly accepted in government for linking individual and group capacities to organizational results. This linkage is achieved through sustained focus on the internal working of self-governance to improve internal capacity on the one hand, and on relationships with and influences on and from the external non-Aboriginal environment on the other. Used with insight, commitment, and willingness to apply in-course corrections as needed, it melds institutions, social values, and the political and economic context. RBM utilizes a systemic macro-perspective on developing self-determining forms of aggregated governance by seeing such development as a dynamic process within which interlocking networks of actors (individuals, communities, and formal organizations) work effectively to enhance or change what they do both by their own initiatives and through the support of outsiders. RBM potentially offers a multi-dimensional perspective on the development of self-determining forms of First Nations governance, one where First Nations communities and their learning institutions are viewed as multi-level holistic and functionally interrelated systems. An iterative RBM model allows one to approach self-determination in First Nations education as a process implicating multiple levels and actors (Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal) in power relationships, linkages, and processes that together foster capacity building in technical skills as well as capacity to build networks and relationships, knowledge, and human resource, and finally to manage and sustain change over time.

What we propose offers a promising *process*, rather than a prefabricated solution. We can promise no more than this however strongly we believe that movement toward responsibility, accountability, and transparency within an efficient, effective, and appropriate “education plus” vision of the policy “endgame” is desperately needed in First Nations education. We offer, then, a response to the need to address current challenges in First Nations education *through multi-*

Figure 12.4: Complexity and Risk in Results Chains

Brenda Mergel 2008

dimensional processes of change, not through a set of discrete or prefabricated policy interventions intended to bring about pre-defined policy outcomes.

The central concept in any RBM model is the “results chain.” **Figure 12.3** illustrates such a chain in simplest terms. The key point is that one begins “at the end” of the chain with the ultimate long-term impacts one hopes to achieve. These desired impacts need to be re-evaluated iteratively and may change significantly over the course of any given policy lifespan. As broad, long-term results, impacts provide a working target; in fact, they are the *raison d’être* for everything else in the results chain. One starts at the end and “maps back” to outputs and outcomes that might plausibly contribute to desired “impacts,” just as a traveller first decides where she is going and then how she might get there.

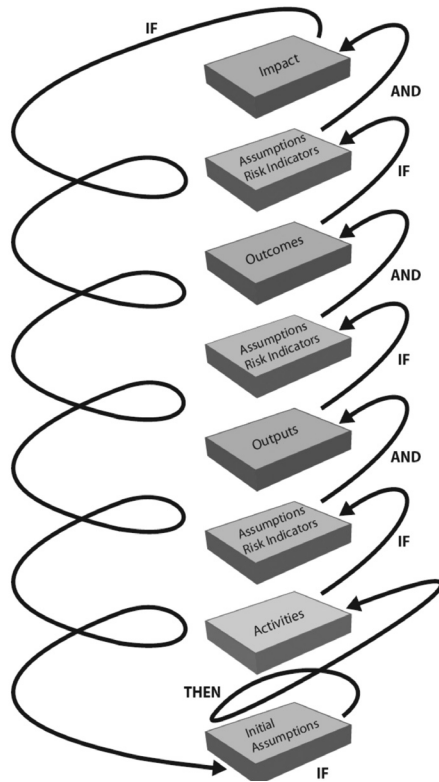
“Outputs” are what happens *directly and in the short term* as a result of policy activities associated with a results chain, transitory or short-term results if you will. Outputs consist of “what is done by whom—and to or with whom” and what is produced by activities directly associated with the results chain. “Outcomes” are medium-term consequences of the activities and outputs associated with the results chain. “Impacts,” as broad, long-term results, flow directly from the “vision” that motivated and shaped the policy in question in the first place. Impacts are intended to solve or ameliorate perceived problem sets that led policy-makers to pursue a vision of a state of affairs fundamentally better than the status quo. These problem sets reflect a “gap” between what is and what ought to be in the view of the policy-makers, advisers, and bureaucrats who together craft a tentative, “working” (in the

sense of “subject to ongoing, iterative adjustment”) results chain. Such a process should not, of course, be the exclusive domain of elected and civil-service elites. Rather, it should be embedded within a non-hierarchical participatory development process approach involving all key stakeholder constituencies. This type of process in First Nations education would require significant capacity development to establish, sustain, and empower authentically self-determining and hence participatory aggregated forms of governance. Participatory interventions need to be linked to change outcomes and contribute to building the capacity of First Nations communities and groups to develop their own understanding of what self-determining aggregated forms of governance might look like in practice. *The change process itself, moreover, should never become the main target of change effort.*

To obtain results, activities require resources, first to mount them and then to sustain them. Resources generally come in four forms: human—particularly knowledge and skills—financial, material, and political. Real-world results chains involve numerous activities with multiple outputs, a panoply of outcomes, some, perhaps many, unplanned and unforeseen, and, potentially at least, impacts; impacts which may or may not be those intended in the first place. **Figure 12.4** hints at some of the complexity and uncertainty or “risk” involved in pursuing a results chain. Some activities contribute to more than one output. Activity 3 contributes to both output 3 and output 4. Output 4, however, is leading to an unintended outcome (outcome 4) which is actually interfering with desired impact 2. Outcome 4, moreover, is also changing the way activity 4 is being carried out. Finally, things are occurring in the environment that are actively interfering with outcome 1. This is, of course, a very limited and schematic portrayal of the real complexity involved in trying to apply the results-chain logic to policy implementation. No model can capture the infinite complexity of reality and “the game” really *does* change as one plays it. Such a model, moreover, is not power-neutral. Its dynamic is linked to power issues of various sorts such as competition for limited resources or control which might constrain realization of even a broadly-shared developmental vision for First Nations education. Without doubt the issue of power is linked to focus on desired results. For instance, a focus on short-term project-driven results might undermine a long-term capacity-development priority such as authentic First Nations ownership or sustainable long-term strategies for creation of functionally aggregated self-determining forms of educational governance.

Complexity notwithstanding, such a model raises key questions that should drive policy-making firmly in the direction of an RBM model of accountability: What basic conditions and opportunities do RBM-model reforms require if they are to arrive at real accountability in Aboriginal education?

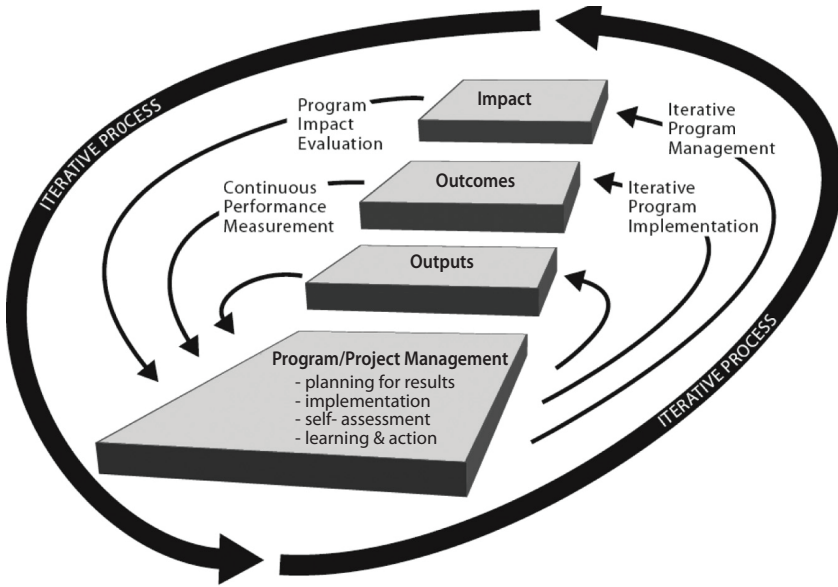
- To what extent do First Nations students—and their teachers and educational administrators—currently have access to such resources and conditions?

Figure 12.5: Risk in Results—Chain Logic

Source: *Results-Based Management in CIDA: An Introductory Guide to the Concepts and Principles*. Canadian International Development Agency, 2006, Figure 6.

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- How does the current distribution of these basic educational conditions, opportunities, and resources interface with students' current educational needs to nurturance as "word warriors"—or not?
- Who defines and judges what constitutes aggregated self-governed Aboriginal educational institutions?
- Who should define and judge what constitutes them? Whose analysis will hold sway in defining the issues and problems to be addressed moving toward functionally aggregated self-governed Aboriginal educational institutions?
- To what extent do aggregated self-governed Aboriginal educational institutions' policies ensure that all Aboriginal students have adequate and equitable opportunities to learn what an RBM educational system demands of them?

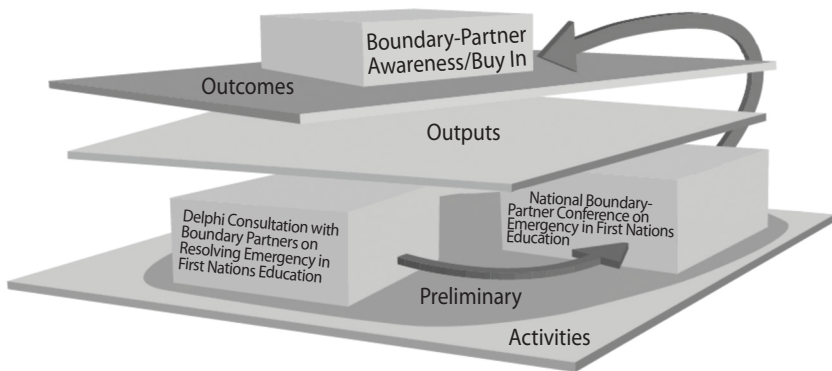
Figure 12.6: Iterative Use of Performance Information

Source: *Results-Based Management in CIDA: An Introductory Guide to the Concepts and Principles*. Canadian International Development Agency, 2006, Figure 9.

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What kind of data is available to answer these questions; to whom are data available, and what data are lacking? In short, movement toward authentic “Indian control of Indian education” through an RBM model requires that the model not be denatured into yet another externally delimited (“hierarchically encapsulated”) approach to educational accountability that leaves aggregated forms of Aboriginal governance of education unable to prevent, discover, and correct inadequacies in and inequalities among their schools.

Ultimately, the ability of a results chain to achieve planned outcomes and desired impacts depends on three things: usefulness over the short, medium, and long-term of assumptions behind the result-chain model, appropriateness and usefulness of data collected and used for “in-course corrections” during the lifetime of the results-chain policy, and finally unforeseen changes outside and inside policy activities and their multiple results chains. That’s a lot of uncertainty entailing a lot of risk. As **Figure 12.5** reveals, moreover, the risk is “cumulative,” indeed “compounded.” The further one moves along the results chain from starting assumptions toward eventual impacts, the greater the risk of encountering faulty assumptions—or assumptions that once were valid but no longer are. Such cumulative and compounded uncertainty makes it vital to collect, collate, analyze, and use interim data to adjust all aspects of the results chain iteratively over time. **Figure 12.5** captures the general sense of this continuous, multilayered, data-informed “in course correction” dynamic.

Figure 12.7: Awareness and Buy-in—Difficult but Necessary First Steps

Data relevant to outputs, outcomes, and impacts need to feed back regularly into overall program or policy-management strategic planning. Adjustments should then be made in outputs in order to modify outcomes appropriately and, as necessary, even targeted impacts themselves.

None of this, of course, should be taken as an argument in favour of vagueness and uncertainty in any aspect of the initial planning of the results chain. We simply wish to acknowledge that serious risks exist in any real-world policy results chain and that the only way to exercise some control over them is to take careful account of them iteratively over time (See **Figure 12.6**). The fuzzier one is at the beginning on the desired impacts that justify a results chain and provide direction to it through backward mapping, the greater the chance of confusion, conflict, and failure.

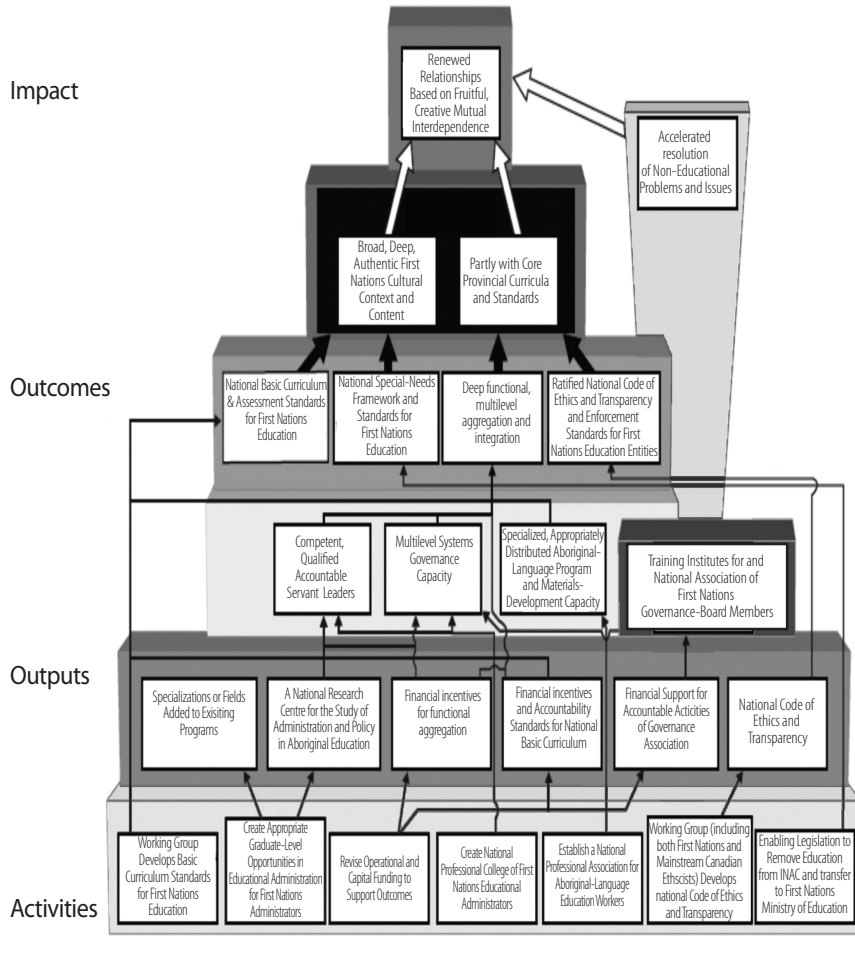
Most “stage theories” of policy implementation or change begin with awareness and initial “buy in” by key stakeholders. **Figure 12.7** translates this difficult but necessary initial step into RBM language and imagery, although it admittedly conceals far more than it reveals. First, it fails to raise the bottom-line political question of what might move First Nations educational leaders who are reasonably satisfied with the current fragmentation of First Nations Conference control of education and resulting local political-economy payoffs from a fragmented status quo to participate in such a process, much less “buy into” the existence of an emergency in First Nations education or a pressing need for serious change—especially change that would fundamentally and permanently alter responsibility and accountability in First Nations education. The only possible response to that question is, after all, “nothing,” at least in the current context within which they live and work. It is far easier simply to blame the federal government and inadequate funding for any shortcomings that exist in First Nations education.

Barring an unlikely collective “crisis of conscience” on the part of such leaders, only resolute and courageous action by the federal government to insist on funda-

mental accountability in the sense obviously intended by the Auditor-General in her highly critical reports on First Nations education is likely to trigger First Nations “buy in” into this type of RBM process. Only federal insistence on accountability in the sense of program value-added for dollars spent in student learning and socialization, would provoke a shared sense of crisis sufficient to trigger this type of fundamental, “out of the box” rethinking of the parameters in the context within which First Nations education currently occurs.

Several policy “wildcards,” however, seem to us to be in play at the moment. Taken together, these might make a firm stance on the part of the federal government on the accountability issue more likely than it seems at present. First, the *Zeitgeist* of our time is solidly aligned against waste and in favour of responsibility and accountability. Second, the current prime minister is reputedly closely linked to Tom Flanagan, whose radical “white paper liberal” stance (to use Turner’s descriptor) on First Nations issues is widely known (2000). At the moment, it seems entirely plausible that Prime Minister Harper might succeed in obtaining a majority government in the near future in which case all bets are off, in our view, about the sustainability of the status quo in Indian affairs generally but especially in education. Finally, there is always the unexpected. The possibility exists that some unforeseen event that attracts heavy media attention may provoke outrage on the part of either mainstream Canadians or Aboriginal leaders, or even both, about the status quo in Aboriginal education.

Assuming Aboriginal education should arrive at some such “critical juncture” (Koenig, 1986), who are the “boundary partners,” “individuals, groups, and organizations with whom the program interacts directly and with whom the program anticipates opportunities for influence” (Patton, 2001) that should be at the table in such consultations and why? Also, how should such consultations occur and why? The national First Nations organizations would have to be central players, but not the only players, in such consultations—and they could not wield veto power over the process itself. Furthermore, such consultations could only be fruitful if it was understood from the beginning by all participants that the status quo was substantially untenable *and would no longer be supported by the federal government*. It seems clear to us that at least the Chiefs’ Committee on Education (CCOE), the National Indian Education Council (NIEC), the Assembly of First Nations (AFN) and the Assembly of First Nations of Quebec would have to be central players at this consultation table. It is equally clear to us that the Council of Ministers of Education of Canada (CMEC) would need to be at the table as well—and for an excellent albeit not-immediately-evident reason. The CMEC produces the Pan-Canadian Assessment Program (PCAP), successor to its School Achievement Indicators Program (SAIP), a national comparative assessment of learning and reading, math, and science on the part of 13 year olds across Canada. To produce PCAP and SAIP, CMEC has been and continues to be involved in creating national assessments grounded in elementary and primary curricula across Canada and hence in “distilling” the most important components of such curricula, *a major*

Figure 12.8: An RMB starting point for transfer of responsibility and accountability

part of what needs to occur in establishing a basic cross-Canada First Nations curriculum framework.

The federal government would also need to be appropriately represented, and that surely means not simply by an education representative from INAC. What is at stake here, after all, is institutionalization of real responsibility and accountability for First Nations education on the part of First Nations entities—once and for all unscrambling crossed lines of accountability. As a crucial step in that direction, all residual education functions of INAC should be targeted for termination in the shortest reasonable time frame. While it is certainly appropriate and necessary that the Minister of Indian Affairs be at the table, the Minister of Finance and Chair of the Treasury Board should also have senior representation at the table since substantial resource issues will arise if the changes we propose go forward.

Such consultations should be reasonably thorough but they should not extend over more than eight months, given the urgency of the need for change. A functional working-committee structure would facilitate the work of the group and firm timelines should be set and adhered to throughout the process with a clear understanding that the process cannot and will not be bogged down by committees that don't do their homework on time. It seems to us that standard "post-presentational" procedures would likely be the most effective (clear description of problems and issues that arise from an initial Delphi exercise followed by delegation to appropriate working committees that would report back to the entire "table" for discussion followed by a two-week period for discussion and notice of motions and then a final meeting for a vote on the motions). The purpose of the preliminary consultation, it should be remembered, would be awareness and "buy in," and hence, necessarily, finding common grounds for that buy-in. Although matters of substance will undoubtedly arise, focus would have to be kept on the endgame—ultimate transfer of real control and responsibility for First Nations education to First Nations entities. Ideally the Prime Minister himself should chair at least the first meeting and should make it clear that the status quo is not an option.

Figure 12.8 offers, in our view, a workable RBM starting point for institutionalization of meaningful responsibility for First Nations education on the part of First Nations entities and for taking major steps away from the current crossed lines of accountability and thus toward a "word warrior" "education plus" that will be a source of pride and satisfaction to all the boundary partners in the process. A real-world RBM would be significantly larger, more comprehensive, and undoubtedly more complex. It would, for example, need to deal explicitly with post-secondary issues. These are present only implicitly in **Figure 12.8**. Still, we believe that **Figure 12.8** provides a reasonably clear idea of what kinds of activities, outputs, and outcomes are needed to move toward a First Nations education plus that joins broad, deep, authentic First Nations cultural context and content on the one hand to parity with core provincial curricula and standards on the other. As we have stressed, any RBM map toward those impacts will need in-course adjustments on a regular basis as it goes forward. Nonetheless, the model portrayed in **Figure 12.8** offers a plausible and potentially useful beginning point, we believe, for a promising alternative to a status quo that pleases no one except those who profit from it.

Not surprisingly, given our treatment of these issues in previous sections of this chapter, the key outcome building blocks in this vision are:

- a national basic curriculum and assessment standards for First Nations education
- a national special-needs framework and standards
- deep functional, multi-level aggregation and integration
- a ratified national code of ethics and transparency with clear and effective

enforcement standards

To realize such outcomes, we think that some minimum “winning conditions” have to be in place, in particular:

- a highly consultative and participatory but also clearly time-delimited process
- openness and transparency—transparent process and decision-making and committed human and financial resources to plan and implement results-oriented actions
- awareness and understanding—all impacted parties/stakeholders are aware of, understand, and accept the issues of self-determining governance of First Nations education, as well as the implied changes and capacity needs
- the presence of the right parties/stakeholders at the table—Who would champion the policy initiatives? Who could provide financial and technical expertise? Who would be impacted? Who would be the direct and indirect beneficiaries? Who with no current voice needs special attention? Who would be supporting and/or opposing such a process?

Furthermore, an adequate pool of competent, qualified, competent, accountable “servant leaders” are needed—leaders with the capacity to operate a complex multi-level education “system” worthy of the name.

To develop a sufficient pool of suitable “servant leaders,” appropriate graduate-level programs and concentrations are urgently needed. Resources need major redirection and, almost certainly, significant new money will be needed to realize this vision although we do not believe by any means that all of this money should come from the federal government. Of particular importance are financial incentives to promote and encourage accountable use of a national basic curriculum and related assessment standards. Appropriate support, education, and training for those involved in the governance of First Nations education are urgently needed.

Engaging in such a process will lead to some “hard lessons,” by any standards—especially for those who are in favour of and profit from the status quo. However, we believe that such lessons will be welcomed by leaders imbued with a sense of stewardship and of their rightful status as “servants” of Aboriginal learners as by those who seek to renew Aboriginal education as an integral and essential part of renewing First Nations relationships with settler governments and with the non-Aboriginal people of Canada. We firmly believe that an RBM-based process designed through facilitative and participatory approaches can lead to long-term sustainability for functionally aggregated First Nation self-governing learning institutions capable of addressing cross-sectoral educational challenges. Furthermore, the RBM-based process seems the only type of process likely to be able to do so. Such a process can provide a much-needed platform for a clear mission

and mandate, clear goals, and appropriate ethics and values as well as appropriate functions, systems, and resources.

Concluding Comments

It has become increasingly apparent that the current balkanized approach to First Nations education is an insurmountable impediment to effective, efficient, and ethical self-governance. It fails to develop, sustain, and integrate a critical mass of capacities needed to address educational challenges faced by First Nations communities and, at the same time, it is constrained by values and governance concepts too narrow for the problem of interdependence and trust with mainstream society. The current policy gridlock reality calls for a new governance ethic and different forms of and status for aggregated self-determining governance entities in First Nations education. A move toward functionally aggregated structures of governance in First Nations education will require development of innovative forms of educational organizations that incorporate and are consistent with shared systems of values and developmental purpose for education. Such a transition will require a profound transformation of entire Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal components of society and culture. Both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal communities will have to change their way of thinking about the governance of First Nations education from a fragmentary to a holistic one and develop a new governance ethic based on coexistence and respectful mutual interdependence within and among First Nations as well as between First Nations and mainstream Canadian society; interdependence framed within evolving Aboriginal identity protected by appropriate boundaries.

We are convinced that First Nations communities will need to undergo pervasive and consequential transformations if they are to regain agency over the education of their children. What we are proposing are transformations that will be so profound that it is hard to predict fully their final nature and implications. However, if and to the degree that these transformations toward functionally aggregated forms of governance in education unfold, resistance to them will inevitably develop. As aggregation and integration of local forms of governance proceed, as has been the case recently in the broader world of public education across Canada, fragmentation tendencies will hopefully dissipate as the processes and fruits of functional aggregation come to be appreciated.

As previously indicated in this chapter, our reasoning about First Nations education is underpinned by conviction that potentially useful critical analysis must go beyond the current understanding of self-governance as strictly local control. Such critical analysis should focus on reversing the resulting balkanization dynamics reflected in absurdly dysfunctional diseconomies of scale, as well as the associated lack of accountability, opaque decision-making process, and absence of over-arching developmental purpose that plague First Nations education in Canada. We find the notion of fragmentation particularly apropos

here, as it captures these tensions between forces of disaggregation and aggregation at play in First Nations educational governance. Fragmentation is also a grating word. It is bothersome and uncomfortable. Its annoying connotations, however, may in fact be just what are needed here. Indeed, its abrasiveness forced us to stay in touch through this chapter with its conceptual opposites (respect, cooperation, interdependence, cohesion, and solidarity, for instance) and their hopeful implications for First Nations education.

Finally, our exploration and critique of the phenomenon of First Nations educational governance led us to conclude that it is a rich laboratory for probing, and hopefully reversing, the dynamics of fragmentation and resulting diseconomies of scale among Aboriginal communities. First Nations educational governance should be a site *par excellence* where the main goal should be to integrate the values, practices, and developmental purposes of diverse Aboriginal communities into an aggregated form of self-determining governance. Failing that, however, it could also unfortunately become the site of such powerful impulses toward even greater fragmentation that it would disintegrate into a multitude of locally situated under-performing First Nations educational fiefdoms constantly struggling with one another for a greater share of the resource “crumbs” available to them—resource “crumbs” that could never begin to keep pace with the insatiable demands of a radically fragmented non-system.

Endnotes

- 1 Good governance depends on transparency, accountability, and equity in ways that are responsive to people's needs.
- 2 By "developmental aspiration" we mean a vision of the capacities and resources needed by Aboriginal communities to achieve their own understanding of what it is to lead a worthwhile life (conception of human good and ideals of human excellence) as an Aboriginal citizen within the broader Canadian context, or capacities and resources deemed essential to First Nations self-determination.
- 3 After a great deal of thought and discussion we prefer "flourishing" in this context to the more anodyne—and typically Anglophone—"development" usage. We believe that "flourishing" much more accurately captures what we believe should be the ultimate social and economic policy objective of Aboriginal and First Nations affairs.
- 4 Some of the Yukon agreements come at it from a slightly different direction—but the coupling to territorial education is nonetheless clear in them.
- 5 First Nations that opt to participate in educational jurisdiction under this legislation enter into a *Canada–First Nation Education Jurisdiction Agreement*. This agreement will give the participating First Nations in BC control over education in their communities. They will be allowed to design and deliver education programs and services which are culturally relevant for their communities and provincially recognized.
- 6 These issues of legitimacy may be caused by a lack of fit between the formal institutions of governance and Aboriginal conceptions of how authority should be organized and exercised. The perceived legitimacy among aboriginal peoples of any form of Aboriginal self-governance in education will depend on the fit between those forms of self-governance and Aboriginal political culture (Cornell, Jorgensen, and Kalt 2002).
- 7 Accountability is basically a matter of responsiveness: are governing institutions and leaders responsive to constituents, funding agencies, and the like, and can they be held accountable for what they do (Cornell, Jorgensen, and Kalt 2002)?
- 8 Legitimacy is basically a matter of value and beliefs: do members of a community or constituents believe that governing institutions are appropriate for them? Legitimacy of a governing institution arises to a considerable extent from "cultural match," from the degree of fit between the formal organization of government and the community's beliefs about how political things—such as exercising power, making decisions, and representing interests—should be done (Cornell, Jorgensen, and Kalt 2002).
- 9 School governance, First Nations or otherwise, is never a closed system. To keep our diagram reasonably comprehensible, however, we have not included influences exogenous to the "system" as we have shown it. All manner of issues and contextual realities, national and international, impinge on government policy toward First Nations, including funding levels and allocation for First Nations education. Our purpose here is to focus analytically on voice, authority, and accountability links between citizen-residents (band/community members) and their local schools.
- 10 This definition, of course, neatly sidesteps the issue of whether the "results" in question are "process" results (e.g., classes provided in certain content areas perhaps taught to certain standards) or "outcome" results such as average test performance, acceptable "gains" in test or multiple-assessment results. The issue is an important one, but for purposes of a simplified model of governance, it's better left to the side.
- 11 For Levy and Merry (1986), first-order change consists of minor adjustments that do not change the system's core. Second-order changes involve changes in all of the following categories: the organizational paradigm defined as the underlying assumptions that shape perceptions, procedures, and behaviors in an organization; organizational purpose and mission; organizational culture, which includes the beliefs, values, and norms shared within the organization; and functional processes that include organizational structures, decision-making processes, and communication patterns.

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