

**Lessons Learned from a Northern Alternative School:
An Ethnography Study**

**"I LEARN BEST WHEN SURROUNDED BY NATURE, DOGS, AND HIPPIES"
LESSONS LEARNED FROM A NORTHERN ALTERNATIVE SCHOOL:
AN ETHNOGRAPHIC STUDY**

By

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Abstract

The Carcross Community Education Centre ("CCEC") was an educational experiment that operated during the 1970's in the Yukon. I was involved in the school as a summer worker, student and parent member. No evaluation of this experiment has been undertaken although various former community members have documented and reflected on the experience. I surveyed 109 former community members to evaluate CCEC's impact, especially on the educational pursuits and careers of former students. Respondents reported that relationships and a sense of community, engagement and authentic learning, opportunities to learn in more hands-on ways, and a supportive environment all contributed to their later success in life, as reflected in high levels of post-secondary education and significant contributions to the adult communities where they live. Implications for current teaching practice include increasing student engagement by providing more hands-on and authentic learning experiences, and a greater focus on teacher-student relationships and the impact of the environments in which students learn.

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Thanks to Greg Bryce and Jennifer Bazett, webmasters extraordinaire, for hosting the invitation to participate in this project on the Carcross Community Education Centre website, and to the 109 respondents who took the time to respond to the survey. I couldn't have done this project without your willingness to reflect back on that short but exciting time in our lives and to offer your collective input and wisdom. Special thanks to founding parent members Ann Love and Charlie Lenz for sharing their research on Carcross, and to Bishop John Frame for his brilliance turning a former Indian residential school building into an educational experience that impacted so many lives in a positive way.

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Dedication

As I put the finishing touches on this research project my father-in-law, Bob Chalmers, the last of the maverick math teachers, passed away at 91 years of age. His appreciation for the importance of life-long learning was with him to the end. That we discussed this paper days before he died is testimony to his dedication as a teacher right to the end of his 91 years. This research project is dedicated to Bob (June 9, 1923 – December 31, 2014).

Lessons Learned from a Northern Alternative School: An Ethnography Study

"I learn best when surrounded by nature, dogs, and hippies": Lessons Learned from a Northern Alternative School, an Ethnographic Study

Chapter 1: Introduction

From 1970 to 1977, I was involved, on and off, in an alternative school in the Yukon. My own experience at the Carcross Community Education Centre ("CCEC") profoundly changed my life and influenced my decision to become a public school teacher. The impact CCEC had on me prompted me to wonder what impact the experience had on others who participated as students, workers, and parent members, as teachers were called. This paper looks at the elements of that experience that had the greatest impact and attempts to draw out what themes or aspects of that experience might be applied in current education, especially for students who are not succeeding in the typical classroom.

Background

The Carcross Community Education Centre was an educational experiment. However like many other educational innovations, systematic evaluation has not previously been done. Housed in the former Chooutla Indian Residential School building, close to the tiny village of Carcross, just south of Whitehorse, Yukon, the school was started in 1972 by Bishop John Frame, of the Anglican Diocese of Yukon (Love, 1990, Lenz, 2012). It took over a year to get the abandoned building fit for students to live in and at its peak CCEC provided a home and a high school education for about eighty students. Most were from across Canada, with

a small percentage from the north. Parent members, as the teachers were called, ranged in age from their early twenties to late fifties. They came from a wide variety of backgrounds and brought a range of experience to the community and its students. Many were not formally trained teachers. A third category of community members was called “workers”. Workers were often young people who had finished high school or university and who wanted to participate in the community, but who had not applied to become parent members. Some parent members were workers or students, or both, before becoming parent members. As I had various roles in this community, as worker, student, and parent member, many of the descriptions in the background section of this paper are from personal knowledge and so, for brevity, do not have citations or references.

In this paper, the Carcross Community Education Center will be referred to as both “CCEC” and as “Carcross”, which is how most former community members refer to it. Context will distinguish it from the village of Carcross close to which the school was located.

Perhaps one of CCEC’s most important aspects was that it operated as a community, where everyone lived on site, and where everyone had a say and a role to play. Members shared responsibility for the ongoing functioning of the aging residential school building, and for all of the other necessary tasks to meet the day-to-day and educational needs of community members.

The school program at CCEC allowed each student to tackle school work in an individualized way and from a very broad perspective. In fact, the school program at CCEC

was described as “education in the broadest sense of the word”. Students did school work at various hours of the day and in various locations throughout the school, integrating “academic” learning with the geographical context and the necessary tasks to keep the school running. For example, a student’s day might include cooking breakfast for eighty people in the morning, a Forestry class spent looking at and measuring trees, and a one-on-one tutorial discussing a novel as part of an English 12 credit.

CCEC provided student members with a wide array of experiences they could be given credit for, including working in a large garden and tending to a barn full of animals. There were also opportunities for students to work in the bakery, wood shop, and automotive shop, and there was a lively drama, music, and creative arts component, much of which occurred spontaneously. Students earned physical education credits by participating in outdoor activities such as snowshoeing, skiing, hunting, fishing, canoeing, and hiking.

CCEC was a private institution that operated as a school from September 1973 until June 1979, when it was unable to continue without government funding. Parent members at the time rejected government funding, as it would have meant altering CCEC’s way of delivering its educational program to conform to the requirements of the regular school system. Although CCEC followed the British Columbia curriculum, like other Yukon schools, its philosophy of “education in the broadest sense of the word” meant that the curriculum was interpreted in a more hands-on experiential way than most public schools. Rather than compromise its principles and beliefs about education, community members and the Standing Committee, consisting of members of the Anglican Diocese, including Bishop

Frame, decided to close the doors. The economy had also changed, and families had become more conservative, less interested in spending \$1,500 per year on tuition for their teenagers to spend a year or two at an alternate school in the Yukon. In addition, the recession of the early 1980s meant parent members were no longer as willing or able to spend two years making virtually no money, given the \$50 honorarium they were paid each month. The building also needed extensive repairs in order to continue. By that time, three floors of the building had already been shut down to reduce operating costs and allow the community to operate for one additional year (Lenz, 2012).

My Personal Involvement in Carcross.

I first came to the Yukon from Edmonton, Alberta in the summer of 1970 as a member of Project Yukon, a program for Anglican youth who came as volunteers to work with parish priests painting and repairing church buildings, cleaning up grave yards and providing summer programming for young people in the rural communities. I had been involved with the Anglican Youth Movement for a number of years and this seemed like an exciting opportunity. These summer projects were the impetus for Bishop Frame to solidify his vision for a year round program that was also a high school. After my first summer in the Yukon, I endured another year or two at a big public high school in Edmonton waiting for CCEC to be ready for students, hoping I would have an opportunity to experience this alternative and finish grade twelve there. Finally, in the summer of 1973, I returned to the Yukon to help renovate the building to house students. Later, I became a student and

completed my high school requirements. Several years later, I returned to CCEC as a parent member.

At that time, the likelihood that I would become a high school teacher was rather remote, based on my early school experiences, which included failing kindergarten and grade one, being put on medication for my hyperactive behaviour, and having an undiagnosed learning disability. I never read a book until CCEC and felt like school was a waste of time. I thought, and still believe, that had I not attended CCEC it would never have occurred to me to choose teaching as a profession. At the most recent reunion, in 2009, which was attended by over 100 former community members, I began to realize that I was not the only one who felt this way about the impact of CCEC had, and I grew to think that the success many former members described was significant enough that it would be worth examining whether there was a correlation between their later success and their early experiences at Carcross.

The Problem

CCEC provided a hands-on, experiential education that still affects the way I approach each day. Former student members, including me, often comment that many of the positive outcomes in their lives are a result of their experiences at CCEC. Now in their fifties, sixties and seventies, the people I shared the CCEC experience with never cease to amaze me, and the stories they tell about how their lives have unfolded since CCEC often include a continuing influence of that experience. The fact that so many people who attended CCEC

went on to do remarkable things has frequently prompted me to wonder about the impact of that experience.

Another reason I have wondered about the impact of the Carcross experience is that my years of working in the Yukon public school system have given me a close up view of the ways in which our education system fails to serve many of our students, especially those who learn in less typical ways, and those attending school in rural Yukon communities.

Concerns such as low graduation rates, lack of interest in school, and limited course selection in rural schools, especially in hands-on or other experiential courses, have prompted me think about what could be done differently to ensure that every student has an opportunity to be successful.

As a wood shop teacher, I saw students every day who were struggling with academic subjects in order to be accepted into post-secondary institutions. Many of these students felt badly about their abilities. My own son, who was diagnosed with a learning disability when he was in grade three, was not served well in the typical classroom setting and was well on his way to becoming a behaviour problem. He didn't begin to flourish until he participated in "MAD" (Music, Art, Drama and Dance), a semester long program where students function like a theatre troupe and the learning is largely hands-on and project based, and which he attended during one semester for three consecutive grades!

Motivated by the shortfalls I perceived, my goal for this project was to gather and analyze data about the impact on former CCEC students and parent members who participated in

this unique alternative educational experience, and to see how or if the opportunity they had to learn in a different environment affected how they made decisions, pursued further education, and chose careers after leaving Carcross. I anticipated that many respondents would say they started their life's work at the CCEC community. The 'go for it, just do it!' ethos of CCEC encouraged students to take chances and to learn from their mistakes. Although these students may have ended up in their current careers without attending CCEC, I anticipated that their descriptions of their experiences at the school and the role CCEC played in influencing their future paths might have significant potential to deepen our understanding of the impact of those experiences, to draw some conclusions that could be applied in the current educational environment, and to see if we could generate new hypotheses about alternate and experiential education models.

Given the apparent impact of Carcross on those who attended, and my concern that the current way of teaching is not reaching all students, my intent was to investigate and document the experiences and impact CCEC had on former students, workers and parent members as reported to me through an online survey with follow-up face-to-face interviews.

The Rationale

Through this project I set out to investigate the way students lived and learned at CCEC and what impact those ways of living and learning have had on their lives. When I began this project, my view was that the opportunities students had at CCEC resulted in effective and

meaningful learning experiences because they were hands-on and authentic, and my belief is that students today would benefit from more opportunities to learn in these ways.

In one of my focus groups a former parent member related an interesting conversation with the artist Ted Harrison, who was, at that time (1972), teaching in the public school in the Carcross village. Harrison was familiar with the Summerhill School in England and had some film(s) of the school, which he shared with the original parent members who were in the process of developing the philosophy and practices to be used at CCEC. Understanding how Summerhill worked makes it clear that many of the principles on which CCEC was built were borrowed from Summerhill after parent members watched this footage.

Summerhill School, founded in 1921, is a co-educational boarding school in Suffolk, England, about 150 kilometres south of London that began as an experimental school. A.S. Neill (1960), its founder, said it was initially a demonstration school and that it eventually demonstrated that freedom works. Summerhill is described as “the oldest childrens’ democracy in the world”, and is known as the original alternative “free” school (Readhead, 2014). It continues to be an influential model for progressive, democratic education and like CCEC, many Summerhill students say it was “the most meaningful experience in their lives” (Readhead, 2014).

Interestingly, a casual search for research about other “alternative” schools revealed that most modern alternative high schools are more “last chance” alternatives for inner city

students or at risk adolescents who are not successful in the regular system, unlike CCEC or Summerhill, which attracted more of a cross section of students.

Experiential Learning

Another reason for undertaking this inquiry is that if the data from CCEC is never examined, those of us who participated will take this experiment to our graves. As an educator in the current educational system, I believe this would be a disservice to all of the time, effort, and money that was spent to provide this unique educational opportunity, as well as a real loss in terms of what might be learned for educating today's students. I feel there is already compelling anecdotal evidence to suggest that the learning that occurred at CCEC may offer current educators a deeper understanding of the impact of experiential and non-traditional learning and suggest some factors that would support students in their learning.

Numerous researchers suggest that students whose learning styles are more visual, spatial, or kinaesthetic need hands-on learning experiences in order to be successful (Gardner, 1983; Silverman, 2002; Crawford, 2009). While traditional learning situations involve the content being delivered by an instructor who teaches in his or her own favoured learning style, experiential learning involves both the learner and instructor responding to the experience and learning by discovering and constructing solutions to real-world problems. This approach, of trying something over and over and learning from one's mistakes, is known as *Kolb's Theory of Experiential Learning* (Kolb, 1976).

Kolb believed that the most important element of experiential learning was that it involves learning by doing, and that ideas are not fixed, but formed and reformed through experience. His theory is that the direct experience of the activity is the major factor in the student's learning, not reading or talking about the concept or listening to the teacher outline the facts, but actually participating. Often, the activity will have a kinetic or physical element such as a meeting, field work, or a simulation that allows the student to role play a real life activity. School designer and architect, Randall Fielding supports this view. In his film, *Designing Schools for 21st Century Learners*, he says that: "We learn when learning is real, that we learn when we are truly engaged, and that many students learn by doing" (Fielding, 2009).

The four elements of Kolb's theory, concrete experience, observation and reflection, the formation of abstract concepts, and testing in new situations, are often seen as a circle in which a student should be able to start at any given point and move on to the next element. According to Kolb's model, concrete experience is followed by learners thinking about what they did and what happened. In the process of reflecting on what happened, they make changes, and apply the changes to alter their understanding before trying out their altered concept to see if further changes are required (Kolb & Yeganeh, 2011).

According to Kolb (1984), the concrete experience is most necessary when a student is first learning a new skill or activity, as they may have limited experience, and the concrete experience is necessary before students can reflect on the activity. The teacher in an experiential situation is the facilitator, and students interact with the environment, only needing the instructor if they have difficulty or to ensure safety.

In experiential learning situations, students are actively engaged in their learning, an experience I believe to be more effective for many students. It is my contention that experiential learning has particular applications for dissatisfied, at-risk students as well as for students from cultures and societies whose traditions are more hands-on, or who have lived more in touch with their physical environments, such as many Yukon First Nations students. Silverman (2002) and Hartmann (2003) suggest that it is also important to take into account that students who are more “right-brained” or visual-spatial will be more engaged by visual and hands-on activities.

Research Purpose and Questions

The purpose of this study is to determine what impact, in terms of approaches to learning and living in a community, CCEC had on the students and parent members who participated in this educational experiment, and to look at whether these factors could be used to engage students today, especially those living in the north. Much of what students did at CCEC was experiential. Students were allowed and encouraged to try again if they needed the opportunity to perfect their learning. In commencing this study, I was interested to learn how this affected their educational, professional, and personal lives. I was also interested in learning what impact living together in a community had on students’ experiences and learning.

The three research questions for this study were:

1. What ongoing effect did the CCEC experience have on the lives of the students who attended? How did it affect their career and educational choices?
2. What made learning successful for students at CCEC?
3. In particular, what factors that made learning successful for students at CCEC could be applied to students in Yukon schools today?

The Research Context

All good science teachers tell their students that when they do an experiment, they should keep track of and analyze the data. For over thirty years, the data about CCEC has been collectively housed in the minds of former students and parent members. In addition, the student records, documents, photographs, and paperwork from the school when it closed are now housed in the Yukon Archives. I have been unable to locate any study that has undertaken to gather and analyze these data with a view to learning from this innovative educational experiment.

In 2009, former community members gathered together in the village of Carcross, near where the school was located, to celebrate the thirty-year anniversary of the school's closure. In the same valley where we lived together three decades earlier, former students and parent members from all over North America gathered to talk about what CCEC meant to them, and how their lives have unfolded since then. My strong sense, from that weekend, was that many of these people are accomplished and successful. What interested me, in particular, were those who left regular school programs to come to CCEC, either because

they weren't doing well there or weren't engaged in learning. At this reunion, many former students and parent members reported that their experiences at CCEC were turning points in their lives, and that they felt privileged and fortunate to have had the experience.

On the final evening of the reunion, a former student led a circle during which approximately eighty former members shared their reflections about the impact CCEC had on their lives. Those gathered spoke passionately about their experiences and many attributed their later success in life to what they learned, and how they grew, during their years at CCEC. Some attributed the fact that they finished high school to their experience at CCEC. I realized, during that weekend, that if this study was not undertaken soon, recollections of people's individual and collective experiences would be lost, and the opportunity to learn from it gone. Given my concern that today's way of educating students often does not meet all students' needs, I did not want to lose the chance to collect and analyze the CCEC experience and experiment to see what might inform or improve current teaching practice.

At CCEC, the experiential learning ethic was often articulated as "Just do it!" When I began to look at this research, I was interested to see whether former students and staff felt that this approach was still relevant in their lives, and what lessons learned at CCEC, over thirty years ago, might help educators today engage students. Anecdotal evidence suggested to me that there was something to be learned, and my hope, in undertaking this study, was that its findings would result in some recommendations and guidance for engaging students in northern schools today.

Chapter 2: Readings and Other Influences on My Thinking

A number of teachers, sociologists and writers have influenced my thinking about how students learn best and how best to prepare young people for the world and work force they will enter, which is surely one of the goals of public education.

One of these writers is carpenter/teacher, Ron Berger, who writes about the power of community in educational settings. Although it may not be realistic for schools to involve students in the daily running of the school, Berger provides examples of situations where, at a minimum, students and teachers meet daily, "both to share work and to work at maintaining a school that is polite and safe for all students-physically safe and emotionally safe" (Berger, 2003).

Berger's view is that these connections and the formation of relationships in the school context create a school culture that is the key to excellence. He writes that:

When children enter a family culture, a community culture, or a school culture that demands and supports excellence, they work to fit into that culture. A culture of excellence transcends race, class, and geography; it doesn't matter what colour, income, or background the children come from. Once those children enter a culture with a powerful ethic, that ethic becomes the norm. It's what they know. (2003)

Berger (2003) writes and speaks about schools that have amazing results: those that have 95 percent student graduation rates with 90% of graduates then attending college; those who appear to be outliers in relation to most schools around them, despite the fact that their

students are largely from low-income and non-white families for whom the predicted graduation rate is dismal. He says it is the culture these schools have created that makes the difference:

One thing clear to me though is that the power of the culture rests in community. When I've visited effective schools I've been struck with this realization though the settings and resources are often wildly different, every effective school I've seen has a strong sense of community. I've seen this in elite residential private schools and in successful inner-city programs for former school dropouts. Students and staff in all of these settings feel that they are a part of something-belong to something. (Berger, 2003)

Berger (2003) suggests a number of ways to create community in modern schools and to make things more human, including breaking students into separate houses or teams, limiting the number of other students each student has to deal with, assigning students to small advisory groups for multiple years, giving students mentors from the professional world outside of school or from the faculty or student body, and employing student focus groups, student panels, or peer mediators to address problems.

Daniel Pink (2005) writes about the stellar graduation rates at American schools such as Hip Hop High and "CHAD". Hip Hop High is a charter school that connects with at-risk students through a hip-hop music program. "CHAD", the Charter High School for Architecture and Design, is a learning community focused on integrating the design process with the mastery of a strong liberal arts education. Pink suggests that student success results from providing students with ways to learn in line with both how they learn and what they need to know for the future. His view is that many of the knowledge based jobs are being outsourced to Asia, with the result that students are going to need a different set of skills than they needed forty or fifty years ago.

Matthew B. Crawford is a shop teacher and motorcycle mechanic who also has a PhD. In his book, *Shop Class as Soulcraft* (2009), he argues that the separation of thinking from doing has devalued the experience of making and fixing things with our hands and that manual trades require careful thinking and provides both challenges and satisfaction. He supports Pink's view that many occupations formerly thought to guarantee high earnings and success are now being outsourced to other countries, while the person who can repair a car and a kitchen sink continues to be needed close to home.

Despite the direction the labour force seems to be heading, we continue to separate the work of the body and work of the brain and have vocabulary for doing so - white collar versus blue collar, new knowledge work versus old-style industry and service, neck up and neck down (Rose, 2004). Rose (2004) suggests that the academic-vocational divide has defined the high school experience for many young people and "undercut the cognitive possibilities of common work and those who do it". He refers to the "paradox of vocational education" – the separation of hand and brain, through the separation of vocational courses from academic courses in our high schools. Crawford (2009) agrees and points to the dilemma created by replacing shop programs with computer labs. He notes that "It is a rare person who is naturally inclined to sit still for sixteen years in school, and then indefinitely at work, yet with the dismantling of high school shop programs this has become the one size - fits - all norm, even as we go on about "diversity", and even in the face of research that suggests that boys, in particular, seem to learn better through direct hands-on activities and don't do well sitting and listening because of their patterns of attention (Kaser & Halbert, 2009).

As one CCEC student wrote:

I don't think my academic marks were any different at Carcross than at public high-school. They were satisfactory. What captivated me at Carcross was all the additional learning outside the classroom: cooking for 100, bakery, farming, wood shop, log-cabin building, fish camp, craft, music appreciation nights, community meetings, dark room, being given responsibility, living with other mixed-gender young people. I felt a sense of community, of family, of purpose, of working hard for the good of the group.

This perspective and the views expressed by these authors and others align with my own experience at CCEC, where hands-on tasks were valued equally with tasks such as planning, management, and writing.

Chapter 3: Method

Overview of Method

This project was originally designed to be an ethnographic study. When it became clear that reviewing the materials in the Yukon Archives was going to make the project unwieldy, this work became essentially an analysis of an online survey with its quantitative and qualitative components. However, the study does retain some strong auto-ethnographic influences, particularly in the analyses, as I was a member of the CCEC.

I utilized several methods of data collection for this research project – I created and administered an online survey followed by conversations and focus groups with former community members. The online questionnaire was completed by former community members, and I engaged small groups of former community members in a number of conversations and interviews, several of which were in the nature of focus group discussions. As an ethnography of teaching and learning in a northern alternative school, data collection procedures were designed to elicit emic data that appreciates first, and foremost, participants' own points of view.

As I was involved in various roles at CCEC during its operation, including attending the school as a student, I participated in the research, and approached it as an insider rather than as an outsider to the research setting. My involvement in the public school system as a high school teacher in a northern school and consulting to the Yukon Department of Education

about applied skills and trades in Yukon schools provides another “insider” perspective on the shortcomings of the current pedagogy and a reason to look for ways to improve it.

The Participants

My plan was to survey as many former CCEC members as possible in order to examine their views about how the experience impacted their lives. Initially, I contacted the webmasters of the private CCEC alumni site to ask that the website host an invitation to participate in this research and to use the lists of former members who had either registered on the website or attended the 2009 reunion.

The alumni website (www.carcross.org) had a list of 152 email addresses, some of which were current. A list of 173 email addresses had also been generated to let former members know about the 2009 reunion. Some of these emails were stale and some members were on both lists. In addition, other members who were not on either list were contacted by members who were.

In addition to posting an invitation to participate on the website (Appendix A), the webmasters sent an invitation to the email addresses on both lists so that, in fact, some former members were likely contacted several times. In addition, I cross-referenced the email lists and sent an email invitation directly from Fluid Survey, the website that hosted the survey. The invitation from Fluid Survey went out to 157 email addresses and provided a secure link to the online survey.

Once the invitation went out, interest was generated and a number of recipients took it on themselves to pass the invitation and information about the survey on to others they were in touch with. Responses came from all over Canada as well as from the United States, and beyond.

Questionnaire/Survey

The online survey included questions aimed at collecting information about participants' demographics, as well as open-ended questions about students' experiences in public school and at CCEC. The open-ended questions also inquired about students' learning styles. See Appendix B for the complete questionnaire.

Procedure

Data were collected from former students and parent members of CCEC using a commercial survey tool, Fluid Survey. Fluid Survey is a Canadian-based web-based e-survey also used by the Canadian Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council for its on-line tutorial evaluation surveys and is subject to information privacy laws in Canada. I posted an invitation to participate in this research on a private website for former CCEC members. The Webmaster then sent email invitations that included a link to the online questionnaire and consent forms (Appendixes A, B, E, F). Although this email went to all members of the website as well as to everyone who attended the 2009 CCEC reunion, when some people had difficulty using the link, I followed up with email invitations, through Fluid Survey, to

everyone whose email address I had. This email included a secure individual link to the questionnaire and consent forms. Once people had the link, they created a bit of a snowball effect by passing the link on and getting word of the survey out to others. Those who wished to participate were required to complete an informed consent form prior to completing the questionnaire (Appendix F).

Using Fluid Survey ensured that participants' confidentiality and anonymity was protected. Participants who responded were not required to give their names or contact details unless they wanted to. Access to the questionnaire was conditional on providing informed consent. Respondents who did provide their names were advised that their names would not be revealed without their consent, and had the options of declining to answer a question, asking questions about the research, or withdrawing from the project. The survey was open for just over a year, starting in February 2013. The majority of respondents (81/109) completed the survey between March 1 and May 31, 2013.

Archival Material and Personal Photo Collection

When CCEC closed, all of its records were turned over to the Yukon Archives. The amount of material housed in the Archives is significant, and includes education policy documents, student journals, and student-generated artefacts. As I attended CCEC over the years, from its opening to its closing, I also have a personal collection of photographs and documents from the school. Subsequent to beginning this research, I discovered that Charlie Lenz (2012) and Ann Love (1990, 1991), both former parent members, had reviewed much of the

archival collection and written papers documenting and analyzing CCEC's history. Lenz's research confirmed how difficult it was to pin down, with any certainty, the number of people who participated in CCEC.

I have referred to the research done by both Lenz (2012) and Love (1990, 1991) as it provides some background and context to students' descriptions of their experiences.

Chapter 4: Results

Preview to the Data Analysis

The online questionnaire included two types of questions – closed questions about former members' demographics and open-ended questions about their experiences. The data collected, especially from the narrative responses to the open-ended questions, was analyzed to identify common themes in relation to the impact of this educational experience on former community members. One of my overriding goals, in analyzing the data, was to identify elements of the CCEC educational experience that might be relevant and useful for 21st century learners and educators, especially in Yukon.

At the conclusion of data collection, former community members had provided almost one hundred thousand words to describe their experiences at CCEC, more than enough to report the impact. As I collected and analyzed the data from the questionnaire, I realized that not only did I have much more than needed, but the repeated responses indicated to me that I had probably achieved saturation in my data well before the total number of responses had been reached. However, it was important to me that everyone who wanted to contribute had an opportunity and that no one was intentionally excluded from providing feedback about their experiences.

I analyzed and reduced the information obtained through the survey by determining which topics or themes appeared most often and seemed to be most important in terms of CCEC's

impact. These topics became the major themes that I have reported in this paper, and the data collected is organized based on these themes.

Participants

The research done by Charlie Lenz (2012) suggests that approximately 360 people attended the CCEC, over its seven years of operation. My own sense is that it was between 350 and 400 so I think 360 is a reasonable number to use for the purpose of this research. From an estimated 360 participants, I had contact information for 173. I received responses to the survey from a cross section of former members in each year of the school's operation.

In the end, 109 former CCEC members completed the survey. This included students, workers and parent members. Based on the estimate of 360 people potentially involved with the school, this is a 30% participation rate of all attendees. From the total of 173 functioning email addresses, 63% completed the survey.

A total of 51 men and 57 women completed the survey. One person did not identify a gender. Of the 109 respondents, 69 were former students, 36 were former parent members and 30 had been workers at CCEC. Seven respondents identified as "other". The reason the total number is greater than 109 is that some people attended as students and then returned as parent members or workers.

Respondents were asked about what years they were at CCEC. Table 1 shows that the spread of responses covers the whole period that CCEC was in existence. As responders usually attended for more than one year, multiple years were indicated so that the percentages add up to more than 100%.



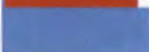





Response	Chart	Percentage	Count
1972 – 1973		15.6%	17
1973 – 1974		38.5%	42
1974 – 1975		42.2%	46
1975 – 1976		28.4%	31
1976 – 1977		28.4%	31
1977 – 1978		14.7%	16
1978 – 1979		8.3%	9
1979 - June 1979		4.6%	5
Total Responses			109

Table 1 **Years of attendance at CCEC**

Survey respondents were asked about their roles while at CCEC. See Table 2. Almost two-thirds of the respondents reported being a student at some time while one-third reported functioning as a parent member and slightly more than one-quarter reported being workers. A small number ($n = 7$) chose to use the “other” category and said they were at CCEC as tutors, summer and short term workers, exchange students, volunteers or floaters. As I predicted from my own experiences, several people acted in multiple roles as evidenced by a total of approximately 130%.

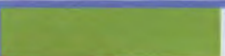
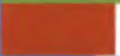


Response	Chart	Percentage	Count
Student		63.3%	69
Parent Member		33.0%	36
Worker		27.5%	30
Other, please specify...		6.4%	7
		Total Responses	109

Table 2 Community member's roles at CCEC

Student and parent members came to CCEC from across Canada, including from the Yukon.

Almost all were of Euro-ancestry. Only three respondents were of First Nations ancestry.

The place of origin results are shown in Table 3. While a relatively large percentage, compared to the overall Canadian population, was expected from the Yukon itself due to the location of the school, there were a negligible number of students from other northern regions, such as Alaska or the Northwest Territories.








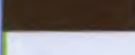



Response	Chart	Percentage	Count
Yukon		13.0%	14
Alaska		0.9%	1
North West Territories		1.9%	2
British Columbia		30.6%	33
Alberta		8.3%	9
Saskatchewan		3.7%	4
Manitoba		3.7%	4
Ontario		39.8%	43
Quebec		1.9%	2
Nova Scotia		0.9%	1
United States		2.8%	3
		Total Responses	108

Table 3 Community members' homes of origin

Of the people who completed the survey 96 (88%) still live in Canada. Other responses came from the United States (6), Australia (3), Barbados, France, Haiti, and Trinidad and Tobago. Twenty-seven stayed in or returned to live in the Yukon.

Table 4 presents a list of the reasons former CCEC members gave for choosing to go to CCEC. Responses in the “other” category included a variety of reasons, such as looking for adventure, wanting to get away from home, etc.

Response	Chart	Percentage	Count
wanted to live in a Christian community		11.0%	12
wanted to live in a commune/community		37.6%	41
looking for an alternative way to complete high school		45.0%	49
wanted to live in the north		43.1%	47
wanted to live closer to the outdoors		28.4%	31
wanted to get away from home		33.9%	37
sent by Family and Children Services		1.8%	2
wanted to have a gap year after graduating elsewhere		4.6%	5
Other, please specify...		35.8%	39
Total Responses			109

Table 4 What drew people to CCEC?

Respondents were also asked about their current levels of education. Eighty five per cent of respondents carried on with some kind of post-secondary education, four to the doctoral level. One quarter of all respondents completed master's degrees. Interestingly, 34 of the

109 respondents (31%) became teachers. Almost 29% had trades or technical qualifications, some in addition to university degrees.

The “What” and the “Why” Open-Ended Questions

In addition to demographic questions, respondents were asked to respond to a number of open ended questions about their experiences at CCEC (see Appendix “B” for a full list of these questions). Examples include questions such as: How did your experiences at CCEC affect your career choice? How do you learn best? What aspect of your experience at CCEC most impacted your life? In addition, Fluid Survey was able to provide me with of the responses to each question so that I could read all responses to a particular question together. This process meant that themes emerged very quickly and clearly – respondents’ narrative answers often echoed similar sentiments so that it was relatively straightforward to identify the themes. In addition, as I poured through the almost 200 pages of survey data, the themes that emerged were in line with discussions I’d had with former community members about the impact CCEC had on their ability to learn, and on their career choices and educational pursuits.

Other themes that emerged pointed to the impact of living in an isolated community in Yukon during the 1970's and the very different learning environment this provided. Many responses confirmed my suspicions about the lifelong impact CCEC had – some said how unlikely it is that they would be doing what they are doing today if not for CCEC and several reported that it was unlikely they would still be alive but for their experiences there. One early theme that emerged was the dramatic difference in the level of engagement

between public school education and CCEC as well as frustration with public school education not meeting students' needs. Students complained about the learning not being real in the public school system

One of the strongest responses was to the question, "If you were successful in public school, why did it work for you?" Clearly, not all students who attended CCEC had difficulty in their former schools. Some who were successful credit the connection and inspiration they got from a few significant teachers. Others said they "fit the mould" or had "academic peers" who supported their success. Most respondents, however, credited family support, especially family support for academic achievement. Former students' comments included, "father support", "very supportive parents", "stable family environment", "support of my family was strong", "family culture that valued academics", "mom helped instill good study habits", a family who "valued academic achievement" and being "raised in a loving family with great values". It was interesting to me that no one said they were successful in public school because of the education program that was offered.

What Worked At CCEC?

Students identified a number of factors that made CCEC work for them. One factor was the structure of CCEC's program and the demands of its location, which meant that there were opportunities to participate and contribute in a wide variety of ways. The result of this was that there was space for individual learning differences in ways the public school couldn't offer. Another key factor was relationships, including being able to have close, and more

equal relationships with teachers, and being part of a community of learners where students felt they belonged and were part of something bigger than themselves. A third factor was opportunities for “authentic” learning, where the learning occurred through real tasks and experiences. Students said that the environment in which they lived and learned at CCEC also contributed to a positive learning experience. Finally, the result of these factors, which was self-fulfilling, was that students said they became engaged in their learning, took responsibility for it, and gained and exercised a sense of agency about their learning and personal development.

Theme A: Responsiveness to Individual Learning Differences

When respondents were asked what was missing from their regular school experience and what prevented them from succeeding or finding school satisfying, the list of factors varied. Students said that they liked to learn at their own pace and needed more challenge than public school provided. One respondent said, “If there is no challenge I shut down”, another that he was more of a social learner and needed “intellectually challenging conversation” but didn’t generally find this in public school. Other students said that “what was happening at school was not relevant” and they “wanted more challenge, depth and individual attention” than many of their classmates seemed to need or want. Some students talked about their personalities affecting how they learn – one said she “always asked a lot of questions”, another that he was more curious than other students seemed to be.

One student said he found it difficult to sit and listen, another that he came away from school thinking he was stupid. Another described himself as “extremely distractible”, with serious mental blocks to writing, another that he didn’t get the one to one encouragement from teachers that he needed. One student, who later obtained a master’s degree, said his parents were told he was slow and wouldn't be likely to graduate.

One former student said his school "lacked creative ways to teach independent and out of the box thinking". This same student described feeling "discouraged and often criticized or punished". Others criticized a system that placed "minimal value ...on relational learning and emotional intelligence". One respondent wrote that his best way of learning was "through conversation and debate and there was little opportunity for this style of learning" at the school he attended. Many former students reflected that their learning styles were "too divergent" and not supported in the public system. Several students reported that they had a "difficult time learning in an inflexible environment".

Several former students, including myself, failed grades in school. One respondent said she felt like she "never really recovered from failing grade 3". Several respondents who went on to become teachers admitted to finding high school very challenging because they couldn't read and felt that school was "a waste of time". When asked what would have helped former students learn in public school, one referred to “opportunities to learn in more varied ways”, another that CCEC offered:

more opportunity for creative and collaborative and expressive learning.
Curriculum that was taught from a place of discovery- curriculum that engaged

creative thinking, problem solving and was linked to the everyday lives of youth- to the world around us- to issues we could reflect on and engage in- this would have made a great difference.

Some students said they were looking for “more flexibility and more hands-on learning” and that it was “painful to expect students to sit and listen to a teacher talk about something students see no purpose in learning.” One student said it would have helped “If there had been someone to understand how I learned.”

Students said they were looking for:

more verbal and interactive ways of learning. More outdoor experiences. More respect for students. Encouragement to think outside the box and not conform to the status quo. That emotional and relational intelligence were valued at school and opportunities to engage this way were provided. More experiential learning, a better understanding by teachers of the kind of learner students were and an appreciation of their strengths and weaknesses as learners.

One student felt he “would have learned better if what I was learning had seemed more relevant and useful to me and I would have benefited from a more caring and personal environment.”

One of the factors students identified as making CCEC work for them was that it was responsive to individual learning differences, especially for those who were more kinaesthetic in their learning style. A number of students said that CCEC was more flexible and accommodating than the schools they had come from. One student identified the “smaller class size, the enthusiasm of the instructors, flexibility, different approach to learning” as making him feel “like I was part of the learning, not just having it pushed on me”.

One student said he didn't find learning useful unless he had immediate need for the information, another that he learned best when engaged and in a self-directed comfortable environment. One student wrote that at CCEC, "I learned that the small classes made me more accountable and that longer classes (2 1/2 hours) were good to really explore an idea or concept. The laid back but thorough teaching I received was also important."

Another respondent said that "CCEC was a place that took into account our whole selves which meant that aspects of ourselves that didn't count in the conventional model, did count here, for instance in my case, the ability to organize and communicate well." One summed it up this way: "I learned that if given the learning material, freedom and flexibility to learn at my own pace, positive support to utilize, I did extremely well."

One student said, "I learned to think and learn (and live) outside the box. My mind was expanded in so many ways by the experiences at CCEC, all of which helped me to see that there were many more ways to approach things other than the single-minded way I was taught to learn."

Some students admitted they were often in conflict in their former schools because of some aspect of their personality or learning style; some found it difficult to sit still in class and others got in trouble for moving around. One student said, "I don't read, I can't sit still." By contrast, students described how at CCEC they finally felt at ease in their learning, that the

"comfortable environment" reduced their anxiety and enabled them to learn. As one student said, "Carcross was relaxed; you can't bring a pillow to class in public school."

Some discovered their abilities and intelligence at CCEC. One student wrote, "I might not have discovered that I actually was smart and therefore I would not have had the confidence to attend University to eventually become a counsellor." Another former student said that, "I had always been a 'self-learner' (from grade 7 on anyway), but I think Carcross showed me that there were more options to education than rote education systems. It also taught me that time away from formal learning wasn't fatal. From Carcross forward, I never stayed in school for longer than 2 years in a row, but completed my master's degree by 28."

One way that individual learning styles were addressed was the opportunities for hands-on learning at CCEC. In fact, the most common response to the question about what worked for them at CCEC was that students needed or preferred a "hands-on" approach to learning, an approach that was supported by the many physical tasks that were necessary to keep the school and building operating – things like being expected to do boiler shifts to keep the school's physical plant operating, or helping with laundry or meals for the whole community. Participation in these essential tasks was not only crucial for the day-to-day operation of the community, but also provided authentic and necessary learning opportunities. For the many students who said they preferred a hands-on approach, or needed "to learn through hands-on experiences" in order to be successful, the opportunities were many and varied. One student said that the practical problem solving skills he learned at CCEC are still being used, "Give me a problem, time to solve it, let me find the tools and I have prevailed every time since."

Although I suspected that CCEC members would likely be strong kinesthetic and visual learners, the results from the survey showed that these areas were almost twice as likely to be selected as the more common auditory and text based learning styles most schools cater to. When members were asked to indicate their preferred learning styles, 86% (92/107) reported a preference for kinesthetic learning (Table 5).


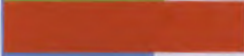


Response	Chart	Percentage	Count
listening (auditory)		46.7%	50
seeing (visual)		70.1%	75
words (text based)		43.9%	47
by doing (kinesthetic)		86.0%	92
Total Responses			107

Table 5 Community member's learning styles

Many students described having a lot of energy and said that "sitting still was difficult". One student said she learned best "by doing something physical"; another that "being physical and engaged was an excellent way for me to learn." One former student said that CCEC was the "first time having a lot of energy was seen as something positive and the norm". One respondent said that he gained confidence "by DOING", a theme that popped up many times in former members' responses. Another member said that experiential learning was his "best method of retaining any useful information."

Even students who typically did well in the standard education system said they benefited from the hands-on learning at CCEC. One former student said, "I love to read and can learn some by reading but it often doesn't stick unless I do something with it". Other former

students echoed this view, indicating that it was hands-on learning integrated with more cognitive learning that made the difference for them. One student said, "I learned to value work by hand and the people who learn by doing. I learned that by co-operating with and listening to others that more could be accomplished and I would learn more profoundly". Another said that CCEC's "emphasis in experiential learning provided hand-on learning that melded cognitive with practical skill development."

A female student who did not graduate from grade 12, but later returned to school, became a teacher and completed her Master's in Education, pointed out that, "All of the courses I did finish had a very hands-on approach – drama, science, and English. The groups were small and we had lots of input into the course material studied. And we had a blast in the classes". Another student described how the hands-on aspect of learning at CCEC contributed to her ongoing learning. She said, "I felt I learned more by doing things that were useful rather than just doing theory and it made me more interested in continuing my learning afterwards."

A number of former students described some of the bigger lessons they were exposed to at CCEC. One said, "I learned that actions speak louder than words. I learned that people with degrees (intellectuals) didn't always have the skills to accomplish all the practical tasks at hand. This took away the intimidation factor." Another said that CCEC taught him "the value of physical labor and difference between freedom and license." One said, "I think what I learned (eventually, not necessarily at CCEC) was that some other people learned and thought very differently. Carcross exposed me to many wonderful visual artists, people who

did superb woodwork and crafts, actors, athletes, cooks, outdoors people and mechanical types.”

A parent member also reflected on the fact that teaching in less traditional ways seemed to make learning more successful for his students, stating, "I did a lot of teaching of history, social studies and power engineering fundamentals using many traditional methods as well as 'outside the box' methods. I had the freedom to do so and I know in certainly a few cases, that I can recall now, this made the difference between success and failure for some of my students."

Many of the comments made by former community members resonated for me, including this one:

I think learning that I was a hands-on learner in both the kitchen cooking and later working in the wood shop. That I was visual and learned best by doing were all things I really learned at Carcross. That I could see thing three dimensionally in my mind were all things I quickly discovered at Carcross. I think realizing that many of the other students and parent members also learned and taught this way was also very exciting and liberating.

Like this respondent, I recall feeling that when I arrived at Carcross I had found not only “my people”, but also my style of learning. While some peoples’ experiences at CCEC revealed things that were difficult for them, there were also opportunities for students to break new ground and to discover new areas of strength.

Theme B: The Importance of Relationships

Many former students referred to the lack of relationships in the schools they attended and were critical of the systems they came from where "teachers were not interested in helping kids like me", and there was a "clear power differentiation" between teachers and student. One former student described her school as, "too rigid" and with too much disconnect between teachers and students". Another respondent said there was "little sense of collaboration or relationships". One former student said he "felt like just another number".

One student said that it would have helped to be "seen for who I was, not just one more student in another class of 30 students, followed by another class of 30 students and another. I mastered the art of invisibility in my public school – it has remained a curse throughout my life."

Many respondents were looking for different kinds of teachers, "teachers who were mentors, where the students were asked about what they were interested in learning and had those objectives facilitated", or where the "teachers would have had the time and interest in helping me think about school and where that education would help me in life."

One student would have liked "a more inclusive social environment in high school where all students were accepted for who they were", others "smaller groups with more activities that I considered to be "useful" rather than just theory", "more encouragement for risk taking and

asking questions” and a “feeling that I mattered to my teachers even though I wasn't the top of the class.” Students wished for “compassionate teachers” who “made connections with kids on the fringes”, and “who would not humiliate but would work by praising and who would assist a classroom of students to behave as if they cared for each other.” One First Nations student wished that teachers in public school had been able “to see me for me not my race”.

A sense of community.

One of the things that made education at CCEC so different is that everyone lived together in a big old building that had been an Indian residential school. Living together as a community, where everyone worked, lived and went to school, was an important way in which CCEC was unique. Many of the comments provided by former community members attest to how important this was for their learning. One member described CCEC in the following way, “Carcross was an incredibly grounding experience. Communal living, understanding you can't ‘do it all’ but you can do your part.”

Most students, workers and parent members came to Carcross from southern Canada, the majority from large urban centers. As a result, much of what they encountered at CCEC was exciting and different, and their enthusiasm helped make community life successful, at least in the beginning years. One former student said he wasn't that interested in “book learning as it was amazing to be with all the other students there, and to be baking bread, bringing in firewood, cooking, and any other number of activities, including being part of

such an amazing community of people.” The fact that everyone had to work together fostered close relationships amongst students, workers and parent members, especially in comparison to school situations most had come from. One student said that:

Carcross taught me that when people work together tasks can take on a whole different perspective with new ideas and new approaches for solving problems. Carcross for me was about people, and part of the joy of learning is being around people you enjoy and working with them on a daily basis.

A number of students said that the sense of belonging at CCEC was significant. One student wrote that for him, “Really, the biggest negative factor in junior high was the feeling that I was an actor in someone else's play. At Carcross I felt like I belonged.” Another student echoed this sentiment: “I felt lost and invisible at my public school and at Carcross I felt like a contributing and valued participant in something much larger than myself.”

One respondent referred to the three R's at CCEC as "relationships, relationships, relationship". Although respondents recall working in the woodshop or barn, or baking bread in the bakery, many say it was the relationships formed while doing these physical tasks that made the difference. One former student said that, “I learned a lot through doing and experiencing while at CCEC but most of what I learned was centered around interpersonal relations”.

A sense of community was integral to the learning at CCEC. Other comments described how empowering it was to sit “in a comfortable room having discussions and sharing and feeling

safe to ask questions”, and that “the feeling of being part of something gave me more self-confidence”.

A former student echoed this sentiment, “I was recognized for my achievements, celebrated for my talents, and generally just LOVED.” Another described the importance of community like this:

Working and living with all types of people; some I might never choose to in outer society and making it work for a common vision. These many transferable, timeless skills in interpersonal relations and living fostered an early foundation in expanded thinking about how to be with others and in the world. An expanded sense of what is possible and doable in life in a healthy and visionary way – or at least the experience fostered that in me.

Carcross operated on the basis of consensus, which meant that a lot of time was spent meeting to discuss operations and make decisions for the good of the community. One respondent commented that one of the ways CCEC impacted him was, “the discussions at Community meetings, the hands-on experiences that we had because of the variety of means we used to be self-sufficient: logging, fishing, the bakery, the laundry etc. etc. The people!!!”

Another respondent commented on:

the social responsibility aspect of the community. Whether commercial ventures, to cooking/wash-up etc. Each person had to learn how to be responsible for themselves and to each other. As a member of the management committee I learned quickly the impact of budgets and rules. Some hard decisions had to be made.

A former parent member commented that, "Perhaps the biggest impact of CCEC was the value of living in community and seeing how community affected the lives of the students - how they changed over the course of their stay at Carcross. They may not have been model citizens when they left, but had been profoundly affected by being a part of this living entity."

Respondents said they were impacted by "personal relationships and the discovery of what it meant to be committed to a community, wherein rules or expectations weren't simply a matter of someone telling someone else what to do, with no personal investment on either part, but rather persons sensing some form of commitment to each other in promises and expectations." The sense of being part of something bigger than oneself was significant for many community members. One respondent said, "I felt accepted and safe at Carcross. I felt like I belonged."

As one respondent said, "The building was only so big and one had to work on differences". One former student commented on how the experience "managed to tap a huge source of creativity through interpersonal relationships borne in a very rural remote setting where actions have very real consequence."

The result, according to another respondent, was that, "I discovered things about myself that I hadn't realized before. I was stretched and challenged in many ways, and perhaps the most significantly, my emotional development skyrocketed, probably due to learning to function with so many different types of people in close quarters." Another commented that "The

communal setting was ideal, skills learned were put to practical uses and gave purpose to the act of learning.”

For one former student the key was, “Being able to participate in a communal experiment, which included lots of activities which in regular life one never has; logging, gardening, meetings, baking bread, making meals was enriching, not only for the activities themselves but mainly because they were done in concert with others ... which was challenging and enlightening both seeing the beauty of the idea but also the inevitable shattering of one’s naïve idealism.”

According to one respondent, “The learning by living thing was crucial. A light-handed guiding hand to steer students in the right direction. The total community spirit and everyone working for real goals.”

While living in community could be challenging, one former student said that:

The love and kindness I was treated with, especially by the parent members, has stayed with me my whole life and inspired me to try to treat others the same way. Seeing the ideal of a loving community become reality three years in a row, taught me that people can create positive, caring, nurturing and inclusive societies if they put their mind to it. I do what I can to foster a sense of belonging to a caring school community for students I work with in the regular school system. My often surprisingly strong feelings about this I know stem from my years at Carcross and my own experience of the tremendous benefits of belonging to a community. Living so closely with others at Carcross and having to participate in the often grueling democratic decision making taught me to tolerate differences, consider the perspective of others, look at problems from all sides, and to compromise. In general I think it made me less self-centered.

Another respondent wrote that learning opportunities at CCEC were integrated into all aspects of community life. She said that she was largely motivated to participate because she felt her efforts contributed to the well-being of something she was part of and believed in. She described being required to try her hand at all sorts of practical skills, which helped her gain confidence in her ability to learn, do new things and be successful. Prior to going to CCEC, she said she was very shy and lacked confidence, especially at speaking in public, but that the small classes at CCEC, with friendly, caring teachers and classmates, provided a safe place to learn where there was always help available and a sense of working together as a class. She said she always felt listened to and respected.

Another student commented:

Oh my... How much space have I got?! I would not have the sense of community, responsibility, and alternate ideas of what being a caring citizen are, had I not gone to CCEC. I think it taught me what spirituality is and how important it is in daily life and that caring for others and being cared for by others are far more important than any other factor in life. I think CCEC taught me what it truly means to be a decent human - I don't always achieve that - but the standard for decent humans at CCEC was pretty high.

Embracing differences within the community.

Many students said that living with students and parent members from various geographical and socio-economic groups from all across North America contributed to the "education in the broadest sense of the word", the foundation of CCEC's educational philosophy. One respondent said that:

The biggest impact on me was seeing a community that was so far removed from my rural life in Alberta and becoming close to a wide assortment of people. Quite

honestly, I felt that most of the people were so "hippie-like", so far removed from my conservative upbringing. Yet to become friends with them, in classes, singing along with guitars, skating on the lake, worrying about exploding boilers, ice fishing or going into the big city, left a very positive impact on my life.

Another student said that, "The values imparted there shaped my life. I like to think the diversity of the people there left me more tolerant and open-minded than I might have otherwise been." For another student, "The community living experience, the diversity of people with complex educational and personal challenges that CCEC accommodated opened windows on life experiences I would not have had otherwise."

For some, living in community challenged their spiritual ideals and "provided an environment with a diversity of people and opinions which you had to come to terms with in a real way/working with, struggling with, talking with, disagreeing with, being frustrated, overwhelmed, ecstatic with."

As one former parent member said:

Again, it comes down to the people and the opportunity to live with and get to know them over time – people from different walks of life, some of whom I'd not have rubbed shoulders with were it not for Carcross. Our dances really optimized this for me – sure there was some private groping going on but for the most part it was like a communal love-in, if you will, with people expressing their exuberance and joy unfettered by gender and dating norms, unlike any high school dances I remember.

Students, workers and parent member gravitated to projects that grabbed their attention which meant that people had very different experiences there. One student said that:

My time at Carcross truly sparked my interest in learning through real life experiences. I realize that beyond the small group discussions, I gained so much

through the mixture of students, with difference cultures and backgrounds along with community living experiences. There is much to be gained in baking bread with a group of teenagers or helping at a fishing camp with -25C weather. You help and opinions count and you grow from that experience.

Relationships with teachers.

Of particular importance were students' relationships with their teachers. One said he needed "interaction where I respected the teacher" and "need teachers to be engaged in the subject matter", another that "relationships are the focus of all learning." Another student said that, "The friendly teachers and classmates at Carcross created a non-threatening environment that helped me overcome my shyness and the small classes forced me to be actively engaged."

Being engaged with teachers and with the subject matter also came out as strong factors influencing student learning at CCEC. The fact that, "Teachers were supportive and engaging", that students were "held as an equal", and "engaged with the people doing the teaching" were significant factors as well as opportunities to learn "through conversation and engaging with others" in a setting where "my opinions are respected", where "I am encouraged and validated", and where students felt like they were "in a supportive environment". One student said that the "sense of belonging and community" made the difference.

For many parent members, the belief in community and experiential learning grew out of their own frustration with the regular school system and their collective belief that things could be done in a different way. One parent member said:

I knew personally how I learned best by the time I attended Carcross. I knew that as parent members we needed to involve ourselves with the students and to work along beside them. I knew that positive relationship was key and I knew that students need much genuine praise and they needed to feel they could be successful. I knew by the time I went to Carcross how to set up scenarios to have students experience success and how to help them develop confidence in themselves.

There was awareness at CCEC that everyone's role was important, and for the most part, a belief that respect was an important element in daily life there. One student said, "It was very important to me to know my teachers, to call them by their first names, to see them, if not as equals, as full and rounded human beings that I could interact with on a personal basis."

For some students, their relationships with teachers provided significant turning points for how they thought about themselves. One students said, "I learned I respond best to teachers who believe in me and whom I admire - mutual respect", where there is "a feeling of being a full and equal member of the community". A female student who later went on to complete several degrees and her Master's wrote:

When I was reviewing the book Nabokov with A.L. [a teacher at Carcross] she said I was very intelligent. That was the first time a teacher had ever said that to me and I will never forget it. It meant everything to me. It lifted my confidence and when she said I was intelligent I knew deep inside she was right.

One student described her teacher at Carcross as being, “the most influential person in my life at that time” because “she basically kicked my butt to make schooling work, and not back away from my responsibilities.”

The fact that teachers and students all participated in all activities and contributed to the operation of the community was a key for many students. One said, “I think seeing the teachers as equal members of the community rather than real authority figures, and seeing them struggle with the same issues of trying to do their jobs and maintain harmony helped me put myself in their shoes and by extension, in the shoes of other authority figures so that I began to see them as friends and not enemies.” Another former student, now a teacher, said that:

I think a sense of connection and relationship played an important role in learning. When I made a personal connection with the person teaching or with the learning environment, I was more likely to learn. The CCEC made a strong impact because of this. I probably made more effort to do well in my classes so as not to disappoint my teachers. There was no way to avoid seeing them daily. If you needed help, they were right down the hallway. Also I remember being asked to evaluate and grade myself in the middle of the year. I can't remember if this grade was actually used, but it may have been the first time I was asked to participate in some form of self-evaluation. Again, this required me to critically look at my actions and ultimately take more responsibility for the result. (I often do this with my students today.)

One student identified that her “turning point was based on relationship. It was not based on her 'being there for me' or having a specific responsibility to me (she was not my contract person). We both had responsibilities to something greater than ourselves and it was through

a conversation and a kick in the ass that helped me realize that there is a connection between effort and reality...”

For another former student, it was “the inclusivity of Carcross, the belief that we were living our own agenda, not following someone else’s.” She said she was challenged when she needed to be challenged – one teacher pushed her to become a better writer; another taught her the value of doing what it takes to get a job done, no excuses, and not being left to fall behind on those occasions when she was slipping back.

Small class size contributed to the sense of belonging and connection. For some the “small groups where there is lots of interaction and discussion” was a critical factor in their learning, especially with teachers who were “positive and challenging”, who provided a “one on one approach”, and “personal attention” and taught “by talking and asking” and “open class discussion” and where there were opportunities to “question things”.

Theme C: Authentic Learning

Another theme that emerged was the importance of “authentic learning”, which includes feeling that what you do matters. Creating authentic experiences in a typical school situation can be challenging, leaving students with few opportunities to get past the theoretical. The school building that housed the Carcross Community Education Centre was located about a kilometer from the tiny village of Carcross and accessible, at that time, by a narrow gravel road that terminated at the Alaska Highway, also a gravel road in those days. The White

Pass and Yukon Route Railway provided one passenger train south to Skagway, Alaska and one passenger train north to Whitehorse daily. Because of its isolated location, most of what took place at CCEC was crucial to the building being safe and warm and to the community being able to provide food, bed and an education for the students there. As a result, authentic learning opportunities were seamlessly embedded in the ongoing day to day functioning of the community. In fact, community members' contributions to the schools' operation were essential as there was no back up if something broke down.

One student wished for "the learning related to my life. To who I was as a person. Public school learning was too abstract and didn't give my life meaning nor did it prepare me for the workforce. It felt useless and empty."

For other students, the feeling that this was missing in the public school system had a very negative impact. One student wrote:

I feel that in high school the situation become worse as I had a tendency to ask questions such as "how can I use this information in day to day life". On one occasion I was sent down to the office for being a "smart ass" for asking how we would use geometry in day-to-day life. The teacher could not come up with an answer. The class started to mumble and snicker, and I was sent to the office. I was not allowed back in class for one week and had to apologize to the teacher. That was in Grade 10, and that was the last question I ever asked in a public school setting.

One student compared CCEC to his previous learning situation:

I learned that learning is interesting, continuous, and that we are all in it together as human beings. This is a different model than subjects in school. Acknowledging this continuum made me much more open to learning all kinds of things. I learned that I

learn best when I feel happy, focused and at ease. We had many opportunities to learn and practice new skills and much of what we learned was immediately useful to the community. In general, it was a safe, caring and positive learning environment that made me feel confident and motivated. There was never any hint of coercion. I think I did best when I was actually doing something I thought was of value instead of just academic learning.

Many students commented on the fact that CCEC was not just about academic learning and said it was the other learning experiences that were most memorable to them.

Carcross for me was not an academic experience. The academics were not always well presented due to lack of experience of many of the teachers and maybe an unclear curriculum, as well as the lack of discipline to attend classes. What I learned at Carcross had to do with building self-esteem, being part of making something work, taking responsibility, the incredible experience of living in a building with 80 people and having input into the running of our own lives was amazing. The incredible opportunities to participate in our work days each week either in the Bakery, the kitchen, the wood camp, or building maintenance chores was educational, grounding, team building and extremely empowering. I seem to learn best when what is being offered has relevance to my life and or is stimulating and challenging.

Another student said she

...learned that working in smaller groups is very effective. Small group classes made everyone a part of the learning. Experiencing a revolution by having one.... that is something that still stands out in my experience of History 12 at Carcross. I learned what a revolution is as we had one. I learned more in the bakery and kitchen than I had in 4 years of foods classes in regular school. I learned to use power tools in shop and made real wood boxes. I learned that I had gifts to share with younger students as I was able to be a tutor for English for one of the students.

It seems that when students and other members reflect on their experiences at CCEC, they often say how much they value the opportunity they had at CCEC to be a part of something

bigger than themselves, and the difference it made that what they did was relevant. One student said that:

We did exceptionally well in terms of learning responsibilities for ourselves and for the group, both generally and with specific tasks. Motivation was woven together with the needs and expectations of the whole. Learning was tied to its purpose and relevancy.

One respondent said that it “helps if the area of study interests me” or “if it is relevant and something I care about.” Others said that a task being relevant made their learning real, and that they needed a reason or purpose behind the learning. Others said it had to be more than busy work, and that they needed to see value and purpose in what they were being asked to learn.

Some students said their learning was more profound when they were “able to use it in practice” and where the learning was hands-on and blended theory with practical application. One stressed the importance of working with others and said that, “Field trips and learning by doing (bakery and kitchen duty) were also hugely instrumental in the way I came to understand team work, time management and commitment.” Other students said how important it was to be “able to apply the learning to the interest or problem at hand” and that they “learned that the most important things we learn in life are outside the classroom setting,” or “when the information I am learning needs to be used directly in a concrete way.”

A male student reflected on the contrast with what life in the Toronto area had to offer. He wrote that, "the 'out of class' stuff was pretty stellar. I did the wood shop thing, but also the barn, bees, bakery and toilet repairs. I also picked up my guitar (finally), and did more x-country, hiking, mountain climbing. Most of that was beyond what life in the "burbs" of Toronto was going to serve up." Another respondent said that she "learned more by doing things that were useful rather than just doing theory" and that this way of learning made her "more interested in continuing my learning afterwards."

Another student attributed later work opportunities to the real learning experiences she had at CCEC. She said that, "Learning thru doing – baking – led to work in Winnipeg, Theatre tour led to passion for theater – studying theatre at university and working in summer theater in PEI, working in the barn, organizing the crafts program – all led to future learning and life skills."

Another student said that, "I didn't have many practical skills when I first came to CCEC. During the year of preparation for opening I learned a lot about plumbing, propane ovens, and steam heating," and still another that "while at CCEC I qualified for 4th class engineer certificate." Another student commented on the transfer of learning that occurred:

At CCEC we were always encouraged to participate in all aspects of community. I always enjoyed trying new things. This came into play with logging and fish camp. When I completed my education at CCEC I obtained employment with a private survey company working across Canada doing geodetic surveys. To this day I love to tackle new projects around the house, painting, wallpapering, sewing. A world apart but the same principles apply.

Theme D: Being Engaged: Action, Commitment and Responsibility

When asked about their public school experiences prior to coming to CCEC, many former students said that they never really fit in and felt like social outcasts, unable to function well in the structure of the typical public school system. One former student said he felt “intensely isolated”; another, that she felt “lost and invisible” at her public high school. Another said he felt like a “square peg in a round hole” and belonged somewhere else. Another respondent felt alienated, restricted, angry and rebellious; another that public school was boring, and that he hated it, starting in kindergarten. One student described himself as a “bit of a different kid”, and said he felt like he “was in some weird foreign environment all through school”.

Respondents didn’t put all the blame on the system – one student described himself as being “tuned out most of the time”. Another student recalls school being “numbingly boring”; others said they were “bored, not engaged”, lacked parental support, were “highly distractible, or found what was being taught irrelevant.

Other respondents said that school was of little interest to them, that they were unmotivated and had a “poor attitude”, got low marks and dropped out. One said he had been skipping school since grade 6, another that she simply didn’t apply herself. Students said they were better suited to learning in more creative ways. One honour roll student said she always felt she was on the fringe and didn’t feel challenged. Another student, who described himself as

“gifted”, didn’t find much of interest at his typical public school. Another respondent was an honour student until he quit school.

One former student said he kept getting expelled for bad behaviour even though academically it was easy, another that she hated school and didn't attend very often. One student described himself as being a “poor student, uninterested, unengaged”. For others, drug use got in the way of success at public school. Several former students learned later in their lives that they had undiagnosed learning disabilities that were never addressed. The result was that they became disengaged.

One former student said he “was a bit adrift”, others that they came to CCEC searching for alternatives, given their dissatisfaction with traditional high school. One said she was increasingly disillusioned with school, another that he was looking for an escape, and still another that he was looking for a wilderness adventure.

One former student commented, “Educators need to find a way to get students to participate in their learning so they're more engaged. More life skills need to be taught and there needs to be recognition that not everyone is going to university.”

One of the things I recall from being a student at CCEC was that there was no place to hide. The flip side of this for me was that the smaller classes and more intimate relationships with teachers and other students helped reduce the anxiety and negative feelings I had about myself with regard to learning. Another student echoed my view, saying that,

“Academically I benefited from small class sizes and the comfort of knowing everyone in the room. This helped me to overcome the social isolation I felt at the time.”

One former student wrote that:

Fundamental to the CCEC experience was having students be involved in their learning experience. As a member of the community, you were active in all aspects of living there – going to classes, being on committees, attending community meetings, cooking, cleaning, creating entertainment, etc. I think one of its primary goals was to have students understand what it meant to be an active and responsible community member, and ultimately an active and responsible member of society as a whole. Ultimately students were given opportunities to be engaged in meaningful ways. There was also a realization that individual actions affect the greater community. These experiences gave meaning and purpose, which continues to be basic to how I learn best.

These sentiments reflect three of the principles on which CCEC's philosophy was based:

“Action, Commitment and Responsibility”. One student reflected that “at the end of the day if I didn't pass, it was all on me. I think Carcross taught you to take responsibility for your actions”. He said, “I remember during my second year coming up with the phrase, ‘If it's going to be, it's up to me’. I stepped up and engaged and it was through that engagement that my time at Carcross became much more than just being at a school earning graduation credits towards a diploma.”

One student said that he learned that being responsible for something made him want to learn more about it, and said, “I learn what I need to know”, another that, “CCEC helped me mature in ways that made me more responsible for the direction my life went. I learned that change only comes from individual initiative and complacency has no place in any

organization.” One student said, “I felt empowered by the fact that I was involved in so many different aspects of my own success. Different than having parents who are providing external stimulus - I wanted to be at Carcross, and did not want to mess it up.”

Some described CCEC as being a change agent in their lives. One said, “I was very impacted by the fact that the "parent members" who were not "educators" per se, seemed to be so passionate about their particular area of expertise. That changed the way I felt about learning in general, and it ignited a passion I didn't have before.” Another said that although she was at CCEC for a relatively short time her experience there had a profound effect on her life:

I believe that Carcross gave me the tools to be who I am today. I was only there for one 10-week session but it was life changing. I learned to learn with my whole being not just from a teacher at the front of the class.

Another student reflected that, “I learned very quickly that I could learn, which was a surprise to me. I loved the small classes with lots of discussion, music and drama.”

Being engaged in the learning was a consistent theme for former students. One student said that he became more aware of the joy of learning at Carcross. I personally recall being inspired by the passion that many of the teachers had for their subjects. That passion was infectious and helped me realize that if you are truly interested in a subject you are more likely to learn it and want to learn. One student's comment that he "had fun at the school and equate that with learning" resonated for me.

One respondent wrote that CCEC:

Opened my eyes to so many things. Outdoors, aboriginal issues, my potential for leadership. Living with a bunch of people many of whom were very different from me, idea of the importance of contributing, my privilege. Because of those things I think I made different life and educational choices than if I had not gone.

A sense of agency and the ability to take risks.

One student said that his experiences at CCEC "made me unafraid to try anything". Another said it "gave me confidence to say what I thought." Of all the areas where student success is most demonstrated in the data analysis, comments that attribute former community members' sense of agency to their experiences at CCEC were the most heart wrenching for me to read. While I was aware of how crucial my own experience at CCEC was to my ability to learn and to my success later in life, I was surprised it had this impact on so many others. One former student said that:

I would say self-discovery was THE most important and most significant impact for me. I not only was aided in developing social skill and abilities, but I underwent a complete self-discovery in that year. It, even to this date, was THE BEST year of my entire life without exaggeration!!

Other perspectives were that the impact was:

HUGE! I was allowed to see that I really was "smart" after all. Because of the positive, supportive environment and that the program was set up that you could learn as fast as you felt was right for you, I excelled. I completed almost 3 grades within the 6 months of classes. I discovered that if I was given the freedom to learn as quickly as it suited me, I learned well, and rapidly.

Another former student said, "I went from a failing high school student to someone who helped manage the whole school as a member of the management committee" and that:

I went from almost dead stopped to learning that even though I learn slower than most I learn more thoroughly and that as a plodder I often get there when others abandon a project and give up. I would never have imagined that I would spend most of my adult life in a variety of schools after the dreadful start I had.

When students or parent members were empowered, amazing things were possible. One respondent said, "I learned that I could do anything I set my mind to - and I learned that I have a voice and that I have lots of creativity!" Another discovered, "Courage, passion, creativity - willingness to explore, engage- dream - dive in." Some former students learned that they could take responsibility for their own learning. One said that, "Carcross confirmed and affirmed my desire to learn about new things and the fact that one didn't always need a "teacher" in the traditional sense."

Another response provides a wonderful visual for just how empowering the CCEC experience was for some people:

I went from faded black and white, to crystal clear colour!! I was now able to ask questions, get answers, and was shown encouragement. I listened to others as they too asked questions. I was learning the meaning of a discussion. This was a life lesson!!

Another respondent commented on the impact on her learning of developing a sense of agency, "My sense of agency in directing my learning at CCEC increased my ability to learn. I could find relevance in what I was learning."

The Carcross experiment took place during the 1970s, when women's rights were just coming to the forefront. According to a number of female respondents, CCEC empowered them by allowing them to do the same things male students did. One commented that she:

...felt encouraged at CCEC by my teachers, parent members, most definitely from my contract person, which gave me additional confidence when making future life and study choices. I believed the world was out there to experience and have adventures in when I left Carcross. Carcross was non-sexist too; I did everything e.g. logging, fishing.

Another female respondent said that at CCEC, "Girls can do that! Self-esteem is not one of my strongest qualities, and teen years are particularly difficult so the encouragement was paramount."

Of course, it was not all about success, as one former student attested:

Funny how failure keeps coming up for me. I made many mistakes at Carcross, had many failures. But it is not the failure that sticks out for me it is what I did with that failure. Failure was not the defining outcome but the movement that happened after the failure. So I would say two things: 1) The capacity that I spoke of earlier of starting anew in terms of coming to a new community, new peer group, the capacity to re-invent myself; 2) The capacity of starting anew in terms of picking oneself up from mistakes, learning and moving forward.

Another student said:

[T]he turning point for me was after making some errors in my school work, I was not scolded in front of an entire class, I was told it was okay, that everyone makes mistakes and to see if I could figure it out. If not, the parent member would help me. THAT was huge. I'd always been made to feel that I was a failure if I made a mistake, and I'd be humiliated in front of an entire class of my peers. As a shy person, that was DEVASTATING!

The sense of agency many respondents commented on was, to a large extent, a result of the impact of other community members. One respondent commented that, "Positive people around helped with making me feel good about myself." It was also a result of a collective energy where people were affected positively by what others were doing, making it an even more powerful experience. As one student said, it "broadened my experiences, increased my practical skills, had me believe I could do anything I wanted to do with my life." Another student attributes his success later in life to his experiences at CCEC, when he says that, "The growth in self-esteem that I experienced at CCEC has made most of my post-CCEC successes possible."

While this research paper is intended to look primarily at how the educational aspect at CCEC impacted former student's lives, many former parent members also credit CCEC with providing them with incredible learning opportunities, often because they were given serious responsibilities at a relatively young age. Parent members often describe how transformative this experience was for them. One said:

I was able to try a lot of different things at CCEC which expanded my abilities and gave me more confidence. This included being given significant responsibility at a relatively young age while at CCEC. (I was one of the youngest parent members).

One student said that his experiences at CCEC "impacted virtually everything!" and:

was definitely one of THE most formative and transformative experiences of my life. Carcross forged my adulthood. Nothing that came after was unaffected by Carcross. I would have difficulty saying what it didn't affect. How I relate to others, search for co-operative activities, parent, commit myself to others and causes.... all the biggies in my adult life...

One student's view is that, "my whole life would have been different I am sure. The one thing that the CCEC gave me was the knowledge that school and learning can be different. It gave me the courage to step into things I believed in."

In the questionnaire, there was a series of questions about whether former community members had discovered musical, mechanical, artistic, or kinesthetic aptitude at CCEC. The responses indicate that for most community members, it was not so much the actual skills or aptitudes that were gained at CCEC but more the self-esteem and sense of agency that was gained there that had an impact. For some students, the impact was, potentially, a matter of life or death:

I don't really know if I would be here typing to you now. I could easily have ended up dead from crazy behavior. I made some very likeminded friendships that were transformative. These were people I loved deeply, admired and was inadvertently mentored by, as friends. Our friendships flew down to Victoria where I continued my education and became, first, a Kindergarten teacher, later a grade 6/7 teacher, then the founding secondary teacher and Principal in a new First Nations K-12 school, and now a Principal of 5 small First Nations schools programs and teaching in my own alternative high at-risk teen secondary school program (now there's karmic irony!)

Another said but for CCEC, "Likely I'd be dead or in jail, I think I might have actually ended up dead. Probably on drugs. At CCEC, I was given, for the first time in my life,

unconditional love and acceptance. It was an epiphany.” Another student said that “I was starting to dabble in drugs before CCEC and suddenly found myself with such a strong purpose that drugs became very unattractive. So many other things - I fell in love with community and responsibility and innovation. My lifelong goals reflected those early experiences.”

One student wrote:

I have no idea how I would have survived. Before I went to Carcross I was in a bad way. I'd left home. I wasn't communicating with my parents. I was smoking a lot of pot. I was living with people that weren't really doing anything more than keeping me off the street. I couldn't hold a job. Carcross was a life-saver for me. It was something that my parents could support (we communicated about that). I really don't know what I would have done otherwise.

Another former student described himself as “increasingly bored, alienated and without purpose, trying to hang on until graduation so that my life could begin” before CCEC and asked, “Whether I could have lasted those two years without drifting into the ditch, who knows? “

A number of respondents identified CCEC as a turning point in their lives. One respondent said that CCEC was “totally the turning point for me. This is where it all became clear to me”, another said, “Carcross was certainly a turning point in my valuing and wanting to learn life subjects and technical subjects as well as academic subjects.”

For a former parent member, it was also significant:

I don't believe I would have had the same degree of adaptability for living and learning if I had not been a Parent Member at Carcross. I learned a great deal there about leadership, working under pressure with limited resources and interacting with a wide variety of people from different backgrounds.

One former community member wrote that:

Carcross plays a role in everything I do today. I think about it nearly every day. It shaped me into who I am. It showed me a career that I still enjoy to this day. It has given me life-long friends and has taught me pretty much everything I know about myself.

For some, it was "The people I met at CCEC and the relationships that I made have lasted a very long time. The kinship that is evident whenever I meet a former member is special".

For others, it was gaining, "more confidence in my abilities than I ever thought possible. I credit my time at CCEC for making me the confident, take-on-anything woman I am today."

Theme E: The Environment

One former student's comment that, "I learn best when surrounded by nature, dogs, and hippies" illustrates the importance of the environment for learning. This included the beauty and vastness of the Yukon wilderness but also proximity to an isolated First Nations village and the interior of the dilapidated old building, with its acoustic stairwells, and communal meeting rooms. Given that the majority of community members came from southern cities, rural Yukon in the 1970's had an adventurous appeal with its isolation and lack of creature comforts and communication with the outside world.

As one respondent suggested, students had two options - the excitement of life in the main building and the wilderness outside. For some, the school's geographical context north of the 60th parallel was part of the draw to CCEC. One respondent said that "The cold, the quiet, the beauty" were all a big part of the experience. Another respondent said that:

My outdoor experiences (fishing with nets on Bennett Lake, hunting moose), cutting firewood, hiking, camping, exploring the wilderness, were high on my list of accomplishments there. I had always wanted to have a wilderness lifestyle and Carcross allowed me to investigate that lifestyle more fully.

A third individual reflected that, "Living on a large rural property in an idyllic setting with mountains on all sides beside a lake reinforced my love of nature and the outdoors."

However, it wasn't just the enjoyment of the natural setting; one former student reflected that, "I found that my thinking was richest when I was invigorated, inspired by the great outdoors. I could focus, read, learn well when I had been physically active or by enjoying the great outdoors." Another former student affirmed how important learning this way was for him, "I also had the opportunity to participate in hands-on activities in nature with peers that led to deepening of understanding and personal discoveries."

One respondent still recalls an experience (and a teacher) that are significant to her thirty years later. She wrote:

I had a very profound experience in a class I sat in on, taught by E. S. (biology?). We were to choose a one-foot square piece of the landscape and study it and draw it

weekly, making observations, etc. It was very powerful for me to do that and I have continued to be conscious of and to observe the amazing life beneath our feet. I am forever grateful to E. S. for that opportunity.

A subtheme of responses regarding the land was the impact it had on people's belief systems and career choices. For example, one student commented, "Living in that incredible natural environment also fostered a life-long love of nature and the outdoors." Another said:

Carcross introduced me to amazing human, geographical and environmental diversity and opened my eyes in so many realms. I think I learned to be less judgmental as a result of having encountered so much diversity at such a young age (17).

One former student wrote that "Living in the Yukon, in Carcross, in the school introduced me to Native people, to Canadian cultures and history-built relationships... which related to me doing my doctoral studies in the Yukon and a lifetime passion for Indigenous health and rights."

Another respondent said that CCEC and its geographical context helped inform his life priorities: "The Carcross experience helped me think about what was important in life (quality of life such as clean air, water, healthy environment, etc., being high on that list, making money low on the list) and about expanding my view of what the possibilities were." Another insight demonstrates that learning in one context can be transferred to another area, "The exposure to nature gave me a sense of self-reliance that has served me well and opened up unexpected opportunities."

Another former community member said that, “CCEC was a huge turning point for me as I increased my love of nature and as a result have spent the last 33 years employed in the field of conservation.” For one student, “The environment at CCEC was empowering and taught me to take big risks.” Another student said:

From the moment I walked through the doors I was on a learning curve and that never stopped. It was just so much fun I didn't know it was even happening. I think that it gave me the power to know that anything I wanted to do was possible. I have never been afraid to try things.

One former student described it like this: “I have always been interested in learning new things, but I thrive best in environments that stimulate my curiosity and don't tamp it down or restrict it”. Another said that what was important to him was “feeling acknowledged as a human being with a brain and heart who had something to offer. Personal attention. Flexibility to study aspects of curriculum that I was excited about. Encouragement.”

For some students, the environment at Carcross stimulated an interest or passion that lead to further learning or career pursuits. One student said that his “time at Carcross was a varied open learning experience where I had the chance to learn new skills in an outdoor environment which was for me a deciding factor in pursuing my education in Forestry. This resulted in a love of the outdoors for work and recreation and remains to this day an important part of my lifestyle.”

Many people suggest that the environment at CCEC was transformational in that it opened up possibilities and helped make their world view larger. One respondent commented that

she "would have a much narrower view of life" if she hadn't attended CCEC. Another said that, "Going to Carcross was like coming out of the top of a chimney and seeing how big the world was – opened my eyes big time!". Another said that, "My horizons were so expanded at Carcross – I can't imagine how narrow my parameters might have been if I had not attended Carcross", and still another that, "it widened my world. It also gave me a greater appreciation of community and contributing." One student felt that "the open approach to teaching and learning likely influenced my current attitude of "life-long learning".

Chapter 5: Discussion

Summary

The three research questions for this study were:

1. What ongoing effect did the CCEC experience have on the lives of the students who attended? How did it affect their career and educational choices?
2. What made learning successful for students at CCEC?
3. In particular, what factors that made learning successful for students at CCEC could be applied to students in Yukon schools today?

The themes that emerged from these three questions are shown in Table 6.

Table 6	
Themes that Emerged from the Research	
Theme A	Responsiveness to Individual Learning Differences
Theme B	The Importance of Relationships A sense of community Embracing differences within the community Relationships with teachers
Theme C	Authentic Learning
Theme D	Being Engaged: Action, Commitment, Responsibility A sense of agency and the ability to take risks
Theme E	The Environment

When asked what ongoing effect CCEC had on their lives, many respondents described their experiences at CCEC as turning points in their lives – several described it as “transformational”. To a large degree, they described becoming engaged as learners, learning to take risks, make mistakes, take on authentic responsibility and do things that were real, that mattered, and that had real consequences, as well as to lead and to build confidence.

Respondents said that the opportunities they had to participate in decision making, to contribute to the discussion at community meetings, to be treated as equals and to learn how to be accountable members of the adult world they were entering impacted their lives in a variety of ways, but in particular, that these experiences gave them a sense of agency and the confidence to take things on. Although the learning was not done in the typical way, sitting in a classroom, former students still found success later in life. This is reflected, at least to some degree, in their high levels of post-secondary education, including university, college and trades and technical training, as well as the significant contributions former community members have made to the adult communities they live in – a small sampling would include a number of world-class artists, creators of theatre and construction companies, and the large number of teachers who are passing on their alternative philosophies about education.

Determining the factors that made learning successful for CCEC students revealed the importance of supportive, positive relationships with teachers and other students. A sense of community and a feeling of belonging and of having a role to play also figured large in

making CCEC an effective learning environment as did opportunities to learn in more hands-on ways that were often not being provided at the schools where students had come from. Another factor that had an impact was being needed to take on real work that mattered. Finally, the environment in which students learned had an impact on their learning, including not only the Yukon wilderness, but also a big old building where students could relax and engage with their teachers and with other students in different ways while learning.

All of these factors could be applied to Yukon's current education system. More focus could be put on student-teacher relationships, creating learning communities and school-within-a-school programs. Curriculum could be less focused on academics and more on real life problem solving and developing a variety of literacies, including hands-on literacy. Perhaps educators need to stand back and look at where the current system came from and ask whether it is still effective or relevant. What this study demonstrates is that students can learn in a variety of settings and in a variety of ways and still find success in their lives. Engagement and authentic learning, opportunities to learn in more hands-on ways, and a supportive environment – if these elements are keys to student success, the challenge is how to more fully integrate them into our current education system.

Limitations of this Research

The major limitations relate to sample bias. First, there was no “complete” alumni list to rely on to contact former members. The challenge of collecting names and email addresses of former community members, thirty years after the school closed, necessarily reduced the available sample size and no doubt introduced a positive bias to the final available sample. It is also likely that those former community members who had a good experience or whose lives turned out well were more likely to respond. Obviously, those who have passed away did not respond, and the response is limited from First Nations students who attended.

Another limitation of this study is that many former community members participated in the community in different roles at different times. For example, of the 69 students who responded, 16 also participated in the community as workers, either before or after being students. Of the 36 parent members who responded, 10 were also workers at one point in time. In addition, two respondents were students who later became parent members. Two others, including myself, participated in the community in all three roles. Given the fluidity of the roles, it is impossible to separate out whether a response is from the perspective of a former student, worker or parent member, if the respondent was at CCEC in different roles.

Another limitation is the unique time and space and the impossibility of knowing how many of the outcomes were a function of the isolated northern setting of the school, or of the time period during which the school operated – at the end of a historical time period when exploration and self-discovery were priorities. Would the themes identified as supporting

student success be reproducible in an urban setting or in a less isolated setting? Would the same themes be as effective now as they seemed to be in the late 1970s? Even if an experiment such as CCEC was tried in a remote setting, it is unlikely that it would be as isolated, given the many options for instant communication that are now available. In addition, the isolated and remote location made self-sufficiency necessary, rather than just part of the educational program, which meant that keeping the building running was absolutely necessary and that there was no fall back plan. By the same token, another unique aspect of this experience was that it was impossible to walk away from conflicts and they had to be sorted out or resolved in some way that relied solely on community members. The relative isolation, which would be difficult to recreate, meant that relationships were essential ways of coping with the dark, the isolation, and, for students, with being so far from home.

When CCEC closed, all of its paperwork, including education policy documents, student journals, and student-generated artefacts, were turned over to the Yukon Archives. These materials remain in the Archives and are difficult to access as no photocopying is allowed. My initial plan was to include this historical material, with particular focus on the educational policy and philosophy documents contained in the collection, which I thought would provide some background and context to students' descriptions of their experiences. When this project became too unwieldy, I abandoned this aspect of the research.

Implications for Further Research

One of the really interesting themes that emerged from questions about what careers former community member have pursued was the large number who became teachers. Of the 109 surveys completed, 34 respondents identified that they were or had been teachers at some point in their careers. One teacher said that “CCEC makes me a different kind of teacher and it was the teacher/models that were part of the community that led me to this profession. It is a beleaguered profession right now but I hang on to what it can be and keep hoping that in some way I can recreate some of the experience of learning I had at CCEC for my students now.” Further examination of why so many former CCEC members became teachers and what impact CCEC had on that career choice and on their teaching philosophy and style would be an interesting topic for further research.

Another area for further research is the religious aspect of CCEC, which is one of the reasons many parent members and students (11%) said they came to CCEC. The fact that parent members were asked to publically commit themselves to a “Rule of Life” that began with the words “Under God...” reflected the Christian foundation of the community and school. The Rule of Life was a statement of the principles by which the parent body and, by extension, the students, agreed to conduct themselves. This overriding set of principles had a profound effect on the entire community and clearly affected who applied to become parent members as well as the kind of students who came (Love, 1991). Another interesting area for further research would be to ask what

impact the fact that CCEC was, in essence, a religious community had on the type of community it became and on the people who chose to become part of it.

In addition to the material housed in the Yukon Archives, I have a personal collection of photographs and documents from the school. As indicated earlier, I had planned to refer to this material as background and context to the whole CCEC educational experiment. However, in the course of my research I discovered that former parent members Charlie Lenz (2012) and Ann Love (1990) both wrote papers analyzing the material from the archives and their own experiences with a focus on why CCEC closed after only seven years of operation. Another area for future research would be to look at CCEC from the perspective of its educational policy and to examine the collection of documents housed at the archives to see what they reveal about the roots and impact of CCEC's educational philosophy and policy.

It would also be interesting to compare CCEC to other alternative schools or communities or communes. In one of my focus groups I became aware that CCEC was influenced by the Summerhill School in England that has operated since 1921. Recently I watched several films about Summerhill's founder, A.S. Neill, that show, quite clearly, where some of CCEC's influences came from. A comparison with other "alternative" schools or programs would provide an interesting further area for research.

Conclusion: Implications for Practice

Hands-on and Authentic Learning Opportunities

This research provides support for the view that increasing hands-on and authentic learning opportunities will enable learners who are more visual or kinaesthetic to tap into their natural learning styles and become more engaged in their learning. The high demand for Yukon's experiential programs such as the semester long M.A.D. (Music, Art, Dance, Drama) and A.C.E.S. (Achievement Challenge Environment Service) is strong evidence that many students want and need to learn in more experiential ways.

Likewise, the lesser emphasis on strict academic subjects seems not to have hampered the academic and professional progress of former students. With less than 25% of Yukon graduates going on to university (Westfall, 2014), and with a serious shortage of certified trades people predicted, it no longer makes sense for university entrance to remain the primary focus of the high school curriculum, especially if this path no longer guarantees employment. Providing students with "applied skills" – opportunities to develop competence using their hands as well as their heads, may lead to an interest in a trade, but may also lead to a career in the arts, engineering, medicine, dentistry or occupational therapy, all of which require using both one's hands and one's head.

Relationships, Relationships, Relationships

One respondent to the survey said that the three “Rs” at CCEC were, “relationships, relationships, relationships.” Psychologist Gordon Neufeld (2004), who writes about the importance of attachment relationships, says that children can’t learn unless they are “attached” to their teachers. Consequently, ensuring that relationships between students and teachers are secure and provide a sense of community and belonging are key ways of providing students with the context for learning.

The “Learning” Environment

This study provides evidence that students are impacted by the environments in which they learn – including the exterior landscape and the opportunities it offers, and the interior landscape that was informal, comfortable, and creative. Creating learning environments that are separate from traditional school settings facilitates learning in more project-based ways, without the limitations of regular classrooms and schedules, and provides opportunities for community building and participatory decision making. An “environment” can be created in many different locations. It is making use of the location – both its assets and constraints that incorporates it into the learning experience. Students who participate in Yukon “school-within- a-school” programs such as MAD (Music, Arts, Dance and Drama), CHAOS (Community, Heritage, Adventure, Outdoor, Skills) and ACES (Achievement, Challenge, Environment and Service) would likely support this view, as would students who participate in

experiences like the Hidden Valley School bison hunt or REM (the Rural Experiential Model).

Being Engaged

Without the opportunity to learn in experiential hands-on ways, many students end up labelled “disengaged” or “at risk”. When engaged, however, these students can become competent and passionate about their work. The Skills Yukon day in Ross River, where students learned applied skills and worked with tools, used to be the only day that most students came to school. Instead of seeing “shop class” as an “option”, with the real learning going on in the academic classes, this situation tells us that when learning seems relevant, students are more likely to show up and to engage.

Closing Statement

If, as Pink (2005) suggests, the skills people will need in the future include the ability to “think outside the box”, to solve problems creatively, and to invent new ideas, radical changes are needed to the education currently being provided. The CCEC experience may have been in an isolated northern location over thirty years ago but the themes that made learning successful for students then still resonate for today’s students. The need for connection and relationships, opportunities for hands-on and authentic learning experiences, and environments that don’t just house, but become part of the learning, will continue to contribute to student engagement and success.

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Appendix A: Information about the Project and Invitation to Participate

Date

Dear Carcross Community Education Centre (CCEC) Alumni.

My name is Gerry Quarton. I was a worker at CCEC before the building was ready for students to live in, a student during CCEC's first year of operation, and later returned as a parent member. I had the pleasure of seeing many of you at the 2009 reunion.

My reason for writing is to invite you to participate in my research project. It is titled, *Lessons Learned from a Northern Alternative School: An Ethnographic Study*. With your assistance, I will be conducting this study to complete my Master of Education degree under the supervision of, Dr. Peter MacMillan, through the University of Northern British Columbia.

I am posting this message on the website to invite your participation in this study because, as a former student or parent member, you have valuable experience and information to contribute to this study. I am interested in finding out about both your positive and negative experiences during your involvement with CCEC. As a teacher in the Yukon, I am especially interested in finding out what worked or didn't work for you in terms of education at CCEC, and how that affected your subsequent educational pursuits or career choices.

The key research questions in this study are as follows:

1. What ongoing effect did the CCEC experience have on the lives of the students who attended? How did it affect their career and educational choices?
2. What made learning successful for students at CCEC?
3. In particular, what factors that made learning successful for students at CCEC could be applied to students in Yukon schools today?

You are invited to participate in two aspects of this study. The first aspect is to complete the online questionnaire. The second is to participate in a videotaped focus group discussion. Should you wish to participate in the first part of the study, please click on the link to the questionnaire and consent form. You will be required to provide your consent to participating in this research before completing the questionnaire. The questionnaire should only take about 30 minutes to complete and your participation is completely voluntary. Even if you agree to participate in the study, you have the right to ask questions about the study, decline to answer any questions, or withdraw from the study at any time. Answering the questionnaire does not mean that you are agreeing to or interested in being involved in a focus group.

A copy of the final report will be available at the conclusion of the study to any participant who requests it.

If you are interested in participating in this first aspect of the study, please do the following:

1. Click on the link to the online questionnaire. Clicking on the link to the questionnaire will take you first to a consent form. Before you can complete the questionnaire, you will need to read the consent form and indicate your consent to participating in this research by following the directions for giving your consent.

YOU WILL NOT BE ABLE TO RESPOND TO THE QUESTIONNAIRE WITHOUT FIRST PROVIDING YOUR CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE.

2. The deadline for completing the questionnaire is September^{1st} 2012
3. Please feel free to write additional comments, insights, or stories you want to share in the space provided at the end of the questionnaire.

Every effort will be made to protect your confidentiality and anonymity unless you clearly state otherwise. The survey program I am using for the questionnaire will provide me with your responses to the questions anonymously. Any hard copies of completed questionnaires will be stored in a locked facility for a maximum of two years and only my supervising committee and I will have access to the raw data. Following this, hard copies of the completed questionnaires will be destroyed by shredding. As a participant you have a right to decline answering questions, ask questions about the study and/or withdraw from the study at any time before the Project or video are finalized. If you withdraw, your responses to the questionnaire or during the focus group discussions will be removed from the data relied on or used in this study.

If you would also like to be involved in the second aspect of the study, the focus group discussions please email me at quarton@unbc.ca or call me at (867) 667-2723

Questions about this Research

This research has been reviewed by the Research Ethics Board for the University of Northern British Columbia for compliance with research ethics protocols.

If you have a question about this research, or your participation in it, you can contact me, Gerry Quarton at quarton@unbc.ca or 1-867-667-2723 or you can contact my supervisor, Dr. Peter MacMillan, at peterm@unbc.ca or 1-250-960-5828. Should you have any concerns or complaints, please feel free to contact the UNBC Office of Research at reb@unbc.ca or 1-250-960-6735. Thank you for considering this request.

Gerry Quarton

Appendix B: Questionnaire - Experiences at Carcross Community Education Centre (CCEC)

This questionnaire is part of Gerry Quarton's research project about the educational experiences of former Carcross Community Education Centre (CCEC) students. This research project is being conducted under the supervision of Dr. Linda Selby.

There are no right or wrong answers to any of these questions. Your responses will be compiled with the rest of the participant data to maintain your anonymity. All responses are confidential and any data collected will be used solely for the purposes of this study.

Your willingness to participate in this research is much appreciated. Please note that the questions are primarily directed at students, but responses from both workers and parent members would also be welcome.

Demographics

1. Name (optional) _____
2. Sex ____ male ____ female
3. Age _____ Years at CCEC _____
4. Role at CCEC ____ student ____ worker ____ parent member
5. How old were you when you attended CCEC? _____
6. Where did you live before coming to CCEC? _____
7. Where do you live now? _____
8. Are you of First Nation's ancestry or did you come to CCEC from a northern territory?
____ yes ____ no
9. Where did you attend school before coming to CCEC? _____

Your experiences at CCEC

10. What drew you to CCEC? Indicate all/any that apply.
 - ____ wanted to live in a Christian community
 - ____ wanted to live in a hippy commune
 - ____ looking for an alternative way to complete high school
 - ____ wanted to live in the north
 - ____ wanted to live closer to the outdoors

____ wanted to get away from home
____ other (please specify) _____

11. How did you come to your current career? Did you expect, when you were in public school, that you would be doing this type of work?
12. Did your experiences at Carcross school affect your career choice, and if so, how?
13. Describe your public school education? How did it go? Were you successful?
14. If you were not successful, why do you think this was?
15. If you were successful, why do you think this was?
16. Did you notice any differences between the way you learned and the way other students learned in public school?
17. Do you know what way or ways you learn best?
18. What would have helped you learn better when you were in public school?
19. What enabled you to get from your school experience to your current situation?
20. Can you identify any turning points or factors that influenced your ability to learn?
21. What aspect of your experience at CCEC had the most impact on your life/you?
22. How do you think your life would be different if you hadn't attended CCEC?
23. Do you think mainly in pictures or in words? ____ pictures ____ words
24. Are you musically, artistically, or mechanically inclined? ____ yes ____ no
25. How and when did you discover this aptitude? ____ yes ____ no
26. Were you able to develop this aptitude further at Carcross? ____ yes ____
27. Did you learn more about how you learn best during your time at Carcross?
28. Do you like to learn by doing? ____ yes ____ no Can you elaborate?
29. What kind of relationships did you form at Carcross?
30. Did you carry on with further education after Carcross? ____ yes ____ no
Please provide details.

31. Can you describe your relationships with teachers at Carcross?

32. Is there anything else you would like to say about your education or experiences at CCEC?

☐ Yes, I would like to receive a summary of the findings in this study

Thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire.

If you would like to be involved in the focus group interviews, please send me a direct e-mail message to quarton@unbc.ca or call me at (867) 667-2723

Appendix C – Invitation to Participate in Focus Group Discussions

Date

Dear Carcross Community Education Centre (CCEC) Alumni.

This is the second aspect of the research project *Lessons Learned from a Northern Alternative School: An Ethnographic Study*. As you know from the information sheet, I am completing this study for my Master of Education degree, under the supervision of Dr. Linda Selby, through the University of Northern British Columbia.

The three research questions for this study are:

1. What ongoing effect did the CCEC experience have on the lives of the students who attended? How did it affect their career and educational choices?
2. What made learning successful for students at CCEC?
3. In particular, what factors that made learning successful for students at CCEC could be applied to students in Yukon schools today?

You have been invited to participate in the second part of this study because you indicated a desire to participate in a focus group discussion when you completed the project questionnaire.

Your participation in this focus group discussion is entirely voluntary. The focus group is intended to be approximately 45 minutes in duration. With your permission, this discussion will be video recorded to ensure accuracy of the information collected and to provide video footage for a short documentary about CCEC. If you do not wish to be video-taped, but you still wish to participate, an audio taped interview can be arranged.

The data from the focus group discussion will be compiled with the other data collected for analysis. Recordings and transcripts will be stored in a locked facility for a maximum of two years and only my supervisory committee and I will have access to the raw data. Following this study all interview data will be destroyed by shredding or file deletion. As a participant you have a right to decline answering questions, ask questions about the study and withdraw from the study at any time before the Project or video are finalized. If you withdraw, your responses to the questionnaire or during the focus group discussions will be removed from the data relied on or used in this study.

A copy of the final report will be made available to participants at the conclusion of the study.

If you have a question about this research, or your participation in it, you can contact me at quarton@unbc.ca, or call me at (867) 667-2723, or you can contact my supervisor, Dr. Peter MacMillan, at peterm@unbc.ca or 1-250-960-5828.

Lessons Learned from a Northern Alternative School: An Ethnographic Study

Should you have any concerns or complaints, please feel free to contact the UNBC Office of Research at reb@unbc.ca or 1-250-960-6735.

Thank you for considering this request,

Gerry Quarton

Appendix D – Focus Group Discussion Questions

The questions for the focus group discussions will arise from the information received from the participants who complete the surveys. Some indicative questions are:

1. What aspect of your experience at CCEC had the most impact on your life/you?
2. How do you think your life would have been different if you hadn't attended CCEC?
3. Is there anything else you would like to say about your education or experiences at CCEC?

Focus groups will be conducted at times and places that suit the participants and the discussions will be videotaped with the participants' permission. It is expected that the focus groups will take approximately 45 minutes. Arrangements can be made for participants who do not wish to have their discussions videotaped.

Appendix E

Researcher Copy Informed Consent Agreement Form

Consent to Participate in CCEC Experiences Questionnaire

I, _____ (participant's name), consent to the Researcher using my responses to this questionnaire about my experiences at the Carcross Community Education Centre in his research, *Lessons Learned from a Northern Alternative School: An Ethnographic Study*. I understand the nature of this research, and wish to provide my consent to my questionnaire responses being used in this research study.

I have been given information about the questionnaire and about the research project described above and I am satisfied that I understand the requirements of this work. I have had an opportunity to ask questions and receive answers to these. I understand that I may, up until the project is completed, withdraw permission for the researcher, Gerry Quarton, to use this information as part of a Master's Project for the University of Northern British Columbia. I understand that if I withdraw, my responses to the questionnaire will be removed from the data relied on or used in this study.

Signature _____ Date _____
Participant name

Signature _____ Date _____
Gerry Quarton, Researcher

If you have any questions regarding your participation in this study please contact me quarton@unbc.ca or call me at (867) 667-2723 or my supervisor, Dr. Peter MacMillan, peterm@unbc.ca or call 1-250-960-5828

Should you have concerns or complaints you are encouraged to contact the UNBC Office of Research at reb@unbc.ca or 1-250-960-6735

NOTE: All information gathered will be treated as confidential for the purpose of studying this topic. The names of participants will remain anonymous unless consent to disclosure has been provided.

Appendix F

Participant Copy Informed Consent Agreement Form

Consent to Participate in CCEC Experiences Questionnaire

I, _____ (participant's name), consent to the Researcher using my responses to this questionnaire about my experiences at the Carcross Community Education Centre in his research, *Lessons Learned from a Northern Alternative School: An Ethnographic Study*. I understand the nature of this research, and wish to provide my consent to my questionnaire responses being used in this research study.

I have been given information about the online questionnaire and about the research project described above and I am satisfied that I understand the requirements of this work. I have had an opportunity to ask questions and receive answers to these. I understand that I may, up until the project is completed, withdraw permission for the researcher, Gerry Quarton, to use this information as part of a Master's Project for the University of Northern British Columbia. If you withdraw, your responses to the questionnaire will be removed from the data relied on or used in this study.

Signature _____ Date _____
Participant name

Signature _____ Date _____
Gerry Quarton, Researcher

If you have any questions regarding your participation in this study please contact me quarton@unbc.ca or call me at (867) 667-2723 or my supervisor, Dr. Peter MacMillan peterm@unbc.ca or call 1-250-960-5828

Should you have concerns or complaints you are encouraged to contact the UNBC Office of Research at reb@unbc.ca or 1-250-960-6735

NOTE: All information gathered will be treated as confidential for the purpose of studying this topic. The names of participants will remain anonymous unless consent to disclosure has been provided.

Appendix G – Participant Copy: Informed Consent Agreement Form

Consent to Participate in CCEC Focus Group Discussions

I, _____ (participant's name), consent to the Researcher using my responses to the focus group discussions about my experiences at the Carcross Community Education Centre in his research, *Lessons Learned from a Northern Alternative School: An Ethnographic Study*. I understand the nature of this research, and wish to provide my consent to my responses being used in this research project. My signature below indicates my consent to participate in a focus group discussion. I understand that the focus group discussions will be videotaped and that, if I participate in a focus group discussion, anonymity cannot be guaranteed.

I have been given information on the focus group discussions and about the research project described above and I am satisfied that I understand the requirements of this work. I have had an opportunity to ask questions and receive answers to these. I understand that I may, up until the project is completed, withdraw permission for Gerry Quarton, the Researcher, to use this information as part of a Master's Project for the University of Northern British Columbia. I understand that if I withdraw, my responses during the focus group discussions will be removed from the data relied on or used in this study.

- ☐ I consent participating in a focus group discussion that will be videotaped and I consent to segments of this footage being used to make a documentary about CCEC. I understand that I will have an opportunity to review the video footage prior to completion of the video documentary.
- ☐ I do not wish to be videotaped in a focus group discussion but consent to participating in an audio-taped interview, and to segments of the audio-tape being used to make a documentary about CCEC.

Signature _____ Date _____

Participant name

Signature _____ Date _____

Gerry Quarton, Researcher

If you have any questions regarding your participation in this study please contact me at quarton@unbc.ca or call me at (867) 667-2723 or my supervisor, Dr. Peter MacMillan peterm@unbc.ca or call 1-960-5828

Should you have concerns or complaints you are encouraged to contact the UNBC Office of Research at reb@unbc.ca or 1-250-960-6735

NOTE: All information gathered will be treated as confidential for the purpose of studying this topic. The names of participants will not be disclosed in the final written or video project but anonymity cannot be provided for those who participate in the focus group discussions.

Appendix H – Researcher Copy: Informed Consent Agreement Form

Consent to Participate in CCEC Focus Group Discussions

I, _____ (participant's name), consent to the Researcher using my responses to the focus group discussions about my experiences at the Carcross Community Education Centre in his research, *Lessons Learned from a Northern Alternative School: An Ethnographic Study*. I understand the nature of this research, and wish to provide my consent to my responses being used in this research project. My signature below indicates my consent to participate in a focus group discussion. I understand that these focus group discussions will be videotaped so anonymity cannot be guaranteed.

I have been given information on the focus group discussions and the research project described above and I am satisfied that I understand the requirements of this work. I have had an opportunity to ask questions and receive answers to these. I understand that I may, up until the project is completed, withdraw permission for Gerry Quarton, the Researcher, to use this information as part of a Master's Project for the University of Northern British Columbia. I understand that if I withdraw, my responses to the questionnaire or during the focus group discussions will be removed from the data relied on or used in this study.

- ☐ I consent participating in a focus group discussion that will be videotaped and I consent to segments of this footage being used to make a documentary about CCEC. I understand that I will have an opportunity to review the video footage prior to completion of the video documentary.
- ☐ I do not wish to be videotaped in a focus group discussion but consent to participating in an audio-taped interview, and to segments of the audio-tape being used to make a documentary about CCEC.

Signature _____ Date _____
Participant name

Signature _____ Date _____
Gerry Quarton, Researcher

If you have any questions regarding your participation in this study please contact me at quarton@unbc.ca or call me at (867) 667-2723 or my supervisor, Dr. Peter MacMillan peterm@unbc.ca or call 1-960-5828

Should you have concerns or complaints you are encouraged to contact the UNBC Office of Research at reb@unbc.ca or 1-250-960-6735

NOTE: All information gathered will be treated as confidential for the purpose of studying this topic study. The names of participants will not be disclosed in the final written or video project but anonymity cannot be provided for those who participate in the focus group discussions.

Appendix I: Letter Re Use of Archival Material

Administrative Officer
Sarah Usher
Box 31136
Whitehorse, Yukon Y1A 5P7
Telephone: [867]667-7746
Fax: [867] 667-6125
Email: synodoffice@klondiker.com



DIOCESE OF YUKON ✚
ANGLICAN CHURCH OF CANADA

diocesan memo

Date: December 30, 2011
To: Yukon Archives FAX: 393-6253
From: Deacon Sarah Usher
Diocesan Administrator
RE: Archival Permission (2 pages including cover)

Dear Archivist,

Would you please grant **Gerry Quarton**, access to the archival records of the Diocese of Yukon. Mr. Quarton would specifically like access to the Carcross Community Fonds including minutes of Community Meetings, Parent Member Meetings and Management Committee Meetings. Mr. Quarton was a former parent member, student and worker at the school and he is at present working on his Masters of Education. His thesis has a working title of "A Mixed Methods, Collective Ethnography Study: Lessons Learned from a Northern Alternative School".

This access does not include permission to photocopy, scan or digitally copy records. It is assumed that he or any researcher would take handwritten notes only and not copy the records verbatim.

If you have any questions or need more clarification please do not hesitate to contact me.

With thanks,

Sarah Usher
Diocesan Administrator

Appendix J – Letter from Yukon Archives re CCEC Collection

Dear Dr. Linda Selby,

This is to confirm that Gerry Quarton has access to the archival records in the Carcross Community Education Centre fonds held at the Yukon Archives to carry out research for his thesis with the working title "A Mixed Methods, Collective Ethnography Study: Lessons Learned from a Northern Alternative School". In addition to the records already open to the public, Mr. Quarton has been granted access by Sarah Usher, the Administrative Officer for the Anglican Church Diocese of Yukon, to the restricted files containing the minutes of Community Meetings, Parent Member Meetings, and Management Committee Meetings. This letter is on file at the Yukon Archives. Permission to access these records **does not include** the permission to photocopy, scan, or digitally copy them. The researcher is permitted to take handwritten notes only and is not permitted to copy the records verbatim.

If you have any questions feel free to contact me.

Sincerely,

Glenn Icton
Archives Reference Assistant
Yukon Archives
Government of Yukon
Box Number 2703
Whitehorse, Yukon
Canada Y1A 2C6
Glenn.Icton@gov.yk.ca
(867) 667-8064