

# Educational Leadership at Moose Meadow School: A Contextualized Portrait of a Northern Canadian School and its Principal

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**Abstract:** Research studies of northern Canadian schools are rare (Goddard and Foster, 2002). From this point of departure, this article presents a portrait of Moose Meadow School and its non-Indigenous principal, employing A. Richard King's *The School at Mopass: A Problem of Identity* (1967) as a historical backdrop. In light of the paucity of northern educational research, this article presents two descriptions: the school and the principal's daily life as operated under the central authority of the Yukon Department of Education in 2008, and that of a residential school in the 1960s, as operated by the federal government department then known as Western Region, Indian Affairs Branch, Canadian Department of Citizenship and Immigration. Observations and interviews were employed as data gathering instruments to record the daily operation of the school and the actions of the school principal. The article offers a theoretical contribution with respect to the role of identity and constructions and enactments of educational leadership. It further sheds light on the centrality of the school in northern rural communities where Aboriginal land claims have been settled with territorial and federal governments.

## Introduction

This article presents aspects of two ethnographic studies conducted forty years apart in two schools located in the same area of Canada's Yukon Territory. Drawing parallels between these two studies presents the opportunity to reflect upon the historical purposes of schooling and the manner in which it has been conducted in the Yukon. Research studies of northern schools are rare (Goddard & Foster, 2002); thus, this is a unique opportunity to present a portrait of a Yukon school and the principal's daily life as operated under the central authority of the Yukon Department of Education in 2008, alongside a portrait of a 1960s residential school operated by the Canadian Department of Citizenship and Immigration (Western Region, Indian Affairs Branch).

A. Richard King's book, *The School at Mopass<sup>1</sup>: A Problem of Identity*, was published in 1967 (by Holt, Reinhart, and Winston). The book was based on an ethnographic study commissioned by Lyman Jampolsky, then superintendent for the Western Region, Indian Affairs Branch, Canadian Department of Citizenship and Immigration. Forty years later, I conducted an ethnographic study that explored non-Indigenous principals living and working in Indigenous Yukon contexts.<sup>2</sup> I was introduced to King's book after my study had been written up and submitted for examination. One of the school sites where I conducted fieldwork was in the Mopass School community where King lived, taught school, and conducted his fieldwork in the early 1960s.

In the intervening time between these two studies, the community of Mopass has undergone a change from being the site of a residential school, the purpose of which was to effect "successful entry into Whiteman society" (King, 1967, p. 3) for Indigenous Yukon children, to being situated in the traditional territory of a Yukon First Nation that has since settled its land claim and self-government agreement with the Government of Canada and the Government of Yukon. This transformation would suggest that the role of the school, its relation with the community, and the means by which educational leadership is construed and enacted would therefore be distinctly different in both studies.

One may ask, "Why is the study of the principalship in a jurisdiction such as the Yukon important?" This can be answered by pointing out that little research appears to have been conducted surrounding the cultural diversity of leadership, cross-cultural understandings and, specifically, conceptualizations and descriptions that include Indigenous perspectives and contexts. Goddard & Foster (2002) underscore this by stating that while there have been examinations by Bryant (1996), Capper (1990), and Shields (1996) within American Indian contexts:

...there have been few examinations of school leadership that have been grounded in Canada's northern region. This lack of research focusing on northern education generally, and the relationship between educational leadership and the local culture in particular, identifies a serious gap in the literature. (Goddard & Foster, 2002, pp. 5-6)

Offering an historical underpinning for educational leaders to culturally adapt their practice, Friesen & Friesen (2002) identify the need for a reversal of the historical assimilation of Aboriginal peoples into mainstream society.

Echoing the federally commissioned 1967 Hawthorn Report (a study of the conditions of Indigenous peoples in Canada), Friesen & Friesen urge that educators should be integrated into Aboriginal ways of knowing, learning the background, culture, and identity of their students more thoroughly. These authors also base this assertion upon the findings of Taylor (1995) who estimates that “90 percent of Native children will, at one time or another, be taught by a non-Native teacher” (Friesen & Friesen, 2002, p. 27).

With respect to the two studies discussed here, an important distinction needs to be acknowledged. While King’s study was a study of a “cross-cultural educational situation,” the study I undertook was an examination of non-Indigenous educational leaders working in Indigenous contexts. As a result, this makes the current study distinct from a cross-cultural study in that it illuminates educational leadership as construed and enacted by non-Indigenous principals living and working in Indigenous contexts. This distinction notwithstanding, my engagement with King’s book provides an important historical backdrop upon which to offer a portrait of the present school in the Mopass community, with specific emphasis given to the school setting and the principal.

### **Similar Trajectories, Decades Apart**

When I first encountered King’s book, I was struck by the similarities in our respective paths. In the foreword, written by George and Louise Spindler, the editors of the series *Case Studies in Education and Culture* (Holt, Rinehart, and Winston), King is described as having flown north through the Yukon in the winter of 1939 to start an aviation company. En route, his plane crashed in the remote community of Teslin, where he remained for six weeks. The trading post manager, an amateur anthropologist, exposed King to some of the background history and culture of Yukon Indians and anthropological perspectives. After this experience, King enrolled in the US Merchant Marine and the Marine Corps during World War Two; he later graduated from Western Washington College and spent a number of years working as an elementary school teacher. Later in his career, King was administrator of a number of schools in Micronesia. He subsequently earned a PhD in education and cultural anthropology at Stanford University, researching the educational process in a Yukon residential school.

Reflecting King’s experiences onto my own, distinct overlaps emerge. We share a similar engagement with the aviation field: I was a Canadian Air Force jet-engine mechanic for six years prior to entering university and graduating as a teacher. My interest in the Canadian North led to a teaching career first in northern British Columbia and subsequently in the Yukon,

where I was principal at a number of schools: one was in Teslin, the same community at which King's plane crashed sixty years before.

After ten years working as an educator and administrator in rural and isolated schools with predominantly Indigenous populations, I was intrigued by the lack of contextualized and culturally-sensitive approaches to educational leadership that would help Yukon educational leaders understand their role in small rural communities. Neither my previous military experience, professional practice as a teacher, nor training or post-graduate study adequately prepared me for the complex and diverse role of school principal in Indigenous northern communities. Once in the position of a new principal, there was no explicit indication of how I could or should lead, nor direction given specific to what it was an educational leader was supposed to do (beyond that aimed at meeting broader organizational mandates), nor guidance on how to develop a professional identity as a school administrator. These observations led me to wonder how the prior life experiences and educational trajectories of school principals impact their praxis (the manner in which they enact theoretical understandings of educational leadership) as educational leaders in the Yukon, and formed a basis of my subsequent doctoral research. As that research plan developed, the Moose Meadow school and its principal (located in the same community as King's school at Mopass) were identified as suitable for the study.

### **The School at Mopass: A Brief Overview**

Presenting a comprehensive review and analysis of *The School at Mopass: A Problem of Identity* is not a goal of this article. A brief overview of the book's key aspects, however, can provide a historical frame for situating more recent studies such as the one I conducted. King stated the purpose of his case study in the following manner:

This case study deals with a single residential school in the Yukon Indian Agency. It is one of fifty-nine similar schools in Canada. How and why is such a school established? Who operates it? In what manner? And for whom? With what results? Quick answers to these questions serve only to focus upon the dimensions of the problems and justify more intensive examinations. (King, 1967, p. 2)

The school at Mopass was a residential school built by the Canadian government, as an instrument of the government's policy to assimilate Indian children into Canadian society. In 1962-63, King reports that there

were 116 children attending the school, beginning at age six and divided into five graded classes.

*The School at Mopass: A Problem of Identity* is structured in three chapters. The first describes the effects of the nineteenth and twentieth century developments impacting the Indigenous people of the Yukon: the Klondike Gold Rush (1898) and the building of the Alaska Highway (1942). While these two events brought technological advances, each resulted in a change to the economy from “direct demand for resources that the Indians could best supply to a more general resource exploitation utilizing machinery and skilled mechanical labour” (King, 1967, p. 9).

The second chapter, “Residential School Operation,” outlines the technical details of running a residential school. King writes this chapter employing what Denzin (1989) refers to as thick description, whereby he “presents detail, context, emotion, and the webs of social relationships ... [and] the voices, feelings, actions, and meanings of interacting individuals are heard” (p. 83). Similar to my own study, a fine-grained portrait of the physical structure of the school is crafted, where the daily operations and weekly routines, including the school day, are described in detail.

The curriculum taught in this residential school is a direct adoption of the British Columbia *Programme of Studies for Elementary Schools*. King (1967) points out that “Yukon schools have never developed their own curriculum statement” (p. 48) and that the objectives, time allotments, program of testing, and prescribed resources (drawn from a standard list supplied by a government printing office in Ottawa) are followed without adjustment. Further, the annual Yukon-developed *Manual for Teachers* does not “contain any reference to Indian children or Indian schools, or to adaptations to singular cases” (p. 48). Only with the consent of the regional inspector of schools can any adjustments to the program be made.

While the children appear to be well-fed, housed, and cared for, in the closing summary of this second chapter on school operations, King offers the following disturbing analogy:

The operation at the school at Mopass for Indian children bears a striking resemblance to a well-run stock ranch or dairy farm in which the valued animals are carefully nurtured. General health, proper nutrition, shelter, and physical care are efficiently and adequately provided. The children are fed by a rotating crew of overseers who condition the herd to respond to a set of signals. (King, 1967, p. 56)

Thus, the time a child spent in the Mopass School was that of an inconspicuous member whose activities are directed at all times by hired adults with status-delivered authority as a result of being positioned within an extended government bureaucracy. King's observation was that the procedures of the school, and the curriculum presented to students, in no way reflected the Indian Affairs Branch policy guidance statement of "bridging two cultures."

The final chapter, titled "The Residential Community as a Learning Environment," presents the adults working in the residential school: staff (janitors, cooks, dining room supervisors, seamstresses, building maintenance personnel), teachers, and the principal and vice-principal. Summarizing this chapter, King presents a number of findings based on his observations of the school at Mopass. First, he identifies that while the school is its own enclave, detached from the local community, it presents as a faithful representation "of the larger society." The school operates in such a manner that "two distinct domains of social interaction exist independently: Whiteman society and Indian society" (p. 87). King points out that where these two domains meet, it is the Indian who bears the burden of adaptation to the system, and not vice versa.

King's portrayal of the school at Mopass is a far richer and detailed account of the operations, staff, students, community, and policy context than can be presented in this article alone. Nevertheless, this brief review outlines the goal of the Government of Canada and the mechanisms employed in order that this residential school be used as one of numerous instruments to force the assimilation of Indian children into dominant society through the extinguishment of native languages, family structures, spirituality, subsistence patterns, and traditional learning methods.

With this historical backdrop, we now can fast-forward four decades to 2008, and to the conceptual framework of the present study. Since King's examination, no attempt has been undertaken to specifically clarify how notions of educational leadership, as construed and exercised by non-Indigenous school administrators, are impacted by the position of Indigenous communities within the broader Canadian context. These aspects are important for both educational leaders and Yukon First Nations communities, given the role education plays in facilitating self-determination, in defining a child's identity, and in reinforcing a community's sense of purpose.

## Conceptual Framework: Challenges to Understanding Educational Leadership

Educational leadership literature often lacks a focus on descriptions or explanations relating to the contexts, situations, and the nature of constituents (students, teachers, parents, community) that may influence and be influenced by educational leadership. The educational leadership literature focuses more on what a specific leader “does” and less on the “how” and “why” he or she chooses to do it; therefore, explorations regarding conceptualizations of educational leadership employing a broader sense than its sole embodiment in one person—the school principal—are warranted. This is reinforced by Spillane, Halverson & Diamond et al. (2004) who argue:

We know relatively little about the how of school leadership, that is knowledge of the ways in which school leaders develop and sustain those conditions and processes believed necessary for innovation. While there is an expansive literature about what school structures, programmes, roles, and processes are necessary for instructional change, we know less about how these changes are undertaken or enacted by school leaders. (p. 4)

Complicating further understandings of educational leadership, Allix & Gronn (2005) identify the confusing epistemic foundation and conceptual vagueness regarding educational leadership by stating that “Almost no area of inquiry or interest has shown itself to be more elusive, or more controversial, to human understanding, than the notion of leadership” (p. 181). Allix and Gronn identify a core challenge to researching leadership, particularly in light of the following question: What is educational leadership? Reinforcing the complexity identified above, and serving to further complicate understandings of educational leadership in the aim of answering such a question, is the historical reliance upon what Rayner & Gunter (2005) describe as “an abstraction of propositions and required behaviours, often derived from non-educational settings by those at a distance from where this leadership is practiced (p. 151).

The limited knowledge base of educational leadership further makes elusive the answer, or answers, to the educational leadership question. The inability to define leadership is further reinforced by the findings of the *Fostering Tomorrow's Educational Leaders* report (Stack et al., 2006). Based in part on interviews with deans of education at institutions that offer educational leadership and administration programs to educators in British Columbia, this report concluded:

Despite much promotional activity, there is no widely accepted definition of leadership and no consensus on how to best develop it or foster it. Our participants disagreed substantively about what leadership means and how it is related to management or administration. (p. 31)

Hallinger (1995) underscores the historical absence of culture as a variable of educational leadership, identifying that conceptions of leadership and management are often transferred to different cultures with little concern given to their validity. This is reaffirmed by Hallinger & Leithwood (1996) who point to the dominant application of Eurocentric concepts of leadership and the limitation this poses:

Without placing blame anywhere, it is time to enrich theory and practice in education by seeking out the diversity of ideas and practices that have existed largely hidden in the shadows of the dominant Western paradigms that have guided the field. (p. 100)

In proximate geographic and contextual relation to the Yukon, Berger, Epp & Moller (2006) employ the term “cultural clash” in their Nunavut-based educational study. These researchers highlight school-specific examples of where an understanding of cultural difference is crucial for educators, and particularly school administrators, in the way that education is delivered to students and schools are operated in Inuit communities.

Examinations of educational leadership within Indigenous contexts are complicated by a number of specific factors related to the overarching dominance of Euro-Western conceptions. When examining the ends of traditional western leadership models, factors such as rationality, system effectiveness, profit, and efficiency present as dominant and valued ends of such leadership. In his critical study of educational leadership, Maxcy (1991) identifies the dominance of individualism, authority for the purposes of obtaining compliance, and power and control—and the vital need to rethink such tenets—and argues that “our educational institutions and educational leadership must make a better fit within the societal problematics we see operative” (p. 5). Deeper understandings of conceptions of leadership in Indigenous communities are further hampered by their elusive and controversial nature and inability of those from the Western world to define leadership within their own context (Allix & Gronn, 2005), and by the unwillingness of educational thinkers to accept contradictions within the field (Maxcy, 1991).

In summary, this brief examination of educational leadership presents the deficiencies in the knowledge base about the role of principals and how leadership may be construed and enacted by them in northern Canadian Indigenous contexts. In light of English's (2003) identification of "the frailties, complexities, contradictions and discontinuities embedded in the knowledge base" (p. 33) of educational leadership, the need for cross-cultural understandings of educational leadership is further reinforced.

### **The Context of Self-Governance in the Yukon**

Distinct from other jurisdictions in Canada, eleven of the fourteen Yukon First Nations have settled land claims and signed self-government agreements with the Government of Canada and the Government of Yukon. Self-governing agreements are separate from land claims, with the First Nation self-government agreement setting out the powers of each First Nation to govern themselves. The context of self-governance as stated here refers to the relationship between Yukon First Nations and the Yukon government, and does not include school governance at the local level.

While, at the present time, the education of Yukon children is directed by the territorial government through the Yukon Department of Education, "the First Nation has the power to make citizen-based laws which apply to their citizens no matter where they live in the Yukon. Examples include child welfare, health care, language, culture and education" (Government of Yukon website, 2007). Self-governance is a key defining aspect of the Yukon governance and political structures, and therefore greatly influences the educational context. However, the settlement of land claims has not resulted in the devolution of education to First Nations, and it could be that this power is never devolved.

Non-Indigenous Yukon principals are therefore located at the intersection of two distinct tiers of educational governance and policy: the self-governing agreements negotiated with the territorial and federal governments, which include the ability of First Nations to draw down their powers of education, and the Yukon Education Act (1990), which sets out the duties principals are to fulfill. The implication for non-Indigenous Yukon principals is that they must ensure that the British Columbia curriculum is taught in Yukon schools while also ensuring that education is culturally relevant, situated locally, and reflective of the local community's aspirations.

Further, in light of land claims settlements, non-Indigenous school principals in rural communities are Yukon government employees working on First Nations settlement lands. As a result, principals, at times, find

themselves on contested terrain and engaged in power struggles as a result of being embedded in the intricate relationship between the territorial government and the First Nation. Mazawi (2005) illuminates the tensions in which principals can find themselves immersed when public schooling—“a system paradigmatically rooted within conceptions of modernity, individualism, and social organization” (p. 111)—intersects with Indigenous cultures.

The Yukon’s distinct self-governance context therefore validates the need for research that specifically takes into account the juncture of history, culture and language, policy and governance, and examines the extent to which these influence educational leadership, and explores how the resulting tensions might be reduced.

### **Educational Leadership and Methodological Choice**

How educational leadership is understood, and the extent to which knowledge gaps exist regarding particular aspects of leadership, have been driven by the types of methodological choices that have guided research in the field. The history of educational leadership research demonstrates a heavy reliance upon quantitative methods (Heck & Hallinger, 1999). While we may be able to understand the extent to which a phenomenon exists or, given the use of case studies, understand what occurs in a given situation by groups of people within a bounded setting, the limited use of qualitative research approaches (e.g., phenomenology, grounded theory, ethnography, and narrative forms) means that we remain less informed about the experiences of educators in the field and how they make sense of their experiences and perceptions of educational leadership. Therefore, we are less able to generate new theories regarding educational leadership based upon the inadequacies and limitations posed by this dependence upon quantitative methods. These factors apply particularly in the case of the Yukon educational system, a statistically small jurisdiction where limited educational leadership research has been conducted. As a result, little progress has been made to expand educational leadership theory in this context and therefore much remains unexamined.

As stated previously in this article, understandings of educational leadership, which take into particular account the role of culture and context in northern Canadian Indigenous contexts, are noticeably absent. Given the narrowness of the predominant Eurocentric educational leadership paradigm, ethnographic observations are an insightful methodological tool that can enlarge the understandings of educational leadership.

In summation, the critical need for Yukon-situated research illuminating the vital role of educational leaders who are attuned to school and community cultures is not to be underestimated. The importance of such examinations is reinforced by Ryan (1989), who offers: “Only by establishing links between those social practices that pervade Western society and everyday life in Native communities and schools, can we begin to capture the complexities involved in seeking out not only explanations of, but solutions to, the problems in Native education” (p. 382).

### **Validity and Bias**

The argument could be made that, having been a Yukon school administrator for the past eleven years, I am biased by my own knowledge, experiences, and attitudes which have grown and taken shape during this period of time. Counterarguments can be made, however, as to the value of my experiences as a non-Indigenous school principal in Indigenous Yukon communities and the relation of these experiences to the research. Framed in such a manner, this constructive perspective on bias is reinforced by Wolcott (1994) who asserts:

Good bias not only helps us get our work done; by lending focus, it is essential to the performance of any research. In the total absence of bias a researcher would be unable to even leave the office to set off in the direction of a potential research site ... The critical step is to understand that bias itself is not the problem. One’s purposes and assumptions need to be made explicit and used judiciously to give meaning and focus to the study. (p. 165)

Reflecting Wolcott’s statement onto this study, were it not then for bias it is reasonable to assume that this research endeavour would not have occurred. Bias thus becomes foundational to this undertaking. Employing this perspective in order to ensure validity of this research and attend to the issue of bias, I therefore offer the following as a means of framing my experience as a vital resource that facilitated the successful completion of this study and added value to it, rather than as a limiting factor.

First, my administrative experiences in a number of Yukon schools, and the relationships developed with my educational-leader colleagues, have served to generate trust both personally and professionally. Based upon these relationships, trustworthy data can be better ensured as interviews will become more akin to conversations and self-disclosure will be more likely – the result being richer data (Harrison, MacGibbon & Morton, 2001).

Second, the professional relationship I have with Yukon school principals afforded me valuable access in a number of ways. At a straightforward operational level, I was permitted access to the school research sites by both the Yukon Department of Education and the school principals themselves. The crucial importance of this in relation to this research is not to be underestimated, given that schools are not places that give free and open access to the public. Thus, my knowledge of schools, coupled with the Yukon educational system's concurrent knowledge of me and my research initiative, became a vital resource for the successful execution of this research project in that, together, both opened doors that otherwise could have remained closed to me as a researcher.

Third, my personal and professional knowledge of educational leadership in the Yukon context arises as a result of my career trajectory. These aspects form a solid foundation, which effectively limits the imposition of preconceptions, thereby opening access to the realities of the research participants not necessarily afforded to others with dissimilar histories. My experience serves as a backdrop against which reflexivity, or the process by which we are "implored to rethink how we interpret and write up our field experiences" (Foley, 2002, p. 163) can be employed. While not considered to be a matter of "getting things 100% right," Foley suggests that "a more reflexive interpretive and narrative practice, although not a panacea, will help us produce more honest, believable stories" (p. 163).

Fourth, my knowledge and experiences as a Yukon principal were valuable resources in that they helped to ensure that my inferences and assumptions are more likely to be correct. In such a way, both this knowledge and experience became crucially important tools with which to critically problematize rather than arrive at preconceived judgments, reinforcing and supporting the assurance of validity rather than limiting or diminishing it. Such a view is supported by Lassiter (2005), who in reference to ethnographic honesty offers: "personal experience can be an intimate part of an ethnographic equation which links coexperience, intersubjectivity, and co-understandings, both in fieldwork and the writing of the ethnographic text" (p. 115).

### **Observation Procedures**

To create a comprehensive "picture" of the settings where research participants work, I employed a series of five observations of Moose Meadow school, with particular emphasis placed upon observing the principal. These observations were coupled with interview sessions with the principal, using a semi-structured questionnaire, each lasting for approximately one hour.

Specifically, I observed the daily school functions in order to gain an understanding of how locally developed curriculum is deployed as a means of fostering local Indigenous culture in the school. These events, as well as describing the school setting in operation, were indicative of the manner and extent to which local Indigenous culture underpins the school program. Observing the principal's behaviour and interaction with Indigenous parents and caregivers, students, and staff provided indications of how the principal enacts his role as educational leader. Observations provide the means that allow researchers to gather and "record important details that become the basis for formulating descriptions from which stakeholding groups produce their accounts" (Stringer, 1999, p. 72). Where I position myself as an observer falls upon what Glesne (1999) refers to as a continuum spanning from primarily observation to mostly participation. In this study, I positioned myself in between, in the role of "observer as participant" (Glesne, 1999, p. 44) who was primarily an observer who interacted with study participants. A particular strength of this approach is reinforced by Kirby & McKenna (1989) who state: "Direct participation and observation by the researcher is thought to provide meaning for the behaviours and attitudes expressed by individuals being researched" (p. 76). The use of such a data gathering technique therefore appears highly applicable to this research project, given its goal of illuminating how non-Indigenous school principals construct and enact their role as leaders.

What follows is a portrayal of one of the schools in the present study. Here, we are introduced to Bob, the principal of Moose Meadow School,<sup>3</sup> who takes us on a tour of a representative day.

### **A Portrait of Moose Meadow School<sup>4</sup>**

I drive through the village to the Moose Meadow School on this brilliantly sunny winter day. I've arranged to meet with Bob, the principal. Moose Meadow is a small community school of less than 100 students, over 90 percent of whom, Bob later tells me, are of Indigenous descent. While the name Moose Meadow is a pseudonym, it is important to note that the school name was changed from the designated Yukon Government appellation (usually the community name followed by the word "school") to that of a respected Indigenous elder's name in the local Tlingit language.

The school is a single-floor building located in the middle of the village. The pale yellow paint scheme on the outside is brought to life by the addition of the multi-layered blue wave and water pattern across the lower 30 percent of the siding. Families of loons ride along the waves. The waves are three layers deep, giving a three dimensional effect. This reflects the fact that large

bodies of water bound the school community on two sides, and conveys a sense of the school being part of the local flora and fauna.

The village in which Moose Meadow School is situated is in the traditional territory of a Yukon First Nation. As a result, there is a new, modern First Nations government office located on the main road. The area has been settled by Indigenous people for thousands of years, and the community is strategically located near large lakes, which have provided both transportation routes and sustenance. The region has also been a traditional migratory route for large animals and birds. During the Klondike Gold Rush of 1898, the area around Moose Meadow's community was a direct transportation route for gold seekers. After the Gold Rush, the community was once again subject to an influx of Outsiders when American Army soldiers came north in 1942 to build the Alaska Highway. Both Indigenous and non-Indigenous people live in the community and given the influx of people from all around the world over time, a segment of the population is of mixed heritage. In the Yukon, the practice exists that, regardless of heritage, if one's background includes Indigenous ancestry the person often self-identifies as Indigenous.

Walking up the cleanly shovelled steps to the front entrance of the school, I'm struck by the fact that, despite it being winter, the front door is open. This open door projects a welcoming invitation to enter. (I note that this is the case with each subsequent visit.) Even before proceeding through the boot room and into the building, I'm immediately struck by the reflection of the sunlight on the clean and highly polished waxed floors.

I barely get my boots wiped on the carpet when I am greeted by a heavily accented voice booming "How are you doing there, laddie?" erupting from inside the office area. This sends a clear signal to one and all that Bob, the late-50s principal for the past twelve years, is in the office, readily greeting all who come through the doors. Never one to sit still for very long, Bob leaps up from behind his computer, envelops me in one of the signature bear hugs he willingly shares with visitors, and immediately proceeds to take me on a school tour (while, in one fluid motion, drawing the special key to the juice machine from his pocket and offering me a cold drink).

Bob has had a long and varied experience in the Yukon. Originally emigrating to Canada with his family from a European country in the late 1950s, he drove up the Alaska Highway with his family towing a trailer with all their possessions. It was 1964 and Bob's father had secured work in a small, rural, isolated community. As a result of his father having forged ahead first, the sixteen year old Bob drove the family vehicle with his mother and eight siblings. The Alaska Highway was very rough then, and he recalls

every few miles seeing the crosses and signs with the names of people who had been killed in car accidents.

Bob quit school before grade 12 and decided to work so he could travel the world. After leaving the Yukon for a number of years, Bob returned and engaged in a number of different lines of work. He has been a truck driver, a millwright, a heavy equipment operator, and a small-aircraft pilot to name a few, yet found that he never really enjoyed doing any of them despite their decent rates of pay. As a result, he left the Yukon once again to pursue a Bachelor of Education degree at a southern Canadian university. As fate would have it, when he returned to the Yukon a few years later to take his first teaching position, it was in the small community where his family first moved in 1964. After teaching in that community for six years, he decided to apply for the principal's position at Moose Meadow. As Bob explained to me one day, the school had gone through seven principals in two years and was out of control, hence he felt it would be a challenge.

The friendly and welcoming atmosphere of Moose Meadow School is evident in a number of ways. Bob takes an active role in this regard, making sure that he is visible in the school—particularly at times when student movement is high and parents are present in the school. I made the following observation at the end of one school day, and it shows how Bob uses his personality and sense of humour to ensure close contact with kids and parents alike:

Parents come into the office at the end of the school day. Given the open construct of the office, they can come right in and talk with the principal. Some parents come right out and ask, "How's my kid doing?" The principal jokes with them, appearing hesitant with his answer. "Wellllllllll, okay, I suppose." He is quick to follow up with serious praise for the child in question, and gives the parent a concrete piece of info. "Jill is carving a great paddle in shop," for example. (Site 3 observation, April 9, 2008)

Bob's sense of humour is most apparent when he is working directly with his students. He uses this sense of humour judiciously, not in a way that puts down or diminishes anyone. Instead, Bob's humour is often situational or a play on words. There were times when he had me nearly incapacitated with laughter. One example is the following observation near the end of the school year when the staff and students were preparing to go out and conduct their annual community clean-up. Not what may be considered a fun job by many, Bob nonetheless used his sense of humour as a motivator for the children. Before starting, safety vests, work gloves, thick rubber gloves, and

garbage bags were distributed while the students and their supervisors were each allocated a sector for which they were responsible:

The principal calls all the students into the library, where he stands in front of them to give a briefing about the process for garbage cleanup. There are some children absent due to the loss of the elder [who had just passed away this week]. Once again, the principal's humour comes through. He has all the kids grouped into teams for garbage pickup—the Rancid Rats, the Putrid Pigs, for example. The kids all chuckle at their names. The principal gives a safety briefing about needles and bears—two things that might be encountered in their clean-up activities. He cautions them not to touch any needle—he is very emphatic on this point.

As for bears, he jokes, “just be sure you're picking garbage with the slowest runner. That way you've got nothing to fear.” He asks the slowest runner in the group to hold up their hand and self-identify. Many kids glance around at each other in disbelief, but nobody raises their hand. (Site 3 observation, May 27, 2008)

Bob's humour does not take away from the core purpose of this talk with his students. Once the laughter subsides, he emphatically cautions the students not to touch any intravenous needles, should they find any. He repeats this firmly but in a way that does not come across, in my opinion, as lecturing or preaching. The tone of his voice is one that expresses that he truly cares about their well-being and he has the children captivated as he speaks. Should they find a needle, they are to call immediately for one of the supervising adults.

While Bob's sense of humour could be construed as projecting a cavalier attitude towards his role as principal, this is not borne out by my observations of him when he is faced with a serious issue or parental concern. When this occurs, Bob responds in a manner that shows a proactive and solution-focused orientation, as in the case where a parent calls with the concern that her son is being bullied by another student:

The principal serves as the secretary while she leaves the school for her lunch break. The phone rings, and principal answers it. He uses the school's native name and his first name (Not “Mr...”) when doing so. The phone call is about an incident of bullying. A parent is phoning in about her son, the reported victim. The principal handles the concern very calmly. While I can't hear the voice on the other end of the phone, it is nonetheless a concern for

the parent. The phone call resolves calmly, with a plan in place for Monday. (Site 3 observation, March 28, 2008)

After witnessing this exchange, I recorded the following reflection in my fieldwork journal:

I was impressed with how the principal handled this. What impressed me was the direct concern for the student. This was evidenced by his repeated request for the parent to direct her son to him first thing Monday a.m. The principal advised the parent that he'd set up a code system with the student when they met Monday. That way, they could monitor the bullying, if any occurred, through a signal system that would not promote repercussions by appearing as a "tattle-tale" who ran to the principal. (Site 3 reflection, March 28, 2008)

In handling the situation in such a way, Bob was able to ensure that his problem solving did not create further problems or issues for the student in question, and he could monitor the situation closely should any bullying occur.

Not only is the welcoming atmosphere projected by Bob, but it is also fostered by members of the Moose Meadow School staff. One day, I visited the school over lunch hour and joined the staff in the teachers' lounge to share lunch. The following describes a conversation with an Indigenous elder once lunch hour was over and teachers had returned to their rooms.

The bell rings and the staff head out. I don't have a class to get to, so the Native Language Instructor and I have a few minutes to visit. She begins talking—I ensure that I listen. She tells me of growing up with her grandparents. She didn't really move into a house until all of her children had left. By then, she observes she would have been around age 55.

Now that she is a widow, she wants to be in the school with the children to keep her mind active—not sitting at home. She tells me when she told this to the principal, he told her to just come into the school. She agrees with me heartily when I say that that was a good thing for him to do.

We talk of native languages and the distinctions between Tlingit communities. She really welcomes this discussion and becomes quite excited when I can share a few small examples from my limited experience. She shares with me the distinctions between Atlin, Teslin, Carcross, and American Tlingit people. Each has a

distinct way of expression—“Americans speak loud Tlingit,” she explains.

She gets up and gets ready to head to her native language classroom. “Good luck and really nice talking to you,” she says. I’ve really enjoyed it too. (Site 3 observation, April 9, 2008)

The school office is directly to the left of the front entrance way. Not simply a doorway to an inner sanctum I can tell that there have been major structural modifications implemented in this area. The term sanctum is used deliberately here in reference to the outmoded view of the principal as manager who carries out their work in an office, completing administrative tasks and rarely interacting with staff, students, and parents other than in formal ways. Contrary to this conception, Moose Meadow’s office is very open and accessible on two sides, and even has a door leading directly to one of the classrooms at the back. A very large opening has been created by the cutting out of a four-foot by eight-foot section of wall. This makes for a highly accessible physical setting, and reminds me of what one could find in a cafeteria. The permeable sliding screen is pushed fully back, opening the office to all who walk by and enter the school.

Students and visitors can lean into the office and readily converse with its occupants. This area feels open, welcoming, and transparent. It certainly appears this way, given how students and community readily enter the office, engage with staff, and converse with the principal. Whenever I visit the school, Bob is never in his office but is either in classrooms or in the outer office area. When I comment on the design of the school office, he uses his arms to indicate how walls were moved and removed. In his tour, Bob mentions that the previous (larger) space of his office was subdivided to facilitate the reconfiguration to a more open, welcoming space.

This accessibility over time has become something which parents have become aware of and take advantage of. For example, I observed the end of one school day in the office:

A parent drops by: The principal asks: “Want me to find your kid?”  
The parent replies: No, I’m here to show you my new puppy. The parent has an 8-week old Golden Retriever puppy. She knows that the principal has 5 of them. There is a big loving session between the puppy and the principal. After this parent moves along (the principal is now trying to arrange to get a sibling of the puppy), another parent comes in. He is clearly Indigenous. “How you doing, bye” the principal calls out (using a Newfoundland accent).

The parent gives a big smile back and they engage in conversations.  
(Site 3 observation, May 6, 2008)

It appears that, regardless of who you are or the reasons for which you drop by the school, you will get a hearty greeting and welcome into Moose Meadow School, and Bob intentionally locates himself near the front entrance so he can be accessible and available to all who enter. During the school day, Bob does not use his regular office, but instead has a large table set up in the outer office where he can work with his computer and be readily accessible to students, parents, staff, and community members.

While Bob closes the door to the juice machine, I note that I'm at the 90 degree intersection of two very long hallways. On a large segment of wall, from floor to ceiling, is a mural approximately twenty feet long. Yukon images are splashed all over it, and the work looks like it was undertaken by students under supervision of an artist. Scenes of the local mountains are decorated with paddle-wheeler boats from the turn of the nineteenth century, and the face of James "Skookum Jim" Mason, a local Indigenous man who was instrumental in the 1896 discovery of gold in the Klondike, is placed prominently in the middle. Five beautifully made native drums adorn the mural and are hung on the wall. Each bears the distinct emblem or crest of the five clans of the local community—these clans are split-tailed beaver, wolf, crow, frog, and eagle. (Bob proudly points out that two of the drums won awards in a drum competition in Whitehorse). The mural is a very beautiful representation, and places local Indigenous culture directly in view of all who enter the school.

Bob leads me from the office, down the hallway, through a set of double doors and into a very large room that is the school's industrial education workshop. I am welcomed by the pungent smell of fresh wood and can see by the light streaming through the windows that there is a lot of sawdust in the air. A group of four to five older boys and girls are clustered around one of the workshop tables, working diligently as they trace the pattern of a canoe paddle onto wooden blanks of birch and alder. Taking a closer look, I see that the blanks are substantial pieces of wood with grain patterns—I estimate them to be five to six feet long, eight inches wide, and two to three inches deep. Our entry causes little, if any, disruption and the students strike me as very engaged given their high level of concentration and devotion to the task.

A world-renowned Indigenous artist and carver leads the students in this activity. I ask the artist about the project and he tells me that they'll soon be cutting the blanks into paddle shapes in preparation for him to teach the

students to carve and paint in the traditional way. I am welcomed warmly—we remember each other from when his son went to one of my schools some ten years earlier. Bob shares with me afterwards that the artist's work has been received by Queen Elizabeth, such is his renown.

I feel that this is an important activity going on here, and for a number of reasons. First, it models for the children the importance of learning traditional knowledge and culture, particularly when a world-renowned artist feels compelled to come back to their traditional territory and shares his skills with the younger generation. Second, it models an Indigenous way of learning, where mastery learning is guided by an older, more experienced community member. Third, that this activity is taking place in Moose Meadow School reflects the value that the school places on community members working with children, and on the reinforcement of local traditional knowledge.

We leave the shop and retrace our steps towards the office. Instead of heading straight there, we make a left-turn detour into a small room. There is a large amount of technical and electronic equipment on the tables and on racks. I immediately clue in that this is the school's radio station. Moose Meadow School has its own FM radio transmitter, broadcasting music continuously to the surrounding community. When Bob was appointed principal he felt that a project to engage students and work towards unifying the community and the school was required. The result was the creation of one of the few school-based, licensed radio stations in Canada.

The music comes from a vast collection including pop, rock and roll, and country and western. Local Indigenous artists are also included on the playlists. Three years ago, Bob arranged to have the CBC (Canadian Broadcasting Corporation) record local artists singing Tlingit songs at the school. Moose Meadow students ran the studio while these recording sessions took place, and now this music can be included in the radio station's playlist. I am struck that this is not a project which, in any way, is a simulation. The radio station, with its own CRTC (Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission) approved four-letter identifier, serves the entire community. At times, students will run the radio station and community elders will speak to the community through the school's station room. I can sense the pride that Bob feels in his school's accomplishment ten years on.

Exiting through the very well-equipped computer lab, we head down the other long hallway to the gym. (I work to keep up with Bob, given his pace.) I am struck by the use of vivid colours in the Ted Harrison artistic theme throughout the school's hallways and classrooms. It makes for a very bright and warm feeling. We enter the gym by passing through the lunch room first. Not solely a place to sit and eat, the lunch room is equipped as an

industrial kitchen and provides a large and practical space for making meals both large and small. It is very clean and functional, very likely an excellent resource for students and community events alike. As we pass through a set of doors leading towards the gym, Bob tells me that he uses the kitchen himself each Wednesday morning, coming in early to prepare breakfast for the school's children.

We pass through double doors to the gym and the principal flicks on the switches to the large reflective gym lights. As they slowly warm up and emit more light, I begin to see a monstrous shape with a discontinuous form protruding from the wall in one corner of the gym. At first, I can't quite make out what this thing is, but as the light slowly increases, I see that it's a climbing wall extending from floor to ceiling. Not flush with the wall, the surface protrudes to create overhangs. It is covered with a variety of hand holds. The surface has been painted by the students and is an incredible asset for a small school such as this. Bob can't contain his pride when he tells me that this wall is considered to be the most technically challenging climbing wall north of Vancouver, and that Whitehorse schools bring their students to use it.

Bob mentions that a key to realizing projects such as this is having a supportive school council and fostering positive relations with this body. (Moose Meadow's School Council has a guaranteed participation of Indigenous members under the Yukon Education Act.) With large projects such as this, Bob stresses that if a principal has the support of the school council, he or she can accomplish great things.

As I have been standing silently and taking in the climbing wall, the lights in the gym have continued to increase in intensity. I can now see clearly to the stage built into the wall at the end of the gym. I am astonished by the most beautiful set of curtains enclosing the stage. They are made of heavy velvet or velour-style cloth, and are a deep and rich crimson colour with black and white trim. Emblazoned on each side of the curtain is the Indigenous depiction of the two moieties: Wolf and Crow. I am in awe of the magnificence of the curtains. Bob once again shows his pride in this latest feature of the school and tells me that they are new this year. His pride in them reflects his belief that the richness of local Indigenous culture must be present and affirmed in Moose Meadow School. I can't help but agree. As I admire them, I tell Bob that they will likely be here for many years after we have retired. They will leave a lasting legacy of what can be accomplished when schools respect and value local Indigenous culture and bring this culture to the forefront in both physical and curricular ways.

Bob leads me back towards the office. He banters pleasantly with students that he encounters, and they readily reciprocate. He is high-energy with the children, and uses hand-slaps, “high-fives,” and no shortage of humour to make them giggle and laugh. He is always laughing with them, as well. Bob leads me to a room that I initially think is the staff room, given the couches, easy chairs, and relaxed environment it projects. He quickly dispels my thought by telling me it is the students’ lounge.

Looking closer on the shelves, I see stacks of board games, books, and many other items for students to use—for example, tables and chairs, and whiteboards upon which to draw. The room is brightly painted, has a large window, and has been created by the subdivision of a very large classroom. All in all, it is a very welcoming place. Moose Meadow is very likely the only elementary school in the Yukon with its own lounge dedicated to student use: I reflect that while high schools quite often have lounges, elementary schools generally do not.

Our tour almost complete, we head back down the long hallway towards the school office. Despite being an older facility, the school is clean and reflects the pride the principal feels in it. I’m impressed by the innovative efforts he has taken to make the school an interesting and relevant place for his students. We retire to his office to begin our series of five interviews: throughout, students comfortably come into the office to use the phone, borrow a stapler, or seek out some other resource.

### **Curriculum Development and Implementation**

In our interviews, Bob shared the recent curricular initiatives that are occurring at Moose Meadow School in conjunction with the community and the local First Nation government. The excitement in his voice was readily apparent as he described the curricular initiatives underway. For Bob, this is clearly groundbreaking work which he fully endorsed as the principal of Moose Meadow School:

We’re working very closely with [Moose Meadow First Nation] developing the new First Nations curriculum that they’re putting into our school for social studies. It’s going to be major. It’s a major undertaking. We’ve had two huge meetings and brought in really excellent people. This is above and beyond what the Department [of Education] is doing. They’re also working on some new First Nations curriculum. (Bob, interview 2)

Bob emphasizes that these initiatives aimed at developing First Nations curriculum are occurring between the school and the First Nation. They are not led by the Yukon Department of Education, but instead are spearheaded at the local community level by the Moose Meadow First Nation. This is a distinctly different approach from the implementation of curriculum developed by a central authority or by external jurisdictions. Bob's excitement was evident as he identified just how important he believes this locally situated approach is to the inclusion of local culture and language in Moose Meadow School:

This is their developing curriculum that's really going to enhance and promote and encourage their cultural ideals and their cultural history. The fact that they've been kind enough to draw us into it is huge. It makes for great partnerships. It just doesn't get any better or any more intimate really when you're invited in to help them develop their cultural identity. (Bob, interview 2)

Bob underscored the extent to which he values this process not only for its curriculum outcomes but as a vehicle for enhancing partnerships between the school and the local First Nation. Bob's excitement continued as he described the pace at which the deployment of this curriculum is slated to occur:

It's a First Nations curriculum which will take up one whole term of our social studies program based on Tlingit—the clan system and governance. They're hoping to have it finished by the end of April, proofed and agreed upon, and all the changes and editing done by the end of May, and then, in our school for August. (Bob, interview 2)

Bob's endorsement of this local approach to curriculum development and implementation was clear as he shared his perspective and understanding of indigeneity in relation to local Indigenous culture:

We've got to become one. It can't be "us" and "them" or "we" and "they" or they're the First Nations, we're not. We have to be a blend. We have to be—we're all part of this community. Our school is 90 percent First Nations, so it is paramount that even for our non-First Nations kids, the fact that we do so much culture here just enhances their learning. They begin to appreciate the cultural significance and importance of the local First Nations. They see it in a different light when they look into the clan system and the art of

it and how sophisticated it is. So, even if they're not First Nations, they get this incredible insight into what is an incredibly powerful and beautiful culture. Just building those relationships, becoming one so that we're all on the same page, we're all working together. A school can't function in a First Nations community unless you're one. It just goes without saying, really. (Bob, interview 2)

For Bob, the school must model the culture of the community through working together to develop curriculum that reflects the community in the school. Bob shows his reverence for local Indigenous culture and language, describing it by using terms such as "art," "sophisticated," "powerful," and "beautiful." His understanding of Indigenous culture and respect for it appears to have grown as a result of the years he has spent in the Moose Meadow community.

## **Discussion**

I embarked on this study of the principalship at Moose School based, in large part, on my experiences as a non-Indigenous school principal working in Indigenous Yukon contexts. I was perplexed by the lack of contextualized and culturally sensitive approaches to educational leadership, particularly in the Canadian North where there exists relatively little educational leadership research (Goddard & Foster, 2002). I had observed earlier in my career that studies of principals in contexts similar to mine were absent. In contrast, Western-centric approaches to educational leadership dominate the field and "stretch over" Indigenous contexts, with little regard for either local contexts or indigeneity. Such a construct was clearly the case in King's description of instruction at the Mopass school.

The two schools described in this article, while separated in time by only four decades, are in contrast to each other with respect to educational purpose. While one school was constructed with the goals of subjugation of Indigenous language and culture, and assimilation, Moose Meadow School is an example of a school and its principal taking on a vitally important and participatory role in reflecting the community's culture.

The manner in which educational leadership is construed and enacted appears critical with respect to the inclusion of local culture and language in the school. Thus, this study identifies the role a principal can play as co-collaborator and supporter of locally developed curricula alongside the local First Nation, a goal being its greater cultural inclusion in the school program. When a principal engages in the development and fostering of locally developed curricula and other activities that weave local culture and

language from their community contexts into the school (i.e., bison hunts, hiring local Indigenous artists to work with the children, and increasing the use of local language in the school's operations) the non-Indigenous principal is transformed into a catalytic force that draws schools and communities more closely together, and shifts the focus away from the managerial and administrative functions of the "job."

Herein lies an important contribution to how educational leadership may be understood and thought about. Principals may thus construe and enact educational leadership (however defined) when, in addition to engaging in conversations of "whose curriculum" and "what should be taught," they provoke broader questions with respect to what might constitute education in northern and rural communities. In this regard, the following questions offered by Coulter and Wiens (2008) may be informative with respect to what should be asked at the community level: "What kind of learning? For whom? Who decides? On what basis?" (p. 15). In proposing that these are important questions needing to be asked, Coulter and Wiens suggest: "The central educational responsibility becomes preparing people to engage with their equals in deciding how they will live together ... no easy task" (p. 16). Based on their assertion, non-Indigenous principals, such as Bob, who live and work in Indigenous contexts, are therefore critical to fostering conversations centered on what may constitute "education" and what takes place in schools.

### **Identity and Enactments of Educational Leadership**

Based on his interactions with parents and students, his use of humour, and his views on education with respect to curriculum and culture in schools, Bob could be referred to as an individual whose identity mediates how he construes and enacts his work. This point raises the following question: What is meant by the term "identity" in relation to the constructions of professional notions of educational leadership? Clarke (2009) offers the following definition, stating: "Identity references individuals' knowledge and naming of themselves, as well as others' recognition of themselves as a particular sort of person" (p. 186). With respect to the self and experience, he further posits that, "Identities are formed at the nexus of the individual and the social" (p. 189). Applied to the identities of the non-Indigenous principals, Clarke's assertion draws into question how the principals may reconstruct their respective selves and define their role in relation to schooling and the larger social contexts in which they operate.

Clarke (2009) presents the concept of identity with respect to teachers as one that is marked by a growing body of research, suggesting that "the

trend towards employing identity as a conceptual tool in teacher education has been paralleled by an increasing emphasis on identity in education generally” (p. 185). This study extends this postulation to the lives of non-Indigenous principals living and working in Indigenous Yukon contexts. Identity constructions and their relationship to educational leadership are potential areas of further study.

Bob’s actions aimed at making the school more reflective of the community and more engaging for students are part of an effort to transition the view of Moose Meadow School from a place of control, domination, and assimilation to a location that children wish to come and learn, engaged by a curriculum that is relevant, and presented in a culturally reflective setting. These aims present as diametrically opposed to the goals of schooling both stated and portrayed by King in his study of the school at Mopass. Advocating for the need to create space in which to place locally-developed activities within an externally mandated curricular frame, Berger, Epp & Moller (2006) suggest in their study of Nunavut education and schools, that:

A major effort should be undertaken to develop northern curricula and resources locally, and policy should make it explicit that teachers should use their professional judgment in prioritizing the needs of students rather than adhering to a set curriculum. (p. 194)

This recommendation is divergent from King’s description of the role of school staff at Mopass: “In the residential school, the whitemen staff and teachers are the end men of huge bureaucratic organizations (church and national government) that are so organized as to provide no reflection of the local communities” (p. 87). While colonizing practices can still be considered to exist in schools and need to be examined and interrogated (such as the reliance on externally mandated curricula from British Columbia), the present school and its practices appear to have moved along a continuum from assimilation towards the fostering of local Indigenous culture and language for the children.

### **Concluding Thoughts**

The purpose of this article is to present a detailed portrait of a school and its principal, employing a study conducted four decades previously in the same community as a backdrop. There is a dearth of similar investigations in Canada and, in particular, a dearth of in-depth studies that examine schools and the principalship in northern Canada. The article sheds light

on the centrality of the school in rural communities where First Nation land claims have been settled with territorial and federal governments. Framing this article by presenting King's study at Mopass serves to underscore the historical legacy of residential schools that must be overcome, in part, by present-day schools that are culturally representative of their communities. This study is the first to delve in-depth into educational leadership in the Yukon and one of the few conducted to date on the principalship in the Canadian North.

As Bob has done, and much the same as Berger, Epp & Moller (2006) propose, principals should draw upon their professional judgment and experience to further the development of contextually relevant curricula. Doing so will reinforce that students' learning opportunities are not simply prescribed in order to meet the requirements of externally mandated curricula, but ultimately are experiences that are culturally and pedagogically relevant to students, their lives, and their respective communities.

This research contributes to bringing forward, and creating scholarly space for, the voices, perspectives, and subjectivities of educational leaders living and working in the Canadian North as actors in the "daily drama" that is played out in schools and communities. It does so by enunciating the voice of Bob, who appears to have moved towards accomplishing what Ryan (1989) calls for with respect to the need for principals to construct distinct educational leadership approaches that "depart in any number of ways from standard schooling practices" (p. 381). Despite the distinct differences between the goals of schooling at Mopass and Moose Meadow School, when presented together these two studies form one piece of a historical continuum of two Yukon schools at unique points in time.

## Author

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## Notes

1. The name Mopass is the pseudonym employed by A. Richard King
2. In this article, a number of different terms are used when referring to Indigenous peoples, including Aboriginal peoples, First Nations, and North American Indians. Such diverse usage is evident between the countries of Canada and the United States, where the terms First Nations, Indigenous Peoples, or Aboriginals are predominantly employed in the former, and the term Indian for the most part in the latter (Friesen and Friesen, 2002). The

terms First Nations and Indigenous predominate, though others are employed dependent upon what is being referred to: i.e., Aboriginal languages. In every case, unless specifically cited, all terminology will be capitalized as a vital and important means of respecting and valuing the identity of those described, much as should be expected and required of any ethnic group or by a citizen of any nation.

3. The name Bob and Moose Meadow School are pseudonyms
4. This section presents a “thick description” (Denzin, 1989) or rich, detailed recount of the observations conducted at Moose Meadow School. The aim is to present the voices, feelings, actions, and interactions and meanings of interactions of the participant around the issue of their work as school principals, all this by means of a rich, textured account. As a result, a somewhat lengthy depiction is presented. This, however, offers readers the opportunity to sense the shades and nuances reflected in the positions and perceptions expressed in ways which may be otherwise difficult to portray.

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*This article is dedicated to the memory of colleague and friend Brian J. Shanahan.*