

I am in the second and final year of my MEd (Critical Studies) at the University of New Brunswick (UNB). I received SSHRC support for my Master's and am now seeking SSHRC support for my doctoral research at UNB. I am conducting the research for both my MEd and PhD theses in partnership with six remote First Nations in northwestern Ontario and their tribal council, Keewaytinook Okimakanak (KO) – see map at <http://kochiefs.ca/firstnations>. KO Chiefs passed a 2013 resolution supporting my MEd and PhD research at UNB and my role as a KO Research Associate. I chose UNB for my research for three reasons: 1) UNB hosts the SSHRC-funded First Nations Innovation (FNI) research with KO as a long-standing partner; 2) the UNB Faculty of Education has Critical Studies faculty who will co-supervise my thesis; and 3) the UNB Mi'kmaq Maliseet Institute (MMI) will support my learning of Indigenous issues.

**PhD research:** My PhD thesis question is: how are remote First Nations developing culturally appropriate and sustainable skills training, and to what extent do they use digital technologies to support these activities, all in the context of decolonization. Colonial training and employment programs addressing the needs of industry create an ongoing challenge for First Nations. These remote communities struggle to protect and sustain their lands, culture, traditions, and the resources they depend on for their survival (Abele & Delic, 2014; Anaya, 2014; Waziyatawin, 2012). My PhD research will address a significant challenge facing most remote and rural First Nations: the communities need to develop appropriate skills training and entrepreneurship programs. Many of the solutions available are often deeply rooted in colonialism, racism, and prolonged engagement with the extractive industries affecting their traditional territories. Decolonizing and indigenizing local training programs and entrepreneurial enterprises will enable First Nations to protect their lands and waters for future generations while working with industry. This argument has been made for indigenizing and decolonizing education in general (Battiste, 2013; Haig-Brown, 2012). Broadly my research will identify the requirements and components for effective, community-based training and skills initiatives in small, remote First Nations in Canada.

To conduct my PhD thesis analysis, I will use a critical theory lens, including Marxist, settler colonialism and decolonization theory (Battiste, 2013; Grande, 2009; Haig-Brown & Nock, 2006; Tuck & Yang, 2014; 2012). Alfred (2009), Cornassel (2012), Palmater (2011), and Wolfe (2006) highlight the historical and contemporary challenges First Nations are experiencing with colonial powers. Indigenizing curriculum, learning environments, and teaching strategies and tools support the First Nations resurgence work being undertaken in remote First Nations (Carpenter, 2010; Potter, 2010). I understand the importance of conducting respectful research with Aboriginal communities (Smith, 1999; Wilson, 2008). My research is guided by “The Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans” (TCPS2) and in particular Chapter 9, research involving the First Nations, Inuit and Métis Peoples of Canada (2010) and the First Nations principles of Ownership, Control, Access and Possession (OCAP) of data (Assembly of First Nations, 2007; Schnarch, 2004).

Interview data for my PhD thesis has already been collected in partnership with the KO communities. Working part-time as a graduate research assistant with the First Nations Innovation (FNI) research project, I travelled with an FNI research team to the KO communities this past summer. We conducted 74 interviews with KO staff and KO community members, asking questions about training opportunities, land-based activities, entrepreneurial, and other local decolonizing efforts. As the lead interviewer, I gained extensive experience with the variability of the interview process. As discussed with my KO research partners and indicated in the interview consent form, I will be applying for UNB Research Ethics Board (REB) approval to have secondary use of this research data for my PhD thesis. I expect to be able to complete my PhD thesis using these completed interviews, a rich source of information. In 2015, I plan to take a training course in N-Vivo software to give me the skills required to code and analyze the interview transcripts. My plan is to complete my PhD requirements in three years.

**MEd research:** My approach to my PhD will continue the collaborative and critical focus I am using for my MEd in the UNB Critical Studies program. My MEd thesis, “E-Community in Remote First Nations in Northwestern Ontario”, is exploring how remote KO community members are using information and communication technologies (ICT) for learning and innovation (Beaton & Campbell

2014; Beaton & Carpenter 2014; Beaton, Seibel & Thomas 2014). I am on track to complete my MEd program in April 2015. For my MEd I am analyzing First Nation developments using critical pedagogy writers - Battiste (2013), Brookfield (2005), Freire (1970), Grande (2004), Kincheloe (2008) and Tuck & Yang (2014, 2012). While collecting my MEd research data, I worked closely with KO staff to develop and conduct an online survey that involved an intensive participatory methodological process. Online methods of data collection are found to be appropriate for working with the KO communities due to their remoteness and comfort with ICT (Gratton & O'Donnell, 2011). Working in close collaboration with the KO Research Institute (KORI), the KO program managers, and the community research administrators, I created the final survey questions and administered the survey in early 2014. The online survey collected both quantitative and qualitative data about use of, and innovation with, ICT and the KO programs in the six First Nations. A total of 256 remote KO community members participated in the online survey. I worked with KO to produce a comprehensive report that included summaries of the quantitative data along with the qualitative feedback provided by the respondents so community members had their voices heard.

**Knowledge mobilization:** In May and June 2014, I travelled to northwestern Ontario to present and share the research report with KO management and staff during visits to the organization's four offices across the region. I worked with KO to produce individual reports for the six KO communities, and then I spent the month of July 2014 travelling to the remote KO communities to discuss the reports with the leadership and community members. I also produced engaging posters of the research results that were posted in prominent places in each of the communities to stimulate discussion and awareness. The information from my MEd research will assist the KO organization and the KO First Nations with their present and future planning, fundraising and development efforts. In addition to producing research reports for my KO partner and KO communities, I have been producing and co-writing my academic research publications with KO staff, members of the First Nations and colleagues on the First Nations Innovation project. Before beginning my graduate work, as a community research partner, I co-authored seven peer-reviewed journal articles, two book chapters and 16 academic conference papers (including Beaton et al., 2004, 2009; and others listed in my CV). Since starting my MEd program, I presented my first academic paper as a lead writer at the World Social Sciences Forum in October 2013 in Montreal; the paper was published in the *Journal of Community Informatics* (Beaton & Campbell, 2014). At the 2014 Congress of the Humanities and Social Sciences, I presented the results of my MEd research in four presentations. I then prepared and submitted two manuscripts for peer review to academic journals (Beaton & Carpenter, 2014; Beaton, Seibel, & Thomas, 2014). In September 2014, I worked with UNB Education and MMI colleagues to present my research at the education conference at University of Saskatchewan: wâhkôhtowin: Indigenizing Practice, Linking Kindred Spirits (Perley, Beaton, Degrace, Whitty, 2014). I am now organizing a UNB workshop with these colleagues to share the conference teachings with others in my Faculty. I will continue to present my research at the Congress and at other conferences.

**Work background and leadership:** Before starting my MEd program in 2013, I worked for over 30 years with the First Nations in northern Ontario, including 11 years as a community research partner on several SSHRC-funded projects with UNB. My long-term work with KO focused on developing and supporting "e-communities" – in which First Nation community members actively use community-owned and managed digital networks, online tools, and applications to sustain and support their local economy, social services, and employment. This includes the internet, social media, videoconferencing, telehealth, distance education, cell phones and many other digital services (Whiteduck & Beaton, 2014; Williams, 2010). For over 30 years, I have demonstrated my leadership and community engagement working collaboratively with First Nations leading many program development initiatives. These included creating many short and long term training initiatives and two different distance education high schools. At UNB, I have participated in several UNB Faculty of Education events, was elected to the Faculty of Education Graduate Studies Committee, and participate in the UNB Graduate Student Association. I have completed four MEd courses, all with A+ standing. I plan to maintain my high academic standing and will continue to write and share my research in the future through my regional, national and international affiliations.