

Running Head: PRESERVICE TEACHER PERCEPTIONS

Preservice Teachers' Perceptions
of Teaching in Communities of
Northwestern Ontario

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Abstract

This mixed-method study examined the perceptions of preservice teachers about teaching in Northwestern Ontario, and how these perceptions influence their decisions to apply for teaching positions within the area through the use of a longitudinal survey design. The purpose for this study was to explore what factors preservice teachers utilized when deciding where to apply for teaching positions, and what the government, universities, and school boards can do to attract teachers to Northern schools. The sample population (n=57) included 46 females and 11 males. 60% of the sample population had never lived in a rural community; 61% had never lived in a northern community; and 84% have never lived in an Aboriginal community. The present study found that, while many preservice teachers found Thunder Bay an enjoyable city in which to live, they felt unprepared to teach in Northern communities. The study also indicated that participants felt that there was too much emphasis on Aboriginal Education, to the detriment of multicultural education, as many of them planned to return to their homes in Southern Ontario. The present study found that university courses had serious implications for students' decisions to teach in particular areas. Students developed schemata based on familiar stories, and the attitudes of professors, whether they spoke negatively or positively about teaching in Northern communities.

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Chapter 1: Overview

Background of the Study

Rural communities in Northwestern Ontario are finding it extremely difficult to recruit and retain qualified teachers (Harmon, 2001). The reasons for this difficulty include competition, preparedness, and culture-shock (Duquette, 2000). Northwestern Ontario has trouble competing with wealthier urban centres that are able to capture the interest of preservice teachers with higher wages and more job opportunities (*Report on Ontario's Northern schools*, 2003). Preservice teachers who decide to go to rural Northwestern Ontario communities are often ill-prepared for what they will face once they get there, and find it difficult to cope in isolated settings (Duquette, 2000). There is also the difference in culture. For example, Euro-Canadian teachers going into a remote, Aboriginal community become outsiders in the community, and may feel unwanted, especially when the communities indicate the need for more Aboriginal teachers (Harper, 2000). Euro-Canadian teachers may become overwhelmed and may often leave after the first year, thereby disrupting the students' learning.

In order to attract prospective teachers to isolated communities, Lakehead University has instituted a mandatory Aboriginal Education program to educate teachers for rural Northwestern Ontario communities. It is hoped by the university that the communities would be able to retain these teachers. Unfortunately, the problem is bigger than just retaining teachers, as many communities are finding it hard to attain teachers as well (Harmon, 2003).

Due to the sometimes negative portrayal of Northwestern Ontario school boards in the media, many preservice teachers are misinformed about the positive aspects of teaching in Northwestern Ontario. The media in Thunder Bay consistently discusses school closures in Northwestern Ontario's isolated communities (*Report on Ontario's Northern schools*, 2003). This discourages many preservice teachers from applying to Northwestern Ontario communities. Most teachers who accept teaching positions in isolated communities are recent graduates from a Bachelor of Education program, and are merely seeking to gain experience in order to secure "better" positions in more southern urban centres, such as Toronto (Harper, 2000). This means new teachers who accept positions in isolated, rural, or northern communities may not intend to stay in the communities for a long period of time.

It is my intent to examine preservice teachers' perceptions about teaching in isolated communities in Northwestern Ontario and how their perceptions change over the course of their studies at Lakehead University. Lakehead University, the only university in Northwestern Ontario, naturally has an obligation to promote Northwestern Ontario schools by helping preservice teachers feel comfortable teaching in all types of communities (e.g. urban, rural, remote, and isolate). Many students come to Lakehead University from urban centres and it is important that the education program at Lakehead University meets students' needs in terms of accepting teaching positions in Northwestern Ontario. In fact, there are courses such as EDUC 3273, "Teaching in an Isolated Community," which are designed to prepare professional year students for teaching in these communities.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to explore how the perceptions of preservice teachers about rural, isolated, and Aboriginal communities change over the course of a semester at Lakehead University. This includes: what triggers the change (if any), whether previous geographic locations influence perceptions, and how preservice teachers' perceptions influence the decision to teach in rural communities in Northwestern Ontario. In order to encourage preservice teachers to apply for positions in Northwestern Ontario, we need to understand their reasons for not wanting to apply in the first place. It is my belief that people entering Lakehead University's Bachelor of Education program have preconceived notions of rural communities, and these notions can change over the course of the year, with certain factors contributing to those changes (Piaget, 1926). Once we understand the factors influencing the perceptions of preservice teachers, Lakehead University can attempt to incorporate the factors into courses to help encourage students to become interested in applying for positions in rural, isolated, and northern communities.

It is important to promote Northwestern Ontario as a viable option for teaching as there are not many teachers willing to teach in communities around Northwestern Ontario, and many schools in the district are scrambling to fill positions (*Report on Ontario's Northern schools*, 2003). Due to the increasing need for teachers, it is necessary to understand why some teachers may choose to teach in Northwestern Ontario as a place of employment. Because of the high turnover rate among teachers in isolated communities, I believe that we need to educate preservice teachers appropriately so they

are better prepared to deal with the isolation and geographic expansiveness of the remote and isolated communities within Northwestern Ontario.

Research Questions

The main research question guiding this study is: “What are preservice teachers’ perceptions of Northwestern Ontario, and how do these perceptions influence their decisions to stay in the area to teach?” The assumptions guiding this study are:

- a) Many students are from major urban centres, and they must adjust to the “culture shock” of a geographically spacious centre, and
- b) Although the first impression is usually negative, some preservice teachers reconsider their decision not to teach in Northwestern Ontario.

The present study utilized two surveys (see research design). Placed against the background of the study, 4 research questions were addressed in a first survey:

- 1) What are preservice teachers’ first impressions of Thunder Bay, Lakehead University, and Northwestern Ontario and how do these perceptions account for the reasons for attending Lakehead University?
- 2) What differences exist between preservice teachers from rural areas and those from urban areas relative to their perceptions and beliefs of rural areas?
- 3) How does previous experience in rural/urban areas affect the perceptions preservice teachers have of rural communities?
- 4) What differences exist between preservice teachers who have had some experience in a rural community compared to those who have not in regard to their perceptions of Lakehead University, Thunder Bay, and Northwestern Ontario?

There were 2 research questions that were addressed in a second survey:

- 1) How do preservice teachers' perceptions/impressions change over the course of a semester?
- 2) How do preservice teachers feel about teaching in a Northwestern Ontario community, and does that feeling change by a) student background, b) rural placement, and c) taking specific courses at Lakehead University?

Finally, four research questions were jointly addressed in both surveys:

- 1) Where would preservice teachers consider teaching? Thunder Bay or in more rural northern communities?
- 2) How do preservice teachers' perceptions of Lakehead University, Thunder Bay, and Northwestern Ontario affect their decisions in applying for teaching positions in Ontario?
- 3) What factors do preservice teachers take into consideration in making decisions to apply for jobs?
- 4) For students who would not teach in Northwestern Ontario, what is the reasoning behind the decision and can their attitudes be changed? If so, by what?

By answering all these questions, I should be able to determine how universities can promote rural communities as rewarding areas to work and live.

Definition of Terms.

My operational definitions are adapted from the Canadian Collaborative Mental Health Initiative (2006).

Rural Communities.

Rural communities refer to those communities which have 10,000 or fewer residents, and are outside commuting zones of large metropolitan areas and cities.

Isolated Communities.

Isolated communities are communities that have limited or no road access, as well as limited access to specialized services.

Urban Centres.

Urban centres are communities which have 10,000 or greater residents, and are inside the commuting zones of large metropolitan areas and cities.

Preservice Teachers.

The term preservice teachers refers to teacher candidates that are currently enrolled in the one-year (professional-year) Bachelor of Education program, and intend to graduate after their spring student teaching practicum.

In-service Teachers.

In-service teachers refer to teachers who have graduated from the Bachelor of Education program, and are currently teaching.

Unqualified Teachers.

Unqualified teachers are teachers who do not hold a Bachelor of Education degree, and have not received any training for teaching, but have been employed to teach in the communities.

Aboriginals.

The term Aboriginal refers to self-identified Inuit, Metis, Status and Non-Status Natives.

Schema (plural schemata).

A schema is an informal, private, unarticulated theory about the nature of events, objects or situations that a person will face (Bullough, Knowles, & Crow, 1992)

Significance of the Study

This study is significant for the following reasons:

- 1) There is a paucity of research that examines the factors that preservice teachers take into consideration in applying for jobs in the teaching profession;
- 2) There is a dearth of research on the education of preservice teachers concerning Aboriginal communities;
- 3) Results should be of interest to school boards in remote areas around the world, as well as to Faculties of Education in other Universities in order to help promote the rural, and isolated communities within the area; and
- 4) This study could, and should, lead into more studies based on decision-making processes, and on preservice teacher education.

Chapter 2: Review of Literature

Introduction

Scholars have conducted research of educational issues in rural and isolated areas, particularly issues concerning the education of Aboriginal students (Aikenhead & Huntley, 1999; Andersen-Spear, 2003; Fickel & Jones, 2002; Medina, Redsteer, Prater, & Minner, 2002; Press, Galway, & Collins, 2003). However, there is a paucity of research concerning the experiences teachers have when they accept positions in rural or isolated communities, and there is even less research on preservice teachers' education about these communities in university programs. The education of preservice teachers is extremely important when we consider that most of the teachers in Aboriginal communities are of Euro-Canadian descent and may not have any knowledge of Aboriginal culture (Agbo, 1990). The educational issues in different communities, including Aboriginal communities, the experiences of in-service teachers in these communities, and the education of preservice teachers are important themes when looking at the decision-making processes of educators. All three themes are especially important when it concerns the decisions of where to apply and accept a position to teach.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for the present study is based on schema theory. A schema is an informal, private, unarticulated theory about the nature of events, objects or situations that a person will face (Bullough, Knowles, & Crow, 1992). In other words, people form opinions of places, things, and events that do not represent the actual situations. There are three aspects to the schema theory: first, there is "adaptation",

whereby the individual builds schemata through interaction with the individual's environment; second, there is "assimilation," where the schema fits in with the real situation; and third, there is "accommodation," where the individual should necessarily adjust the schema to fit the individual's experiences (Beck & Levin, 2003). Schema theory has been used in studies to "understand and facilitate student learning, especially that aspect of learning that involves the construction, modification, and extension of schema" (Bieber & Worley, 2006, p. 1011). Gender schema theory is also used as a conceptual framework when there may be gender differences, or when looking specifically at one gender (Hughes, 2002).

In the present study, I am looking at the schemata preservice teachers have when they enter the Bachelor of Education program at Lakehead University, and any accommodation that may occur throughout the first semester. In other words, the present study is concerned with the ideas that preservice teachers bring with them to Lakehead University and Thunder Bay and how these ideas change over the course of the semester and their placement, as many students are introduced to Northwestern Ontario through Lakehead University and Thunder Bay. There is also a chance that gender could play a significant role in preservice teachers' perceptions of Northwestern Ontario, both at the beginning of the study and at the end. This study is also concerned about understanding the extent to which the conceptions that preservice teachers bring into teacher education change over time and how they carry out their decisions about where to teach based on these conceptions.

Educational Issues in Rural, and Isolated Areas.

There are many issues concerning education in rural and isolated areas in Ontario, such as lack of funding and providing resources to school boards that cover a large geographic area (*Report on Ontario's Northern Schools*, 2003). Most of the boards that represent the schools in rural and isolated areas “cover very large geographical areas, and their schools are, for the most part, very small and very far apart” (*Report on Ontario's Northern Schools*, 2003, p.1). To add to the distances the boards must negotiate in order to provide services to all the schools, there is also the issue of funding. Recently the funding for several grants, such as the *Local Priorities Grant* and the *Declining Enrolment Grant*, has changed, making it harder for schools with low enrolments to provide much needed services to the students, and making it difficult to attract teachers, as the boards cannot provide the same salaries as large urban centres (*Report on Ontario's Northern Schools*, 2003; Baker, 2003; Hillman, 2003). While the new distribution of funds is upsetting some of the larger urban communities, it is severely hurting the school system in Northwestern Ontario. The concerns smaller schools have are not addressed because, unlike major urban centres, small communities do not have access to the same media resources to help obtain the attention of the government, which leads to the impression that urban centres receive preferential treatment (Baker, 2003). Unfortunately, this preferential treatment of urban centres means that when there is a new implementation of policies to help urban schools, the smaller schools also have to implement the funding policies, which do not take into account the unique situations of rural and isolated schools (Arnold, 2005). Part of the unique state of rural and isolated schools includes the fact that “school[s] are becoming increasingly involved in addressing

the needs of children, youth, and families outside the traditional educational program, and their responsibility now includes, in addition to the delivery of educational programs, student and family services” (Sekilich, 2003, p. 37).

Rural and isolated schools must address the problem of attracting and retaining teachers (Harmon, 2001). Many teachers who accept positions in rural or isolated areas have never been to an isolated community, and the geographic and professional isolation that they feel begins to take its toll (Herrington & Herrington, 2001). Harrington and Harrington (2001) suggest that travel costs, higher costs of living, and limited accommodations are some of the reasons rural and isolated communities find it so difficult to recruit and retain the teachers that they so desperately need.

Harmon (2001) provides some guidelines for rural and isolated communities on which to base their hiring. He claims that “ideal” characteristics for rural and isolated community teachers include:

1. Certification and ability to teach in more than one subject area or grade level;
2. Preparedness to supervise several extracurricular activities;
3. Ability to teach a wide range of abilities in a single classroom;
4. Ability to overcome the students’ cultural differences and add his/her understanding of the larger society; and
5. Ability to adjust to the uniqueness of the community in terms of social opportunities, life styles, shopping areas, and continuous being scrutinized.

These guidelines show the different life that teachers face in some smaller communities as the communities tend to have multiple grades within a classroom, and the lifestyle is quite different than an urban centre. For example, when a new teacher’s schema is

fitting, that is, when situations and interactions are made meaningful without changing the schema, the teacher is assimilated. On the contrary, when the schema must change in response to the inability to make situations adequately and appropriately meaningful, the teacher is merely accommodated. Accommodated teachers may question their ability to fit in as a teacher and may decide to quit. Accommodation results in a high turnover rate that interrupts students' schooling and hampers student achievement (Starlings, McLean, & Moran, 2002).

Yet another issue that rural and isolated communities face is teacher retirement. Like teachers in urban areas, many of the permanent teachers in rural and isolated communities are also of the baby boom era, and are of the age to retire. There are many more teachers retiring than there are coming into the profession and schools are finding it difficult to replace the retirees (Green & Reid, 2004).

Despite the challenges involved in teaching in rural and isolated schools, there are some very positive aspects. For example, the relationship between teacher, student, and family is easier to foster in a small community than a large urban centre because the town is better integrated than the city (Baker, 2003). Hillman (2003) agrees, as he states that the "sense of knowing the community, the people in them, [and] who the children belong to is a powerful force for good in school/community relations" (p. 5). Sometimes teachers go to the smaller communities when they are tired of the hustle and bustle of urban centres (Hillman, 2003).

Educational Issues in Aboriginal Communities.

Northwestern Ontario is made up of mostly rural and isolated communities, and the racial population is vastly different from the south, as Aboriginal students can make

up more than 34% of a classroom; whereas in a southern classroom, Aboriginal students may make up only 1% of the students (*Report on Ontario's Northern Schools*, 2003). The history of Aboriginal education is one of colonization and assimilation, and as a result, the Aboriginal people have fought hard to gain control of their own education, and to promote the education of their culture in the public education system (Kanu, 2002). However, there has not been much done to “preserve, protect and promote the rights and freedoms of Aboriginal people to use, practice, and develop Aboriginal languages and knowledge in Canada through education” (Battiste, 1998, p. 20). One problem of education in an Aboriginal setting is the idea that education is a Euro-Canadian construct, and by forcing it on the Aboriginal student, there is a conflict between what the student is learning at school and at home (Aikenhead, 2002).

Many studies have been conducted on how culture should be integrated within the curriculum of the school (Agbo, 2004; Antone, 2003a; Antone, 2003b; Bazron, Osher, & Fleischman, 2005; Jacobs, 2003; Trujillo, Figueira, Viri, & Manuelito, 2003). In order to teach language and culture in the schools, the teacher must have a comprehensive knowledge of the traditional values, myths, tribal history, and traditions of Aboriginal people (Agbo, 2002). As one study claims: “if schools are to serve the legitimate needs of their communities, then efforts must be made to review and shape not only the institutional structure and culture of the school but also the culture of the community within which the school functions” (Goddard & Foster, 2002, p. 14). Although schools in Aboriginal communities are open to change, often they need the help of the community to implement the changes, especially when the teachers are unsure of the culture (Agbo, 2002).

The lack of knowledge about Aboriginal culture is another issue within Aboriginal education (Agbo, 2002; Battiste, 1998; Goddard & Foster, 2002; Harper, 2000). Many teachers in Aboriginal communities are of Euro-Canadian descent, and have not been educated in Aboriginal culture. Numerous teachers have little or no knowledge of the lifestyle, values and culture of Aboriginal people and yet these are the people who are responsible for providing a large share of Aboriginal children's education (Agbo, 2004). Agbo (2004) points out that the issue is not one of merely wanting Aboriginal children to learn the culture, but to find teachers who can adequately teach it to them. Another study suggests that teachers look at the integration of Aboriginal culture as a "new scene of learning" whereby the teacher can learn about the culture at the same time as the students (Kanu, 2005). Unfortunately, there is often the view by teachers and administrators that all children are alike and that the Euro-Canadian curriculum is appropriate for all (Goddard, 2002)

Teaching styles can impact the success of students, and how teachers interact with the parents will determine if the parents will support their children's education (Agbo, 2007). A wholistic approach to teaching helps students succeed in school, as it connects the body, mind, spirit, and heart (Swanson, 2003). To be an effective teacher of Aboriginal students, teachers need be clear and concise about what they want and provide the structure to help the students produce it, as well as provide positive Aboriginal role-models for the students to feel pride in their culture and people (Kanu, 2002). Aboriginal youth have said that a good teacher must have cultural knowledge, be encouraging, explain things clearly, use good examples and analogies, have high expectations of the students, be interested in the student's lives, and be respectful of the students (Jacobs,

2003). When it comes to dealing with parents, it is important for the teacher to talk directly to the parent rather than using letters and notes (Bazron et al., 2005). There is also the push for more Aboriginal teachers, especially since they would be the best to teach in their community since they already identify with the community, and they will strive to make the school an important part of the student's lives (Friesen & Orr, 1998).

Experiences Teaching in Aboriginal Communities.

One problem for teachers in Aboriginal classrooms is the lack of training to deal with the unique situations of these classrooms (Harper, 2000). Students in Aboriginal classrooms are significantly different in age and ability (Harper, 2000). Studies reveal that the teachers wish they had received more formal education in classroom management for multicultural classes, English as a Second Language training, and some Special Education training (Harper, 2000; Sealander et al., 2001). There are also suggestions that teachers should receive longer orientation periods before going into the community, and while in the community, have a sponsor family to support them culturally (Agbo, 2004).

Aboriginal communities can improve the education of Aboriginal students by having more Aboriginal teachers (Battiste, 1998). There are several programs designed for Aboriginal teachers, such as the Native Teacher Education Program (NTEP) at Lakehead University. NTEP caters specifically to preservice teachers coming from isolated Aboriginal communities. The purpose for the program is to create role models for Aboriginal students, to show them that they can succeed (Duquette, 2000). Cultural education is a large part of what makes a teacher comfortable in Aboriginal communities, as it provides a better understanding of Aboriginal culture and beliefs (Duquette, 2000; Harper, 2000).

Preservice Teacher Education.

There is not a large amount of research on preservice teachers, but there are some interesting studies on what should be taught to preservice teachers with regard to Aboriginal education (Stachowski & Frey, 2003). Some universities have designed education programs that contain mandatory multicultural courses, as well as courses designed to integrate Aboriginal values and perspectives into course work (Trujillo et al., 2003). Within universities, there are mentoring programs that allow non-Aboriginal and Aboriginal students to work together and teach each other their cultures (Belgarde, Mitchell, & Arquero, 2002). As to what should be taught in the multicultural courses in order to help the preservice teachers in the future, Pewewardy and Hammer (2003) say that preservice teachers “need to study the history and culture of Indian children including their values, stories, music, and myths, as well as racism” (p. 3). Many teachers are ill-prepared for the realities of rural and isolated communities because the textbooks that are being used do not provide information on the issues of poverty, racial diversity, and other diversity issues that occur in rural and isolated communities, and instead have allocated poverty and racial diversity as completely urban issues (Ayalon, 2003).

Given that many universities propagate the idea that Euro-Canadian education is the best kind of education for all children, preservice teachers continue to promote Eurocentric ideals in situations where they are not appropriate (Battiste, Bell, & Findlay, 2002). For example, in an Aboriginal community, history should not solely come from a Eurocentric viewpoint. However, there is hope as some universities have programs that are devoted to teaching in rural, isolated, and Aboriginal areas (Stachowski & Frey,

2003). Preservice teachers are placed in a six month placement in a community, where they must interact not only with their students but with the people outside the school as well, including parents, relatives, and others. A program with such an intense placement “enhances beginning teachers’ understandings of the multiple realities that characterize many classroom and community settings and strengthens their ability to respond effectively to people whose worldview may differ from their own” (Stachowski & Frey, 2003, p. 2).

In order to be comfortable teaching in any setting, most studies agree that preservice teachers need to learn about the cultures they will encounter before they leave the program (Agbo, 1990; Duquette, 2000; Harper, 2000). Education is important to all people, and it is up to the educators to discover how to reach all students to make them successful, but it must start with the university classes (Stachowski & Frey, 2003). There is also the need for universities to promote rural, isolated, and Aboriginal communities to preservice teachers (Green & Reid, 2004). At the same time, there needs to be an understanding of what types of people would be best suited to the community, and learning why a preservice teacher would consider teaching in these types of communities may help in attracting and retaining teachers for a longer period than a year (Harmon, 2001).

Chapter 3: Methodology

Introduction

The present study investigated the perceptions preservice teachers have of Lakehead University, Thunder Bay, and Northwestern Ontario, and how these perceptions change throughout the course of a semester at Lakehead University. In this chapter, I provide a methodological context for the study, which includes my personal and cultural information, research design, data analysis, and ethical considerations. My personal and cultural background is important to this study because I have lived in a small remote community in Northwestern Ontario for my entire life, and as such, I have borne witness to the problems affecting education in these communities. Although Lakehead University has a large population of students from Northwestern Ontario, the Bachelor of Education program appears to have a larger population of students from more urban areas. Having attended Lakehead University, and lived in a Northern community, I believe that a study examining the thoughts and perceptions of preservice teachers, as well as a documentation of any changes in thought that may occur, will be beneficial to Lakehead University and the school boards of Northwestern Ontario, especially if we can pinpoint what activities and courses make the most positive impact on preservice teachers.

Personal and Cultural Background

I was born in a small, remote Northern community. The town is situated at the end of a highway, and to travel to communities farther north requires a bush plane. There

was a strong sense of community in my hometown, and we did not have a large turnover of teaching staff, although many communities surrounding us did. As I was growing up my hometown consisted of two cultures; the Aboriginal culture, and the Euro-Canadian culture. This demographic changed over the years as new opportunities brought new people. Many times the Euro-Canadian and the Aboriginal cultures intertwined, as the public elementary school taught, and still teaches, Aboriginal art, beliefs, and activities. I came to Lakehead University to obtain my Honours Bachelor of Arts (HBA) and Bachelor of Education (BEd), and I found that there was a strong Aboriginal presence, much like in my hometown. Once I began my BEd, I found that the students were from other cities, and had no knowledge of Northwestern Ontario and its rich heritage. Many times I overheard students complaining that there was nothing to do or that they felt that they were in the middle of nowhere. There was also the concern with the lack of jobs as schools were beginning to shut down. I became upset when I overheard a professor tell a student that there were “no jobs in Northwestern Ontario” and later I told that student about the jobs that were available for teachers. After seeing some students who started out hating Northwestern Ontario change their opinions, I became interested in discovering what caused those changes, and if those causes could be implemented into courses and activities at Lakehead University.

Research Design

The present study is a mixed method research study, combining qualitative and quantitative methodologies (Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, 2004). By combining qualitative and quantitative methodologies, I explored the research questions in much closer detail than I could by using only one of the methods, as I could build on the strengths of both

methods (Creswell, 2005). I combined the qualitative and quantitative methods together into a longitudinal survey design. A longitudinal design “involves the survey procedure of collecting data about trends with the same population, changes in a cohort group or subpopulation, or changes in a panel group of the same individuals over time” (Creswell, 2005, p. 357). The present study utilized two survey instruments. One of the surveys was given in November, and the other in January, after the first practicum. These surveys contained questions pertaining to demographic data (e.g. age, sex, reasons for choosing Lakehead University, previous town/city of residence, etc.), as well as open-ended questions that required the participants to describe their impressions of Thunder Bay, Lakehead University, Northwestern Ontario, and what factors they would consider when applying for teaching positions. The present study utilized both qualitative and quantitative methodologies. The answers to the qualitative questions helped to explain and elaborate on the quantitative results by providing personal reasoning for the impressions participants had, and the decision making processes they used for job applications. The qualitative data were analyzed with qualitative data analysis such as coding. The qualitative data is “needed to refine, extend, or explain the general picture” (Creswell, 2005, p. 515), and helps to produce “a coherent and understandable picture of the phenomenon under study” (Phelan, 1987, p. 35).

Before sending out the survey, I conducted a pilot test to determine if the format and content of the questions were appropriate for the purposes of the study. Twenty and ten students respectively completed the first and second survey instruments, during which I asked for their feedback. The feedback from the respondents who participated in the pilot was incorporated into the main survey instrument for the study.

I provided all 703 students in the professional year of the Bachelor of Education program with a link to my online survey. The link was attached to a letter explaining the purpose of the study, and I requested that the students read the consent form and use their Lakehead University email addresses instead of their signatures when they accessed the survey instrument online. The email addresses helped in my data collection by providing me with a way to identify which surveys went together, as they were a pre- and a post-test. The address also helped, as I used an incentive draw for an Ipad in order to have a higher response rate. The incentive was one of the actions taken to try and attain a generous sample size, and to allow for a randomizing of the samples. In order to follow up with non-respondents, I provided the link for my survey once a week for three weeks during the first survey, and once during the second survey. It was disappointing that I had a return rate of only about sixty.

Data Analysis

There were several factors I looked at within my study. I examined the categories of age, as well as sex of the participants, to discover if there was a difference in perceptions, beliefs, and changes in perceptions and beliefs. Place of origin was also another category of the study, as there is an understanding that many preservice teachers intend to go back to their hometown to teach. Experience with rural and isolated communities was another major factor, as a participant with no experience with a smaller community may find the transition more difficult. In regard to the respondents' experience, I looked at where they lived, the length of time they had lived there, and they way that could influence their decisions about teaching in Thunder Bay or in the rural and isolated communities in Northwestern Ontario. The courses they were taking at

Lakehead University, where the preservice teachers did their winter placements, and how that affected whether they were willing to stay in Northwestern Ontario were all categories I used as comparisons among the participants. I used cross-tabulations within the SPSS program to analyze the quantitative data.

I conducted an item-by-item analysis as well as cross tabulations when looking at direct comparisons. The frequency distributions were analyzed alongside the themes I found during the analysis of the qualitative data. The themes for the qualitative data were decided by categorizing similar comments into groups. I determined how important the themes were by how often the participants mentioned that theme, or issue, in the question. However, for the item as to whether participants had taken a multicultural course, the participants were split into two groups, and instead of comparing a subgroup to the entire sample as it was in other cases, I had to compare the subgroup to the sample to which it belonged.

Ethical Considerations

I sent messages by email to potential participants in November, and clearly explained the purpose of this study. Additionally, I provided consent forms that explained what was expected of the participants, any risks or benefits that may arise, and informed the participants that they might withdraw from the study at any time. The forms also explained to the participants that they will remain fully anonymous, and that all documentation and information collected will be kept in a secure location at Lakehead University for seven years (please refer to the Consent Form in Appendix B). The research results will be made available to participants upon request.

Limitations

The limitations of this study are the lack of comparison between Lakehead University students and students from other universities. Also, I was not able to sample students from the Revised Integrated Teacher Education (RITE) program, which is an alternative scheduling of a regular Primary/ Junior component of the professional year or one-year BEd. The RITE students attend classes at different times, while regular students attend set classes. Therefore, it was difficult to coordinate a time to do the surveys for the RITE students, and I was unable to send my survey link to those students. The RITE students were living in a rural community already, and by not having them complete the survey instrument, I may missed out on some valuable information. Due to the low response rate, despite every effort to encourage students to take the surveys, I am unable to generalize the findings to the entire population. This study may not apply to other, more urban university students. I may not have obtained full accounts of the preservice teachers' perceptions and thoughts of teaching in Northwestern Ontario by not doing interviews.

Delimitations

This study is delimited to Northwestern Ontario. The study was conducted at Lakehead University, using the students in the one-year (professional year) Bachelor of Education program. I invited the entire population to complete the surveys, in hopes of attaining a generous sample size. The change in perceptions/impressions was examined over a two month period. Many variables contributed to the decision to apply or accept a teaching position in Northwestern Ontario, but I limited the variables to the factors that dealt with living in Thunder Bay and attending Lakehead University. Other studies can

be conducted at different universities across Canada and around the world to determine if the perceptions of preservice Faculty of Education students of rural and isolated communities are similar to those of the students at Lakehead University.

Characteristics of Respondents

The characteristics of the respondents who completed the survey instruments are described below (Please note that totals may exceed 100 because of rounding).

Age

39 respondents (or about 68%) were between the ages of 18 and 24. 16 respondents (or 28%) were between the ages of 25 and 34, while 2 respondents (or roughly 4%) were between the ages of 35 and 54. The population in the Bachelor of Education consists of approximately 35% of students between the ages of 18 and 24; 58% between the ages of 25 and 34; 7% are between the ages of 34 and 50; and less than 1% are over 50 years of age.

Gender

Of the 57 respondents, 46 (or 81%) were female, and 11 (or 19%) were male. The population in the Bachelor of Education program at Lakehead University is made up of about 70% females and 30% males.

Rural Experience

About 60% of the participants have never lived in a rural community. 5% have lived in a rural community for less than six months. 2% of the participants have lived in a rural community for about one year. 2% of participants lived in a rural community for

about two years, and 2% of participants have lived in a rural community for about three years. 12% stated that they have lived in a rural community for four or more years, and 18% responded that they have lived in a rural community their entire lives.

Northern Experience

About 61% of respondents stated that they have never lived in a northern community. 12% of respondents have lived in a northern community for less than six months. 4% of respondents declared that they have lived in a northern community for about three years. 9% stated that they have lived in a northern community for four or more years, while 14% have lived in a northern community their entire lives.

Aboriginal Community Experience

Of the 57 respondents, 48 (or 84%) stated that they have never lived in an Aboriginal community. 4 (or 7%) have lived in an Aboriginal community for less than six months, 1 (or 2%) has lived in an Aboriginal community for about one year, 2 (or 4%) have lived in an Aboriginal community for four years or more, and 2 (or 4%) have lived in an Aboriginal community their entire lives.

Hometown Population

Out of the 57 respondents, 2 stated that their hometown had a population of less than 1,000; 10 stated that the population of their hometown was between 1,001 and 5,000; 4 respondents were from a hometown with a population between 5,001 to 10,000; 3 people were from towns with a population between 10,001 and 30,000; 5 participants stated that their hometown population was between 30,001 and 50,000; 8 participants were from hometowns with a population between 50,001 and 100,000 residents; 21

respondents were from hometowns with a population between 100,001 and 500,000; and 4 participants were from towns with a population over 500,000 residents.

Hometown Province

When asked which province their hometown is located in about 2% said they were from New Brunswick, 93% were from Ontario, 4% were from Quebec, and 2% were from somewhere outside of Canada.

Highest Degree

About 39% of the respondents stated that their highest degree obtained was a Bachelor of Arts/Science; 54% of respondents held an Honours Bachelor of Arts/Science; 2% of respondents had a Masters Degree; and 5% claimed some other type of degree or diploma as their highest degree of education.

Major

Out of the 57 respondents, roughly 2% declared that their major was Anthropology; 2% were Biology majors; 4% were Business majors; 18% were English majors; 2% were Environmental Studies majors; 2% had French as their major; 9% were geography majors; 11% stated that History was their major; 4% were Indigenous Learning majors; 4% were Kinesiology majors; 2% were Music majors; 4% stated Outdoor Recreation as their major; 2% were Political Science majors; 11% were Psychology majors; 7% were Sociology majors; and 21% had “other” as their major.

University Attended to Obtain Highest Degree

About 5% of respondents attended Brock University to attain their highest degree; 4% attended Carleton University; 47% attended Lakehead University; 5% attended Laurentian University; 2% obtained their highest degree from McMaster University; 2% attended Nipissing University for their highest degree; 2% attended Queen's University; 5% obtained their highest degree from Trent University; 4% attended the University of Guelph; 2% of the respondents obtained their highest degree from the University of Ottawa; 2% attended the University of Toronto; 5.3% achieved their highest degree from the University of Waterloo; 2% attended the University of Western Ontario; 2% obtained their highest degree from the University of Windsor; 4% attended Wilfred Laurier University; 4% attended York University; and 5% obtained their highest degree outside the province of Ontario.

The Profile of Thunder Bay

Thunder Bay is situated at the head of Lake Superior in Ontario, and is the biggest city between Winnipeg and Sault Ste. Marie. The population of Thunder Bay is roughly 108,000 residents. Thunder Bay is an industrial city that runs on the lumber industry, which is in decline at the present time, causing the city to lose residents. There is a high percentage of Aboriginal people within the city and its' surrounding communities, and with the presence of Confederation College and Lakehead University, students from around the country, and even the world, enter the city. The people of Thunder Bay are quite friendly, and there are many different activities to enjoy both within the city limits and surrounding areas.

The Profile of Lakehead University

Lakehead University is the only university in Northwestern Ontario. The nearest universities are Laurentian in Sudbury, and the University of Manitoba in Winnipeg. Lakehead University has a strong Aboriginal population, and the student body is quite active. Many students come to Lakehead University for the Bachelor of Education, and the Outdoor Recreation programs. Students are from around the globe, and, because the size of Lakehead University is small, the student body is very close and friendly.

Chapter 4: Results

Introduction

The main perspectives of the respondents that emerged from the study related to:

- a) Perceptions of Northwestern Ontario; b) Difference between rural and urban students;
- c) Change of perceptions over time; and d) Decision-making processes.

The first perspective, perceptions of Northwestern Ontario, dealt with the reasons the respondents gave for attending Lakehead University, the first impressions had of Thunder Bay, and Lakehead University as well as the different perceptions preservice teachers had after living in Thunder Bay for a semester; and why they felt the way they did about Lakehead University and Thunder Bay. The second perspective, the difference between rural and urban students looked at how previous experience affected preservice teachers' decisions to stay in Northwestern Ontario, and whether or not there was a difference in their perceptions in regard to Lakehead University, Thunder Bay and Northwestern Ontario. The third perspective, change of perceptions described the factors that contributed to change through the respondents' placement in a rural setting, and their taking of the Multicultural/Aboriginal course. The final perspective, decision-making processes, examined the willingness of preservice teachers to teach in Northwestern Ontario after their placement, how their perception affected their decisions to stay, and the factors preservice teachers considered in their decision to apply for positions.

Perceptions of Northwestern Ontario

Roughly 7% of respondents claimed that one of the reasons for attending Lakehead University was that it was inexpensive when compared to other Universities. 5% stated that they liked the campus and that had an influence on their decision to attend. 16% of participants like to be outdoors and felt that Lakehead University offered them that opportunity more than any other University. 28% said that they attended Lakehead University because it was close to home. 40% of respondents claimed that the reason they attended Lakehead University was because they were accepted into the Bachelor of Education program. 14% felt that the smaller class sizes were a good reason to come to Lakehead University, and 51% decided to attend Lakehead University because it has a good education program. 18% also had other reasons for attending (e.g. a good scholarship, sibling was already here, etc.).

17.5% of the participants felt that the ability to stay home, or close to home, while attending University was a clear advantage in attending Lakehead University. Many students claimed that they “didn’t want to move away” in order to attend University. A female respondent (aged 18-24) from Thunder Bay noted that she could:

Save money by living at home and going to university.

A male student from Marathon (aged 18-24) thought:

It’s going to be good to be home,

as he had been out of the city for a while. Another female from Fort Frances (aged 18-24) stated:

Lakehead was my first choice because it is close to home...I really enjoy the Northwestern Ontario area, and was hoping that I would not have to move to Southern Ontario – I'm not a city person.

The distance away from "home" was an issue for many students when they found out that they were accepted into the Bachelor of Education program at Lakehead University. In fact, 24.7% of students mentioned this issue when writing about their first thoughts upon acceptance. A female (aged 18-24) from Maidstone stated:

It is so far away from home and my family.

This distance from family and friends caused many students to feel "scared to move so far away." Although many students knew there was quite a distance between their "home" and Lakehead University, a female (aged 18-24) student from Waterford made the comment:

[It] didn't seem too far to travel on the map, not realizing that the scale on the map changes depending on which part of Ontario is being examined.

Experience was an important topic, as 28.1% of the participants noted the idea of experiencing a new city. Many of the students who discussed experience mentioned moving to Thunder Bay as "an exciting opportunity to experience life in Northern Ontario," and one thought that "Thunder Bay is far from home, the experience will be worth it." Another thought that the perspective on experience went with the weather. In fact, three different participants mentioned that their first thought when they found out that they were accepted into Lakehead University was, "It's going to be cold up there."

Acceptance was a fairly important thought as 17.5% of the participants mentioned being excited at being accepted to Lakehead University. They felt it was a relief, as a female (18-24) student from Thunder Bay stated:

I was worried that I would not get accepted because I heard it was hard to get into the teaching program.

Another female student (18-24) from Ottawa was slightly disheartened, as her first thought was:

Oh well, at least one school accepted me.

When applying to the University one student thought, “Will I be accepted?” and when that question was answered almost all of the participants who mentioned acceptance also noted how pleased and excited they were to be coming to Lakehead University.

Lakehead University having a good education program was also mentioned. This issue was not necessarily the first thought when the participants found out that they were accepted, but 8.8% of the participants thought about it. Many of the students mentioned that they had heard that Lakehead University had “a wonderful reputation for preparing education students for the realities of teaching,” and that many people were telling prospective students that “it is the best Faculty of Education.”

When it came to first impressions of Thunder Bay, 17.5% of the participants declared that Thunder Bay is their home, and therefore they did not have a first impression, but one female participant (25-34) from Thunder Bay commented:

When I moved to a small town for a year, I appreciated Thunder Bay a lot more!
Also, the participants who called Thunder Bay home wrote about how they “love

Thunder Bay and never want to leave.” Another female respondent (24-35) from Thunder Bay commented:

I wish I could stay in Thunder Bay when I graduate but I will be moving as it is impossible to get a full time teaching job here.

24.6% of the participants commented on how beautiful they thought Thunder Bay was when they first arrived. A female respondent (18-24) made the comment:

Geographically it was very different from Southern Ontario, very mountainous, but very beautiful.

Another female student stated that:

Once I got to see more of the city I thought it was beautiful.

19.3% found the size of Thunder Bay to be an issue, but they were divided on whether it was an advantage or a disadvantage. Some people felt that Thunder Bay was “small and quiet,” or that “it seems much more like a small town,” while others felt that Thunder Bay was “bigger than what I had expected.” A female participant (18-24) from Ottawa made the comment:

[Thunder Bay] is a very small town with not much happening, not many places to hang out and not much of a nightlife.

Participants felt the friendliness of the residents of Thunder Bay was important.

A female respondent (18-24 years) from Chatham commented:

It is bigger than my hometown, but everyone here was really friendly and nice, and people automatically know you are a student, so they offer you directions or suggestions on places to go and stuff.

Another female participant from Waterloo remarked that

[Thunder Bay] feels like a small community, yet it has a large population.

Although there were so many positive first impressions, for 14% of the participants, the first impression was disappointment and disgust. In the eyes of a female participant (25-34 years) Thunder Bay:

is starting to look shabby and run down in areas. The city looks like it is slowly dying.

Another female (18-24) respondent stated that:

The city itself reminded me of the lower SES (Socio-Economic Status) areas of Windsor.

The city gave some participants the impression that it was “dirty and scummy” and “sketchy.”

31.5% of the participants loved Thunder Bay and found the city and surrounding areas absolutely beautiful. A male (25-34) participant from Campbellford stated:

I really like this area and plan to stay here indefinitely. The region is full of friendly people who are active and hardworking and housing is affordable for people who are just starting out. Combined with the natural environment this is a great place to live.

Many of the participants agreed that Thunder Bay “is a wonderful place to live” (50% of the respondents that loved Thunder Bay also mentioned that they would want to live there as well). A female (18-24) participant from Fort Frances made the comment:

[Thunder Bay is] such a friendly and relaxed area, not to mention beautiful! I really can't imagine living anywhere else.

Many participants (24.6%) felt that one of the greatest advantages of Thunder Bay was its proximity to nature. A female participant (18-24) from Thunder Bay remarked:

[Thunder Bay] is a great place to live especially if you enjoy the outdoors, while another female participant (25-34) from Thunder Bay commented:

Northwestern Ontario has many beautiful places to explore as well as many outdoor activities for the various seasons (camping, hiking, swimming, skiing, skidooing, etc.).

One complaint that was important (with 19.3% of participants commenting on it) was the idea of Thunder Bay being too isolated for some participants. Many of the comments centred on the thought that Thunder Bay was too far away from family, and that it was “isolated from large cities such as Toronto or Ottawa.” This comment from a female participant (18-24) from Tillsonburg was slightly different:

My opinion was very skewed. I thought it was remote, with mostly Aboriginal people, no mall and a very meek existence. My opinion now is very different having been there. It feels very similar to other cities I have lived in or near and does not feel remote at all, except for the fact that it is so far away from other places.

Although she stated that Thunder Bay did not feel remote, this participant still mentioned that it was far away from other major urban centres.

14% of the respondents commented on the political aspect of Thunder Bay. A female (18-24) from Thunder Bay remarked:

Thunder Bay and Northwestern Ontario is an area with a lot of potential that is rarely invested in by politicians, since the majority of Ontario voters are located in the Toronto area.

A male participant (18-24) from London made the comment that:

[Thunder Bay] seems neglected by Toronto (the Ontario government)... there is more occurring in Thunder Bay and Northwestern Ontario than Southern Ontarians believe.

There was also the belief that Thunder Bay “needs a lot of improvements in terms of city, tourism, etc.”

The weather of Thunder Bay seemed to be important, as it was mentioned sporadically by the respondents. The weather played a fairly big part in the development of impressions and opinions that the participants had. What is seemed to come down to was that participants felt that Thunder Bay weather was too cold. There was not much explanation behind their answers, but when the participants mentioned the weather they seemed to all say, “It’s cold,” or “I hate the winter climate.”

While only 5.3% of the participants mentioned it, the lack of job potential was a reason why many participants felt they could not live in Thunder Bay. For example, a male (18-24) from Woodstock felt that:

[Thunder Bay is] a nice place to live if you already have connections and a career, but there are very few career opportunities for young people growing up here, and very little to attract others to move into the region.

A female participant (25-34) from Brampton made this comment:

If there were more job opportunities I would have stayed after finishing my undergraduate degree.

When it came to the opinions preservice teachers had of Lakehead University after attending for a semester, 33.3% of the respondents stated that they felt Lakehead University was small. While this was an advantage for some, others felt that it put Lakehead University at a disadvantage in comparison to other Universities. A female preservice teacher (18-24) from Waterloo made the comment:

I like that it is a small campus. Walking across campus only takes ten minutes compared to much longer at other Universities.

Others stated that the campus is “small and cozy and easy to navigate.” A female participant (18-24) from Ottawa remarked:

[Lakehead University was] very small [and did not] have enough room to teach all 6,000 students.

Some of the comments were in between liking the campus size and finding it too small; for example, “[The] campus is small, but with all the resources of a larger campus,” or “For a small University, it’s doing alright as far as [the] number of services and experiences [available].”

31.6% of respondents felt that the campus itself was important in their overall opinions of Lakehead University. Many of the preservice teachers felt that the campus is “beautiful during all seasons,” but they had mixed feelings as to whether things were accessible. A few people commented that “the campus is well laid out,” while a female participant (25-34) from Thunder Bay stated that facilities were “not very accessible now

that they have built the new parking lots and blocked off certain areas.” A female participant (25-34) from St. Catherines stated:

The Teacher’s College main building is sort of stashed away at the other end of campus – it is a fair walk to the main side of campus [for] buses, bookstore, etc.

29.8% of the participants expressed opinions about the services that were provided at Lakehead University. Again the participants were divided on the effectiveness of the services as a female (18-24) participant stated that

[there are] a lot of services, such as the athletic space, woodlot, [and] lecture theatres.

Another female (18-24) felt that:

You tend to get the run around [from the administration] when you are trying to solve a problem/issue you are having.

Food and administration services were mentioned as the two main issues at Lakehead University. With regards to the food, it was felt that there were “extreme limits placed upon it in regards to time of day to purchase food as well as what is provided.” As for administration, participants felt that they were not very helpful and that there was a “lack of information that is given to the students.”

17.5% of respondents felt that the University had a very friendly atmosphere. There was often the mention of Lakehead University being “personal and welcoming,” and one person commented that “the students are a tight-knit community, and offer a good experience.”

12.3% of the participants mentioned professors as either a positive representative of Lakehead University, or as a negative one. Many preservice teachers felt that the professors were “friendly, easy to talk to, and approach[able].” Others felt that the professors seemed “a little under skilled,” or that some professors were “very disorganized and some classes were a waste of time.”

The idea of maintenance had a very negative influence on 10.5% of the participants, as they felt that things were “always dirty and broken.” Other preservice teachers felt that “the buildings are older and beginning to need serious maintenance.” Only one participant (a male, 25-34, from Fredricton) thought that Lakehead University was:

Always updating the facilities (e.g. MAC LAB, bike shack, etc.).

After living in Thunder Bay for a semester, 35.1% of the participants claimed that they liked/loved Thunder Bay. A male participant (25-34, from Campbellford) made the comment:

Thunder Bay is a great community. It has almost everything that I look for in a place to live.

Other comments ranged from, “I like Thunder Bay. I have lived here my whole life and hope to be able to stay here,” to “I think [Thunder Bay] is a really beautiful place.” A female participant (18-24, from Hamilton) remarked:

I’ve loved it for the last five years and will miss it when I’m gone.

Another female participant (18-24, from Chatham) stated:

I like the city a lot for school/University, but I am not sure if I want stay/live here for the rest of my life.

15.8% of the respondents reported that they felt Thunder Bay was isolated from the rest of the province, as well as from friends and family. A male (18-24) participant from Woodstock commented on how the isolation of Thunder Bay had negative effects:

The relative isolation of the city does result in some problems not experienced elsewhere, such as less tolerance, and often people who have lived their entire lives in Thunder Bay are not truly aware of how different things are elsewhere (though they believe they are).

Another negative comment related to the view that Thunder Bay was “too cold, boring, no business, [and had] no competition for business.”

12.3% of the participants discussed the positive experiences they had while in Thunder Bay. The experiences ranged from friendly people to shopping and outdoor experiences. A female participant (18-24) from Caledonia really enjoyed the fact that there were “a lot of places to shop and neat little places to explore,” while others liked that there were “lots of things to do outside.”

Although 10.5% of participants commented on Thunder Bay as a small city, they were divided between whether it was a positive aspect or a negative one. Several participants noted that Thunder Bay was a “small city with all amenities,” while others thought the city was “small and not very convenient,” which meant that the “stores never have what you need.”

7.0% of the participants mentioned that Thunder Bay had potential. Several respondents commented that Thunder Bay “Has potential that isn’t necessarily appreciated nor utilized,” while a female from Fort Frances was more precise by declaring:

Thunder Bay has more potential to be a more beautiful city than it is right now.

Politics was important in the second survey as well, as it was mentioned by 5.3%.

Everyone who mentioned politics spoke about the decline of industry within Thunder Bay. For example, a male respondent (aged 35-50, from Thunder Bay) commented:

[I] wish the provincial/federal government would aid our need to diversify our industry here.

A female participant (18-24, from Thunder Bay) made the remark:

Politically, Thunder Bay is not located in the best place possible [as] politicians generally forget the Northwestern Ontario exists in terms of road work [and] funding for industrial projects, such as forestry.

Crime is another theme (mentioned by 5.3% of participants) that appeared to be getting more attention after the first semester, as a female participant (18-24 years, from Fort Frances) declared:

The news seems to talk about a high crime rate. That makes me nervous about wandering around alone.

Personal experience was a major theme for describing why preservice teachers held certain opinions about Lakehead University and Thunder Bay, as it was discussed by 38.6% of the participants in both a negative and positive fashion. However, there was the problem of preservice teachers being unable to combine their opinions of Lakehead University and Thunder Bay, as a male preservice teacher (18-24, from Woodstock) made the comment:

My feelings about Lakehead University and Thunder Bay can really only be attributed to experience, but I must say at this point that my opinion of Lakehead and my opinion of Thunder Bay are mutually exclusive. In some respects, Lakehead [University] is an island, in so far as many of the students (indeed, most of the students in some programs) come from outside the city, where the problems with Thunder Bay don't really apply, and many of our daily lives can be accomplished on campus, without needing to expose ourselves a great deal to the rest of the city.

Out of the 17.5% of the participants who discussed professors as a reason for their particular opinions of Lakehead University, several mentioned they had a low opinion of the University because they felt that the professors "can't explain why they assess the way they do, and worse off, [they] don't agree with the way they have been told to assess." Another negative issue that was discussed was the impression that "the teachers don't know how to use equipment, and can't answer fairly general questions [that] they should know." However, many other preservice teachers felt that the professors were "approachable and knowledgeable."

8.8% of respondents felt that facilities and activities helped them feel more comfortable in Thunder Bay and Lakehead University. Again, the participants "enjoyed the accessibility to outdoor recreation," and a female participant (25-34, from Stoney Creek) made this remark:

I've gotten involved in outside activities – curling, aerobics – and this has helped me to feel at home here.

Size was mentioned by 7.0% of respondents. Mostly the participants referred to their appreciation for the smaller sized community and the “small class sizes at Lakehead University.” A female participant (18-24, from Ottawa) stated:

I am from a major city (one million people) so I am used to busy cities.

The University where I did my undergrad had 25,000 students and had a very large campus.

She found Lakehead University and Thunder Bay too small to live and work in.

When asked about why they held certain beliefs about Lakehead University, 5.3% of the participants mentioned that there were some serious problems when it came to maintaining the existing buildings at Lakehead. For example, a female participant (18-24, from Thunder Bay) wrote:

I was studying and saw mice and have had classes cancelled due to technology problems in the ATAC! The building is only...three years old, so it's pretty unreasonable for these problems to occur so soon.

Two other participants felt that maintenance was important, especially since they had observed a “line of buckets in the hallway outside of the residents’ cafeteria when it rains,” and “water leaking in certain buildings.”

The Difference Between Rural and Urban Students

Living in a rural community for less than four years did not have a negative effect on the perceptions of teaching in Thunder Bay, as everyone who lived in a rural community between one and three years stated that they would be willing to teach in Thunder Bay (see Table 1). However, not having any experience living in a rural community, or living in one for more than 4 years seemed to divide the participants, as

more were not willing, or unsure, about teaching in Thunder Bay. For the participants who did not want to teach in Thunder Bay, the biggest reason was the distance from home.

Table 1
*Rural Experience * Teaching in Thunder Bay*

Rural Experience	Would you teach in Thunder Bay?				
	Yes	No	Maybe	Don't Know	Total
Never lived in a rural community	16	9	8	1	34
Lived in a rural community for less than 6 months	1	0	2	0	3
Lived in a rural community for about 1 year	1	0	0	0	1
Lived in a rural community for about 2 years	1	0	0	0	1
Lived in a rural community for about 3 years	1	0	0	0	1
Lived in a rural community four years or more	5	2	0	0	7
Lived in a rural community my entire life	4	2	4	0	10
Total	29	13	14	1	57

Many participants were unsure of whether or not they were willing to teach in a rural community. However, all those respondents who had lived in a rural community their entire lives wanted to return and work in a rural area (see Table 2).

Table 2

*Rural Experience * Teaching in a Rural Community*

Rural experience	Would you be comfortable teaching in a rural community?				
	Don't				Total
	Yes	No	Maybe	Know	
Never lived in a rural community	12	6	15	1	34
Lived in a rural community for less than 6 months	3	0	0	0	3
Lived in a rural community for about 1 year	0	1	0	0	1
Lived in a rural community for about 2 years	1	0	0	0	1
Lived in a rural community for about 3 years	0	0	1	0	1
Lived in a rural community four years or more	6	0	1	0	7
Lived in a rural community my entire life	10	0	0	0	10
Total	32	7	17	1	57

Having, or not having experience in a Northern community did not seem to have an influence one way or another on whether or not participants were willing to teach in Thunder Bay. The participants who lived in a Northern community for three years

seemed to reject the idea of teaching in Thunder Bay, while living in one for more than four years seemed to prevent preservice teachers from rejecting Thunder Bay completely (see Table 3).

Table 3
*Northern Experience * Teaching in Thunder Bay*

Northern Experience	Would you teach in Thunder Bay?				
	Yes	No	Maybe	Don't Know	Total
Never lived in a northern community	18	8	8	1	35
Lived in a northern community for less than 6 months	1	3	3	0	7
Lived in a northern community for about 3 years	0	1	1	0	2
Lived in a northern community four years or more	4	0	1	0	5
Lived in a northern community my entire life	6	1	1	0	8
Total	29	13	14	1	57

Northern experience did not have a large impact on preservice teachers when it came to feeling comfortable teaching in a rural community. Living in a Northern community for their entire life prevented participants from discounting rural areas completely, as was the case if the participant had lived in a Northern community for

about three years; however, in all other cases, there was no distinction between those who had experience living in a Northern community and those who did not (see Table 4).

Table 4
*Northern Experience * Teaching in a Rural Community*

Northern Experience	Would you be comfortable teaching in a rural community?				
	Don't				Total
	Yes	No	Maybe	Know	
Never lived in a northern community	18	5	12	0	35
Lived in a northern community for less than 6 months	4	1	1	1	7
Lived in a northern community for about 3 years	1	0	1	0	2
Lived in a northern community four years or more	3	1	1	0	5
Lived in a northern community my entire life	6	0	2	0	8
Total	32	7	17	1	57

Living in an Aboriginal community did not have an impact on whether preservice teachers would choose to teach in Thunder Bay, although those who had lived in an Aboriginal community for less than six months seemed to feel less inclined to teach in

Thunder Bay (see Table 5). The preservice teachers who had no experience in an Aboriginal community were fairly evenly divided among the categories, as 25 stated that they would teach in Thunder Bay, 9 said they would not, 13 said they might consider it, and 1 person had no idea if s/he would consider it at all.

Table 5
*Aboriginal Experience * Teaching in Thunder Bay*

Aboriginal Experience	Would you teach in Thunder Bay?				
	Don't				Total
	Yes	No	Maybe	Know	
Never lived in an Aboriginal community	25	9	13	1	48
Lived in an Aboriginal community for less than 6 months	1	2	1	0	4
Lived in an Aboriginal community for about 1 year	1	0	0	0	1
Lived in an Aboriginal community four years or more	1	1	0	0	2
Lived in an Aboriginal community my entire life	1	1	0	0	2
Total	29	13	14	1	57

Participants who had lived in an Aboriginal community for more than one year all stated that they would be willing to teach in a rural community (see Table 6). Those respondents who had lived in an Aboriginal community for less than six months were quite divided and unsure if they would consider teaching in a rural setting.

Table 6
*Aboriginal Experience * Teaching in a Rural Community*

Aboriginal Experience	Would you be comfortable teaching in a rural community?				
	Don't				Total
	Yes	No	Maybe	Know	
Never lived in an Aboriginal community	24	6	17	1	48
Lived in an Aboriginal community for less than 6 months	3	1	0	0	4
Lived in an Aboriginal community for about 1 year	1	0	0	0	1
Lived in an Aboriginal community four years or more	2	0	0	0	2
Lived in an Aboriginal community my entire life	2	0	0	0	2
Total	32	7	17	1	57

Preservice teachers who come from a hometown with a population between 100,001 and 500,000 were more likely to consider teaching in Thunder Bay (see Table 7). Those participants who came from a hometown with a population between 10,001 and 50,000 were more likely to reject the idea of teaching in Thunder Bay, whereas those who

came from a hometown with other population levels did not seem to have been influenced one way or another in regard to their willingness to teach in Thunder Bay.

Table 7
*Hometown Population * Teaching in Thunder Bay*

Hometown Population	Would you teach in Thunder Bay?				
	Yes	No	Maybe	Don't Know	Total
Less than 1,000 residents	2	0	0	0	2
1,001 - 5,000 residents	6	2	2	0	10
5,001 - 10,000 residents	1	1	2	0	4
10,001 - 30,000 residents	1	2	0	0	3
30,001 - 50,000 residents	0	2	3	0	5
50,001 - 100,000 residents	3	2	3	0	8
100,001 - 500,000 residents	14	3	4	0	21
Over 500,000 residents	2	1	0	1	4
Total	29	13	14	1	57

Participants who came from a hometown with a population greater than 100,001 residents were more likely to not feel comfortable teaching in a rural community,

whereas those respondents coming from smaller populations felt that, overall, they would be more comfortable to teach in a smaller, rural community (see Table 8). The preservice teachers from communities with populations of less than 10,000 residents were all comfortable teaching in a rural community.

Table 8
*Hometown Population * Teaching in a Rural Community*

Hometown Population	Would you be comfortable teaching in a rural community?				
	Don't				Total
	Yes	No	Maybe	Know	
Less than 1,000 residents	2	0	0	0	2
1,001 - 5,000 residents	9	0	1	0	10
5,001 - 10,000 residents	4	0	0	0	4
10,001 - 30,000 residents	2	0	1	0	3
30,001 - 50,000 residents	4	1	0	0	5
50,001 - 100,000 residents	5	0	3	0	8
100,001 - 500,000 residents	5	4	11	1	21
Over 500,000 residents	1	2	1	0	4
Total	32	7	17	1	57

The population of the community in which the preservice teachers attended their placement did not really have an influence on their decision to teach in Thunder Bay, as they were divided in their opinions in almost all the population brackets (see Table 9). Many participants were unsure about their willingness to teach in Thunder Bay, regardless of their placement. However, a large percentage of participants who taught in a community with a population between 100,001 and 500,000 residents were willing to teach in Thunder Bay (50%), although 18% of them were completely against teaching in Thunder Bay.

Table 9
*Placement Population * Teaching in Thunder Bay*

Placement population	Would you teach in Thunder Bay?				
	Yes	No	Maybe	Don't Know	Total
less than 1,000 residents	1	0	0	0	1
1,001 - 5,000 residents	3	1	0	0	4
5,001 - 10,000 residents	0	0	1	0	1
10,001 - 30,000 residents	1	1	1	0	3
30,001 - 50,000 residents	0	0	1	0	1
50,001 - 100,000 residents	3	0	1	0	4
100,001 - 500,000 residents	20	7	11	2	40
Over 500,000 residents	1	1	1	0	3
Total	29	10	16	2	57

The preservice teachers who had a placement in a community with less than 100,000 residents were more likely to think that they might feel more comfortable teaching in a Northern community (see Table 10). The participants who had their placement in a community with more than 100,000 residents were more likely to be unsure about their comfort level when it came to teaching in a Northern community. All the participants who were placed in a community with less than 5,000 residents, thought they would be extremely comfortable teaching in a Northern community.

Table 10
*Placement Population * Teaching in a Northern Community*

Placement population	Would you teach in a northern community?				
					Don't
	Yes	No	Maybe	Know	Total
less than 1,000 residents	1	0	0	0	1
1,001 - 5,000 residents	4	0	0	0	4
5,001 – 10,000 residents	0	0	1	0	1
10,001 - 30,000 residents	2	0	1	0	3
30,001 - 50,000 residents	0	0	1	0	1
50,001 - 100,000 residents	2	0	1	1	4
100,001 - 500,000 residents	11	9	17	3	40
Over 500,000 residents	1	1	1	0	3
Total	21	10	22	4	57

The Change of Perceptions Over Time

When first asked if they would consider teaching in Thunder Bay, 50.9% of the participants said yes, 22.8% said no, 24.6% said maybe, and 1.8% stated that they didn't know if they would stay in Thunder Bay to teach.

15.8% of the participants would stay in Thunder Bay to teach if they had family and friends in the city or nearby. A female participant (25-34, from Thunder Bay) made this remark:

[I would teach] only in Thunder Bay [because] I own a house and have established a life here.

Another female (25-34, from Atikokan) stated:

My whole family is from around the area therefore I would love to be close to my family. However, my fiancé would have to get a job there first.

On the other side, 26.3% of the participants said they would not teach in Thunder Bay because their families were elsewhere. Many of the participants commented on how Thunder Bay was "too far away from...family." A female preservice teacher (18-24, from Waterloo) stated:

I would prefer to be closer to home, but my...experiences have been great.

17.5% of the participants commented on the idea that there were no jobs available in Thunder Bay. A female from Thunder Bay (25-34) stated (and many others agreed):

I want to teach in Thunder Bay or the surrounding communities but have been told by many people that the supply lists are already very long and it is very difficult for beginning teachers to be hired full time.

Another female (25-34) from Ottawa declared:

I want to go where there are jobs, and I understand that there are jobs in the Northern communities.

7.0% of the respondents felt that they would want to teach in Thunder Bay or the surrounding communities to gain experience, as a male (24-35, from Mississauga) stated:

I would work there for the experience and to save/make money.

Others wanted to experience a new place, "I want to have new experiences, and learn more about the people and places I am not familiar with."

10.5% of the participants felt that the environment had some impact on their decision to stay in Thunder Bay. For several preservice teachers, the environment had a negative impact, "The city is disgusting here. It gives a bad impression." For others, the proximity to nature was a very positive impact on their decision to stay and teach in Thunder Bay, as a female participant (25-34, from Mutton Bay) stated:

It is nice to be near the water (I grew beside the Atlantic Ocean) and I enjoy the conveniences of the city embedded in nature.

Isolation was mentioned by 5.3% of respondents within the aspect of teaching in Thunder Bay. A male participant (25-34, from Toronto) stated that:

[Thunder Bay] feels too isolated for long-term residency.

A female (18-24, from Ottawa) discussed the issue that

[Thunder Bay] is a small town with hardly any people and not much to do.

When confronted before entering placement with the question of whether they would be comfortable teaching in a rural community, 56.1% of the participants answered yes, 12.3% said no, 29.8% said maybe, and 1.8% said I don't know.

21.1% of the participants commented that they had either already lived in a rural community, or they had worked in a rural community. One thing they all had in common was the fact that every last person who had stated that they had lived/worked in a rural community would feel comfortable teaching in one. A female participant (18-24, from Fort Frances) stated:

I grew up in a rural community, and I hope to return there to teach. It's home.

Another female respondent (25-34, from Atikokan) made this comment:

I am currently living and doing my teacher placement in the rural community of Chapleau. I think I would not be comfortable teaching in a metropolitan area, anywhere larger than Thunder Bay.

Interestingly, both negative and positive issues that could occur in a rural setting were relatively important when discussing comfort level. Some of the negative issues (about which 7.0% of the participants commented) included poverty and discipline problems in the classroom. A female (18-24, from Caledonia) stated:

I think poverty would be the only real turn off. Teachers' stories about teaching in isolated communities in my classes have turned me off the idea a little.

Another female participant (18-24, from Newmarket) made the remark:

In my experience, I find the children in rural communities much more difficult to handle.

On the positive side, many comments were made about the sense of community as well as the advantages in the classroom. A female student (18-24, from Chatham) stated:

I like to think that a rural community might be more personable and there won't be as many students so there will be a better chance for students to get more attention from the teacher.

On the same note, others stated that "The kids seem more personable...not as many problems as city schools." When looking at a different angle in the classroom, a male participant (18-24, from Woodstock) made the comment:

The advantage in teaching [in a rural community] is that you have more wiggle room to work cross-curricular and cooperatively with other departments.

Loneliness and isolation was mentioned by 14% of the participants. A female participant (18-24, from Belleville) stated:

I have always lived in a city and need to be around many other people. I could never live in a very small community as I would find it too isolating.

Many others felt that they would have trouble socializing, or that they would be bored in a rural community: "There are not enough people around and I think I would get lonely," "I think I may feel like an outsider because I'm familiar with urban centres, and I find the diversity exciting," and finally, "[It's] far from home, boring, not much to do, [and I would be] away from friends/family."

Another topic that was touched on by 10.5% of the participants was the idea of rural communities not having the amenities that one may need. For example, a female participant (25-34 from Thunder Bay) claimed that living in a rural community:

Would depend on if there were a larger community close by should I require things that I could not get in a 'rural community.'

Another female participant (18-24, from Osgoode) made the comment

I like to be within a 30 minute drive in order to get to stores and recreational facilities.

Lifestyles in smaller communities seem to be what drew some participants to feel comfortable living there. 15.8% of the participants mentioned that the slower lifestyle was what would attract them to a rural community:

I think I would like the peace and quiet, the intimacy of a rural community
(Female, 25-34, from Ottawa).

Another aspect that these participants liked was the “friendliness of rural communities.”

Others simply just liked rural communities because they were smaller.

10.5% of the participants commented that there would be some type of challenge associated with living in a rural community. For one participant, the commute was the biggest hurdle. A female participant (18-24, from Maidstone) made the comment:

I love the aspects of small communities. It would be a great chance to gain a whole new set of experiences and would be very challenging.

Many of the participants who thought it could be a challenge took it as a positive challenge as this female participant (25-34, from St. Catherines) stated:

I love challenges so I really want to have the opportunity to have my own class right away and if it means teaching in a rural community, I am more than happy to!

Placement was used as a criterion for comparing change over time. Where they did their placement, how big the community was, and whether they had a positive experience or not were all factors. Out of 57 participants 5.3% were placed in the Algoma

District School Board; 1.8% were placed in the Dufferin-Peel Catholic District School Board; 5.3% were within the Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board; 1.8% were placed in the Keewatin-Patricia District School Board. 38.6% of respondents were placed in the Lakehead District School Board; 5.3% were within the London District Catholic School Board; 7.0% were placed in the Ottawa-Carleton District School Board; 5.3% had their placement in the Peel District School Board; 1.8% were placed in the Peterborough Victoria Northumberland and Clarington Catholic District School Board; 1.8% of the participants were placed in the Sudbury Catholic District School Board; 1.8% were placed in the Superior North Catholic District School Board; 1.8% of the participants were placed in the Thames Valley District School Board; 21.1% were placed in the Thunder Bay Catholic District School Board; and 1.8% of the respondents were placed in a board that was not included on the list.

1.8% of the respondents had their placement in a town that had a population of less than 1,000 residents; 7.0% were in a town with a population between 1,001 and 5,000 residents; 5.3% were placed in a town with a population between 10,001 and 30,000 residents; 1.8% stated that their placement was in a town with a population between 30,001 and 50,000 residents; 7.0% were placed in a town with a population between 50,001 and 100,000 residents; 70.2% were placed in a town with a population between 100,001 and 500,000 residents; and 5.3% were placed in a town with over 500,000 residents.

Out of the 57 participants 84.2% stated that they had a positive placement experience, 12.3% said they sort of had a positive placement experience, and 3.5% did not have a positive experience.

52.6% of the participants stated that they had a positive experience because they had a good associate teacher: “My associate teacher was very positive and welcoming.”

A female participant (18-24) from Chatham remarked:

My teacher was very helpful with resources and curriculum information.

He let me have a lot of range with my lesson plans, and let me try my own things.

Most of the participants felt that their associate teacher was excellent when they allowed them to try things that they learned in the Bachelor of Education Program.

36.8% of respondents commented that having a good group of students made their placement a positive experience. Most simply stated that they had “good kids” and a female participant (18-24, from Waterford) made this remark:

The class I was in had excellent kids with little-to-no behaviour issues.

14.0% of the participants felt that they had opportunities to learn during placement, and a male (25-34, from Mississauga) made the statement:

The knowledge I received was about three billion times more than anything I learned in Teacher’s College, except for Dr. X’s class.

Another participant made a comment about learning “a lot about the way children learn.”

8.8% of the respondents stated that their success in the classroom helped them have a positive experience during placement. A female participant (18-24) from Thunder Bay said:

I reached students and made small successes.

Another female (35-50, from Thunder Bay) said:

I realized my potential and capabilities to be a teacher.

A successful placement made “the experience...a fulfilling and rewarding one,” for one female participant from Thunder Bay.

Unfortunately, 8.8% of the participants declared that they had a negative experience with the associate teacher. A male student (35-50, from Thunder Bay) had:

A very negative associate who displayed low expectations and a lack of ‘efficacy’.

Another participant claimed that her associate teacher taught her “a lot of what NOT to do.” Other participants felt that they were not given much responsibility in the classroom, or that there were some serious ideological differences between the associate teacher and the participant.

5.3% had a negative experience that involved the students of the classroom. One female participant (25-34, from Thunder Bay) made this statement:

It was the behaviour of the students and the realities of being a teacher that were a bit shocking.

Another comment made by a female student (18-25, from Belleville) was:

There were a lot of students (32) and 90% of them were boys. There were also 17 IEP’s, therefore the class was very difficult to manage.

Having taken a Multicultural/Aboriginal course in the first semester was another criterion used to assess whether or not there was a change in opinion concerning the idea of teaching in Northwestern Ontario. 52.6% of the respondents stated that they had taken the Multicultural/Aboriginal course at Lakehead University. 47.4% stated that they would be taking it during the winter semester.

53.3% of the participants who had completed the Multicultural/Aboriginal Education course stated that they had learned quite a bit about Aboriginal education. Some preservice teachers found that it was useful information, but many were disappointed in the lack of Multicultural education provided. A female respondent from Thunder Bay commented that she learned:

A ton of useful information in regards to Aboriginal Education. Other students felt that one of the professors “gave a history of Aboriginal education, discussing residential schools and problems from the past,” but the course did not focus “on Aboriginal education today.” Most of the participants who discussed the issue of Aboriginal Education felt that the course was “predominantly about Aboriginal issues... [and the] discussion about other cultures (Asian, Middle-Eastern, Latin American, etc.) was lacking or non-existent.”

30.0% of the participants felt that they had learned nothing from the course. As one female (18-24, from Echo Bay) wrote:

[I learned] a whole lot of NOTHING! I didn't have a chance to learn about OTHER cultures, it was ALL aboriginal; however, there were lessons that didn't even relate to education, such as architecture that reflects Aboriginal ideals. This does not affect me as a future teacher. I also found a lot of generalizations were made, such as a certain tradition was generalized for ALL Aboriginal groups.

Many of the participants, who commented that they had learned nothing, also spoke about the lack of Multicultural education that was provided in the class.

On a more positive side, 30.0% of respondents commented that they had learned about some positive aspects of multicultural and Aboriginal education. One male preservice teacher (35-50, from Thunder Bay) noted that he learned:

A general sense of sensitivity toward minorities, and some specific cultural traits that explain certain behaviours of Aboriginal peoples.

Other participants wrote about learning to integrate multiculturalism into the curriculum, learning patience, acceptance, understanding, and how not to be prejudice.

Although only 16.7% of the participants mentioned the professor explicitly in their responses, many had mentioned it through what was being taught since the course content was determined by the professor. One of the biggest issues regarding the professor was a sense of unprofessional behaviour, as a male preservice teacher (25-34, from Mississauga) wrote:

[I learned] absolutely nothing... Dr. B was probably the most racist person I have ever met in my entire life and I live in the GTA. Her ways, methods, and everything about that course did nothing but put resentment in my heart and hatred for her. She taught us absolutely NOTHING and I feel stupider, dumber, number, and more ignorant having been in her class... people, students, and other interested in a decent education [should] not be stuck or forced to take a course by someone who will do nothing but belittle them and blame them for all their problems.

A female participant (25-34, from Thunder Bay) wrote:

I was, however, not impressed about how white people were generalized by the professor, and some comments made during [the] lectures were unprofessional.

There were other participants who “enjoyed the class” and their professor.

33.3% of the participants who had not yet taken the Multicultural/Aboriginal Course discussed learning about Aboriginal education. Most were quite positive and mentioned wanting to “understand their (Aboriginal) culture better.” A female preservice teacher (18-24, from Ottawa) wrote:

I hope to learn more about Aboriginals (how they differ from Caucasians, their lifestyles, history, best ways to educate them, etc.) and become more understanding.

A male respondent (18-24, from Woodstock) wrote:

While I believe that the Aboriginal aspect is important, I have found that Thunder Bay tends to be a little preoccupied with Aboriginal issues to the point where other issues suffer.

26.0% of respondents were hoping to learn more about other cultures. A female participant (18-24, from Manitouwage) made the remark

[I hope to] learn about the culture and how to incorporate it into the classroom.

Other participants wanted to learn sensitivity to other cultures, how to accept all other cultures, and to “learn more about the multicultural side of education.”

22.2% of respondents were hoping to learn strategies to modify their teaching in order to accommodate for all different cultures and backgrounds. One female respondent (18-24, from Napanee) noted:

[I want to] learn more about other cultures and beliefs so that I can have a clearer understanding when teaching student later on, and be able to adapt their needs to the lessons that I teach.

Another female participant from Waterloo stated:

[I want to learn about] different cultures that will impact the way I teach and work with children, [and] ways in which I can help students who are from different cultures.

14.8% of participants wanted to learn better ways of communicating with students from other cultures. A female student (25-34, from Ottawa) stated:

I hope to gain tools to ensure a positive environment and a way of addressing prejudice and cultural differences in my class that are healthy, respectful, and effective.

Many of the participants who commented on the acquisition of communication skills emphasized the importance of learning to communicate effectively with different types of people, and the way to use those skills in their own classrooms in the future.

After their first placement, 50.9% of the participants stated that they would teach in Thunder Bay, while 17.5% said they absolutely would not. 28.1% said they might teach in Thunder Bay, and 3.5% were not sure if they would or not.

31.6% of respondents referred to opportunity/experience when explaining why they would teach in Thunder Bay or farther north. A female respondent (18-24, from Echo Bay) made this comment:

There are lots of opportunities for teaching in the north, more so than farther south in large, populated areas.

Another female preservice teacher (18-24, from Chatham) stated:

[I would teach in the area] to start off with, and get some experience for a few years. I am interested in teaching in a variety of places/countries that have various physical/social environments.

Most of the participants believed that “it would be an interesting experience” to teach farther north. One female participant from Caledonia wrote:

It seems from our classroom management class teacher’s stories that it is very scary to teach up north. Also, videos we have seen make it seem dangerous and difficult. However, a part of me wants to experience it to know first hand.

28.1% of respondents said they would not teach in Thunder Bay or farther north because their families are somewhere else. A female from Tillsonburg stated:

It is too far away from family. I am very family oriented and if I could move all of them with me then I would definitely consider it.

Many participants stated that Thunder Bay is just too far away, and one male from Woodstock made the remark:

I have been away from my family and friends long enough after studying in Thunder Bay already, so I do not plan to teach here in the immediate future.

As with those who wanted to teach closer to their families, 15.8% of the respondents stated that they wanted to stay in Thunder Bay or go farther north because they had family in the area. A female (25-34) from Thunder Bay wrote:

I love the people and environment of the north and I would like to stay close to my family and friends who all live in Thunder Bay and surrounding areas.

All of the other participants who claimed Thunder Bay was home wanted to stay in the city to teach.

There are two main reasons why 15.8% of the participants said they would consider Thunder Bay, but not consider anywhere farther north: either they had family in Thunder Bay, or going farther north was too isolated for them. One female preservice teacher would teach in Thunder Bay only because:

I have ties (and house) to the city.

A female respondent from Brampton made the remark (which was echoed by several other participants):

I would not consider the far north because it is so remote.

Job availability in Thunder Bay and surrounding communities was an issue with 10.5% of the participants. Several participants commented that they would consider Thunder Bay “but it’s hard to find positions.” A female preservice teacher from Thunder Bay wrote:

I would like to remain in Thunder Bay, but due to the chance of Lakehead District School Board not hiring for two years I may have to look for a job somewhere else.

Not only are the teaching positions unavailable, but as one female participant from Brampton declared:

There are no jobs here for me, or my husband.

Employment in Thunder Bay was perceived as waning in all sectors of the city, not just in education positions.

When asked after their placement if they would feel comfortable teaching in a Northern community 36.8% of respondents felt that they would be comfortable, while 17.5% said they would not. 38.6% thought they might be comfortable teaching in a Northern community, and 7.0% did not know if they would or not.

24.6% of the participants discussed their concerns about living in an unfamiliar community and what they would need to do in order to teach there. Many commented that they “would need information on the community” before traveling there to live and work. Others stated that they would go to a northern community “if [they] knew people who lived there or would come with [them].” The majority of the participants felt that they did not have enough information or that they were so “unfamiliar with the culture of a northern community” that it hindered their decision, and left them unsure of whether they would accept a position in a northern community or not.

18.0% of respondents commented on their fears about race and other issues that could exist in a small, northern community. A male respondent (35-50, from Thunder Bay) noted:

My concern is for the lack of acceptance that non-Aboriginal may encounter in northern locations.

A female participant from Brantford wrote:

I don't feel like I have the proper education to handle this [type of situation].

There was also the concern about safety, as a female student from Belleville made the statement:

I feel some parts of even Thunder Bay are unsafe and would not live here alone.

Another concern shared by a couple of preservice teachers, was the idea of acceptance of their sexual orientation:

I am a queer woman, and the concern for me is not so much feeling safe/welcome as not having a strong or large community of others like myself (female participant, 25-34, Ottawa).

A male respondent from a small community in Northwestern Ontario noted:

I'm still hesitant about the openness of a northern community for an outsider who also happens to be gay.

All of the 12.3% of the participants who said they had lived in a northern community stated that they would teach in one. A female participant from Tillsonburg stated:

I am from a small community, and I very much like the feel of it and understand the dynamics.

For the participants who stated that isolation would be an issue when teaching in northern communities (10.5%), it was enough of an issue to make most of them say that they would not consider teaching in a northern community. A female preservice teacher from Thunder Bay made the comment:

[I'm] not sure how I would react to the isolation.

Another female preservice teacher from Thunder Bay stated:

[Northern communities are] too small for me. Not enough entertainment such as movie theatres and shopping. I'm not interested in changing my entire lifestyle.

For other participants (8.8%), the idea of a northern community did not faze them.

A male student from Woodstock declared:

A good teacher should always teach the students, not the material, and therefore, the act of teaching is always tailored to the students anyway.

When you keep that in mind, you realize that location is irrelevant.

A female student from Waterford agreed as she wrote:

It doesn't matter where you are, if you are willing you can adapt.

After participating in placement, 2% of the participants decided that they would not consider teaching in Thunder Bay, even though it had been a definite option before placement, while 7% felt that they might decide to teach in Thunder Bay after their placement, although before it was a viable option (see Table 11). 3.5% changed their mind completely from, "No, I would not teach in Thunder Bay," before placement to "Yes, I would teach in Thunder Bay," after their placement, while 14% maintained that they would not consider teaching in Thunder Bay in either case. 5% of the participants

that were thinking they might consider teaching in Thunder Bay changed their opinion after placement to say that they would teach in Thunder Bay, and the 2% who had no idea if they would teach in Thunder Bay before placement decided that they would not consider it at all after their placement.

Table 11

*Would you teach in Thunder Bay? * Would you teach in Thunder Bay after placement?*

Would you teach in Thunder Bay?	Would you teach in Thunder Bay after placement?				
	Yes	No	Maybe	Don't Know	Total
Yes	24	1	4	0	29
No	2	8	2	1	13
Maybe	3	0	10	1	14
Don't Know	0	1	0	0	1
Total	29	10	16	2	57

After their first placement, 3.5% of the preservice teachers who originally stated that they would teach in a rural community decided that they were not interested in teaching in a Northern community, while 25% thought that they might consider it. 5% of the participants decided to change their decision to not teach in a rural community and stated that they would be willing to teach in a Northern community and 5% who were

originally unsure decided that they would teach in a Northern community. However, 9% who were unsure at the beginning of the semester decided that they were not interested in teaching in a Northern community.

Table 12

*Would you be comfortable teaching in a rural community? * Would you teach in a northern community after placement?*

Would you be comfortable teaching in a rural community?	Would you teach in a northern community?				Total
	Yes	No	Maybe	Don't Know	
Yes	15	2	14	1	32
No	3	3	1	0	7
Maybe	3	5	7	2	17
Don't Know	0	0	0	1	1
Total	21	10	22	4	57

Decision-Making Processes

Before going away on practicum, 77.2% of the participants chose positions available as a criterion they would use when seeking employment. 66.7% chose city/location; 50.9% chose salary; 43.9% chose the school board as part of the criteria they would be looking at; 21.1% felt that accessibility to an urban centre was important;

and 15.8% felt that there were other criteria that they would be looking at (e.g. where a significant other will be working, or cultural holidays that are observed).

After their placement the respondents used location as their major criteria when applying for jobs, with 65.0% of respondents mentioning that as something they would be looking at. A female participant from Osgoode stated:

I will only be applying to 'S' board, and I do not care that is a 2-3 year wait to get a full time position.

Most of the other participants who were looking at location as one of their criteria points stated that they were choosing locations that were "close to home."

Salary was important as 24.6% of the respondents stated that they would use that as part of their criteria when applying for jobs. In fact, for some participants it was not just salary, but "salary versus cost of living."

An available position was also important, especially for those participants who were not as concerned with location (22.9%). In response to the question of criteria, a female participant (25-34) claimed:

Whoever wants to hire me fulltime. I'll go anywhere.

Some participants decided that Ontario was not big enough, and wanted to apply in other provinces and overseas (14.0%). A female participant from Sault Ste. Marie declared:

I have nothing holding me back. I am willing to teach anywhere that will take me.

Another female participant said she was "planning on going overseas," in response to the question of criteria.

Summary

There were four perspectives that emerged from the present study: a) Perceptions of Northwestern Ontario; b) Difference between rural and urban students; c) Change of perceptions over time; and d) Decision-making processes. The study examined the reasons for attending Lakehead University; the impressions students have of Northwestern Ontario, Lakehead University, and Thunder Bay; and the differences in perceptions after living in Thunder Bay for a semester. The study also examined how previous experience with rural, northern, and Aboriginal communities affected preservice teachers' decisions to teach in Northwestern Ontario. Placement experience and taking a Multicultural/Aboriginal education course were also scrutinized as possible factors in the decision-making process of preservice teachers. Finally, the willingness of the respondents to stay in Northwestern Ontario to teach after their placement was also examined in the present study.

Chapter 5: Discussion

Summary

There is a dearth of research on the effect perceptions have on preservice teachers' decisions of where to apply for jobs, and as such, it is difficult to compare the findings in this study with other studies of a similar nature. The purpose of the present study was to explore the perceptions preservice teachers have of Northwestern Ontario and examine how those perceptions change throughout the course of a semester at Lakehead University. The study also looked at how preservice teachers' perceptions affected their decisions on where to apply for positions.

The findings, based on a mixed-method longitudinal survey design, showed that, although students felt Thunder Bay was a wonderful place to live, they were more likely to go back to their hometowns, where they felt the most comfortable. Professors that taught courses such as Aboriginal Education, Multicultural Education and Teach in an Isolated Community courses seemed to have a greater influence over the students' decisions than many other factors. The findings also suggest that the feeling of isolation in rural northern communities was also an issue that preservice teachers felt would prevent them from applying for positions in isolated, northern communities.

Perceptions of Northwestern Ontario

Participants' perceptions indicated that, in general, many of them thought Thunder Bay was a terrific place to live. Proximity to nature was very important for many preservice teachers, and their willingness to participate in the various activities around campus and around the city helped to make them feel more at home in Thunder

Bay. Research has shown that participation within a community helps to foster positive feelings, and the outsider becomes more of an invested insider within the community (Belgarde, Mitchell, & Arquero, 2002). The few students who felt negatively about Thunder Bay and Lakehead University, were mostly from urban centres. This finding is not surprising because many students complain about distance from urban centres and the lack of certain amenities to which they are used to in large cities such as Toronto or Vancouver. Positive perceptions of Thunder Bay were due to the friendliness of the city and students at Lakehead University. Perhaps because of its isolation, inhabitants of Thunder Bay tend to be friendly to outsiders and appreciate students coming from distant places to attend the University.

The Difference Between Rural and Urban Students

There were no differences between rural and urban respondents relative to their views about their intentions to teach in Thunder Bay and in rural communities, as participants from both areas were willing to teach in Northwestern Ontario. This finding could be based on the positive experiences students had at Lakehead University, in Thunder Bay, and in their student teaching placements. The willingness of the participants to teach in rural areas could be due to the way the question about teaching in isolated communities was framed, as the question asked if students would be willing to teach in rural areas, not in “northern rural areas”. Some of the respondents might have conceived of rural areas in Southern Ontario.

The amount of experience preservice teachers had in rural, northern, and Aboriginal communities did not seem to have much influence over their initial decisions to stay in Northwestern Ontario to teach. This finding may be related to the idea that

many students were either from a rural community or because smaller communities tended to have a tight-knit, almost familial feeling within them. This made sense, as the more experience a preservice teacher has with an area, the more likely they will want to return there to teach.

I found it very interesting that the more experience a participant had with living in an Aboriginal community, the more likely those students would want to teach in a rural community. This was not particularly surprising, as most Aboriginal communities are considered rural (or rather, isolated).

The Change of Perceptions Over Time

When asked whether attending a Multicultural/Aboriginal education course in the first semester was relevant to their education, many participants felt that it was not. I found that for some students, exposure to Aboriginal education issues influenced their decision to think about teaching in a northern community. This finding is consistent with research, as Agbo (2004) found that inservice teachers who were employed by Aboriginal communities wished they had had more exposure to Aboriginal issues when they were at the University. More important than the content of a course, the professor teaching the course seems to have more influence on the students, as students trust their professors and try to shape their schemata on the basis of what professors say about teaching in isolated communities.

Placement had the expected relationship on preservice teachers' decisions to stay in Northwestern Ontario to teach. Probably if students found their first teaching experiences pleasant at a particular place, they were more likely to want to become permanent teachers there. Associate Teachers as role models to the preservice teachers

could also have provided pleasant teaching experiences for the students who were likely to remain in Northwestern Ontario. If the Associate Teacher is excited and positive about his/her role within the school, the preservice teacher is more likely to want to emulate that teacher and feel more comfortable in any type of classroom. If the preservice teachers were unsuccessful in fitting their particular schema in the classroom, they were more likely to accommodate during the period of student teaching and may not likely want to teach in Northwestern Ontario. For example, one student mentioned that he and the Associate Teacher had different ideologies, which caused him to merely accommodate during the student teaching placement, and, therefore, he felt he had a negative placement experience. Those respondents who were able to assimilate through the positive relationships with their Associate Teacher, had no trouble fitting into the classroom and learning from the teacher and the students.

Decision-Making Processes

The findings revealed that the participants were not very selective in applying for teaching positions as they were willing to accept any position, as long as they had a full time job at a time when teaching jobs are not readily available. It is natural for preservice teachers to become more focused on what kind of position they would want and where to teach because of their exposure to the realities of the classroom during their placement. What is fascinating was the comment made by one participant that she was interested in only applying to one board, even if she could wait for two to three years before securing a full time position. This finding indicated that there are many who would prefer to stay within their hometown.

Some students stated that they would have loved to stay in Thunder Bay to teach, but that there were no jobs. I found that many students would not consider teaching anywhere in Northwestern Ontario except Thunder Bay, because they did not want to be too far from family and friends. The fear expressed by students about teaching outside of Thunder Bay may be due to the opinions they have formed about the dangers that exist in isolated communities. It is clear that students' schemata about life in isolated communities have been formed over the years through stories that they have heard about the community. The participants who felt they would have to either visit a community or research it extensively before accepting a position in that community might have been those students who did not want to take any risks. Other respondents who stated that having a friend or someone they knew in the community would help in making them more comfortable with the decision to teach in Northern communities were probably those who were afraid to be isolated from family and friends.

The findings in the present study are somewhat ironical as the respondents who know about the isolated communities expressed fear about teaching in the communities and for those unfamiliar with the communities, their main fears were the lack of knowledge of the communities.

Conclusion

Ultimately, the preservice teachers who participated in this study were going to teach where they felt the most comfortable, whether that was an urban centre, a rural community, or a Northern Aboriginal community. The participants indicated that having prior experience in the community was an important factor when looking for a fulltime position. While positive placements in isolated or rural communities encouraged the

participants to apply for positions in isolated or rural areas, a negative experience caused them to reject the idea of applying for positions in areas similar to those experienced during placement. Participation in a Multicultural/Aboriginal course did not influence the participants in their decisions, unless it was to discourage them from applying to Northern communities.

For the participants, the University's main influence on their decision whether or not to apply in a Northern community was the professors. One student was unsure if she would be willing to apply in a Northern community because the professors were telling the class about classroom management issues that can occur.

The participants were generally happy with Lakehead University and Thunder Bay, and many were willing to stay in the city to teach. However, many of the participants were not willing to go to communities farther north because they felt it would be too far and isolated from friends and family, and too expensive to travel back and forth to visit.

The findings of the present study have some implications for teacher education within the University, the government, and for Northern school boards. For Lakehead University, the implications stemming from this research is that students need Multicultural and Aboriginal education courses that are separate from each other within the Bachelor of Education program, and that combining both courses is not in the best interest of the students. There is an indication that next year the University will be implementing a mandatory Aboriginal Education course, and making the Multicultural course an elective. This research suggests a mandatory Aboriginal education course would not be beneficial to preservice teachers, as many of the students would like to

return to Southern Ontario to teach. In addition, the findings of the present study suggest that Lakehead University should implement a mandatory education course that would help to provide students with a fitting schema about teaching in isolated communities. The students could decide whether they would prefer to take Aboriginal, Multicultural, or a combination course that would help them understand life in all the different communities that they may find themselves. Furthermore, Lakehead University could establish Professional Development Schools (PDSs), which would involve a partnership between the University and public schools in order to equip students with school-based learning throughout the semester (Agbo, 2003). “The PDS creates a web of learning from otherness-learning that is induced by teaching, by doing, by collaborating and by action research. The PDS is therefore an establishment in which the university and school will work toward garnering knowledge and learning together about teaching and learning” (Agbo, 2003, p. 19). The new Honours Bachelor of Education in Aboriginal Education is a good start to educate students along the lines of professional development schools by establishing partnerships between the university and isolated communities. As well, there is the implication that professors are preventing students from applying to positions in Northwestern Ontario through some of the classroom management stories that are told in class. The final implication of the findings of this study for Lakehead University relates to placement. Students should be given placements in different areas to provide them with a comparison of urban schools and rural schools, and the issues that can arise in both.

Teaching in Northern communities is isolated and expensive, thereby resulting in graduating teachers refusing to go to these Northern communities to teach. The

government currently provides a Northern allowance for people working in Northern communities, but in order to attract more teachers to those areas, the findings revealed that the government should provide more financial and service incentives for them. For example, the government could provide teachers flights to the community and home for the holidays; a mentor from the community to help them feel more welcome and involved; and extensive training before they enter the community, based on the needs of the students. For the service incentives, the government could view teaching in Northern communities as part of a National Service, thereby providing high accolades and employer preference in Southern Ontario for teachers who commit to teaching in these communities for at least one year. This way, the communities may not have to scramble to find teachers.

Another implication has to do with the Northern school boards, as they are the experts in what the students need. Training for the needs of the students must be provided to any teacher entering the community. In collaboration with the government the school boards could provide training courses and mentors for teachers entering their communities. The mentors would be people from the community who could explain the culture, and beliefs to the teacher (Agbo, 2004). All these implications and the recommendations arising from them would be helpful in promoting Northwestern Ontario as a wonderful place to live, work, and raise a family.

Recommendations for Further Study

This topic should be studied in depth through the use of other survey instruments as well as qualitative interviews in order to gain a more complete picture of how perceptions affect preservice teachers' decision-making processes, as school boards

should know what preservice teachers are considering when they are applying for positions. As well, universities should have an understanding of how to promote rural, northern, and Aboriginal communities to preservice teachers in order to attract them to accept and keep the positions in these communities. While my study was limited in scope, it could be enhanced by having a larger response rate, and focusing the questions to northern communities and Aboriginal communities. Furthermore, the criteria preservice teachers use when applying for positions should be examined by a paper survey instead of an online survey. The instrument should be handed out to a random sample of students who will be either provided with a pre-stamped self-addressed envelope to drop the completed questionnaire in a mailbox, or advised to drop them off at convenient locations on campus. It would also be beneficial to interview respondents to understand their point of view of issues not raised in the surveys.

I encountered several issues when conducting the present study. The most important issue was the poor response rate. Even after sending out reminder emails, and providing the incentive of winning an Ipod, I had a response rate of less than 10%. The reasoning behind this low response rate is twofold: a) I was sending out the first survey at the end of the semester, when the preservice teachers were attempting to complete projects and write exams, and b) by sending out a mass email to all the students my correspondence probably got lost among the communication bulletins that were being sent out every day by Lakehead University. One recommendation would be to go into multiple classrooms to discuss the survey and remind students of the survey link in their email. There is research on low response rates when dealing with students, and some of the reasons for the low response rates include being busy and forgetting to fill out surveys

(Johnson 2002). Johnson (2002) continues by saying that there are issues when there are low response rates as “students who are upset or disappointed...are more likely to complete online...forms.” The idea of salience pertains to my study, as participants could have filled out my surveys because they had a particular stance on the issue of teaching in Northwestern Ontario, which would lead to not having a random sample. In order to get a random sample, I would recommend approaching different classes and having the students fill out a paper survey in the class. Because I could not claim a random sample, and I had such a low response rate, many of the quantitative tests I wanted to use (e.g. repeated-measures t-test, Chi-square, etc.) were invalid as the assumptions for the tests were violated, and I was unable to draw any inferences from my sample to the general population of preservice teachers at Lakehead University. This led me to use descriptive statistics combined with the written data that was provided to me by the participants.

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Appendix A

Sample November Survey

Section A – Demographics

1. How old are you (check only one)?
 - a) 18 – 24
 - b) 25 – 39
 - c) 40 – 54
 - d) 55 +

2. Are you (check only one):
 - a) Male
 - b) Female

3. Which of the following statements best describes your experience in rural communities? Please note that “rural communities” refers to communities which have fewer than 10,000 residents and are outside the commuting zone (more than 1 hour drive) of large metropolitan areas and cities.
 - a) I have never lived in a rural community.
 - b) I have lived in a rural community for less than six months.
 - c) I have lived in a rural community for about 1 year.
 - d) I have lived in a rural community for about 2 years.
 - e) I have lived in a rural community for about 3 years.
 - f) I have lived in a rural community for years or more.
 - g) I have lived in a rural community my entire life.

4. Which of the following statements best describes your experience in northern communities? Please note that “Northern communities” refers to communities which have fewer than 10,000 residents and are above 46° latitude (in Ontario it would be equal to Sudbury or farther north).
 - a) I have never lived in a northern community.
 - a) I have lived in a northern community for less than six months.
 - b) I have lived in a northern community for about 1 year.
 - c) I have lived in a northern community for about 2 years.
 - d) I have lived in a northern community for about 3 years.
 - e) I have lived in a northern community for years or more.
 - f) I have lived in a northern community my entire life.

5. Which of the following statements best describes your experience in Aboriginal communities? Please note that “Aboriginal communities” refers to communities where the majority of the population is Aboriginal.
 - a) I have never lived in an Aboriginal community.
 - b) I have lived in an Aboriginal community for less than six months.
 - c) I have lived in an Aboriginal community for about 1 year.
 - d) I have lived in an Aboriginal community for about 2 years.

- e) I have lived in an Aboriginal community for about 3 years.
- f) I have lived in an Aboriginal community for years or more.
- g) I have lived in an Aboriginal community my entire life.

6. My hometown is : _____

7. The population of my hometown is approximately:

- a) less than 1,000 residents
- b) 1,001 – 5,000 residents
- c) 5,001 – 10,000 residents
- d) 10,001 – 30,000 residents
- e) 30,001 – 50,000 residents
- f) 50,001 – 100,000 residents
- g) 100,001 – 500,000 residents
- h) Over 500,000 residents

8. My hometown is in:

- a) Alberta
- b) British Columbia
- c) Manitoba
- d) New Brunswick
- e) Newfoundland
- f) Northwest Territories
- g) Nova Scotia
- h) Nunavut
- i) Ontario
- j) Prince Edward Island
- k) Quebec
- l) Saskatchewan
- m) Yukon Territory
- n) Other: _____

9. What is your highest degree (check only one)?

- a) Bachelor of Arts/Science
- b) Honours Bachelor of Arts/Science
- c) Masters Degree
- d) Doctorate
- e) Other _____

10. What was your major?

- a) Anthropology
- b) Bio-Molecular Science
- c) Biology
- d) Business
- e) Chemistry
- f) Computer Science

- g) Economics
- h) Engineering
- i) English
- j) Environmental Studies
- k) Forestry
- l) French
- m) Geography
- n) Geology
- o) General Studies
- p) History
- q) Indigenous Learning
- r) Kinesiology
- s) Languages
- t) Library and Information Studies
- u) Mathematics
- v) Medicine
- w) Music
- x) Northern Studies
- y) Nursing
- z) Outdoor Recreation
- aa) Philosophy
- bb) Physics
- cc) Political Science
- dd) Psychology
- ee) Religious Studies
- ff) Sociology
- gg) Social Work
- hh) Visual Arts
- ii) Women's Studies
- jj) Other _____

11. From which institution did you get your highest degree?

- a) Brock University
- b) Carleton University
- c) Dominican University College
- d) Lakehead University
- e) Laurentian University
- f) McMaster University
- g) Nipissing University
- h) Ontario College of Art & Design
- i) Queen's University
- j) Royal Military College
- k) Ryerson University
- l) Trent University
- m) University of Guelph
- n) University of Ontario Institute of Technology

- o) University of Ottawa
- p) University of Toronto
- q) University of Waterloo
- r) University of Western Ontario
- s) University of Windsor
- t) Wilfrid Laurier University
- u) York University
- v) Other _____

Section B – Lakehead University and Thunder Bay

12. Why did you decide to come to Lakehead University (check all that apply)?

- a) It was inexpensive
- b) I liked the campus
- c) I like to be outdoors
- d) It is close to home
- e) It was the only University to accept me
- f) I wanted smaller class sizes
- g) It has a good education program
- h) Other _____

13. What was your first thought when you decided to come to Lakehead University?

14. What was your first impression of Lakehead University?

15. What is your opinion of Thunder Bay and Northwestern Ontario?

Section D – Teaching

16. Would you consider teaching in Thunder Bay or the surrounding communities?

- a) Yes
- b) No
- c) Maybe
- d) Don't know

17. Why or why not?

18. Do you think you would be comfortable teaching in a rural community? Please note that "rural communities" refers to communities which have fewer than 10,000 residents and are outside the commuting zone (more than 1 hour drive) of large metropolitan areas and cities.

- a) Yes
- b) No
- c) Maybe
- d) Don't know

19. Why or why not?

20. What criteria will you be looking at when you are deciding where to apply for jobs (check all that apply)?

- a) Salary
- b) Accessibility
- c) City/Town
- d) School Board
- e) Positions Available
- f) Other _____

Please use this area to write in any additional comments about teaching in Northwestern Ontario.

Sample January Survey

Section A – Demographics

1. My hometown is: _____

2. What was your major?
 - a) Anthropology
 - b) Bio-Molecular Science
 - c) Biology
 - d) Business
 - e) Chemistry
 - f) Computer Science
 - g) Economics
 - h) Engineering
 - i) English
 - j) Environmental Studies
 - k) Forestry
 - l) French
 - m) Geography
 - n) Geology
 - o) General Studies
 - p) History
 - q) Indigenous Learning
 - r) Kinesiology
 - s) Languages
 - t) Library and Information Studies
 - u) Mathematics
 - v) Medicine
 - w) Music
 - x) Northern Studies
 - y) Nursing
 - z) Outdoor Recreation
 - aa) Philosophy
 - bb) Physics
 - cc) Political Science
 - dd) Psychology
 - ee) Religious Studies
 - ff) Sociology
 - gg) Social Work
 - hh) Visual Arts
 - ii) Women's Studies
 - jj) Other _____

Section B – Lakehead University and Thunder Bay

3. Where did you do your placement?
- a) Algoma District School Board
 - b) Atikokan Roman Catholic Separate School Board
 - c) Bluewater District School Board
 - d) Bruce-Grey Catholic District School Board
 - e) Catholic District School Board of Eastern Ontario
 - f) Connell and Ponsford District School Area Board
 - g) District School Board of Niagara
 - h) District School Board of Ontario North East
 - i) Defferin-Peel Catholic District School Board
 - j) Durham Catholic District School Board
 - k) Durham District School Board
 - l) Grassy Narrows Education Authority
 - m) Halton Catholic District School Board
 - n) Hamilton-Wentworth Catholic District School Board
 - o) Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board
 - p) Hornepayne Roman Catholic Separate School Board
 - q) Huron-Superior Catholic District School Board
 - r) Ignace Roman Catholic Separate School Board
 - s) James Bay Lowlands Secondary School Board
 - t) Keewatin-Patricia District School Board
 - u) Kenora Catholic District School Board
 - v) Lakehead District School Board
 - w) London District Catholic School Board
 - x) Mine Centre District School Area Board
 - y) Moose Factory Island District School Area Board
 - z) Moosonee District School Area Board
 - aa) Moosonee Roman Catholic Separate School Board
 - bb) Nakina District School Area Board
 - cc) Niagara Catholic District School Board
 - dd) Northeastern Catholic District School Board
 - ee) Northern District School Area Board
 - ff) Northwest Catholic District School Board
 - gg) Ottawa-Carleton District School Board
 - hh) Ottawa Catholic District School Board
 - ii) Parry Sound Roman Catholic Separate School Board
 - jj) Peel District School Board
 - kk) Peterborough Victoria Northumberland and Clarington Catholic District School Board
 - ll) Rainy River District School Board
 - mm) Red Lake Area Combined Roman Catholic Separate School Board
 - nn) Renfrew County Catholic District School Board
 - oo) Renfrew County District School Board
 - pp) Simcoe County District School Board

- qq) Simcoe Muskoka Catholic District School Board
- rr) Sudbury Catholic District School Board
- ss) Superior North Catholic District School Board
- tt) Superior-Greenstone District School Board
- uu) Thames Valley District School Board
- vv) Thunder Bay Catholic District School Board
- ww) Toronto Catholic District School Board
- xx) Toronto District School Board
- yy) Upsala District School Area Board
- zz) York Catholic District School Board
- aaa) York Region District School Board
- bbb) Other _____

4. What was the population of the town/city where you did your placement?

- a) less than 1,000 residents
- b) 1,001 – 5,000 residents
- c) 5,001 – 10,000 residents
- d) 10,001 – 30,000 residents
- e) 30,001 – 50,000 residents
- f) 50,001 – 100,000 residents
- g) 100,001 – 500,000 residents
- h) Over 500,000 residents

5. Was your placement a positive experience?

- a) yes
- b) no
- c) sort of

6. Why or why not?

7. What is your opinion of Thunder Bay?

8. What are your thoughts on Lakehead University? (e.g. the campus, available services, experiences you have had, etc.)

9. What are some of the reasons you think has led you to feel this way about Lakehead University and Thunder Bay?

Section C - Education

10. Have you taken a Multicultural / Aboriginal Education course?
a) yes
b) no – I'm taking it this semester (skip to question 12)

11. What do you feel you learned from the Multicultural / Aboriginal course?

12. What do you hope to learn from the Multicultural / Aboriginal Education course?

Section D - Teaching

13. Would you consider teaching in Thunder Bay or farther north?
a) Yes
b) No
c) Maybe
d) Don't know

14. Why or why not?

15. Would you feel comfortable teaching in a northern community?

- a) Yes
- b) No
- c) Maybe
- d) Don't know

16. Why or why not?

17. What are the criteria you are using as you are applying for jobs around Ontario, Canada, and the world (e.g. city/town, salary, etc)?

18. Please use this space to write any additional comments you may have on Thunder Bay, Lakehead University, or teaching in northern communities.

Appendix B

Dear Potential Participant,

I would like to extend an invitation to participate in a study concerning the perceptions of Northwestern Ontario. I have selected you based on your current academic status as a student in the Bachelor of Education program and willingness to participate.

This project is part of my Master's research entitled, "Preservice Teachers' Perceptions of Teaching in Communities of Northwestern Ontario".

The purpose of the study is to discover how the perceptions preservice teachers have of rural and remote communities change over the course of a semester at Lakehead University, and what triggers the change, whether previous geographic locations influence these perceptions, and how these perceptions influence the decision to teach in rural and remote communities in Northwestern Ontario. This data, at present, is unavailable from any source.

During this phase of the study you will be asked to complete two questionnaires which will each take approximately 15 minutes of your time. Questions include, but are not limited to the following: age, gender, educational background, geographic locations, and impressions/opinions of Thunder Bay and Lakehead University. You may decline to answer any question within the survey. The consent form will be kept in a file separate from the study results in order to maintain confidentiality and anonymity.

All answers are accepted and are completely anonymous. You may withdraw from the study at any time. The information from all the questionnaires will be coded, analyzed and securely stored at Lakehead University for seven years. No individual will be identified in any report of the results. The results will be shared with Lakehead University and the Weiler family to meet criteria for an award they have given me. One of the conditions of the award is to provide the Weiler family with 4 copies of my thesis. A summary of the report may be obtained from the library at Lakehead University in Thunder Bay in May 2008. I may also use the results to publish in academic journals.

If you have any questions or concerns about this study, please do not hesitate to contact me at the telephone number or email address below. You may also contact the Lakehead University Research Ethics Board at 807-343-8283, or my supervisor, Dr. Seth Agbo, at 807-343-8836.

Sincerely,

Sarah Multamaki
Department of Education
Lakehead University
(807)251-7606
simultam@lakeheadu.ca

My email address on this sheet indicates that I agree to participate in a study by Sarah Multamaki, on PRESERVICE TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF TEACHING IN COMMUNITIES OF NORTHWESTERN ONTARIO and it also indicates that I understand the following:

1. I have received explanations about the nature of the study, its purpose, and procedures.
2. I am a volunteer and can withdraw at any time from the study
3. There is no apparent risk of physical or psychological harm
4. The data I provide will be securely stored at Lakehead University for seven years.
5. I will receive a summary of the project, upon request, following the completion of the project.
6. I will not be named, or identified in any way in any materials published as a result of this study.

Email Address of Participant

Date