

Chapter 101

A Blended Approach to Canadian First Nations Education: The SCcyber E-Learning Community

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ABSTRACT

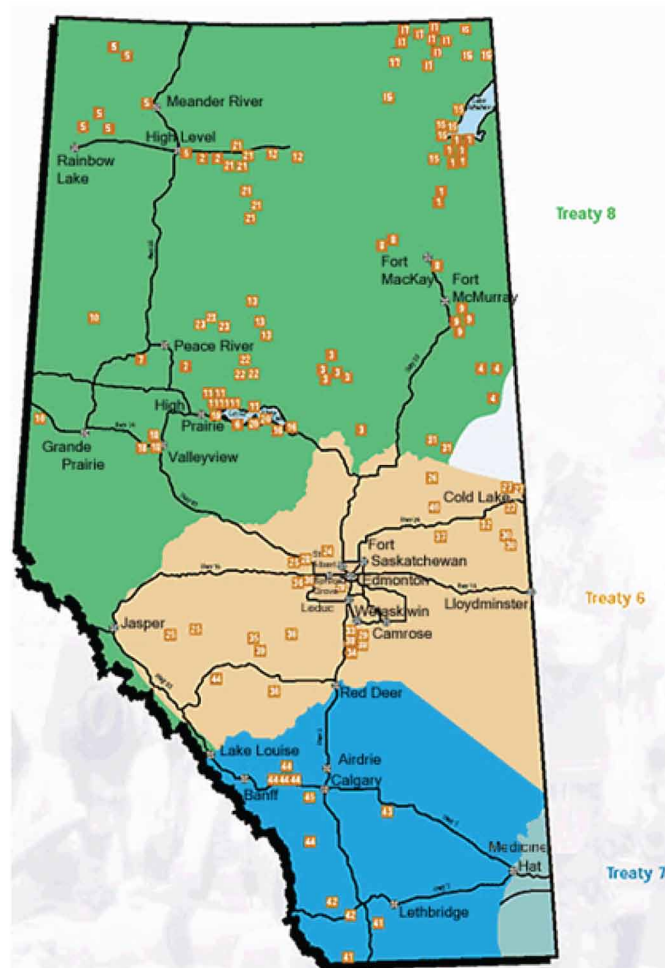
This chapter describes a research study that investigated how a blended approach to Canadian First Nations education could be used to foster student engagement and success. The study examined the SCcyber E-Learning Community program through the lens of the Seven Principles of Effective Teaching (Chickering & Gamson, 1999). Data was collected via an online survey, interviews, and site visits. The study participants indicated that the deliberate and intentional integration of mentors at local learning centers with online teachers, who provide synchronous tutorials through the use of a Web-based learning management system and conferencing tool, was the key to academic success.

INTRODUCTION

The Sunchild First Nation Reserve is located in the western central part of Alberta, Canada. The reserve has an area of 52.18 square km (Figure 1). As of 2008, this First Nation had a registered population of 1209 people, of whom 732 live on their reserve (Government of Canada, 2008).

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Figure 1.



In 1999, members of the Sunchild First Nation considered the lack of education in their community and decided alternative methods were needed to reach First Nations students. They discovered that:

- First Nations students faced unique challenges including family and legal situations, time away from class and relocating to new homes.
- Many First Nations students were adults. These students wanted to upgrade and build a better future while meeting their current schedules and responsibilities (SCcyber E-Learning Community, 2012).

In order to address these challenges the SCcyber E-Learning Community Program was established. This program adopted a blended learning approach for high school courses by combining the use of mentors at 21 local learning centers with online teachers who provide synchronous tutorials through the use of a web-based learning management system and conferencing tool.

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