

## Detailed Outline

### Title

The impact of the digital divide on aboriginals' distance education opportunities in North American reservation.

#### I. Introduction

- The concept of the digital divide became important in the 1990s when the Internet became common in North America.
- a) Definitions
  - The digital divide is the gap between people who have access to computer technologies and the people who do not have this access (Horton, 2004).
  - Aboriginal people are the First Nations, the Metis and the Inuit people (Statistics Canada, 2011).
- b) Audience of Research
  - The audience of the research are distance education universities who want to increase their aboriginal student population.
  - North American aboriginal people will benefit from the results of this research project.
- c) Research Goals
  - Discuss how the digital divide effects the ability of the aboriginal community to participate in distance education.
  - Use current research that shows the social-economic, political and cultural causes of the digital divide in rural areas.
  - To make recommendations about how distance education institutions can accommodate aboriginal students.
- d) Research Questions
  - What are the possible solutions of the digital divide that affects North American aboriginal people? (Primary Question)
  - What practices are used at distance education universities to decrease the effect of the digital divide on aboriginal people? (Secondary Question)
  - How does the digital divide affect the aboriginal community's ability to access distance education institutions? (Secondary Question)

## II. Literature Review

### a) Digital Divide

- The digital divide or the technology gap is influenced by socioeconomic status, race, gender, education and geographical location (Eastin, Cicchirillo & Mabry, 2015).
- The people who are effected by the digital divide include African-American, Hispanics, Aboriginal people, high school dropouts, single-parents, and low-income families (Horton, 2004).
- Digital divide describes the disadvantage of people who are unable or choose not to use computer technologies (Cullen, 2001).
- People who live in cities are 50% more likely to have the Internet than people who live in rural areas (Education World, 2015).
- Many rural areas are unable to receive the Internet or only receive dial-up Internet (Journal, 2007).
- Rural areas are unable to receive the Internet because of low population density, lack of infrastructure and high service costs (Chen, 2013).

### b) Aboriginals

- The traditional roles of distance education are to increase access to education and promote equity.
- Millions of people who live in rural areas do not have access to the Internet (Wang & Gearhart, 2006).
- There are 5.1 million aboriginal people in the United States and 1.4 aboriginal people in Canada (Statistics Canada, 2011).
- Most of the 600 First Nations in Canada and the recognized 560 aboriginal communities in the United States live in reservations (IWGIA, 2008).
- There is an educational gap between aboriginal people who live in cities and aboriginal people who live in rural areas.

## III. Methodology

- A review of the literature was the main methodology used in this research paper.
- The information came from sources such as case studies, journal articles, books and government websites.

- The paper used case studies to show the social-economic, cultural and political causes of the digital divide.
- The research will form the basis of the recommendations of how distance education institutions can accommodate aboriginal students.

#### Case Study 1: Kawaliak, Wells, Connell, and Beamer (2004)

- Study of the learning needs of Aboriginal students, aged 18-54, who live on a reserve in Alberta, Canada.
- The potential benefit of this study include finding out more about the learning needs of the First Nations and helping post-secondary institutions in Alberta develop distance learning.

#### Arguments

- Few post-secondary institutions are located near Aboriginal communities (Kawaliak, Well, Connell and Beamer, 2004)
- Aboriginal people do not want to leave their communities to attend school.
- They cannot access distance education courses because they do not own personal computers (Kawaliak et al., 2004).

#### Case Study 2: Subramony (2007)

- Study of Inupiat Eskimo in Borealis, Alaska, United States.
- Case study of Boreal Slope School District includes interviews of teachers, students, parents and community leaders (Subramony, 2007).

#### Arguments

- The Eskimo community was part of an agricultural environment.
- The Internet is part of Western culture and industrialization (Subramony, 2007).

#### Case Study 3: Betts (2009)

- The study is about a computer lab that was set up in a rural aboriginal community in Arizona, United States.
- The Community Resource Lab (C.R.L.) was established by the Pueblo community, local community college and the local university (Betts, 2009).

#### Arguments

- Until 1998, personal computers were rare on the reservation.

- The only computers were in the tribal headquarters, police department and fire department (Bett, 2009)
- Only 22% of Pueblo community own personal computers.
- The Pueblo community did not have a print tradition, most of their communication was oral (Betts, 2009).

#### Case Study 4: Fahy, Steel & Martin (2009)

- In 2007-08, Athabasca University studies four aboriginal communities in Northern Alberta, Canada including Wabasca, Fox Lake, Fort McKay & Fort Chipewyan (Fahy, Steel and Martin, 2009).
- The purpose of the study find out the learning preferences of Alberta's residents.

#### Arguments

- Aboriginal people are a large percentage of the population in Canada's northern communities (Fahy et al., 2009).
- Distance education has ignored the learning styles and political expectations of aboriginals.
- The rate of Aboriginal people in university-level programs was lower than other Canadians (Fahy et al., 2009).

#### Case Study 5: Philpott, Sharpe and Neville (2009)

- Study of five communities in Labrador, Newfoundland, Canada including Postville, Nain, Rigolet, Hopedale and Makkovik (Philpott, Sharpe & Neville, 2009).
- Teachers, principals, parents and students from the Labrador School District were interviewed.
- The three aboriginal groups which live in these communities are Innu, Inuit and Metis.
- Objective of the study is the find the factors that make e-learning successful for students.

#### Arguments

- Less than 7% of aboriginal people in Manitoba, Nunavut, British Columbia and Saskatchewan, Canada have access to Internet (Philpott et al., 2009).
- The content on the Internet is not relevant to aboriginal people (Philpott et al., 2009).
- Teachers in the community are not trained to use Internet in the classroom.
- Internet is not available to homes on the reservation (Philpott et al., 2009).

#### Case Study 6: Kaler (2012)

- The case study was about the conditions that make aboriginals successful in online learning.
- Researchers interviewed eight aboriginal high school students from Flathead and Blackfeet Reservations in Montana, United States (Kaler, 2012).
- Students were from the Salish-Kootenori, Blackfeet and NezPerce aboriginal groups.

#### Arguments

- Aboriginal culture is different than the dominant Western culture (Kaler, 2012).

- Aboriginal students have the worst academic performance in American public schools.
- Aboriginal chiefs are concerned about putting cultural information on the Internet (Kaler, 2012).
- Aboriginal people think they are less likely to be stereotyped in an online environment.

#### Case Study 7: Simon, Burton, Lockhart and O'Donnell (2014)

- In November & December 2011, researchers interviewed members of the Elsipogtog First Nation (Simon, Burton, Lockhart & O'Donnell, 2014).
- Elsipogtog First Nations is the largest aboriginal group in New Brunswick, Canada.

#### Arguments

- First Nations are politically autonomous communities in Canada (Simon et al., 2014).
- Assembly of First Nations (A.F.N.) representing 600 aboriginal chief supports post-secondary education.
- Aboriginal lack of access to computer technology (Simon et al., 2014).
- Distance education give aboriginals the option to stay in their community.
- Distance education reduces that effect of government policies which remove aboriginals from their lands (Simon et al., 2014).

#### IV. Analysis

- A comparison of the case studies about aboriginal communities and distance education
- This paper will make recommendation about how distance education institutions can minimize the effect of the digital divide on aboriginal people in North America
- The recommendations will be based on the research from the case studies and other sources

#### V. Conclusion

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Simon, J., Burton, K., Lockhart, E. & O'Donnell, S. (2014, February). Post-secondary distance education in a contemporary colonial context: Experiences of students in a rural First Nation in Canada. *The International Review of Research in Open and Distance Learning*, 15(1), 1-19.

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