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).
Elispogstog 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
References


