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Teacher Turnover in Isolated Native Communities: A Qualitative Reflection

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A Thesis

in

The Department

of

Education

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
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Abstract

Teacher Turnover in Isolated Native Communities:
A Qualitative Reflection

Brendan Banasik

This study is a reflection on the experience of living and teaching in isolated Native communities. A literature review and data derived from photographs are used to cross-reference the memories from a fifteen-year career living and teaching in First Nations and Inuit communities. Large and frequent staff turnover is examined and linked to culture shock and isolation, and the absence of a proper orientation for teachers arriving in cross-cultural situations. The topic is introduced after a literature review of the history of education for Canada's Native peoples. The phenomenon of turnover is then considered in light of the complexities of the teaching profession in general and the added dimension of Native teaching and learning styles. The use of data from photographs and personal narratives represent a phenomenological reflection on the experience. The study is not meant to provide definitive answers. It is intended to identify some pertinent questions and provide a perspective on the experience of cross-cultural teaching in isolated Native communities in Canada.

Preface

The photographs used in this work are from my personal collection. I took the photographs over a period between 1986 and 1994 in Cree and Dene communities in Northern Saskatchewan and one Inuit community in the Baffin region. Any persons in the photographs consented to having pictures taken. Written permission was obtained from any persons who are identifiable in any photograph.

The photographs were used as an aid in my own personal reflection and creation of narratives from that time period. They are not meant to spotlight any of the people in the photographs. The names of the people and the places where the photos were taken have purposely been left out of this work to provide anonymity and privacy. Persons appearing in the narratives have also remained nameless.

Acknowledgements

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Special thanks go to two outstanding professors in the Educational Studies department. Dr. Joyce Barakett deserves a big thank you for her insights, and her refusal to allow me to procrastinate. Dr. Ailie Cleghorn has been an outstanding mentor and champion of this work. Heartfelt thanks.

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Introduction

"We did not ask you white men to come here. The Great Spirit gave us this country as a home. You had yours. We did not interfere with you. The Great Spirit gave us plenty of land to live on, and buffalo, deer, antelope and other game. But you have come here; you are taking my land from me; you are killing off our game, so it is hard for us to live. Now, you tell us to work for a living, but the Great Spirit did not make us to work, but to live by hunting. You white men can work if you want to. We do not interfere with you, and again you say why do you not become civilised? We do not want your civilisation! We would live as our fathers did, and their fathers before them."

Crazy Horse

"There they live their truest life,
And all things show sincere."

(M. Tupper)

Image

This is a painting of Can-Am highway #2 that runs north through Prince Albert toward communities in the North of Saskatchewan. I painted it on a piece of paper taped to the chalkboard during art.

During a three and a half- hour drive between the reserve and the city you can eat a sandwich, listen to music, and enjoy a coffee. If you are alone, you have a lot of thinking time. The trips are different depending on the direction you travel. Southward the stresses of the job seem to physically leave your body. (For me, after forty minutes of driving when I hit pavement.) You are going to a place where you can be fairly anonymous. You are headed towards shopping, restaurants, movies, and newspapers, doctors, dentists, mechanics...

Heading north, there is a relief of another kind. The comforts of home await. The bustle of the city and the pavement give way to the forest and the rivers and lakes. The certainty of friends and the slower pace of life seem welcome. The thing that I think about, while looking at the image, is that it does not reveal its direction. It has become an important and poignant image for me. In my mind it has come to represent not only the geographic divide, but also a crossing between cultures, languages, and ways of knowing and living.

Our reserve finally got a road out to the highway twenty years ago. It was a fly-in place before that. Even with a road the distance still serves a purpose. Reserves farther south and closer to the city are rapidly losing their native language. Substance abuse and crime are a bigger problem. Our reserve still enjoys a level of innocence and sense of community.

Narrative #1- 1986- Arrival

Steve's truck is filled with as many of my belongings as it will hold. (A large antique desk fills half the truck. Parsimony and common sense will come to me later when I travel to my first fly-in community.) He is driving me from Montreal to Saskatchewan where I have accepted my first teaching job. He is a good friend. What other kind would agree to give you a 36-hour lift across three provinces? We are headed to a small Swampy Cree community that I have never seen before, and cannot imagine.

Just past Winnipeg we stop at a roadside stand for a hamburger and fries. It is after this that I begin to have trouble. We begin stopping by the hour for me to seek a washroom. I suggest that the hamburgers might be the culprits. Steve reminds me that he has no gut wrenching symptoms. He says no more, but I then realize he has recognized my overwhelming angst before I have. I am going to a small reserve where I don't know anyone or anything. A place where a teacher has been shot and killed by youths the previous year.

As we near our destination, a sign welcomes us to Tisdale - the "land of rape and honey" (Later changed to canola and honey). Beyond Tisdale our truck is buzzed two times by a cropduster. This only adds to the drama and heightens the angst. It is near nightfall when we reach our destination near the end of a long straight gravel highway. We unload the truck, placing what now constitutes my life into the apartment I am to share with a roommate. We drive an hour back to a nearby town for supper. I stay in town so that we can quaff a few beer. This gives us a chance to erase some of the tension of our three-day drive, and me a chance to voice my gratitude and a proper farewell.

The next morning I wake up and Steve has already started his journey east. It doesn't take me long to find out there is no bus that will take me to the reserve. I am undaunted, and search the two Chinese restaurants for local farmers. One, Everett, is headed to a small town halfway to my destination. From there he says I will be able to meet up with someone from the reserve and get a lift. There is no one from the reserve in the town that afternoon. The shooting has probably left them a bit uncomfortable. Everett offers to take me the rest of the way.

We are stopped before crossing the small wooden bridge over the small meandering creek. Ahead we can see the four-plex that houses my current life. On the bridge a young man on horseback is blocking our way. He is without the benefit of a saddle, carries a beer in his left hand, and is reeling in all directions. At my interview I had been told it was a "dry" reserve. Everett observes that sobriety cannot be legislated. After a few moments we are able to cross and I thank Everett for his kind acts.

It is noon. I have no key to enter my new abode. I am the very first teacher to arrive and no one else arrives that day. I phone the education coordinator and am told that we cannot locate a key. I sit on my front steps till six o'clock trying to believe that she won't forget to follow this up. From across the street this young Native lady approaches and tells me her grandmother would like to offer me some soup. When I enter the house they speak to each other in Cree. A place is set for me at the table with a steaming bowl of soup and a plate of bannock. No words are spoken. I sit down to eat and the two of them sit in the next room watching TV.

For the past sixteen years I have lived and taught in four Northern Native communities. My first year was spent on a Swampy Cree reserve in Saskatchewan as a grade four teacher. The following three years I was a grade six teacher in a Denė community on Lake Athabasca. After one year teaching a split grade five/six class in the Baffin area of what is now Nunavut, I returned to Saskatchewan. For the past ten years I have been a grade seven homeroom teacher in a Woodland Cree community. It is with this experience as a focal point that I propose to examine the phenomenon of frequent and large teacher turnovers. These turnovers are a common occurrence in many northern Native communities.

The Inuit and Denė communities where I worked were only accessible by airplane. The two Cree communities were an hour's drive from the nearest town and two and a half to three and a half hours from the nearest city. The isolation that accompanies working in these settings will be examined as a contributor to teacher turnovers. Isolation will also be considered in terms of the community members' isolation from both the rest of Canada, and the school setting. Another consideration is the phenomenon of teacher isolation from the community.

The nature of culture shock and its possible impact on non-Native teachers will be examined. Both the stages of culture shock and possible reactions to it will be seen to contribute to the short stay of teachers in these communities. Another facet of culture shock is that of the students when faced with curricula, routines, and expectations that differ from those in the home and

community. Problems arising from this mismatch are seen as another reason for teachers deciding to move elsewhere.

Alongside these issues the nature of the teaching profession is examined as yet another layer of the complex role of non-Native teachers. It is common for a large number of teachers to begin their careers in Native communities. For these new teachers both a new and strange setting and the expectations of the profession are daunting. Many do not stay more than a year or two before seeking employment in larger centers.

As a prelude to these phenomena Native education will be examined from first contact between Europeans and First Nations to the present day. This prelude takes the form of a literature review covering the impact of missionary schools, residential schools, the White Paper, and Indian Control of Indian Education. This review will underscore the origins of a negative view of teachers and schools by some Native community members. It will also serve to provide an understanding of how Native Education has evolved and what has led to its present state. It is implied that knowledge of this history would help teachers in understanding their roles and how they may be perceived by students and community.

The final chapter will address the area of teaching and learning styles in the context of the Native classroom. Realities and myths surrounding the topic of Native learning styles are examined, as well as what are identified as effective strategies and approaches in instructional practice. The fact that many teachers

arrive at their new assignments without such background will be considered as a possible source of frustration and another variable in teacher turnover.

This thesis may be of interest to teacher trainees, educators, and administrators who work or plan to work in Native communities. It may also be of interest to Native leaders and administrators who are concerned about recruiting and retaining teachers. This is especially important in light of the projected serious teacher shortage in many parts of Canada. Anyone who has ever worked in northern settings knows the sinking feeling that can accompany a significant number of staff leaving the community. The phenomenon of turnover is considered in terms of how it may affect student behavior, staff morale, program stability, and community perceptions.

In its form as a qualitative reflection this work does not seek to quantify variables or offer definitive solutions. Its form is designed to pose pertinent questions, provide a historical framework for the current teacher, and to help make meaning of my own experiences and those of many people that I have been privileged to work with in Canada's north.

Methodology

The study of such settings as schools in Native communities lends itself well to the area of qualitative research. The many layers of meaning embedded in such social situations are difficult to quantify. Walker (1985) states that qualitative research is not concerned with measurement, but rather, with

obtaining exceedingly rich data from a limited number of individuals. Bryman (2001) contrasts what he describes as qualitative research's rich deep data with the hard reliable data of quantitative research. Bryman also observes that qualitative research places emphasis on words, process, behavior, and the point of view of the participants. Quantitative research on the other hand contrasts this with an emphasis on numbers, a static view of social reality, meaning, and the point of view of the researcher (p. 285).

It is to be noted that this study takes the form of a reflection based on fifteen years of experience teaching in the settings to be considered. It is not, therefore, the result of a planned or structured qualitative project during those years. It does, however, seek to arrive at what Creswell (1994) describes as the intent of qualitative research; an understanding of a particular social situation, event, role, group or interaction. In this particular case it is an attempt to shed light on or make meaning of all of the above as experienced by teachers, students and community members in the setting of isolated Native communities.

Phenomenology

This study attempts to derive meaning from the subjective and intersubjective interpretations of phenomena experienced by teachers, students, and communities in isolated Native settings. In considering the scope of this study I was influenced by the thoughts of Van Manen (1984) who advised that a phenomenological inquiry does not provide a punch line, and that its ending is

not so much a completion as an interruption. The narratives, data collected from images, and consideration of the pertinent literature on the topic are presented here in the form of a reflection on fifteen years of living and working in Native communities. As such, the study lies broadly within the tradition of phenomenology, "...the social construction of knowledge and understanding of the commonsense world of every day life, as well as the intersubjective world of common experience which individuals share and take for granted" (Barakett and Cleghorn, p. 33). The implication here is that phenomena exist because of the subjective and inter-subjective meanings given them.

It was Alfred Schutz who introduced Husserl's philosophy of phenomenology to the social sciences. He describes its intent as seeking to make comprehensible the world of human existence (Schutz, 1996). That is, society as a human construction, and introspection or the use of our own subjective processes are valid resources for study (Orleans 1999). Schutz identifies the task of phenomenology as that of making manifest the incessant triangle of reflexivity of action, situation, and reality in various modes of existing in the world. Varenne (1999) quotes Schutz's view that, "...in a certain sense I am a social scientist in everyday life whenever I reflect upon my fellow men and their behavior instead of merely experiencing them" (p. 2). This attentive practice of thoughtfulness constitutes what it means to be human (Van Manen, 1984).

In its purest form, phenomenology is described as, "A philosophical inquiry into intellectual processes which is characterized by the vigorous

exclusion of any preconceptions about existence or its causes" (MacMillan Encyclopedia, 2001). Schutz (1967) described this as refraining intentionally and systematically from all judgements related directly or indirectly to the outside world. This exclusion of all previous knowledge is termed "phenomenological reduction". Schutz himself stated that this facet of phenomenology has to be abandoned in studying the social world since we must start out by accepting the existence of that world (Bryman, 1988, p. 52.). This study has been guided by these ideas.

Data Collection

Data collected for this study has come from several sources. In its phenomenological form the data has been gleaned from personal experience, narratives, and images, most in the form of photographs taken by the author. In tracing the evolution of education for Canada's Native peoples the first chapter relies solely on a literature review of relevant sources. The chapter helps set the stage for an examination of the current situation. Subsequent references to literature on the subject are meant to frame the phenomenological components of the study and to provide a triangulation of viewpoints. This triangulation provides context and in some respects serves to compare or contrast the subjective nature of the study with the body of accepted academic discourse.

Image-based Qualitative Research

In the course of my studies I became acquainted with the relatively new field of image-based qualitative research. This inter-disciplinary form of research involves the use of images to spark the memories of particular times, places, and meanings. As Prosser (1998) writes, "Taken cumulatively images are signifiers of a culture; taken individually they are artifacts that provide us with very particular information about our existence" (p. 1.). Over the years I have saved many photographs taken in the communities where I have worked. These photographs provide a basis for reflection and aid in the writing of narratives.

It is important that the data contained in these photographs be extracted in a methodical and effective way. In examining them I have followed a data protocol based on a series of questions. Although all the questions do not necessarily apply to each photograph or image, the resulting treatment in narrative form should provide answers to most of them. I have adapted several questions suggested by Mitchell and Weber (1999, p. 84) from a chapter on the use of school photographs. Weiser (1993) writes that, "The pictures we take often carry a deeper meaning than was apparent when we quickly snapped them" (p. 234). Another question is based on her assertion that photos can trigger memories of something that is not in the frame (p. 16). This fact has also given rise to the narratives that appear as separate entities. The following questions have been used in examination of the images contained in this study.

- What do you remember generally about this image?

- Thinking back, what images of you as a teacher are suggested in the image?
- What does the image reveal about its location?
- What do the facial expressions and body language suggest to you?
- What images do you have strong feelings about? Why?
- What do you see now that wasn't apparent when you took the photo?
- Does the image trigger any memory of an event not shown?

Narratives

The use of several narratives in this study is meant to provide rich description that will serve to bring both the researcher and the reader to the actual sites in question. It is here that the actual interactions among the actors create the various meanings inherent in day to day school life. It is also here that the views represented in the literature are best examined for their accuracy and pertinence to the topic.

Subjectivity

The issue of subjectivity is one that is viewed differently by various accounts in the literature. Some accounts recommend embracing that subjectivity, while others warn of its danger. A phenomenological approach would certainly recommend the former. The mix of literature review, personal memory and data generated form images is meant to allow for this subjectivity while considering other viewpoints. This mix of viewpoints will prevent a purely

subjective look at the topic. A further rein on my own biases is the luxury of being able to reflect on fifteen years in four different communities. The repetition of similar and conflicting occurrences over time and in different settings will serve to prevent me from making assumptions based on too little data.

Format

This study takes the form of a personal recounting of events and perceptions during a fifteen-year career. In and around these are the observations contained in a wealth of literature on the topic. At the beginning or end of a section, images have been inserted. These images are directly followed by a treatment of the image as described in the section on data collection. The treatment of each photograph is contained in a border in order to separate it from the general text. Narratives sparked by these images or through other memories are interspersed throughout the work. The narratives are in Italics and are also separated from the general text by a border.

The use of the term 'Native' is used widely in this work. Although the term First Nations is now preferred by many Indian bands in Canada, the use of the word Native indicates that the study refers to both Indian and Inuit communities. The names of actual persons are not used in the narratives or the treatments of the images out of respect for privacy.

Native Education in Canada: An Historical Perspective

Image

This is a photo of *****, a kindergarten student, with his grandmother ******. The picture was taken in her house. She was born at the beginning of the twentieth century. His education will mostly take part in the twenty-first. She attended a residential school. During her lifetime she has seen the advent of radio, television, telephones, skidoos, computers, electricity and running water on the reserve, and the road, which was completed twenty years ago to connect her Woodland Cree community to the rest of the province.

Her youngest daughter completed university and teaches. That represents a leap from subsisting on the land to professional life in one generation. This is indication that there is little basis in any myth that says Native people are incapable of succeeding in education.

The picture makes me very think of the responsibility that teachers have to their students, and of some of the horrors that residential schools and teachers have inflicted over the centuries. The comfort and love that students like James find in their homes is something I try to keep in mind in the classroom. Seeing students with their families provides a wealth of information on who they are, and the way they view things.

The photo brings to mind a poster I remember seeing as a teenager. It represents a feeling that teachers often have about those in their charge. The photo was of a large muscular football player sitting on the bench between plays. The caption read " I hope some day I'll be strong enough not to hurt anybody..."

The new teacher in an Aboriginal community faces the challenge of assuming a role as teacher, and fulfilling the province's requirements. There is a tug of war which occurs, or should, between the needs of the student and the need to satisfy the school system that adequate learning is taking place. Ford (2001) puts it well when she writes, "The inspiration for learning is too often snuffed by demands on teachers to prove they're teaching. The proof becomes mandatory testing - the cop-out for governments and critics" (p. B3).

The view of radical theorists on education is reflected in the observation by Aronowitz and Giroux (1993) that, "...the main functions of schooling are the reproduction of the dominant ideology, its forms of knowledge, and the distribution of skills needed to reproduce the social division of labour" (p. 65). They also concede that, "...there are complex and creative fields of resistance through which class-, race- and gender mediated practices often refuse, reject and dismiss the central messages of the schools (p.68). The notion of resistance is one known too well by anyone who has faced twenty five teenagers in a classroom. It is what McCourt (2001) called "...the drama and tension of the teaching profession (p. 3). To consider these facts is useful, but not sufficient as a preparation for teaching Native students.

Ogbu (1991) provides a more relevant train of thought when he observes, "...ethnographers have concluded that minority students disproportionate school failure is caused by discontinuities in culture, communication and power relations" (p. 4). His study examines the different rates of success between

immigrant minorities and what he calls "involuntary" (or non-immigrant) minorities. Those who have come from a different country have already bought into the North American dream of education and the many doors it can open to a better life. Involuntary minorities, as the term might suggest, are resistant to the "dominant" culture, and are likely to display that resistance in the classroom. Bruner (1996) differentiates between two approaches to the idea of the mind and learning. The computational view is that the mind is an information processor. The cultural view, "...asks first what function 'education' serves in the culture and what role it plays in the lives of those who operate within it" (p.11). Attempting to teach Native students without trying to understand this can be a large step towards frustration and failure.

The consideration of a culturalist approach and of the notion of "involuntary minorities" is important in this question of the teacher's role. But in order to truly understand the nature of resistance from Native communities one should remember that the education of Natives by the dominant culture in Canada has been ongoing for over four-hundred years. The results of this education are the birth-place of suspicion, frustration, and resentment by many students and community members in Native communities. If teachers wish to situate themselves in their new role in these communities then, consideration of history's events provide a necessary backdrop. The following is a literature review of Native education in Canada from a historical perspective.

A Current Backlash

It takes very little effort to locate negative and accusatory literature on Canada's track record in Native education. Frustration and anger mark the thoughts of contemporary Native authors like Adams (1989), who states that, "The school systematically and meticulously conditions natives to a state of inferiorization and colonization", and, "The school and its teachers operate within typical racial stereotypes and coerces students into feeling ashamed and unworthy" (p. 132). Cardinal (1969) writes that, "The history of Canada's Indians is a shameful chronicle of the white man's disinterest, his deliberate trampling of Indian rights and his repeated betrayal of our trust" (p. 1). He goes on to state that;

> I will expose the ignorance and bigotry that has impeded our progress, the eighty years of neglect that have hobbled our young people for generations, the gutless politicians who have knowingly watched us sink in the quicksands of apathy and despair and have failed to extend a hand. (p. 2)

. Eigenbrod (1995) writes, "...from the Native perspective, literacy is associated with political power, dishonesty, and injustice" (p. 90).

As a non-Native educator on the reserve, these angry reactions lead me to question what events spurred them, and how far if at all, we have come. They also beg the question of whether there is another side to the story. Has education been of any benefit to Canada's first peoples? A glance at history reminds us that the purposes of education have not always been to prepare

students for full participation in a democratic society. Often the main purpose seems to have been to further the political and military aims of government.

First Contact

It is only very recently in human history that human rights have become a major issue. Five centuries ago the nations of Europe used their sailing vessels and large guns to plunder and colonize the world. The only apparent reason for this behavior seems to have been that they could. This mind-set lasted the better part of four centuries until the drain on resources both financial and human ceased to be sustainable.

The plight of the Beothuck in Newfoundland offers a horrifying look at early European encounters with Canadian first peoples. Horwood (1969) writes that one John Guy of Bristol traded with the Beothuck in 1612. Awaiting his return the next year the Natives celebrated wildly on the beach when a ship arrived, and then paddled their canoes toward the ship. Sadly it was not Guy's ship, and the broadsides of grapeshot that decimated the natives began two hundred and ten years of organized killings. For the first one hundred and fifty-six years, these killings were not punishable by law (p. 73).

Thoughts of educating the natives, or their children as later became the Canadian governments strategy, were the farthest things in the minds of these sporting settlers. Horwood observes that," Most fishermen, who believed in ' killing the nits with the lice', after shooting a party of Beothuck men and women

would round up the children and cut their throats" (p.75). In the spring of 1829 the last surviving member of the Beothucks, Shananditti, died of illness. Shananditti was given a Christian burial in a Church of England graveyard, but later her grave was dug up to make way for a new road. Even her bones were lost (p. 77). The Beothuck had the misfortune of being the earliest contact for the first waves of lawless settlers in the "New World".

The insulation from human diseases that North America enjoyed disappeared at the time of contact with the Europeans. Out of the Native populations of a million in Canada and seven to ten million in the States, Ennamorato (1998) cites anthropologist H. Dobyns' estimate that 95% died off in the first one hundred and thirty years after initial contact (p. 95). Scholars, although skeptical about the numbers, do not disagree on the percentage. White quotes Lord Jeffrey Amherst, the 18th-century governor-general of British North America ordering his troops to "...infect the Indians with sheets upon which smallpox patients had been lying, or by any other means which may serve to exterminate this accursed race" (Ennamorato, p. 96). White suggests that disease ultimately became a weapon in the hands of determined Europeans. As will be seen later in this chapter, disease also played a devastating part in deaths of residential school students. Those who remained could look forward to becoming pawns in the colonizers' expansionist and racist policies.

Little is written about the period of time between first contact and the rise of residential schools. Maina (1997) suggests that the initial contact of Native

peoples and European education came via Christian missionaries. She quotes Fisher,

> Because the missionaries did not separate western Christianity and western civilization, they approached Indian culture as a whole and demanded a total transformation of the Indian proselyte. Their aim was the complete destruction of the traditional integrated way of life. (p. 296)

The missionaries followed the fur traders inland, and the progress of the different denominations can be traced by noting the French names in places where the Catholics arrived first, and the British names where the protestants were the first.

It is widely accepted that Native peoples in Canada had their own system of education before the arrival of the Europeans. It was based on the need for learning the skills of survival and subsistence (Cardinal, 1969; Goddard, 1993; Maina, 1997; Young-Ing, 1998). This education was informal and varied according to tribe, location, and the perceived future role of the individual child. Cardinal observes that, " The Indian method, entirely pragmatic, was designed to prepare the child for whatever way of life he was to lead- hunter, fisherman, warrior, chief, medicine man or wife and mother" (p. 52). He is worth quoting when he goes on to explain,

> This education-to-a-purpose enabled the child gradually to become a functioning, contributing part of his society. Since all of the social institutions of his society were intact, he was able to become a part of and relate to a stable social system. His identity was never a problem. His education had fitted him to his society; he knew who he was and how he related to the world and the people around him. (p. 52)

The greater part of this system was done in during the efforts of the missionaries to Christianize, and the efforts of the government to 'civilize'. As we will see later, the interruption of parenting brought about by removal of children for a European education guaranteed the end of traditional Native education.

Various factors led to the rise of residential schools in the 1800's. Miller (1987) writes that after the war of 1812, residential schools were developed to favor the sedentary European immigrants over the nomadic Natives. At the time the Indian ceased to be important as an ally or trading partner, but became an obstacle to the expansion of farming territories. Miller observes that, " Since Indians were an obstacle, they would be removed, not by extermination but by assimilation" (p. 3).

Dyck (1997) explains that the work of missionaries in the west was precipitated by, "...the prospect of future Euro-Canadian settlement of the Canadian west" (p. 12). The payoff for the churches was to establish footholds in what would become populated centers. The government's dealings with the Natives were directly related to westward expansion. The negotiation of treaties was meant to ease this expansion. Dyck writes, " Without mutually accepted treaties it would be difficult to avoid the high costs of confrontation and military action that had characterized relations between Indian peoples and the American government. Both Miller and Dyck note that schooling was an essential component of the treaties. This was insisted on by Indian leaders who saw their

livelihoods disappearing along with the buffalo. The Canadian government undertook to provide that education.

The Residential Schools

It is in reading the literature on residential schools that one can immediately understand the frustration and anger of Canada's First Nations towards non-Native education. The indignities and horrors carried out against Native children in the residential school setting do not make for easy reading. The harm it has inflicted on the languages, cultures, and psyches of our Native peoples is very much in evidence today. A disturbing fact that surfaces in researching residential schools is that they were in operation up until the 1960's, which shows society's concern with human rights and liberal thinking to be very recent phenomena.

The rationale for residential schooling centered on the separation of Indian children from their parents and communities. What the federal government had promised in treaties signed in the 1870's were schools on reserves. What they began to implement, however, were plans for residential schools a considerable distance from the reserves. As Miller (1987) writes, " Indian Affairs bureaucrats and missionaries agreed that the home influence to which the Indian child returned each day after classes in a day school undid the work of the teacher..." (p. 4). Kelm (1996) puts a somewhat different slant on it when she writes, " Predicated on the basic notion that the First Nations were, by

nature, unclean and diseased, residential schooling was advocated as a means to 'save' Aboriginal children from the 'insalubrious' influences of home life on the reserve" (p. 52). She also describes a federally commissioned report by Nicholas F. Davin in 1876 that recommended residential schooling since Aboriginal children could be educated best while separated from their parents. As Kelm writes, "...His recommendation was to seize the minds and bodies of Aboriginal youth by forcing them into residential schools where the values, language and culture of Euro-Canadians would predominate" (p. 54).

The strategy of assimilating Natives was not limited to misguided bureaucrats and missionaries. Ennamorato (1987) quotes Prime Minister John A. Macdonald in 1887 when he said, "The great aim of our legislation has been to do away with the tribal system and assimilate the Indian people in all respects with the inhabitants of the Dominion as speedily as they are fit for the change" (p. 72). Ennamorato goes on to describe Ottawa's contention that the best Indian policy was elimination of Indians; not by violence, but by assimilation. A more humane spin on the idea of Indian schools was offered by the Deputy Superintendent General of Indian Affairs L. VanKoughnet in a letter to the Prime Minister that same year. Ennamorato quotes,

> That the country owes to the poor Indian to give him all that will afford him an equal chance of success in life with his white brother, by whom he has been supplanted (to use no stronger expression) in his possessions, goes without saying, and the gift for which we pray on his behalf, with a view to the discharge of this just debt, is the education of his children in such a way as will put beyond question their success in life. (p. 72)

Milloy (1999) quotes Duncan Campbell Scott addressing a parliamentary committee in 1920 saying, " I want to get rid of the Indian problem...Our objective is to continue until there is not a single Indian in Canada that has not been absorbed into the body politic, and there is no Indian question, and no Indian department" (p. 46). What one assumes when listening to the rhetoric of the government is that assimilation was indeed the aim of residential schooling, even if kinder words were spoken by some. That a long era of worldwide colonization was coming to an end did not mean that the attitudes towards the conquered were any more humane or accommodating.

One of the ironies of the federal government's commitment to provide education for Natives is that education was not a federal jurisdiction according to the British North America Act. Although the treaties specified federal provision for education, the actual running of the schools was sub contracted to various churches. Dyck (1997) writes, " Subcontracting the running of Indian schools to religious denominations not only shored up the government's lack of expertise in this field, but was also favored by federal officials as a means of informally off-loading some of the costs onto churches" (p. 14). As far as the actual running of educational programs was concerned, the government took little interest apart from funding. Cardinal (1969) points out, " The Canadian government inexplicably did not participate actively in an education program for Indian children until the early 1950's and did not vigorously pursue that policy until the mid of later fifties" (p. 52). In the meantime the churches ran residential schools

in which, for the most part, use of Aboriginal languages was forbidden, and corporal punishment was rife. The actual accounts of former residential school students paint a vivid picture of how the churches 'educated' Indian children in the name of the Canadian government.

Language

In most residential schools, an often-punishable offence was the use of the mother tongue. It was thought to be one way of quickly severing the link to Native culture. The repercussions of this policy are considered by Kirkness (1998b) when she writes, " It is our belief and understanding that language is the principal means by which culture is accumulated, shared, and transmitted from one generation to another. Language expresses the uniqueness of a group's world view" (p. 93). She goes on to quote Burnaby and Beaujot who point out that in 1951 Canadian Aboriginals who had an Aboriginal language as their mother tongue numbered 87.4%, whereas in 1986 the number was only 29.3%. Ing (1991) states that, "... the Native Indian language became the key object of attack in the residential schools" (p. 74). She adds that, " Today a broken link exists in the chain of the oral tradition. The loss and near-loss of some Native languages through the residential school system has created discontinuity in this chain of oral tradition" (p. 79).

The punishments used to curtail the use of Native languages were varied and brutal. Both Ennamorato (1998, p. 110) and Maina (1997, p. 297) cite cases

where students had sewing needles pushed through their tongues, a routine punishment for speaking the Tseshat language in a Port Alberny school. Ennamorato also cites cases of students being forced to stand in line and join hands to receive electric shocks from an electrical outlet, and of students forced to spend hours with their hands resting on scrub brushes. She quotes Tootchie Flying Eagle, who remembers his first day at the Fort Alexander Residential School,

> Then they took me downstairs to a big square room with a cement floor and made me kneel down in the middle of the room. I still didn't know what I had done. I was given a big tin cup and the nun told me to spit in it until it was full. I kept spitting into it, trying to fill it. I was there on my knees for a long time until the nun came back. I saw she had a bar of soap in her hand and before I knew it, she shoved that bar of soap as far as she could down my throat...all the time she was saying, "Don't speak that heathen, savage language anymore!" (p. 100)

Ing (1991) sheds light on one consequence of this attitude to Native languages when she notes, " Many Natives who left the residential school system feared to speak their language and so failed to teach the language and traditional ways to their children" (p. 81). Ennamorato (1998) puts it a little more bluntly when she writes, " From 1876 to the 1970's, when pressure from Indian leaders forced them to either close or convert to non-church or government jurisdiction, residential schools were, to a great extent, responsible for the deterioration of Indian families" (p. 8).

In reading the various accounts of residential schooling it becomes obvious that the Canadian government and the churches came very close to

succeeding in their quest to erase Aboriginal languages in Canada. Kirkness (1998) sums up the current language situation with the following,

> More than 60 Aboriginal languages were once spoken in what is now Canada. Of these, eight are already extinct, 13 are near extinction (with fewer than 40 speakers of each remaining), and 23 are seriously endangered (with only a few hundred speakers each). It is projected that at the current rate of decline only four (Cree, Ojibwa, Inuktitut, and Dakota) of the 16 remaining languages have a reasonable chance of surviving over the next century. (p. 95)

Ing (1991) quotes Cree elder Alex Bonais, who eloquently voiced his fear,

> Sometimes I get scared-scared for our children. Language takes my children away from me, that is why I am scared. They do not want to hear my words. When he throws his (Native Indian) language away, that is when it starts. He makes fun of his father and mother, his grandfather and grandmother. (p. 81)

Ironically, the Cree in Northern Canada at the turn of the last century had what was arguably one of the highest literacy rates in the world (Bennet and Berry, 1987). Nearly all Cree adults read and wrote a syllabic Cree script devised by Methodist minister James Evans in the 1830's. Bennet and Berry observe that,

> The success of the script, its rapid transmission and nearly total penetration of the Cree-speaking population, took place without any of the pedagogical tools so familiar to us: there were no schools, no teachers in the specialized sense of the word, no standard writing materials, and very little printed (or written) material to read. (p. 233)

Instruction was usually performed by a family member when time allowed. The demise of this literacy was brought on by the introduction of schools in Native Communities, and presumably by the removal of children to residential schools.

The teaching of this script was re-introduced in the 1970's, but local instructors were left on their own to develop a curriculum. With the advent of radio and other sophisticated communications methods, and the emphasis on English script, this first language literacy never recovered.

Physical and Sexual Abuse

Foremost among the memories of former residential school students are the memories of the harshness and the cruelty of their supervisors. Their treatment of children who were far from home and totally vulnerable is a stomach turning example of " Man's inhumanity to man". It may be argued that during the same time period corporal punishment was pervasive in schools across the country, with the strap as the main tool for delivery. In my own high school, run by the Christian brothers, boxing students ears was commonplace until the late sixties. The difference, however, was in the public punishments favored by the residential schools as a form of humiliation and intimidation, and the work of sadists.

Bull (1991) describes an account where a group of four boys were accused of drawing a picture of a horse urinating. When none confessed, all the boys "...got their fingers hit till their nails were bleeding or knocked off" (p. 45). In another account by the same witness an older girl was found to have reported the over-zealous beatings meted out by one nun. The same nun made the girl

change into her petticoat and administered the following in front of sixty-two girls.

> The first three or four strokes of the strap "were not that bad" but the Strokes became more intense and more painful as they were concentrated on one part of the body. The girl used the chair as support, and with each lashing, she would flinch and shove the chair in the process. Meanwhile there was "blood squirting out of her" as she was menstruating at the time. In addition, " both her parents were upstairs while she was being punished. Not one of the girls had the heart to go tell her parents. We didn't dare speak up or talk back." (p. 45)

Bull recounts many cases where the number of lashes, often with a metal studded strap, were in the range of one hundred.

Ennamorato (1998) writes that in many schools the rate of sexual abuse was 100%. She quotes Tootchie Flying Eagle's account of his rape by a priest.

> I didn't understand what he was doing at first, for a long time I didn't know what he was doing...but when he started to pull my pants down, I tried to stop him, but he kept on yanking them and pushed me down. The first time it happened, I was crying and yelling for help when he was forcing me down. Two kids showed up, but they just turned and walked away, they didn't or couldn't help me. When Father was finished with me, he just pulled my pants up and pushed me out of his office like a piece of dirt. (p. 167)

She also tells of Willie Blackwater when she writes, " Blackwater, now 42, says he was raped at least once a month for three years at Port Alberni, and was beaten when he tried to report the rapes" (p. 11). In one poignant account Ennamorato writes of a woman returning to a place that haunted her.

> One Cree woman returned to the basement of a former hospital and prayed. It was there she said, that she had been forced to have an abortion when she was 14 years old. She told the panel that she became pregnant after being bound, gagged, and raped by two men when she was awakened one night by "a person dressed in white" who led her to a room on the pretext that her brother had died. (p. 166)

Chrisjohn et al. (1997) provide what they call an artificial structure to the catalogue of reported abuses. They suggest it is artificial because the abuses did not occur isolated from each other. In their list of physical abuses are the following focused summaries.

- Sexual assault, including forced sexual intercourse between men or women in authority and the girls and/or boys in their charge;
- Forced oral-genital or masturbatory contact between men or women in authority and the girls and/or boys in their charge;
- Sexual touching by men or women in authority and the girls and/or boys in their charge;
- Performing private pseudo-official inspections of genitalia of girls and boys;
- Arranging or inducing abortions in female children impregnated by men in authority;
- Sticking needles through the tongues of children, often leaving them in place for extended periods of time;
- Inserting needles into other regions of children's anatomy;
- Burning or scalding children;
- Beating children into unconsciousness;
- Beating children to the point of drawing blood;
- Beating children to the point of inflicting serious permanent or semi-permanent injuries, including broken arms, broken legs, broken ribs, fractured skulls, shattered eardrums, and the like;
- Using electrical shock devices on physically restrained children;
- Forcing children to eat their own vomit;
- Unprotected exposure (as punishment) to the natural elements (snow, rain, and darkness), occasionally prolonged to the point of inducing

life-threatening conditions (e.g., frostbite, pneumonia);

- Withholding medical attention from individuals suffering the effects of physical abuse;
- Shaving children's heads (as punishment); (p. 31).

The authors also include similar lists of psychological/emotional abuses and enforced unsuitable living conditions, and omissions of action by both the church and government. They also point out that these abuses have been attached to all groups having contact with these Aboriginal children, and have been attested to by all groups involved with the exception of provincial and federal governments. The authors conclude that,

> ...the consequences are that many Aboriginal people now suffer from a psychological disorder known as Residential School Syndrome. In addition, the failure to accord psychological attention to this condition early on has led to its perpetuation (sometimes in mutated form) in Aboriginal communities, much as a disease is spread in a susceptible, uninoculated population. (p. 35)

Ennamorato (1998) writes that at the first reporting of abuse cases in residential schools the official responses from the churches involved. This changed, however, after the revelations about the sexual abuse of non-Native children at the Mount Cashel orphanage in Newfoundland in 1990. The episode, "prompted a closer look at the residential schools" (p. 11). This foray against a major church group may have encouraged many more victims of abuse at the schools to come forward. The United Church of Canada (2000) website reports that the church is named as a co-defendant with the federal government in 350 cases, while the government is facing close to 7000 claims.

Chrisjohn et al. (1997) charge that the Canadian government and the churches were guilty of genocide. They maintain that residential schools continued for thirty years after Canada signed the United Nations Genocide convention in 1949. Article two of the convention states that genocide can be manifested in several ways. Of the five items in article two, the following four are all attested to in the literature and accounts by witnesses; Killing members of the group, causing serious bodily or mental harm, deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its destruction in whole or in part, and forcibly transferring children of the group to another group.

Disease and Murder

Another disturbing phenomenon in residential schools was the toll taken by the rapid spread of diseases. Milloy (1999) quotes Duncan Campbell Scott in an early twentieth-century address to parliament, "...fifty percent of the children who passed through these schools did not live to benefit from the education that they received therein" (p. 51). Kelm (1996) writes, " Overwork and corporal punishment, combined with hunger and malnutrition, shaped the bodies of the students" (p. 72), and, " The poor food and shelter, the abuse and overwork made the bodies of Aboriginal children more susceptible to the communicable diseases that stalked the schools' populations and encouraged complications from relatively harmless diseases" (p. 73). She cites a report of residential schools on the prairies by Dr. Peter Henderson Bryce that found a quarter of the

students died while enrolled or shortly after. Plotting post-school health raised the number to 69 percent. She quotes his finding which also gave rise to the title of her book when he describes, " ...a scandalous procession of Indian children to school and on to the cemetery" (p. 62). Kelm concludes that,

> In the case of tuberculosis, it is quite clear that the schools acted as a clearing house for the disease. Bryce (who became the Department of Indian Affairs Chief Medical Officer) knew this to be true as early as 1905, since the schools facilitated the spread of tuberculosis to communities that had been previously untouched by the disease (P. 75).

The appalling fact is that due to underfunding many of the conditions, which could have been improved in the schools, were left neglected. Miller (1987) quotes Wherret (1977) who noted that, " Not only were the schools overcrowded, many of the institutions were tightly sealed to conserve energy. The combined effect of these conditions on students still largely without natural immunity to tuberculosis was shocking" (p. 6).

As if the tremendous toll taken by disease, and the scars left over from years of abuse are not enough, murder and/or manslaughter are evident in the literature surrounding residential schooling. Possibly the only reasons that these crimes do not appear in the list of physical abuses compiled by Chrisjohn et al. (1997), is that the victims are not still with us to tell the tale, and the perpetrators have also passed away. Ennamorato writes about Native determination to investigate the mysterious deaths of 45 of 630 students at the Thunderchild Boarding School in Saskatchewan. There former students allege that some of their classmates, "...died of broken hearts and broken bodies at the

hands of sadists" (p. 8). Their bones were discovered by contractors digging basements in Delmas at the former school site. Other bodies were discovered in a shared grave on the banks of the North Saskatchewan River.

Kelm (1996) writes of how parents from Stoney Creek pressed for an investigation into Melanie Quaw's death after a beating she received at Lejac. In Ennamorato's recounting of interviews with former residential school students, Irene Fineday remembers that half way through receiving a hundred lashes with a thick leather strap in 1927, 12-year-old Robert Lonesinger passed out. The remaining lashes were given anyway. He died a few days later in a Battleford hospital. No autopsy was performed. Eleanor Brass recalls that 13-year-old Cora Keewatin was beaten across the back with a heavy leather strap at File Hills Boarding School in 1915. "She killed her...I don't remember what she got it for- it wasn't much of anything. After that whipping she just lay there for days until she died. We cried and howled like a bunch of coyotes for her" (p. 134). Doris Young remembered the death of a young boy at the Elkhorn Residential School. " There were two of them in the boiler room pounding him with their fists. I think they took that kid and put him in the barn and lit it. They reported he died in a fire" (p. 134).

In 1908 Frank Oliver, a minister, wrote to his bishop with an uncommon viewpoint. He is quoted in the Report of the Canadian Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (1996),

> I hope you will excuse me for so speaking but one of the most important commandments laid upon the human by the divine is love and respect by

children for parents. It seems strange that in the name of religion a system of education should have been instituted, the foundation principle of which not only ignored but contradicted this command (p. 5).

When one considers that these children were taken from their parents and cultures, and then forced to endure treatment as described above, it is no surprise that Native people maintain a level of anger, frustration, and distrust. What is surprising is the number of Native writers who have positive things to say about residential schools.

Another Side of the Story

Several writers do admit to some positive effects of residential schools. Scott-Brown (1987) writes about St. Dunstan's Calgary Industrial School as a place where braids were permitted, a place where students were *encouraged* to speak English *more often* than their Native tongues, and where principal George Hogbin noted, "...the pupils show an eagerness to learn and pay attention, which in many cases is most gratifying" (p. 45). Ben Calf Robe explains how the boys learned a number of skills aside from academics and were quite proud. He also speaks of how students were lonely away from the reserve but that the reserves at that time were feeling the pinch of the loss of hunting and subsistence. Scott-Brown quotes former pupil Mike Mountain Horse calling St. Dunstan's, " ...a great educational center which taught its students carpentry, farming, printing, and baking" (p. 48).

Bull (1991) writes that Fr. Paquette and the nuns at the Duck Lake Residential School, "...worked in support of each other and were well motivated in raising and educating Indian children" (p. 34). She also notes that unlike many other institutions, Duck Lake had no escape attempts. In talking of her interviews with various former residential school students, she points out that although the interviews were separate and private, all respondents agreed that they had all enjoyed the experience of learning. Others stated that they would have liked to continue their education past grade eight when they were deemed finished. As in Scott-Brown's (1987) account, English held one advantage in making it possible for students with different native languages to communicate, and several added that they developed emotional ties with these new friends that were lifelong.

Dyck (1997) writes of Emmanuel College outside Prince Albert near the turn of the century. He suggests that Indian leaders' insistence on being involved in the running of the school made a difference. There was no corporal punishment, and the first principal, Archdeacon John McKay was a fluent Cree speaker who conversed with the students in their own language. He points out that, "...

> ...although Emmanuel College was obliged to take note of the policies and instructions of the Department of Indian Affairs as a condition of receiving government funding, its operation never entirely corresponded with the strident tone of federal policy that envisioned Indian Children as passive recipients of residential schooling and their parents as entirely out of the picture (p. 23).

Dyck also talks about the Prince Albert Indian Residential School that opened in 1951. He quotes a deputy minister of Indian Affairs who visited the school as

reporting; " My general impression of the school was good. It is different from other residential schools and is more or less like a small village". He also reported that the principal must have been well liked by the students, " ...if I judge by the way they smiled at him when we were visiting around" (p. 57).

One positive aspect of residential schools is often mentioned in the literature on residential schools. Mesher (1995) notes that, "So many people today love to talk about all the harm that such schools may have done to their students. From my view that school, and its individual students, managed to gift us with intelligent, educated and responsible leaders when we most needed them" (p. 70). Scott-Brown (1987) quotes Titley (1983) who wrote, " Organized opposition to the assimilationist policies of the government appeared during the first three decades of the twentieth century, and Industrial school graduates were frequently to the fore of such movements" (p. 48). She goes on to state that the knowledge of English allowed them to learn the aims of the white man and use his methods to counteract assimilative policies. Perhaps the idea is put most strongly by Miller (1987) who writes,

> Neither church nor government succeeded in achieving its objective. But the Indians, who had wanted the schools to master the basics of the white man's learning so as to enable themselves to cope with the white man's society and economy, did at great pain and cost acquire the necessary skills. The emergence of a new generation of Indian leaders, schooled in residential institutions and devoted to the preservation of their people *as Indians,* is one manifestation of this success. Others can be found in the everyday lives of Indians who were able to translate their schooling into employment (p. 11).

These comments contradict statements like those of Adams (1989) who warns,

" Great caution must be exercised in teaching English because it is so basic to white supremacy and inferiorization" (p. 134), or Battiste (1995) who boasts that, " The failure of non-Native education of Natives can be read as the success of Native resistance to cultural, spiritual, and psychological genocide" (p. 7). I turn once more to Miller (1987) who summarizes his article on the irony of residential schooling, " Ironically, it was the residential school, which was designed to be the benign exterminator of Indian identity, that indirectly played a role in its perpetuation and revitalization" (p. 11).

A former chief of the Prince Albert Grand Council addressed our district teacher's conference several years back. He spoke with a barely concealed contempt for white society. He spoke of the importance of learning the "cunning of the White Man". Almost half of the teachers in the room were "white", and I can remember wondering what was all that cunning about us. His advice was actually an echo from long passed Native leaders. His message was, to a large extent, unnecessary at that point. Clearly, for decades, Native leaders have been facing the governments and the rest of the country with a fine grasp of English and of laws, treaties, and human rights. The reference list at the end of this paper and any other writing on Native issues is replete with the fine words and ideas of Native people. Although schooling has failed to assimilate Native peoples, it has provided them with skills that place them on a level playing field.

If there were indeed good things to say about residential schooling, one would be that today's Native people are more than able to articulate the crimes of the past, and their demands for the future.

Indian Control of Indian Education

The late 1960's and early seventies were years which heralded a significant changes in education for Canada's First Nations. In considering the type of thinking leading to these changes, one can turn to a report by the Indian and Eskimo Welfare Commission (1958). In its introduction the report finds that the Christianization of Natives has been a great success since ninety-eight percent of status Indians belong to a Christian church. They go on to state that, "The cultural transformation is still lagging" (p. 5). It later goes on to note that, " In technical terms, Indian Education is first and foremost an 'acculturation' responsibility" (p. 13). The following quote is worth reading in its entirety as an example of the same twisted thinking that dominated the residential schooling fiasco. In considering ways to acculturate Indian students in public schools the commission states,

> Generally speaking the only way the non-Indian school as such, without adaptation, can be as successful with an Indian as with non-Indians is when the former's home and community background are culturally similar to that of the latter. This can only happen if his Indian home is already an acculturated one or if he has been brought up in a non-Indian home. To be logical with sending the Indian child to a non-Indian school, government authorities should see to it that all Indian communities be immediately acculturated in every way or that all children born to unacculturated Indian couples be farmed out to white families immediately after birth (p. 33).

The last sentence in their conclusion echoes the flawed thinking of the century before it, " When Indian children will not help but grow-up to be culturally Canadian, then the average Canadian school will meet their educational needs" (p. 36). The Indian and Eskimo Welfare Commission erred in thinking that those graduates of the residential system were going to swallow more of the same old assimilationist policy.

In 1969 the Liberal government unveiled their 'White Paper' which proposed giving control of Indian education to the provinces. As Maina (1997) observes in citing Laroque (1975), " Because of the failure of the residential school system to eliminate First Nations as recognizable and distinct cultures, the federal government supported the placement of First Nations children in public schools in the historic White Paper of 1969" (p. 297). Goddard (1993) observes the paper, " ...proposed that Indian children no longer be treated as wards of the government but be considered as citizens of the province in which they lived" (p. 164). Cardinal (1969) argues that the paper was a, "thinly disguised programme of extermination through assimilation". He goes on to point out that,

> The federal government, instead of acknowledging its legal and moral responsibilities to the Indians of Canada and honouring the treaties that the Indians had signed in good faith, now propose to wash its hands of Indians entirely, passing the buck to the provincial governments (p. 1).

It was as a result of this federal proposal that Native leaders decided enough was enough. The paper had stipulated that the proposal would not go through without the approval of Indian leaders. It didn't. Goddard (1997) observes that,

" Out of this maelstrom of public discussion and private negotiations came the concept of Indian control of Indian education" (p. 216). In fact, Cardinal (1977) notes that it was the fresh approach taken by a newly named deputy minister of Indian Affairs John Ciaccia. Because his input allowed then minister Jean Chretien to keep face, the National Indian Brotherhood's report entitled Indian Control of Indian Education was accepted in 1973.

Goddard (1997) writes about the incident that led to the opening of the first band controlled school in Canada. Students from the James Smith Reserve were bussed to a provincial school where they had complained about racist teachers and schoolyard bullies. In 1972 there had been an outbreak of head lice at the school. When lice were found on the heads of white children they were provided with a bottle of medicinal shampoo and instructed on how the family should use it and disinfect the house. When lice were found on an Indian child they were told to gather all their siblings from the school. Then they were bussed home and told not to return until the lice had gone. Chief Sol Sanderson and the band council pulled all the Cree children out of the provincial schools and hired a teacher to hold classes in an empty building on the reserve. This school and a second, opened by the Lac La Ronge Indian Band in Sucker River were to become models for the band-controlled schools in western Canada.

Maina (1997) quotes the Indian Control of Indian Education paper,

> What we want for our children can be summarized very briefly
> i) to reinforce their Indian identity
> ii) to provide the training necessary for making a good living in the modern society.

> We want education to give our children a strong sense of identity with confidence in their personal worth and ability (p. 298).

There is nothing in these demands that seems complicated or difficult. In fact, through the magic worked by Ciaccia, Jean Chretien was able to take a 180-degree turn from his 1969 White Paper. Maina quotes an observation Chretien made after reading the first draft of the ICIE paper in 1972,

> Integration interpreted as a unilateral change is unacceptable to the Indian people. Our concept of integration must be revised to recognize the unique contribution which Indian culture and language have made to the Canadian way of life. Integration should protect and foster the Indian identity and the personal dignity of each child. (p.299)

Finally, after over a century of assimilationist thinking, the government had listened to the Indian lobby and effected changes in the approach to Native Education. What remains to be discussed is the outcome of these decisions twenty-seven years down the road.

Control or Management?

Now that we have had a chance to see 'Indian Control' in action for a number of years, it is possible to identify some positive gains as well as some limitations in its practice. The main problem would seem to lie in the degree of control, especially in terms of finance (Goddard, 1997; Cardinal, 1977; Hall, 1992). Cardinal (1977) describes the situation in the strongest terms,

> In fact what the bureaucrats accomplished with their regulations was to say, " We'll agree to you controlling Indian education, but not Indian education as you define it. The only thing we agree to is that you can run our education programmes as long as you run them the way we've always run them. We'll give you a set of rules by which you have to run

them; we'll tell you what kind of organization you have to set up, what kind of accounting system you have to set up, and exactly the guidelines you're going to have to use." (p. 84)

One of the difficulties is the fact that provincial jurisdiction over education means that the provincial curriculum must be adhered to. This makes it difficult to add more Indian language and cultural content. As Kirkness (1998a) puts it, " Education into culture, not culture into education must be our practice, and we must believe that the answers are within us" (p. 12). The dilemma of how to balance the inclusion of Indian culture and language with the need for mainstream values is handled differently in different Native communities. This is especially tricky since many students attend provincial schools. Medicine (1995) points out that, " When we talk about 'introducing tradition' or are concerned about Native culture and ' traditional ways as opposed to urban lifestyles' we must realize that 55% of the Native people in North America live in urban areas or off reserve"
(p. 44). She also reminds us that there is no one Native culture and that it is an extremely variable thing. Maina (1997) quotes Hampton (1995) when he observes,

> Asking Natives to eschew automobiles, television, and bank accounts in the name of "preserving their culture" makes as much sense as asking whites to give up gun powder because it was invented by the Chinese or the zero because it was invented by the Arabs. It is the continuity of a living culture that is important to an Indian education, not the preservation of a frozen museum specimen. (p. 295)

It is important to remember that to today's Indian youth, the Toronto Maple Leafs, pop music, motion pictures, and the internet are already a part of their lives.

Taylor et al (1993) identify some problems involved in Aboriginal control of education. They warn that, "...an inevitable consequence of the sudden introduction of Aboriginal autonomy is the reality that some inexperienced persons will be required to make significant decisions" (p. 177). They go on to describe replacing one form of inexperience for another, namely the lack of experience in Indian culture of mainstream educators and the lack of educational experience of many Aboriginal decision makers.

Hall (1992) states that one problem with local control is that the real authority of education and all matters of local government is the band council. " This sets the stage for conflict of interest situations where individual band councilors charged with the management of other reserve programs are able to redirect and veto educational spending and initiatives" (p. 61). The school committee and school administration are often left in a powerless and token position. He also notes that a five year study of band-controlled schools shows that there is a conflict between the reasonable expectations of teachers and a " ...widespread negative working atmosphere created by Indian band councils jealous of their power and control over every activity associated with their reserves" (p. 62). Another factor he illuminates is the tendency for elected officials to confuse their roles as policy makers with that of administration.

He points out that often when trained and experienced administrators and teachers attempt to assert themselves, they are fired with no recourse to appeal. He also notes the absence of any written policy pertaining to the management of Band- operated schools. Hall is careful to use the word 'operated' as opposed to 'controlled' in order to shed light on the fact noted earlier that control still lies with the Department of Indian Affairs and their carefully guarded coffers.

Despite the fact that there are some perceived problems with the switchover to Band-operated schools, it is also clear that Canada's First Nations are determined to wrest more complete control over their schools from the federal government. It is a given that some First Nations communities are better prepared than others to meet this challenge. Kirkness (1998) suggests that Indian control of Indian education has not progressed as it should have for two reasons, "One was the manipulation of Indian Affairs to have us simply administer the schools as they had in the past. The second was our own peoples' insecurity in taking control and failing to design an education that would be based on our culture, our way of life, and most important our world view" (p. 11). She also writes that First Nations should be more efficient at sharing their research and implementation of culturally relevant curricula. This would reduce the incidence of duplicating these efforts, and help narrow the gap between First Nations that are making good progress and those who are lagging behind.

According to Charleston and McDonald- Jacobs (1988) it is time for the "End of Paternalism" in the federal government's view of Native education. In their report for the Assembly of First Nations they state,

> The recognition and reflection of the inherent right to be and remain distinct First Nations and to exercise local self-determination over local education programs is at the heart of this Declaration of First Nations Jurisdiction Over Education. (p. 2)

It remains to be seen how this quest for local control will play out, but as Taylor et al. (1993) point out, empowerment is only the beginning of the process. They suggest that sudden empowerment places a great strain on the human resources in any First Nation and that unrealistic expectations should be avoided. This empowerment is, "... but the beginning of a fundamental societal change" (p. 182). Hall puts it well when he cites King (1987), " A frequently cited criticism of policies toward Amerindians is that the white man has done 'everything' for Indians except give them the right to make their own mistakes" (p. 65). After reading the above it is evident that the federal government in Canada has yet to get it right and have been making the same mistakes for roughly five hundred years. Maybe it is time for them to loosen the reins.

Although the First Nations wishes are plain, there are some that have a different future in mind. These are the folk who think it is unrealistic to believe that education in First Nations communities can succeed.

The Same Old Story

It has been suggested to me by well meaning non-Native city folk that Native people should not have to stay on reserves but come to the cities to live in the mainstream society. My reply has always been that they just simply don't want to. Indeed there are many that have moved to cities, some of which have a large percentage of Native people. Goddard (1997) writes that the economic development of some reserves hasn't changed since today's parents were in school. He offers the notion that, "Those students who wish to go on to post secondary education, or who wish to enter the workforce in a *meaningful* (my italics) manner, must therefore leave their communities. Left behind are those without ambition, the ill, and the aged" (p. 222). This comes as a bit of a shock to someone who has lived for fourteen years in Native communities. I now work in a Woodland Cree community of roughly fifteen hundred people. Are there those with no ambition? Yes, just as there are anywhere else. Are there aged and ill people? Of course, just as there are in non- Native communities. Yet along with them are many that work for a living. The infrastructure of the community is run by local people. These people occupy positions as store clerks and managers, nurses, dental therapists, health care workers, ambulance drivers, youth workers, secretaries, teachers, miners, line cutters, commercial fishermen janitors, maintenance staff, social workers, woodcutters, construction workers, guides, tutors, band councilors, and program directors. The principals of both schools are from the community as are the health director, the director of public

works and director of education. I shudder to think of suggesting to any of these people that they have not entered the workforce in a 'meaningful manner'. Are those who spend most of the year hunting, trapping and fishing in the tradition of their ancestors included among those of "no ambition"?

Goddard goes on to say that those who leave the reserve for post secondary education do not return, although that is precisely what many of these people have done after completing their education or training. Some reasons given for this reluctance to return are small overcrowded houses, no running water, outside latrines, lack of recreation, and problems with delivering health care and educational services. I believe the author has simply not followed the events of the 1990's. Each of the four communities where I have worked in the last fourteen years has had major overhauls. Each community has running water throughout the community, each has at least one new multi-million dollar school (Two of the communities have added both an elementary and a high school.), and the levels of health care and education are at worst adequate, and at best more than adequate. Although there are still many communities that await these improvements, the slow hand of the federal government will in time provide them.

Goddard's view of reserve life and reserve schooling as "ghettoization" in my opinion entirely misses the point. Alongside the lack of self-esteem, alcoholism, solvent abuse, unemployment, family abuse, poverty and despair

that he alludes to, are the lives of loving families and vibrant communities. Charleston and McDonald- Jacobs (1988) state quite clearly in their report that, "The individual First Nations do not want to be assimilated into any other society or culture, aboriginal or non aboriginal. They demand that their rights to exist freely as distinct self-governing peoples within Canada be fully recognized and respected by all other people" (p.14). The reasons for this, besides the obvious disdain for a dominant culture that has done its level best to assail and eradicate Native culture for five centuries, are very practical. Kirkness (1998) points out that language is the principal means through which culture is accumulated, shared, and passed on from generation to generation. Kirkness states that of the sixty native languages once spoken in Canada, only four have a chance of surviving into the next century. Medicine (1995) reminds us that; "Our cultures and languages are embedded in these communities" (p.43). These languages and cultures were born of a lives lived hunting, trapping, fishing, and travelling around Canada's wilderness. If Native communities dissolve and are absorbed into mainstream society, the erosion of language and culture can only escalate. Clark (1985) cites a letter allegedly written to the U.S. government by Chief Seattle that contains the words, "Every part of the earth is sacred to my people. Every shining pine needle, every sandy shore, every mist in the dark woods, every meadow, every humming insect. All are holy in the memory and experience of my people" (p. 3).

Image

These pictures show both the old and new schools in a Lake Athabasca community. The first picture shows the old school, a collection of trailers and add-ons. The gymnasium was a dimly lit, pint-sized building behind the school. The grade 6-11 classes were held in four portables that were about a five-minute walk from the school shown here.

The second photo is of one of the new educational facilities in the Athabasca region. It represents the multi-million dollar structures that INAC is providing on reserves all over Canada. The federal government is admittedly slow, but more and more reserves are benefiting from such new buildings.

We teachers practiced a bit of reverse snobbery in the early 90s when we professed that a building did not make a program, and did not make a staff. This much being true, there was no way to mistake the wide-eyed pleasure and fascination that students showed on the first day of school in a new building. It showed them that someone somewhere knew how important they were.

I am moved by the picture of the old school. Inside its rickety walls we were warm in the brutal winter, comforted by the familiar surroundings, and unaware of impending new multi-million dollar surroundings. We had the feeling of doing as much with less. My first six years of teaching were spent in portable classrooms apart from the main school. It was a time when I felt it was possible to create a separate universe.

Indian Affairs only counted registered students from the reserve in question when planning a new school. They ignored the presence of a somewhat transient element of the student population and what compared to the rest of Canada as a booming birthrate. This meant that some of the new schools had the familiar portables springing up around them. They then solved the problem of their frugality by designing schools that were easily added on to on a classroom by classroom basis.

Such a sentiment as this is evident whenever Aboriginal families can take advantage of holidays to gather their children in boats or skidoos with sleds and go out on the land. It is obviously a delight and a passion. It is a reaffirmation of who they are and who their ancestors were.

Goddard's (1993) notion that Native students should attend provincial schools instead of band schools is a perplexing one. Was it not the federal government's white paper that suggested a similar off-loading of responsibility to the provinces in 1967? Wasn't the idea soundly rejected and did it not directly lead to the advent of Band operated schools? The author laments the fact that many provincial schools are closing and that students are being bussed long distances to large impersonal institutions. Does it make sense to bus Native children even longer distances, and in some cases have them live in residences away from their families and communities? Perley (1993) identifies the separation of schools and students home communities as a feature of 'colonized chooling'. We have already dispelled the notion that all First Nations schools are run down and inadequate, or as Goddard writes, "...old, ill equipped, and incapable of offering the curriculum deemed necessary in the 1990s" (p. 165). We have already read of the damage done forcing children to leave their families and communities. The notion of forcing Native children to attend provincial schools sounds much like the same old story of deciding what is best for Natives in Canada even though it may be against their wishes.

A National Infrastructure

In calling for a national infrastructure to oversee Native education McCue (2001) puts the ball back in the federal government's court. He suggests that without a national infrastructure or curriculum, individual bands are left to determine their own goals and evaluate their own progress. As Taylor et al. (1993) have pointed out, one problem with this is that many people who find themselves in positions of educational responsibility are under-trained for the type of decisions they need to make. Hall (1992) also points out that in some bands the chief and council have personal and political reasons for jealously guarding decision-making responsibilities, and override decisions made by trained professionals. McCue's question is worth quoting here and it asks pointedly,

> How can any serious observer or bureaucrat reasonably expect all 680 bands, the majority of them with fewer than 1000 residents and situated in rural and remote locations, to manage effectively an education program with limited and inexperienced internal resources in the absence of anything even remotely resembling a system of education? (p. 1)

Under the present system Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC) assume the role of moneymen. They carefully count students and allot money for the building of and running of band schools. They are known to go about this chore with a legendary stinginess. The building of a new school, which can not go ahead if there are certain agreements between the band and a provincial school, entails a counting of heads. Only students from the reserve who are registered in school are factored into determining the size of the school. The

soaring birthrate of Native peoples and the presence of some students from other reserves or centers are ignored. The result is that after the building of a new multi-million dollar facility, a community finds itself in the position of having to return with hat in hand to INAC within a year or two to add on to the existing building or erect portable classrooms. This is the extent of the federal contribution to Native education. They take no part in setting goals or evaluating results. McCue says simply that without national goals there is no measurement or evaluation.

One pitfall for many band schools is to bring in an independent evaluator. In my present place of work fifty thousand dollars was spent so that a team of evaluators from an out of province private company could come and assess our schools' programs. The result, after fleeting classroom visits and interviews over six and a half days, was a two hundred-page report. We were commended in four areas, and were peppered with 224 recommendations. Guess what? The company projected a five-year implementation period under their tutelage. This of course would mean hundreds of thousands of our education dollars being paid to them instead of being used to hire additional staff or pay for special programs or equipment. This is eerily similar to the "Circle Game" alluded to by Chrisjohn et al (1997). The game refers to the practice of offering a year's worth of counseling to residential school survivors. They are then deemed cured, and some white psychologist pockets the federal dollars allotted for this 'healing process'.

McCue has boldly challenged the government to face up to their responsibility in the area of education. He admits that many may balk at the thought of spending the millions in upcoming years to set up this infrastructure for fewer than 150,000 students. He also warns that the failure to do so will come at a staggering cost to Canada and the health and well being of Native communities in the next three decades.

Teacher Turnover

Image

This was one the more challenging groups of my career. My teacher trainee/intern spent 4 months with us. They certainly made her work for every one of her accomplishments she had. When we went away for an internship workshop, the substitute teacher had both the guidance counselor and the principal in the room trying to regain some order. Their grade six teacher had taken early retirement at the end of the previous year.

The picture was taken at the outset of our trip to a town one hour away for bowling and pizza. The little ceramic vase that the students are holding was the monthly attendance award that also included a $50 prize. We won it 3 months in a row, which paid for our bowling trip. I had suggested we give a hand sign that meant 'hang loose' in Hawaii or somewhere. It was only later that I noticed Darrell's middle finger.

Despite the common use of radio, television, and other media, these students are isolated from the larger world. For many, the exposure to TV and Hollywood movies leave them frustrated at the slow simple pace on the reserve. My memory of having to be strict, in order to get anything done, still nags at me. In particular I remember upending an unoccupied desk, spilling pencils, notebooks and textbooks to the floor. I did it to get the class's attention during a moment of pandemonium to which verbal cues had no effect. Although it had the desired effect- a hush fell over the room. I would always regret such things. Fortunately, I never felt I had to do it again, and our classroom climate developed to the point where dramatics became unnecessary.

It is a widely acknowledged phenomenon in Native communities that every year teachers leave to work elsewhere. The phenomenon has a revolving door quality where many new teachers spend their first one or two years in a reserve school, and then move closer to family or larger centers. It has been observed in school offices and staff rooms across the north that a little bit of 'new blood' can be a good thing for a staff. In other words, a few new faces can bring new ideas, skills, and personality to the school. Yet, when large numbers leave, it can have a demoralizing and destabilizing effect on the remaining staff and students.

Many teachers bring to the north, and especially to remote communities, a variety of skills and expertise. This may mean that such extra curricular activities as music, drama, and some sports are introduced to the community. The loss of a particular teacher may mean the loss of the choir, the basketball team, a photography club, or some other activity in a community where there is already a lack of sufficient activities for youth. This is one of the costs of turnover. Another cost is often the departure of staff members who provide technical expertise in computers, industrial arts or trades in both curricular and extra-curricular settings.

Recently I took a year of leave to take courses towards a master's degree. Previously I had taught grade seven for a number of years in the same community. Upon my return, I did not know any of the students in either grade seven class, or either of the two grade eight classes. I did know the grade nines

that had been in my class. In other words, out of five classrooms in the middle year's wing of the school, most students were strangers. This made a big difference in my effectiveness during supervision and day to day management. It was not until half the year went by those students grew accustomed to my presence and ceased to defy or ignore me. Such resistance is common in schools all over the continent, but more so with unknown faces. Thus, each time a teacher leaves the community, any cross-cultural experience and knowledge of the students and community is lost with them and someone else is brought in to start from scratch. Waller (1961) observes that a teacher who leaves after a year or two limits his/her acquaintances to his official capacity. The locals do not know the individual well enough to see the person as well as the teacher.

One less visible consequence of turnover is the social fallout that may accompany it. Staff members, especially in more remote communities, grow to depend on each other for both professional and social interaction. A departure can mean the loss of a mentor, confidant, or friend. This can cause a discernable distancing between long time staff members and new teachers. It is almost as though the veterans are not going to become too close with someone who may leave after one year. Those who have worked together over a number of years share common goals, expectations, and knowledge of the community. It is a wise administrator who bridges this gap and brings together the old and the new so those newcomers have a better chance of acclimatizing.

It is quite common for many of the elementary schools in the north to have a large number of local Native teachers, but there is still a need to advertise provincially and nationally to fill positions in the upper grades with the required specialists. As one moves farther north, especially to remote fly-in communities, there are less local teachers available. Taylor (1995) observed that up to ninety percent of Native children will at one time be taught by non-Native teachers, and that many of them will receive the bulk of their education from non-Natives. Although the Native teacher education programs in Canada graduate hundreds of new teachers each year, a booming birthrate in Native communities means that the supply can not keep up with the demand.

Native vs. non-Native Teachers

It is perhaps timely to investigate the issue of Native vs. non-Native teachers in Native classrooms. Surely, if there were enough local Native teachers to fill all positions, then the incidence of teacher turnover would barely be an issue. There are many that have written of the importance of hiring Native teachers for reserve schools (Friesen and Orr, 1998; Kirkness, 1998; Lipka, 1991; Mohatt and Erickson, 1981.). We have already seen that there are not enough Native graduates to fill all positions. This situation is aggravated by the fact that trained and educated Native teachers are often among the more educated people in the community, and are often groomed for administration positions outside the realm of education.

It remains to be proven that non-Native teachers are ineffective in Native classrooms. In Mohatt and Erickson's (1981) study of classroom styles of a Native and a non-Native teacher, the authors observed that as the year went on the non-Native teacher intuitively began to incorporate a more culturally congruent classroom manner. Ward (1992) suggests that mainstream teachers working with indigenous children must spend time sharing in the activities and day to day life of the community in order to better understand the students and their needs. Although the Assembly of First Nations (1998) recommends that all non-Native teachers undergo cross-cultural training, Lortie (1975) observes that teachers benefit more from experience than from training. Thus, if a non-Native teacher stays for only a year or two in Native classrooms, the benefit of that experience is lost and someone has to begin that process all over again. This has to count as one of the greater costs of turnover.

It is also yet to be proven that all Native teachers are equally effective. The Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (1993) states that many Native leaders and community members are frustrated because Native teachers are not fully grounded in the teaching traditions of their nations. Lortie reminds us of one of the unique aspects of teaching when he writes that teachers have already had first hand contact with other teachers for sixteen years. This exposure, however, is intuitive and imitative rather than explicit and analytical, and that it constitutes, "... an ally of continuity rather than change" (p. 61). What this can mean is that some Native teachers may rely on the teaching styles they

themselves were witness to instead of those that are currently held to be successful with Native students. Lipka (1991) observes that outside or mainstream models of teaching have become the norm and standards by which indigenous teachers are prepared and judged. He goes on to state that, "Ethnicity does not appear to be the key classroom variable; it is the actual interactional style and relationship between the students and their teacher" (p. 204). Stairs (1995) writes that teachers at the point of contact with students are the mediators between diverse cultural learning models, one a formal mainstream model, and the other a culturally relevant model. She observes that there have been improvements in both Native and non-Native teachers in some multicultural settings, but maintains that this is due to changes in the curriculum as much as to changes in the teachers. In her conclusion she writes that, "...genuine two-way brokerage between Native culture and formal schooling validates Native ways of learning, responds to urgent mainstream needs, and is our collective path to success in Native education" (p.152).

Given this idea of cultural brokerage, it seems reasonable that exposure to non-Native educators is not necessarily a bad thing for Native students. We have already seen that teachers from mainstream Canada have frequently provided expertise in areas of extra-curricular activities (Sports, music, drama, etc.), trades, and technology. It also seems reasonable that mainstream literacy skills can effectively be taught by those who count English as their first language. These teachers also provide a chance for Native students to interact with

members of another culture, which lends a genuine quality to brokerage between cultures. A favorite in many of my classes has been my rendering of different accents using the English language. My childhood years in Quebec enable me to mimic our Prime Minister speaking English, and another favorite of the students is the difference between a cockney English accent and a highland brogue. These and other glimpses of the larger world are sources of acute interest for many students. In return, Native students are quite eager to share their experiences and local culture and language with a teacher who allows the time and shows interest.

I can readily attest to the fact, after fourteen years of teaching in Native communities, that it has been a very informative and enriching experience. My exposure to some of Canada's Native languages and cultures has been an eye-opener that very few mainstream Canadians will ever experience. Over the course of these years I have witnessed the efforts of the competent and the less competent, from both Native and non-Native teachers. In my mind, affirmative action aside, it is always better to hire the best teacher available regardless of their background. For the purposes of this paper then, I suggest that perhaps the best viewpoint is that taken by Medicine (1995) when she quotes Sitting Bull, "Our world is changing. Let us put our minds together. Take the best of both worlds and make a better life for our children" (p. 45).

Recruitment and Retention

Because of the lack of any real federal involvement in educational matters, as noted earlier, statistics regarding turnover in band schools are not readily available. The Northern Lights School Division in Saskatchewan is a provincial jurisdiction and includes many reserve schools in its care. It is, as such, in competition with band-operated reserve schools for those teachers who apply to teach in the north. During what is generally perceived as a severe teacher shortage, the pool of teachers available is a small one. Northern schools are also in competition with the rest of the country and the United States for these teachers.

Statistics quoted from one Northern Lights director of education (Leader, Fall 2000) give an indication of the difficulty and great expense of recruiting and retaining teachers in the north. This director quoted statistics that indicated 107 positions out of 281.5 in his division were filled by newcomers in the Fall of 2000. This amounts to a 38% turnover in the division. The division also began the school year still searching for seven teachers to fill positions. This is at a time when enrollments are increasing and during what he terms a time of intense competition for teachers throughout North America. He also cites the fact that 21 of the new teachers reneged on their contracts or on verbal agreements only days before school began. This was despite interviews held on sight, tours of school and community, and information offered broadly and honestly about social and cultural aspects of the community.

In addition to competing for the same teachers, most band-operated schools cannot match the incentives offered by a division like Northern Lights. They pay above provincial scale, offer furnished lodging at a subsidized rent, pay almost a thousand dollars in moving expenses and offer utility reimbursements. The fact that Northern Lights teachers are in the provincial system means that they can join a union, be tenured after a probationary period, and pay far less for their group insurance packages. Most reserves cannot match these incentives and are hard pressed to find teachers.

The state of teacher shortages in many areas means that many teachers will not even get as far as deciding between band- operated schools and a division like Northern Lights. The Leader points out that neighboring provinces pay more, and that they have had to advertise widely and repeatedly despite an aggressive recruitment drive in Saskatchewan universities. The Canadian Teachers' Federation (2000) claims that two thirds of Canadian school boards expect to have difficulty in hiring teachers next fall. They note that 45% of the current Canadian teaching force will be eligible for retirement in 2008, and that the U.S. predicts a shortfall of 200,000 teachers in each of the next ten years. Four states in the U.S. are offering $20,000 signing bonuses for new teachers in the fall. The federation predicts that Canada could lose 25 to 30% of beginning teachers to other countries. Kelly (2001) reports that Northern Ontario will have to hire 6000 teachers by 2010. It is clear then that turnover is a problem, and one that is made critical by the difficulty in finding new staff.

Narrative - Turnover

The spring is a hard time. That is when we find out how many teachers are leaving. Many never intend to spend more than a year or two in the north. Some have been discouraged by the low academic level of their students. Some are discouraged by the crime. Many just can't or won't face the isolation. It is hard to say goodbye to colleagues you have worked with and come to know. It is hard starting all over again with new faces. As much as it is true that it is good to have some new faces, it is also important to have some veterans on staff. This is what indicates continuity to the students. It is what makes day to day order in the classrooms and the hallways a little easier. It is what makes possible to place names and lives to the students' faces.

I have been in my present position for eight years. When I arrived the school was considered the "flagship" of the school district. I believe it still is. It is in no small way due to the longevity of the core staff. Several were there long before I came. I have attended the graduations of many of my former grade seven pupils. The years of many shared victories and defeats are like a glue that binds our students and we as teachers. A community and school that retain teachers have taken a large step towards improving their school program.

*How do I know this? I strongly suspect it. The year after I taught *****, I happened to be in the office as acting principal when I heard a lot of yelling in the hallway. The new grade seven teacher was dragging ***** towards the office by the scruff of the neck. Then, yelling the whole time, he was attempting to hold ***** against the wall outside the office. I could see the teacher was past reason and well into fury. I was able to suggest to him that I would handle it from there. ***** was content to stand in detention for fifteen minutes as I requested. He and I had built a small bond. The new guy was starting from scratch.*

Reasons for Turnover

During a conversation with a friend about the large turnovers that remote communities endure, she looked at me as though I had missed the obvious. "Nothing to Do!" she said. Although she had put her finger on a valid reason for turnover, boredom is not, in my experience, one of the main reasons for leaving. Taylor (1995) and Ward (1992) offer a blanket type reason for the short duration of many teachers' careers on reserve. They suggest that most non-Native teachers come to reserve schools with the intention of staying only one or two years. They may see it as a chance for an interesting time while waiting for a job

closer to home or in a larger community. They may see it as a chance to get some job experience before entering the southern market. They may also see isolation as an opportunity to clear up student loans or save for a car or a mortgage. Others become concerned that their school- aged children might receive better schooling in the south. Whatever the case, we have all seen enough young professionals leave after one or two years not to perceive a trend.

Aside from the notion that teachers intend to spend only a short time in an isolated community, there are other factors that may influence teachers' decisions about staying or leaving. Collins (1999) cites social, cultural, professional, and geographic isolation as key reasons for rural turnover. Distance from family, and inadequate shopping are also given as prevalent reasons. All of these are definitely part of the turnover problem, but there are further more personal and individual reasons why some of my colleagues have left the reserve.

It is standard practice on many reserves to offer one- year contracts to teachers. Although multi-year contracts are under study in several reserve education systems, there is a quite valid reason for the one- year contract. Because teachers live on reserve and are part of the community, those who are considered a bad influence on the community or the school are easily terminated (usually termed "non renewals") at the end of their first year. There are also teachers who are hired due to lack of other applicants and prove to be grossly incompetent in one or more areas of their professional duties. All this becomes

more complicated when community members bypass the school and director and complain about teachers to chief or council, who have the final say in matters of hiring and firing. Many teachers feel the need for more security than a one-year contract, and also may need more than a one-year contract if they wish to take out a loan at the bank.

There are still more individual reasons that cause teachers to decide on leaving. Because teachers are perceived to be wealthy in areas where many locals live in poverty or work only seasonally, they are also targeted by the criminal element. Although I lived in my present place of work for four years without incident, the following two years included four break-ins at my teacherage. These crimes generally occur when all the staff is away at a conference or during holidays like Christmas or Easter. It is a small percentage of youth who are responsible for the break-ins and the majority are quickly apprehended. Lulls in crime occur during their incarceration. The shock of having their homes and possessions violated is sometimes enough to cause teachers to decide to call it quits. One young female teacher moved off reserve and resigned at the end of the year when she found that her home had been broken into for the second time and that someone had urinated in her living room. Another male teacher came home with his wife and two young sons to find that aside from being robbed, the thieves had taken great care to damage the house and contents. Water guns had been used to spray the walls with Coca-Cola, Soya sauce and various other liquids. Clothing, pictures, CDs, and other assorted

belongings had been heaped on the floor and similarly doused. The last straw was the discovery that the boys' pet hamster had been skinned alive. The youths in question were out and about in the community for weeks before they appeared in court. During this time they grinned and snickered at the teacher and his family. It was enough to drive the teacher south after three years in the community.

At a series of round table meetings this past year Saskatchewan Education brought together directors and principals from the north as well as teachers' union representatives, and members of Sask Ed. to identify some strategies for battling the soaring costs of recruitment and retention. Among the reasons given for high turnover rates are ones similar to my observances above, which they termed "fear for safety of persons and property" (Sask Ed., 2000). Also identified were high cost of living, classroom discipline problems, lack of defined roles and protocols, high expectations in the realm of extra-curricular activities, feelings of isolation and lack of support, and lack of communications. Another factor that was identified was that for those who were actually happy to stay and teach in the community, the isolation meant that it was difficult to plan joining a mate and raising a family. As one female teacher remarked after four years in an Athabascan community, "It feels as if my life is passing me by". It was also noted that teachers are often lost because of lack of employment opportunities for spouses. This is especially problematic because of high levels of

unemployment in the community itself. There are often backlashes from community members when their own are passed over in favor of an outsider.

On the converse side of these detractors, the roundtable discussed the fact that teachers who tend to stay in Native communities are those who are already married, especially if their spouse also has a teaching position, those who marry locally, and those whose lifestyle is well suited to the opportunities for outdoor recreation. The participants of the roundtable discussion hope that various strategies will provide added incentive for teachers to remain longer in the north. These include mentorship programs, a more complete orientation process for new staff, incentive programs, an emphasis on promoting northern communities during recruiting, and inter-agency cooperation in providing employment for spouses. Even with all these initiatives in the planning stages, there remains a mounting crisis in the area of staffing band-operated schools in the north.

What has not been addressed so far in this section are the far- reaching effects of two more personal and perceptual forces at play. I have never heard these issues addressed at any meeting, conference or orientation, even though it is probable that all teachers arriving to teach on reserve experience them. All other problems aside, the effects of isolation and culture shock can be noted in the majority of teachers who come from elsewhere to live in Canada's reserves.

Isolation

Anyone who has ever sat in a small plane for hours to arrive at their place of work has a good idea of the meaning of isolation. Looking out the window at miles and miles of forest or tundra, one is aware of a prolonged physical removal from the familiar. Behind one are stores, restaurants, services, newspapers, home, family, and friends. Ahead is the unknown. A place that, for the moment, is only a name. This is the first and most obvious type of isolation to be considered. It is that of the new teacher arriving to discover the nature of geographic isolation.

Awaiting the arrival of these new faces, is a community that itself is isolated from the south by language, culture, and sheer distance. They are waiting for people who bring curricula from major centers, a different cultural perception, and a language that for many is still a distant second. They are about to meet their new neighbors. Despite the common use of radios, televisions, and other media, they are still truly isolated from the larger world around them. The knowledge of the outside world as seen in movies and television can lead to frustration in the youth of a northern community. Many feel trapped. Adams (1989) writes that Indians have 62 suicides per 100,000, as opposed to 14 among the general population. Most of these are teenagers, unable to surmount personal problems or envisage a future for themselves.

Following closely after this geographic isolation is the sense of cultural isolation.

<u>Isolate:</u> To place alone, apart, set in a detached position, separate from others of the same kind;
(Webster Universal Dictionary, 1970, p. 761)

Image

This is one of the small propeller planes that used to take us between Lake Athabasca and Saskatoon, in Saskatchewan. I can't remember which direction this trip was. From the body language I'd say we were headed north. (**** is leaning forward and *** is not smiling at the camera.) The flight took about three and a half hours. It was all trees and more trees (Or in Winter snow and more snow) when you were looking out the window. Flying seems so close and personal when you take off and land in a six-seater.

Getting on the plane marked the end of a vacation in a very definite and immediate way. No more restaurants, theatres, malls, or newspapers. It's funny looking back now. We, as teachers, had a sense of importance when we considered that two planes had been sent to fetch us. The small crowd of people at the airport made us feel even more important until we realized that they were vying for seats on the return charter.

Image

This is the runway on the reserve in Northern Saskatchewan. When I look at the photo now, I find that I never considered how much work must have gone into clearing the trees for the runway. Sometimes, when it was windy, the plane would sway from side to side when landing. The school bus would usually meet us and drive us the few kilometers to town. There was a tension you'd feel at the end of a vacation when we used to fly up there. The sense of separation from home and the familiar was intense.

I remember the last time I left. Several of us were not returning. All the local staff had their trucks parked by the runway to say their good-byes. The plane was an hour late. I think I had been fine until then. By the end of an hour tears were coursing down my face in a silent, chin-quivering paroxysm.

Those who arrive from the south soon notice the different habits, speaking and behavioral patterns, and the vestiges of ancient traditional lifestyles. One teacher was affronted when he noticed his students spitting. It is an example of a habit frowned upon in urban settings that is quite common in some communities. Those who stay longer in the community can expect these cultural differences to become less glaring as they acclimatize with their new surroundings. There is a term, "Wanna be" which is applied to those who jump headlong into adopting Aboriginal traits and pursuits. This is not necessarily a negative occurrence but warrants some consideration. It has been noted by those who have taught in the north over long periods, that despite adjustment to the community after many years, one is still perceived as an 'outsider'.

A further layer of isolation is that between schools and the community at large. Most of what happens in the schools will take place in isolation from the community around them. Waller (1961) writes of mainstream teachers paying for the sins of their predecessors. Because corporal punishment used to be prevalent in schools, many adults will feel what he calls, "...a hostility not unmixed with a certain respect" (p. 59). In speaking of parents in Roadville, Heath explains that,

> ...parents of junior and senior level students therefore both depend on and resent the school; the bringing together of differences in student backgrounds, extra-curricular activities, and expectations of behavior have undermined their closed community's control and left them less able to relate to the school of today than to any other institution which touches their lives. (p. 44)

For many of the adults in the Native community, school will remind them of negative experiences in local and residential schools. Memories of lack of success, abuse, and frustration serve to keep them away from school and consequently from teachers. Adults in these communities are the first or second generations of English speakers, and some have not achieved any fluency in the language. This can make teacher- parent/community communication a challenge.

Taylor (1995) notes that there is a pattern that emerges of teachers relying on each other for social activities. He refers to it as a possibly negative practice that keeps teachers from mingling with community members. Waller (1961) speaks of the positive aspects of this social phenomenon when he writes,

> The primary group of teachers gives a sub-group sanction to the attitudes of the teacher towards students and community; they support him in his struggle for mastery, comfort him in defeat, and advise him as to ways and means of further struggle. (p. 57)

He calls this a fostering of the craft that help to make life bearable, especially in less hospitable communities. Waller also recognizes the danger here that these ties may become more important than those with community members, and that the teachers may end up teaching for teachers. The social value of these teachers' cliques is also related to what Waller refers to as a psychological isolation. Although he is not writing about cross-cultural situations, he identifies the fact that teachers are psychologically isolated from the community because they must live within the teacher stereotype.

Image

An arctic community in summer. It was difficult to get used to the total absence of trees, and daylight that lasted twenty-four hours a day. As Irvin (1989, p. 20) writes, "One has the sense of a desolate, poor, forlorn place set in the middle of nowhere." I arrived on the island on August 8th. It snowed the next day.

A few of us would gather on Friday nights to play Risk. The R.C.M.P. corporal and constable would start every game. The corporal really got into it. He would wear his camouflage pants and his cartridge belt. They were always called away within the first hour to quell one disturbance or another.

Image

A Baffin community in winter. I was out for a walk on this road that leads to the power plant. Timeoosi, the liaison officer, stopped his skidoo. "What are you doing?" he asked. When I told him he said that polar bears liked Qallunaaq (White man) like myself for a dessert. Later I did find some prints in the snow. You could have fit two of my baseball caps sideways in one footprint. I beat a hasty retreat back to town.

The sun would come up at morning recess. By afternoon recess it would be dark again. The winter somehow was a strain on southerners that were fond of the sun. For the locals, the snow and ice allowed them to travel with skidoos, skis, and dogsleds.

The R.C.M.P. constable was a tall woman from Newfoundland. She was the first constable ever to last a whole year on the island. The previous year a sergeant had gone a little funny. Every time the R.C.M.P. sent a plane for him, he would hide out on the land. They finally had to bring in dogs to track him down.

Here again, the teacher clique allows teachers to act spontaneously and unreservedly in front of those who are able to see them first as people. The notion of the teacher as role model makes it problematic for teachers to act as they wish in other company.

Depending on other teachers, then, is not healthy as someone's only avenue of socializing. On the other hand, it can be seen as an opportunity for mentor support, morale boosting, and a kind of team-building. At worst it can still be considered a necessity in the early weeks before newcomers have had a chance to interact with community members. Whatever a teacher's personal choices are, it can still be recognized that there is a social isolation at the onset.

Added to these layers of geographic, cultural, social and school/ community isolations, is another that is a recognized phenomenon in the teaching profession. Lortie (1975) observes that, "...one of the striking features of teaching is the abruptness of full responsibility" (p. 59). In other words people in other professions have more of an apprenticeship before taking on a full professional load. He goes on to state that teachers are removed from the work of other teachers by the walls and doors that separate classrooms. For a new teacher, especially one who is experiencing one or all the aforementioned isolations in adjusting to their new surroundings, there is an added professional isolation. A new teacher must make decisions about how they will approach cross-cultural instruction, English as a second language, a large range of academic abilities, a lack of resources, and the tests to patience and resolve that

students will place before a new teacher. This professional isolation varies in degree depending on the staff and administrator's sensitivity and proactive intervention, but the stress that accompanies it can be enormous.

Over the years it has not been unusual to run across negative ideas about the nature and quality of teaching in the north. Many people believe it is "easier", or that people only work there while waiting for a position in the city. The first stories one hears about are the stories of alcohol, violence and crime in these communities. These stories abound in the form of gossip and in the sensationalist reporting of eager journalists. They are the more sensational, and therefore the more enduring perceptions. This is a further view of isolation. It is that of the majority of the Canadian population who are isolated, or insulated, from the lives of their native minorities.

Within these apparent layers of isolation newcomers in the teaching profession are left to create lifestyles that will make their stay rewarding and interesting. The alternative is to remain to themselves and eventually succumb to what is known around the north as "cabin fever" whereby a teacher stays in the house when not in school. This is perhaps the most intense type of isolation, that keeps a teacher away from the community and their colleagues. Someone who has been accustomed to theatre, big screen movies, concerts, restaurants, newspapers, clubs, and associations, is suddenly left far removed from these distractions. They have also left behind family, friends and support systems. It is vital that they find other ways to spend time and enjoy their surroundings. In the

first week of my stay in an Athabascan community my vice principal gave me the simplest and most profound advice when he told me to, "open your heart to these people". It is one of the wiser things that anyone has shared in my teaching experience and has had an important influence on my outlook ever since.

There is a rationale for focusing on isolation as opposed to loneliness, or alienation. To my mind the reason is that isolation is common to everyone in northern schools. Loneliness depends on the perception and actions of the individual. Alienation would suggest an act or acts on someone's part. The focus on isolation is in no way a pointing of fingers or finding of fault. Many people in these communities have often gone out of their way to share with non-Natives, and many have formed enduring friendships with them. The support and friendship of staff members is also not called into doubt here. Isolation is simply a fact for northern teachers and community members. How a community and individuals deal with it has a strong influence on the length of a teacher's stay.

Culture Shock

Moving to a new place can often be unsettling. Moving to an isolated place with a different language and culture is an even greater challenge. Taylor observes that most non-Native teachers who teach on reserves suffer significant culture shock and that it may never leave them. It is interesting to note that whereas Native peoples are a minority culture in Canada, non-Native teachers

become the minority or cultural others when they arrive on the reserve. How they cope with this new situation will have a large influence on their success and their longevity in the community.

There is no shortage of literature on the phenomenon of culture shock. Much that is found on the internet is for the benefit of foreign university students, but may serve to help inform us. For a definition of the term we can be as expansive as Mainprize (1997) who sees culture shock as, "...an incongruity between socially constituted expectations and perceived/experienced realities" (p.58), or as succinct as Mason (2000) who observes that homesickness produces stress, which produces culture shock. Guanipa (1998) identifies culture shock as an anxiety produced when someone moves to a completely new environment. The University of Nebraska-Lincoln sees culture shock as the stresses and strains which accumulate from being forced to meet one's everyday needs (e.g. language, climate, food, cleanliness, companionship) in unfamiliar ways. Mason credits Kalvero Oberg with being one of the first to note that culture shock is almost like a disease in that it has a cause, symptoms, and a cure. Oberg is also credited with identifying the stages of culture shock. These stages, however, seem to differ depending on the author.

The first stage of culture shock has been identified as an incubation (Guanipa, 1998) or honeymoon (Mason 2000) stage. This is where a fascination with new surroundings leads to a blissful feeling. After a few weeks a dissatisfaction sets in and leads to what Mason calls a rejection phase. This

generally comes in the form of complaining about the new place or culture. The regression phase is when one reverts to their culture of origin. Recovery is Mason's fourth phase whereby one begins to accept the good and the bad in the new culture and sets goals, and generally gets on with life.

Taylor (1995) refers to the work of the Coopers in Thailand when he speaks not of stages of culture shock, but a set of reactions to it. The Coopers identified escape, confrontation, encapsulation, and integration as these reactions. In the escape reaction, people avoid the new culture either by staying at home or by making frequent visits to familiar places, friends and family. The confrontational reaction reads very much like the above rejection phase where in conversation people put down facets of the new culture. Taylor likens this to a legitimation or universe- maintenance as people seek reaffirmation of their own culture by seeking support in their intolerance of the new culture. Encapsulation Taylor identifies as the tendency to keep company with those that share the previous culture, in the form of regular social events. Again this seems to mirror Mason's regression phase. The last reaction is integration where a conscious effort is made to get out and mix with the new community and learn about it. Taylor points out that this does not mean assimilating, but rather becoming a member of the community while both sides retain their cultural identities. Furnham and Bochner (1986) describe this as 'culture learning', and stipulate that it is not an adjustment to a new culture as much as it is a learning of its

salient characteristics. Integration is the only one of Taylor's four reactions that is not a sub-conscious reaction.

Symptoms of culture shock differ depending on whom one reads. It seems that many different symptoms are attributed to it. The University of Nebraska-Lincoln cites frustration, mental fatigue, disorientation about how to work with and relate to others, boredom, lack of motivation and physical discomfort. Guanipa, among a host of other symptoms identifies lack of confidence, anger, irritability, resentment, aches, pains, allergies, sadness, melancholy, loss of identity, and feelings of inadequacy. Mainprize adds to the list when he targets psychological and social strain, cognitive confusion, anxiety, disgust, indignation, and impotence. Mason uses skin problems as a likely example of a culture shock symptom. Clearly, there are a number of possible symptoms, and one shudders to think that all of them should befall one who encounters culture shock. It is probably safe to say that different people react to situations in different ways.

Furnham and Bochner (1986) suggest that there are variances in the occurrences and severity of culture shock. To them these variances have to do with the individuals and their value systems and ability to adapt. They suggest that the authors see social skills as a key in dealing with culture shock, and that the best way to cope and minimize the effects of culture shock is to learn behaviors that are appropriate in the particular social situation. This is not quite as simple as it sounds. Professionals, Furnham and Bochner observe, are usually very adept at the verbal and non-verbal practices of their own society, and are

particularly frustrated and embarrassed by their ineptitude in the new culture. At the time Taylor (1995) wrote his article, he recommended that those who recruit for northern schools be particular about the candidate's suitability for a cross-cultural experience. Sadly, with the teacher shortage as it is, administrators are often glad just to have a warm body to interview. Various authors proffer strategies to battle and minimize culture shock such as starting a hobby, exercising, meditating and attending local events. It would seem, however, that getting out in the community and honing the social skills is over-all the best solution. Anywhere I have been in the north I have recognized that laughter is infectious, and our Native peoples have a keen sense of humor. Their interplay with English and Native language phrases is particularly adept and indicative of a strong sense of wit.

Perhaps most central to this debate is the students' perceptions of a teacher's activities in the community. To see and be seen as a participant in local life validates for the students a sense of community in which teachers play a part. In my own experience, it is not an easy thing to just jump up by yourself and show up at a local event. It took for me, a request to volunteer at a ski-doo poker rally to first get me out. I found when I returned home that I had relished the excitement, the greetings from students and parents, the laughter, and the view of the community at ease with itself. I was also able to join in some of the student's conversation on Monday morning about the event. The effect of being seen by them chatting and laughing with their parents goes a long way in

softening some of the classroom resistance that one encounters. One student, after having a row with the teacher in the classroom, arrived home to see the teacher sitting at the kitchen table chatting with the parents. Although my colleague did not mention a word to them about the outburst, the next day the student had modified his behavior.

If students sense that a teacher does not approve of the way their community does things, they can come to see the teacher as a haughty outsider. It is in effect a slur upon who they are and whom they come from. Creating or maintaining this kind of social and cultural gap can work against all a teacher tries to do. A student approached me at my desk one Monday morning and announced with a big smile that I had been drinking beer with her Dad. It had indeed been his birthday on the Saturday, and I had visited for a couple of hours. My first thought was that she was attempting to put me on the spot in front of the other students. I came to realize that it had been only that she was pleased that I considered her father a friend.

Most of the authors above agree that being aware of the likelihood of culture shock can lessen its intensity and provide the opportunity for some proactive rather than reactive measures. A wise administrator can help by bringing the subject up with new staff members, and making some suggestions. A primer on local practice, custom, and world view would also not go amiss. Mohatt and Erickson point out that there is a reduced difference between Natives

and non-Natives in living arrangements, and ways of talking and dressing. Although this is the case, there is still what the authors call an "invisible culture". I can remember thinking, oh; they're driving trucks, shopping at the coop store, wearing Levis etc. They've arrived in the twentieth century. In a way they have, but on their own terms. This erosion of cultural differences Furnham and Bochner refer to as a push toward global homogeneity. It is in great part a result of global corporate interests and the authors borrow the term "cocacolonization" to describe it. In attempting to get past the apparent trappings of twentieth century life and recognizing what is distinctive in Native culture it may be important to realize that it have only been a few generations since Native people left their trap-lines and began to live in large communities. Europeans and Asians have had cities for hundreds and in some cases thousands of years. My own attempts at pinpointing Native cultural differences might have included more modest goals if I had then read Heath (1983) when she observes, "The ethnographic present never remains as it is described, nor does description of current times fully capture the influences and forces of history on the present" (p. 9). We can safely say that culture shock is a reality for non-Natives arriving on the reserve. They, however, are not alone. Much of the content and style of instruction in schools is foreign enough to produce some culture shock in Native students. There is an old education adage that teachers worry first about curricula, second about themselves, and finally about their students.

Narrative - A Small Victory

***** is a sullen student. Reading and writing are not easy for him. In this small reserve on Lake Athabasca, he comes from one of the homes where no English is spoken. ***** is one of my priorities in that he will do some work if I can spend a little time with him. The problem is that ***** is not getting along well with some of the students. He has taking to saying, "F___ Off!" to them in class. My attempts to curtail this unpleasantry have met with failure. I decide that the best approach will be a home visit. I dread it.*

*My walk to *****'s home after school provides me with a closer look at this part of town. Our teacherages are fully furnished and applianced. We have oil furnaces and running water. The houses I pass are rather dilapidated. Some are cabins. They have no running water, and are heated by wood stoves. As I near the house, I am increasingly nervous. *****'s Dad is by reputation an imposing figure. I have a little rubber ball in my hand that I am squeezing to help with the growing stress. Then I remember. Why do I have to remember the extension cord now?*

In my first year of teaching my principal had to deal with a grade three boy who left a pencil dangling out of a girl's scalp. The boy lived with his grandmother. The principal accompanied him home and handed the grandmother a letter suspending the boy. As he began to explain she tore up the letter and said, "What do you want me to do? Kill him?" She begins to throttle the boy. As the principal takes a step forward, she grabs an extension cord, doubles it, and begins to whip him with it. There are angry welts on his arms long afterward. As he leaves, she lifts the shotgun and threatens to kill him if he contacts the police. The principal is well and truly rattled by this. Remembering the story makes me pause. It's not too late to turn around and go home, but now I am in front of the house. Oh well....

*I knock and a woman's voice says to come in. They are not big on knocking on doors or answering them here. *****'s Mom is in the kitchen to the left. She does not greet me or turn toward me. I stand in the doorway, as no one has invited me to enter. Down the hallway, *****'s Dad steps out of a bedroom. He does not approach. Briefly I explain about *****'s use of the "F" word. He replies that ***** always says that. I explain the need to discourage it in the classroom. I am so glad to have that rubber ball which I am energetically squeezing. *****'s Dad says, "I can't give him lickings all the time." I say I don't think he needs a licking, but that if both he and I talk to ***** maybe we can change him a little bit. "No problem" says his Dad.*

***** does change a little bit. One day later in the week I am standing on a table to hang some student work on the wall. The papers lie at my feet. The students are leaving for the day. As I turn to pick up another paper, I see ***** is sitting on the table and begins to hand them to me one at a time. If I had tried to reach the student by giving detentions or sending him off to the principal's office, I doubt it would have had the effect of that one home visit. It was a turning point. *****'s Dad asks me in the grocery store how he is doing. I am able to smile and show him the thumbs up. I remember it as another of those small victories.*

If this is true, then arriving at the third phase in timely fashion is paramount to a teacher's success. Only when a bridging of cultural differences and mutual respect is achieved can there be an environment where what we know as learning can proceed without hindrance.

Narrative - Defeat

******* is the youngest of my sixteen Inuit students in a small Baffin Community. She is a small child, and very shy. I am standing next to her desk trying to help with her math work. I do not remember saying anything negative or raising my voice. All of a sudden I realize her tiny shoulders are heaving. Tears are running down her face. I am horrified. I ask her friend ***** to come and talk with her. I don't know to this day what made her cry. I spent the rest of the year trying to reassure and reconcile. At the year-end assembly in the gymnasium the principal announced my intention to leave for another teaching assignment. One girl in the gym called out "Hurray". I didn't have to look to know who it was. **** was one of my defeats.***

Teaching and Learning

Image

This image is a haunting one. It was taken in the school playground in what is now Nunavut. It was an odd moment. At this young age, the boy would have spoken no English, and my Inuktitut was severely limited. For years, looking at this photo, I only noticed the lack of a smile. Now, of course, I can see how important it is for him to show me the little blue ski-doo.

The photo reminds me how removed from the larger world the far north was. All the experience I had of culture, language, history, and values, were totally foreign to these children. A grade nine student came to school after having watched a western movie the night before. He was quite emotional, and said he didn't think it was worth killing all those people just to make a movie.

The community was under a cloud that year. Three teenaged boys had disappeared in July. They were last seen hopping ice floes. Near the end of April a young man was finally charged in their murders. The bodies were still unaccounted for when I left in June.

Point of Contact

Having considered the above historical influences on Native peoples through education, and the nature of living in isolated Native communities for outsiders, it still remains for us to examine the actual acts of teaching and learning in Native classrooms. Martin and MacDonnel (1982) suggest that teachers occupy one of the most important positions in the education system since they represent the point of contact between the system and the students it seeks to educate. Carrasco (1981) echoes this notion when he quotes the United States Commission On Civil Rights, "The heart of the education process is in the interaction between teacher and student" (p. 155). Stairs (1995) takes the notion a step further when she observes that teachers, as immediate agents of contact are also agents of conflict or reconciliation. If one is to succeed in this role it should be helpful to consider, not only what we have examined so far, but also the role of the teacher in society at large, and specifically the role of the non-Native teacher in a Native school.

If the classroom is where the "rubber hits the road", then teachers must carefully consider their methods and the learning characteristics of the students in their charge. Non-Native teachers may do well to consider themselves not only as agents of contact between education systems and students, but as a major point of contact between cultures. This is in addition to the expectations for teachers that Neilsen (1999) has pointed out which include acting as intellectual

and moral mentors, surrogate parents, social workers, counselors, security guards, cultural ambassadors, paramedics and psychologists.

The examination of what constitutes teaching and learning is to enter into what may be described as many "grey areas". What happens in the classroom happens between and among human beings and is fraught with variables. Those scholars who seek to quantify the process often disagree on methods and outcomes in education. New teachers who spend four years studying together in university rarely go about their jobs in the same way or with the same outcomes. Each classroom, school, and community have different groups of students and circumstances. Martin and MacDonnell (1982) add that schools are a very special type of organization, in that neither the school nor its clients for the most part can exercise a choice in selecting each other.

Looking back on my first years of teaching, which all took place in Native communities, I wish that I had read and considered then what I have to date. It would have provided me with a larger perspective. What follows here is not an A to Z guide to effective practice; but rather, an overview of some relevant and sometimes illuminating thoughts on education in general and on Native education specifically. There is no grand punch line or single maxim to be offered. What can be gleaned by the educator who reads this is akin to what a university professor once told us, "I don't expect you to leave here knowing all the answers, but we have succeeded if you leave here asking the right questions."

Theories of Schooling

It is useful for educators to consider the somewhat larger picture of the nature of schooling before trying to comprehend what occurs in their individual classrooms. Various educational theorists have pointed to what they consider to be hidden motives in the organization of mass schooling. Conflict theorists Weber (1968) and Collins (1968) refute the common notion that schooling provides opportunities for all and identify a process of stratification in schools. They name social classes, those in positions of power, and cultural groups as those who use education to perpetuate their place in society and maintain the status quo. Their ideas led to work by Reproduction theorists who sought to identify various models of reproducing stratification in schools. These models center on the interests of capitalist ideology, cultural dominance, and class struggle.

Bourdieu's (1973) work is of particular interest to those who work in cross- cultural classrooms. He introduces the idea of various forms of capital, which are used to succeed in educational setting. Capital is what students bring with them into the classroom, and use to advance or succeed. He identifies the main forms of this capital as being economic, cultural, social, and academic. Capital can be seen as a type of social currency that eases upward mobility for those that have it. The most telling form in considering Native education is that of cultural capital. It is what is acquired at the family and community level, and consists of knowledge, attitudes, values, and material possessions. Bourdieu argues that this is the greatest tool with which the elite engineer stratification.

To him, schools' failure to decode cultural capital and even the playing field, implicate them in the stratification process. Bernstein (1973) identifies types of speech as being central to the transmission of cultural capital. He identifies a particularistic language that uses elaborate codes, and to which the elite classes limit access. Both Bourdieu and Bernstein have outlined ways in which those in power limit access to educational opportunity in mainstream schooling. Both have touched on something that is easily perceived in the history of Native schooling. We have already seen how residential schools sought to erase Native language and culture, and how provincial schools marginalized the efforts of Native students. Adams (1989) states that, "The school and its teachers operate within typical racial stereotypes and coerce students into feeling ashamed and unworthy (p. 132)." He also states that the white supremacist school and its repressive attitude towards children is the source of a so-called Native school problem (p. 132). It is easy to see that a system of reproducing society's stratification in mainstream schools would filter down to an equal or greater attempt to use the same technique against a Native people who were under threat of assimilation by a colonial power. When considered from this point of view Adams' harsh words are a little more understandable. As Hookimaw-Witt observes, if education replicates society, then whose society does it replicate?

In response to the writings of the reproduction theorists, Aronowitz and Giroux (1993) state that the reproductionists have failed to account for resistance in practice by both students and teachers at the school level. It is

perhaps here that we can begin to look at how both teachers and students in Native education create a balance between curricula and students' needs, authority and independence, and between social awareness and cultural preservation. In considering the reproduction theory, and recognizing the potential for teachers and students to resist, we are ready to examine how students and teachers in Native settings interact. While it is necessary for schools to deliver a pre set curriculum, it is possible for educators to adapt the curriculum to the needs of their students and to their particular styles of learning.

Native Learning Styles

There is no shortage of debate on the issue of Native learning styles. In fact, as we will see later, there are those who would deny that Natives learn any differently than any other group of students. Clark (2000) offers a view of the paradigm shift between what he calls an industrial model of education and that of a culturally congruent model preferred by Native children and other minorities.

Industrial Model	Culturally Congruent Model
Discrete Disciplines	Integrated Curricula
Class Lecture	Applied Learning
Contrived Lessons	Authentic Experience
Individual Competition	Group Competition

(Adapted from Clark, 2000, p. 2)

In examining this list one can recognize in the Culturally Congruent model some of the shift that modern day educators have recognized as effective teaching methods for the mainstream. Clark observes that his diagram identifies effective methods from traditional education that have been given new names by today's educators. McKenzie (1998) mentions almost exactly the same list, although he also identifies cooperation as preferable to competition rather than differentiating between group and individual competition. He adds that the methods used to successfully reach these students can be used to with students of many other cultures. He states that Native children prefer group, as opposed to individual interests. McKenzie also recommends the use of role-play or creative drama as alternatives to discourse.

More (2000) uses the term learning style as a general term, preferring to center his attention on ways of learning. He explains that learning style is a term that is muddied by confusion and lack of consistency in its use by various authors. He explains that, "Ways of learning are the mental processes and instructional settings which a student uses while learning (p. 5)." More also recognizes that each individual student has their own best way of learning. His model is based on a continuum of four main areas.

Global	-	**Analytic**
Verbal	-	**Imaginal**
Concrete	-	**Abstract**
Trial and Feedback	-	**Reflective**

(Adapted from More, 2000, p. 9)

These ways of learning can be seen to somewhat mirror the difference between the models offered above by Clark. The difference being that Clark has identified what are believed to be the preferred Native ways of learning, while More points out a need to find the student somewhere along a continuum between the ways. Clark's discrete and integrated curricula can be seen as More's analytical and global. Both integrated and Global stress the importance of the whole picture, while the discrete and analytical terms refer to a preference for learning in small parts. Clark's class lecture can be compared to More's verbal style. Both terms speak of the reliance on verbal explanations, while applied learning and imaginal learning depend more on images and diagrams. Clark speaks of contrived lessons while More speaks of abstract learning. These both are characterized by the use of overall rules and principles, While authentic and concrete learning use hands on experiences and examples to approach a rule. Finally, while Clark writes of individual and group competition, More describes the trial and feedback method as students depending upon responses from the teacher, and it's opposite as a reflective method in which the student takes time to internalize the new learning before offering answers or performing work.

More also offers the fact that many Native students show a preference for a visual mode of learning. He links this to the need for a strong visual sense in a hunting and gathering society. Sawyer (1991) calls this preference the most commonly accepted and widely publicized Native learning

style. He links this to the emphasis on observation and imitation in Native child-rearing practices. It is probable, however, that many non-Native students also prefer a visual approach, which is served by manipulatives, slide projectors, overhead projectors, videos, diagrams and illustrations. Dewey, quoted by White (1995), indeed states that, "I believe that the image is the great instrument of instruction. What a child gets out of any subject presented to him is simply the images which he himself forms with regard to it "(p. 163). Who was it that said, "A picture is worth a thousand words..."?

Stairs (1995) outlines two opposing models which somewhat synthesize More's and Clark's models above. She has given them their Inuit names of Isumaqsayuq and Ilisayuq. Isumaqsayuq is a traditional way of learning based on lengthy observation and imitation. She explains that because of the practice of learning cultural skills on the land, mistakes are more critical. It is for this reason that extended observation is needed. This way of learning is also a way for Native children to be integrated into their shared social structure.

What contrasts this Native way of learning is that of Ilisayuq, (Which translates closely to the Inuit word for teacher.) which tends to depend on a high level of abstract verbal mediation. Stairs notes the irony of having to prove knowledge through verbalization when one is using a second language and dealing with abstractions. Swisher (1991) also makes a point of describing the traditional way of learning through observation, self-testing in private, and then demonstrating competence. Clark (2000) warns that the factory model of

standardized testing can have a devastating effect on Native students. Swisher recommends the use of student led groups that can be quietly observed and evaluated on participation.

Swisher and Dehyle (1991) provide a checklist for identifying tendencies in both learning and teaching styles. The list suggests discussing learning styles, awareness of pacing, awareness of questioning strategies, physical proximity sensitivity, classroom organization for interactional needs of students, and flexibility of approach. Heridia (1999) quotes Bennet's recommendation for a flexible approach which slowly introduces one new strategy at a time so that students can build competence in new or unfamiliar learning styles. The use of such checklists would echo More's premise that identifying the best instructional and learning practice can occur only after the needs of the particular group and individuals are identified.

Having glanced at some of the models offered by various authors for learning and instructional styles, we are left to consider what their value is to an educator. It is clear that there is a lack of any firm identification of one learning style for all Native children. Sawyer (1981) writes that rather than try to answer the question, 'How do Native students learn?' an attempt should be made to identify which teaching accommodations have proven most effective with Native students. He suggests that Native Learning Styles can be seen as a "Shorthand for instructional adaptations (p. 99). Swisher (1991) maintains it is not a good idea to assume that a particular group will have one particular learning style. She

points out that there is diversity within cultural groups, and that overgeneralizing can lead to stereotyping, and inappropriate excuses for failure in teaching and learning.

McKenzie (1998) reminds us that each Native student is an individual and that discussions of "Native education" should not become too broad. While such cautions are valuable, there remains the fact that Native students bring a different worldview and personal experience to the classroom. To be successful as an educator one can benefit by realizing that only through recognizing this fact can one reach their students and begin to facilitate learning. There are many authors who address the need for cultural awareness in dealing with Native students.

Borderlands

Teaching in several Native communities did not mean that I had to leave Canada or Saskatchewan. It did mean that I had to cross cultural borders. I lived and worked among the Swampy Cree, the Dene, the Inuit, and the Woodland Cree. I had entered their worlds, and sought to 'educate' their children. Teachers arriving in such communities begin with the handicap of being unaware of local history, culture, language and genealogy. They are marked as outsiders in tightly knit communities. The satellite dishes on roofs, the modern vehicles, the brand name clothing, and the music that youth enjoy all serve to fool the newcomer into believing that time and exposure to the larger society has

narrowed the cultural gap. Although this is true to some extent, the teacher is undoubtedly in what White (1995) calls the borderland. Mohatt and Erickson (1981) note that, "...Invisible cultural rules survive and remain quite strong long after the children lose their referential language" (p.109). Heath underscores this idea when she writes, "...the ethnographic present never remains as it is described, nor does description of current times fully capture the influences and forces of history on the present" (p. 9).

Armed with university training, a provincial curriculum, and a plan for what their particular grade will learn in the coming year, the teacher is a professional with a certain mission. If this mission is the only one undertaken it can lead to frustration and even failure. The less obvious mission involves finding out what students bring to the classroom in terms of life experience, school experience, and academic ability. Without this meeting in the middle, there is often too wide a gap between the "teaching" and the "learning". Fingarsen (1988) writes of the meeting between frustrated teacher and concerned Native parent. The student in question does little or no work, and is disruptive. At the end of the meeting the parent inquires of the teacher whether or not he can set a snare. He asks if the teacher can set a beaver trap, or a fish net under ice, or if he can cook bannock on a rock. The teacher replies that he can not. The parent offers that his son can, and his younger son is learning. He offers to teach the teacher, but would not force him to. He then asks, "Why do you force your ways?" Here is a telling point. For many Native students role models are those

who have lived traditionally. They hunted and fished, constructed their own dwellings, and lived off the land. It is clear that little that is offered in classrooms can prepare students for such living. The parent's final word illustrates the feeling of many Native parents, "Show my kid how to learn. Show him how to use his mind. He has a good one. I know! I've known him much longer than you have. Don't just try to drag him into your world. He doesn't want to be there. He has his own" (p. 9). Here we can reflect on Stairs' (1995) notion of teachers as immediate agents of contact, and of conflict or reconciliation. Does the teacher serve the curriculum or the students in their charge? For what futures are Native students being prepared? For the incoming teacher these issues are rarely addressed. Thus it is left to the individual to try and plot their course. Battiste (1995) maintains that Indian Education has had to change from acceptance of acculturation and cognitive assimilation to revitalization and renewal of language, and cultural identity and dignity. Non-Native teachers can hardly be expected to take responsibility for the latter, but can be more effective if they modify their instruction to serve the needs of Native learners.

In his work on cross-cultural science and technology Aikenhead (2000) refers to cultural border crossings. He notes that these are not uncommon and uses the example of someone returning home from work. The change from professional setting to home involves an unconscious alteration of language, a modification of beliefs, expectations and conventions. It is often a more challenging border crossing for Native students switching from the home

environment to that of the school. Hauser (1995) notes that the language, dialects, gestural systems and participation structures through which children make sense are radically different from the codes used by teachers. Without acknowledging this fact teachers run the risk of playing hit and miss when introducing concepts from the curriculum.

Aikenhead writes of the need for teachers to act as cultural brokers. In this role the teacher makes these border crossings explicit. Concepts from the different areas of the curriculum are approached first from the perspective of students' personal and cultural ways of knowing. This notion speaks directly to the aforementioned reproduction theorists. Bourdieu's view that success in school depends on the amount of cultural capital a student brings to the classroom is acknowledged and this cultural brokering serves to erase that inequity. Of equal importance is Bernstein's (1973) argument that schools prevent an open playing field by the use of implicit codes in speech. For students whose first language is not English, great care should be taken to approach concepts in language that is accessible to them.

Quintal's (1990) study of Northern Saskatchewan Native students' readings measured the students' ability to retell and make meaning of both culturally relevant and culturally non-relevant readings. She concluded that ability to retell and make meaning depended on the relevance of readings to students' interest, and public and experiential knowledge. Among her recommendations are the need to discuss with students the differences and

similarities between the author's text and students knowledge and experience, and the need for teachers to be aware that language teaching and learning develops in a social, cultural, and functional context. She suggests that those who design curricula and write policy, "...must take into consideration the issues of language difference and language learning in examining the reality of literacy for Indian and Metis speakers" (p.87).

To the new teacher the concepts above can provide a sense of the nature of cross-cultural education. Without cross cultural training or experience teachers are faced with adapting their teaching styles to this unique situation. Aikenhead and Huntley (1999) point to the fact that the same culture shock we examined in chapter two is experienced not only by teachers moving to remote communities, but also by the students who come to school. They suggest that this culture shock can directly affect the student's attitudes towards school. If a teacher is aware of their role as cultural broker then their chance for success in the classroom is enhanced. It would seem that classroom climate and student behavior are impacted by the choice the teacher makes in the style of instruction. One of the factors influencing teacher turnover is the failure to adapt teaching methods and the frustration and student resistance.

In my experience with Native classrooms I have perceived that in most there are four to six students who would do well in any classroom in Canada. A frequent mistake made by educators is to measure their success in teaching according to the success of these students. The other students are often thought

of as substandard or unmotivated. It is in reaching them that a teacher demonstrates skills in cross-cultural instruction. Mesher (1995) compares the cultural gap between Natives and non- Natives to a bridge between cultures. She observes,

> There are many such men, and women, today, who attempt to close that gap, to walk out onto that bridge. But today almost all of them are Inuit. Most of today's Qallunaat (White people), by and large, make almost no effort to even put their feet onto the bridge. Rather they stand at the Qallunaat end of it and beckon to us to come across. (p. 88)

Having looked at some of the teaching and learning styles recommended for cross-cultural education, and at the idea of cross-cultural brokering, there still remain some observations and recommendations pertaining to classroom climate and the affective needs of Native students.

Relational versus Instructional Goals

Although the consideration of teaching and learning differences and cultural considerations are a large part of what facilitates success in Native classrooms, there are other considerations which can influence what happens in the classroom. Lortie (1975) identifies these considerations as relational as opposed to instructional. He explains that they are a means towards achieving instructional goals, and come in the form of interpersonal transactions between students and teachers and states that teachers realize with their students. The MEQ (1997) describes this as a social dimension of education and stipulates, "Teaching also involves caring about students and this emotional commitment on

the teacher's part is an essential part of effective student/teacher relationships" (p. 15). Cummins (1989) goes as far as to maintain that, "...Minority students are failing academically, not primarily because of language difficulty, but because they are disempowered as a result of particular kinds of interactions with well-intentioned educators" (p.57). If the classroom is lacking in certain relational states it can mean that attending is a chore for students. It can also result in the type of negative experiences that lead to teacher turnover.

Swisher (1991) quotes Kleinfeld when she speaks of the need to be a warm demander. In other words it is important to require students to produce results, but high expectations must be balanced with humanistic concerns. Among the examples of these concerns she offers are awareness of which students do not like to be spotlighted, awareness of proximity preferences, organizing the classroom around interactional needs, and giving feedback that is immediate, consistent, and private. Martin (1976) points to the importance of seating arrangements in determining how students cope with stress and in protecting personal space. Paying attention to these types of details can help the students feel more secure and encourage them to participate in class activities.

Sawyer (1991) notes that many authors have talked about the importance of pacing. The teacher paces himself by adjusting to the speed and movement of the students. A part of this concept is the awareness of non-verbal cues. Lipka (1991) writes of the importance of organizing and conducting schooling in a way that is similar to community and cultural norms. He suggests that added to

education's 'three R's', a fourth 'R' could be added to denote relationships. It is here that Lipka states that interactional style is ultimately more important than ethnicity. It is my belief that given time to adapt, non-Native teachers can have effective classroom relationships with their students. If a school is experiencing a large rate of turnover, then it can mean that teachers are arriving and then leaving without having had time to get to know the students and community, and adjust their teaching styles accordingly.

The Universal Child

Mohatt and Erickson (1981) decry a belief in the 'universal child' model by teachers, administrators, counselors, and psychologists. They suggest that any universal view of children ignores culture as a critical factor in Native children's learning. Although there may be truth in this, perhaps the choice of which theorists to read makes a difference. If adapting teaching practice is as important as identifying 'Native learning styles', as is suggested above, then perhaps there is literature that can shed light on such adaptations. Many theories or constructs seem to lend themselves to the idea of adapting to the needs of students. In recognizing culturalism as an approach to understanding the nature of the mind, Bruner (1996) observes that it "...Takes inspiration from the fact that mind could not exist save for culture" (p. 3).

Narrative - The Intern

It is late in the afternoon. I'm sitting in the staff room while my student-teaching intern is teaching a lesson to my grade seven class. It is later in the internship when she is supposed to have time alone with the class. The staff room that year is a haven. There are many new teachers on staff and the students are taking as much advantage of this as possible. My intern, I know, is not having an easy time. With five years under my belt as a teacher I am not having an easy time either. The class of twenty-seven students is my biggest challenge to date.

So I sit, thinking of how I ended up in this Cree community in Saskatchewan. I see the principals each spring with a small pile of resumés, settling for what they can find from the paper in front of them. Not our superintendent. He phones me in the Northwest Territories to recruit me. We had met at a teachers' conference years before. Early in the year when the students are laughing and yelling during a lesson, one tells me that the students are going to get me fired. I am able to answer, "Are you kidding? They brought me here especially to be with you guys." We have come a long way in a few months, but my intern is under a lot of stress. I decide I've left them long enough and make my way to the classroom.

*Although **** is Native, she is not Cree. When I enter the classroom she is standing quite still. She appears very pale. The students are out of their desks and making a lot of noise. Three inches from ****'s nose is Jonas. He is in the middle of a wordless yell. "Aaaaagh!" Two students have left through the back door. With a little raising of the voice I am able to bring down the students volume and begin to take stock. One of the main culprits is ***. He has sworn at the teacher, and in a fit of rage, bent and mangled the chalk holder that holds five pieces. I ordered it from some American catalogue to use in teaching music.*

**** is a special case. He rarely speaks. At thirteen years of age he is a good one hundred and sixty pounds. He wears the same bunny hug each day, and never takes the hood off his head. I notice that he is ahead in math, but always needs some one on one with the teacher to help him. I have made this one of my priorities, but with twenty-six other students, he sometimes has to wait. More than once I have arrived at his desk only to ask where his notebook is. Now I don't have to ask. I reach into the wastebasket, try my best to untwist and smooth out the notebook, and calmly begin to help him. These are some of the good moments. I don't want to jeopardize this small element of trust, but *** needs to know we're off track here.*

*I find him in the mudroom where the back door is. He is in the process of leaving. I hold out the mangled chalk holder. Raising my voice into an indignant sort of whine I tell him, "I ordered this all the way from the United States!" After ten seconds of silence, he takes it from my hand, mumbling, and begins to untwist and separate the metal pieces. It is a futile attempt. This holder will never draw five straight lines again. But the attempt is a sign that we have come through this. The bridge hasn't been burned. It is one isolated moment. The year is made up of many such moments. Some are victories, and some are defeats. **** is a creative and hard working teacher. Her four months with the class are fraught with tension. At days end she has, more than once wept in frustration. After she graduates she leaves teaching. It is two years before she returns to a classroom.*

He maintains that 'meanings' have their origins and significance in the culture in which they are created, and that they can create a basis for cultural exchange. This view of the mind and education would suggest that culture is at the heart of how people learn. It underlines the notion that without considering the cultural background of Native students, one can not understand their meaning making or how to help them internalize new meanings.

Sternberg (1984) explores this idea in his contextualist view of intelligence. His observation that intelligence means different things to different groups of people struck me as a tangible reflection on my cross-cultural teaching experience. Although I am well read and university educated, the parents and role models of my students are highly skilled at surviving in and utilizing the land around them. Their view of the world is different from mine. Whereas they might flounder in attempting to master what is offered in my classroom, my attempts at mastering their practices in traditional life would certainly amuse both they and my students. Sternberg puts this in perspective when he writes,

> If one views intelligence in terms of adaptive behavior in the real world environment, then it is impossible fully to understand the nature of intelligence without understanding how this environment shapes what constitutes intelligent behavior. (p. 308)

To my mind the implications of this view are that it is important to create a match between previous knowledge and new concepts that are being introduced. This touches on the idea of cultural brokering and adapting instruction mentioned earlier.

Many educators enter the field of Native education with a narrow view of their mission. I believe that literacy is a tremendously important asset to Native children's futures. On the other hand, Native peoples have lived through the ages relying on oral tradition and transmission. Browne (1992) illuminates this fact when he observes that many people do not live in a literate cosmopolitan world. Many have relied on what he calls folk culture. He writes, "If we liken the existence of the earth to a twenty-four hour clock, mankind has been on earth for only the last minute, and the non-folk for only the last few seconds" (p. 27).

One cannot deny that the twenty-first century demands of its work force an ever increasing level of literacy and technological competence. It is widely accepted that the infrastructure of Canada's reserves does not offer sufficient employment for the work force that is emerging from their schools. Many students leave the reserve to pursue higher education and the jobs that this education leads to. It is also evident that a traditional lifestyle of hunting, trapping and fishing is no longer sufficient in terms of supporting a family. For some, however, the future will involve living on reserve. It will involve some of these traditional pursuits. There is and will remain a sector of Native society that operates in a mode of the kind of Folk Culture Browne describes. In what manner does education serve this sector?

At a point in time where Native languages and culture have been and continue to be drastically eroded, the reserve offers a haven where a close knit community of extended families share an existence still steeped in Native culture

and language. To recognize this fact is to realize that the mission of Native schools involves not only preparing students for participation in society at large, but in nurturing and reviving language and culture. As Hampton (1995) observes, "...Indian education is inherently a bicultural enterprise that has been directed at two sometimes competing and sometimes complimentary goals: assimilation and self-determination" (p. 8). Educators that do not acknowledge this duality in the purpose of education, and the importance of preserving those facets of Native culture perform a disservice to the communities that they serve. As in Canadian society at large, many adults do not read a novel after they have left high school. For many, the richness of Shakespearean literature or the complexities of geo-trigonometry will play no part in their adult lives. If education does not offer skills and values that will enrich and compliment the lives of those who choose to remain on their own side of White's 'borderland' then perhaps education weighs heavily on the side of assimilation.

It is hard to imagine that the wealth of history and folklore personified in the life experience of Native communities' elders is any less relevant or enlightening than the Euro-centric content of the school's history or literature components. Yet, because the school's history and literature is enshrined in print, it is often presented as a definitive world view. The norms and values implied in school curricula are often culturally incongruent with those of Native culture. In what amounts to a grave insult, the worldview and culture of Native people is often not acknowledged by those seeking to provide education. It is perhaps

here that theories about the 'universal child' fail to provide answers in the search for what should constitute 'Native education'.

Native children are, like all others, children of the universe. They share a hierarchy of needs, a curiosity about the world around them, and a wish to be successful and experience life to the fullest. A rejection of the idea that Native students can be understood through the universal child model is to ignore the similarities between Native children and any others. What is important is to recognize that Native children bring with them to school a sense of self, community, and culture. Bruner (1996b) offers a series of tenets in his view of folk pedagogy. Among them are two that address the importance of validating students' previous experience. One underlines the importance of identity and self esteem as a primary goal of schools. Another, the narrative tenet, underscores the need for students to be able to relate school experience to their lives within a culture. It suggests that students have a need to frame and nourish their identities through myths, history and folklore, and needless to say if the myths, history and folklore do not at least partially reflect their cultural realty, then they are in a fashion disenfranchised. Bruner observes that not equipping students with the ability to understand, feel, and act within their cultural worlds is an absence of pedagogy.

Conclusion

Image

The annual boat ride. It was not officially compulsory, but no one declined. We would pile into boats with the para-professional staff, the chief, the director, the band administrator, counselors, and their families. For two days we would camp out on an island. Steak dinners, volleyball, swimming off the Athabasca sand dunes, songs and tales around a fire. We were invited, though this time most did decline, to join a fire where a moose head had been spiked over the fire for just the prescribed amount of time. Family members took turns tearing off the more delectable parts.

****** *looked over his shoulder. It was the second day of the trip. He darted toward the next tree. Finally, after two days, he looked around and began the preparations for, at best, an apprehensive bowel movement. Then he heard them. Giggling. Close by. The same group of children.* ****** *swept up his roll of toilet paper and began yet another sprint...*

Image

The staff room was a warm escape here. Ten or fifteen minutes of lively banter. Locals and out of towners. Nurses, Mounted police, and maintenance workers. A busy coffee pot. Not all have felt like that. A staff that allows itself to become aloof or divided has lost a heartbeat. The building can be a very chilly place. How could the students not notice?

The good times. The vice-principal's torn and tattered pants. Buy new pants suggested the teacher aide. These are still good he suggested. With a few well-placed tugs she tore off one leg of his pants. We laughed bout that one for two years.

The bad times. ***** our maintenance man was looking for his son. The son had gone on a skidoo ride the day before with two of my grade six students. ***** returned that afternoon. Not home. Not to the church. To the staff room and then the office. He explained to us, with the tears streaming down his cheeks, that he had found his son's body. Frozen to the ice a short way out of town. Lying beside the hole in the ice where he had tried in vain to pull his two young passengers from the water. Some men from the community had to use an axe to hack the body from the ice.

It is a fact that large numbers of non-Native teachers arrive in northern schools and leave within a year or two. It is a fact that the rate of demand for teachers means that there remains a need for non-Native teachers to teach in Native schools. It is evident that the longer a teacher stays in a community, the better their understanding and appreciation of the students and community members that they serve.

Mason's (2000) description of the second phase of culture shock rings bells when considered alongside the large numbers of transient educators in northern communities. This phase of 'rejection' involves disdain and criticism of the new culture. It has been apparent to me that those teachers who leave Native communities within one or two years are often still mired in this phase of culture shock, and leave still harboring negative views of Native culture. Their stay in the community is often marked by what Taylor (1995) describes as the escape or encapsulation reactions to culture shock. This refers to the avoidance of contact with the new culture, and the limiting of socializing to those who have shared the previous culture. It is hard to imagine that these facts go unnoticed by students and community members. Conversely, a teacher who remains in the community and takes part in its day to day life is appreciated, and the act of returning is recognition of the positive factors in the community and in its potential. This is also evident to the students and community.

It is a fact that isolation plays a part in the short stay of many teachers in Native communities. The relative lack of services, facilities, and recreational

opportunities is enough to draw many teachers back to larger centers. Isolation can also occur between the school and community, and even within the school staff. This sense of isolation can arguably be linked to the incidences of suicide within the northern teaching ranks. In my sixteen years in the north these include two hangings and one intentional head-on collision with a transport truck. It is evident that administrators, staffs, and communities that recognize the effects of isolation and take steps to support their teachers can prevent such tragic occurrences and the frequent departure of new teachers.

Teachers who do not have a sense of what Natives have historically experienced in their education may not be aware of the reasons for some negative feelings about school and teachers among community members. Ideally, this sense of the hundreds of years of negative impact of schools on Native peoples should inform the classroom practice of teachers and the mission statements of schools themselves. What Lortie (1975) describes as relational as opposed to instructional goals, and what Lipka (1991) refers to as the 'fourth R' (relationships) have a lot to do with success in Native classrooms. Or, as the saying goes, 'if you can't reach them you can't teach them.

Lipka observes that ethnicity doesn't seem to be the most important classroom variable. He cites interactional style and relationship as the most important. Mohatt and Erickson (1981) observed that a non-Native teacher being studied in comparison with a Native teacher, had begun to adapt his teaching style to a more culturally congruent one over the course of a year. One of the

results of teacher turnover is that those types of gains in experience and outlook are lost and someone has to come in and begin the process of adjusting all over again. In the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples report (1996) it is stated that many Aboriginal community members and educational leaders are frustrated by the fact that aboriginal teachers are not fully grounded in the teaching traditions of their culture. In fact, the years Native teachers spent in classrooms with non-Native teachers, and their teacher training experiences sometimes serve to render their teaching styles culturally incongruent. In other words, hiring a Native teacher is no guarantee that things will go more smoothly in the Native classroom. It has been my experience that non-local Native teachers often face a difficult time, as non-Native teachers do, in adjusting to the students and the community.

Recommendations

McCue (2001) has pointed out that education for Native children operates without a national infrastructure. This is despite the fact that the treaty right of education on reserves was promised by the federal government. Native schools, whether band or provincially operated have different ways of recruiting and orienting their teachers. It would be advisable for each jurisdiction to ensure that teachers arriving in the community have access to the following information:

- Current literature in the area of considerations of Native teaching and learning characteristics.
- An indication of local history, customs, culture, and lifestyle.

- A list of important locations in the community and information on recreation, and services.
- Some form of primer on the nature of culture shock.
- A briefing on local adaptations to the curriculum and local expectations.
- Information on culturally relevant readings and programs.

Due to the present teacher shortage and competition for quality educators it is advisable that local education leaders proactively seek to fill positions at the earliest possible date, and carefully check references. A reasonable benefits package is often necessary to lure new educators from the urban areas. Local leaders should also take steps to welcome their staff and smooth their integration into the life of the community.

It is important for local governments to take an active interest in the state of their schools. It is equally important to have trained and experienced educational administrators who are equal to the task. If these people are in place, their decisions should be considered strongly even in the light of the opinions of local school boards and politicians that may differ from those of the administrators.

Some communities do all of these things. Some do few or none of them. It is a shame that through regional and national publications or the Internet, a database has not been created to identify best practices in the aforementioned areas. This would go a long way in preparing teachers for entry into isolated Native communities. The outstanding work by Tsannie (2001) specifically

addresses the subject of welcome and preparation of teachers arriving in isolated cross- cultural situations. Although it is written to inform newcomers to a Dene community, a large part of it would serve to prepare teachers for entry into any Native community.

The last recommendations would be addressed to teachers themselves. It is wise to remember, when arriving in a Native community, that it is not good to be viewed as bringing with you the attitude that you are going to gift the community with your knowledge of the dominant culture. You are a visitor, and as strange as things may sometimes seem, a respect for local custom and tradition is the least that you should exhibit.

It is a good idea to take some time to research the community and its history. It is a good idea to learn some of the language. It is strongly recommended that you take the initiative in attending local functions. They are a tremendous ice breaker. It is also a good idea to search out the best information about your situation and the advice of those who have been in your position.

If at all possible, resist the feeling that you are temporary. Share your gift or talent. Members of the community will certainly share theirs. Stay on after your first year. Stay on after your second. Your effectiveness will be enhanced, and so will the community's perception of you.

> **Teaching means coming back. You come back after the weekend. You come back after a holiday. You come back after the worst day in your career. You come back ready or not. And then you do what you do when you're in the classroom with the students. But first you come back.**
> **(Doran, 1999, p. 39)**

Image

Construction went on around us. The ramshackle vandalized old wing and several portables housed us till half way through the year. Then the classes in the building moved to the new half while the old half was gutted and rebuilt. All this was part of a year of tremendous upheaval. The principal and the secretary have just loaded the last of the young ones onto the bus at the end of the day.

The image brings memories of some of the dedicated educators I have had the fortune to work with. The school day, the extra- curricular duties, the class fundraising, the actors in the classroom, or the odd irate parent. The multi-tasking. And yes, the stress. The culture shock and isolation. All of these things add up to make the job that teachers do even more difficult.

But some still come back.

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