

Thesis

IN SEARCH OF THE MEDICINE ROAD

FOR THE PEOPLES EDUCATION

**(Kanatonikatak Maskikiwi Meskanaw
Inniwak Kiskinomakewina Oschi)**

Submitted By:

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To

**The Faculty of Graduate Studies
In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
For the Degree**

Masters of Arts

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**In Search of the Medicine Road for the Peoples Education (Kanatonikatak Maskikiwi
Meskanaw Inniwak Kiskinomakewina Oschi)**

BY

Elsie Crate

**A Thesis/Practicum submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies of The University of
Manitoba in partial fulfillment of the requirement of the degree
Of
Master of Arts**

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Abstract

This thesis looks at certain First Nation students who have dropped out of the mainstream education system, and who are now in a special education program at their local reserve school. The reasons why they dropped out and came to be in the program are explored through dialogue with parents, community consultants and the students themselves. The research methods used include participant observation, taped interviews, informal interviews, and individual and group sessions with students. Primarily, the thesis is founded on traditional Indian research methodologies. Interwoven throughout the thesis along with autobiographical data are 'teachings' that come to lend strength to the process and to the structure of the thesis. The data reveals that there is an urgent need for parents, educators and community leaders to come together, to address not only the academic needs of the students, but also their personal and social needs.

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Chapter One: Introduction

This thesis concerns the seeming non-compliance of some First Nations students to remaining in the mainstream education system of the local community school. The students find themselves in a revolving door syndrome with respect to remaining for any length of time in either the regular classes or a special education program, which has been designed for students experiencing difficulty in the regular academic setting. This thesis provides some response through the voices of community consultants, parents and the students' themselves, as to the reasons associated with the students' non-compliance.

When I decided that I would return to university to pursue a Masters of Arts degree in Native Studies, the way was open for me to do that, no obstacles were placed in my path. I believe that we are led in sometimes sure but subtle ways, these ways, which tell us what our work will be. In thinking about what the focus of my studies would be, what my thesis would be based on, I began to remember my dream.

While I was teaching in a northern community in the early 80s, I had this dream. The classrooms where I was teaching were located on the third floor of the building.

In my dream ,I stood at the bottom of the stairs; underneath each step going up, were large, thick textbooks. As I stood there looking at this, I noticed that there was no foundation to this structure. Each step and the entire staircase was in danger of collapsing.

It is told that we receive messages through our dreams which guide us. Simpson shares that dreaming and visioning are often the way knowledge is transmitted from the spiritual world to humans. She quotes Garry Raven, an Anishinaabe sweat lodge leader from Hollow Water First Nation, who explains: “Dreams, remember your dreams they tell you what you need to do, ask elders what your dreams mean you will learn more about your choices meaning in your life, the contributions you should make.” (1999:38)

Orientations

In writing about the assignment of various names to the first people of this land, Calliou, an educator and member of the Michel Band of Alberta states:

A legacy of colonialism is the dichotomy of us/them, characterized with a variety of terms. These include, among others, Native, Status Indian, Amerindian, Aboriginal, First Nations, Canadians, Euro-Canadians, Anglo- Canadians, and White. Just when is it appropriate to use these terms?
(1998:22:10)

Since colonization and up to the present day, we as the first inhabitants of this land have been assigned a variety of names. I borrow a statement from Calliou who writes in discussing naming:

I will daintily wade through a few terms. This is not meant to be a fully proportioned autopsy of the signs and their significance, I merely inventory, without full deconstruction and with apologies to legal and other experts who can hair split these terms to even finer widths. (1998:22:1:32)

Through intermarriage with the 'white' race (Metis), through divisive actions of government (Bill C-31), and the enfranchisement bill (non-status), through regaining treaty rights (status), and through the treaties (treaty Indians), and so on, and adding to this the terms Native, Indigenous and Aboriginal, it is no wonder that there is confusion in some minds as to the correct title to use when naming the first people of this country.

For purposes of this paper, I have chosen to use the term 'Indian' and first people or First Nations when referring to the study participants, their community, and other reserve communities and their people. The students participating in the study are all treaty or status Indians; this research is about them and not of any other group. We the first people most often know ourselves in our communities as Indian people. One will quite often see the signs posted at the entrance to a reserve community, 'You are now entering

an Indian Reserve'. These signs may also identify the specific linguistic group to which the Indian Nation belongs. Amongst the Cree speaking people, we also call ourselves *Ininiwak*, 'the people', thus I also use the term 'the people'. Throughout this paper the terms Aboriginal, Native, Anishinaabae, and Indigenous are used of necessity, in response to and in referencing the literature.

I use the term *traditional* in reference to the way the people have always conducted their lives, since time began. A traditional person may be seen as one who follows the first way of the people with regard to his beliefs, values, and the way he practices his spirituality, for example.

While the numbers of students involved in the research are small, nine students, they represent the total population of students who at this point in time were seen to be having difficulty remaining in the mainstream education system. Because the numbers of students were small, my fieldwork with them was, to borrow a phrase from Clandinin and Connelly, highly personalized' (2000:140); this phrase was in reference to a researcher who worked with three research participants.

Although the numbers of students involved in the research *are* small in relation to the total school population (approximately 400), each and every one of these students is important, and their well being or lack of, impacts on

themselves, their families and the community. Dan Thomas (who as well as being a curriculum development specialist, I also consider a traditional teacher), shared the following about the importance of each and every student:

For First Nation people, every person is precious and the perspective is for 'inclusivity' in education, for just as a chain is only as strong as its weakest link, our community may fail due to the failure of these nine out of four hundred. Therefore, the success of these nine is paramount for the success of the community as a whole.

Phil Lane Jr. and Michael and Judi Bopp share a story about Phil Lane Sr., a distinguished Yankton Sioux elder, which relates to the idea of inclusivity:

He held a stick in his hand, and with it drew a circle in the sand. "Our people used the circle to explain many things" he said. "For instance, the circle represents the hoop of the people. All of the people are a part. No one is excluded. The hurt of one is the hurt of all. The honor of one is the honor of all." (1988:19)

Although the focus of my study does not concern other students in the school who appear to be free of the study groups' problems, I would argue that some of those students are also experiencing some difficulty within their school system. According to a teacher who was at their school during the school years 1999 to 2002, the total number of graduates were sixteen out of

a possible forty three to sixty graduates. The students' failure to graduate was related to either not completing their required courses and/or failing the mandatory provincial Mathematics and English courses which account for 30 to 40% of the student's final grade.

Due to the sensitive nature of the disclosures of some of the study group students, their anonymity is further protected by not naming the community where the research took place. The community snapshot is accurate according to the amenities provided and the numbers of students in attendance at the community school. Those who took part in the research, the parents, community consultants and the students, will have available to them the finished thesis at the local education office. At the community level, the results of the research will also be available to the community members in general. A copy of my thesis will be made available through the local education office.

It is incumbent upon me to ensure that the voices of those involved in the research be heard, especially, those of the students who are the 'reason for being' of the research. As well, it is hoped that the results of the research will 'spur' on those who have the will to make the necessary changes to an education system which does not at this point in time, appear to be a positive one for some of the students.

Questions concerning the study

Questions could be raised concerning the small numbers of students in the study in relation to the total school population (approximately 400). However, this is not a quantitative study, in that the numbers of students experiencing problems personally and educationally is not at issue here. Rather, it is that these nine students in the study are experiencing problems at all. While the data does indicate that certain problems do exist in relation to the study group students' personally and academically, there are certain aspects that can be considered before drawing wide and general conclusions. For example, this study was carried out over a short time period with nine students' who at this point in time were seen to be having difficulty remaining in the mainstream education system. One of the question that can be asked is, over a longer time period, and with more students coming into the study, would the results appear so one sided in pointing out the academic and personal problems of certain of the students, given that the majority of the students studied showed no indication of any problems? Also, if there were no indication of problems academically or personally with the majority of students in this school, what are their supports to them personally, to their education? What defines success for them? These questions could be the

subject of further research into the educational and personal well-being of students at their various educational institutions.

Journeys

This paper is about a journey to a reserve community and the research which took place there: the research to find out why certain students are experiencing difficulty remaining in the mainstream education system. This journey which began sometime in the past, and that planned for meeting with the students, is also about the voices encountered there: the students themselves, the parents, and the community consultants. These voices were all brought together to not only give structure to the research, but to give substance to the life of the research, the process, and to give meaning to the research results, or *kiskéntamowina*, that which is known-that which is. Interspersed throughout the thesis are the voices of other researchers, educators, and authors who also write about the needs, developments, and philosophies concerning education for First Nation or Indian people. Clandinin and Connelly write “In its broadest sense, voice may be thought of as belonging to participants, researcher, and other participants, and other researchers for whom a text speaks.” (2000:146)

Having arrived at my destination, I prepare myself to meet the research participants. I meet the students, who are the main focus of the study. As they begin to share in voiced expressions and in less intangible ways, they invoke in me memories of my own life and school experiences, when I was a young teen. This paper is also about the impact of colonization on the people educationally, and in many other ways, as the journey continues, the voices of the research participants give relevance to its inclusion.

When we journey we learn many things from different people, sources and places. Within this paper, I use those things learned from many places to help me to bring the structure, substance and process of the research together. I use the formal education acquired at western universities; also, I use my life experiences gathered over many years. Most important of all, I use what I have learned through ceremony, prayer, and the teachings from traditional Indian people. As well as hearing from the research participants and I as co-participant, this work is also interspersed with the voices of the grandfathers and grandmothers from the spirit world, who came to support and teach me, when I most needed help. The *teachings* that came are italicized, as well as my dreams. Throughout this paper I also share my knowledge of some of the Traditional teachings that have come to me over the years, through attendance and participation at many ceremonies, and through the giving of

myself during vision quests. In chapter four I write (in the narrative) about my own personal journey through colonization.

In this paper, I describe various methods used which will help the research to 'flow', to happen in 'a good way', encouraging the research participants to participate, to share their views, thoughts, and stories. These methods are what I call Traditional Indian Research methods or *tapwéwina* (the truth). I include other forms of research relative to social science research to compliment my chosen research methodology. In this way, I acknowledge my western education and the knowledge gained there. As much as we would like, we cannot ignore the possibilities that exist of two ways or more working together to arrive at the answers we seek.

The following introduces the objectives of the research, a snapshot of the community where the research took place, a summary of the characteristics of the research participants, and a description of the special education program in which the students were taking part. The actual name of the program is not used, in order to promote further anonymity.

Objectives of the research

The primary purpose of this research is to address the issue of the seeming non-compliance of certain students in a First Nations Community to

remain within the mainstream education system of the local community school. The parameters of the research center around this major question:

Why are the students experiencing difficulty remaining for any length of time in the mainstream education system? It is hoped that by asking the following, that this question will be answered:

1. What are the students' views on why they are having difficulty?
2. What are the views of parents and community consultants with regard to the students' difficulty?
3. Would it be important personally and educationally, to incorporate some aspects of the traditional cultural ways of the people into the students' educational system?
4. What are the views of the research participants on the effectiveness of the special education program?

Community Snapshot

The research took place in an Indian Reserve in Manitoba. The population in the community is approximately 1000, with approximately 800 community members living off reserve. The majority of the reserve population is in the twenty-five to thirty-five year age range. The community is well serviced as to hydro and electricity, with good road access to major towns and villages. There is a health center in the reserve, as well as other services, such as an alcohol and drug abuse program, a child and family services unit and a youth drop in center. The community school took over the administration (local control) of its education services in the 1970's. The

school population is about 400 students, with the majority of students being in the early grades: kindergarten to grade six. The school follows the provincially mandated curriculum.

The Special Education Program Description

The schools' administration provided me with the special education program description. For purposes of anonymity, the actual name of the program is not used, nor is the acquisition of any materials provided by the schools administration referenced. The following is a summary of the salient points of the program.

The Special Education Program was initiated during the school year 1996/1997. Prior to this it was noted that certain students were exhibiting behavioral problems both in the community and within the school setting. Concerned parents, teachers, and some working within the education administration decided that some form of intervention was required. The intent of the Special Education Program is to facilitate the academic and social-emotional development of students who have been referred to the program by concerned teachers and/or parent(s)/guardians. A primary objective of the program is that students be reintegrated into the regular school program, after their skills and behavior have developed to a point where that can be managed.

The criterion for admission to the program is: 1) students who have been assessed as special needs (level 2) with minor learning disabilities, (2) students who have social-emotional disabilities, (3) students with low academic frustration levels-meaning that these students do have major problems with learning concepts within a specific academic area, and (4)

students with social-emotional problems arising from the home environment resulting in inconsistent attendance and incompleteness of school work.

The students are assessed by Special Education Resource Personnel prior to admission to the program. The intent of the evaluation is to identify specific areas of academic weaknesses. This information is also used to identify specific academic levels, instructional content and instructional strategies that would facilitate greater student achievement levels and personal growth.

The academic courses of the students are the same as those students in the mainstream educational system. The difference is that, the students in the special program work and learn at their own pace. There is no time line for completion of course or module; the students are paced according to their abilities. Examples of courses which the students might take include: Mathematics, English, Science, and Social Studies. In the area of electives, the students have the opportunity to gain credits in Industrial Arts (small motors), Computer Education, and Physical Education. All instructors are provincially accredited teachers.

All students in the program are given the opportunity to work at community-owned and privately owned businesses. Within the workplace component, the intention is for students to learn the special functions and/or roles of employees, and that social expectations of employers are similar to the expectations of the education system. Workplace activities are linked to the students' academic interests wherever possible. The workplace component takes place during the spring/summer months for one month. There is one credit for the workplace component.

According to school records, one hundred and one students have spent time in the program. Of the one hundred and one students, forty eight have dropped out, forty seven reintegrated back to regular classes; of the forty seven, eleven students dropped out and eight returned to the special program. The remaining students were listed as moving away from the community. In the school year 97/98, two students from the program graduated from grade twelve, one who had reintegrated back to regular classes, and one who was a student of the program.

(The Special Program did not continue after the school year 2002-2003 due to lack of funding.)

Participants to the research

All participants to the research (community consultants, parents and students), were made aware at the time that I first made contact with them, that I was a student at the University of Manitoba, currently enrolled in the masters program through the Native Studies Department. The participants were also made aware that the research in which they had agreed to participate would be related to the development of my thesis.

The Students

The group of students, who were the main focus of the research, were all in or had been in attendance in a Special Education Program at a First Nations community school (one of the students had moved from the program back to regular classes). The total number of students involved in the research was nine. The students were from various backgrounds socio-economically, ranging from full time working parents, seasonally employed parent, one parent working, to dependence on social assistance. Two of the students were from single parent families. The commonalities of the students were that all were treaty or status Indians, and that none spoke their First

Nation's language. There were eight males and one female in the group of students; their age range was from fourteen to eighteen.

Community Consultants

The community consultants numbered six and all were involved in some way in the educational system of the community school, as teachers, counselors, and administratively. Through the education system, and as community members, the consultants had personal knowledge, and also knowledge of the students' academic progress. The consultants came from various educational backgrounds, including: Bachelors and Masters in education, and one with a Psychology Degree in education. Four of the consultants were from the local community, all but one were treaty Indians.

Parents

Informal interviews were carried out with six parents; all had children and grandchildren presently attending the community school. Children of three of these parents were presently in the Special Education Program, the child of one parent had recently moved from the program up to grade nine, the grandmother of one of the students in the program was interviewed, and one grandmother whose child had been in the program in the past was also

interviewed. The sixth parent was a teacher at the school, who currently had a child attending regular classes.

Chapter two details my research methods and discusses traditional Indian research methodology. My use of traditional Indian research methodology acknowledges my own knowledge of traditional ways of knowing, and hopefully works toward promoting in co-respectfulness, research methodology that acknowledges 'traditional' research methods, while at the same time giving credence to social science research methods. According to Colorado, an integration of Western and Indian ways of thinking must occur if we are to develop research strategies and outcomes which are acceptable and respected by both cultures. (1988:49)

Chapter Two: Research Methodology and Discussion

In Hampton's article, *Memory Comes before Knowledge: Research May Improve if Researches Remember Their Motives*, he discusses his personal experiences with research. He shares about rolling out the sacred medicine bundles of his life and looking for memories there, picking them up, touching and feeling them, each memory giving him knowledge. (1995:53) Hampton also discusses motives for doing research: how memories and feelings brought forth from those memories give knowledge and power to finish a task at hand. (P.52-54)

When thinking about my memories within the context of education and the educational system imposed upon us, I remember how my mother was punished in the community day school for speaking her native language. I remember when I was in grade 2 or 3 at day school, how my teacher threw my carefully (I thought) crafted Christmas angel into the garbage, after I had proudly placed it on her desk. I'm sure this is why I have no talent for drawing or putting things together with my hands; my artistic talent if I had any, was stifled.

It was not until I began to remember my dream of the staircase with no foundation that my motive for the research I would be doing became clearer.

In some small way, perhaps I could be of help to the students, to the children coming up, and that the missing foundation would begin to form for them. I am curious about what could form that foundation. I know it would not include punishing someone for speaking their first language, or stifling one's artistic talent. Do old educational systems need to be torn down, and new ones built from the ground up? What would this structure look like? Cajete the Pueblo educator and author, writes of American Indians and education, and that this a time of choice:

That it becomes crucial that we ask questions about spirit, philosophy, structures, roles, contexts, and intent of American Indian Education in the twenty-first century. This place of Asking begs for dialogue at all levels of relationship, structure, and expression. Thought woman is whispering in our ear and again turning the wind that stands within each of us. (1994:186; 187)

The questions of structures that might help to form the missing foundation of educational systems, brings me to the research carried out with the students who have dropped out of the mainstream educational system.

The Research Process

Related to the 'process', Ellerby quotes his mentor Thin Elk:

For us the process is what counts. The process is a ceremony, it is sacred. Then the result is a better understanding of creation. But that is not a product

really, that belongs to the creator, the spirits and the ancestors. It was theirs in the beginning and the end: you never really 'discover' anything. The Creator is always Complete...(2000:36).

And so knowing this, I ventured forth to carry out the process already known.

I had given my research approach considerable thought. I could not use purely social science methods of inquiry that I had learned at Western educational institutions of 'higher' learning. The scientific way of conducting research posed a dilemma for me, as, my Indian way was reminding me otherwise. I was reminded of what I have learned, what I know, that we are all influenced (physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually) by the environment around us: the physical, the human and all other life. Everything has to be considered as a whole and in consideration of the interrelatedness of all life; my research would begin with these thoughts in mind. Some of the social science research methods which would appear to compliment the way I saw my research developing would also be reviewed, to see what might be used from there.

I began my research and literature review looking for alternative or perhaps blended ways of conducting research. 'Blended', in this context means a combination of both western and Aboriginal thought with regard to conducting research (Ellerby 2000). Through various readings that I was

guided to, including; Colorado 1988, Madder 1996, Gardner 2000, Hampton 1995, Simpson 1999, Ellerby 2000, Smith 2000, Connelly & Clandinin 1990, Stevenson 2002, Hoare & Robinson & Levy 1993, Hermes 1998, and Cajete 1999, I was able to *see* how my research methodology might develop without depending only on social science research methods. The thoughts and ideas of these authors/educators, with regard to the use of traditional methodology in research or perhaps a combination of scientific and traditional research methodology, was inspirational for me in the planning of my own research.

Colorado shares her thoughts on the use of both Western and Native science to find answers to questions:

In research, we try to use Western glasses, not Native glasses, to see the meaning of problems in our lives and to find solutions. This poses an urgency because we are not using both Western and Native science; we have become exclusively dependent on Western science. (1988:60)

As I went along in the planning of my research, it became apparent to me that I was unable, and unwilling to attempt to fit the Traditional ways of doing things, of finding answers, into scientific research methods. The thoughts and the knowledge came, that for myself, I must use the Traditional

Indian ways as a foundation to the whole research process. This way was central for me; all else would stem from this foundation.

In deciding to base my research from a traditional perspective, I step outside the boundaries of established parameters of conducting research. In doing so, I push away the old constricting ideologies of power and domination from which current scientific research practices had their birth. I do my research through 'Indian' eyes, as opposed to 'imperial' eyes. Using Indian eyes to do research means we look at *all* in the environment in relation to our research, including western methods; we take what we can use from these and leave the rest.

Smith writes about research through 'imperial eyes'. "Research through 'imperial eyes' describes an approach which assumes that Western ideas about the most fundamental things are the only ideas possible to hold, certainly the only rational ideas, of social life and of human beings." (1999:56) Knowledge that a growing number of educators and researchers are exploring alternate ways to conduct research is becoming more common, is alluded to by LeAnne Simpson: "A growing number of researchers are exploring the idea of using Aboriginal paradigms, methodologies and methods in research they conduct with Aboriginal peoples." (1999:23) See

also Simpson In Press, Graveline 1998, Kawagley 1995, Kineu 1995, Martin-Hill 1995, and Colorado 1988.

Although the Traditional 'way' formed the foundation of my research and flowed in and around the whole research process, this was not to the exclusion of social science research methods. This integration was necessary in order to obtain specific information from research participants. An example is the taped interviews with community consultants. (Within a traditional cultural context, we do not tape conversations while seeking information about something we wish to learn.) Colorado refers to 'integration', as a blending of research efforts, not the domination of ideological control by one culture's science. (1988:4) One other example of a named social science research method (as it turns out I employed in my research), is participatory research. I did not consciously search for this research method to use; however, its description was appropriate to the guidelines built into my not always visible research methodology.

The term usually defines a research inquiry which involves: some form of collaboration between the researchers and the researched, a reciprocal process in which both parties educate one another, and as a focus on the production of local knowledge to improve interventions or professional practices, (Macaulay et al. 1998:105)

In her delineation of methodological implications for the use of participatory research, Colorado writes: “The participation of people in participatory research, similar to “relations” in Native science, can provide cross-cultural opportunities for collaboration, co-operation, and communication.” (1988:63)

As the focus of my research methodology was not the use of social science research methods, I will not dwell on their use, although as it turns out, I *have* employed some of these named academic methods. As Indian people we have long experience in using some of these methods to seek answers in a good way: being respectful in collaboration with others in finding things out for ourselves and also for the production of local knowledge for community benefit (participatory research). Also, sharing lived stories (narrative inquiry). These Indian methods have no academic name. I transpose a phrase offered by Peter Kulchyski in his discussion of Native Studies, to my thoughts on Indian research methods, “My own preference is to characterize it more precisely as a lack of discipline, an attempt to develop knowledge that is not constrained by the methodologies, theories, values, and impulses traditionally associated with a specific discipline. (2000:20) Academic and traditional methods can continue to

inform each other, to the culmination of research methodology acceptable to both communities, if neither assumes superiority over the other.

If using scientific research methodology was considered the *only* way, the most popular, the most appropriate, then we would still be under the colonizer's imperialistic gaze, and working within the parameters he sets out for *the way* to develop and conduct our research. He (the colonizer), would be flexing his 'positional superiority'. (Smith, 1999:60) This positional superiority began when competing western states in the mid fifteenth century began to politically divide the world, establishing their authority and superiority. Smith suggests that these imaginary boundaries continue to be drawn, and that the underpinnings of early western systems of classification in a colonial context, were undeniably about power and control. (p.60)

In *Expressions In Canadian Native Studies*, Peter Kulchyski writes about the challenges for Native Studies-one being the now dominant methods of academic inquiry: "Native Studies may be seen as part of a broader movement within academia to question the now dominant standards for inquiry that were laid down in large measure by the Western Enlightenment."(2000:15)

Traditional Indian Research Methodology.

The departure from 'pure' academic research methods began in my preparation that came *before* contact with the research participants. This preparation, the offering of tobacco and prayer, also took place on a daily basis while the research was on going.

From my long experience attending and participating in various ceremonies, I have learned that tobacco was given to the Indian to use as an offering in prayer when saying thank you for something: the new day, the water, the medicine plants, the animals, and all living things put here on earth by creator. Tobacco is also used as an offering when asking for help with something: healing for self, for family, for those in trouble, or, if we are going through hard times and struggling with something. The answers will come, sometimes in a way least expected. Earlier in my research, when I was thinking about, praying about, how what I was doing might culminate into something that could possibly be of help to students, questioning what I was doing, what needed to happen, I had a dream.

In my dream, an educator whom I had known for many years, and who had passed on, came to me. He took me to this place where an old building had fallen into ruin. This place resembled the area where the residential school had stood, the one that he and I had attended. He was very happy and excited, telling me, showing me, what could be done there. A new structure could come from the ruins, it needed a new foundation. As my guide walked along

showing me things, he fell over something. Try as I might, I could not get him up- I had to go on alone.

In the past, the Traditional methods of seeking answers consisted of the offering of tobacco and a gift to someone, or through ceremony such as a vision quest, or other individual and group ceremonies. This way continues today, for those seeking answers the Traditional Indian way. Simpson (1999) uses Anishinaabe methods in conducting her research on Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK). These methods included: consulting with Elders and community experts, learning by doing, storytelling, dreaming, ceremony, self-knowledge and self-reflection.(p23) Simpson writes of her 'methods' to seek answers, " I participated in a number of different ceremonies over the course of the research. Different ceremonies were used to heal, cleanse, to seek knowledge, to give insight into the future, and to make decisions about this research." (p40)

The answers, the knowledge that comes of what we are asking, are looked at, thought about, worked with, and put into context of the situation at hand. This way of conducting research is both meaningful and powerful as the answers come from a spiritual realm. No one can take these answers away; the truth of them is always there. The truth resembles the sureness of the sun coming each day. It is always there, although we may not always be

able to see it. Using the Traditional way as a base to conduct research, and the interweaving of that way throughout the whole research process, gives strength and power, not only to the answers that come, but to those researchers who are no longer relying only on scientific research methods.

Following our true heart means expressing ourselves: our self reliance, and self determination through development of our own knowledge systems.

In writing about one of his research methods 'Indigenist Thought', Stevenson states, "As Indigenous people strive towards self-determination, Western thought still attempts to hold onto some semblance of colonization in claiming and defining systems of self-determination. Again we have to move towards our own systems of knowledge acquisition, back to our traditions." (2002:40)

The Tree As a Metaphor for Traditional Indian Based Research

Native Science is in every sense an expression of the evolutionary interrelationship of native people with nature. The tree presents an archetype of life, learning, and development that begins with the sprouting of a seedling from a seed embedded in fertile ground, then moves to the various stages of growth and development through all the seasons of life and its trials and tribulations until it begins to form seeds of its own---the roots, trunk, branches, and leaves of the sacred tree may be seen as symbolic expressions of the various dimensions of Native science (Cajete 1999:58)

The development of traditionally based research is analogous to the growth and development of the tree. When humility is a part of prayer, in asking for guidance in every day life, or if one is working to put something together, the guidance *will* come, such as the following.

The tree has its roots, its foundation in the earth. The growth and development of the tree is influenced by the nourishment it receives from the soil, its foundation. Also, by the environmental influences: air, light and water. The final appearance of the tree, its height, shape, leaf color and strength, is determined by these influences.

Like the tree, Traditional based research has its roots in that earth foundation. Everything that goes into that foundation determines the outcome of the research process. Planted in the foundation is the motive, the intent of the research. We nourish the motive with humility. The ceremonies for cleansing and healing go alongside the motive, as we must keep our mind, body and spirit clean, ready for the answers to come. The answers that come through dreams and visions are acknowledged with humility, these answers that give direction to the research process. We offer tobacco to the research participants, so they will know that we seek their help in a sacred manner. The history of the people is kept there in the foundation and acknowledged throughout the whole research process, as the growth of the people and of the generations coming after is determined by their history. The elements from the foundation flow upward, a part of the growth process, giving life to the research, as the nutrients from the earth flow up from the roots, through the veins of the tree, sustaining its growth. The trunk of the tree can be seen as holding those methods of inquiry, the data gathering, and in response, the voices of the people. The voices of the people must be heard, before the seed planted in the foundation can begin to grow and flourish. The spirit and intent of the research flow up, within and around the growth process, defining the relationships between and amongst each, inviting communication to occur and capturing the knowledge that each presents.

In his discussion of 'tenets of Native philosophy', Cajete writes
 "creativity can be likened to a seed full of potential which to reach its

potential must grow through an outward process of sprouting, developing leaves, flowering and bearing fruit.” (1999:66)

Within the context of research, this is an Indian way of looking at and understanding things: people, the earth, the environment, and the interrelationships amongst and within them. The underpinnings to this method of inquiry explore and acknowledge the traditions of the people and the first ways given to them: their way of asking, knowing, and their acknowledgment of the spiritual relationship amongst all living things.

The next part of this paper deals with the ‘methods’ used to gather information from the research participants. These were taped interviews with the community consultants, informal interviews with parents, and individual and group sessions with the students; the sessions with the students and the questions asked, are included in chapter three, Findings. The methods used were the branches to the traditional Indian research base. That is, these methods were carried out cognizant of respecting that knowledge base.

The Interviews

Using the Traditional Indian way as a base to the method of interviewing acknowledges respect (the passing of tobacco when asking), humility (research participants are equal), trust (confidentiality is assured),

truth (the tobacco answers), and acknowledges relationships to the physical, human, and all the environment around us.

Based on the work of Theresa Tuccaro (1987), Colorado presents an outline related to 'the interview'

The first is preparation (the preparation of self), use prayers, know how to approach people (ask the Elders), knowing when to do the interviews (the interviewer must feel good, have an open mind) and pick a good spot (you can see and feel a good spot). The second is the interview: know the right time to begin "when the spirit shows itself": establish trust, relax yourself, use simple language (never try to be above the other); balance is important, listen (even when the interview is finished) humor is important. (1988:56)

Using the Traditional Indian approach, there is much more to the method of interviewing than simply preparing questions and conducting the interview. There is the preparation of self, and the thoughts about the reasons behind the interviews-the motive. Everyone is considered: those giving their consent for the research, the participants to the research, and the community in general; what impact if any will the research have on them?

In preparation for the interviews, I prepared myself through the offering of tobacco and prayer (ceremony), asking that I would know my place (humility), remember kindness, talking about why I was doing the research: for the students, for the children coming up.

... in prayerful research, the voice of the people becomes the data; the words create a feeling in the reader and give credence to the findings. This is the normal method by which Native

people arrive at consensus, or in this case, confidence in research findings. (Colorado 1988:54)

Community Consultant Interviews

The names of the community consultants were suggested to me through the local education authority, as these consultants had both personal and academic awareness of the students. These consultants added greatly to the type of information that I was seeking as to why the students were having difficulty remaining within the mainstream education system.

The interviews with the community consultants were tape recorded and transcribed. The consultants were provided the time to view the transcriptions, giving them the opportunity to make any changes, deletions or additions. The interview questions posed to the consultants were open ended, allowing them room to expand on their answers. The open-endedness of the questions also helped to elicit reflective responses. The responses to 'why' did the students leave the mainstream education system, were framed within the kaleidoscope of environmental influences impacting on the students. The consultants were asked the following questions:

- 1) What in your viewpoint are some of the reasons the students have left the mainstream education system, for example; could this be related to the school, parents, the community, or some other influencing factors?

- 2) What do you see as those processes and influences which could facilitate, and support the students to remain in or return to the mainstream education system?
- 3) The research literature has cited cultural aspects related to a student's positive self esteem and identity, as being important to a student's growth both personally and academically. What are your views on cultural aspects within the context of education, and within the context of personal growth?
- 4) What needs of the students do you see the Special Education Program fulfilling? Are you familiar with the curriculum of the program? What changes if any would you like to see made in the program?
- 5) In what ways if any could the community, school, education administration, and parents be more supportive of students overall education, both academically and personally?

The consultants were asked if they had any additional comments, and if they felt there were other questions that could have been asked. After the fact as sometimes happens even with what we may think is careful planning, I noted that in my zeal to arrive at some answers, questions number two and five were similar, and that the consultants were answering number five while also answering number two. I therefore eliminated asking the number five question, although some of the consultants also responded to this question. (They had a copy of the questions for their use during the interview).

Parent Interviews

Informal interviews were carried out with the six parents; that is, no tape recorders were used, nor were any notes taken during our meeting. I

made notes immediately following each interview. Parents had the option of viewing my completed notes; this was to ensure that nothing had been added or deleted to their responses. They also could receive a copy of the typed interview if they choose to do so. These parents were made aware of the research that I was involved in at the time that they were contacted and asked if they would participate. Complete confidentiality was assured, since no names would be used. The parents were encouraged to speak freely on any topic related to the research questions. For example, one grandmother spoke of how children were disciplined and encouraged in their education in the past, by being read to, and ensuring the children went to bed at a time which would ensure they were well rested for school the next day. The parents were asked the following questions:

- 1) What in their viewpoint were some of the reasons why students were having difficulty remaining in the mainstream education system? Could any of these reasons be related to; the school itself, parents/home, the students themselves, or other factors?
- 2) What did they think were some of those things which might help the students to remain in the mainstream education system?
- 3) Did they think it was important to the students personally and academically to have some aspects of their culture in their schooling?
- 4) Where there any other questions that they felt could have been asked?

The responses to the research questions and the common themes they generated are the subject of the next chapter.

Chapter Three: Findings

INTRODUCTION

I conducted the interviews in an attempt to arrive at some answers as to why the students had dropped out of the mainstream education system. It is my hope that the answers that come will not only create a better understanding of why these students find themselves where they are today, but also, will determine some 'positive ends' to which the results can be applied.

The interviews were exploratory in nature; the findings were arrived at through dialogue examining the environmental influences impacting on the students, and their possible relationship to the students' lack of progress in the mainstream education system. As a way of beginning dialogue, the interview questions were preset, although, the participants were also given the opportunity to suggest other questions that they felt could have been asked. In keeping with the traditional way of asking and waiting for answers, no time limit was set on the interviews. The interviews took place either at the participants' place of work, at their home, or at the local education office boardroom, complete privacy was ensured. As I knew some of the participants from previous encounters, the preliminary greetings and

catching up first had to be carried out. I as ‘participant-observer’ (Hampton1995), took part in the reflective discussions around the questions presented. I sensed at times that the time had come for the questions concerning the students to be asked, and that we were in the right ‘place’ for this to happen.

Another thing about interviewing; you have to pick a good spot, and you have to feel, this person will fit in good here...But you have to know the right place/time to begin. You don’t just jump in. You have to visit, make the other person feel comfortable. (Theresa Tuccaro, 1987)

The community consultants and some of the parents and students ‘opened’ themselves up in their sharing, as though they had been waiting for this time to come. The more ‘traditional’ participants revealed that they at times received their answers through ceremony. A community consultant shared: “I could talk for days on this. I had no one to teach me these things; I learned it from my pipe.” (August 14, 2002)

Paulo Freire the Brazilian educator and author, in his discussion on dialogue writes, “As we attempt to analyze dialogue as a human phenomenon, we discover something which is the essence of dialogue itself; the *word*. But the word is more than just an instrument which makes dialogue possible; accordingly, we must seek its constituent elements.”

(p.60) Freire also speaks about the ‘word’ being more than just a word, that

having arrived at the 'word', we in dialogue, must find out what more there is to this word; what has shaped it, what has given it life? (p.69)

We look at the words which form the interview questions, and the responses that came; what has shaped them and given them life? I think that as Freire suggests, 'we in dialogue must seek its (the word's) constituent elements', in order to fully understand and gain from that, what it is we are seeking.

In attempting to identify common themes having bearing on the research questions, I wrote each question within a circle and surrounded this with the responses that came from the community consultants and parents. Using this circular approach helped me to see more clearly the identified influences impacting on the students academically and personally, and also the relationship of the responses to each other, and their similarities and differences. I also used this same method in looking at the students' responses. The circular approach also enabled me to see and extract more easily the common threads or themes that respond to the central question: why are the students experiencing difficulty remaining in the mainstream education system? These threads or themes are interwoven throughout the responses from the participants. The circle in a traditional sense connects

everything to each other, whereas using a linear approach tends to break up thoughts and ideas; the portrayal of these is not seamless.

The responses to the research questions from the community consultants and parents are arranged under the themes of: parental support, the education system, leadership, community, culture and the special program. As there is a relationship between and amongst these (parental support, the education system, community, leadership, culture and the special program), from time to time, the responses that come necessarily bring in more than one influence impacting on the student.

Parental Support

Throughout our lives, our parents have been a major influencing factor in all aspects of our growth and development: physically, emotionally, intellectually, and spiritually. As parents, their role is to be our caregivers, providers, teachers, and protectors. The role of parents however, has not and does not always provide the child with a positive foundation for growth. It is that foundation through which the child can develop themselves into self-reliant young adults and adults who have positive self-esteem, with a strong sense of identity of who they are and where they fit into the scheme of things with respect to the family, the community and the outside world.

One of the strongest comments coming from the interviews with the community consultants was, "that parental influence is the number one reason why students find themselves in the special program." (Community consultant 'C.C.' August 14, 2001) Another consultant comments on the behavior and attitudes of the students, and the relationship to the home environment:

I think that a lot of behavior or attitudes come from the home. I would say maybe 90% of it comes from home, and the children learn behavior, behavior is a learned thing---and most of the places that they get it is from home.. That's a really big thing when a child comes from a dysfunctional family; they're going to bring that dysfunction with them. It's really hard to tell a parent that, you know that their parenting skills need to be improved, before their child can be successful. (C.C. June 25, 2001)

These comments raise the question, why do parents not have a more positive influence on their children's education? During the interviews, several reasons were given for lack of parental involvement. One major reason was that the lingering negative influences of residential school had undermined the parenting skills of parents. Related to this was the parents' loss of their responsibility to teach their children:

Parents do not have time to help their children with their work. Parents have a more pressing need to address their own social problems, like emotional or psychological problems. These problems could stem from old residential school influences. These people never developed proper parenting skills, they

were not taught the traditional values of respect, this way has been passed on to their children, and has become a way of life. These children are in school at this present time.” (C.C. August 14, 2001)

Hookimaw- Witt, shares a similar thought, “A lot of problems that Native people have today came out of residential school; psychological problems. And we passed our problems on to our children.” (1998:226)

As has been mentioned, one of the reasons why some parents are not so involved with their children’s education had to do with the parents losing the responsibility for teaching their children to others, due to the impact of the residential school experience. A community consultant comments, “It’s sort of a learned behavior for a lot of parents, because we were not so involved in our children’s education for a long time, and now it’s taken awhile for us to get back into being involved, and sharing the responsibility of education.” (C.C. June 26, 2001)

This comment by the community consultant reminds me that the school-administrators and teachers need to communicate to the parents what is going on in the school related to their child’s education: what that child needs to achieve in order to move ahead, how they plan to get him there, and the school’s expectations of the parents’ involvement in their child’s education. A way must be found to truly implement the school’s philosophy

of 'the child needs help from the school, the community, and the parent'.

(C.C. August 13, 2001)

In chapter four, the topic of colonization and its effects on the people are raised. It is appropriate to comment briefly here of the effects which continue to touch the lives of many people today, not the least, the lives of many parents who continue to raise their children through the kept influences of foreign child rearing practices. These ways were passed on down through the generations.

We must be careful not to 'lay the blame' squarely at the feet of the parents as to why their children seemingly cannot, will not continue on in school. Some parents continue to be caught up in the cycle of ignorance of those things that would help them to nurture and nourish their child in all of his dimensions. The parent, it seems in some cases, *has* relinquished their responsibility for raising his/her child to the school. Parents and community consultants comment further on the need for more responsibility on the part of the parents. "Parents have to take responsibility for a child's well being personally and academically." (Parent October 3, 2002) "I have seen three parents this school year, the kids are coming and going, it is hard to get something going with the parents." (C.C November 3, 2002) "Education starts at home and continues at the school, parents have to realize that their

role is as important as everyone else, probably more important.” (C.C. June 26, 2001) And, “the parents have to come right into the school to see how their kids are doing, the parents could ask, “How is my kid doing, is anything wrong?”, and “How are you helping them, and how can I help?” ” (C.C. August 13, 2001)

When the child is not cared for, nurtured, or encouraged, the child comes to school not fully formed or developed emotionally, intellectually, and socially. The tools that he needs to see him through the educational system are missing, that *strengthening* foundation which is given to the parents to help develop their child is missing. As two of the students shared during my individual time with them, “parents should love and encourage their child”, and “how can parents support their child? Parents’ need to encourage child and show caring.” (Student interviews June 2002) I see these comments coming from the students as hope for the future. The realization is there of what needs to happen. The Royal Commission on Aboriginal People cites social change, the stresses of poverty, and disruptive interventions in Aboriginal family life over generations that have taken a severe toll on the capacity of many Aboriginal families to provide ‘this’ kind of positive environment for raising children (1996:448).

Many parents out of necessity continue to entrust the education of their children to that system which in many cases does not contain those elements which would help that child to develop intellectually, emotionally, spiritually, and socially. The present system is also not based on nurturing in the child a strong sense of pride in his heritage and identity. If the child has a strong sense of pride in him/herself and this is nurtured in the first instance through the home, and secondly through the school and the community, all else would follow. The pride which strengthens the knowledge of who one is, impacts on one intellectually; as one feels good about him/herself they believe they can perform the task set before them.

Through the treaties signed by our ancestors, we entrusted the formal education of our children to foreign systems, believing this was the best for the child, that the child would be cared for there in every way. Some children made it through, yet in the future, these children have to deal with the loss of their ways handed down through the generations. Languages, family and community cohesiveness were lost for many. Many of the children were lost, and the people did not know what they had lost until it was too late. The following is a teaching that came to me, which tells of how some of the parents lost their children.

There was a village in a remote area where there was much snow. Snow covered everything; the tipis, the earth all around. The people had little

food, unable to leave to look for food, they had trouble finding wood to warm their lodges. The earth seemed barren for miles around, the only movement was the snow which the cold wind blew all around. One night as a mother lay sleeping, a sound came to the doorway of the tipi, only she heard the sound. She looked out and was entranced by someone standing not far from the tipi. She was afraid, as this being was frightful to look upon. The being was tall and fat with blazing eyes. The mother found her voice and asked who he was. The being answered: I am the one who can make the snow stop, the wind to stop blowing, you will not be trapped here anymore, you will have food and wood to warm your lodges. If I do this for you, you must give me your children, I will care for them, feed them shelter them. The mother fearful of angering the being, told him, I will have to think about this great thing that you ask, come back tomorrow and I will give you my answer. As the mother lay back down, she began to dream. In her dream she saw her people in warm lodges with plenty of food to eat, people with white faces were offering the people all the food they could eat and carry. In her dream the mother could not see on the other side of her dream, only one side was presented to her. The next morning, the mother thought and thought about what her decision would be. She thought to herself, that the being has promised to look after my children, we have so little food, my people will not starve and we will have warm lodges to live in, I can have other children. When night came again, the being was waiting for her. As she told him of her decision, the being seemed to grow even taller and fatter, filling up with the new beings he had acquired. For a time the cold winds subsided, the snow stopped. The people found plenty of food and wood to warm their lodges. Then the snow began again and with it the cold wind which covered all with snow, and with it the people and their children.

The Education System.

In 1971, the Indian Chiefs of Manitoba in the spirit of self-determination, put together Wabung: Our Tomorrows, a historic document presenting their position on “policies necessary to achieve a just and honorable and mutually satisfactory relationship between the people of Canada and the Indian people of Manitoba” (prologue1). Within this

document, the Chiefs note, “many non Indians believe that we have failed education but the truth of the matter is that education has failed us because it was imposed upon us, was not relevant to us, nor were we given the opportunity of being involved in designing it.” (p.109)

Since this time when the seeds of self-determination were being planted in the minds of the people, much has been written and talked about concerning the education of Indian people. Over the years there have been many conferences, gatherings by and for the people, most asking the question “why has education failed us”? Other conferences and gatherings detail ‘how to get there’. Many working groups and their subsequent reports support the longstanding concerns related to First Nation education. Millions of dollars have been spent on production of these reports, most detailing the same issues, same recommendations on how to *fix* the education problems of Indian people. As Deloria writes in the section on ‘*The Perpetual Education Report*’:

The Secretary Of Education is conducting a new study of Indian education this year and the task force is busy putting together a document that will provide policy guidelines during the next several years. The ink will hardly be dry on this report before another organization or federal agency has the urge to investigate and the cycle will begin again. From the Rev. Jedidiah Morse in the 1820’s through to Senator Kennedy to the present, the refrain is the same: “we are not doing anything, we need more money, and the Indians need to be involved.” (1991:61)

In 2003, the final report from the National Working group on Education was released by the then Indian Affairs Minister Robert Nault. In his praise of the report, Nault stated:

This is another example of how the Government of Canada is taking concrete steps in partnership with First Nation Communities, ... and that investments in education are the most enduring contributions that can be made for First Nations communities. (Grass Roots News, March 5, 2003).

In the same news article, the report was seen as old news, for as far back as 1972, the then National Indian Brotherhood, (now the Assembly of First Nations), released a report called '*Indian Control over Education*', detailing many of the same issues in the Working Group Report, and rejecting the Federal Government's proposal to turn over education to the provinces. In 1973 the Federal Government accepted the Indian Control of Education Policy paper in principle as national policy. The National Working Group Report of 2003, followed on the heels of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal People released in 1996, which included the educational aspirations of the people, along with many recommendations.

This paper's focus is not to present an account of the historical events related to Indian education. A detailed review of the developments in the field of Indian education is offered in the introduction to the book

Aboriginal Education: Fulfilling The Promise (2000), and edited by Marlene Brant Castellano.

Despite the slew of reports and recommendations concerning the education of Indian people, we continue to observe and hear that First Nation people are not happy with their present educational system. “Aboriginals want education with meaning” states the headline in the Winnipeg Free Press November 28, 2003. “First Nations Students well behind the National Average” is another article which appeared in the Interlake Spectator August 12, 2002. “Former Trustee questions First Nations Education”, the Interlake Spectator April 24, 2003; and “Native Schools urged: Report says education in crises” The Winnipeg Sun, February 14, 2003, are some of the more recent headlines we continue to see today.

All the rhetoric is there in the reports, all the recommendations for the education of Indian children – the children need someone to stand up for them, someone who will not be afraid to cast aside the ideology that the present system in place in most reserve schools is the only way to educate the children. As the present education system in the communities has been in place for many, many years, understandably change would not come overnight. It is time however to begin to examine, to develop and implement

educational processes which would sustain the children in both their academic and personal well being.

Cajete writes of his work, *Indigenous Education for a Twenty-First Century World*:

This work has been a pilgrimage, tracking the spirit of Indigenous education through concentric rings of relationship. Images and Metaphors have been portrayed as reflected in the words of many people, Indian and Non-Indian, artists and scholar-- Metaphorically we have looked to the top of an inner mountain to gain a perspective of where Indian education has been and where it is now. We are poised to see where Indian education may go and the best paths it might take to get there. (1994:186)

Cajete sets the tone for those who have the will to “do” *something*, to bring the education of Indian people into the twenty first century, not however at the cost of leaving behind those things which give real meaning to the term *Indian* education. Perhaps all the reports and recommendations together will, or have already planted the seeds of self-determination for those determined to see Indian children take their rightful place within the educational milieu, secure in their heritage and with pride in their identity.

Some visionaries, educators, authors and others not only talk and write about the state of First Nations education, but are involved in ‘doing’, developing, implementing alternative, new educational processes, resources, and *ways of doing*, some of these include: Battiste (1998), Hampton (1995),

Cajete (1999) (2000), Smith (1999), Kawagley (2001), Colorado (1988), Simpson (1999), and Stevenson (2002).

The seeds of self-determination which lay dormant for so long have awakened. The new growth expresses itself in unique ways, through various forms of expression.

In 1975, Emma LaRoque a Metis scholar and educator asked the question, “why are the children and parents the first to be stigmatized when perhaps, in fact, it is the institution that may be failing them?” (p58)

This question brings me to where a group of students find themselves today, not able to fit into *their* institution of learning. The feeling one gets when observing and interacting with these students is that they are on the periphery of their educational system. They are seen as though in a fog-some unable to find their way. It appears as though their spirits are lost, somehow unreachable by the outstretched hands of their instructors and other helpers in the educational system. What is being offered these students? Why do some not take it?

The community consultants including the parents had much to say about the local education system as it related to the failure of some of its students to continue on in the mainstream education system of the local community school.

The focus was on changes that could be made at the local level as to how the education system could be used, changed and improved, to provide a more supportive learning environment for the students. Several areas were cited within the education system that needed attention, revamping, and development. These included: **At the school:** the lack of a vision statement which would detail the roles and responsibilities of the administration and the teachers, the teaching styles of some of the teachers, the lack of proper evaluation and passing of students, (the students are passed to the next grade without proper preparation), the lack of proper evaluation of students' ability to read and write, and the need to address and build up the students' confidence and self worth. **Outside the school:** lack of initiative from all levels of leadership in the community was cited, as, it was noted that all the human resources had to work together to support their youth, not only in their educational endeavors, but also in their emotional and physical well being, and, as has been mentioned, parents needed to be more involved in their child's education.

Lack of a vision statement and the guidance that would flow from that through the form of relevant policy sits paramount as the missing element which could help to bring things together for the administrators, teachers and students. The needs cited all relate to missing policy which

would not only address these needs, but which would remain in place even if leadership should change. The following quote from a community consultant speaks of the need for the development of a vision statement from which would flow the guidance for policy development, and from that, the instructions to developing guidelines for student evaluation:

Follow a vision statement, it doesn't matter if leadership changes, if we do not make changes, we are perpetuating the cycle. Policies have to be developed with student expectations therein; means of evaluating students, criteria for developing tests, consistent means of evaluating students until that student reaches that optimum level. "here are the policies and the steps to get there, we are going to be starting at 60% achievement level, and I expect the teachers to do that, here is the criteria for developing those test items, these are the instructions I expect them to use". If these are in place, teachers have to develop these and do consistent evaluation until students have achieved that optimum level. If teachers cannot do that then get someone else. (August 14, 2001)

The Community Consultant speaks about getting things done through the development of a relevant vision statement, rather than continuing to follow a statement which quite often although grandiose, fails to give guidance as to how one can proceed to bring about the tenets of the vision statement, or as they are often called, mission statements.

In speaking about the changes that need to come about at the school and the weaknesses that need to be addressed, the teaching styles of some of the teachers came under fire:

Address the teaching styles and attitudes of teachers, right now we do not have anyone at the school that can go directly into the faculty of Science, computer science, why? because we have been teaching our students the old way, we have not taught our students to become more creative thinkers, thinking beyond the norm. Teachers have to promote a student in how to use his reasoning skills, his thinking process, students are not acquiring those concepts they are supposed to learn. Teachers have to teach a student how to use a word, not just fill in the blank or regurgitating a word. (C.C. August 14, 2001).

In his discussion on aboriginal education and the many problems encountered for the development and renewal of educational programs, and the need to encourage teacher creativity in curriculum development and implementation, Paquette writes, “left to their own devices as individual classroom teachers, most teachers will inevitably attempt to teach as they were taught. If such pedagogy fails to produce satisfactory results, the cause is often seen to reside in the students and their social circumstances.” (1986: 40)

If teachers are not taught or do not learn how to teach students (in general), to think conceptually or abstractly which would allow the minds of the students to consider not only the task or subject, or word at hand, but how that task or subject interrelates with other things, then that student will not be learning at all, except in the immediate sense, long enough to regurgitate the expected answers. The relationship of words and systems to

each other is not considered, not explored; rather most teachers continue to rigidly follow the prescribed methods of teaching as the only way to properly teach the students.

McLaren and Leonard, editors to *Paulo Freire, A Critical Encounter*, write about interferences to transformative education, one being the authority-dependence of teachers to follow the traditional syllabus and resist democratic transformation; this authority-dependence is in turn passed on to the students.

The transformation of teachers and students from authoritarian to democratic habits is a long term project. After long years in traditional schools, teachers become conditioned to lecture, to assert their authority, to transfer official information and skills, as the proper way for professionals to do their work. (1993:29)

While many teachers do follow prescribed methods of teaching (most likely in schools following the provincial curriculum), I had the happy experience to see that this was not always so at the university level. During my most recent academic experience, many of the professors encouraged independent thought, action and dialogue, more in keeping with working *with* a student in developing that student's critical thinking and independent thought. This encouragement allowed me to extend my thought processes out to look at everything in its entirety while attending to my studies. This

was more in keeping with how I had learned over the years: that is, the relationship of one thing to another is always considered.

In her exploration of what we are beginning to discover (or rediscover), about the 'how' of Native learning-about traditional Native processes of education, Stairs, a cultural psychologist and educator, gives an example of how Native learners typically develop concepts: "Native learners typically develop concepts by repeating tasks in many different situations, such as hunting under varying conditions of weather and animal movement, and with various forms of equipment." (1995:141)

The lack of proper student preparation and evaluation for passing from grade to grade was a big concern expressed by both community consultants and some parents. Combined with this concern was the lack of proper preparation and evaluation of the students in certain academic areas, such as the ability to read and write, for example. The following comment speaks of the need for proper monitoring and evaluation of students, especially in their reading skills, as poor reading skills hold the students back from moving ahead in other areas:

I think the biggest problem is with language arts—(reading and comprehension), Some are having problems with language arts, especially reading, and you can't really get ahead with other subjects because of this---they can't read their social studies, where there is a whole lot of reading, same with science, they can't read it, so they can't do anything with it---It is hard for

them. -----, came in at grade nine, he can do the math orally, he catches on fast. Because of his reading difficulty he can't get other stuff done. It is hard to get them to write. (C.C. November 3, 2002)

The fact that in some instances the present education system is not meeting the needs of some of the students, is illustrated through the following comment from a parent: "the present education system is not meeting needs, there are kids in grade nine for two to three years, and a student may stay in grade ten for two to three years, then either go into the Special Program or drop out." (October 22, 2002)

School as a helping institution prepares a child, educates a child to take his place in today's world. In life we meet many opportunities, many challenges; how can a student access these opportunities, and respond to challenges with informed thought, without that very fundamental right-the ability to read? When a student does not know how to read, he is not 'whole' or fully formed. That element which would allow him to fully express himself is missing, it does not allow his communion with others through the written word. Those that teach him have overlooked providing him with a total means of communication, denying him his human right, to be able to read. Freire writes of reading and writing, "Learning to read and write ought to be an opportunity for men to know what *speaking the word* really means:

a human act implying reflection and action. As such it is a primordial human right and not the privilege of a few.” (1972:12)

To empower the students by providing them the opportunity to learn to read, and ensuring that the students *know* how to read, or in the most basic sense, develop a means of responding to a student’s inability to read, is the responsibility of both the parents and the school where the child goes to learn. Watt-Cloutier, writes of empowerment, “Empowerment cannot happen and wisdom cannot be nurtured effectively unless there is a wise, empowering structure in place to support it. Many students fail not because they do not have the ability to learn, but because the system has failed to teach them.” (2000:122) In discussing authentic empowerment within the context of education, Cajete writes:

To have authentic empowerment you must have a system of educating that not only trains for vocation but prepares individuals: for self-actualizing themselves, fulfilling their human potentials, enlivening their creative spirit, and finding their personal meaning, power, and what in earlier times Indian people called medicine. (1994:190)

In all fairness, there are many schools, administrators, and teachers who do work hard to bring the children through the grades. However, bringing the child up through the grades also means ensuring that child is properly monitored and evaluated before passing him onto the next grade; to do otherwise would be a great disservice to the child.

A community consultant shares his views on the need to develop a means of evaluating students who might be presenting with some difficulties:

In the mainstream (Education System), these students were presenting with a variety of difficulties. For example, in identifying a student who had difficulty reading---what are they presenting with? Some effort has to be made to alleviate those underlying weaknesses in reading. If the student is difficult to manage, are there individualized systems to deal with the child? If the school is not dealing with the problem appropriately, the student tends to repeat grades. There is a tendency to repeat grades here. (C.C. June 26, 2001)

Related to the concern of passing students without proper monitoring, was the concern expressed of the relaxed expectations of the school with regard to students passing on to the next grade. That is, there is not a high expectation of the students to do better than 'just passing':

School administration and relaxed expectations justify and promote students, such as accepting students to pass at 50%. In reality maybe the students will achieve 50% by that teacher's standards. If you had tested those students, you would find them way below the provincial average, anywhere between 2 and one-half to 3 years below the provincial average. There is a residual long term effect; these practices have become ingrained in the community. This social passing is evident. When these students go on to higher places of learning, they cannot achieve there, they cannot perform at that expected level. That system has promoted and perpetuated that mentality of I'm going to fail. (C.C. August 14, 2001)

The students cannot be defined as being 'successful' or unsuccessful solely on the mark they may receive on an exam; there may be extenuating circumstances surrounding that student and his ability do well in any situation. The point being, and all things being equal, if the student is encouraged and feels empowered by the education he is receiving, his level of achievement will be reflected in his grades.

One of the issues brought forth by the community consultants and parents, was the need to address the self-confidence and self-esteem of the students. The school and the parents were seen as factors which could help the students in this way.

The child begins his life at home; how he is treated there impacts on his growth and development physically, emotionally, intellectually, and spiritually. Unfortunately, because some parents have not yet rediscovered those parenting skills which would help a child to grow in all of his realms, we see children not fully formed. We see children whose emotional and intellectual growth is stunted; their spirit is not strong. They are sent to school this way. When they do not 'succeed', fit in to the educational system, their self-confidence and self esteem is undermined, they believe that they cannot do the work. "Them being in a regular classroom, it brought down their self esteem, always being the one who's slow, who can't read or

can't write." (C.C. June 25, 2001) This same consultant commented on the need for students to deal with issues which may be hindering their educational progress, and that many of these issues stem from the home environment:

If a child runs into an obstacle, no matter what it is, and they try to do something, and that obstacle is still there, they're not going to proceed; that thing has to be repaired first, before they can actually go on and become successful. That's some of the things I see in this program, where some of the students, they have obstacles that are not repaired yet, and then they can't move forward. Parents have to realize and accept that a lot of this stuff does come from the home "maybe I'm responsible for this too".

The school itself was seen as an entity which could help to meet the needs of the students in developing more confidence and positive self-esteem. "Spend more time with the students at a younger age, helping them to develop their self confidence and self esteem, start that at school and build on it every year. We kind of leave that out of our educational system; we think more of an education system as academic."(C.C. June26, 2001) A parent comments, "The present education system is not meeting the needs of the students, it does not recognize the unique gifts of the students, academics only, nothing to build up the self esteem of the students." (October 22, 2002)

The Education Blanket

The fabric of education begins with threads interwoven to form a whole (blanket). These threads contain all the necessary energies and strengths to make that completed blanket strong, resilient. The blanket provided protection when the cold winds blew and gave courage to the people. With use and care the blanket lasted, it could appear worn although never needing to be replaced, the threads never broke. The people used this blanket often to cover themselves and their children; teaching, learning, growing. The threads of the blanket contained all that the parent needed for the education of the child; physically, emotionally, intellectually, and spiritually. The blanket held the teachings of strength, courage, wisdom, humility, kindness and truth. Such was the fabric of education for the people in the past.

Today, the blanket that covers the parent and child contains foreign threads, foreign materials, man made, this blanket does not fully cover, protect the parent and child. This new blanket is not strong, easily torn, it does not offer the protection of the old blanket, it does not offer comfort to the parent and child. The child will grow physically under this new blanket, and even intellectually according to the teachings of the new foreign threads of the blanket. The new blanket is missing those old threads which held the instructions for the parent to teach the children. The child will know in the end that something is missing in his education. What is missing may remain elusive for many years, as the child struggles, sometimes making it on to 'higher' education. Still in the end, if he has not totally accepted the new blanket he will know that something is missing, and he will search for that. Other children may never find those missing old threads, those teaching threads, we see those children today struggling personally, educationally, and communally.

The new blanket with the foreign threads which has covered the parent and child for a long time now is the Provincial Education System used in Indian Reserve schools.

Some parents, visionaries, educators and others are beginning to weave a new blanket, replacing the foreign threads with threads from the past. The center of the blanket necessarily contains only those threads from the past, as the center must be strong and resilient, to provide a place for renewal of strength and energy as it did in the past. Coming out from this centering place, the old threads begin to meet and intermingle with newer foreign

threads. The old threads run sometimes parallel with the new, sometimes touch and intermingle. As, the people know that the child must have knowledge of these newer threads too. The child now has contact with the maker of these new threads and uses some of their ways. The child can always go back to that centering place which provides those teachings which will help him not only on his personal path but also educationally.

Reflective of the 'civilizing' role of the educational system of the time, J. Donald Wilson writes of the prophetic rule which adorned the wall of the Credit River School in Ontario in 1830 "*No Blanket to be Worn in School.*" (1986:64)

Leadership

One of the more pressing issues identified was the lack of leadership at all levels in dealing with the problems related to students' lack of initiative to remaining in the mainstream education system:

The leadership at all levels have to understand the issues at all levels, and address them. If they don't understand the problem, they can't address it, if they don't have that knowledge and insight into what is happening. Some have looked at things from the inside for so long, to have never tried to understand, instead we go to Winnipeg or Ottawa for answers. There are always opportunities for developments, although we may take baby steps, the influence will still be felt. If we pass that on down to the generations, then our people will go somewhere, but if we maintain the status quo, doing things the same old way... . The students are always going to be there, how are we going to achieve a level of independence and self sufficiency, if we do not have imagination, if we keep waiting for Ottawa? Where is our pride our self esteem? If we do not change and teach our students to become more imaginative thinkers, to

think beyond the immediate scope of what can be, dream beyond-the world is there. (C.C. August14, 2001)

The leadership by virtue of their being leaders, are looked at as a body who could take the lead in bringing about those changes which could promote a more viable learning environment for the students, one which would ensure that the child is supported in all aspects: physically, emotionally, intellectually, and spiritually. How is that child doing physically, are his physical needs being met in his environment? How are his emotional needs being met, is he encouraged, praised or belittled? Are the child's intellectual needs being met? If not, is it the educational system, parenting, or possibly a physiological challenge that needs to be addressed? Meeting the physical, intellectual and emotional needs of the child will help to make that child's spirit strong, allowing him to stand up to any challenges that may be placed in his path. The child needs help to arrive at that level of self sufficiency to have pride in him/herself, help from their caregivers: parents, the educational system, community and its leadership at all levels.

As the community consultant suggests, the ideology that the community must keep on doing things the same old way, maintaining their dependence on outside forces so far removed from the reality of the community, undermines the capabilities of community leaders. If nothing

new is tried, new ideas, concepts, as a priority to attempt to raise the level of students' success within the educational system, how will it ever be known what is or is not possible? Mackay and Myles from their research with students and the students' experiences within the educational system write, "Bands whose children enjoy a high graduation rate appear to be those whose chiefs and councils who rank the education of their children as a top priority." (1995:172) Graduation is an important milestone for students, whether that student has been 'prepared' to take his place in the world is another matter, and a matter of how one defines 'prepared' or 'successful'. In her discussion of colonialism in Native education, Andrea Bear Nicolas writes about "success" and "achievements":

The real problem, however, is that no system can be measured by its achievements alone (particularly for it is in failures that the most can be learned. And there is a serious problem in colonial settings that rarely get addressed: Who gets to define success in the first place? Those who have "made it"? or those lost by the wayside? (2001:10)

Through their articulation of the people's vision for their children's well being: socially, personally and educationally, and by acknowledging the reality that some change is needed, community leaders can come to some understanding of what needs to be done for the students' present and future education. Cajete writes of 'vision', 'we must establish dialogue about what

our visions might be and try things out. We must appreciate what others have done in formal and informal ways, big and small, past and present. In this way we energize our visions as we live and grow.”(1994:192)

Community leaders at all levels are at various stages of personal growth and development, that growth which allows them to see beyond the visible, the tangible, how the community is really functioning. The influence of the colonizer and his helpers continue to be felt, seen in many communities, most noticeably in the community educational systems, which continue to in most cases use the colonizer’s educational systems only. Until the community leaders at all levels *fully* come out of that mantle of colonialism which has covered them for so long, things will not change, and neither will the chances for *true* educational survival for the children.

Community

In his opening remarks at the National First Nations Elders Language Gathering, Ovide Mercredi the then National Chief of the Assembly of First Nations, shared some advice from one of his elders Peter O’Chiese:

That it is time for our people to stop putting each other down. There is too much gossip in our communities. There is too much “the chief is not doing this, The chief is not doing it right.” There is too much “The elders are this,” there is too much that the young people don’t care. There is too much of that and not enough of what’s good. There’s not enough of

lifting each other up. (National First Nations Elders Language Gathering, June 1993:7)

This 'idea' that people continue to carry negativity towards others, is captured by the following comment from a community consultant:

I don't know if this is ingrained in our people because of some of the things we have gone through; like residential school, oppression, forced to live on a reserve, government control over us and the welfare syndrome. The community as a whole, generally are basically good people, but there are those who think negative, this comes out at band meetings. They don't feel good about themselves, so they come out ready to fight and dump all their garbage." (June 26, 2001)

Colonization and the residential school era which followed and the fallout from all that was spawned there ... dependence, shame, feelings of inferiority, anger, jealousy, and abuses of many kinds continue to be seen and felt in many First Nation communities. Many of the people were put down for so long and have not dealt with their frustrations, that as a result they find it difficult to be happy for other's achievements, or to lift each other up. In every community there are also those who have not bowed to the dependency state, who have and do work hard to provide a living for themselves and their families, who have dealt with their past conflicts, and who are seen to offer a helping hand to those less fortunate, where 'helping'

one another comes with no price tag. Communities like their individuals, are in various stages of growth, development and healing.

Since the awakening of individuals and groups to the importance of culturally and contextually relevant education for the children and indeed to the Indian nations, there has been a plethora of literature on the importance of community involvement in their local reserve schools. Wabung (1971), The Royal commission on Aboriginal People (1996), Assembly of First Nations (1988), and The Final Report of the Ministers National Working Group on Education (2002), is only a very small portion of the literature dealing with the need for more community involvement in their local education systems.

What appears non existent in the literature is the acknowledgement of the fear that still exists in many communities of trampling on someone's toes which are still firmly 'dug in', in their "no traditional stuff here" mindset. In communities such as these there can be no real total community involvement, as the self importance of a few denies the children their right to making choices of what *they* feel might be important to *their* education. Within the context of education and how the community could be more supportive to its students, was the comment by parents, "community healing, and working together needs to happen, traditional and Christian working

together.” Also, “that the school cannot fix all the problems, start with one symptom, for example; alcohol and drug abuse that is going on.” (Parents June 4, 2001 and October 22, 2002)

The need for the community resources to work together in a respectful unbiased manner is also commented on by community consultants:

The school cannot work independently by itself, it has to come within the whole community; students, parents, leadership, administrators, teachers and social organizations in the community. The old way is to sit down in a circle and discuss what is the problem? What is the root? and how do we go about this? A circle, where every one spoke their piece, instead of blaming. (August 14, 2001) and, “It has to be a community effort, the community resources have to work together, there may be more than one aspect of a students life that is affecting him.” (C.C. June 26, 2001)

Regarding support for students from community members, especially the parents, a community consultant has this to say:

When we talk about the community supporting education, a really big thing that we are lacking is parental involvement, really, really lacking. It is kind of a hard thing to say. If the children, the students could see that the parents want them to be educated, that might make them, or help them to have a goal for education, and wanting to be there, and knowing that their parents care, and feeling ‘well I’m doing good’. I am not saying the whole community, there are a lot of parents who are very supportive, and there are some who we would like to have more support from them. (C.C. June 25, 2001)

The issue of community support for sufficient funding for education was raised. At the community level, there is an allocated budget for education. Consultants brought forth the need for the community to understand that they are expected to work *within* that allocated budget in providing educational services, and that there was not always sufficient funds to provide the kind of services that they would like:

In terms of learning there is always a money crunch. We try to do the best with what we have, in most cases it is working harder with less. Sometimes people don't understand that (June 25, 2001) and "We can't keep up with providing enough resource people to deal with these kids, above and beyond what the regular classroom teacher has to deal with. We have to keep providing more and more counseling to help these students coming in to our school system. I think over the next generation it is going to get worse, and how do we deal with that?" (June 26, 2001)

The question asked by the community consultant can only be answered by the community itself. If it is determined that some students do need that extra help either through counseling and/or the continuation of some sort of special program geared to meet individual student needs, then it is up to the community to act accordingly.

In the summary of recommendations from the Final Report of the Minister's National Working Group on Education (December 2002)

concerning parental and community participation, the statements are made that:

Canada provide resources to affirm the revitalization of First Nation Indigenous Knowledge in the development of parental, family and community capacity building. And, First Nations and Canada to affirm the importance of parental, family and community involvement in the school setting; Canada must provide the necessary resources to support First Nation parents and grandparents to provide supportive mechanisms to effectively address this area of school programming. (p.42)

It is agreed that extra resources will in the second instance, help to develop and implement programs to attempt to build the 'capacity' of parents and communities, with respect to perhaps attending to their children's' education in a more positive manner. Also, substantial financing of education does offer more possibilities for the development of programs/processes to address special educational needs. However, in the first instance and at a very fundamental level, a monetary value cannot be attached to the notion that things will improve academically or personally, for that child, if more and more resources are kept coming in. Why are we still asking government to pay us parents and grandparents to do what is our responsibility: to support our children academically and personally? Money alone will not *fix* educational problems. The healing that first needs to happen in communities has to come about by the will of the people: parents,

leaders, and the students themselves. They will look within to see where they are as individuals, then without to their families and the community; what healing has to be done there? Only then can the people collectively in a kind and unbiased manner plan for the educational path of their children, one that would fully educate their children intellectually, emotionally and spiritually.

Culture

Culture is an environment subject to the same ecological principles and truths as a physical environment. Culture is a dynamic human creation that is always in process at one or several levels simultaneously. Each generation of a People *is* their culture. Just as the life of a person can't be frozen in time, so it is true of living cultures. As individuals and groups of people in a culture reassess, revitalize, reaffirm, and recreate themselves, the culture as a whole transforms. (G. Cajete 1994:191)

The historical landscape of the people before contact included their traditions, their cultural ways. Ecologically, the land provided the people with a blueprint for living in harmony with all of nature, and thus nature provided the people with a way, a culture to live in harmony according to the natural laws. As the landscape changed to include those whose traditions were not the same as the people, the cultural ways of many of the people began to change. Today, as the people continue to emerge from their historical landscapes, many hang on to their traditions from the past, and the teachings inherent in those traditions. As cultures shift and change, some

things do not change; those intangible truths which guided the people in the past remain the same. With still others, the influences of colonialism continue to guide one's thoughts and actions; they are hesitant to look back from where they have come, not yet understanding that historical influences impact on them: personally, socially, communally and intellectually. It is to these people, and the ideologies that they continue to carry that there is only one way to do things, communally and educationally, that the comments from the community consultants and parents are directed, when they speak of the importance of including aspects of the peoples culture in the educational system of the local community school.

The following comments capture the expressions of consultants and parents who were interviewed, of what needs to happen in the school and in the community, in order to promote a more viable and respectful education for the students, and also one which would enhance the personal well being of the students.

We have to teach our children all we can, including culture, including the past, including what is happening now, this is important so they can make choices about their beliefs. This information is also important for their personal growth. Change is very hard to come by here, some people sort of dictate what can go on and what cant. These people have to become more open minded; people have to become more acceptable to change. (C.C. June 25, 2001)

There are a lot of things happening in our community that is preventing our people from growing culturally. Some may not be

proud to be Aboriginal because of cultural genocide; it goes back to the residential school thing. A lot of our people went to residential school, their culture was taken away from them, and they were not allowed to speak their language--- A lot of these are in our community, some are angry, they pass that on to their children, and the children bring that to school with them. (C.C. June 26, 2001)

It is important to include some cultural perspectives in the school and in the curriculum. Culture does not only mean pow- wows and sweat lodges; it also includes use of language and sharing. (Parents June, 2001 and August 2002)

As many of the people were being stripped of their traditions, their cultural ways, through colonialism and the residential school system, a fear or mistrust of the word culture was also instilled. In certain communities, there continues to be a fear or mistrust when the word culture is used. It is important for those who continue to be unaware of the real meaning of culture, to understand that culture is not specifically related to spiritual ceremonies, for example, it also includes language and other traditions. Culture within the context of education, involves presenting the opportunity for students to learn, secure in the knowledge of who they are. Diane Longboat as a contributing author in *Indian Education in Canada: vol:2 The Challenge*, writes of the importance of relevant education to identity development:

Education as a process of human growth and development is one key to the survival of the First Nations in the modern world...Education can enhance survival of First Nations people only if it contributes to

identity development through learning our language, our cultural traditions and our spiritual beliefs. (1987:39:40)

Wesley an elder involved in *A Denver Conference with Indian Elders* (Morey 1970), shares the same viewpoint regarding the need for the people to retain their cultural identity while pursuing educational endeavors:

That we are educating our young people in such a way that perhaps they don't know about their own cultural values. It is our right to get our Indian youth educated into professional men. At the same time they should remember to keep their Indian identity. (p.95:96)

Winkler, a conference participant further states, "we are training intellect in our white schools, and letting the inner self, the inner man die, the result is all the futility, alcoholism and drug addiction, because the human cannot live as if he were purely an intellectual animal." (p.96)

This comment by Winkler reminds me of the students that I spent time with, who appear to be lost, without their spirits, exhibiting signs of loneliness and depression. A community consultant comments:

I think it still goes on today where a lot of the students are somewhat depressed...talking about students, that you could almost see them, exhibiting some of the symptoms of depression. We started to think about why are they depressed? A lot of it has to do with their self-esteem, their lack of confidence in themselves, and lack of understanding of who they are, their identity. (June 26,2001)

Parents, the education system, leadership, community and culture all impact on the students: personally, intellectually, socially and spiritually. The cultural aspect, the determinant which lets one know who they are in the scheme of things can be seen as the underpinnings to the students' development in all aspects of his/her life; this cultural aspect is missing for many of these students. How then can the students be expected to perform academically, or exhibit socially acceptable behavior, when they have no concept of their identity and what that means, when they have not learned the values of respect and pride in being the best that they can be in all that they do?

The cultural expressions of many of the youth today, in the communities, appears to consist of modern technological influences only. It appears that for many, the values which guided the people in the past, and thus the children, are missing. A community consultant comments:

The culture of our community today is fast cars, T.V., it is modern equipment. Our people are caught up in this mainstream society, where it is everyone for themselves. Our people have become self-centered, they have walked away from those cultural values, they have disregarded those values that have been passed down, directly or indirectly. We don't understand the cultural aspects of our language, if we don't understand that, how are we supposed to help those kids?
(C.C. August 14, 2001)

The historical tapestry of the people continues to shift and change with each generation as the people open themselves up to the ever changing environmental influences impacting on them. The only constant in the culture of the people are the traditions handed down through the generations. Even if set aside, these traditions from the past are always there along the peoples' path waiting to be picked up, and reaffirmed, as a vital thread in the ever changing cultural landscape of the people.

The Special Program

Those individuals who observed the inappropriate behavior of the young people both in the school and in the community can be commended for taking the initiative to respond to the dilemma. This is self-determination or 'local control', where individuals in the community, and then as a group, decided to do something about what they perceived as a growing problem in their community. Yazzie discusses internal sovereignty and taking control of one's own life:

Communities must consider how they can effectively reassume control of their destinies. If Indigenous people give up responsibility of their lives to others, they lose control of them. If, however, Indigenous people take back responsibility for their lives, beginning with the individual, they can achieve internal sovereignty. (2000:47)

The community members taking a proactive approach, answers part of the problem. A 'special' program has been developed for the students in attempts to respond to the students' academic needs. However, it appears that there needs to be more action in the area of getting to the root of the students' inappropriate behavior, and finding a means to deal with that. A community consultant comments on the need to assess the students not only academically, but also physically and emotionally:

If you take a look at each one of these kids in the program, you have to go not only into their academics, what they are demonstrating, but also why they are acting out, and dig deeper than that. Is the problem emotional or a mental disability? All these things have to be looked at. Is FAS or FAE involved? Do testing re. any disability. (June 26, 2001)

As for the development and implementation of the program itself, the consultants commented that the program was started to help the students to reach an academic level where they could reintegrate back into the mainstream education system:

the goal of the program is to work with the students through; modifying the curriculum in terms of pace, developing individual programs, developing a positive learning environment, and building up students self image and self esteem, and in the program, certain allowances could be made for behavior, different learning strategies could be employed and individualized, with possible reintegration back to the mainstream. (C.C. June 26, 2001)

Other program needs as identified by the consultants included the development of an instructional program where students could work at their own pace, while setting their own achievement goals:

There could be an instructional program, the students could set their own pace. The students could be young parents who may have to stay home one-half day, or students who are having difficulty keeping up. I saw the pathfinder program in different schools. It was designed in the United States, it did not meet the criteria of western Canada's regular curriculum. ... has/had this program, we visited there. The students set the level at which they want to pass, for example, at 90%, and they cannot go onto the next level (content), until they pass at 90%, the students when they pass, they know 90% of the entire content. (C.C. August 14, 2001)

The need for a qualified instructor for the program was also commented on, in that the one teaching the students had to have knowledge not only in program development but also in working with students to develop positive attitude changes:

People who are teaching this program have to be fully aware of how to develop a positive learning environment, for example, how to develop and change attitudes of students, how to work with the students, they know they can do the work, it was changing that attitude, that self image. I tell them, I can teach you but you have to do the work, see you got 90%. (C.C. August 14, 2001)

That there were a wide variety of learners amongst the students was also recognized, and that perhaps the students needed to acquire skills not

only related to academics, but skills that would also serve to allow the students self sufficiency upon leaving the academic setting:

Students need to work with both their hands and their minds, programs could be provided for this. They have to be interested in something for it to be a success. The way I look at it, not everyone is going to graduate high school, not everyone is going to go to college, not everyone is going to university. If we have people that are dropping out from grade ten, eleven, or twelve, we have to provide some sort of training for them that will provide a livelihood for them when they grow older. Just because they quit school now, doesn't mean that their education is going to stop. I would like to see our school go in the direction of providing a vocational program for our students. (C.C. June 25, 2001)

One other comment from a community consultant relates to this idea of providing an education from which the students can learn skills related to their aptitudes and the success levels that they might like to attain, "the purpose in having this program is to give those students that chance to get as much out of the education system as they can, to get those kinds of skills they will use if they are to be successful down the road. Everyone has different aptitudes." (C.C. June 26, 2001)

While it is true that those students who graduate from high school have more doors open to them for employment and further study, "Schools often are the vehicles that point the way to future promise and prospects for the fulfillment of personal and community aspirations ... formal education

has become a requirement for entry into jobs and participation in other social sites.” (Schissel and Wotherspoon 2003:2:3), there are those students who will not graduate high school and go on to college or university. Learning and acquiring an education is relative, what fits one student will not necessarily fit another student. If it is determined what the needs and aspirations of a student are, then the support systems should be in place for that student: physically, emotionally and intellectually. Does the student want to go on in school to graduate high school, or, is he/she bowing to the needs of parents, the school, the community and society in general to see him/her graduate high school? ‘Higher’ academic education is there for those who want that; however, each person has their own levels of attainment, and knowledge not necessarily found in textbooks is gathered through life’s experiences. The point being, whether we gather knowledge through academia or through personal and life teachings, we as humans feel the need to do *something*: to teach, to learn, and to put our learning to work in whatever capacity that may be. The students should be given the opportunity to explore their areas of interest and assisted to reach those various levels of education and competencies, which would sustain them physically, emotionally and intellectually.

One of the consultants' comments on his desire to see a vocational type program attached to the school and how the development of such a program would be an acknowledgement of the various types of learners and their varied interests and competencies.

In summary, the comments from the consultants ranged from: the intent of the special program, the courses included (basically the same as the regular school program), the students work at their own pace, and the need for the teacher to be aware of how to modify the program to respond to each of the student's unique needs. As well as working with the students academically, the teacher also had to be prepared to support the students' growth personally, and to work with the students on attitude change. A consultant comments, "the students' self image, poor self-esteem, attitudes has to change, they need encouragement as equals." (C.C. August 14, 2001) That things change over time was recognized, in that perhaps it was time to evaluate the 'special' program for its effectiveness. "This program needs evaluation, is it meeting the needs of those it is serving?"(C.C. June 25, 2001)

Finally, as commented on by a consultant, if the students' intellectual, emotional and spiritual needs are being met from caregivers, parents, the

educational system, leadership and the community, there should be no need for a special education program for students:

If there is positive growth of tradition and leadership, this will impact on the students' development and as individuals. If everything comes together, there should be no need for a special program for these students, other than to address some physical and intellectual needs of the students, for example, some attention deficit or hyperactivity. (C.C. August 14, 2001)

The literature appears to be sparse with regard to similar type special education programs in First Nation community schools. What does appear in the literature is that in certain First Nation communities, and in large urban centers, Indian cultural survival schools have been developing, some of which formed in response to the high dropout rate of their students, and/or for sovereignty reasons such as the Akwesasne Freedom School near Cornwall Ontario. Author and educator Don McCaskill in his discussions of Indian cultural survival schools, writes: "The central goal of these Indian cultural survival schools being; to assist students to develop a bicultural identity, so that they might function successfully in both Indian and non-Indian society." (1986:159) It is not the intention to investigate these schools as a response to or in comparison to mainstream education systems, or to the 'special' program in which the students (in the present study) find themselves. For the interested reader, more information on these alternative

type schools can be found in *Indian Education in Canada Volume 2: The Challenge (1986)*, and edited by Jean Barman.

In the United States, thousands of Alternative type schools have been in existence for some time, in response to drop-out problems, and for the at risk students. According to researchers Knutson and College:

A perception that the standard high school lacks relevance is the usual reason given for dropping out. In fact, the curricular offerings of the standardized, bureaucratized high schools do tend to be isolated subject matters taught with an emphasis on rote memory and with a student management system focusing on compliance with authority. (1994:1)

For hundreds of years little has changed in the accepted educational systems, both in the content and how that content might be taught or learned.

In his discussion of the current educational systems, author Daniel

R. Wildcat writes:

For all the fuss about innovation in educational methods, curriculum, and respect to higher education, the basic organization of the institutions, the division of subjects, and the teaching methods have changed little since the establishment of the first colleges and universities in Europe during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Curriculum at all levels of American education, bears the largest imprint of Western metaphysics. (2001:10)

The present education system continues to attempt to shape the minds of its learners through the indoctrination of the political, economic, legal,

and cultural expressions of the larger society. The curriculum offerings often have little to do with the real life of a student, and instead of drawing the student's interest, tend to be isolating. Perhaps the students are the wise ones, for in their quest for knowledge and where and how that knowledge might be transmitted; they are no longer satisfied with the same old content, taught in the same old way. Could this perceived non interest of students have spurred on authors, educators and communities to look again at the contemporary education systems not only to see what is being taught the students but how that content is being transmitted? From their exploration of educational/ cultural programs that respond to students' seeming non compliance to conventional education programs, Schissel and Wotherspoon share the following:

We are aware that their success stories are characterized by a rather fundamental paradigm shift in educational thinking: that for education to be truly an instrument of social justice and social redress- along with its formal function of intellectual development it must discard the hierarchical disciplinary form and replace it with a model of individual or communal self determination----true mentoring can occur only in a non-threatening, non-authoritarian context and that any learner, despite age, needs to seek learning and not have it thrust upon him/her. (2003:138)

Sessions with Students

As well as the issues and the themes generated through interaction with parents and community consultants: such as parental and leadership support, educational system support and the importance of culture to the personal and educational well being of the students, what follows are issues raised directly by the students which either directly or indirectly interfere with their personal and educational well being. These include: school/education support, issues of abuse of alcohol and drugs, feelings of alienation, resulting in anger, loneliness and disruptive behavior. The issue of some of the students' inability to read which impacts directly on the students' success or failure within the school system is also raised.

The Students

A school is just like a woman, we send our kids there to be developed. Like a woman carrying a child in the womb, if we don't treat that system, that building, the people there who try to develop that student, that child, with respect, the student, child will come out not fully developed. There is going to be something wrong with that child. When a woman is carrying a child, and if you abuse that woman, that child will come out born with something wrong. The child feels everything the woman feels, if you physically abuse that woman, the child will come out that way. It is in fact true, a law of nature. If you plant something out there and if you do not look after that planted seed, it will be stunted. If you look after it, water it, it will come

out beautiful. Same as the children in the school with learning, emotional, physical deficits need to be respected. If people don't respect and support that student, we are not respecting that entity. We as parents, grandparents, Elders have to realize that. We have to understand that process, that school, so the kids will be learning in an optimum environment. (C.C. August 14, 2001)

Respecting that school, that entity, means ensuring that all therein is safe, clean and supportive to that student's learning and development. The people there, the administrators, the teachers are not only there to 'instruct' the child, but to respect and support that child. In that way that entity, that school becomes respectful of itself. As the community consultant has pointed out, some of the students have learning, emotional, and physical deficits. These need to be respected, and when addressing these needs of the student, the school becomes respectful of itself. That supported student will come out more fully developed.

Freire, in discussing the 'banking' concept of education which anaesthetizes and inhibits creative power, views the students' minds as containers to be filled by teachers. This method resists dialogue between teacher and student. He writes of the students receiving this type of education:

The truth is, however, that the oppressed are not marginals, are not men living 'outside' society. They have always been inside-inside the structure which made them 'beings for others'. The

solution is not to 'integrate' them into the structure of oppression, but to transform that structure so that they can become 'beings for themselves.' (1972:78)

The mother-the school must care for herself in such a way: physically, emotionally, intellectually, and spiritually, to ensure optimal survival for the child in the world to which he will be born. Preparing herself respectfully for the birth of that child means knowing what that child will need to survive, and preparing herself thus. Respectful preparation means having dialogue with that child to be born, dialogue which allows that child to know of those things rightfully his, and of those things which make him unique. Respecting the child allows the child to question, without fear of censorship. Respecting oneself and the child to be born is a difficult journey, when looked at within the concept of a school making sometimes difficult changes (transforming its structures), to accommodate the growing child.

Problem posing education, the 'other' method of educating according to Freire, allows both the teacher and the student to always be in dialogue, constantly unveiling reality. "In this way, the problem posing educator constantly re-forms his reflections in the reflections of the students. The students are no longer docile listeners-are now critical co-investigators in dialogue with the teacher." (p.54)

The Joe Duquette High School in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan is an example of a school which brings their students and staff together in 'co-respectfulness'. Schissel and Wotherspoon in discussing the mandate of the Joe Duquette High School, comment:

In essence, what the school attempts to do is create an adult-like world in which autonomy, responsibility, respect and enfranchisement are the cornerstones to do this, the school staff creates an atmosphere of mutual respect and equality by being reflective about their own behavior and by demonstrating respectfulness categorically. (2003:141)

In trying to find the answers to why the students that I was meeting with had left the mainstream education system, a clearly outlined 'picture' of them as individuals remained elusive. At first, there appeared to be many unknowable jagged edges to each of the students. After a time, I realized that these edges contained all the reasons why they had left the mainstream educational system. As I progressed with my research, I was to find only the surface causes, and yet these seemed enough, as each cause, each jagged edge, had its own reason for being, and was an important part to the answers I sought. These I could observe and hear through my interactions with the students, parents and community consultants.

Sessions With Students

Group Sessions

Two group sessions were held with the students in their home classroom. There was complete privacy during these times, only the students and I were present. I began by presenting a brief introduction to the history of colonization, with a focus on education. The reason I did this was to help the students to consider their present educational situation in light of all that had come before, the how and why of their parents' and grandparents' education. As well, I hoped that some of the historical knowledge would allow them to respond to the research questions more reflectively.

The students listened most attentively to my brief presentation. The question of how or why the students came to be in the Special Education Program was put forth. The question was put in such a way, that the students could consider what their supports and nonsupport's were to remaining in the mainstream education system. Suggested examples they could draw on included: parents/home, the community, the school; policies/procedures, teachers, curriculum, ... was it something personal going on with them, or other factors not mentioned? By way of beginning discussion, and to help

develop an element of trust between us, I shared my own journey through the educational systems, and my supports and non supports to my education.

The students had little response to the question put forth, the few responses included: one teacher was singled out as not knowing their subject area or knowing how to teach. Policies and procedures were not supportive to their education, for example, students are suspended for swearing, and if late, they get sent home. One student shared they would like to stop drinking, having blackouts related to drinking. Recreation at the school is missing things; an extension at the school would be good for added programs.

In thinking about reasons as to why the students had so little to say during the group sessions, I came up with ideas that: it was a cultural norm for them not to express themselves when in a group, they were afraid of making mistakes in front of others (there was a lot of waiting to see what the other guy will say moments), or they had no opinions on the topic. The last reason proved to be not true, as the students indicated that they did have opinions, and shared some of these during individual sessions. As to not sharing in a group being a cultural norm, I found this to be more realistic. Although some of the cultural practices of the Indian people have changed over time, including the socialization and education of their children, I do

see something of the first way that the people taught their children, that is, the children never talked needlessly.

When I first attended university, I more often than not, did not volunteer information when in a group, although I might know the answer to the question being asked. My professor commented on this during one of my evaluations: "you don't speak up during group sessions." I remember responding "It is the way I was raised." She responded, "you will change that though won't you."

Kirkness and Bowman write of 'silence'; "Although there was little segregation of family for events, whether social or work-related, children were taught that there were times when they should be silent and allow the adults to speak without interruption. Silence was regarded as the cornerstone of character." (1992:6)

The other aspect of not speaking up has to do with being insecure, being afraid to make mistakes and suffer the ridicule of others; this happens when one is belittled, or called down. Feelings of low self esteem are instilled in children, when they are not encouraged, and instead are told that they are stupid or never doing things right. These feelings are taken to the school, to the playground, and to the classroom, where the children either hide their feelings of inferiority, or project outward their feelings of anger.

In the Final Report of the Minister's National Working Group on Education (2002), the statement is made that:

Traditional family life provided a firm foundation of security and encouragement for Aboriginal children. Aboriginal families of today are not always able to provide this. Parents may be hampered by the effects of poverty, alienation, residential school experience, and dysfunctional family or other relationships. (p.21)

When one does not feel confident in themselves for whatever reason, they will invariably take out their feelings of frustration and low self esteem on someone else, and in the home setting, this is quite often on the children. Actions such as these from parents and significant others, not only teaches that child to see himself with a very poor self image, but also puts that child at risk of not succeeding academically. "I am called stupid therefore I must be." The child is not being helped to develop with respect personally, socially, or academically.

Hhrechka, in her discussion of the at risk student quotes from a 1996 publication by Integrated Services for Children And Youth at Risk:

"the at risk" student can be defined as a student whose academic background or prior performance may cause them to be perceived as candidates for future academic failure or early withdrawal. This includes students who are at risk of low achievement in the educational system, and students not reaching their own optimal social and personal development. (2000:178)

The environmental influences surrounding the students impact on them physically, emotionally, spiritually and intellectually. The home where the child spends most of his time has the biggest impact on a child's wellbeing. When the family unit is dysfunctional, that is, when the family unit is fractured, not together as a whole, then support and encouragement are not given to the child.

Some of these students did come from dysfunctional family backgrounds, backgrounds where although some are encouraged in their education, others for a variety of reasons are not. A community consultant comments, "A great deal of the influences comes from the parents, in _____, we do have some families that are dysfunctional. That's a real big thing when a student comes from a dysfunctional family, they are going to bring that dysfunction with them."(C.C. June 24,2001)

I believe that the students not speaking up during group sessions had to do with being afraid of making mistakes, enticing laughter from their classmates, and although much has changed over the generations in parenting, some aspect of the way Indian children used to be remains - that inborn quietness.

Individual Sessions

In order to elicit more response and hopefully reflective responses from the students, I decided to use a very informal approach when posing a question to them. Before I began, I assured them once again of confidentiality, that no names would be used. I also reminded them of the purpose of the research and that they had given their consent to take part. No notes were taken until each meeting with a student was completed.

I began by the telling the students that right now they find themselves in this special program, and that there are probably some reasons as to why they came to be here. Could any of these reasons be related to or be because of any of these: the school administration, for example policies and procedures (I explained policies and procedures), or teachers; parents/home environment, something personal going on with them; or were there other reasons? Following this part of the session, I asked the student two more questions. These were: what were their hopes for the future and what did they think about the importance of their culture as Indian youth, to themselves, and to their education?

Student Responses and Issues Raised

The student responses are arranged under the headings of: school/administration, parents/home, culture and personal. Interspersed amongst the responses are the issues raised by the students which reflect on their personal and educational well-being.

School/Administration

It is apparent that the majority of these students do not find the special program that they are in helpful to their learning. The students' comments indicating their dissatisfaction were similar. These comments ranged from boredom with their classes, to not being inspired by the teaching methods used. "Doesn't like boring classes, nothing new, no variety, so wanders out of class." "Teacher could teach differently, explain work with student, make it more interesting, instead of just handing out work to be done." "Doesn't like program, wants to go back to regular classes." (Students May, June 2002)

A community consultant comments, "there is no sense identifying difficulties, if one can't put into place programs to meet a particular need." (June 26, 2001)

A program has been put in place for the students, ostensibly to assist them in eventually returning to the mainstream education system. However, it appears that at this point in time the students' needs are not being met, as evidenced by the students continuing lack of interest in *their* educational system. In a perfect world, the parents, the teachers, and the administration should be able to see what is going on with these students, and respond accordingly. If it is seen that these students are expressing themselves by wandering out of class, coming in late, or not coming in at all, then the question has to be asked- why? What is going on? Is there nothing in class that would draw them back, hold their interest or challenge them?

A community consultant comments:

If the students are not performing, parents have to understand this. Also the teachers have to realize that their way of doing things must change, and they cannot take it personally. They are going to have to realize that if I'm going to develop as a teacher, I'm going to have to get more education, going to have to do things more effectively. (August 14,2001)

Some of the students also commented on what they thought was the unfairness of some of the school's policies regarding punishment for unacceptable behavior. During group session, a student commented that "administration was not supportive to their education, students are suspended for swearing, and if late, they get sent home." During an

individual session with a student, they shared that, when they came back to school, they signed a contract that if anyone wrote him up, they would be kicked out of school permanently. One other student stated that they had been “written up about five times-being late, telling teacher to shut up and fighting with classmates.” (Students June 2002)

It seems to me that these students’ comments are related to one of the community consultant’s comments on the need for the development of a vision statement for the local education system. Included in the vision statement could be ways to deal with those students (who the school feels need certain guidance and help with whatever is *causing* the students’ unacceptable behavior), which will not take away the self worth of the student, or cause a student to be taken out of the school environment. Suspending a student I do not think helps that student in any way, other than to alienate them further from themselves and their academic education. In discussing worth/achievement, educator and author David E. Purpel writes:

The constitutive rules of the schools are somewhat different in that achievement becomes the basic condition for acceptance. Students learn very quickly that the rewards that the school provide- grades, honors, recognitions, affection-are conditioned upon achievement and certain behaviors of respect, obedience, and docility. (1989:35)

Some time after my sessions with the students, I met one of them in the community. This student shared with me that he was not allowed to go

on a field trip that he had wanted to go on, this was his punishment for some unacceptable behavior on his part.

Educational institutions often continue to use outdated policies and procedures to deal with what they feel is unacceptable behavior by their students. Educational institution policies and procedures must stop being punitive. The schools must stop punishing students for showing their individuality, and attempt to find out the root cause of the students' behavior. Perhaps new, more respectful strategies can be developed and implemented to deal with what is perceived as unacceptable student behavior, otherwise, the students' perception of themselves will continue to be one of low self image, and the one that is always getting into trouble.

One of the things that had been mentioned by the community consultants was that the self image of the students needed to change to a more positive one, and that they have to know that people care about them. During my sessions with the students, I told them that they were very important, and no one should try to tell them otherwise, that each had a gift to offer, perhaps yet to be realized. A community consultant comments on the importance of showing caring:

I think that kids that come to our school need attention paid to them. We had a good relationship, they knew I cared, that's why they 'put out', I mean they worked in the classroom. Yes

to me that is important, when you have a relationship, when the kids know that you care, when you take time to go to their home. (August 13, 2001)

Parents/ Home

The students had little to say about their home life and their supports or non-supports to their education from there. The few comments from the students ranged from, “parents don’t talk to them about school that much,” to “has no contact with dad,” “one parent supportive, the other is not,” “parents supportive,” “only met dad last year,” to no comment at all. When asked how could parents be more supportive, the responses were: no response, to two students stating that, “parents to encourage their children,” and, “parents to encourage their child, show caring.” (Students May, June 2002)

The bond between parent and child is strong no matter what has happened, or is happening between them. To see a look of pride upon a child’s face when encouraged and acknowledged for their achievements is to see the realization of the ‘why’ of parenting with love. Too many times and in too many families, the parent(s) cannot show this caring for their child, yet the child expectantly waits. The parents are too ‘heavy’, weighted down with their personal issues undealt with, not able to care for themselves, and therefore unable to extend outward caring for others.

While the child hopefully, expectantly waits for that show of love and encouragement from their parents, they will not talk about in detail, this very personal issue so close to their being. They wait hopefully, searching for that reciprocal sign of love. At times they wait with fear-what if it never comes? Are they then not worthy? Freire, writes of hope, "hope is rooted in incompleteness, from which they move out in constant search - a search which can be carried out only in communion with other men." (1972:64)

Culture

Before asking the students their thoughts on culture as it related to them personally and to their education, I shared with them that in the world, the society in which we live, many words are used to name and to describe different things. That the word culture had been given to describe the way a group of people live, including a description of their social, political, economic, and educational systems, the way they parent or raise their children, the use of their first language, their manner of dress, and the way they practice their spirituality. I used the Hutterite people as an example of a visibly distinct group of people practicing their traditional culture (the students have seen this group of people, as there is a Hutterite colony near

by), a people who retain their traditions, values, and customs, yet intermingle with the larger society around them.

As a way for the students to begin to think about *their* people and culture, I shared with the students the traditional ways of the people before contact, traditional being the way the people had always lived, before their traditions were assigned the word 'culture'. I shared that the people also had a very distinctive way of expressing themselves in all aspects of their lives: politically, socially, economically, educationally, through the use of their own language, their parenting ways and the way they practiced their spirituality. I told the students that when contact was made with the Europeans, that for many, the traditional ways of the people began to change, and that although we could not go back to where we were before contact in all aspects of our lives, many of the people continue to express themselves traditionally in various ways; through use of their languages, their child rearing practices and through various ceremonies. It was important for the students to hear that the people had once been a proud nation, for now as the students look around them, they see the continuing impact of what happened when many of the people tried to become something they were not. It was important for the students to know that things were not always this way for the people, the children and the

community, and that there are many people, and communities striving to retain some of those traditions from which they drew their strength in the past. I also shared with the students that today we live in a world where we are very much influenced by the people of the larger societies, and the new technologies that keep coming. The trick for them was to make use of what they could from the larger society, while at the same time remembering who they were-Indian youth from a nation of their own.

The students listened most attentively to the information that I was presenting; had they heard none of this before? I posed the question: did they think it was important to them personally and educationally to have historical information of the people, their traditions before contact, and the traditions which continue today, within their educational system? All except two of the students responded to the question:

“could put something about culture in the school somewhere so kids can choose”, “has thought about traditional things in school, would like to learn some teachings”, “doesn’t know about putting historical things in school, doesn’t know about their culture.” “something about native history, native could be in school somewhere, the way our people lived.” “something about culture would be okay to have in school, like in books and videos, so kids will be proud of who they are.” “knows he is native and is okay with that, thinks saying the lords prayer is good, some school is in trouble because they stopped saying the lords prayer.” (Students May, June 2002)

Much has been written and talked about over the last thirty years or so concerning the importance of including a 'native' perspective in the educational system of Native children. As we are now in the twenty first century, it is alarming that even today, the 'push' has yet to come for this aspect of an Indian child's education. The inclusion of anything 'native' in the schools should by now be a natural occurrence; are these not Indian children in an Indian community? A community consultant comments on the contradictions of 'white' schools offering aboriginal 'stuff', while the reserve schools offer very little. "... what happens in some places, the Aboriginal communities, the schools are more white than the outside schools. There is less aboriginal stuff happening in some reserve schools than there is in some public schools." (C.C. June 26, 2001)

In the matter of having anything 'native' in the schools, in the curriculum, and in the libraries, some communities are beginning to slowly expose the children to those things rightfully belonging to the children: the history and traditions of their ancestors before contact, and the present day traditions and ceremonies which continue to be carried on by many of the people. The children are being treated with respect, by not keeping from them their birthright. There are also many more communities who do not include anything 'native' in their educational systems, or do so merely as a

tokenism; they have not taken the 'risk'. These communities and their educators continue to empower the established order of educating, while no power, no truth continues to be allotted to the history and traditions of the people. Those who have not taken the risk continue to bow to the views of a few with very fundamental ideology. They continue to think for the children, negating that child's opportunities to broaden his world view, and to make his own choices. A community consultant comments, "when we talk about culture, this is where our main stumbling block lies, someone else dictating their values, and not allowing students or people in general to make choices for themselves." (C.C. June25, 2001)

The will of the people and the will of the leaders at all levels must be there before any change can come about; they must first come out from under that mantle of oppression that many of them continue to wear. Freire writes about the oppressed: "the oppressed, who have adapted to the structure of domination in which they are immersed, and have become resigned to it, are inhibited from waging the struggle for freedom so long as they feel incapable of running the risks it requires." (p.24)

As the majority of these students have indicated, they do have some awareness of cultural perspectives. Two of them have taken native studies. Unfortunately, whatever they have learned there is not being reinforced in

any other parts of their curriculum, or through the resources available in the school library. I taught at the students' school one year in the 1980s, and at that time there were no resources which related to anything 'native'.

Apparently resources with a native perspective continue to be minimal or nonexistent. "I would like to see more stories on natives, legends, have not seen any resources here in this library." (C.C November 3, 2002)

Personal

The personal issues raised by and surrounding these students are the culmination of what has come before. This generation of children are on that road where their parents and grandparents have traveled before them. The 'why' of where these children find themselves today cannot be looked at without looking back to see what came before to the people. Much has been written and talked about concerning colonization and the devastating impact it had on many of the people: parents, children and communities. My intention is not to 'choke' the reader with yet another tirade on colonization; it is however worth repeating here the impact of being the 'oppressed' as it relates to the students under discussion. In looking at, and in particular living in an Indian community, one can see, feel, the continuing impact of colonization. Politically, socially, economically, educationally and in the

matter of religion, the tentacles of the 'better' way, or perhaps the only way that is known, continue to hold the will of many the people in their grasp. The danger lies in passing on false teachings to the children that the 'wisdom' of the oppressors is the truth, when the teaching should be, that each individual has their own truth.

Unfortunately, in many of the communities the false teachings continue and are spread through the political systems, the educational systems and through the churches. Many of the churches and their prophets continue to espouse the superiority of their way as being the only way. Not long ago I took a phone call from someone I thought was a regular sweat lodge participant (they both had the same name), I invited him to a sweat lodge ceremony. It turned out he was a 'christian'; he said, "you are going the wrong way."

The individual sessions with the students all speak of the issues born out of all that came before. These issues relate to the impact of colonization from long ago that has been carried on down through the generations. The voices of some of the students indicate that they too as some of their parents before them continue to cover their pain with alcohol and drugs, this to their personal and educational detriment:

"smoking up at school, smoking up a few times a month mostly when lonely, too tired to come to school, smoking makes him

tired”(May 17, 2002), “alcohol interfering with school, peer pressure, having blackouts” (May 3, 2002), “kicked out of school for five months for smoking dope outside school, came back to special program.” (May 14, 2002), “suspended for smoking up while in grade eight, came back to special program after losing two months of school.” (May 15,2002), “does not smoke up at school anymore, still smokes everyday, buys it, it makes him tired, shows up at school mostly in the afternoon.” (June 3, 2002)

Other reasons indicated by the students, which keep them from continuing on positively in their personal lives and in school are related to feelings of anger, loneliness, fighting, dealing with verbal abuse, all these culminating in behaviors which invariably end up with the student being suspended and /or eventually getting sent to the program that they are in:

“suspended for behavior problems, showing anger, too much fooling around, fighting leading to suspension or getting sent home leading to too much school being missed and falling behind in class, this led to not being able to keep up in class and then sent to program he is in”. “kicked out of school from time to time since grade four for fighting.” “written up for fighting when in grade eight, moved to special program”. “feels anger at times, sibling calls him down.” “verbal abuse from grandmother.” “parental conflict in the home.” “has suffered verbal abuse.” (Students May-June, 2002)

When asked about their hopes for the future, the students either gave no response or gave these comments:

“wants to go on in school, travel and get a good job, important to grannie that he finish school.” “It is important to act as a role model to the kids coming up, he would encourage his own child

to stay in school and not do what he is doing.” “would like to get into sports”; “for mom and dad to get back together, for himself to finish school and play football”; “probably be a fisherman like his dad”; “would like community to recognize his finishing high school, would like to go to college.”
(Students May-June 2002)

One of the very alarming things that became evident in conversations with these students was that some of them do not know how to read. The age range of these students was from fourteen to eighteen. It is a tragedy that some of these students have evidently been passed on to the next grade without proper evaluation. A parent states that “there are more than one or two students illiterate at age eighteen.” (August 2002) Could the reason why at least one of these students began to have difficulty in school be related to his having trouble reading since the fourth grade? “trouble with reading from time to time since grade four, kicked out of school from time to time since grade four for fighting.” This student further commented that his “reading difficulty may be due to sniffing when he was eleven or twelve years old.”
(Student June 2002) This student is now eighteen and is in the ninth grade.

It is apparent that this student’s difficulties in language arts (reading and writing) were not picked up at the time his difficulty began. We have to assume that his academic progress in this area was not adequately

monitored, or if having discovered this students difficulty, that no effort was made to address the problem.

The assault on the psyche, self-esteem is very detrimental when one cannot read, while those around you can. Mackay and Myles, in their survey related to student dropouts, report that educators suggested that discomfort with English leads to avoidance behavior. Students with weak language skills may remain silent in class and this may be interpreted by teachers as unwillingness to participate or even to pay attention in class. (1995:164) When one is unable to read, there *is* loss of personal power, and therefore independence; that fundamental right, the ability to read has not been nurtured, and that person will always be attached in some way to this element that is lacking in him. This missing element, the inability to read, might cause one to draw into themselves, lonely and hiding from the world, or perhaps cause a 'hostile' outlook to those around them, as they attempt to show that they are 'just as good'. As the community consultant has said earlier, "some effort has to be made to alleviate those underlying weaknesses in reading, otherwise those students experiencing difficulty, may be held back in school, or end up dropping out."

Mackay and Myles from their survey also report that Native and non-Native educators in discussing drop-outs, situate the students' difficulties

with inadequate instruction in elementary schools. (p.165) While inadequate instruction may be part of the problem, the larger issue is proper monitoring and evaluation of students.

It is apparent that the main reason the students have dropped out of the mainstream education system and find themselves in a special program, is due to some negative behavior (according to school policies and procedures), that they had exhibited.

The repercussions from the students' behavior leads them to being taken out of the mainstream education system, and eventually they find themselves back in the special program which attempts to prepare them for reentry back into the mainstream education system. The students' issues and problems remain however, not having being dealt with. Their detrimental behavior sits, waiting to resurface. It appears that no one has *seriously* looked at these students in *all* of their dimensions. Without resolution of the students' problems, a revolving door syndrome develops with regard to these students' education, and they never really belong anywhere. I observed and heard that some help is being asked for by the students.

During my individual sessions with them, these students disclosed the issues related to their behavior, although they were not described as issues by the students. These 'issues' include: boredom, alcohol and drug abuse,

illiteracy, unstable home environment, memory problems, low self esteem, anger, depression and loneliness. Unfortunately, these issues or roots to the students' detrimental behaviors are only the symptoms of the underlying problems to be dealt with. Educators and administrators need to learn to look beyond outward behavior, into the possible reasons which cause it; this will help them to better evaluate student situations and make more correct interpretations about how the student can best be helped.

The students' voices have been heard-it remains for those concerned, to work on providing the students an education which acknowledges their physical, emotional, intellectual and spiritual well being.

The issues and the common themes generated through interaction with parents and community consultants point out the behaviors exhibited by the students, the possible reasons for the behaviors, approaches that can be taken to begin to resolve some of the issues facing the students, and who should be involved in positively supporting the students both in their personal and educational environments, that is, in the students' home, school and community environments.

The approaches that can be taken, according to my research, which would help to provide a more positive and stable learning environment for the students, is detailed in chapter five.

The next section of this paper deals with the legacies of colonization and my own personal perspectives on being the colonized. Why have I included a section on colonization? As has been mentioned in the chapter on 'findings', the legacies of colonization continue to play a role in the lives of many of the people, to the detriment of their children, the students who struggle to carry on despite not having dealt with personal issues, these from the fallout of colonization which impacted on their parents and thus on the children.

In writing about transforming our lives, Smith shares that:

Part of the exercise is about recovering our own stories of the past. This is inextricably bound to a recovery of our language and epistemological foundations. It is also about reconciling and repriorizing what is really important about the present.
(1999:39)

As long as the tears continue to fall from the old peoples' eyes (as those in the north, those who wanted to know what happened back there, what is this word 'colonization?'), and as long as the children continue to be lost, we will acknowledge the legacies of colonization. The important thing to remember is that we must speak our own truths, as they *were* in the past,

as they *are* in the present. However, as we speak our truths, the intention should not be to assign blame or guilt on others.

In conversation with one of my committee members Dan Thomas (December 17, 2004), he shared that there are those who tend to release or run from their truths, rather than dealing with their own truths from the center of their being. They speak from the outside assigning blame and guilt on others, rather than go into their own house, so to speak, to deal with their truths there. The section on 'legacies of colonization' therefore is not to assign blame, but to speak the truth, including my own truths from the past, which mirrors those of the students *this many years later*.

Chapter Four: Legacies of Colonization

When the creator made two people at the beginning of time the creator gave them Indian law to follow. He gave them four directions. He gave them sweetgrass, the tree, the animal and the rock. The sweetgrass represents kindness, the tree represents honesty, the animal sharing, and the rock is strength. (Elder George Courchene, 1992)

I see these gifts as being interconnected to all our being: physically, mentally, emotionally, spiritually, and to the earth around us, the earth which nurtures and teaches us. Before colonization, these gifts formed the basis of the people's educational ways, a way to live, to learn, to know ourselves, our families, our communities, and to teach the children.

For example, kindness can be expressed through acknowledgement of the child's right to be cared for not only physically, but also within the context of education, mentally, emotionally, intellectually and spiritually. This also extends to ensuring that child learns of those things rightfully his, his history, including the traditions of the people before colonization. To keep these from the child would not be an act of kindness. This act of kindness offers the child the opportunity to learn about himself, who he is, and to help him make decisions, choices, of how he might develop himself, to express his own uniqueness.

The educational ways of the people before colonization included teachings, which helped to form the foundation of education for the children, for the people. Consciously or unconsciously, the learner took into himself the lessons provided, through listening, observing, and doing. The lessons were put into practice through all aspects of a learners life; economically, socially, politically, and was woven into the fabric of the learner's being; mentally, spiritually, physically, emotionally. The learner knew who *he* was, his identity, his place in the family and in the community. He had a *sense of place*. This was the way of the people before the mind and body became cloudy with foreign foods, foreign drink, and foreign educational systems. This great change came about as the European colonists made their way to the land of the people. The process of colonization had begun.

Visionaries amongst the people had prior knowledge that changes would be coming to the people. At the National First Nations Elders Language Gathering in 1993, Elder Fred Eagletail shared the following: This was a prophecy told to Black Elk of the Lakotas:

Along time ago, my father told me what his father told him, that there was once a Lakota holy man called Drinks Water, who dreamed what was to be; and this was a long time before the coming of the Wasichus [the white people]. He dreamed that the four-leggeds were going back into the earth and that a strange race had woven a spider's web all around the Lakotas. And he said that when this happens, you shall live in square grey houses, in a barren land, and beside those square grey

houses you shall starve. They say that he went back to mother earth soon after he saw this vision, and it was sorrow that killed him. You can look about you now and see that he meant these dirt-roofed houses we live in, and that all the rest was true. Sometimes dreams are wiser than waking. (National First Nations Elders Language Gathering 1993:77)

William Commanda, an Elder participating at the same gathering, For Aboriginal people, prophecy is the spiritual side of our lives, our knowledge of things pertaining to the land. Mother Earth, the Sun, the Moon, and stars are the elements that help to keep nature in balance. Aboriginal people have the knowledge that there was an age before this one and even before that one. Both ages were destroyed because mankind had gone too far away from nature and the Life Force plan of life. Each time he went too far in inventing things, became corrupted, and destroyed himself and all living things. (p.27)

What prompted the Europeans to colonize new lands? It is not my intent to give a comprehensive account of colonization as far as European history is concerned, as there has already been much documentation on the topic. The following offers a brief glimpse to the reader as to the ideology of the Europeans during the time of colonization, and what prompted and sustained them in their quest. In the section on Claims to Territory in Colonial America, L.C.Green shares the following:

At the time of the era of discovery, from the early part of the fourteenth century, it was generally accepted that the entire globe was the property of God and as such, distributable by the Pope as his delegate on earth. At the same time, it was the practice of the European states to seize for themselves territories which had not yet been claimed by other Christian states, regardless of the attitude or presence of aboriginal

inhabitants, who, for the main part, were described as 'savages or barbarians.' (1989:4)

The Spaniards make reference to natural law, divine law, or human law, by which they might lawfully travel to lands in question. That only natural and divine law might prevent them from doing so. They explained away any significance of human law, by saying that if there were any human law that might prevent them from traveling to and staying in any lands in question, that the law would be inhumane and unreasonable and consequently would not have the force of law (rights being conferred by natural and divine law). (Green p43). That the colonists used the notion of divine and natural laws (according to their understanding) and the supposed superiority of Christianity and its propagation to assume control of the new lands and the inhabitants they encountered is apparent. The colonist explorer attributed natural law to inclinations of 'civilized' man, those who follow rules of conduct, conferred on him by a divine power. In part, the reference to natural laws was a way of justifying the zeal with which the explorers declared for themselves and their monarchs, the validity of seizing the new lands. Thus they explained away the presence of any inhabitants they encountered in the new lands, as, according to the ideology of the explorers, the inhabitants were not civilized, and therefore outside the realm of divine and natural law.

Battiste and Sake Young Blood quote the historian Lewis Hanke:

The personal God of the Europeans omitted to mention Indigenous peoples and their lands in His teachings. Because of the bible's failure to mention the American continent and its people, church authorities argued that Indigenous peoples were infidels, natural slaves, children or backward savages. (2000: 97)

There was as well, the ideology that the inhabitants who were for the most part were seen as having no intelligence, and apparently having no 'civil sovereignty' were not a nation, that nations ought to be cultured and civilized. (Green p. 67)

Could the following statement be the forerunner of the circumstances in which many First Nations find themselves today, politically, socially, economically?

Although the aborigines in question are not wholly intelligent, yet they are a little short of that condition, and so are unfit to found or administer a lawful State up to the standard required by human and civil claims---they have no proper laws nor magistrates, and are not even capable of controlling their family affairs; they are without any literature or arts---and they lack many other conveniences of human life. It might therefore, be maintained that in their own interests the sovereign---might undertake the administration of their country, providing them with prefects and governors for their towns, and might even give them new lords, so long as this was clearly for their benefit. (Green p. 46)

Other thoughts on why the Europeans uprooted themselves from their mother land, had to do with the lack of respect they had for their land and the earth, that they had lost their culture and their connection to the earth.

Educator and author Sioui writes:

An abysmal sense of insecurity is what drove Europeans and others from their old world homes. It originated in the antique demise of the original mother-centered human cultures and earth spirituality and in the parallel, gradual fragmentation of human kind into patriarchal nation states and man centered religions. With this upsetting began an age of untold violence perpetrated by man against the earth and all femininity, that is to say, against himself, since life originates in the feminine nature. That is why the Europeans had to leave home and how they eventually landed here, on this continent, whose Original Peoples traditionally honor and think of the Earth as a Mother, who not only nurtures the human physically, but even more importantly, inspires, teaches, guides and educates him/her. (The Millennium Symposium on Science, Society, and Human Rights. August 2000, University of Regina)

Impact on the People

Because the repercussions of the residential school era (born out of colonization), are still being felt today amongst the people, it is worthwhile to have a brief look at the ideology of the time. I bring forth the time of the residential school era as a point of reference, to look at the past of the people, “the past which has not quite passed away”, as La Capra notes.

(1963:8) For the reader unfamiliar with the history of the residential school

era, there has been much discussion, much written on the topic by scholars, individuals, groups and historians. A small list of these include: York (1989), Kirkness (1999), The Royal Commission on Aboriginal People (1996), The National Indian Brotherhood (1988), Young (1997), Rogers (1957), Hookimaw-Witt (1998), and Battiste (1998).

Author Gerald Vizenor offers the following passage which describes the historical setting of the boarding school era—

The expressions of the staff (nuns and priests), convey the relentlessness with which they carried out their mission, soul after soul had to be gained by hard fight, patience and prayer, and many of these were converted from their heathen views and practices only after many years of hard work,--boarding schools across the nation, whether government or sectarian, stripped their Indian wards of their Native identity in the name of Christianity and civilization. (1984: 103:105)

The testimony of Karl Menninger (Vizenor 1984), before the Senate Subcommittee on Indian Education also speaks to the negative impact on the children who were institutionalized:

That children are damaged when their first sources of identities are disrupted, when you tell him that his language is no good, when you tell him his color is not right or imply it, by surrounding him with people of a different color, habits, and status. (p. 105)

Vizenor writes that thousands of children have survived cultural disunities in federal and mission boarding schools, and that the federal

blueprints for assimilation became the special burden of several generations of tribal children. (p. 104)

It is true that many have ‘survived’, but many have not recovered from the abuse heaped on them at residential schools. The following quote by Oskaboose, (Kirkness 1998), fully captures the ‘picture’, of the time of residential schools, and how the policies of that time affected the people: physically, emotionally, spiritually and mentally. And, as time would prove, these effects were to be seen through the generations.

We were removed at age five (sometimes earlier) from our parents and community, dumped into an alien hostile environment of residential schools, and left to survive by any means we could. We were removed from our parents, our grandparents, our siblings, our relatives, our communities, our religion, our teachings and our customs, to be brought up by childless nuns and white men who wore black dresses---we learned to be abusers ourselves, and we passed it on to the generations that followed, our own children. Abused children became abusers themselves---We were taught European ways and European values and European mindsets and when we returned to our own communities we had become strangers— little brown white men who couldn’t speak their language, nor make a simple fire or track an animal through the woods. We were ridiculed and rejected by our own people. And that’s what the policies of assimilation did to Indian Country. They brought pain and suffering, lost lives, vicious in-fighting, divisions, waste and sorrow. We may never recover from the time of residential schools’ only survive. (p.p. 100-101)

When the colonists arrived, they brought with them among other things, new forms of education. This new form of education did not have in

its foundation, teachings of humility, honesty, strength or kindness. Rather, it caused confusion, as new more 'civilized' knowledge forms were introduced. The new forms of education taught shame, hurt and anger to many of the people.

The lives of many of the people and the traditional way of educating a child were fragmented through colonization and the subsequent taking away of the children to residential schools, although, as Calliou notes:

Not all individuals were alienated by schooling and not all became domesticated. Instead, some First Nation people successfully resisted colonial control, aided by the counter-influences of individuals, families, languages and communities. (1999:161)

I had spent some time in a northern community as part of a group in 2002. We had been invited there to help the people deal with their anger, shame and hurt, which stemmed from their colonization and subsequent introduction to the foreign educational ways of the colonizers, through residential and day schools. One of the things the people wanted to know was what happened back there? What was this word 'colonization'? It seemed that in order to be able to move ahead, they had to have some idea of why they found themselves where they were today.

We the helpers were only the facilitators of the understanding that the people were seeking about colonization, their history since time began, the

healing ways of the people, and what was keeping many of them shackled to the past, either consciously or unconsciously. This was the time for the people to share, to ask their questions. The old people shared their hurt still lingering from residential school, the young people sharing their stories, their grief from the fallout of all of that. Memories serve to preserve those historical traumatic events, however intolerable, however painful, as a truth from which one can begin to work through their past for themselves, their children and the children yet to come. The event or trauma does not disappear; it may remain hidden or veiled until it exposes itself in some unsettling manner. LaCapra writes of denial and repression: "...what is denied or repressed in a lapse of memory does not disappear; it returns in a transformed, at times disfigured and disguised manner." (1960:10)

The memories of the old people were drawn out as though from some distant place in time. These memories had not changed. They were now looked at in perhaps a different context. The people remembered the harsh times suffered, some times with pain, tears, and at other times with humor in recalling the ways of their caretakers who were attempting to indoctrinate them with Christianity. The people were in some way, caught together in the tentacles of the colonial system imposed from long ago. The effects were still being felt today: individually, communally, emotionally, physically, and

spiritually. At this point in time, the coming together of the people was also their re-education of things forgotten, those things veiled in time as though a great spider web had covered the people for so long. As in times past, the educator, the classroom, was the earth. We learned from the earth, the trees, the rocks, the waters, the winds, the animals that came to visit, we learned from each other.

John Rogers in his book *Red World and White* (1957), recounts his boarding school experiences, and of his return to the reservation; of how he had to relearn his language, and of his acknowledgement of his culture and identity:

I was beginning to realize that I was being forced to give up all that was dear to me, and it was not good that this should be done. Nothing the white man could teach me would take the place of what I was learning from the forest, the lakes and the river. I could read more in the swaying of the trees and the way they spread their branches and leaned into the wind than I could read in any books that they had at school. (P.108)

The people in the northern community expressed this same sense of reverence for the waters and the forests around them. This was their acknowledgement of their 'sense of place'. Cajete writes of 'place':

... native cultures describe their place as a living presence in the context of its mythic and spiritual meaning. The storied and living homeland of native cultures provides a holistic foundational context for native life and participation with the universe and illustrates the primacy of space and place in native cosmology. (1999:182)

Although the people had lost much: individually, communally, they had not lost the special attachment they had with the land. This part of them, the knowledge that the land would sustain them had not been lost. The expressions of respect and reverence the people had for the land, was evident each time we went exploring the waters and islands around us, each time we climbed the mountains to places where tobacco was placed, acknowledging the presence of those who had gone before, and the spirits who were felt there. This was the traditional territory of the people. The pride that the people had in their territory was evident each time we stepped into the boats to skim over the water, each time the men brought fish for a meal, emptied from their nets. The timelessness of the place was shown through the drawings on the rocks, there, since no one knew when. We shared songs, stories, and laughter around the fire. We were a people together, our commonalities binding us together: our histories, our language, our hurts, our pride. The earth cradled us, held us. No one, no colonizer could take away the strength felt there on the land, as that strength came from the earth, sometimes tangible to us, at other times felt but unseen.

Vizenor, in the section on *Boarding School Remembrances* writes; “the conflicts have changed in time and place, from the reservation to the urban world, and so has the language of the past, and the memories of

cultural survival” (p.100). How have the memories of cultural survival changed in time and place? Can memories change, based on what is happening in the present? What might happen in the future? Is it the discovery of a new truth? A new meaning? Harold Goodsky (in Vizenor), shares:

I was chained in dream and thought about us all being named by a psychopath like Columbus—But I could never be without my color---I would be nobody without my color---I don't know about the name Indian that we all answer to; I don't know that much about history, the history that white men tell, but I know that I have my color.(p.107)

Goodsky thinks about the word ‘Indian’, what does this mean to him, “who am I”? He asks as he surveys the color of his hands (p.107). He would have to have a ‘survival memory’, of his culture, in order to think about this in a different way, to consider this (himself) differently. No matter what has happened to Goodsky, his color has always been with him and is a part of who he is. The memory of that part of who he is has not changed.

La Capra, in discussing Pierre Nora’s views on memory and history, writes:

But what is symptomatically evoked in this passage is a sense of trauma that is both veiled and displaced by the romantically folkloric form it takes. Nora feels that something essential has been lost, and whether or not the loss itself is imaginary, the very opposition between history and memory serves to commemorate and arrange it. (1996:19)

The memories of the people in the northern community were arranged according to their perceptions of then, their time at residential school. In the present, their memories, their perceptions are just as vivid, tempered with new knowledge and insight, and some understanding of the colonial ideology which brought about great change amongst the people. Some meaning was given as to their lives in the present, the truth of that meaning being hurtful. There is the feeling that something has been lost, this loss that they cannot quite picture, cannot quite grasp.

Highwater asks: "Is it possible that there is not one truth, but many; not one real experience, but many realities; not one history, but many different and valid ways of looking at events." (1981:6). He quotes the late Hanna Arendt, author of 'life of the mind'... "that the impulse behind the use of reason is not the discovery of truth but the discovery of meaning, and that truth and meaning are not the same things" (P.6)

Personal Perspectives on Colonization

Some time ago, and within the last ten years, I was waiting at a bus stop in Winnipeg. An Indian man was sitting on a bench there, holding a bottle of beer. As he rose and came toward me, I thought he was probably going to ask me for money. He said, "I don't want money, only a cigarette".

I gave him a cigarette, then he said “you know, I wish that I had been born a white man”. I wonder now what he would have shared, had I taken the time to listen to him. Would he, as in Memmi share a portrait of himself, “recognizing it as one would a detested nickname which had become a familiar description. The accusation disturbs him even more because he admires and fears his powerful accuser” (1965:87).

One of the things learned by the colonized was to detest himself, his ways, his color, everything about himself. The colonizer and everything about him was envied, sought after. The missionaries and others who came to the reservations to ‘save’ the people did their job well. Fanon writes about the colonized man as an envious man:

The look that the native turns on the settlers town is a look of lust, a look of envy; it expresses his dreams of possession-all manner of possession; to sit at the settlers table, to sleep in the settlers bed--- there is no native who does not dream at least once a day of setting himself up in the settlers place. (1965:32)

I was raised in an Indian reservation in Manitoba. I went to day school in our community, up to grade eight. Our teachers were non-Indian. My mother was punished for speaking her language in day school, she reached grade eight there. My father apparently went to grade four. My mother and father spoke both Cree and English in our house, speaking mainly English to us children. I was one of eight children, the third oldest. We went to the

United church three times on Sunday (once for Sunday school). In his later years my father refused to attend church anymore because as he said, "It doesn't seem to do those that gossip any good." My mother faithfully attended church, being involved in church affairs until her passing.

I would hear the people talking some time, "did you see so and so in church?— and here he was out drinking the night before". The terms lazy, drunkard, dirty, "misti Indian" were heard, as the people called each other down, mimicking the colonizers. "misti Indian" meaning big Indian. He's nothing but a "big Indian" was in reference to one perceived as being lazy, dirty, and slovenly. I would think that the opposite of this term would be an "un-big Indian" or a white man. People became ashamed to be known as Indian, and many denied their heritage. Everything 'white' was better: white skin, white ways, white teachers, white ministers, white men, and even white bread. As in Memmi who discusses the colonized feelings to the colonizer, we strived to reach the white man's level of achievement in every way:

Love of the colonizer is subtended by a complex of feelings ranging from shame to self-hate. The extremism in that submission to the model is already revealing. A blonde women, be she dull or anything else, appears superior to any brunette— his habits, clothing, food, architecture are closely copied, even if inappropriate. A mixed marriage is the extreme expression of this audacious leap. (p.121)

My mother was one of many who were very much influenced by the Colonizer's message that we must change our ways, change who we were, and try to be more like the white man. My mother kept us children very clean, kept our house clean. We had to get extra cleaned up if 'white' people were coming to call. She did not seem to have it in her to also express her caring in more explicit ways, the expressions of love and caring that might give sustenance to our emotional well being was missing. Had something happened in her life to prevent her from showing her caring in other ways beyond looking after our material needs?

I realized much later that she raised us children the only way she knew how, as her mother had before her. My mother and father did not attend residential school. My mother's mother attended Brandon residential school. When my grandmother was at residential school, she and others from our reserve were afraid of those children appearing most Indian, still wearing their long black braids. Had this 'Indianess', already been instilled into my grandmother's mind as being backward and savage?

The frustrations which came into our house came from places that I did not think about, or learn about until years later. The conflicts arose out of the ashes of what had been the people's traditional way of life, to what we

now had; foreign ways of looking at our neighbors, foreign educational systems, foreign drink, and foreign ways of practicing our spirituality.

It seemed that I felt the brunt of the frustrations felt in our house; I had very dark skin as a child, and was called down over this part of me. This assault on my psyche, caused me to have very low self-esteem, I carried this for years, through to having my own family. Years later I went to my mother, crying, telling her that I did not blame her anymore for all the hard times that I had gone through. We became close in later years, the bond between mother and child strong, no matter what came before. I mourned her passing for a long time. I now know that she did the best that she could with what she had at the time.

Until I went to boarding school, I had no concept of being Indian, that I had been colonized. I thought that I was the same as everyone else, that things were the way they supposed to be. There are some instances that I recall, where I should have had a glimmer that I was somehow set apart from others. When I was about eight or nine years old, I sometimes stayed with my grandparents in Winnipeg during the summer. One of the neighbor children and I played together. I remember one day he was laughing and shouting, "Elsie's granny is a squaw". I did not know what that meant, and I joined him in the same chant. At about the same time, I began to notice some

differences between myself and others. The children of the local shopkeeper in our community had very white skin. I became aware of their white skin next to my very brown skin. I liked to hold the white hands of one of the children, as though somehow her color would rub off on my hands. No matter how hard I washed and scrubbed my hands and arms, they stayed the same brown color. I still did not know how or why I was different, or even that I was. I only knew that I didn't like the color of my skin.

When I went to boarding school, my psyche continued to be assaulted, as I and many others were the subjects of veiled emotional abuse: the girls having their waistlines checked when we returned from summer holidays, to see if we had become pregnant over the holidays, the principal reading our mail out loud to the assembled students, inviting others to laugh at our grammatical errors, the principal taking pictures of the girls in the bath tub, sharing these with the boys. These were only some of the abuses we were subject to, the abuse was veiled in my mind, although I knew somewhere deep inside me, that this was not right, but unable to bring this out, to examine it, and do something about it, feeling powerless. I did not recognize it as being blatant abuse until much later. I heard later, when former students of residential schools began to talk about the abuse that they had suffered there, that much more horrific forms of abuses were suffered by

these students. One of the good things that came out of residential schools, were the bonds of friendship that were formed there, these bonds continuing throughout our lives. Already back there, the Indian people were being pulled together, for what was yet to come. Each of us was to take our place in the unfolding story of the people's lives, some good, and some bad.

Unlike John Rogers (Red World and White, 1957), who on his return home from boarding school, was reoriented to his traditions, I and many like myself had no traditions to return to. I was not raised in the traditional ways of the people; the church ministers, the schoolteachers, and the government agents had made inroads into our community, into our lives, many years before. They brought with them those foreign ways adopted by many of our people; political systems, foreign languages, Christianity, and foreign systems of educating. With these tools, it was instilled into our minds, our psyche, that we were not as good, not as smart as those who had come to help us, come to save us. The traditional way of our ancestors had been eroded, replaced with a poor semblance of what was to be our adopted way of life, the "better life", based on non-traditional Indian values.

The tentacles of this new and better way reached inside our community, and touched the daily interactions amongst the people. Jealousy came amongst the people, squabbles over who had more material things, and

in the name of Christianity, over who attended church most often, who was the most “saved”. This religion imposed from outside the community, was supposed to have been a good thing for the people, to teach them kindness and caring. Instead, the imposed religion caused much anger and hatred, as those who had been “saved”, turned against their own traditional people, who they perceived as practicing witchcraft.

The new system imposed on the people through colonization caused many of the people to become complacent and dependent. They did not have to be self sufficient. Along with this came low self-esteem, there were no accomplishments to be proud of. As the children were taken to residential school, the people lost the gift of parenting; they had no one to parent. These are some of the intergenerational legacies left to the people, from both residential and the reservation school systems. Today, the foreign systems of governing and educating the people continue in many of the reservations, and the threads of colonization still weave their way into the historical tapestries of the people.

Vizenor’s statement, “that conflicts have changed in time and place from the reservations to the urban world ...” can be debated. The conflicts still continue on most of the reservations because the leaders have become comfortable with, and continue to use the non-traditional forms of leading

the people. The Indian Act system of electing the leadership breeds anger, hatred and jealousy amongst the people, against neighbor, against relations.

The conflicts continue on the reservations in the name of Christianity, as those who consider themselves 'saved', continue to look down on their traditional brothers and sisters. The conflicts and confusion continue in the area of education, as mainly non-Indian forms of education continue to be used. Then people ask, "What is wrong? What is missing for our children?" The children in most community schools have little opportunity to learn their true histories, the traditions of their ancestors before contact. The decision to not learn of these things has been made for them.

The examples of my childhood experiences, indicate how the colonizer's mentality can be introduced at an early age, and carried unconsciously throughout life. The point of regressing into the past is that in order to be able to move ahead, we must look back to see where we have come from: our histories and what happened there. Our histories shape us, and what we do with that is individual, based on how far we have come in learning about ourselves and about the influences that impact on us.

Mary Young shares her views on the importance of a person knowing who they are, before they can move ahead in their lives; "unless I know where I come from and know what my beliefs, values, and attitudes are, I

cannot begin to challenge and change who I am, either as a person or as an educator". (1997:14:15)

Smith asks a related question:

Why then has revisiting history been a significant part of decolonization? Coming to know the past has been part of the critical pedagogy of decolonization. To hold alternative histories is to hold alternative knowledge's. The pedagogical implication of this access to alternative knowledge's is that they can form the basis of alternate ways of doing things---the need to tell our stories remains the powerful imperative of a powerful form of resistance. (p.p.34-35) Smith further adds that there is unfinished business, that we are still being colonized (and know it), and that we are still searching for justice (1999:34).

In my adolescence and into early adulthood, I carried low self-esteem, from the abuses suffered as a child and as a young woman. My low self-esteem and not knowing who I was, not knowing the history of the people, and the legacies left there for me, was reflected in some of the choices that I made along my life path.

One opportunity placed before me, was that I could choose to go to University. I was accepted as a mature student, and graduated from the University Of Manitoba School Of Nursing in 1981. When I graduated from university, I still knew nothing. All was learned from the western perspective, western thought. I had learned the skills that would see me through my chosen profession, but knew nothing about those things which would sustain me through difficult times, through life, left by our ancestors,

which would provide sustenance to the emotional, mental and spiritual well being of the people. I am fortunate that I was able to attend university, and I fully support 'higher' academic learning. What was missing for me at the time, was that foundation of knowledge from which I could have drawn support during the difficult times that I faced. That strengthening foundation is still missing for many students. If we are talking about decolonizing ourselves, why are we continuing to use the colonizers education forms only?

The process of decolonizing myself began in 1981 (although I didn't know it at the time). I attended an ecumenical conference in Morley, Alberta. Hundreds of people were camped there; there were mainly Indian people, although other races were well represented. The tipis looked beautiful, when viewed from the crest of the hill, so many, it seemed as though the past had caught up with us again. The elders called that place 'sacred grounds'. I found out why. It was time for me to begin my spiritual journey, to get to know who I was, my purpose here, to let go of my hurts, to learn of the legacies left by my Indian ancestors. This journey has been difficult. Little did I know that the abuse I suffered at the hands of the colonial oppressors, was nothing compared to the pain and suffering to be endured from those who did not want to see me pick up the first ways of the

people, the traditions of my ancestors. This journey to get to 'know' also meant that I had to acknowledge my total being to include the spiritual aspect, that part that had been missing from all of my life and all that I did. I had to relearn my traditions and language, and the various cleansing and healing ceremonies. I had to shed the many layers of colonial coverings, which had weighed me down for so long. Throughout all of this: the learning, the suffering, my strength has been truly tested, and as Yazzie says, "I say that I have been to hell and back." Yazzie shares another common thought:

That we as Indigenous people must start within. We must exercise internal sovereignty, which is nothing more than taking control of our personal lives, our families, our clans and our communities. To do that we must return to our traditions---that is our path to postcolonial existence—all we can do is declare community and spiritual independence. No tank, no smart bomb, and no colonial cop can penetrate that. (2000:47)

Despite the continuing colonization taking place amongst many nations, many individuals *are* working on decolonizing themselves. The realization is there that change must begin with the self, before anything else, before the family, before the community. It can be an exciting time for those willing to allow themselves to be a part of the continuing cycle of renewal and change. Related to shifting paradigms, Marie Battiste writes:

In the relentless cycles of renewal and reform, Aboriginal peoples are living in an extraordinary time. Aboriginal peoples throughout the world have survived five centuries of the horrors and harsh lessons of colonization. They are emerging with new consciousness and vision. (1998:22:1)

During one of the many ceremonies that I attended I heard that the white man and the Indian had both been given gifts: to the white man, the gift of curiosity and to the Indian, the gift of insight. These two can work together, if the ideology that one has superior knowledge and therefore superior power over the other is put aside.

The concluding chapter pulls together the research results (as indicated by the data), and offers some response as to the possibilities that exist of providing the students with more meaningful, relevant, and respectful education. Decolonization is touched on, as a means of preparing oneself to view the environmental influences impacting on the students, self, family and community, from the perspective of a new vision of reality.

Chapter Five: Conclusions: Transformation

As Aboriginal people approach the 21st century, the need is great for a transformed education that enriches our character and dignity, that emerges from one's own roots and cultural experience, from which a voice once powerless can be raised, and where diversity is seen as an asset, not a source for prejudice. (Battiste 1998:7)

The research conducted has shown that the students' behavior and attitudes have contributed to these students finding themselves out of the mainstream education system and in the special program. However, no plan has been in place to *fully* help these students, other than in the academic area. Their personal problems remain and contribute to the students' ongoing self-destructive behavior. Although some attempts have been made by those who have taught these students over time, to address the perceived personal needs of the students, such as raising the levels of self-esteem, there appears to have been no consistency, and no plan to address the issues or root causes related to the students' negative behaviors. As my research shows, it is not only the educators at this school that have the task of transforming the present educational system and supporting the students physically, emotionally, and intellectually, but also the parents, the leadership at all levels and the community in general. If the roots of the students' problems are not addressed and only the surface visible behavior is to be dealt with,

then the cycle of self- incompleteness facing these students will surely catch others coming up through the generations.

The conventional modes of the present education system often have little to do with the life of the student, personally, socially, economically or politically. The system has stagnated (there are no new plans in place), and so have these students, who find no lasting personal empowerment in or through their present education system. New approaches must be taken, heed must be paid to those who have tried new ways, or rediscovered old ways, to address the patterns of hopelessness, depression, loneliness, apathy, anger and low self esteem exhibited by these students. It is perhaps past time to cast aside the fear of stigmatization if new ways are tried or if the old ways are picked up and used to bring these students to a point where they are in tune with all aspects of their being, centered socially, emotionally, intellectually and spiritually. In discussing preparation for transforming vision, Cajete writes:

The key is learning to seek in a way that reclaims a people's oral history and cultural tradition for the purpose of constructing transformative vision. We must establish dialogue about what our visions might be and try things out. We must appreciate what others have done in formal and informal ways, big and small, past and present. In this way we energize our visions as we live and grow. This is not as complex as it may sound since Indigenous educational processes have numerous vehicles for doing exactly that. (1994:192)

I return briefly to colonization, as this historic event continues to play an important role in why some people and communities have not yet made innovative changes in their local education systems, continuing to use the same old systems imported from outside the community.

One of the areas that the colonizer had domination over the colonized was through the education system that was imported from Europe. The western educational system was born out of the same political systems developed and portrayed by the Europeans as the way to govern and to educate the colonies. As a colonized people, the Indian people were included in these indoctrinations. The base of the systems brought over by the Europeans included laws and regulations, politics and religion, which were used to educate and control the people. The present educational systems including but not exhaustive of: the study of law, science, history, political systems, religion, and social and present educational systems, grew out of this power base. The common denominator in this power base was religion or Christianity, which directed the morals of the people: a way to think, feel and to act.

Deloria writes:

That the Christian religion taught westerners how to think about society, the world and the individual person. And that western mind is dependent upon two types of thought, Greek and

Hebrew, which have been intertwined to form the Christian scheme of things as brought to this country. (1978:11)

Battiste shares this related thought:

The immigrants left their own societies and entered tribal Canada. In our Aboriginal homeland, they began to develop a society that they imagined into being through laws and regulations. The affirmation and continuation of this imaginary realm are supplied through the provincial educational systems. (2000:195)

The journey to transformation which would allow one to contribute fully with an unbiased and open mind to any new forms of education begins with self. I suggest that the minds of those who continue the rhetoric about what education should be for the people, first need to be decolonized, or rid of any notions that there is only one way to educate, and that the educational system now in use in most reserve schools is superior to all other forms. There are also those who are in charge of community education system delivery, who *are* working on decolonizing themselves personally, they have yet to make that same effort in bringing about relevant changes to the local educational school systems.

The changes on the journey to decolonization are felt and seen after a long hard battle to free oneself from the tentacles of colonialism. The tentacles of colonialism were not selective, but touched a person in all of his realms: physically, mentally, emotionally and spiritually. Battiste and Young

Blood write about colonization and the disorder it brought to the peoples lives, “Colonization brought disorder to Indigenous peoples lives, to their languages, to their social relations, and to their way of thinking about, feeling, and interacting with the world.” (2000:13)

Despite what we now know about the sometimes devastating events of our history as Indian people and the loss of life that occurred and still continues to occur in many forms, we must remain respectful of what we can learn from others. Whatever we learn from others is of value, as this is how we come to realize that were it not for this, we would if we choose to respond, have nothing to respond to. What we learn from others serves as a backdrop against which we form our own opinions. We can take what we learn, not immediately taking all that we learn as truth, but as one way to think about things, without compromising our own integrity. From our own base of knowledge systems; our languages, our ways of practicing spirituality, our ways of educating the children, and our ways of knowing, we observe, listen and then we respond. We use our *decolonized* minds.

The decolonized people realize that although in many aspects of their lives they continue out of necessity to use the colonizer’s political, social, and educational systems; their own way of doing things, thinking about things, values, which lay dormant for so long, have sprung back to life. They

realize that *their* way is of value, that there is much to learn from them. They realize that their minds are now their own.

The decolonized man/woman will no longer cower under the threats from any of the colonizer's institutions or its workers. Fear may be struck into the colonizer's heart, as he realizes that the decolonized man/woman will no longer take at face value all that he says and promises; the decolonized man/woman no longer needs to define themselves according to the ways, beliefs, values that the colonizer has set out as a blueprint to follow. The colonizer realizing this, and attempting to retain his power, will attempt to find fault with the decolonized people, attempting to belittle, or negate anything that the decolonized people attempt; any show of power, self worth, either as an individual or in groups. The colonizer realizes that he may be losing his power, his hold over the colonized, and he shows his hand that still clutches the paternalistic, colonialistic attitudes from time of contact. I have personally witnessed these paternalistic, colonialist attitudes by certain: Government agencies, justice system officials, health care workers, evaluation teams coming in to the communities, and also by some of those within the educational systems at all levels. At meetings with Chiefs of certain reserve communities for example, Government workers asking in a derogatory manner, 'What do you think about that Chief'? And to myself,

receiving the proverbial pat on the head that I had somehow had the brains to go on to university. In these passages I refer to the colonizer as any one regardless of their color who took on the ways of the colonists, and who continue out of ignorance to see themselves as superior and thus holding power over those they consider less intelligent, inferior somehow.

In the end, the decolonized people realize that freedom can be theirs, *is* theirs, as they shrug off the colonial blanket with which they have been covered for so long. They realize that the colonizer cannot *shackle their minds* anymore. They stand apart, observing from where they have come, realize who they are, and know what the colonizer has been doing, and is now doing. As Fanon writes:

Thus the Native discovers that his life, his breath, beating heart is the same as those of the settler. He finds out that the settlers skin is not of any more value than the Natives skin; and it must be said that this discovery shakes the world in a very necessary manner. (1963:36)

As has been mentioned earlier in the section on education, much has been written, debated, and recommended concerning education for Indians for more than thirty years at national, provincial and community levels by authors, Indian organizations, investigative commissions, educators, and others. Some of these include: Wabung (1971), The National Indian Brotherhood (1972), Assembly of First Nations (1988), Laroque (1975),

Deloria (1978), Colorado (1988), Battiste (1995), (1998), (2000), Kirkness (1998), Hampton (1995), Cajete (1994), (2000), Hookimaw-Witt (1998), The Royal Commission on Aboriginal People (1996), Smith (1999), Kawagely (2001), and Deloria and Wildcat (2001).

My intention is not to repeat what each of these is saying individually, as the history and development of education as it relates to Indian people is not the point of this chapter. The concerns, recommendations and developments voiced and shared within these writings, if they were to be viewed in their entirety, would be seen as having the same common themes for the need of culturally and contextually relevant curriculum, including: teaching of languages, heritage, identity, customs, values, and *total* control of education for Indian people.

There *are* some individuals and communities who have made strides in developing 'new' and innovative processes, teaching methodologies, curriculum and process development in response to the perceived need to provide culturally and contextually relevant education for native learners. The 1995 Ahkwesahsne Science and math project in southern Ontario mentioned by Cajete (1999), is one example, and the Dene Kede curriculum, Dene Nation 1993a, 1993b, discussed by Calliou (1999). The Bear Island

Stevenson Lake Project out of Island Lake Manitoba “where curriculum is developed around the things they do in that community, like fishing, what you can do with fish scales, fish scale art for example.” (C.C. August 14,2001), is another example of individuals and communities taking control and doing more than just talking about what needs to be done to enhance their children’s education. These are but a few examples of individuals and communities who give real meaning to the term ‘total control of Indian education’, however, much more needs to be done. The following shared by author and educator Kirkness speaks to those many who have not yet begun to provide a quality education for their learners, one not based on the same old way of doing things.

There is no doubt that we have mastered the art of expressing what education should be for our people should be. The rhetoric is there, but where is the substance? I believe that what we are saying is inarguable The problem comes with turning that rhetoric into action and doing those things we say are conducive to learning for our children, rather than doing the same old thing in the same old way. That is why I am advocating that we must first cut the shackles and free ourselves from mirroring a system that has not worked. Then, we must cut the crap by less talk and more action, and finally we must cut the mustard, which is to practice what we preach. (1998:14)

Recently, I found myself back in the northern community, where I had the dream which showed me the missing foundation to higher academic learning. The classrooms, although in a different building, were again

located on the third level. As I climbed the stairs, I wondered if they now had some foundation.

The idea of foundation brings me back to the students in the special program. What was in their educational foundation? What was missing that prevented them from continuing on to higher academic levels?

The research questions asked at the beginning of the thesis have been answered. The primary question of why have the students left the mainstream education system has brought together the pieces of information which answers this question. The pieces of information when stitched together form a kind of mosaic, which depicts the history of the people, colonization, and the deaths of many kinds: politically, socially, economically, educationally and spiritually. From this back drop, the voices of the research participants are heard in sometimes subtle or not so subtle ways, depicting the reasons why the students are floundering and have left the mainstream education system. The following have been identified through the data as sources of support to the students that are missing, or supports that needs a more concerted effort in order to fully support the students both personally and academically:

Parents have been identified as the most important source of support for their child's education. Parents must deal with old and present issues which

prevent them from providing a healthy, nurturing, learning environment for their child.

The Educational System, if it seeks to have the students' attention and respect, must develop and implement a plan, a vision statement, which would address any short falls in the teaching area, the monitoring and passing expectations for students, policies and procedures. Also, a curriculum which would concern not only the academics of the students, but one which would show respect for the students, by ensuring that the students learn of those things rightfully theirs: the historical and present day traditions of the people.

The Leadership at all levels have not addressed the personal and the educational issues facing the students, or the social issues arising from the community which impact on the students and their personal and educational well being. In addressing these issues, the leadership must base their actions from a healthy sense of pride, self-esteem, and self sufficiency, knowing that the answers lie *with them* and the community in general.

The Community as a whole: the community resources, the education system, the leadership, parents and students need to come together, to sit down together, to ask, "How can we help our students to become more self sufficient, in both their academic and personal lives?" "How can we help our

students to develop their self worth?" They need to base their discussions and support on a bias free and open minded approach, a discussion that promotes community healing and respect.

According to the research, these are the missing supports to the students', in both their academic and personal lives. In the first instance, the students must know that they are supported and that someone cares about them within the context of their personal lives; what guidance and supports do they need there? Academic achievement would follow when students know that someone cares and that they are being provided an education which acknowledges their intellectual and also their spiritual wellbeing. To feed both the mind and the spirit would help to make that student strong. Through the responses to why have the students' left the mainstream education system, the question asked of what are the processes and influences which would help the students to remain in the mainstream education system? has also been answered.

The question asked of whether culture was seen to be of importance to the students both personally and educationally was responded to in the positive by the research participants. The parents, community consultants and the students agreed that some form of the culture of the people should be included somewhere in the education of the students. As has been mentioned

earlier in the section on culture, although the cultural landscape of the people has changed, many of the people have not let go of those teaching bundles left by their ancestors; others have reclaimed these bundles as they began to realize that something was missing in their lives. The students it appears need that help to realize what it is that *they* are missing in their lives which would help them in the first instance with their personal growth, and secondly academically.

As the research has indicated, full and complete attention can not be given to these needs unless those that are leaders in various capacities in the community, parents and community members in general *fully* deal with those various hurts affecting their minds and spirits- suffered from so long ago, many from the residential school era. These hurts are passed on down through the generations, expressing themselves through abuses of many kinds to self and others. This is the legacy which first needs to be dealt with before the people can begin to build that strengthening foundation for the education of their children, both in the home and at their educational institutions. In order for one to feel a sense of achievement, self worth, a sense of security and empowerment, there must be a foundation in place which nurtures these, a foundation which includes: kindness, courage, strength, respect, truth, humility, and the knowledge which sustains these.

This foundation includes those things which the people knew in the past, and which many know today, that will help the child develop into a self sufficient adult with that inner strength able to take his place both in the community and in the larger society.

The students have shown *their* vestiges of strength by expressing in their own way their thoughts, needs, hopes for their education and for their home environment. They express themselves not only verbally, but by their silence as well. As has been mentioned earlier, although the numbers of the students involved in the research were small, within a cultural context, each and every one of them is of paramount importance to themselves as individuals, to their families and as a potentially contributing member to their community.

We quite often hear that “such and such a community is really progressive, they have so many new buildings.” Progress does not only mean more and newer buildings. Real community progress happens when the people have shed their fears, their biases and inferiority, instilled so long ago by the oppressors. Real community progress happens when the people begin to build new structures, new foundations with that indestructible substance- the rebirth of the spirit of the people. This substance is unseen,

and intangible, showing itself through the expressions of the children, parents and community.

Some of the young people in this community and others, supported by their parents, are now coming forward wanting to learn of those things left by their ancestors: respect for all of life, sharing not hoarding, kindness not jealousy, lifting each other up instead of pulling each other down, and the spiritual ways of looking after one's mind, body and spirit. Perhaps it is the children who will begin the mending of the sacred hoop talked about so long ago by Black Elk, the Oglala visionary (Neihardt, 1932); the sacred hoop which will join all the people together.

The research and the writing of my thesis has contributed to and enhanced my role as a researcher and as teacher, in that I with strength and humility continue to base my teaching from the perspective of helping to rebuild the educational foundation of the people. Hopefully, through the voices of the research participants, the writings of like minded educators and authors, and through the dreams and other spiritual help that came, my thesis offers some contribution to educators, parents and others who no longer satisfied with the contemporary education system, are working to rebuild that foundation, that medicine road for the education of their children.

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