

**FIRST NATIONS CONTROL OF FIRST NATIONS EDUCATION:  
AN ISSUE OF POWER AND KNOWLEDGE**

by

**ELIZABETH LIGHTNING**

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## ABSTRACT

This study is a two-part inquiry into the First Nations control of First Nations Education movement which began in the 1970's. The study is unique in that it utilizes postcolonial, feminist, critical pedagogical, and anti-racist perspectives in the development of theoretical and methodological models. The use of alternative critical and oppositional perspectives facilitates the study of the historical context which, it is argued, is integral to understanding the contemporary situation of the First Nations. Although a comprehensive study of socio-cultural changes which have occurred since European contact is not possible, the thesis argues that the recognition of these changes is also integral in the development of contemporary Native epistemologies and pedagogies. This approach reveals the diversity that characterizes First Nations communities, but it is argued that it is possible to focus on the problems which they share through their relationship with the dominant government.

Part One comprises an exploration of colonialism in general, and the study of residential and integrated schooling in particular. Native education of this period is conceptualized under the title of Historical Colonial Indigenous Education, a period when the First Nations did not have any control over their own education but were forced to attend forms of schooling which were alien to their own cultures. The development of theory which explores colonialism is crucial for understanding the way colonialism impacted on the indigenous people of Canada. In the pursuit of land and resources, the destruction of indigenous cultures and languages was a necessary component for the success of colonialism. Schools, such as residential schools, became crucial sites for genocidal practices and policies. The chapter on residential schools reveals, one, the destructiveness of this type of schooling, and two, the way residential school experiences continue to impact on the lives of Native people today.

The second part comprises two chapters which focus on the period when the First Nations won the right to have significant control over their own education. This period is conceptualized as the Postcolonial Period. One chapter provides an overview of the First Nations control of First Nations education movement. The problems inherent in this endeavour were identified through an extensive review of existing literature on Native education, and by observation of the practices of Native communities in general and one Native community in particular. The last chapter provides a synthesis of the different strategies, visions, and constraints which are integral to the issue of Native education. A major constraint is that Native educational practices and curricula have to be developed within a Western European educational framework. This section includes a discussion of the way curricula based on Native values and philosophical systems can be developed and implemented.

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Finally, I would like to thank Professor Roger Simon for introducing me to oppositional critical discourses. His courses in critical pedagogy provided me with a background which is so essential for a person who is a member of a minority group. I would like to thank Professor Jim Cummins for his support and his interest in my work.

## CONTENTS

Abstract	ii	
Acknowledgements	iii	
Contents	iv	
Chapter		
I	Introduction	1
II	The Role of Author and the Nature of Study	13
III	Theoretical and Methodological Strategies	30
IV	An Exploration of the Historical Colonial Context	59
V	Historical Colonial Indigenous Education	101
VI	The First Nations Control of First Nations Education Movement - A Postcolonial Perspective	146
VII	Dreams, Visions, and Resistance - through a Postcolonial and Sacred Circle Perspective	209
	Bibliography	241

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

The main objective of this dissertation was to develop new methods and theoretical frameworks for the study of the First Nations control of First Nations Education movement. In 1973, a national indigenous organization, the National Indian Brotherhood (NIB), presented the Federal Government with a Policy Paper demanding educational control by Native bands. Extensive literature on this subject exists (Barman, Hebert, & McCaskill:1986; Charters-Voght:1991; Kirkness:1986; Matthew:1990). While I found this literature useful, it did not have the theoretical and methodological scope for the critical analysis of complex phenomena.<sup>1</sup> Although I did not have any clear alternatives at the beginning of this exploratory study, I was determined to find new analytical and theoretical approaches. Fortunately, I was able to draw from critical theoretical discourses from fields such as feminism, postcolonialism, radical critical pedagogy.<sup>2</sup>

As will become apparent in this study, the use of these discourses added new dimensions to the study of Native education.

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<sup>1</sup> Existing literature did not provide satisfactory explanations for the numerous problems that exist in Native communities in general, and in Native education in particular. The problem was that the historical and political specificity of Native people was not taken into consideration.

<sup>2</sup> While I am aware of postmodernism and poststructuralism, I have not had the opportunity to study these movements thoroughly. Therefore I am not able to use the literature at this time.

For instance, I was able to use a critical perspective to reveal that the phenomenon of taking educational control by Native bands is a political endeavour characterized by conflict, complexity and contradiction. This is because the First Nations are now implicated in the power relations of Western society, wherein they are socially constructed as a racial minority.

The intent of this dissertation is not to replicate the numerous empirical or descriptive studies which have been conducted in the field of Native education. My intention was to go beyond the scope of these studies and explore new theoretical and methodological horizons. The field of Native studies is at the point where the various parameters and complexity of Native education need to be reviewed. Systematic studies of First Nations education, using a postcolonial indigenous perspective which takes into consideration the power relations that underlie Native reality, need to be conducted. This thesis was motivated by my concern with the lack of the necessary critical theoretical discourses which would guide First Nations educators and administrators in the complex and difficult task of assuming control of their own education. When Native people began to establish their own schools and curricula the only educational models available were based on Western European educational ideologies and practices. As well, after years of domination many communities were unprepared to assume control (Taylor, Crago, & McAlpine:1993; Pauls:1984; Wyatt:1978-79; King:1987).

Many Native educators demonstrated ingenuity and foresight by relying on traditional elders for guidance and inspiration (Couture:1985:4). Through this process Native educators and band members were able to create curricula and educational materials which were grounded in Native traditions and values (Armstrong:1987; Archibald:1995; Williams & Wyatt:1987; Battiste:1995).

The theoretical approach utilized in this dissertation enables me to argue that the recognition of socio/economic and cultural changes resulting from European contact has to be central to the creation of critical discourses. European contact has resulted in contradictions and dilemmas for Native people. Native people now live with two different realities which affect all aspects of their contemporary lives. A major dilemma is related to the need to integrate two opposing philosophical systems; i.e., the integration of a world view that is spiritually-based, and a world view that is scientifically-based. That this has not been accomplished yet is pointed out by renowned American Indian educator Gregory Cajete who argues: "While there has been progress in the last twenty years, the integration of these two approaches has been practically non-existent" (Cajete:1994:19). This is the major dilemma that confronts Native people, and, as Gregory Cajete argues, we cannot afford to have this dilemma remain unresolved.

Another fundamental change occurred in the political

dimension, that is, the recognition that Native people now occupy a subordinate position in mainstream society. What this means is that the concept of power as previously known to Native people is now changed. Indigenous cultures have been, and are continually being, affected by their participation in the dominant society, and this fact has to be incorporated into new indigenous epistemological and pedagogical models. Concepts such as cultural change, power, oppression, and control have become integral to the development of Native critical discourse. Therefore, they are the guiding concepts which determine the theoretical framework of this dissertation.

The second chapter is a discussion of my role as the author, a Cree woman, in the writing of this thesis. I, as author, am shaped by, although I also shape, the historical and social context. In this case, I believe that the cultural origin of the author is pertinent and has numerous implications. The main one is personal involvement in the issues which are the focus of the inquiry. In the same chapter the nature of, and development of, the study is discussed. It is a discussion of the way this study evolved into an exploratory study which would provide an overview of the dimensions inherent in the assumption of control of Native education by Native people.

The third chapter discusses the theoretical and methodological approaches used in this dissertation. Departing from conventional practices, the issue of control was redefined

to mean *ideological control*.<sup>3</sup> This approach is based on alternative oppositional theories which found that ideological control is the most pervasive of all forms of oppression. Wa Thiog'o Ngugi argued that the most powerful form of colonial oppression was the control of the mind of the colonized (Ngugi:1989). The emphasis on ideological control enabled me to focus on the relationship between knowledge and power. Several issues which are related to ideological control emerged. For instance, I found that a key issue was the creation of contemporary indigenous knowledges which would incorporate the changes that have occurred, and which would evolve into theoretical and philosophical discourses for Native educators. The lack of systemic foundational and philosophical models has had detrimental consequences for Native people at the concrete and academic level. The lack of a critical tradition also had important implications for the writing of this thesis. I discovered that a theoretical space for critical thought and discourse did not exist; i.e., this dimension has not been *formally* identified theoretically.<sup>4</sup> Critical discourse which takes into consideration the historical, political, socio-economic, and cultural factors which determine the relationship

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<sup>3</sup> This is a departure from conventional definitions which are based on economic and material bases of oppression.

<sup>4</sup> Here I am referring to the creation of critical academic theory. I realize that a strong Native literary tradition exists which plays a crucial role in the interrogation of historical and contemporary reality. But my point is that we need to be involved at all levels of academia.

of the First Nations with the dominant society does not exist. For instance, I was not able to find literature which defines concepts such as colonialism, power, and control, from a Native perspective.<sup>5</sup> Attempting to resolve the problem relating to the lack of theoretical models was time-consuming and frustrating. Initially, I struggled with Native literature which idealized and essentialized traditional indigenous cultures without taking contemporary changes into consideration. I found existing literature limiting because it was either very traditional or it was ahistorical.

Fortunately, I was able to locate certain Native writers who have expressed similar concerns. One of the texts is by Robert Allen Warrior, who writes about textual criticism by critically reviewing the work of writers such as American Indian writer Vine Deloria Jr. and other American Indian intellectuals (Warrior:1995).<sup>6</sup> The main concern expressed by American Indian writers is the need for critical analytical frameworks which will transcend essentialism. For instance, they point out problems related to the treatment of 'Native identity' as a "unified indigenous consciousness", and they discuss the attempts to

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<sup>5</sup> I searched in vain for a definition of power, and this is when I appreciated the opportunity to use feminist, postcolonial, and critical pedagogical perspectives. The key is to appropriate ideas from alternative discourses and adapt them to the analysis of Native issues.

<sup>6</sup> Firstly, the term 'American Indian' is used by the indigenous people of the United States. Secondly, I appreciate the nature of this text with its focus on the work of intellectuals and textual criticism. I did not discover it until towards the end of my research. Therefore, I was forced to think through the problems and I happened to arrive at the same conclusions as these writers. Critical work by Native writers is growing in the United States to a great extent, but I do not see this happening in Canada.

define "cultural authenticity" by reifying cultural traditions which are no longer relevant in the contemporary period. This problem occurs when contemporary changes are not acknowledged. By way of elaboration, it must be recognized that traditions such as hunting are still relevant in northern communities, but are no longer practiced in many more urbanized communities which, in many instances, are involved in other forms of economic development. As mentioned before, contemporary Native epistemology and pedagogy must incorporate these changes. Native literature which essentializes Native cultures portrays these cultures as static and unchanging (Warrior:1995). These same arguments are made by Canadian writer Menno Boldt who raises issues related to contemporary change, and who offers strategies which can be useful for the construction of Native discourse (Boldt:1993).

The focus on the First Nations Education movement was motivated by the realization that education is the key site for decolonization. Education is about the creation and transmission of cultural knowledge. Therefore, control over the ideological and cultural dimensions is integral to the development of the critical consciousness of Native people. Feminists and minorities have discovered that critical awareness is integral to liberation struggles. Control over educational institutions will facilitate the reclaiming of cultural knowledges which will contribute to the development of a cultural identity and self-

pride. Native literature which affirms Native cultures and experiences will counteract the ongoing racial discourse which dehumanizes and marginalizes Native people. This knowledge would facilitate an understanding of the dire social conditions that exist on most reserves. As will be demonstrated within the body of the thesis, the lack of adequate explanations has led to a "blaming the victim" syndrome. As well, the lack of knowledge regarding the historical and cultural context has led to the problems of Native people being treated as being no different from those of other Canadians. The approach used in this study demonstrates that historical colonial policies and practices played a central role in the creation of the problems that exist in Native communities today.

A major theme that emerged out of this study is the need for indigenous 'organic intellectuals' or professionals who would be in a position to develop the necessary indigenous critical and cultural discourses. These Native professionals would work in harmony with traditional elders. While the involvement of elders in educational institutions was a positive development, they cannot be expected to be experts on political issues, such as the politics of education for instance. According to traditional elders, it is the responsibility of young people to interpret and apply the directives of elders (Couture:1985:6). The presence of Native professionals will resolve the split in Native educational institutions where cultural education is left to Native language

teachers and elders, while the academic control is left to non-Native people.<sup>7</sup>

The study of the First Nations control of First Nations education movement is divided into two interrelated parts. In the first part, the study of the residential school and of the integration period is incorporated within a framework entitled Historical Colonial Indigenous Education. The second part is conceptualized as the postcolonial period, a period when Native people won the right to be involved in their own education. Postcolonial discourse grew out of a need to interrogate the nature of, and the impact of, colonialism in the lives of previously-colonized people. The discourse argues that while historical colonialism has 'withered away,' its effects continue to be felt today. This is confirmed by recent studies on residential schools, suicide, and the justice system (AFN:1995; RCAP:1996; Bull:1991; Chrisjohn & Young:1994). For instance, the Special Report on Suicide Among Aboriginal People conducted by the Assembly of First Nations (AFN) attributes the high rates of suicides in Native communities to "a complex mix of social, cultural, economic and psychological dislocations that flow from the past into the present" (AFN:1995:2). The Report argues that the root causes of these dislocations are a result of the colonial relations between Native people and the Canadian

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<sup>7</sup> This is a real problem that I was able to observe first hand, at a Native college and at other Native elementary and secondary schools.

government. From this I deduced that the problems associated with Native education today cannot be understood without a knowledge of the colonial historical context. Therefore, one chapter is devoted to a study of colonialism in general, and one chapter is on residential schools in particular. This chapter includes a short discussion of the integration period, a period when Native children were forced to attend all-white schools in nearby towns. The comprehensive study of this period provides evidence that the effects of these schools are intergenerational, and they continue to affect the performance and attitudes of parents and students today. The inference is that they contribute to the high drop out and low retention rates that characterize Native schooling.

The last two chapters include a critical analysis and discussion of the First Nations control of First Nations education movement. In Chapter VI I argue that the focus of inquiry is on the relationship that Native people have with the the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development (DIAND). DIAND has had exclusive authority over the affairs of Native people who are registered under the Indian Act, and who live on reserves. In this context, I query the role of DIAND in the construction of marginalization and underdevelopment of reserves. This approach enables me to argue that Native people, while their experiences may be diverse, have, in common, problems and issues which result from government policies and legislation.

The discussion of the policies regarding the band-operated schools on the Plains Cree Reserve demonstrates that there is diversity in the approaches and strategies adopted by the different bands across Canada. This reserve also demonstrated that band-operated schools do not necessarily conform to the principles espoused by the NIB policy paper. These principles are local educational control and parental involvement. This study also demonstrates that the diversity in strategies and approaches are the result of the contradictions which are part of the everyday reality of Native people.

While Chapter VI is more of a descriptive work, the concluding Chapter VII, entitled 'Dreams, Visions, and Resistance - through a Postcolonial and Sacred Circle Perspective,' is a critical analysis of the issues which are fundamental to Native education in general. The title of the chapter exemplifies the dual reality that has confronted Native people since European contact. While the Sacred Circle is defined in metaphysical terms such as harmony and balance among all beings, I argue that we need the postcolonial perspective to address the imbalance that was created by European contact.<sup>8</sup> While this does not resolve the issue, it ensures that we have the means to theorize and address the conflict between Native people and the dominant society. This chapter will discuss the different strategies that

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<sup>8</sup> The concept of "Sacred Circle" is used and defined in the article by Robert Regnier (Regnier:1995).

have been, and can be, used in the creation of an indigenous epistemological model which incorporates the two realities. The dichotomy between the scientific world view and the holistic world view is a problem for all people, whether they are Native or non-Native. The issue is that it may not ever be resolved, but agency is *to be able* to have dreams and visions *and to have the means to carry them out*, and the theme of this dissertation is that Native people have been prevented from exercising this type of agency. Within this framework the concept "means" is defined as having the right tools, i.e., academic tools for Native struggle in a world dominated by ideas and ideology. Dreams and visions do not mean only the sacred but they also mean the mundane, the ability to struggle for your right to have visions and dreams, and to strategize and to have discussions...

## CHAPTER II

### THE ROLE OF AUTHOR AND THE NATURE OF STUDY

*The pleasure of stepping into the brisk, clean air of critical inquiry makes this work exhilarating. The possibility that we will bring back knowledge of value to how we live, and control, our lives makes the journey not only exhilarating but essential. As long as signs are produced, we will be obliged to make the effort to understand them. This is a matter of nothing less than survival (Nichols:1981:8).*

My role as author of this study is relevant to the nature of this dissertation. It is relevant that I am a woman of Cree heritage born and raised on a reserve in Alberta, who is a residential school survivor, and that I am a person who has spent a great deal of her life in academic institutions as a student and as a part-time instructor of Native Studies in two different Universities. I believe that these experiences are integral to my cultural, political, and social identity and to the approach utilized in this dissertation. I agree with Linda S. Kauffman when she states that our intellectual work (in her case it is feminism, in my case it is as a Native scholar) "is directly related to our personal histories; that our subjective experiences influence our politics, that our psychic traumas affect our teaching and writing" (Kauffman:1993:130).

My indigenous holistic view of reality determines my approach in that this study is a personal journey, as well as an academic exploration. The 'long and arduous journey' in the writing of this dissertation resulted in a spiritual as well as an intellectual growth. The need to identify and resolve issues

originated from a life wherein there were many unexplained and unresolved issues which haunted me as I journeyed in space and time, across cultures, and across the country, eventually making my home in a large urban centre where I lived for many years. The young woman who left home had no knowledge of her Native culture, and, as I found out later, no real sense of self. This disconnection affected me socially and psychologically, and affected my family as I became a mother and grandmother, and affected my relationships with others.<sup>1</sup>

I learned about my culture through research conducted in universities where the professors were not able to help me because of their lack of knowledge of Native issues, but I persevered. For my Masters Degree I was able to formulate a Native world view which encompassed beliefs shared by indigenous people of this continent, and I compared it to a model of the Western world view (Perrott:1989).<sup>2</sup> It was at this time that I discovered that what I had learned growing up in a Native home had fostered a holistic conception of reality. This knowledge emerged during my research and in the writing of my Major Paper. I finally understood what it was that made me different from non-Native people with whom I spent a great part of my life.

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<sup>1</sup> That is, I know about the problems that I am writing about. I know what it is like to emerge from a residential school having been disconnected from your cultural background, having low self-esteem, and not knowing how to be a parent.

<sup>2</sup> At the time I was using my married name Perrott. Later I began using my maiden name *Lightning*. This work was in the form of a *Major Paper* as opposed to a *Thesis*. I consciously made this decision because I knew that the task was immense and I needed the freedom to explore.

Through a long-term healing process I was able to achieve a sense of self and self-esteem. A persistent theme motivated me throughout my life, that is, to *find out what happened, and why it happened*, which means I have been searching for answers most of my life.<sup>3</sup> That explains why I spent so much time in universities.<sup>4</sup> Again, I can relate to Linda Kauffman's experience when she states, "I sought a university precisely because I saw it as a haven from the chaos and craziness of 'real life' (Kauffman:1993:131)."<sup>5</sup> My learning process involved studying and researching, listening to elders, and attending numerous Native conferences. Because of my own experiences, I cannot agree with the elder who told me harshly during the course of my field work that "You can't learn anything from books!" The fact is that most of us were uprooted from our cultural environments and we were fortunate to survive at all. I know that there are many unfortunate Native people who do not have

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<sup>3</sup> Although there was a time when I did not actively search. This is the time that I was "asleep," a process described by elders as a time when you are in a state of confusion and not able to do anything about it. (And it is true that when I began to experience a breakthrough as I was entering my Masters Program, it was like I was awakening from a dream). Before that I remember that I spent a lot of time reading English literature, novels, and biographies. My favorite authors were Daphne DuMaurier, George Elliot, and C.P. Snow. It is important to know that we do not always do the "right thing;" that we can be in a state of mystification, where we do not question our circumstances. As a residential school survivor, true to form, I was alienated from my community and my culture, and at one time I actually believed that assimilation was the answer!

<sup>4</sup> I know that some Native people will say that maybe I was searching in the wrong place, but I do not agree. That my life is finally coming full circle in a positive way is a sign that I did something right, especially when I know that many of my peers did not survive as a result of their residential schools experiences.

<sup>5</sup> Part of Kauffman's experience was to find out that it was not a haven for women, and as I found out it was not a haven for Native people either, and ironically it is this knowledge that has played a big part in the development of Kauffman's consciousness, as well as many other women, and for my own, and thus it plays a major part in this study.

access to elders but have had to begin the learning process in various ways. For instance, I was told by one young man, "I learned about my culture from libraries"; another young man told me that he kept a psychology book from the prison library which helped him to understand himself. I know from experience that, in this complex society, knowledge from texts is as important as knowledge from elders; the two need to complement each other. What the Elder was trying to tell me is that you need to live the culture and spirituality, that intellectual knowledge is not enough, and I fully agree with this. The fast-changing and chaotic world that we live in makes it difficult to be dictating how people should live their lives; everyone is at a different stage in his/her journey. All we can do is recognize that we are an oppressed people and that we need to have compassion and tolerance for each other.

A consistent theme in my life is my belief in Native spirituality. This has sustained me in the last few years. For instance, books and tapes on healing, sweatlodges, and sweetgrass, are an integral part of my own healing process right now, and believe me I needed this support during the writing of this dissertation. I am convinced of the value of healing for transcending our past and present oppression. The healing process enabled me to deal with the painful task of writing this thesis which triggered emotions of grief and anger. And this healing process also made it possible to feel joy, and a sense of

accomplishment and creativity in the course of my work. This is what was stolen from us, the ability to be creative, and to experience a sense of accomplishment in our own activity.<sup>6</sup> Instead many people lost their lives in tragic circumstances, or took their own lives. My wide experience of life informs my conviction that we need to recognize and acknowledge the multiple and diverse nature of Native experience.<sup>7</sup>

If there is anything that characterized my life, it is my instinct for survival. In a sense I never stopped struggling against negation, of attempting to improve my situation and the situation of my children, even when I was reading English novels. I am now motivated to work for the future of my grandchildren, as well as for all other Native children. The instinct for survival includes a political awareness that historical, social, and cultural circumstances were a determining factor in my situation as a Native woman.<sup>8</sup> Throughout university I spent time with, and

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<sup>6</sup> Abdul R. JanMohamed pointed out the importance of negating hegemony because, "the hegemonic formation of minorities is itself based on an attempt to negate them--to prevent them from realizing their full potential as human beings and to exclude them from full and equal participation in civil and political society--and because minorities cannot take part in the dominant culture until this hegemonic negation is itself negated. The most crucial aspect of resisting the hegemony consists in struggling against its attempt to form one's subjectivity, for it is through the construction of the minority subject that the dominant culture can elicit the individual's own help in his/her oppression" (JanMohamed:1990:103).

<sup>7</sup> What I found is that we have learned the "blame the victim" ideology, and we turn away from our own people just because we think they are different. For instance, many young people lost their families, and were brought up in non-Native foster homes, many of which were abusive. On many occasions when they try to come back to their reserve they are not welcome "because they are different." I have found a real non-compassion for the numerous Native people that have been incarcerated. A concerted effort to fight for the rights of incarcerated Native people has not developed, although it is beginning to happen. After observing certain events I have concluded that we have become as intolerant as our oppressors.

<sup>8</sup> I need to elaborate that the development of a critical consciousness did not happen for a long time. I had a sense something was wrong, but I did not know what it was. As far as my scholarly work is concerned, the inability to accept simplistic solutions, or to engage in denial and mystification, complicates my life. I always seemed to sense there has to be more to life

learned from, women who were "feminists".<sup>9</sup> In time, I was forced to resolve my own position on feminism. This entailed taking time out of my studies to study the role of Native women in traditional pre-contact societies. This study helped me understand the importance of cultural upbringing in the way we view the relationship between men and women. I found that I could not isolate the situation of Native women from the rest of Native society. I found that my holistic view determines my tendency to strive for integration and unity as opposed to separation. I believe that, first, Native men and women are both victims of a dominant Western ideological system which subjugated and marginalized them on the basis of race. Secondly, I feel that as part of the self-determination process, Native men and women need to work together to address their victimization. I do realize that the situation between Native men and women is far from ideal, and that there are severe problems of abuse and violence that have to be addressed. I also realize that Native women suffer from "multiple jeopardy", i.e. sexism and racism, to which I refer in Chapter six. To resolve these issues we need to develop the necessary theories relating to the experiences of Native men, women, and children in today's society.

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than I was able to perceive. This is the main reason why it has taken me so long to get to where I am, this and the fact that the necessary theoretical material had not been developed.

<sup>9</sup> I know that there are many different types of feminism, but it is neither possible nor necessary to go into it now. I also realize that white feminism has been challenged by black women regarding issues of racism and exclusion (Mohanty, Russo, & Torres:1991).

The Native belief is that everything is interrelated. The study of colonialism facilitates an understanding of why families, relationships between men and women, and the treatment of children, have deteriorated, or have been transformed. My studies and interest in alternative political discourses helped me realize that everything is socially constructed, and that everything is political. Therefore, it was essential that the political, ideological, and historical dimensions of contemporary reality be addressed. Since I found most of the existing literature lacking critical analyses of these dimensions, my task was to go beyond these studies, which were ahistorical, descriptive and apolitical. In fact, in my review of recent studies of Native education by Native students, such as Brian Wildcat and Bruce Littlechild for instance, I am surprised at the lack of critical political analyses. Only further study will provide the necessary answers to why this is so.

In this work, it has been difficult to attempt to resolve the fact that I need to critique some work by Native people. Knowing our history, I know what it takes for us to be able to attain higher education, and to write theses, etc. I merely want to point out that scholars are at different stages in their academic journeys, and what I am doing is expanding on the work which has been conducted by other Native people. I am presented with a dilemma when Native scholars do not deal with politics and power relations as they are manifested by the Department of

Iddian Affairs. I learned that we need to focus on, and address the fact that the personal is political, in the same way as feminists have done. That is why this dissertation evolved into one of studying external political forces which have constrained our ability to be an autonomous, self-determining people. This approach complicated an already complex study, but I had no choice.

A critical approach by Native scholars interrogates the Native relationship with the dominant Western society and its members. This is not an easy task because it deals with sensitive issues. A major problem, for Native people, is our relationship with members of the dominant society. And it is important to clarify my position on this. I know I was accused of being "anti-white" by a Native person! There is an irony in this because I have been married twice to non-Native men, and have children who are of mixed heritage.<sup>10</sup> My present husband, Eric, who is a non-Native person, is my best friend and supporter. If it was not for his emotional and financial support I could never have gone as far as I have in my studies.<sup>11</sup> The issue is not whether you like white people or not, rather it is a matter of Native self-determination and empowerment as opposed to

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<sup>10</sup> I know that I have been castigated for this also, for being a "Bill-C31" woman. Bill C-31 was the legislation which eliminated discrimination against Native women who married non-Native men. This is a contentious issue in Native communities and it is not possible nor necessary to deal with it now.

<sup>11</sup> It is important to clarify that while I needed Eric's support, he was respectful of my need to empower and decolonize myself. The vision and work in this dissertation is my own; Eric had nothing to do with it.

dependency. Native people are always in contact with white people. In fact, in the field of education we are very dependent on them, so that it has become necessary to resolve the dilemma of our dependency. As a matter of fact, this occurs not only in education. Native leaders are very dependent on non-Native consultants, lawyers, and anthropologists, and numerous other professionals, but the meaning of this is never critically explored.

I came to the conclusion that it is a matter of being aware that non-Native people are members of a society which oppressed Native people for centuries. Therefore, there is a need to ensure that non-Native advocates are sincere in facilitating empowerment. For instance, a crucial attribute is the ability to distinguish between non-Native people who are sincere in supporting us in our empowerment, and those who use Native people for their own interests. An indication of a supportive person might be one who will understand the historical circumstances that have marginalized Native people. In this context, they will acknowledge that they are the products of Western society and that they have been influenced by the norms and values of that society. This understanding would enable them not to feel threatened when Native people attempt to empower themselves. The issue is that we need to critically explore our dependency on white people in order to understand what it means, and the implications that it may have for our everyday lives. One

indication of our dependency is the fact that we let non-Native people write texts regarding our histories and cultures. These are the reasons why it is necessary to devote a part of this dissertation to a study of the role of white people in the Native decolonization process.

Lastly, I need to clarify my position regarding Native traditions, cultures, and philosophy. After years of searching, I am now convinced that the indigenous view of reality and associated knowledge systems need to be rediscovered and preserved. It is a system of knowledge and spirituality which helped indigenous people to survive for thousands of years without destroying the environment and 'Mother Earth.' But as I argue in the body of this dissertation, we need to do this within a contemporary perspective, and it is this task that has complicated our efforts to develop Native curricula for Native schools. We need to be realistic about the fact that we are attempting to resurrect these values and philosophies within an environment which is saturated by Western influences.

#### Subjects of Study

A manifestation of our historical oppression is the confusion in the way the indigenous people of this continent are designated. This presents a problem for any study of Native issues. The term 'Indian', which is the legal designation under the Indian Act and which is used to designate Native people, originated from an error made by Columbus who thought he had

landed in India. The term 'aboriginal' is used in the Constitution to encompass three principal groups; 'Indians,' 'Metis,' and 'Inuit.' The term First Nations was formulated to designate the descendants of the original nations who occupied these lands at the time of contact and who became registered as 'Indian' under the Indian Act. The focus on this study is on the First Nations, who are recognized under the Indian Act, and who were given a mandate to assume limited control over their own educational institutions in reserves across Canada. I will use the terms Indigenous, Native, and First Nations interchangeably. It will be noted that some writers use the term 'Indian'. For instance, Menno Boldt makes a point of using it because, as he explains, "it has constitutional, and legal reality, and after more than a century of Indian Act application, it has also acquired a socio-political reality" (Boldt:1993:xiii). I have difficulty using this term even though it is the legal term and it is used by the government.

#### The Nature of Study

The effort to determine the nature and direction of this study literally took years because of the lack of Native educational theories and methodologies. In the writing of this thesis I was motivated by the determination to discover new ways of analyzing the issue of Native education. We needed an overview of this broad subject. Therefore, because of this approach the study evolved into an exploratory one. In this

context, this dissertation is meant to *begin* a critical *dialogical process* on the important topic of Native education.<sup>12</sup> It is exploratory in the sense that the nature of the study evolved out of my research and fieldwork. And it is exploratory in the sense that it provides a new orientation in the study of Native education and it is this aspect which almost overwhelmed my efforts to complete this dissertation.

As mentioned in the Introduction, the preparatory work entailed indepth studies of diverse theoretical fields. The immensity of this task which focussed on the theoretical aspect of the study did not provide an opportunity to conduct empirical research. It was necessary to learn new academic languages, and to acquire new analytical tools. The end result was the development of new methodologies and theoretical frameworks for the critical analysis of the historical and contemporary context of Native education. I was determined to incorporate in this thesis the colonial experience of Native people in general, with a particular focus on the phenomenon of residential schools. As mentioned in the thesis, it is imperative that we develop these models so that the experiences under colonialism and residential schools will be recorded and acknowledged. The suffering of people through historical colonialism cannot be, and must not be,

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<sup>12</sup> Authors Ira Shor and Paulo Freire refer to the term '*critical dialogue*' as a collaborative and reciprocal discourse in which "thought, action, and reflection combine in informed, enlightened, and committed action to 'dismantle and counter' the hegemonic structures that support oppression (Shor & Freire:1987:104)."

forgotten. Another important reason is that we need these models for understanding the present day problems that exist on Native reserves. Through this approach I was able formulate a colonial model pertaining to the relationship between Native people and the colonial governments of Canada both historically and in the contemporary period. As well, I conducted an extensive review of existing literature on Native education. The motivation of this study was to conduct an investigation of how "it" actually is, of how it "actually works, of actual practices and relations." (Smith:1987:160). "It" in this dissertation means: how does the struggle for control of Native education really work in the everyday lives of Native people?

During this time, I attended numerous conferences on Native education where I was able to observe the proceedings and have discussions with other Native educators. Studying the agenda at conferences is valuable in determining what topics are considered important by the organizers.

As part of my study I was able to observe a particular Native reserve in Alberta, with the pseudonym the "Plains Cree Reserve." During the process of investigating possible sites for inquiry, I became involved with this community by assuming a non-paying position, but I was also able to earn some money by performing certain tasks when I was in dire need of funds. I felt that my involvement with this community presented a good opportunity to observe band practices relating to Native

education. The type of observation I was engaged in is closer to that of "transient observation," as it is defined by Jerome T. Murphy (Murphy:1980). Murphy distinguishes between participant observation and transient observation. Participant observation is a long-term process and usually associated with sociologists or anthropologists where the researcher "participates in the day-to-day living of his subjects", usually taking several years. On the other hand, the transient observer is clearly an outsider who is faced with time constraints. Murphy explains that:

Unable to actively participate in the life of the program and observe day-to-day activities, the transient observer uses all of his senses as he interviews subjects, attends meetings, roams the hall, and generally hangs around (Murphy:1980:112).

I was an outsider, with limited time, and I mostly "hung around" observing and having discussions with the members of the community, who did not have a problem accepting me. I found that in an exploratory study, observation can be valuable because as Murphy asserts, "If you want to know what actually is occurring, there is no better way to find out than to observe it yourself, rather than rely on the potentially unreliable reports of others" (Murphy:1980:113). Time limitations and the scope of this exploratory study determined my approach.

I found that while I was fortunate to study and observe a Cree community, in a sense, the community is secondary to this type of study, which focusses on 'institutional' themes or issues

which are found in most communities.<sup>13</sup> What is significant is that the Plains Cree Reserve did not fit into models observed by other Native educators who wrote of positive developments (Gardner:1984; Archibald:1995). Since I began with the assumption that Native communities are beset with numerous social and economic problems, I was determined to identify problems which were inherent in the process of taking control of Native educational institutions. The community that I observed manifested social, economic, cultural, and religious diversity and associated problems.

Native communities display important differences relating to geographical location, and the presence of, or lack of, resources. Native communities in northern Canada are distinctly different from those of southern Canada. That is, many northern Native communities have lifestyles which have retained Native traditional lifestyles. Connie Heinbecker(1994), Emily Faries(1991) and James Ryan(1992) conducted studies of communities in the north where they found that these communities were better able to maintain Native languages, and traditions such as hunting and fishing. Southern communities which are close to urbanized areas have been found to be impacted by

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<sup>13</sup>But it is important to note that these issues emerged during the course of my exploration and field work. I did not go into the field with concepts or theories, other than the fact that we have numerous problems, and I wanted to discover or identify these problems, and the ways we could resolve them. So much of the literature I was reviewing focussed on communities which have been successful in implementing Native control. I can now assert that, taking into consideration the political and ideological realities of the Native/Canadian relationship, it is not possible to have Native communities which are fully successful in carrying out the mandates set out in the NIB position paper (NIB:1973).

outside influences, and are not able to preserve traditions and maternal languages as well (Couture:1985; Faries:1991). The particular community which I observed has been greatly affected by the presence of a residential school in the reserve. This reinforced my belief that it is only through the knowledge related to residential schools that the social and cultural situation can be understood.

#### Limitations of Study

There are many limitations of this study. Mainly it was a very broad subject which complicated my attempts to find a focus of inquiry. I felt that I had to work harder than other non-Native people because of the cross-cultural nature of my work. The need to live with and study the dual realities of our lives as Native people makes us work doubly hard at the academic level, because we have to study our culture, as well as be knowledgeable of the dominant society. Lack of time and funding were constraints which had important implications for the study. Because of time constraints I was not able to conduct interviews with Native people in general, and specifically with Native youth. I was appreciative of the work of many non-Native scholars, especially J.R. Miller who was able to provide extensive data on residential schools. I am also appreciative of other Native people who began the process of exploring residential school experiences of Native people. These are mentioned in the body of the thesis. Lack of time also

constrained my efforts to delve more in-depth on issues such as historical and contemporary racism. The subject of racism in the lives of Native people needs to be explored systematically.

## CHAPTER III

### THEORETICAL AND METHODOLOGICAL STRATEGIES

*Too often Indian groups, taking treaty research as a model, have assumed that research consists of looking up what someone else has said about a topic. With Indian educational research, however, there is precious little to look up, and most of the existing material is not worth finding (Chrisjohn:1988:29).<sup>1</sup>*

This quotation expresses the problem of Native research, i.e., the lack of research methodological models which can transcend the conventional, linear, apolitical, ahistorical, descriptive approaches characteristic of mainstream social science methodology.<sup>2</sup> In her critique of conventional, male-dominated sociology, Sociologist Dorothy Smith refers to its methods of thinking as "ideological practices," that is, "those ideas and images through which the class that rules the society by virtue of its domination of the means of production orders, organizes, and sanctions the social relations that sustain its domination" (Smith:1987:54). My review of Native literature suggests, however, that Native, and non-Native, writers on First Nations issues have not proceeded beyond the gathering of data resulting in descriptive, reductive, and limited presentations.

Presentation and description of facts is not enough. There has

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<sup>1</sup> Rolland Chrisjohn articulates the problem I encountered in the study of education when he states, "Specifically, if I were charged with designing an 'Indian' educational system from the ground up, there would be no body of data I could refer to for guidance" (Chrisjohn:1986:29).

<sup>2</sup> The work by feminists has significance for Native research. For instance, Joyce McCarl Nielsen writes that feminist methods, as part of a larger intellectual movement, "represent a fundamental shift away from traditional social science methodology. Thus feminist research is contributing to a transformation of what traditionally has been called methods" (Neilson:1990:1).

to be a critical analysis of the social relations underlying everyday experience. This theme underlies this study, and, therefore, in that sense it is ground-breaking and exploratory in nature.

The research phase of this study was a long and slow exploratory process similar to the process described by Rolland Chrisjohn when he wrote "...research is a cumulative process that you work into, rather than adopt wholesale" (Chrisjohn:1986:30). This applies especially to Native research, where the exploratory work has not been done. Unfortunately, we have not had the material, financial, and human resources to take the time to reflect on, and develop, the necessary critical methodologies. Attempts are being made, but, as I have mentioned, they are limited in scope and dimension.

We cannot assert that there is one way to conduct Native research, especially when the experience of Native people, since European contact, has been one of genocide, assimilation and domination. Any study of First Nations issues must be based on the recognition of the multiple, complex, and diverse experiences of Native people. The question is whether we can rely exclusively on Native research methods which are mostly grounded in discussions with elders, and which are based on references to the concept of 'respect,' and a specific 'protocol' to be followed (Archibald:1993). According to Jo Ann Archibald, the concept of "mutual respect" is central to First Nations research.

She states that:

The fundamental teachings of our Ancestors emphasize respect in all aspects of our lives and in our interactions with others. If we are true to our Aboriginalness, then respectful thoughts and actions are essential to educational research (Archibald:1993:190).

While I believe in the centrality of respect in any undertaking, my concern is whether this method allows for critical thinking and for critiquing other work. I also wonder whether this conceptualization allows for the development of research methodology based on the complex and multidimensional nature of First Nations reality.<sup>3</sup>

#### The Social and Cultural Context of First Nations Research

In order to find the right methodological approach it is necessary to establish the social and cultural context of Native reality. I found that, in the case of Native people, this was not an easy task because of their historical relationship with the dominant society. The way the First Nations have been conceptualized by the dominant society, and the way they have conceptualized themselves, has been a real obstacle in the development of new methodologies and analytical models at the academic level, and in the development of political strategies at the practical level. Traditionally, the First Nations people are viewed as existing on the margins of the dominant society and are

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<sup>3</sup> It could be argued that the work of Archibald and others can be categorized as essentializing because they assume a "unitary indigenous experience". I am indebted to Robert Allen Warrior (Warrior:1995) for the term "unitary indigenous experiences," because it articulated what it is that disturbed me about this kind of literature.

not perceived as active participants in that society.<sup>4</sup> The First Nations themselves have tended to emphasize their separateness from the rest of Western European society. They see their political involvement as ending with the Department of Indian Affairs. I believe that this has contributed to an inability to deal effectively with the rest of Canadian society. The breakthrough, for me, occurred when I was able to conceptualize the First Nations as 'active participants' in mainstream Canadian society, even though they have special constitutional and legislative status as the original inhabitants of this continent. This conceptualization enabled me to assert that in their quest for educational control, the First Nations are implicated in a struggle with mainstream educational institutions, processes, and practices. It is therefore imperative for them to understand the nature and function of Western European education systems in order to realize the implications of taking control of their own education systems. They need to realize that education in Western society is characterized by political and cultural struggles for the control of knowledge, institutions, and practices. This knowledge is fundamental to the development of discourses and strategies which will ensure success in their educational endeavours. The conceptualization of the First

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<sup>4</sup> It was informative to read Marilyn Assheton-Smith's article on acculturation theory, where she writes about the practice of anthropology which has, for their own purposes, conceptualized Native people as separate and apart from mainstream society (Assheton-Smith:1977).

Nations as active participants of the dominant society broadens the area of analysis to include contemporary changes that have occurred since European contact.

### Ontological and Epistemological Changes through European Contact

The main problem that confronts Native people is how to deal with changes resulting from European contact. This problem is also central to Native research and analysis. I came to the conclusion that a starting point of this study was to assert that changes occurred in our ontological reality, i.e., our way of being or living, which, in turn, affected our knowledge systems. European contact generated a need to develop new epistemologies which would incorporate the resulting changes from this contact. Although the process of change varied across time and space, the full impact of this intrusion into the indigenous world is now being realized in the cultural, religious, political, and economic diversity that exists in Native communities. No Native community has withstood this onslaught. The fact is that no one, including remote communities, can escape the impact of modern society. Therefore, Native people have to learn to deal with Western society on its terms without being co-opted by it. Our ancestors knew the meaning of the modern notion of '*knowledge is power*'. Elders stated that we needed to utilize the best of both worlds (Couture:1985). They did not say to ignore it, although some elders give that impression. Our ancestors knew that Native people would have to learn to adapt to the new reality; Native

people have always been adept at adapting to their environments. That is why Native leaders ensured that the provision of education was included in the treaties that they signed. That they were bargaining with the devil is another matter. It is true that the attempt to gain knowledge in the present situation is full of pitfalls. No one knows that more than we do, but the fact is that there is no other way.

Native people have struggled against the hegemonic system which replaced their own cultural systems for centuries. Through individual and collective resistance they managed to prevent the complete destruction and elimination of indigenous cultures and nations. Successes in maintaining and preserving cultural traditions and values have varied, some communities being more successful than others.<sup>5</sup> But the common denominator is that they have all been affected and transformed by Western European contact, and by their continual participation in that society.

During the course of my research I found that what is lacking is a Native epistemology grounded in contemporary reality. We have not developed the critical intellectual tradition, discourses, and language, necessary for dealing with problems with cultural change. The problem affects Native efforts to develop the necessary epistemologies. The need for

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<sup>5</sup> The diversity existing on reserves has made it difficult to define success. Many Native people now define success as based on the acquisition of material goods and benefits, and thereby minimizing the importance of Native cultures in their lives.

the creation of new categories of existence and experiences is voiced by a prominent Native thinker, Vine Deloria, Jr., who argued that Native tradition is limited

because it was not originally developed to confront the particular challenges of contemporary American Indian communities and politics. A contemporary American Indian politics would have to grapple with a situation that made demands requiring the creation of new categories of existence and experience (cited in Warrior:1995:93).

This dilemma that confronts Native scholars and professionals is also articulated by First Nations Lawyer, Mary Ellen Turpel, who observes:

...I am increasingly aware of how dynamic, interacting and undivorced culture is from history, politics and economics. Should we strive to describe a pre-colonial state of affairs? What is the point anyway? Can the pre-colonial regime ever be resurrected? My own view is no ... It cannot be resurrected because we have all been touched by imperialism and colonialism, and there is no simplistic escape to some pre-colonial history except as a rhetorical one...One cannot erase the history of colonialism, but we must, as an imperative, undo it in a contemporary context... (Turpel:1994:208).

These writers are not arguing that Native values and philosophies are no longer valid. What they argue is that we need to redefine Native strategies for cultural survival. Writers such as Deloria and Warrior argue against the essentializing of traditions and customs. The discussion of essentialism is also central to the textual criticism of Robert Allen Warrior (1995), whose critical work is very relevant and timely, because he addresses contemporary problems that confront Native scholars. The "preoccupations" that he identifies are questions related to

essentialism, authenticity and identity. In his review of past Native critical writing which adhered to "forms of idealism and essentialism," Warrior writes:

Appeals to essentialized worldviews, though, always risk an ossifying of American Indian existence. Such a commitment to essentialized indigenous worldviews and consciousness, over the course of the decade, became a pervasive and almost requisite feature of American Indian critical writing (Warrior:1995:xvii).

These writers confirm my own views that the essentializing of Native experience is limiting because it does not provide space for addressing the multiple problems that exist in Native communities. The tendency to essentialize Native cultures and traditions presents them as static and unchanging, and therefore feeds into the stereotypical conceptions held by non-Native people.

In his recent text, *Surviving as Indians, The Challenges of Self-Government*, Menno Boldt also argues against essentialism. He argues that Native people must adapt to the twentieth century without betraying the "fundamental philosophies and principles of the ancient covenants." He points out that defining "cultural authenticity" through customs and traditions has limitations:

Inherent in such customs and traditions are the limitations of time and place in which they were conceived. It follows that, if a culture's authenticity is defined by a body of ancient prescriptive customs and traditions, rather than by broad philosophies and principles, the degrees of freedom for cultural adaptation and development will be greatly restricted (Boldt:1993:183).

While I agree with Boldt that Native survival must be based on

the preservation of First Nations philosophies and principles, I see his discussion of the role of elders as itself essentializing. He sees the task of building the bridge to the twentieth century as possible "only by the close cooperation between Indian 'elders' and Indian youth. He writes that:

The elders have the essential role of ensuring that the cultural chain linking the ancient covenants to the present is not broken, that is, of maintaining integrity with fundamental Indian philosophies and principles. The youth have the essential role of ensuring that the fundamental philosophies and principles are interpreted for relevance to their surviving and living needs for the contemporary social, economic, and political circumstances (Boldt:1993:183).

The problem with this view is that it 'assumes a unitary experience.' It would only work in an ideal situation, where there are youth and adults who have not been alienated from their culture and way of life by colonialism and residential schools. Rather, I believe, we have to explore our historical experience as part of our healing. In my view, it is the responsibility of 'organic intellectuals' to contribute to the healing work by writing theoretically about the colonial and residential school experience and associated social problems. It is more practical to conceptualize both 'organic intellectuals' and elders working together in the interpretation of philosophies and principles, referred to by Boldt, for contemporary social, economic and political needs.

What is becoming apparent is that the role of Native people with professional skills is crucial to Native survival. Deloria

argues that we cannot limit our vision, that we do not have to do everything the way our ancestors did them. He states, "I don't see why Indians can't be poets, engineers, songwriters or whatever..." (cited in Warrior:1995:95). It is North American Indian thinkers such as Deloria and others who facilitate the development of new epistemologies or paradigms. We need to realize that our involvement in contemporary society has generated a need for First Nations professionals or 'organic intellectuals'.<sup>6</sup>

We now participate in a society which has different forms and levels of knowledge. Black sociologist Patricia Hill Collins discusses the distinction between 'common-sense' knowledge and 'formal' knowledge. She refers to two interrelated levels of knowledge, one being *commonplace, taken-for-granted knowledge* which is the "first and most fundamental level of knowledge," and which comprises "the everyday thoughts and actions of people." The other type of knowledge is more specialized and is produced by "experts and specialists" (Collins:1990:30). Specialized knowledge and the Native professionals who would be in a position to produce this knowledge are the key to our problems. Specialized knowledge would address the power relations which determine our everyday lives. In the same way as other

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<sup>6</sup> I want to stress that any reference to professionals and organic intellectuals means that I am referring to Native people who have a strong sense of their identity and a commitment to their cultural heritage. Other Native people who may have the professional skills but not the cultural knowledge and commitment will lead Native people into assimilation.

marginalized groups, we need to study the way we are oppressed. For instance, regardless of changes that have occurred, we have not achieved a real autonomy. We are still not free, politically, economically, ideologically, and most importantly, psychologically. I found that the key is that instead of administrative control we need to have control of intellectual and philosophical production.<sup>7</sup> According to my review of the literature, we are not accustomed to questioning the "relations of ruling and their apparatuses" (Smith:1987). And yet it is axiomatic to other marginalized groups such as Third World writers, and feminists, that this is the starting point for any marginalized group. These groups learn about, and understand, power so they can contest and transform it (Banks:1993). The learning process is achieved through "specialized knowledge" developed by professionals, "grounded in their community" (Collins:1990:30). The nature and role of Native thinkers is an issue which needs to be explored, and this will be addressed in the last chapter in the discussion of decolonization and the development of a Native epistemological model which will resolve the Native/Western dichotomy.

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<sup>7</sup> Native scholars have not developed the theoretical work; we are allowing non-Native people to write about our issues, our histories, and our cultures. For us, this is not freedom. In this context, then, empowerment means the ability to write about our own reality. An important theme in Fanon's writing was that the primary goal of colonialism was to silence its victims (Fanon:1963). My point is that when people do not engage in the study of power at an intellectual level, then they are still colonized.

## The Need for a Critical Indigenous Epistemology

The formulation of the political dimension in indigenous experience enables us to study and understand the society which oppresses us in a way which is not possible in the traditional cultural model. This new dimension incorporated into Native academic discourse facilitates the critical analysis and interrogation of the historical, social, political, and economic aspects of Native reality. It opens up a space which reveals that this reality is characterized by conflict, struggle, and oppression. Mainly it reveals the central characteristic of contemporary Native experience i.e., our identity as a subordinate people, a people who are engaged in a continual struggle and negotiation for their right to exist as indigenous peoples. The lack of Native autonomy is expressed by Mary Ellen Turpel who states that, "...Today Aboriginal peoples are legally and politically surrounded in Canada - they are fenced in by [a] governance that they did not discuss, design or desire" (Turpel:1993:167). The new Native epistemology is liberating because it ensures our survival by facilitating the development of a critical consciousness regarding the implications of our involvement in mainstream society. The new epistemology would be holistic because it would encompass the totality of Native experience, the negative as well as positive developments.

## Theories and Methodologies for Contemporary Native Reality

A challenge for this study was to locate methods and

theories which would enable me to explore, and explicate, the way the indigenous people of this continent have been marginalized, racially oppressed, and socially constructed as "Indian." I was determined to find alternatives to conventional methodologies which have not been able to address these aspects of Native contemporary experience. This is an attempt to begin the task of creating a 'specialized knowledge' which we really need in order to be able to interpret the meaning of everyday reality (Collins:1991).

The use of a broad range of alternative oppositional theories introduced me to important developments related to the social construction of reality, as it is manifested in conceptions of truth, knowledge, subjectivity, and experience. Although this leads to involvement in highly complex academic theoretical studies, this dissertation should demonstrate that we have no choice. I realize that 'tradition-bound' Native scholars will be critical of my use of Western-based approaches, but after years of study and reflection I feel that some of us have no recourse but to adopt this approach. The First Nations need to recognize that they are implicated in a fast-changing, highly complex, technological world, and they need the academic tools to inform their political, cultural and pedagogical strategies. It has to be recognized that First Nations scholars cannot always agree on methodologies due to their diverse experiences. For the development of "specialized knowledge" which is grounded in the

contemporary reality of Native people, we have to be able to study the strategies developed by other marginalized groups. As Henry Gates Jr. argues, it is necessary to draw from

... the most sophisticated critical theories and methods generated by the Western tradition [in order] to reappropriate and to define our own "colonial" discourses. We must use these theories and methods insofar as these are relevant and applicable to the study of our literatures ... (Gates Jr.:1992:68).

The appropriation of certain ideas and methods from alternative theories and methodologies cannot be conducted in an uncritical manner because no theory, whether it is Marxism, feminism, poststructuralism, or postmodernism, escapes "the specificity of value and ideology" (Gates:1992:68). My task in this study has been to appropriate certain ideas and methods and make them relevant to the discussion of Native cultural and historical specificities. This is a complex task, and I found that one has to be knowledgeable of Native political, social and cultural realities in order to adopt the necessary critical and selective approach. While we may have reasons to distrust non-Native people we still have to realize that without their critiques of the system, it is difficult for Native people to have an impact in the higher echelons of academia.<sup>8</sup> Marginalized peoples have found that the power of the system is such that it is extremely

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<sup>8</sup> In this context, ask any Native student who is attending higher education about his/her experiences and feelings of powerlessness, among other things. I know from experience how powerless I felt in being able to effect any changes individually. As First Nations people we need to build alliances with other minority groups.

difficult to achieve any change or transformation. Yet a review of feminist literature reveals that they have made significant inroads in all fields, but especially in the fields of education.<sup>9</sup>

While these groups do not necessarily agree on issues, their most important contribution is their critique of traditional hegemonic institutions and practices. The work accomplished by these groups is extensive and it provides ongoing critical oppositional analyses of emerging issues. These critical discourses deal with issues of power, representation, deconstruction, decolonization, the redefinition of knowledge, and subjectivities, within a construction of reality framework. A study such as this which explores a complex of relations arising in different historical periods requires an interdisciplinary approach and draws on a diverse array of theoretical approaches. The basis of my critical theoretical framework is provided by a feminist sociological approach. The exploration of the historical colonial context utilizes post-colonial perspectives, while the study of the contemporary period utilizes the work of feminist critical pedagogists, radical critical pedagogists, and anti-racist educators.

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<sup>9</sup> Texts on this subject exist and are far too numerous to list, but a review of the following texts provides an insight into the extent of feminist work: *The Impact of Feminist Research in the Academy*, (1987) edited by Christie Farnham; *Reconstructing the Academy, Women's Education and Women Studies*, (1988) edited by Elizabeth Minnich, Jean O'Barr, and Rachel Rosenfeld; *Spirit, Space & Survival, African Americans in (White) Academe*, (1993) edited by Joy James & Ruth Farmer; and texts on sexual harassment in academia (Paludi:1996) and (The Chilly Collective:1995).

It was crucial for the writing of this study to find the right methodological approach. Feminist studies have demonstrated that the right methodology is fundamental to studies pertaining to marginalized groups. In the formulation of a methodological framework I drew on the work of feminist sociologist Dorothy Smith, because it contains a comprehensive model which provides a useful framework for an extremely complex study (Smith:1987; Smith:1990). As a feminist sociologist, Smith's focus is on women and sociology. But her critique can apply to all of the social sciences which are Eurocentric and male-centred, and which exclude the experiences of other marginalized groups.<sup>10</sup> Because the themes which emerge out of Smith's critique can be applied to other situations, I am able to appropriate Smith's ideas for use in this interdisciplinary study. I felt that I could transpose the women-focussed, and sociologically-focussed work, to a study of Native issues while using it as a guide.<sup>11</sup> My literature review convinced me that First Nations scholars need to develop methodologies which will explicate, not just describe, the nature of hierarchical forces which impact on their 'everyday' lives as First Nations. While I reviewed and used other resources, I found Smith's texts the most

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<sup>10</sup> This is the point of alternative critical discourse, that many groups have been marginalized or excluded from the Western 'canonical' epistemologies.

<sup>11</sup> I found that Sandra Harding makes a similar statement using almost the same terms (Harding:1987). I also have to assert, as will become apparent in this study, that the colonial experiences of indigenous people are much more drastic than the subject matter dealt with in Smith's texts.

helpful because they not only offer modes of inquiry but also offer useful explanations of her methodology, the development of her 'sociology' for women,' and her 'institutional ethnography.' What is crucial for this study is that it is an alternative paradigm critical of traditional social science practice.<sup>12</sup>

I decided to use Dorothy Smith's texts after a long and extensive search for an analytical framework. I was able to finally appreciate the methodological and theoretical insights which inform Smith's feminist 'sociology of knowledge.' I learned from her work that a methodology which locates the marginalized outside mainstream discursive and material practices is the key; otherwise, inquiry gets enmeshed in ideologically-based mainstream sociological practices.<sup>13</sup> The key is to recognize and acknowledge that the First Nations belong to a racial group which has been colonized, ostracized, and marginalized since European contact. This is the "Native standpoint" discussed later.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> In his discussion of Dorothy Smith's work, George Smith writes that Dorothy Smith created a new paradigm for sociology. He explains, "The method of analysis proposed by Dorothy Smith marks a paradigm shift for sociology because of its unique epistemological/ontological grounding... This kind of ontology marks off her world from other empirical and/or radical approaches to sociology because it proposes to investigate social life in terms of how it is actually organized" (Smith:1995).

<sup>13</sup> It is significant that Sociologist James Heap writes that he learned (as a student) from Dorothy Smith not to get 'stuck' in the theoretical realm, that "if one started or stayed in the realm of theory, making abstract connections between categories, one was guaranteed to go wrong, entangled in ideological practice" (cited in Campbell & Manicom:1994:ix). This was my problem, and it is the problem of existing Native literature. This is the most useful insight I learned from Dorothy Smith's work.

<sup>14</sup> This is the Native standpoint which I will discuss later. We see ourselves as marginalized people; this is our reality. Actually, I am beginning to realize the importance of marginalized people identifying themselves as victims as the first step to liberation. I am indebted to Sandra Lee Bartky (Bartky:1990:22) for the following quote from Franz Fanon who in his discussion of the "psychic alienation of the black man," stated: "Those who recognize

Smith distinguishes between the everyday world as 'phenomenon,' and the everyday world as 'problematic.' She explains:

In constituting the everyday world as an object of sociological examination, we cut it off methodologically from the ways in which it is actually embedded in a socially organized context...(Smith:1987:90).

Similarly, Native studies which use traditional 'ideological' methods treat the everyday world as a phenomenon, and constitute it as an object of study. In such studies, the social organization and social relations which determine the everyday life of Native people are not visible. Roland Chrisjohn and Sherri L. Young (1994) raise this problem in their study of residential schools:

One thing research can do is help everyone see the big picture, regardless of where each was (or is) located within it. This is particularly important for First Nations peoples, since we are continually being fed only the localized, individualized picture as "Truth." As long as that is the only picture we see, we will be limited in how we think about residential schooling and what we do about it, as individuals *and* as Nations...(Chrisjohn & Young:1994:B15).

The phenomenon of residential schools is becoming an important topic of discussion. The problem raised by Chrisjohn & Young is that it has not been dealt with theoretically, and therefore, the discussions occur as happening to individuals rather than originating from relations of power. The key is for Native

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themselves in it will have made a step forward" (cited in Bartky:1990:22). As well I am interested in the use of "false consciousness" for the people who have not transcended their "social construction" as victims. I believe it is useful for distinguishing between the "healed" and the others.

scholars to work through the confusion and obfuscation and reveal that these institutions were part of the colonial power relations which saw schooling as the means to destroy Native cultures as a whole and not just individuals or attendees. It was part of a larger colonial project affecting everyone, and which continues to affect us all.

Smith demonstrates that it is only through the procedure of making the everyday world of women 'problematic' that you can reveal the underlying social relations.<sup>15</sup> She describes her method as

...a procedure of going from a social actuality to develop a conceptual apparatus disclosing and explicating its properties. The problematic is property of the social organization of the everyday world. The concept of problematic explicates a property of the everyday world as a focus for sociological work. Constituting the social organization and determinations of the everyday world as a problematic is a method of guiding and focusing inquiry. The purpose and direction of inquiry is in part ... an explication or codification ... of a problematic that is implicit in the everyday world (Smith:1987:91).

This mode of inquiry is necessary because the problematic of the everyday world is not "transparent nor obvious." As Smith explains:

The everyday world is not fully understandable within its own scope. It is organized by social relations not fully apparent in it nor contained in it. This is the social organization of the sociological problematic in the actual world and practices of real individuals (Smith:1987:92).

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<sup>15</sup> Smith explains that the term 'problematic' is "ordinarily used to talk about matters at the level of concept or theory rather than at the level of experience and action" (Smith:1987:91).

The existence of a problematic in society is due to the emergence of modern complex societies wherein the social organization and social relations are no longer visible in the 'domain of the everyday world.'<sup>16</sup> It is the invisible dimension which is the problematic. Adapting Marx's analysis of capitalist society, Smith is able to show how people's lives in the same local settings are "organized by relations external to the everyday world and [which are] beyond the power of individuals to control (Smith:1987:95).<sup>17</sup> The problematic locates a focus for study which reveals and explicates those external relations. Constructed from a male standpoint in the relations of ruling, traditional sociology does not recognize the experience of women, or, the First Nations can argue, that of other minorities. Smith's critique of traditional sociology is about power and control.

In order to resolve the exclusion of women, Smith developed an alternative sociology which begins from "women's actual lived experience", the lived experiences which are excluded from mainstream sociology. This she achieved by formulating a sociology for women which utilizes the concept of the "standpoint

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<sup>16</sup> This is very significant for Native people, that their involvement in a complex society has fundamental implications. These arguments by Smith apply to them as well, because they no longer live in simple societies where "the character and organization of the everyday world are fully visible (Smith:1987:92)."

<sup>17</sup> Smith argues that it must be "understood as a particular form of social organization and that the local and directly known world is extensively and increasingly penetrated by these processes of material and social organization. That organization may be experienced as disorganization, incoherence, lack of sense, but it is organization in that the processes of social relations at the abstracted level can be viewed as generating the organization of the everyday world" (Smith:1987:95).

of women." The standpoint of women situates women in the "actualities of their everyday worlds," and therefore questions "how those worlds are organized and determined by social relations immanent in and extending beyond them" (Smith:1987:106).

### The Native Everyday World as Problematic

Now I will show the importance of Smith's formulation of the everyday world as problematic. By making the everyday world of the Native people "problematic," we are able to go beyond the everyday experience and study the social relations which determine it. Conceptualizing the Native everyday world as 'problematic' means not focussing exclusively on the aspects of the everyday world which are visible, but on the social relations which determine the everyday world of the First Nations.<sup>18</sup> The procedure of making any activity problematic is possible because the problematic is a property of everyday reality. This is not only useful but necessary for the study of education.

By treating Native education as 'problematic' in this sense, the notion that education is neutral, that it is an activity for teaching neutral knowledge in a neutral way, is dispelled. Making the terrain of Native education problematic shifts us from

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<sup>18</sup> Smith writes that "The everyday world is not fully understandable within its own scope. It is organized by social relations not fully apparent in nor contained in it" (Smith:1987:92). George Smith, in discussing this method, writes: "Examining these kinds of determinations requires a method of work that can study social organization as this is coordinated and concerted, reflexively and recursively across space and time, in the practices and activities of individuals" (Smith:1995:24).

the taken-for-granted aspects of the everyday world to a level of thinking which generates questions regarding the way social forces have impacted on the everyday lives of Native people. It raises questions regarding the historical colonial relationship between Native people and the dominant society. It raises questions as to how the experiences in residential schools affect the present day attitudes of the First Nations. It also raises questions about why there is such chaos and social disintegration on the reserves, manifested by high suicide and incarceration rates. We need to know how these problems affect the attempts to develop and administer Native schools and curricula.

Equally important is Smith's concept of 'women's standpoint.' For the feminist movement, it was a very important discovery that they could conceptualize their own 'standpoint.' The concept of standpoint, according to Smith, "creates the space for an absent subject, and an absent experience that is to be filled with the presence and spoken experience of actual women speaking of and in the actuality of their everyday world" (Smith:1987:107). The use of the concept of standpoint for women or Native people gives them a site from which to contest their exclusion from traditional cultural practices where knowledge, culture, and politics are developed almost exclusively by men and written from a 'white male' standpoint. This practice has the effect of excluding others who do not fit the category of white

male. The Native standpoint can demonstrate that the cultural, political, and social is developed by "white" patriarchal society and not by Native people.<sup>19</sup> The use of the concept of "Native standpoint" will ensure that the lived experiences of Native people are not excluded or suppressed.<sup>20</sup> Research from a Native standpoint which makes the Native everyday world problematic seeks to provide answers which will add to the knowledge of people about their world, and provides Native people the opportunity to construct their own epistemology.

A crucial task of this study is to explore the issue of power in Western society. It is useful to recognize that forms of power have changed historically. What is of concern to this study is the ideological forms of power as they were manifested in the colonial period, and in the contemporary period. It is important to recognize the dimensions of the power which controls mental processes of populations, not just for Native people but for society as a whole. The focus of Dorothy Smith's text *The Conceptual Practices of Power; A Feminist Sociology of Knowledge* (Smith:1990) is the ideological practices of mainstream sociology. And while the focus of this critique is on sociology,

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<sup>19</sup> Freire states: "In truth, the dominated are human beings who have been forbidden to be what they are. They have been exploited, violated, and violently denied the right to exist and the right to express themselves (Freire:1985:192)."

<sup>20</sup> Smith claims that women did not know how to view the world from where they were. She says: "We discovered that what we had known as our history was not in fact, ours at all, but theirs. We had not realized what and who was not there in the texts in which we had learned to understand ourselves." And that "The very forms of our oppression require a deliberate remaking of our relations with others and of these the relations of our knowledge must be the key, for the dimensions of our oppression are not fully revealed in discoveries that go beyond what direct experience will teach us" (Smith:1987:107).

it is not confined to this, because, as Smith reiterates:

Such an inquiry moves beyond sociology, for sociological objectifications are a special case of [and depend on] the objectified knowledges of the relations and apparatuses of ruling (Smith:1990:203).

It is important to see that Smith has connected conceptual practices with the political process. This political process is the 'relations of ruling and apparatuses.' The comprehensiveness of Smith's definition of relations is useful for this study. She states that "Relations of Ruling"

is a concept that grasps power, organization, direction, and regulation as more pervasively structured than can be expressed in traditional concepts provided by the discourses of power (Smith:1987:3).

She explains that by 'ruling' she is identifying

a complex of organized practices, including government, law, business and financial management, professional organization, and educational institutions as well as the discourses in texts that interpenetrate the multiple sites of power (Smith:1987:3).

This definition of power is useful because it shows power is embedded in the institutions and practices of the system through the 'relations of ruling and apparatuses.' As well, Smith's work demonstrates the way power is manifested in the conceptual practices of the system, and that is the objective of this study. It is also useful because it can be used not only for contemporary but also historical analyses. This is confirmed by Chandra Mohanty who writes that the concept of relations of ruling is useful for the analysis of colonialism because it eliminates the need for "binary oppositions" such as

"oppressor/oppressed relations." Instead, it reveals the dynamic nature of governing and social power, and it allows for oppositional agency (Mohanty, Russo & Torres:1993:13). The conceptualization of power as embedded in the institutions of society, such as education, reveals an important dimension, that education is part of the relations of ruling and should be recognized as such by Native people who are in the process of assuming control of the education of their children. My concern has been that the movement to take control of Native education by Native people has not been problematized. Therefore, their experience with colonial education is not taken into consideration. A key question that should be asked, for instance, is "How has residential schooling affected our views of education, our communities etc.?" As well, the idea that Western education is embedded in power relations and vested interests has not been addressed.

#### Theories of the Social Construction of Reality

The sociology of knowledge provided an important theoretical tool, i.e., the notion of the social construction of reality which will be useful for Native analysis (Berger & Luckman:1966; Mackie:1987). The theories advanced by Sociologists Peter Berger and Thomas Luckman revolutionized the way reality and knowledge

were conceived.<sup>21</sup> Using methods from sociology of knowledge, Marlene Mackie provides valuable insights into the social construction of men and women. Although her focus is a study of the way gender is constructed, it is possible to apply these perspectives to the situation of the First Nations. To understand that reality is socially constructed is an important step for the development of critical theoretical discourses. It is a useful tool for deconstructing notions of modern society as natural and unchanging. This is because "human consciousness is constituted socially and historically, rather than universally and transcendentally; the process by which ideas become solidified and rigidly fixed..."(Cocks:1989:26). Through the use of this theory Native analysts are able to challenge the social construction of the indigenous people as "Indian", and to deconstruct the images and stereotypes that have been constructed historically, and which continue to affect the lives of the First Nations people. Through this theory we can see that "race" is a social construct. It is a "social construction that has developed in order to serve social purposes. Context is critical to consciousness, and consciousness takes its meaning from history" (Hunter College Women's Studies Collective:1995:174).<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Marlene Mackie explains that sociology of knowledge is "best viewed as a few powerful ideas that have proven useful for thinking about many different sociological problems" (Mack:1987). Mackie also offers an explanation by Maines (1981) who stated that for sociologists of knowledge "the essential structure of society has a materialistic base which is lodged in massive and powerful social institutions, namely, political, military, and economic institutions (Mackie:1987:114).

<sup>22</sup> See the chapter on "Social Roles: Gender, Race, and Class" in (Hunter et al:1995:165).

The focus of the sociology of knowledge on the study of social structures is also useful in revealing the social relations which determine the everyday lives of Native people.<sup>23</sup>

### The Colonial Context and Postcolonial Discourse

The next section will explore the type of power which emanates from ideological practices. I will begin by exploring the use of ideology in the colonial process. This is a powerful form of oppression, because it is pervasive, and it perpetuates itself for generations. The contribution of postcolonial theory is that it has expanded the scope of analytical studies of colonialism to include forms of oppression resulting from the use of ideology. This provides analytical frameworks which can explore the way the construction of the images of Native people provided the rationale for their subjugation. This is the framework through which we can study the practical realities of colonial administration. The colonial perspective provides a framework for the study of the relationship of Native people with the dominant society - it is based on the premise that the relationship is problematic, in the same way that women always have to contend with a patriarchal society.

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<sup>23</sup> The social structure is composed of "a pattern of values, beliefs, and customs embedded in a specific material way of life (Hunter College et al:1995:172). It is worth noting Mackie's discussion of the usefulness of combining the theories of symbolic interactionists and sociologists of knowledge, who compensate for each other's strengths and weaknesses. Symbolic interactionists provide a more sensitive portrayal of the individual who is perceived to be a rational and creative being who enjoys a measure of autonomy. This view counterbalances the sociology of knowledge approach which focuses on the social structure, and "the nature of individual subjectivity is not developed systematically in Marxism, [its] theoretical source (Mackie:1987:114)."

The critical analysis of contemporary Native schooling is facilitated by the use of the work of radical critical pedagogists and by feminist critical pedagogy. This section is based on the need to show that in their involvement with the Western education system, not only are Native people confronted by that system as described by Western radical critical pedagogists,<sup>24</sup> but also as subjects who have been colonized by that system.<sup>25</sup> In their involvement with Western society and education, they are confronted by images and stereotypes of themselves and by negative portrayals of, or outright exclusion of, their cultures and beliefs.<sup>26</sup> With the use of these perspectives it will be possible to demonstrate that Native experiences historically, in residential schools, for instance, were part of a larger system of domination which began in the colonial period, and that the policies and attitudes of the administrators were the products of this system.

Secondly, it will be necessary to explore the effects of the ideological construction of the subject peoples. This is

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<sup>24</sup> The work of radical and feminist critical pedagogists will be used, but in the case of the First Nations we have to realize that the forms of oppression are different, although the work of these critical pedagogists is helpful in their identification of the power relations and vested interests in the education system.

<sup>25</sup> It has taken me time to realize that this was the problem with attempting to use the tools of critical pedagogy; I said, then, that they did not have the means to interrogate Native forms of oppression.

<sup>26</sup> We have to develop studies of the effects of negative stereotyping, that stereotyping "prevents us from seeing people. Stereotyping means reacting to people on the basis of our expectations of what they are like, without actually knowing them as individuals (Hunter College et al:1995:169)." It is true that this situation has changed in the education system, through improvement of texts, curricula, etc., but we still have to critically analyze the meaning and impact of these changes. Also see LaRoque (1991).

important because it is necessary to make the connection between historical colonialism, and its continuing hegemonic forms, and the social and cultural problems that exist on reserves and among Native people in general. Here it is necessary to use psychological discourse (Duran & Duran:1995). Franz Fanon was the first to critically analyze the psychological effects of colonialism (Fanon:1963). Fanon believed that it is not possible to understand colonialism without exploring the psychological component. The study of historical colonialism in the next chapter will demonstrate that what has been lacking in Native analysis is a study of the *psychological* effects of colonialism. This focus will provide the basis for understanding why things happen the way they do in Native communities.

## CHAPTER IV

### AN EXPLORATION OF THE HISTORICAL COLONIAL CONTEXT

*They exist for us in a cherished series of dichotomies: by turns gentle, in tune with nature, paradisaical, ideal--or violent, in need of control; what we should emulate or, alternately, what we should fear; noble savages or cannibals...They exist also as a global whole--complete, knowable, definable (Torgovnick:1990:3).*

*It would not be accurate to assume that even pre-contact existence in the territory was in the least bit idyllic. The plaintiffs' ancestors had no written language, no horses or wheeled vehicles...and there is no doubt, to quote Hobbes, that aboriginal life in the territory was, at least, "nasty, brutish and short" (Judgement by the Honorable Chief Justice Allan McEachern, March 8, 1991, in *Delgam Uukw vs The Queen*).*

### The Relevance of a Historical/Colonial Study

The First Nations of Canada are at a critical stage. They are beginning to realize the significance of their history as colonial subjects. The interrogation of experiences related to residential schools is beginning to happen (Chrisjohn & Young:1994; Bull:1991; Assembly of First Nations:1994; Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples:1995; Duran & Duran:1995; Paul:1993; Jaine:1993; Haig-Brown:1988). This emerging literature is the result of concerns regarding existing social conditions in First Nations communities. These writers agree that the source of indigenous problems is the historical colonial experience that the indigenous peoples were subjected to at the time of Western European contact. For instance, psychologists Eduardo and Bonnie Duran write that the past five hundred years have been "devastating to our communities; the effects of this systematic genocide are currently being felt by our people"

(Duran & Duran:1995:6). We are constantly confronted by the need to address the phenomena of colonialism and residential schools through the revelations of abuses in residential schools across the country. The latest revelation occurred just recently. It was the disclosure of horrendous cases of abuse suffered by Native students in a northern community in Ontario.<sup>1</sup> Another case is where criminal charges were laid against a Catholic bishop in British Columbia.

Related to these issues is the need to develop explanations of why many Native communities are self-destructing through violence, physical and sexual abuse, and suicide. The *Royal Commission of Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP)* interpreted the self-destructive behavior as "a collective anguish, part grief, part anguish--tearing at the minds and hearts of many people" (RCAP:1995:ix). The report characterized the conditions as

the cumulative effect of 300 years of colonial history: lands occupied, resources seized, beliefs and cultures ridiculed, children taken away, power concentrated in distant capitals, hopes for an honorable co-existence dashed over again and again (RCAP:1995:x).

We have to realize that without the necessary explanations Native people will be further victimized by a *blame the victim* ideology (Ryan:1976). For instance, a recent poll revealed that attitudes toward Native people are hardening; the poll found 40 percent of

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<sup>1</sup> See the report by *The Globe and Mail*, October 19, 1996, which discusses the issue of abuse at St. Anne's Residential School in Fort Albany, Ontario. This is an interesting case because it reveals so many elements of colonialism, and the religious division that exists in many Native communities.

Canadians believe that Aboriginal people are to blame for most of their own problems, up five per cent from 1994.<sup>2</sup> The same poll found that 47 percent believe First Nations enjoy a standard of living equal to, or better than, the average Canadian--a 17 percent increase over the past two years.<sup>3</sup>

These issues led me to conclude in this study that the task for Native people is twofold. First is the need to explore the phenomena of colonialism, and residential schools, in order to determine the effects of historical colonial policies and practices on the lives of Native people today. As part of the decolonization process, Native people themselves have to acquire the tools for this kind of exploration. Secondly, the First Nations need to develop knowledges which are not only new, but also liberating and healing, as advocated by psychologists Eduardo & Bonnie Duran (Duran & Duran:1995:6). The development of healing models based on Native values has been occurring; there are examples where the whole community has undergone a

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<sup>2</sup> The phrasing of the questions in this poll needs to be critically analyzed and critiqued for instance, the corresponding question here is, "Do you think that most of the problems of Aboriginal people are brought on by themselves?" One delegate at the meeting did accuse the Minister of DIAND, Ronald Irwin, of constructing a survey with "loaded" questions to make Aboriginal people look bad. The delegate charged, "I think these question were put forward in a very mean-spirited way and designed to elicit a negative response." Irwin denied the allegation. (Windspeaker August 1996, Vol 14, No.4).

<sup>3</sup> The poll was commissioned by the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, (DIAND) through Insight Canada Research which conducted a telephone survey of 1,201 Canadians in February, 1996. What is significant is that the poll shows that the attitudes of the Canadian population are more negative, and less tolerant, than they were two years ago.

healing process.<sup>4</sup> But the development of these models is complex and time-consuming, and many communities still do not have access to aboriginal healing models.

A component of the healing process is to ensure that the colonial history of the aboriginal peoples of Canada is revealed and addressed. Because decolonization is multi-dimensional, it was necessary to define it for the purposes of this study. Decolonization is defined as an interrogation of the role of power and knowledge in Native oppression. This departs from the usual self-determination strategies which have focussed strictly on the need for self-government, treaty rights, and aboriginal rights. While I realize the importance of these objectives, I am arguing that there is another dimension that we should be exploring. This is the view of discourse as 'violence.' Jose Rabasa explains that "the equation *discourse is violence...refines the commonplace knowledge is power*; it displaces the formulation of the problem from misuse of information to an integral view of knowledge as a form of domination, and control" (Rabasa:1990:188). This theoretical perspective enables us to interrogate the way the construction of

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<sup>4</sup> A study by the Assembly of First Nations documented certain communities (AFN:1988). The community that has become well-known is Alkali Lake located in British Columbia, where the whole community underwent a healing process. Also see the text by Rupert Ross who, through a long experience in Native communities, has developed a real understanding and empathy for their values system. He discusses the development of aboriginal healing models in several communities (Ross:1996).

knowledge and representation were used in European conquest.<sup>5</sup>

The representation of Native people as savage or heathen was an act of violence.<sup>6</sup> This perspective demonstrates the power of the postcolonial perspective which allows us to discuss the ideological construction of Native people. The starting point in decolonization has been the development of a 'critical consciousness' which allows the marginalized not only to understand the way they are oppressed, but to be able to contest their oppression.

Using the power and knowledge framework, I argue for the development of critical oppositional thinkers and literature which would facilitate the development of a critical consciousness (Said:1996; Gramsci:1971; Adler:1987).

*Conscientization* was defined by Paulo Freire as "the development of the awakening of critical awareness" (Freire:1992:19).

Antonio Gramsci asserted that integral to the development of "critical self-consciousness" was the presence of "intellectuals as the chief creators, preservers, critics, and teachers of culture and ideology," and that, they are the most "important

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<sup>5</sup> Although Rabasa confines his paper to the study of the role of ethnography and colonial conquest, this perspective enables us to see how "treating, trading and conversing" were used as modes of gaining a deeper understanding of indigenous institutions and practices (Rabasa:1990:203). It is important to know that "The process of learning about the other not only produces data but introduces dialogue into a web of practices ranging roughly from the exchange of goods to conversion" (Rabasa:1990:203). This formulation resolves the problem of analyzing the role of the fur trade, which has been conceptualized as a time when indigenous people and Europeans cooperated and co-existed in the colonial process.

<sup>6</sup> Rabasa writes, "Not only must the slave speak the language of the master, but he must also speak from the representation the master renders of the adversary's language (Rabasa:1990:205).

agents in the construction and deconstruction of hegemonic social relations" (cited in Brantlinger:1990:97). To reiterate the main theme of this study, we have entered a period where First Nations priorities have to include the development of this intellectual component which would complement the knowledge and wisdom of elders.<sup>7</sup>

Decolonization in terms of the development of postcolonial theories and discourses has not occurred, i.e., the development of theory which will allow us to interrogate the power relations inherent in our relationship with the dominant society. And yet, Gramsci advocated the need for "oppositional critics" who would produce "liberating, counter-hegemonic knowledge." Gramsci warned that revolutionary changes cannot occur without this cadre of oppositional thinkers, and oppositional discourses. He stated that:

A human mass does not "distinguish" itself, does not become independent in its own right without, in the widest sense, organising itself; and there is no organisation without intellectuals, that is without organisers and leaders, in other words, without the theoretical aspect of the theory-practice nexus being distinguished concretely by the existence of a group of people who "specialise" in conceptual and philosophic elaboration of ideas (cited in Brantlinger:1990:99).

While Native leaders have been successful in protecting their

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<sup>7</sup> An example of the need for critical thinkers is the recent development where the Canadian representative stated in the United Nations that the government of Canada "accepts the right of self-determination for indigenous peoples." (Reported in Wetaskiwin Times, Nov.4, 1996). While everyone considers this as a "milestone," I cannot help asking what it means, and what is behind the government's decision? There is a need for Native critical analysts for these kinds of issues. Although we may have a few, I do not think we have enough, judging from the educational record.

historical rights, they have managed to do it mostly without critical theoretical models.<sup>8</sup> How much more successful would we be if we had academic warriors as well? According to postcolonial theory, revolutions and decolonization movements occurred in conjunction with the development of critical discourses. In fact, the contention is that postcolonial literatures emerged out of the decolonization process.

#### The Development of Oppositional Discourses

The interrogation of the colonial history of indigenous people is a necessary component of the process of decolonization.<sup>9</sup> In this context, Terry Eagleton wrote that formerly colonized people, simply to survive, "may find themselves 'forced' to enquire into the global structures of imperialism as their imperialist rulers need not do" (Eagleton:1991:174). One could say that it is axiomatic that the connection between British imperialism and the historical treatment of indigenous people be explored as part of the effort to transform structural and institutional racial oppression. In other words, in order to analyze racial inequality and exploitation of indigenous peoples we need to know the historical

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<sup>8</sup> I would like to acknowledge that the more I study Native issues, the more I respect the tenacity of Native people to survive despite all odds. When you know their colonial history, you cannot help but commend them for their efforts. But the statistics tells us that we have not covered all fields. For instance, addressing social problems on the reserves, and affirming the need for education, have not been considered priorities in the male-dominated band governments.

<sup>9</sup> It is significant that the First Nations are only now beginning to explore the role of decolonization in their struggle against the hegemony of the Canadian State. For Frantz Fanon, decolonization is a necessary political process for both the colonized and the colonizer, because both are victimized by colonialism (See Fanon:1991; Ashcroft, Griffiths & Tiffin:1989; and Ngugi:1986; for discussions of decolonization).

roots. And it is argued in this study that these roots lie in the history that is associated with colonialism and imperialism.<sup>10</sup>

In Canada, critical literature on the colonial history of Canada is almost non-existent. This should not be surprising as any textual analyses of Native issues and history were also non-existent until the 1970's, and any existing literature and studies were written by non-Native people. Any analysis of Native people was left to anthropology and ethnography. Until I began to study the field of postcolonial literature, I had real difficulty in knowing how to study the issue of *colonialism* using the few examples existing in Canadian literature. This literature did not have the conceptual and theoretical scope of recent postcolonial literature. Fortunately, for First Nations scholars, the shift to critical, oppositional, literature is occurring in the 'postmodern' era when the trend in academia is towards challenging dominant ideologies, epistemologies and the established canon.<sup>11</sup> This era was the result of a growth of critical studies emanating from alternative movements, as

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<sup>10</sup> Bernard Magubane makes an important distinction between the terms *imperialism* and *colonialism*: imperialism is referred to as "specific relations between a subjugated society and its alien rulers," and colonialism is used to refer "to the social structures created with the colonized society by imperialist relationships" (Magubane:1979:3).

<sup>11</sup> I am fully cognizant of the problem related to attempting to write essays about one's colonized experiences and not finding the material, as well as, the feeling that you should not be doing it, especially when you do not have support behind you. It was a relief when James Frideres discussed "internal colonialism" in his text *Native Peoples in Canada, Contemporary Conflicts* (Frideres:1988).

reflected in Postcolonialism, Feminism, and Postmodernism.<sup>12</sup> Unfortunately, for Native scholars, the development of postcolonial discourse is occurring long after the "heyday of decolonization" in Third World countries.<sup>13</sup> Postcolonial literature emerged out of the decolonization of Third World countries after the Second World War. It is the work of writers of the Third World countries which has transformed the study and analysis of colonialism and history. Their work has made the discussion of colonialism common place, popular, and, in many instances, post colonial discourses have been institutionalized.<sup>14</sup> The approaches by postcolonial writers are varied, but they all agree on the centrality of the colonial experience in the oppression of minority groups. They also agree that colonialism is an ongoing process which continues to impact on the experiences of previously colonized people in the contemporary period.

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<sup>12</sup> See Patrick Brantlinger's *Crusoe's Footprints, Cultural Studies in Britain and America* for a comprehensive introduction of the development of critical studies, which includes Women's Studies, Afro-American Studies, Postcolonial, New Left, and poststructuralism, and the role in the "upheaval in the Humanities" beginning in the 1960's (Brantlinger:1990). Authors Ashcroft et al write that certain commonalities exist between these groups; Post-colonial writing and literary theory intersect in several ways with recent European movements, such as postmodernism and poststructuralism, and with both contemporary Marxist ideological criticism and feminist criticism" (Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin:1989:155).

<sup>13</sup> I found it unfortunate, because I felt as if I were 'inventing the wheel.' I had to conduct an enormous amount of research to formulate the analytical and conceptual framework used in this study. Postcolonial writers are involved in postcolonial analysis of the contemporary period, whereas I was attempting to develop a framework for the historical period. For instance, postcolonial writers are debating other issues such as immigration problems, the use of the English language as opposed to their own languages. In other words, they are further ahead.

<sup>14</sup> The proliferation of 'postcolonial' literature is a significant phenomenon, considering that the academic institutions have been reluctant to acknowledge the experiences of colonized people (Said:1979:13). Also see Stephen Slemon's article on the institutionalization of postcolonial literature (Slemon:1995:45).

The growth of post-colonial literature has been phenomenal, and yet it has not had a significant impact in Canadian Native and non-Native literatures. This is unfortunate, because I believe that postcolonial theories have much more theoretical and methodological power for the interrogation of colonialism from a contemporary perspective.<sup>15</sup> This literature is useful because it transformed the theoretical and methodological frame for studying colonialism, and therefore opens up numerous possibilities for the study of all aspects of colonialism in the contemporary period. Postcolonial discourse is part of a movement which introduced the shift from Marxist-based theories which privileged economic explanations for social situations. The shift takes into account the cultural and ideological aspects of social reality. JanMohamed makes an important distinction by arguing that the phenomenological source of *minority discourse* is the "relations of domination that constitute the antagonism between dominant and minority groups (JanMohamed:1990:103)."<sup>16</sup> This is a positive development for First Nations scholars as it has always been difficult, if not impossible, to see how analytical frameworks which privileged class struggles among workers could be used for Native analysis. Another advantage is that the shift to cultural theory opens up an analytical and conceptual space

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<sup>15</sup> It must be recognized that postcolonial discourse is not monolithic; it has become very complex with an enormous range of perspectives.

<sup>16</sup> It is important to note that feminist scholars also conceptualize their oppression as originating from this source.

for minority discourse. As Ann Soerensen explains, "the cultural perspective provides the possibility of understanding the clash between the interests and cultures of many different groups ..." (Soerensen:1992:202). The shift to the exploration of the ideological dimension of colonialism facilitated this study. Stephen Slemon explains the shift as occurring at the level of analysis in postcolonial discourse. He writes:

The nature of colonialism as an economic and political structure of cross-cultural domination has of course occasioned a set of debates, but it is not really on this level that the 'question' of European colonialism has troubled the various post-colonial fields of study. The problem, rather, is with the concept of colonialism as an ideological or discursive formation, that is with the ways in which colonialism is viewed as an apparatus for constituting subject positions through the field of representation (Slemon:1995:45).

What distinguishes this dissertation is the use of a framework which problematizes the colonial history of Native people. This work demonstrates the relevance of postcolonial discourses for Native analysis. Native scholars will be able to relate to the experience of other minorities and discover the commonalities in their oppression. They will be able to discover that First Nations and non-Western peoples share a common history through their historical domination by colonial and imperialist countries. Authors Abdul R. JanMohammed and David Lloyd write that minority cultures, in spite of enormous differences which need to be preserved, all occupy "the same oppressed and "inferior" cultural, political, economic, and material subject-

position in relation to Western hegemony" (JanMohammed & Lloyd:1990:10). They will realize that their colonial history is specific to them as is argued by Brantlinger, that as "patriarchy is to feminism and bourgeois or capitalist ideology to Marxism, racism and imperialism are to the world's nonwhite 'minorities'" (Brantlinger:1990:148). Therefore, indigenous people have to be cognizant of the ongoing effects of the colonial legacy.<sup>17</sup>

Postcolonial writers have demonstrated the fundamental importance of locating the source of domination in the colonial experience (JanMohammed & Lloyd:1990).

#### The Different Dimensions of Historical Colonialism

An important feature of historical colonialism is that it consists of many phases, and varies in time and space. In this study I want to focus on two different phases of Canadian colonialism. One phase, which I consider the most important, relates to a period when the social construction of "Indian" people as savages, and their cultures as primitive and inferior to Western "civilization," occurred.<sup>18</sup> This first period began at the time when Columbus landed in South America.<sup>19</sup> The second

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<sup>17</sup> It was useful for me to conceptualize that this relationship has always been problematic, and one that will continue to be problematic. The federal government's determination to assimilate Native people has never changed. The study of this relationship reveals a continual struggle between the two forces. It will not end until Native people are assimilated into the dominant society. Unfortunately, the Native people are slowly getting assimilated into mainstream society.

<sup>18</sup> This became known as the 'civilization/savagism dichotomy'; see (Pearce:1988).

<sup>19</sup> A very recent text by Leonard Ian Rotman looks like a very useful resource because it is a study of the Canadian legal system which includes the colonial context. Rotman writes: "Canadian Indian policy has its origins in the fifteenth-century colonialist policies implemented by the first seafaring European states to make contact with the indigenous peoples of the New

phase begins in the eighteenth century when the indigenous people lost their autonomy, and the colonial government was able to implement its colonial policies and legislation. The first phase is relevant to this study because the assumption of this dissertation is that the designation of the indigenous people as savage and primitive provided the philosophical and scientific rationale for their treatment under, first, the British colonial government, and secondly, under the Canadian government after Confederation. What this means is that the image of indigenous people was created hundreds of years ago and is part of a larger colonial project than is usually imagined. This approach has a wider theoretical scope, because it not only addressed the colonial history of Native people but it also reveals colonialism as playing an important role in the formation of 'modern' European societies.

What is significant of early modernism is that the rise of imperialism and colonialism occurred concurrently with social and technological developments which resulted in new forms of domination. Notions of barbarism and civilization which had evolved from the Greeks had always existed (Le Goff:1992:139). But the developments in the 14th and 15th centuries provided a

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World. These nations generally believed themselves to be intellectually and morally superior to the people whose lands they invaded" (Rotman:1996:21). He also provides the additional information "To justify their incursions into these new lands, their right to reap its rewards and, in some instance, to enslave their indigenous populations, these nations initially relied on a variety of papal bulls, grants, and royal charters which presume to grant religious and royal authority to conquer their 'barbarian' populations and to claim their lands and treasures as European possessions" (Rotman:1996:21).

powerful impetus for European colonialism and conquest of other peoples and lands. These developments were the rise of the sovereign state, the development of writing and science, and the emergence of early capitalism. What is not commonly known is the role of writing and the printing press in furthering the aims of colonialism. The presence of writing and the printing press introduced something new to imperial conquests. Writing has been described as probably the most important element in the colonial process (Ashcroft, Griffiths, & Tiffin:1989). And Michael De Certeau refers to writing as the *writing that conquers* (De Certeau:1988). Authors Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin credit Tzvetan Todorov for his "revolutionary insight" in identifying the function and power of writing in the colonial process. The authors state that Todorov, in his study, *The Conquest of America* (1974), found that the key feature of colonial oppression was "the control over the means of communication rather than the control over life and property or even language itself" (Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin:1989:79).<sup>20</sup>

What should concern First Nation scholars is the power and influence the images constructed during the early colonial period have had over their lives historically, and in the contemporary period. The colonial legacy is the continuing ideological role

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<sup>20</sup> The authors write, "The principle which Todorov sees as central, the control of the means of communication, is the empowering factor in any colonial enterprise...The intrusion of the colonizer is not always attended by the confusion which gripped the Aztecs, but control is always manifested by the imposed authority of a system of 'writing,' whether writing already exists in the colonized culture or not" (Ashcroft, Griffiths, & Tiffin:1989:79).

of these negative images and stereotypes as manifested in contemporary racism (Berkhofer:1978; Pearce:1988). Studies have connected the creation of images of indigenous people as crucial to the success of colonialism and imperialism, as can be seen in the texts by Robert F. Berkhofer Jr. (1978), and Roy Harvey Pearce (1988). These authors identified the crucial role of images and stereotypes in social practice. Berkhofer argues that the images of the "Indians" constructed during the period of exploration have endured throughout the centuries. According to Berkhofer, these images have not only obscured the "true identity" of the indigenous people, but have served as "ideological weapons" in the subjugation of these peoples.

Pearce's text is a study of the influence of ideas on thought and action. His premise is that the idea of savagism shaped American thought from the seventeenth century onwards. Pearce is interested in studying the effects of the savagism and civilization dichotomy which he views as an American legacy founded in "violence and distortion." Pearce argued that what the Indian actually was became less and less an issue because the stereotypes served the needs of the American society; that is, the stereotypes affirmed the perceived superiority of the emerging society. Berkhofer and Pearce's work is invaluable because the focus is on 'Native Americans,' specifically on the emergence of the 'savagism/civilization' dichotomy.

The contribution of postcolonial and postmodern theory is

the identification of the role of representation and ideology in the marginalization and social construction of the colonized 'Other' (Brantlinger:1995:103). Patrick Brantlinger discusses the contributions by Antonio Gramsci in the formulation of new interpretations of hegemony and ideology. Departing from Marxian economic determinism, Gramsci attributed an important role to ideology which he saw as part of a "dialectical process" which was a "necessary aspect of all social formations." For Gramsci, ideology was effective because it played a fundamental role in social organization filling "particular needs and roles," and it became embedded in this social organization as "common sense." Brantlinger describes "common sense" as

the ideological glue or cement that legitimizes and binds a social formation together by making its institutions and arrangements of power seem natural and wise (Brantlinger:1990:96).

Gramsci's notion of ideology is useful in demonstrating that the ideological construction of indigenous peoples was part of the political strategy of imperialist regimes, and that these constructions became part of the "common-sense" knowledge of colonial discourse and of society as a whole. Gramsci makes it clear that society and knowledge are socially constructed, and that ideology plays a very important role in this construction. It is important to realize that ideological constructions can be

positive for one nation and destructive for others.<sup>21</sup> An important argument in postcolonial theoretical work is that the ideological construction of the 'colonized other' is considered crucial for the social formation of European societies. Another useful contribution by Gramsci is to show how ideology and culture played an important role in hegemonic formations. Gramsci argued that hegemony was part of "the complex nature of power, class hierarchies, and causation within society, as well as the social production and influence of ideas and culture," so that hegemony carried within it "seeds of resistance and rebellion" (Brantlinger:1990:96??). The Gramscian notion of hegemonic power is useful for postcolonial criticism in general, but particularly for this study because it includes the social production and influence of ideas.

#### The realities of the colonization of indigenous people

Postcolonial critics have created a discourse which is able to interrogate the relationship between power, knowledge and social construction of colonial subjects. David Theo Goldberg offers an explanation of how the racial differentiation which began at the time of Columbus' travels was perpetuated by the rise of a new paradigm - scientific theory. Goldberg argues that:

...the rise of racist expression and its accompanying

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<sup>21</sup> Jacques Le Goff observes that "History appears rational only to the conquerors, while the vanquished people experience it as irrationality and alienation" (Le Goff:1992:147).

violence of material deprivation was rendered *theoretically* possible only by a change in a paradigm from the seventeenth century onward...(Goldberg:1993:11).

Goldberg defines modernity as a period beginning in the sixteenth century and which was reflected in a new consciousness and historical formation of what is now known as "the West."

Goldberg's contribution is to reveal the origins of racial discourse in liberal/democratic social formations. Goldberg shows how these ideas and ideology stemmed from the contributions of John Locke, David Hume and others, who played a key role in the rise of the liberal/democratic society. What is significant is that Goldberg shows the way racism is central to modernism, and thereby liberalism.

Liberalism plays a foundational part in this process of normalizing and naturalizing racial dynamics and racist exclusion. As modernity's definitive doctrine of self and society, of morality and politics, liberalism serves to legitimate ideologically and to rationalize politico-economically prevailing sets of racialized conditions and racist exclusions (Goldberg:1993:1).

A knowledge of the nature of modernism is also relevant to this discussion as it is characterized by its commitment to civilization, capitalism, and science through the principles of progress, the social contract, private property, and individualism. Frank Hearn wrote: "Progress, defined as continuous economic growth and industrial expansion, became the catchword of the nineteenth century" (Hearn:1985:30). It is this liberal/democratic state, with its racist conceptions and images

of Native people, which emerged in the eighteenth century as a conquering nation.

The implications of creation of images and textual production

An important contribution by postcolonial, feminist, and postmodern scholars is to reveal a new form of power that is dominant in contemporary society - *discursive power*.

Postcolonial writers explored the meaning of the ideological creation of images and stereotypes and their role in the social construction of knowledge of colonized peoples. They are then able to demonstrate the way the social construction of these people is perpetuated, and maintained over centuries (Said:1979). A reflection of colonial power is that civilizations which had their own literature, and histories, were also colonized. Edward Said, and other scholars, have explored the way this type of knowledge construction occurred in societies which already had writing, such as what was called the 'Orient,' and countries such as 'India.'<sup>22</sup> Aboriginal people of this continent did not have writing.<sup>23</sup> They were societies which used oral communication and the oral transmission of knowledge and culture. Imperial hegemony was based on the discursive representation of cultures

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<sup>22</sup> Feminist educator Himani Bannerji's article "Beyond the Ruling Category to What Actually Happens: Notes on James Mill's Historiography in *The History of British India*" is a critique of the way colonialism was able to appropriate the intellectual apparatus of countries such as India and others (Bannerji:1995).

<sup>23</sup> It could be argued that the lack of postcolonial discourses contributes to what Simon During describes as a "crisis of emptiness" in his reference to Australians. Simon During said of the Australians that there was "no strong postcolonial discourse by which they can mirror themselves" (During:1985 cited Ascroft, Griffiths & Tiffin:1989:164).

and histories of these people. In his text *Orientalism*, Said is able to demonstrate the power of discursive and textual production (Said:1979). The power of representation also included the politics of historical knowledge. European imperialism did not accept the fact that most non-Western indigenous societies had histories of their own.<sup>24</sup> LeGoff explains imperial attitudes as:

...we reserve the word 'history' for Western conceptions and do not recognize as historical other ways of thinking about history, and on the other, because the social and political conditions that have favored the development of history in the West have not always obtained elsewhere (Le Goff:1992:143).<sup>25</sup>

The perception of indigenous people as not having a history was a negation. It has been countered by postcolonial critics, for example, through the writing of African histories. Brantlinger argues the lack of representation of a people is to make them 'invisible.' He states that this negation is something that Afro-American writers, artists, and intellectuals must continually struggle against (Brantlinger:1990:150). Black writers found that "historical consciousness is itself a product of ideological struggle in which the powerful seek to tell their singular, self-congratulatory story and to repress or distort

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<sup>24</sup> In a recent land claim decision, the presiding judge, MacEachen, did not accept oral tradition as valid (Monet & Wilson:1992).

<sup>25</sup> In his study of the Spanish conquest of Peru, Nathan Wachtel found that it was not a conquest of society without history. He wrote, "every event is produced in a field that is already constituted, composed of institutions, customs, practices, meanings, and multiple traces, which both resist and offer a purchase to human action" (Le Goff:1992:146).

other stories" (Brantlinger:1990:150).<sup>26</sup> The political project of postcolonial literature is to redress the lack of representation, or misrepresentation, in European textual production. While black academics are arguing for the inclusion of Afro-American history in American history, we should be arguing for the inclusion of the experience of all marginalized peoples, including women. Historians John Hope Franklin and William Harris argue that:

As a discipline and form of consciousness, history itself is in danger of failure, a kind of suicide by omission and distortion, if it forgets more than it remembers--above all, if it represses the stories of millions of "invisible" people, and then it also represses the story of that repression (cited in Brantlinger:1990:151).

The point is this: the reality of Native people is either repressed or distorted, and part of the project of Native decolonization is to reconstruct the past. The use of postcolonial theories opens up a whole new field for First Nations scholars. This new field is in the interrogation of the relationship between ideology, knowledge construction, and representation.

An exploration of discursive ideological representation as a form of oppression makes it necessary to interrogate the role of the social sciences in the historical oppression of Native

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<sup>26</sup> Brantlinger writes, "Historians of the black experience in America labor under a double indemnity. Not only do they struggle to recapture a past that has been all but obliterated by the dominant, white culture, they must also struggle to convince white colleagues and the academic powers-that-be that this repressed, nearly forgotten past is worth recapturing and teaching" (Brantlinger:1990:150).

people. In the case of colonialism, representation began with reports by explorers, missionaries, and traders.<sup>27</sup> Oppositional discourses have revealed that the early anthropology as an emerging 'science' was implicated in the colonial process. Anthropology was a product of its time. It has its roots in the "humanist vision of the Enlightenment" and the expansion of the colonial empire.<sup>28</sup> Considering the intellectual, social, economic, and political structure of European society, it would have been difficult for any science to take a different ideological position.<sup>29</sup> I do not mean to rationalize their historical role, but I want to stress that their roots, and interests, are always already different from those of the indigenous peoples. My point is that indigenous scholars need to recognize the role of anthropology, and that of other Western-based social sciences, as problematic for them.<sup>30</sup> Post-colonial

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<sup>27</sup> For instance, Robert F. Berkhofer writes, "How the English moved from supposedly factual descriptions of the Native Americans to the symbolism of the Indian can be traced briefly from Richard Haluyt to Thomas Hobbes and John Locke" (Berkhofer:1978:16). Berkhofer also states that the accounts of European 'discoveries' in the last quarter of the sixteenth century published and reprinted were by Richard Haluyt the Younger (Berkhofer:1978:16).

<sup>28</sup> Anthropologist Kathleen Gough writes that the institutionalization of anthropology occurred in the period when Western nations were making "the final push to bring practically the whole pre-industrial non-Western worlds under their political economic control (Gough:1968:403)."

<sup>29</sup> A distinction in the role of anthropologists is made by Jose Rabasa who reports that the scientific claims "set the ethnographer apart from the missionaries, administrators, and other practical types (Rabasa:1990:193)."

<sup>30</sup> An important task of feminist scholars has been to critique male-dominated social sciences, and considering Native history, Native scholars have to acquire the skills for these types of critiques. An example is when I observed an anthropology class taught by a non-Native instructor to Native students at a Native college. I was shocked to hear the young anthropologist repeat verbatim from the textbook the idea of indigenous peoples as primitive, and "violent, who beat their wives." Obviously there were no gatekeepers who were able to recognize that we have to interrogate the role of anthropology in the lives of Native people historically. This is when I began to wonder "How do you teach anthropology to Native students?" For a discussion of the teaching of anthropology and Native people, see the article "Issues of Respect: Reflections of First Nations Student's Experiences in Postsecondary Anthropology Classrooms" by Sheila Te

writers found that the success of colonialism was dependent on the expertise of academics for the training of colonial administrators.<sup>31</sup> Brantlinger writes about the way the rise of "scientific" disciplines such as physical anthropology and ethnology reinforced by social Darwinism strengthened the stereotypes perpetuated by explorers and missionaries. In this way, "scientific theory" was able to provide justification for colonialism and genocide (Brantlinger:1985:). It also provided knowledge and expertise for policy-making, and the training of colonial officials and administrators (Kuklick:1993).<sup>32</sup> An important development was evolutionary theory which viewed man as evolving through distinct social stages, i.e., from savagery to barbarism to civilization, and Brantlinger argues that this had to serve as a powerful legitimation of imperialism (Brantlinger:1985:184).<sup>33</sup>

### The Consequences of Colonialism in Canada

The period when the second phase of colonialism in Canada

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Hennepe, in the *Canadian Journal of Native Education*, Vol. 20, No. 2, 1993.

<sup>31</sup> For instance, Edward Said found that "prior knowledge of the country" facilitated, and may well have contributed to, the success of Napoleon's conquest of Egypt (Said:1979:80).

<sup>32</sup> Henricka Kuklick wrote that while J.G. Frazer might have had reservations regarding the role of anthropology, Frazer argued that "colonial officials could not control their subjects without anthropological training" (Kuklick:1993:185).

<sup>33</sup> Brantlinger's article, "Victorians and Africans: The Genealogy of the Myth of the Dark Continent" (1985), leaves no doubt as to the role that European intellectuals, philosophers, and social scientists played in supporting imperialism and colonialism. The attempt by Native people to interrogate their past means critiquing white institutions and practices. While it is necessary to interrogate the past, it is also necessary to recognize some changes that have occurred in anthropology. There are anthropologists who are now advocates of Native people. It is an irony that Native people have been forced to rely on 'friendly' anthropologists in land claims struggles.

emerged can vary, but for the purposes of this study, the second phase begins in the settlement of Western Canada in the 1800's. The colonial administration of Native people occurred at different periods, occurring much earlier in the east, and at a later period in Western Canada. Daniel N. Paul, a Micmac from the East coast, provides a history of the colonial administration of eastern Native people (Paul:1993). What is significant is the consistency of colonial policy and administration in eastern and western Canada.<sup>34</sup> A knowledge of this period facilitates an understanding of the shift in power relations which occurred at this time. It was a time when indigenous populations were forced to realize that their way of life was disappearing. They were compelled to negotiate for their land in the attempt to secure future survival. It was also a time when the government was able to exert control over the lives of Native people to a great extent. As we will see in the following discussion this power became more and more arbitrary.

The argument of this study is that the first phase of 'classic' colonialism, the construction of Native people as savages, and primitive, provided the ideology for the subsequent governance and administration of Native people. The way to

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<sup>34</sup> Henricka Kuklick refers to the consistency of colonial administration when she writes: "The most remarkable characteristic of British colonial administration may well be its extraordinary consistency; prominent features of its structure and ideology was sustained not only from one territory to another but also from the nineteenth century through the era of deliberate decolonization" (Kuklick:1993:192). Also see Noel Dyck's critical analysis of Indian Affairs bureaucracy, policies, and practices (Dyck:1991).

explain this premise is that, while it is true the Native communities were being forced to change and were willing to change, the problem was the arbitrariness of government which would only accept the policy of assimilation as the answer to aboriginal social change. So what we see is the differing definitions of social change between the government and the indigenous peoples. This is the recurring and unending theme characterizing the relationship between these two forces. Augie Fleras is correct when he describes "aboriginal-state relations" as a "contested domain involving a protracted struggle between opposing ideologies for control over jurisdiction" (Fleras:1996:147). Fleras also argues that "the fundamental dynamic which animates this struggle for control is centred on questions about 'power' with respect to land, government, and treaty rights" (Fleras:1996:148).<sup>35</sup>

A postcolonial perspective will demonstrate that this struggle is unending and has its roots in the colonial period, and that it is an issue of power and control. The use of postcolonial and feminist frameworks facilitated the approach used in this study, an approach which will not minimize the role of power relations in the Native/Canadian relationship. I found that these oppositional approaches are able to reveal and address

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<sup>35</sup> Native leader and lawyer Ovide Mercredi is quoted as stating in 1991: "In law, with law, and through law, Canada has imposed a colonial system of government and justice upon our people without due regard to our treaty and Aboriginal rights" (cited in Rotman:1996:50).

issues which are not usually dealt with in mainstream studies. For instance, Native educational studies do not explore the connection of residential school experiences to contemporary social problems. As I will argue later, a review of literature and educational practices reveals that the mainstream practice is to locate problems as originating in the Native community (Assheton-Smith:1977).

I found that the differing ideologies between Native people and the government can be found as originating from this period. The conflict is rooted in the differing and opposing conceptions of reality held by the Native people and the dominant society. In the pre-contact period, the Native people were sovereign nations occupying large tracts of land of what is now known as Canada. These nations had their own form of communal social organizations, a holistic conception of reality, and oral cultures. The spiritual, political, social and economic realms were intertwined in the social organization and considered to have equal importance. While the nature of these indigenous cultures will be discussed later in this dissertation, what is significant is that indigenous peoples considered themselves as having cultures and philosophies which were as valid as those of other nations. What needs to be understood is that although Native people saw the need for change, and were at the point of losing their livelihood, they never would consider giving up their cultures and their identity. Deeply rooted in the cultural

traditions is the belief that the culture that people were born into constitutes who they are, and, although cultures might evolve, the essence of the cultural identity is unchanging.<sup>36</sup> And at this time, the cultural identity was very strong, even if it was being eroded.

The conquering nations in turn, saw indigenous forms of organization as primitive and inferior, and the Natives as savage and barbaric. The paradox of the late nineteenth century is the emergence of Canada as a liberal/democratic state which was informed by colonially-based conceptions of Native people. It is these conceptions which informed the governance and administration of Native people, and which legitimized the relationship which was based on power and control. It is within the context of the development of the liberal/democratic state that the persistence of the policy of assimilation can be understood. As indigenous communities did not conform to the liberal/democratic vision, they had to be transformed.<sup>37</sup> In his discussion of the official policies of the Department of Indian Affairs Noel Dyck argues that they

... were dedicated to delivering Indians from communal forms of social and economic organization, which were perceived as 'backward', by aggressively promoting the liberal ideal of

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<sup>36</sup> It must be remembered that, until European contact, change was not as devastating; change was always planned by the Native community. Thus they were able to control the effects of change.

<sup>37</sup> Marilyn Assheton-Smith writes of the role of the evolutionary framework which determined the view that, "Progress necessitated the gradual elimination of non-Western institutions and the emergence of institutions based upon the Western model, which was supposed to be of a higher evolutionary order" (Assheton-Smith:1977).

possessive individualism (Dyck:1991:88).

According to the government, the "Indian Problem" was that problems were due to the inferiority of Native cultures and the character of the people. It is this ideology which is at the root of the Native/Canadian conflict, and its influence was strongest during the period of 1876 to 1940's.

Paternalism and Native people - Protection Which Can Kill You, or  
Father Knows Best

There is a need to explore paternalism and the governance of Native people. The problem is that we have neglected to study the role of paternalism in the problems encountered by Native people today. It also had a historical role because it was used as a rationale for denying civil, human, and legal rights to Native people under the guise of protection. Associated with the 'Indian Problem' was the conceptions of indigenous people as backward and as "childlike" (Thomas:1992:132; Dyck:1991). This paved the way for paternalistic governments and the legal designation of Native people as "wards of the state." Legal analyst Leonard Ian Rotman provides evidence of the insidiousness of this relationship, characterized as "a relationship between unequals" (Rotman:1996). The following statement in a court judgment is self-explanatory as to its role in the loss of possessions by Native people. In 1852, the Upper Canada Court of Queen's Bench stated: "the Crown should be in a situation to protect their interest [aboriginal peoples] and treat them as a

people under its care, not capable of disposing of their possessions" (Rotman:1996:19). And Rotman argues that a great number of Department of Indian Affairs personnel "took a paternalistic, albeit well-meaning, attitude: the Indians were children or wards, father knew best" (Rotman:1996:20).<sup>38</sup> And though Rotman writes about recent changes in the legal system, i.e., the condemnation of the rhetoric implemented in *R v Syliboy* by the Supreme Court,<sup>39</sup> the following quote demonstrates the pervasiveness of images and ideology in Canadian society. In 1994 Judge Sarich, in his discussion of racism in the police force, stated:

There is also an attitude problem among the non-Native population from which nearly all police officers are recruited. The Indian Act of Canada is premised upon the postulate that Native people are incapable of managing their own lives, that they cannot make their own way in non-Native society and that they are inferior to non-Natives (cited in RCAP:1996:10).<sup>40</sup>

John Tobias writes that early government policy was based on the goals of *protection, civilization, and assimilation* (Tobias:1991). The term *protection* needs to be problematized because it is misleading; it could be said the policy of

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<sup>38</sup> The use of the terms "well-intentioned" or "well-meaning" is disconcerting and we have to address this. It seems to serve as a sanction of some sort.

<sup>39</sup> In 1929 the trial judge in *R v Syliboy* characterized aboriginal peoples as "uncivilized people" and " 'savages' with no rights of sovereignty or ownership over the land they had used and occupied since time immemorial" (Rotman:1996:21).

<sup>40</sup> In *Bridging the Cultural Gap, A report on Aboriginal Peoples and the Criminal Justice in Canada*, Judge Sarich is reported to have stated that these concepts have been advanced for so long by the Department of Indian Affairs, and uncritically accepted by the general population, that there is an unconscious acceptance of these "so-called" truths (RCAP:1996:10).

protection was a *double-edged sword* as it was detrimental to Native people. Although Tobias argues that the early policy adopted by the government was one of protection from exploitation by settlers, the use of this term obfuscates the real situation. The use of the term *protection* must be interrogated as to its real intent, especially when government policy has bordered on genocide of Native people. It has been shown that in the period of 'protection' the government was able to annex and confiscate land from the Native people, and encroach on their rights in various ways. What it has been interpreted to mean is that the government was free to expropriate lands and resources while it prevented exploitation by settlers (Paul:1993; Dyck:1991; Surtees:1982).<sup>41</sup> The multitude of land claims filed today by Native groups is the result of land that was expropriated by the government under various guises throughout the centuries.

The long-term goal of assimilation was officially recognized with the passage of *The Gradual Civilization Act, 1857* (Dyck:1991:51). In this period, the Government became more 'legalistic' and used legislation as a social control mechanism. Government critics found legislation was used to suppress opposition and resistance (Armitage:1995; Titley:1986). With the passage of the *Indian Act* in 1876, the relationship between the

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<sup>41</sup> Arthur J. Ray provides data on lands acquired under the Laurier government. He states, "Between 1896 and 1909, the Department of Indian Affairs bought and then sold almost three-quarters of a million acres for \$2,156,517. The Treaty 7 bands of southern Alberta, who held some of the largest reserves in the country, lost the most land" (Ray:1996:260).

First Nations and the Government of Canada solidified into one of power and authority on the part of the Government and of subordination on the part of the First Nations. Through the *Indian Act* the Department of Indian Affairs was given sweeping powers to control and regulate every aspect of Native life. Augie Fleras argues that, through the mandate of the *Indian Act* (1876), "aboriginal languages, cultures, and identity were suppressed, and band communities were locked into patterns of dependency and despondency with little opportunity for escape" (Fleras:1996:156).

The late 1800s was a painful period for the Native people in the prairies. They were losing the major source of their livelihood - the buffalo. Historians have recorded the importance of the buffalo as a subsistence base (Dickason:1992:297; Ray:1996:12). At the same time, aboriginal people were being decimated by epidemics. Olive Dickason writes that an especially severe epidemic in the 1870's "hit the Cree hard" (Dickason:1992:297). There is no doubt it was a humbling experience for the once-proud Crees, to acknowledge that their life was changing, and that they needed the aid of the Canadian government. In his article "Canada's Subjugation of the Plains Cree," John Tobias writes a history of how coercion through starvation was used by the government to subjugate the Crees (Tobias:1983). During this period the power of the government was, in a sense, supreme. Through the reserve system

and Indian agents, the government was able to control and regulate every aspect of Native life.<sup>42</sup> The change in Native social organization was initiated by the reserve system and the imposition of elected band councils. The government had control over leadership, i.e., the election of chiefs; Indian agents had the power to intervene if they considered the chief unfit, meaning someone who would not comply with government policies.

#### Meaning of Domination, Dependency, and Subjugation

In the review of the historical treatment of Native people these concepts were central to their experience, but the key question is, what did they mean? What does domination mean? How were Native people subjugated? How did they become dependent? Gregory Cajete, a Tewa American Indian educator, provides a concept useful for understanding much of what happened to Native people historically. He states that many Indian people seem to suffer from a

"Hostage syndrome" that mirrors the documented psychological effects of individuals who are kept in captivity for a long period of time. The syndrome is characterized by the states of alienation and confusion. These are emotional and thinking processes that individuals experience when they have adapted to the loss of their freedom and the demands of their captors (Cajete:1994:190).

This syndrome is mostly found in people who live in reserves or

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<sup>42</sup> The Indian Act defines a reserve as "a tract of land, the legal title to which is vested to Her Majesty, that has been set apart by Her Majesty for the use and the benefit of a band (Penner Report:1983).

reservations,<sup>43</sup> and who have the "status of being wards of the government." Cajete describes a situation found in reserves and in other colonized countries. He states that the syndrome-like effects "can range from total rejection of perceived controllers to an attempt to identify with them and become the same" (Cajete:1994:190). A review of the administration of the Department of Indian Affairs demonstrates how oppressive it was. The fact that Native people have not become extinct is a testimony of their ability to survive. It is not possible to document the atrocities committed in the name of civilization and Christianization, but a few examples should provide an idea of the meaning of control and domination.<sup>44</sup> I know that ordinary Canadians do not know the extent of the oppression to which Native people were subjected.

#### Farming as an Alternative Economic Activity

The loss of the traditional livelihood of prairie indigenous peoples called for some form of alternative economic activities. The one activity which was suitable for the prairies was farming. Historically, there have been conflicting reports on whether Native people were willing to farm or not. Sarah Carter confirms that many Native people were willing to try farming in order to

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<sup>43</sup> The term "reservation" is used mainly in the United States, while the term "reserve" is used in Canada.

<sup>44</sup> My research revealed that the attack on indigenusness occurred in numerous ways, in fact too numerous to document here; therefore I am using a few examples which I believe demonstrate the extent of control that the government was able to exert on the lives of Indian people.

feed themselves. But while they were willing, the "government, more than anything else, undermined their success" (Carter:1990).<sup>45</sup> Carter, in her text, *Lost Harvests, Prairie Indian Reserve Farmers and Government Policy*, conducted a comprehensive study of the agricultural practices on Western reserves. It is not the purpose of this study to explore the issue of agriculture, but to explore government policy as creating dependency in many instances. Noel Dyck writes about the control given to Indian agents in their administration of Indian reserves. The belief that the Department was acting in the best interest of the Native people made it impossible for the officials to question the effectiveness of their programs (Dyck:1991). The positivistic ideology underlying government actions and policies cannot be stressed enough. Jerry Paquette writes:

The same positivist faith in "progress" and in the superiority, rightness and immutability of the values and beliefs underlying western-European cultures and lifestyles, also led to the development of the extreme paternalism and eurocentrism of the late European colonialism...So strong was the belief that the values underlying the western European cultures were self-evident that any questioning of them was regarded as irrational (Paquette:1986:50).

These beliefs underlie the view of the "white man's burden," because the whiteman assumed the responsibility of looking after

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<sup>45</sup> Carter notes that most Indian people have been agriculturists, and that "agricultural products accounted for 75 per cent of food consumed by North American Indians (Carter:1990:37)." See also the text *Aboriginal Resource Use in Canada, Historical and Legal Aspects*, edited by Kerry Abel and Jean Friesen (Abel and Friesen:1991) for a comprehensive study of a variety of economic activities by Native people.

the affairs of "primitive" and "backwards" people and of educating them to adopt the patently superior values, cultures and languages of western Europe (Paquette:1986:50). This explains why the failure of programs was attributed to the degenerative character or inability of Native people to know what was good for them.<sup>46</sup> Government attitudes were a mixture of benevolency and 'blame the victim' ideology. That is, government officials stated that they were working in the best interests of the Indian people, and saw them as ungrateful whenever they expressed concerns (Dyck:1991). Writers such as Sarah Carter and Arthur J. Ray provide documentation of the way Indian Affairs policies led to the failure of agricultural programs on the reserves. For instance, Arthur J. Ray describes a farm program initiated by the Indian Commissioner, Hayter Reed, in 1888 which turned out to be a dismal failure. Ray discusses the various strategies devised by Reed. Firstly, his strategy was to attempt to make Indian families self-supporting but he also wanted to ensure that they would not compete with whites. Secondly, Reed decided that Indian farmers should make their own simple equipment and "produce their food without the aid of machinery" (Ray:1996:256). Reed was concerned that the use of machinery would encourage Indians to pool their resources to buy the

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<sup>46</sup> Noel Dyck writes: "With a remarkable degree of sincerity, generation after generation of 'tutors' have mounted programs to deliver Indians from the stigma and vulnerability, poverty and misery associated with Indianness in the Euro-Canadian mind. What is more, despite sustained efforts, the task of Euro-Canadian tutelage - to save Indians from themselves - has become a never-ending one" (Dyck:1991:24).

machines and this would undermine the department's goal of promoting individualism (Ray:1996:256). Ray reports that most Indian agents found the plan ludicrous, but Reed refused to change his policies. Reed also used amendments to the *Indian Act* to prohibit Indians from selling grain, crops, or other produce without obtaining permission from the local agent or farm instructor.<sup>47</sup> The intent of this section is to demonstrate the extent of the power of the Department of Indian Affairs and to reveal the lack of control by Native people over their own lives. What needs to be explored are the long-term effects of the subordinate/dominant relationship between Native people and the department. For instance, we need to explore its role in the creation of apathy, loss of self-esteem, and a lack of belief in one's ability - problems that are found in many Native communities.

#### The attack on Native cultures and religious traditions

Augies Fleras argued that the *Indian Act* suppressed aboriginal languages, cultures and identity (Fleras:1996:156). How did this happen at the community level? The following is an account of actions taken by government administrators and Indian agents in the suppression of Native cultures and religious activities. What is shocking is the role of the Government of

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<sup>47</sup> Ray writes that initially the regulation was used to protect Indians from unscrupulous whites, but Reed's hidden agenda was to limit "Indian participation in the budding commercial economy" (Ray:1996:257).

Canada and the general public in the violation of the cultural and religious rights of Native people. Gregory Cajete provides a concept which explains the effects of attacks on the cultural and religious beliefs of a people. He states: "Ethnostress is primarily a result of a psychological response pattern that stems from the disruption of a cultural life and belief system that one cares about deeply" (Cajete:1994:189). Significantly, the long term effects of ethnostress result in "community disintegration, declining health, inadequate education, and in the rates of alcoholism, suicide, and a host of other self-destructive behaviors, including child abuse" (Cajete:1994:189).<sup>48</sup>

We, as Native people, are now living in a post-colonial world, where forms of domination are not as visible as they once were. This is attested to by the way Native people are able to engage in Native religious activities such as Sundances, Pow-Wows, and Giveaways. Likewise, Native people in British Columbia are now able to hold 'potlatches.' These ceremonies and dances are central to the spiritual-based cultures of indigenous peoples.<sup>49</sup> But there was a time when participation in these cultural spiritual activities meant jail terms. In 1884, an

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<sup>48</sup> Cajete writes that when the realities of ethnostress are not dealt with people act out "its too familiar effects." "We do this by perpetuating dysfunctional relationships, divisive behavior, cynicism, mistrusting our own thinking, and other forms of self-invalidation, both of ourselves and of our culture" (Cajete:1994:190).

<sup>49</sup> Geoffrey York explains that "Many traditional Indian dances and ceremonies--recognized as a vital element in the Native cultural and spiritual identity--were outlawed as a result of amendments to the Indian Act in 1884 and 1885. Sun dances, thirst dances, potlatches, and other (aboriginal) ceremonies (which were banned) were finally legalized in 1951 (York:1990:264).

amendment to the Indian Act outlawed the celebration of the potlatch and the 'Tamanawas dance' (Titley:1986:163). In time, the ban was extended to the Western provinces, in the prohibition of the Sun dance of the Blackfoot and the thirst dance of the Crees because they were "perceived as the major obstacles to progress in that part of the country" (Titley:1986:164). The prohibition of these dances and giveaways was the result of the actions of missionaries who "viewed them with utter contempt," considering them to be aspects of heathenism and superstition (Titley:1986).<sup>50</sup> They were readily supported by the government officials who felt that they interfered with the budding agricultural process. Brian Titley writes about the extreme measures taken to prevent the Native people from indulging in their ceremonial dances. For instance, all activities by the Native people were under constant surveillance by the Indian agents and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police.<sup>51</sup> Titley writes about the collaboration between government officials and missionaries, who would have discussions on what activities should be allowed. Although it was difficult to enforce the prohibition, some Native people did get incarcerated.<sup>52</sup> The

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<sup>50</sup> R.J. Devrome writes that as late as 1943 there were attempts to stop the holding of a Sundance at the Joseph Bigstone Reserve (Devrome:1991:82).

<sup>51</sup> On the other hand, Native people found ways to continue with their dancing and ceremonies which had gone "underground."

<sup>52</sup> One was an old Indian man who was over ninety years old, feeble and almost blind; the NWMP decided to release him (Titley:1988:168).

'powers-that-be' decided that even modern dances should not be allowed because they were injurious to the health of the Native people.<sup>53</sup> Even sports activities were considered a problem, and, Titley writes, it looked like "the Indians were not to be allowed any recreation whatsoever (Titley:1988:170). Through reading Titley's account we now can see the power of the Indian agents in the 1920's.<sup>54</sup> When promoters of agricultural fairs began to request the attendance of Indian people in their ceremonial outfits, the Indian agents were shocked. Besides the fact that Indians might indulge in lewd behavior, the officials felt that Indians in feathers and beads might give the wrong image to the outside world. Thus they also decided to ban the wearing of traditional outfits and made it an offence. There was an ongoing battle between the promoters of fairs and the Indian Affairs Department, and what emerged is that participation of Native people outside the reserve was strictly regimented; the permission of the Department was required.

Other strategies were considered by the government. For reasons of its own, the government was reluctant to allow Native people leave their reserves. Therefore, it was decided that the

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<sup>53</sup> When the Commissioner learned that modern dances which included 'two-step' and square dances had been permitted in a certain reserve, he was incensed, and asserted that "All activities from polkas to power-wows were injurious to the health of the Indians. He asked for the names of those who were holding dances and demanded to know if they were on the ration list" (Titley:1988:180).

<sup>54</sup> See also Harold Cardinal's article "Hat in Hand" in his text *The Unjust Society, The Tragedy of Canada's Indians* (Cardinal:1969) for a poignant illustration of the power of the agent and the subjugation of Indian people.

Native people would have to obtain a pass from the Indian agent every time they wanted to leave the reserve. A powerful deterrent for resistance was the withholding of funds for food or rations at a time when Native people were dependent on the government. Part of the treaty provisions was that the government would support the Native people in time of need. The question here is what effects the suppression of cultural activities had on the Native people. Native people were constantly bombarded with the message that they were inferior. It has been found that this kind of oppression creates self-hate in the people, and they begin to internalize the messages that they are inferior. Frantz Fanon's work is valuable because he extended colonialism analysis to the "processes of consciousness and the psychological mechanisms produced by colonialism" (Zahar:1974:xxi). Eduardo and Bonnie Duran also write that literature on health problems of Native American people "demonstrates that the genesis of the problems are found in the area of psychological dysfunction (Duran & Duran:1995:23)." Duran & Duran provide a very useful description of the reactions to genocidal assault:

Once a group of people have been assaulted in a genocidal fashion, there are psychological ramifications. With the victims's complete loss of power comes despair, and the psyche reacts by internalizing what appears to be genuine power - the power of the oppressor...(Duran & Duran:1995:29).

Duran & Duran explain that internalized hatred results in

suicide, and externalized self-hatred results in violence. The violence is directed against other Native people. Probably the most destructive form of oppression was the removal of children from their homes and keeping them in residential schools for long periods. In most instances, the children were kept in the schools from September until June. This is the subject of discussion in the next chapter. There are other issues which need to be explored but this is beyond the mandate of this study. These are the high incarceration rates of Native people and the way children were taken from their homes and placed in white foster homes (Armitage:1995; Johnston:1983).

#### Resistance by Native people

The issue of resistance by Native people is an issue that needs to be addressed. Some writers have attempted to focus on resistance by Native people in an attempt to insert a positive slant on Native experience. But I found that this approach minimizes the real issue of the power relations inherent in Native reality (Miller:1991; Haig-Brown:1988). It is true that Native people were not passive victims that they resisted in various ways throughout the colonial period. And while they were able to exert influence in many areas, they did not achieve "universal power" as it is defined by Jose Rabasa. Rabasa states that although it has been argued that the master depends on the slave, in the end Hegel dismisses the independence of the slave. Hegel dismissed this form of independence as "a piece of

cleverness which has mastery within a certain range, but not over the universal power nor over the entire objective reality" (Rabasa:1990:204). What is important is the term "universal power" which, in this paper, means relations of ruling. Peter McLaren provides useful arguments in his critique against radical theories of resistance which romanticize "the culture of the poor," but which do not consider how the culture has also has been colonized by the dominant ideology "replete with its differences and contradictions." Therefore, they fail "to analyze how power is lived in everyday, practical experience" (McLaren:1988:221).<sup>55</sup> McLaren articulates what has been lacking in Native literature, that is, the means to interrogate the way 'power is lived in the everyday lives of Native people.'

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<sup>55</sup>An example is given by McLaren who argues, "Theories of resistance often miss the connection between literacy and sexuality and the manner in which sexual domination reproduced as literacy is lived through the gendered practices of the family and society" (McLaren:1988:221). Feminist scholars such as Dorothy Smith have developed theories which take into consideration the way the everyday lived experience is determined by the relations of ruling (Smith:1987). As I try to show in this study, these perspectives are also relevant for the analysis of how race informs social practice.

## CHAPTER V

### HISTORICAL COLONIAL INDIGENOUS EDUCATION

*The most crucial aspect of resisting hegemony consists in struggling against its attempt to form one's subjectivity, for it is through the construction of the minority subject that the dominant culture can elicit the individual's own help in his/her oppression. One of the most powerful weapons in the hands of the oppressor is the mind of the oppressed; without control of the latter's mind the dominant culture can enforce compliance only through the constant use of brute force (JanMohamed:1987:247).*

Until the 1970's the Federal government had complete control over the education of indigenous people residing on reserves in Canada. The control of education was one aspect of a historical colonialism which had the power to control all aspects of the internal and external life of Native people. A brief review of this period will demonstrate that the way colonial schooling was imposed on the Native population resulted not only in a social and cultural dislocation of Native people, and the destruction of Native cultures and languages, but was also responsible for creating social, educational, and economic inequality. The focus of this study is to explore educational institutions and practices as being part of a larger hegemonic system. This type of schooling needs to be conceptualized as the mechanism for obliterating all vestiges of Native cultures and languages. In this context, all members of Native communities were implicated in one form or another; the effects were generated intergenerationally. The ideological, legal, political and economic oppression of Native people was made possible by

marginalization and exclusion based on race.

The formal education of Native people became institutionalized in the late nineteenth century.<sup>1</sup> It was a period when the main mechanism for educating Native children was the institution of residential schools. This section also discusses the integration period, a time when Native children were integrated into provincial schools. Although the integration policies were developed within a reform framework, education was still under the control of the federal government.<sup>2</sup> Native people did not begin to take part in educational decision-making until the 1970's. The study of the residential school and integration period, a period when the government had total control, is integral to understanding the marginalization and disadvantaged status of Native people today. Native people have been described as "the most disadvantaged peoples in Canada as defined by major socio-economic indicators such as education, employment, and occupational status" (Silverman & Nielson:1992:7). Marianne Nielson cites the grim statistics:

Considering that 80% of Native young people drop out of school before completion, this means that a young Native boy

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<sup>1</sup> There were various efforts to educate Native people before this period; in fact David G. Perley writes that Native people were subjected to "colonial patterns of education long before Canadian Confederation in 1867. The emergence of a dominant-subordinate relationship and an accompanying racist ideology can be seen in education efforts as early as the 17th century" (Perley:1993:122). See also Miller (1996) for a brief history of these schools.

<sup>2</sup> David G. Perley writes that the "movement toward day schools, and finally the movement toward school integration served to reinforce the larger societal relationship of dependency, and thus could be said to reinforce the colonial relationship" (Perley:1993:123).

has a much better chance of being arrested before he turns 18 than he does of graduating from high school (Silverman & Nielson:1992:4).

Until recently, the role of the residential schools and provincial integration in the creation of underdevelopment, dependency, and the social and cultural alienation of Native people has not been acknowledged. In the literature and studies which are now emerging, colonial schooling is blamed for failing to prepare Native students for survival in their own communities and for participation in mainstream society (AFN:1994; Barman:1996).<sup>3</sup> As will be discussed, this failure was the result of ambivalent and contradictory goals underlying government assimilation policies.

#### RESIDENTIAL SCHOOLS - AN UNFINISHED BUSINESS<sup>4</sup>

Native leader Harold Cardinal wrote in 1969 that, before European contact, Native people had their own system of education. He wrote:

Although the system was entirely informal and varied from tribe to tribe or location to location, it had one great factor going for it--it worked. The Indian method, entirely pragmatic, was designed to prepare the child for whatever way of life he was to lead--hunter, fisherman, warrior, chief, medicine man or wife and mother (Cardinal:1969:52).

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<sup>3</sup> It is to their credit that many Native people have been able to transcend marginalization and attain an education as individuals, but this does not change the intent and purpose of colonialism.

<sup>4</sup> This was the term used by a Native man in a discussion of residential schools; he articulated the essence of these schools, because the problem is that the effects of these schools have not been dealt with.

With the advent of changes wrought by European contact Native leaders incorporated the provision of educational programs for their people. Native leaders negotiated for formal schooling which would prepare their people for life in the new era. While formal school can play a legitimate role in the transmission of knowledge and culture, the way it was defined and imposed on Native people was extremely destructive for Native cultures and the people themselves. This is the theme which emerges in this historical exploration of the early colonial period.

For approximately one hundred years, the Federal government had the power to remove Native children from their homes and communities in order to "educate the savageness from them" (Tobias:1991:136; AFN:1994:106). The colonial administrators felt that removing the children from their homes at a young age would remove them from the evil influences of their 'savage' parents (Tobias:1991:136).<sup>5</sup> An ideology which viewed indigenous cultures as inferior and barbaric provided justification for removing these children in order to 'civilize' and 'christianize' them. While other educational measures had been tried, the residential school became the ideal institution for this task.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> R.J. Devrome provides evidence of the derogatory view of Native people and elders. Derome reports that Native people were described as "pagan," and elders were called "old men pagans" (Devrome:1991:78).

<sup>6</sup> Historian J.R. Miller writes that residential schools as the central institutions of social policy were affirmed in Canada by the Bagot Commission in 1842 (Miller:1989:108).

These residential schools, which have been categorized as "total institutions," are now held responsible not only for destroying the cultural identity and languages of its Native students, but, in many instances, subjecting them to physical, emotional, psychological, and sexual abuses (AFN:1994).<sup>7</sup> Evidence exists which reveals that these schools destroyed the foundation of the community, i.e., the family unit. Native children and their parents were robbed of a "cultural legacy of child rearing" as children were removed at a tender age, an age when children require nurturing and learning from their parents (Ing:1991). As students they were also separated from their own kin, male from female relatives, and by age groups. An elder attributes the lack of closeness of some kin members to this system of separating them at a young age (Neel:1992).<sup>8</sup> We are seeing the ramifications of this period in family breakdown; family violence and abuse; high suicide and incarceration rates; and high dropout rates in education (AFN:1994; RCAP:1995). The issue of residential schooling is very relevant today as instances of abuse in residential schools are finally emerging, and in many

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<sup>7</sup> The term "total institution" is used in Erving Goffman's text *Asylums: Essays on the Social Institution of Mental Patients and Other Inmates* (New York: Anchor Books:1961). Native authors have found this term useful for describing residential schools. See (Chrisjohn & Young:1994; Persson:1986:152; Assembly of First Nations:1994).

<sup>8</sup> In an interview, Chief Saul Terry stated: "We, as children, were not only being separated from our parents, but separated from one another--boys on one side and girls on the other side. And the junior boys were separated from the older boys, so you were further isolated from your brothers and sisters. I guess what happened is we all grew up as strangers to one another" (Neel:1992:92).

instances are being dealt with through court cases.

Contrasting aboriginal practices with the practices in residential schools demonstrates how traumatic and devastating the colonial practice of removing young children from their families and forcing them into alien forms of schooling would have been for young children.<sup>9</sup> Through previous studies I found that, while pre-contact indigenous communities had different cultural traditions, they shared a common world view which was based on a respect for all beings, species, and the environment.<sup>10</sup> The family, as it was manifested in an extended family system, was central to the social organization of the community. Studies exist which document the importance of the family, the mother, and the children to aboriginal survival (Solomon:1990). According to traditional teachings, the family and kinship networks were the most important institutions in Native communities. Native communities were "structured around the unique inter-relationships that exist among family, extended family, clan, band, and tribe" (Lucas:1989, cited in

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<sup>9</sup> I use the word "force" here even though some parents were willing to send their children to these schools. I do not think that is the issue. The issue is that so much of the trauma is not immediately apparent, because the damage was psychological. Many young children were not able to figure out what was happening, some never did, and it took years of healing before the extent of the damage was realized. Many Native people went through years when they were alcoholics, and some were fortunate to transcend their trauma. This pattern emerged in studies of this period, and specifically in my conversations with a Native man who is now a successful artist.

<sup>10</sup> This research, which is unpublished, was part of my work for my Master's Degree. In this work I explored Native culture and was able to formulate a world view shared by indigenous peoples (See Perrott:1989).

Ing:1991:81). Kinship structures which were based on a network of valued relationships were one of the most important organizations in Native culture (Lewis:1970, cited in Ing:1991:81). Respect for all individuals young or old was the key principle of aboriginal philosophy. Children were treated with respect and as "gifts" from the creator (AFN:1994:59). Early explorers and missionaries noted that children were loved and given freedom and autonomy (Ross:1996:44;Miller:1996:44).<sup>11</sup>

Schooling in the Native world was a lifelong learning process. Knowledge was also a shared resource which was acquired cooperatively (Stairs:1993:88). Aboriginal learning has been described as a 'natural process' where the learning and teaching ensured cultural continuity, by ensuring the well-being of the individual, the family, the community and the people as a whole (Armstrong:1987). The holistic orientation was reflected in a learning process which endorsed a balance between the mental, spiritual, emotional and physical well-being of community members. An important characteristic of Native learning was that it was experiential; people learned by observing and doing (Miller:1996). Another important characteristic is that underlying the learning process was a determination not to interfere in the development of the child who was thought to be

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<sup>11</sup> Rupert Ross cites an explorer, David Thompson, noting the extent of love and protection given to native children and that they were "the healthy centre of a strong and caring society" (Ross:1996:44).

guided by its own 'spirit.' Through the dynamic process of the cultural environment and guidance, the children themselves determined the way they would develop through observation and learning.

Traditional education has been described as encompassing the three "L's", i.e., looking, listening and learning (Miller:1996:16). Moreover, instruction was infused with a deeply ingrained spirituality, an invariable tendency to relate the material to the spiritual realm (Miller:1996:16). The reports by Native children of their first initiation in residential schools is shock and bewilderment. They were young children who spoke only their own indigenous language, but, in many cases, they were prevented from speaking that language, yet had no knowledge of the English language. It will be demonstrated that the government, guided by its ideological orientation, had no qualms in removing the Native children. Government officials rationalized their actions by assertions that the policies were necessary for Native people to learn to live with modern society. No one can disagree that Native people had to learn to live in modern society; the problem is the way it was done. As Armitage argues, the policies of assimilation were nothing less than "primarily an expression of the racist and colonial nature of the immigrant societies" (Armitage:1995).

#### History of Colonial Education

A starting point of this study is to establish the

educational goals and objectives of, one, the colonial government of the nineteenth century and, two, the indigenous nations who signed treaties in Western Canada. A review of these goals and objectives is important because they reveal two opposing views of Native reality that underly the Canadian/Native relationship. Treaties did not gain significance until the signing of Western treaties (Tobias:1991; Wildcat:1995; Price:1987). Treaties have a special significance to the First Nations in the Western provinces such as Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and Alberta. (Only one or two treaties were signed in British Columbia). For instance, Native leader Harold Cardinal categorizes a treaty as an "Indian Magna Carta" (Cardinal:1969:28). The following quote is informative because Cardinal presents a perspective of how Native people viewed themselves and their claims to sovereignty in a way which is completely different from the way the colonial administrators saw them. Cardinal wrote:

The treaties are important to us, because we entered into these negotiations with faith, with hope for a better life with honour...Our people talked with the government representatives, not as beggars pleading for handouts, but as men with something to offer in return for rights they expected. To our people, this was the beginning of a contractual relationship whereby the representatives of the queen would have lasting responsibilities to the Indian people in return for the valuable lands that were ceded to them (Cardinal:1969: page 28-29).

To the Plains First Nations, the treaties were also important because they established the "federal government's legal and moral responsibility for providing treaty Indian education"

(Wildcat:1995:14). Three Treaties were signed in Alberta, Treaties 6, 7 & 8. Treaty No. 6 is of special importance because it instructs the federal government to open and maintain schools in Indian reserves whenever the Indians of that region would ask for it (Littlechild:1995:8;Daniels:1973;Price:1979).<sup>12</sup>

A significant feature of the First Nations/Government relationship is that there has never been a consensus on the interpretation of the Treaties and associated responsibilities (Price:1987). For instance, when the First Nations signed treaties they envisioned a partnership with the government in the education of Native children. The signers of the treaties saw education as a means of preparing their children for a new way of life, but not at the cost of their culture and identity (Cardinal:1992;Dickason:1992). The differing objectives and interpretations laid the groundwork for the conflict and resistance which has characterized the Native/Canadian relationship in the last few hundred years. What Native people could not foresee was that the administrators had their own view of Native people, and under the colonial perspective there could not be a partnership. This is probably why Native leader Harold Cardinal concluded, "Our leaders mistakenly thought they were dealing with an honourable people who would do no less than the

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<sup>12</sup> Cardinal writes that the Indians involved in the signing of Treaty Six (The Plain and Wood Cree tribes in Saskatchewan and Alberta) surrendered land comprising an approximate area of 121,000 square miles (Cardinal:1969:32).

Indians were doing--bind themselves, bind their people and bind their heirs to honourable contracts" (Cardinal:1969:29). As will be shown, the dominant ideology of colonial governments was based on a non-acceptance of Native cultures and education was to be used as a tool for assimilation.<sup>13</sup> James A. Banks defines *assimilation* as occurring when an ethnic or cultural group "gives up its characteristics and adopts those of another group" (Banks:1994:56). Banks also discusses *acculturation* as the process that occurs when the characteristics of the group are changed through interaction with another cultural or ethnic group. Banks states that "the interacting groups exchange cultural characteristics; both are changed in the process (Banks:1994:56). But acculturation, as defined by Banks, did not occur. Instead the assimilation policy of the Canadian government was to eliminate all traces of Native cultures, and force Native people to accept Western European cultures, beliefs, languages, and norms and values. Beginning in the 1970's, this was modified, but it can be demonstrated that assimilation ideology continues to influence government policy to this day (Rotman:1996).

### The Establishment of Residential Schools

The role of missionaries in the colonial process has been

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<sup>13</sup> David Wallace Adams makes a useful observation on the contradictions inherent in government policy in the United States. He states that government held "two conflicting visions of the Indian's future: one, that Indians as a race were doomed to extinction, and two, that Indians were capable of being "civilized" and assimilated into White society" (Adams:1988:1).

well documented (Thomas:1994; Kuklick:1993; Chrisjohn & Young:1994; Miller:1996; Grant:1984). It is now clear that their role was integral to the success of colonialism in the same way as the early anthropologists. The focus here is on the missionaries' role as administrators of residential schools but their role has to be seen as much broader. The missionaries were accused of being implicated in the genocide of indigenous peoples (Chrisjohn & Young:1994:32). The historical review by E. Brian Titley leaves no doubt of this in his review of the missionaries' role in pressuring the government to ban religious ceremonies (Titley:1986). Missionaries have been, and still are, a divisive force among the indigenous peoples. Religious diversity has split Native families, making it difficult for them to agree on goals for decolonization, for instance.<sup>14</sup>

The history of the early education of the First Nations is dominated by the activities of missionary groups (Grant:1994; Devrome:1991). John Webster Grant provides a definitive study of the activities of Christian missionaries among the indigenous peoples of Canada over a span of 450 years from 1534 to the present. Grant writes about the various denominations which became the key players in the administration of residential schools. He also writes about the struggle for control by the

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<sup>14</sup> An example is in my own family where out of three sisters, you find one is a fundamentalist Christian, one is a Catholic, and I follow the traditional way.

various churches, and how the educational fate of Native people became caught up in this struggle (See also Devrome:1991). Their involvement facilitated the institutionalization of formal schooling in residential schools on the Prairies in the 19th century.

Residential schools which had their origins in the West became the models for other Native schools across Canada (Miller:1996). After experimenting with other forms of education in eastern Canada, the Canadian government commissioned a study of American Native schools. The 1879 *Davin* Study found that residential schools were the ideal institutions for assimilation because it meant that the children could be removed from their homes and communities (Barman, Hebert, & McCaskill:1986:6). The Davin report recommended that the schools be operated by missionaries since they had already demonstrated their commitment to "civilizing" Canada's Indians (Barman, Hebert, & McCaskill:1986:6). These schools were effective because they were operated as "total institutions." Diane Persson, in her study of the Blue Quills school in Alberta, offers a useful description of the nature of these institutions:

Blue Quills can be described as a total institution, or a place of living and working where a large number of people in a similar situation are cut off from the wider society and live in an enclosed, formally administered setting. The two worlds of a total institution--the residents and the staff--are characterized by differences in power and in mechanisms by which conflict is regulated. When pupils entered the residential school, they underwent admission procedures designed to dispossess them of their previous

roles and isolate them from the reserve world  
(Persson:1986:152).

Most of these schools were located away from Native communities, while a few were located within the reserves. By 1900 the missionaries, with the support of the government, were operating sixty-one residential schools with a total enrolment of 3,257 First Nations students. For the next fifty years the majority of First Nations students attended these schools (Watson & Gooderham:1984).

### Meaning and Significance of Residential Schools for First Nations

Residential schools have a special significance in the consciousness of the First Nations because they were the principal means by which Native cultures, traditions, families, and communities were undermined or destroyed. Diane Longboat explains that education was an "important element in an overall policy of assimilation." It was a means of:

replacing Native languages, religions, history and cultural traditions, values, and worldviews with those of the European settler nations...Education has worked as an agent of colonial subjugation with the long term objective of weakening Indian nations by causing the children to lose sight of their identities, history, and spiritual knowledge (Longboat:1987:23).

As stated before, the phenomenon of residential schools is being explored by several studies, and this, in turn, has raised important issues and conflicts. An important study was conducted for the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples by Roland D. Chrisjohn & Sherri L. Young (1994). The study is based on

consultations held on this subject, and includes testimonies of victims of these schools, as well as rationalizations by church groups.<sup>15</sup> This study demonstrates that the issue of residential schooling is characterized by complexity, misinformation, and confusion. This study is extremely useful because it attempts to clarify issues which are fundamental to the complex phenomenon of residential schools. The authors feel that the First Nations need to view residential school experiences as being part of the larger context of colonial practice.

Personal testimony by First Nations has become very important in Native literature, but the authors warn that there is a need to go beyond personal experience and recognize the political forces which underlie the relationship between Native people and the Canadian State. The need to "problematize" residential schools is becoming crucial because of the determination to minimize the impact of these schools by church groups who are also attempting to blame "a few bad apples", individuals who do not reflect the good work by the rest of the religious community.<sup>16</sup> It is also important to recognize that

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<sup>15</sup> A phenomenon associated with residential schools is the activities by church groups who would like to either suppress discussion, or else minimize the damage that occurred. An example is an article published by *The Edmonton Journal*, on November 9, 1993, with the headline, *Churches meant well with natives, Assimilation of aboriginals felt to be 'Christian responsibility, they say*. In the article the church groups, in their submissions to the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, acknowledged European colonizers had tried to assimilate the Native population--*but with the best of intentions* (italics mine). I am concerned that the churches also want to play a part in the healing process.

<sup>16</sup> Julian Henriques discusses a "rotten apple" theory of racism which I think is a useful explanatory concept (cited in McCarthy & Crichlow:1993:128).

Native people do not agree on the destructiveness of these schools. Many people feel that they benefitted from them, and many of them would rather not deal with the past. But it is becoming more difficult to ignore the realities of these schools because of the continuing revelations of horrendous abuse which occurred in some of these schools. For instance, at the moment, there is conflict among Native people in the Fort Albany area on whether to prosecute religious people who are accused of multiple instances of all kinds of abuses.<sup>17</sup> Full-scale inquiries into residential schools have been called for by Native leaders, but they have been ignored by the government. Systematic studies of these schools need to be conducted by Native scholars - the study by (Chrisjohn & Young:1994) is a good beginning. These studies would critically analyze the meaning and implications of the residential school system for contemporay experiences.

#### The Nature of Schooling at Residential Schools

Until 1945, Indian schooling was carried out in isolation from mainstream society. Education policies were based on a "paternalistic ideology" from 1867 to 1945 (Hawthorn Report, 1967, cited in Frideres:1988:172). And the period from approximately 1945 was characterized by an "open door" policy which translated into the integration of Native students into

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<sup>17</sup> See The Globe & Mail, 1996. This would make a good case study because it has all the elements of a colonized community.

provincial schools. The paternalistic nature of government policy was supported by the missionaries who, for their own purposes, preferred to isolate Native students as a means of protecting them from the evil influence of Western society.<sup>18</sup> The interests of the missionaries are usually seen as separate from those of the government officials, but a focus on the social relations reveals that they are products of the same society. Although the needs of the missionaries to christianize their charges were predominant, they also believed that these cultures were inferior and had to be exterminated, and, therefore, in time they would become extinct. In the meantime, the missionaries wanted to keep the 'Natives' separate from the rest of Western society (Frideres:1988:173).

Although a study of this period of Native education is crucial for many reasons, the focus here is to demonstrate that a combination of factors made it impossible for the students to gain a decent education. Evidence is now emerging which reveals that educational policies were not only genocidal, but were designed to ensure that Native students would not compete with the white population. Native education advocate Jean Barman reveals that Native students were being schooled not for assimilation but for inequality (Barman:1996:273). She found

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<sup>18</sup> For instance, Barman provides examples of how the nuns attempted to keep young Native women from the evil influence of white men they considered to be of the "lowest type". The nuns preferred to keep these young women "on the reserves, in their homes, [where] they will not be in the way of temptation" (Barman:1996:120).

that while the federal government was maintaining the illusion of assimilation, "the DIA was ensuring the failure of aboriginal peoples to compete socially or intellectually with their white neighbours" (Barman:1996:281). It can be argued that, if assimilation was the fate of Native people, then at least they could have learned some skills which would enable them to participate in the dominant society. As it was, they were excluded from any participation in the dominant society. The contradictions in government policy can be understood when we see the government dilemma underlying these policies. For instance, the principle of *protection* meant isolating Native people on reserves, but the officials found that this undermined their efforts of assimilation because it prevented Native interaction with mainstream society. The goals of assimilation called for the training of Native people to be industrious and self-supporting in the Western European sense, but this enabled them to compete with white people. The welfare and well-being of the Western Europeans was foremost in the minds of colonial officials as they sent briefs to Ottawa in 1901 assuring the officials that "Nothing that we propose doing for the Indian is going to injure the prospects of the white labourer" (Barman:1986:130).

## The Nature of residential schooling - "The Buckskin Ceiling"<sup>19</sup>

The type of schooling provided by residential schools was not found elsewhere except in other colonized countries. The significant feature of these schools is that they were under the control of a non-Native government and non-Native administrators. As wards of the State, it was felt that Native people did not know what was good for them (Rotman:1996). One of the factors relevant to this study is the quality of education Native children were able to acquire from these institutions. We now know that they did not receive an education relating to their culture and languages. Therefore, we need to look at how their schooling would have prepared them for future participation in their society and in mainstream society. Among the many problems confronting Native people in attempting to gain control of their own education in the 1970's was a lack of experience and knowledge of the existing education system (Pauls:1984; Wyatt:1978-79; King:1987). As will be discussed in a later chapter the worst problem was the lack of models which would guide them in the the development of band-controlled schools and of curriculum which was based on traditional cultural systems. Linda Bull, in her study of residential schools, found that a major problem was "the lack of experience in the analysis of

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<sup>19</sup> This is used by J.R. Miller, who explains that "Within a half-day system of academic learning and vocational training there was always a 'buckskin ceiling' over the heads of the Native students. This ceiling was the practical, vocationally oriented instruction (Miller:1996:158)."

problems that leads to decision-making" (Bull:1991:5). She found that this was the result of institutionalized schooling where children were not allowed to take part in the decision-making (Bull:1991:5).

The philosophy of the schooling of Native children was a mixture of the ideological orientation of the Department of Indian Affairs, the concern for the interests of the non-Native population, and the religious interests of the missionaries. As mentioned before, an important objective was to ensure that 'educated' Native people would not compete with the neighbouring whites. The government and the missionaries were in agreement that the Native students should be educated "along the lines of the physical rather than the mental" (Barman:1996:281). The missionaries' dominant interest was the 'christianization' of the students who they considered 'heathen.' Government officials developed rationalizations for the substandard education. For instance, the simplification of the curriculum was to ensure that the children would not be educated "above the possibility of their station," that creating a distaste for their home environment would be injurious to them and a waste of money (Barman:1986:120).<sup>20</sup> Schooling, then, while providing practical skills to permit the Native students entry into mainstream

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<sup>20</sup> The contradictions in the attitudes of the colonizers must be noted. The underlying belief was that the people were savage and therefore inferior. Therefore they had to be transformed through schooling. And yet whenever it suited the administrators they argued that the Native students had to be kept at home. The result was that many Native children became alienated from their own communities and cultures, and yet they could not survive in white society either (NIB:1973; AFN:1988; Barman:1996).

society, would be only "at the lowest rungs" to ensure "it did not challenge the status quo" (Barman:1996:281).

The government used missionary groups to administer residential schools while it assumed financial responsibility. According to existing literature, the government was notorious for its parsimonious attitude (Barman:1996; Miller:1996). The financial resources that the missionaries received were far below the amount given to non-Native schools. The parsimonious attitude of the government in funding the residential schools set the stage for the substandard conditions (Barman:1996; Dyck:1991). In fact, J.R. Miller categorized their approach to schooling as "*cheap and simple*" (Miller:1996:158). The missionaries had the freedom to administer the schools, but they were also accountable to the government. The schools were expected to generate their own resources and become as self-sufficient as possible. A Department of Indian Affairs annual report stated that the residential schools across the country were "largely supplemented by the missionary society" (Barman:1996:285).

The pedagogical role of residential schools has been categorized as a failure because they prepared Native students neither for life in their own communities, nor for participating in mainstream society (NIB:1973; AFN:1988; Barman:1996). Barman argues that one of the main reasons for failure of these schools is the amount of time students spent in the classrooms. She

states:

... despite a curriculum in federal schools that paralleled the curriculum in provincial schools where other Canadian children were educated, aboriginal children were allotted less time in the classroom than were their non-aboriginal counterparts" (Barman:1996:274).<sup>21</sup>

Residential schools used the provincial curriculum, but, as the DIAND reported, "special emphasis is placed on language, reading, domestic science, manual training and agriculture"

(Miller:1996:155). J.R. Miller alludes to the "*buckskin ceiling*", i.e., government officials made it clear that the instruction would be practical and vocationally oriented (Miller:1996:158). In time, the government officials decided that education for boys would focus on learning farming, stock-raising, logging, fishing, and hunting and trapping (Miller:1996:158). While this type of learning might be suitable for the James Bay area, parents in The Pas region of Manitoba protested that "they did not send their children to school to be taught to hunt, trap, and fish" (Miller:1996:158).

A major problem that confronted the missionaries was the shortage of funding which greatly determined the type of teachers they could hire. J.R. Miller writes that a fundamental problem was "poorly prepared and untrained staff" (Miller:1996:318). The lack of funds was a factor in the reluctance of missionaries to

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<sup>21</sup> This information is relevant to the discussion on integrated schools to which Native children were expected to transfer; their lack of preparation would have made it extremely difficult to compete in these schools. And yet failure to be competent was seen as a sign of their inferiority as Native people.

"weed out" staff who were guilty of misconduct (Miller:1996:320). This, Miller notes, was a big factor in the incidence of physical and sexual abuse in schools. Funding was the major problem which forced the schools to accept teachers who were not well prepared for teaching, never mind teaching students from a different culture. Miller writes that, as early as the 1890's the lack of professional training for teachers was noted (Miller:1996:174). In 1967, a Canadian Welfare Council study found that more than "50% of the staff which responded to a questionnaire had less than a high school education (Canadian Welfare Council:1967:122). Native leader Harold Cardinal does not mince words when he describes schooling and teaching in those days. He reports: "The curriculum stank, and the teachers were misfits and second raters" (Cardinal:1969:54). Cardinal is speaking from experience. As a Grade Eight student he ended up teaching the class, because the person sent from Quebec could not speak English, and certainly could not speak Cree (Cardinal:1969:54). The 'blaming the victim syndrome' described by William Ryan (Ryan:1976) was reflected in the attitudes of the school administrators. Cardinal reports, when they complained about the lack of competent teachers, they were silenced by statements such as "Ungrateful little savages who don't appreciate what is being done for you" (Cardinal:1969:54). Evidence exists that obtaining good teaching staff was never a priority with the Department of Indian Affairs (Barman:1996; Miller:1996).

Practical training involved the learning of domestic skills for girls and farm chores for boys. Missionary involvement meant that students spent a great deal of time on religious matters.<sup>22</sup> Consequently, in many of the schools, half-days were devoted to learning activities, while the rest of the time was spent in religious activities, farming, and other chores. Many of the students have complained that they were not able to spend much time in school. For instance, one student testified:

We had prayers ten, twenty times a day and when we weren't praying, we were changing clothes for prayers. We prayed when we got up, we prayed before breakfast and after breakfast, and we prayed when we got to the classroom ... I lost count of how many times a day we prayed (Barman:1996:283).

A government report wrote that "an Indian girl washed, cooked, cleaned, and mended her way through residential school" (Barman:1996:286).<sup>23</sup> The boys bore the brunt of the physical work. They report that they had to get up very early in order to work at outside chores. For instance, one young man complained that he was up at five-thirty every morning "either to serve as an altar boy for Mass or to work on the farm, milking cows,

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<sup>22</sup> For instance, see the discussion by R.J. Devrome of the complaints by the teacher of the Joseph Bigstone band. The teacher complained that her classes were being disrupted by religious training. The teacher argued that "the Missionary was uncooperative and continually interfered in her teaching, by coming to the school unannounced to give religious instruction for any length of time that was convenient to him" (Devrome:1991:84). It is significant that while the Indian agent supported the teacher the Department did not, and it asserted that authority rested with the Church group. The outcome of this was that the teacher subsequently resigned over this controversy (Devrome:1991:84).

<sup>23</sup> As a residential school survivor I can attest to this; I learned domestic skills such as sewing, etc. But when I was "let out" at age sixteen, the only option I could see for myself was to work as a domestic. Fortunately, policies were changing, and through the intervention of a caring priest, my group was one of the first from that area to go on to higher education.

working in the garden" (Barman:1996:286).<sup>24</sup> Many of the boys reported having to work at "brute labour" such as cutting trees and pulling out stumps without the necessary tools that farmers would have. One unfortunate young man stated that he tried to go to school, "but there was not enough time...I went to Alert Bay for school and instead they put me in a job" (Barman:1996:286). It is true that the schools differed in the amount of chores that were carried out by the students. But it is a fact that the Department of Indian Affairs expected the residential schools to derive income from their schools and become as self-sufficient as possible.

#### The Consequences of Residential Schooling

The key question which must be explored is the meaning and significance of residential schools in the lives of Native people today. In other words, what were the effects and consequences of these schools, and how did these experiences influence the attitudes and behavior of former students who are now parents and grandparents? That is, what role do these past experiences play in the present problems of high drop-out rates, non-attendance, and in the neglect and abuse of students? Although practices in residential schools varied widely, common themes have emerged in the various literatures. Although there are Native people who

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<sup>24</sup> I know I became proficient in peeling potatoes, which the little ones had to do every day - pails of potatoes! I also remember being out in the field where we harvested potatoes and carrots. The fact is we enjoyed the activity when it was not too strenuous, but we did not realize the implications it had for our schooling.

see residential schools as beneficial, on the whole they must be seen as extremely detrimental to all Native people. These schools have to be viewed as important mechanisms for the elimination of Native cultures and languages, and therefore they can be categorized as mechanisms for genocide. In this context, Andrew Armitage writes that "removing children from their parents in order to change a people and a culture came to be recognized as an act of oppression, formally considered by the United Nations to be a type of genocide" (Armitage:1995:6).

### Language Loss

An AFN study states that the suppression of the speaking of Native languages in residential schools has contributed to the decline of many aboriginal languages (AFN:1988(1):75). The study found that less than a quarter of all aboriginal children acquire their aboriginal language as their first language. Most of the Native language speakers live in isolated northern communities (Farries:1991:4). Many children report being punished when they spoke their language. A residential school survivor interviewed in 1976 reported that she spent the first three years in residential school in silence:

So the first three years of my life were spent in silence not talking to anybody because we were punished if we spoke Cree, and this was the only way we could communicate....They never taught me to say "My name is Louise Loyie." It was just taught "Louise Loyie", I learned eventually that this was my name. At first I wasn't sure, because I had an Indian name, so it actually took me quite awhile to realize that my name was Louise... (Loyie:1976:n.p.).

Many parents have refused to teach their children the mother tongue because they did not want them to be punished like they had been. The tragedy now is the break in cultural communication between parents and children where the parent speaks Cree and the children do not understand the language.<sup>25</sup>

#### Study of Effects on Parenting

Residential schooling had profound and long-lasting effects on the families, because removing the youth from their homes struck "at the heart and soul of Indian culture" (Canada, House of Commons:1983:28). In a submission to the Special Committee on Indian Self-Government in 1983, the British Columbia Native Homemakers Club expressed its concern for the fate of the generation of former students who were now parents (Canada, House of Commons:1983:28). The Homemakers Club stated that "They are now considered by their people as the lost generation" (Canada, House of Commons:1983:28). Eduardo and Bonnie Duran also write about the destruction of Native families. They write:

The problems that we face today in the process of intervening with Native American families are problems caused by a conspiracy that was implemented over one hundred years ago (Duran & Duran:1995:28).

Duran & Duran report that the policy was so effective that many parents have to be educated on "what the concept of the family actually is" (Duran & Duran:1995:28).

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<sup>25</sup> I saw this in Native homes where the adults speak Cree and their children did not understand them. What are the implications of this?

Rosalyn Ing conducted a study on the effects of residential schools on parenting. The separation of the children from the family impacted first of all on the children, but on the parents and the community as well. The removal of children from the home contributed to the loss of parenting skills (Ing:1991:71). It must be noted that the children were away from school for ten months of the year. Louise Loyie describes the effects of her and her siblings' removal from the family. Her father was a trapper, and once the children were gone he began to drink. She reports:

He had no reason to go back on the trapline. He had no kids to support. They were all taken away from him so he took to drinking quite heavily. He didn't work, just drank. Consequently, he and my mother broke up. They split, separated (Loyie:1976:n.p.).<sup>26</sup>

Social work experts attribute the high incidence of family breakdown to residential schools. A vicious cycle developed where the anger and bitterness by parents was also transferred to the children (AFN:1989, cited in Ing:1991:72). A factor which is not dealt with is the inhumane treatment of Native parents wherein their feelings were not considered to be important. Daniel L. Paul states that non-Native administrators "failed to appreciate that Native Americans experience all the emotions of

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<sup>26</sup> Loyie did not see her father again for six years. He tried to come and see them but "Seeing he was not living with my mother they wouldn't allow us to go out and he didn't bother after that. He just gave up. He thought he couldn't fight the system. There was no way...(Loyie:1976:n.p.)." Eventually, her mother was murdered in a drunken party, therefore Loyie and her siblings ended up without a home. She stated, "My dad sold the cabin he had built. I don't know what happened to him, where he went or anything. I just lost track of him and my family gave up on him too. We thought we were in school forever...(Loyie:1976:n.p.)."

human beings everywhere. The reason parents want their children home is because *they love them*" (Paul:1993:268). Paul reports that Native parents adopted various strategies to try to have their children home for Christmas, even hiring a lawyer but to no avail. The Indian agent reported how one of the parents had sent her request directly to the Department. The agent reported: "She thought by writing she would be able to get her children home for Christmas. These people think that they can have their own way and would like to do so and when they find out they cannot they get mad..." (Paul:1993:268). The assault on Native families continued when the residential schools were closed. Social agencies stepped in and removed children, citing neglect and abandonment (Johnston:1983; Armitage:1995).

#### Assault on their Indian heritage and identity- The Legacy of Racism

Postcolonial theorists have demonstrated the connection between colonialism and racism. It is significant that sociologist Patricia Hill Collins argues that: "Race, class & gender oppression could not continue without powerful ideological justification of their existence" (Collins:1991:67). The exclusion and denigration of Native cultures was a form of racism of the worst kind. Native children became the victims of the racism of the 'religious' educators, and suffered severe trauma (AFN:1994; Ing:1991). Joan Ryan wrote of the detrimental effects that occur when the development of the child is disrupted.

The basic trust in one's origins which Erikson states is vital to establishing a firm sense of one's self could not develop in children who were raised in residential schools because those origins were attacked and invalidated (cited in Ing:1991).

Many survivors speak of how they were ashamed of themselves as Native people and in many cases ashamed of their parents (AFN:1994; Haig-Brown:1995:281). A tactic of the nuns was to attack the spiritual basis of Native cultures as heathen (Miller:1996). Celia Haig-Brown reports a common occurrence among Native students of residential schools. Students and First Nations instructors saw these schools as sites for developing self-hatred. A First Nations instructor commented:

By the time I went through the residential school system, I had a very negative attitude towards my parents and towards my friends ... I started seeing some of my brothers and sisters as ugly looking because they were Indian ... When I got to Grade 8, I was so ashamed to be Indian... (Haig-Brown:1995:281).

In an AFN study a woman reported the same type of self-hatred and hatred of her parents. She stated: "I used to hate them [her parents] too for being Natives and putting me in that despicable race" (AFN:1994:106). These attitudes were fostered by the attitudes of nuns, as well as the school texts. In her book *Defeathering the Indian*, Metis educator Emma LaRoque wrote of the negative images in curricular materials. She highlighted two standard portrayals in a 1972 publication, "either the Indians are covered with feathers, or they are not covered at all! Also in each case, they are either 'lurking' or 'warring'"

(LaRoque:1975:62).

### Resistance

A significant impact of the residential schools is in the fostering of alienation from schooling in many of their students. This aspect has not been explored sufficiently, and often leads to recommendations which do not consider this alienation. It seems that this is beginning to change, as Jean Barman argues that schooling for many Native people is more an object of fear which must be avoided than a place of learning (Barman:1996:272).

The literature on residential schools reveals the difficulties of attracting and retaining students (Miller:1996; Persson:1986; Haig-Brown:1988). Diane Persson found "that the most common form of resistance was running away" (Persson:1986:156). In 1932, when a new school in Saddle Lake, Alberta, opened, "desertions" were so common that the principal petitioned the Department of Indian Affairs to "enforce compulsory school attendance" (Persson:1986:156). The petition was to "enforce" compulsory school attendance because an amendment to the Indian Act in 1920 had made attendance compulsory for students between the ages of seven and fifteen (Miller:1996:169). This was later amended to include children who were sixteen years of age, and, in some cases, authorities were empowered to keep children until they were eighteen. This same amendment authorized truant officers to "enter any place where he has reason to believe there are Indian children between

the ages of seven and fifteen years" (Miller:1996:170). The amendment made it possible to penalize parents who refused to send their children to school. Beginning in 1945, family allowances were withheld from parents who refused to send their children to school. E. R. Daniels also writes that members of the RCMP and special constables were used as "truant officers." Daniels writes that school teachers and chiefs could be authorized to search premises of children believed to be truant, and they were allowed to "convey the child to the school, using as much force as the circumstances may require" (Daniels:1973:109).

Miller devotes a whole chapter on resistance. For instance, he writes about students burning down buildings as part of a resistance against domination (Miller:1996:343).<sup>27</sup> Miller writes that the schools were never entirely successful in their efforts to keep children in school. A study of the entire Native education system in British Columbia demonstrated that the schools were never able to maintain more than a third of the number of eligible students (Miller:1996:171).

During this period, it was difficult to keep proper records of the attendance of students. Because of a number of factors, many Native people ended up without any schooling. Miller

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<sup>27</sup> In the 1940's an official of the Department of Indian Affairs stated that in a ten-year period nine residential schools had been destroyed by fire, but he did not specify how this happened (Miller:1996:382).

reports that a Stoney Indian's comment "I didn't even go to one hour of school because I am an Indian" was more typical of the average Native person (Miller:1996:172). The abysmal record of schooling reported by authors Barman, Hebert & McCaskill has to be seen as having serious implications for Native people in the long term. The authors report that in 1930, three quarters of Native students across Canada were "in grades 1 to 3, receiving only a very basic literacy education. Only three in every hundred went past grade 6" (Barman, Hebert, & McCaskill:1986:9). What is significant is that "as late as 1951, eight out of every twenty Indians in Canada over age five reported in the federal census that they possessed no formal schooling" (Barman, Hebert, & McCaskill:1986:10). The students who were desirous of getting an education were frustrated because they could go no further than Grade 8. No matter how much some students wanted to continue, they were not given the option of continuing; they were told to go home when they turned sixteen (Barman, Hebert, & McCaskill:1986:11). Harold Cardinal reports that:

any successes through the residential school system emerged as exceptions rather than the rule [and] for the Canadian Indian, the lack of educational opportunities prior to the mid-fifties marks those generations as a time of neglect which is still taking its toll (Cardinal:1969:55).

#### FROM SEGREGATION TO INTEGRATION

Native educational policies had not been changed since the 1880's. The lobbying of Native groups, the postwar political climate, and the concern of non-Native supporters were factors

which led to the demise of residential schooling. After the Second World War Native policies of segregation were being questioned. Criticism of Native schooling and demands for reform had begun after the First World War. Stan Cuthand and Harold Cardinal write about the organizational efforts of the different tribes on the Prairies (Cuthand:1991:381; Cardinal:1991:393). They write about the meetings which were held in various locations in the 1920's to 1930's. The Department of Indian Affairs was forced to acknowledge that education policies had to change. The appointment of the Special Joint Committee of the Senate and the House of Commons in 1946-1948 was an acknowledgement by the Department of Indian Affairs that the whole Act needed "a thorough revision" (Miller:1996:377). The Committee was to review the provisions of the *Indian Act* and of Canada's administration of Indian affairs (Armitage:1995:79). It is significant that there was disagreement between government officials and religious groups on the nature of reforms. Reforms were delayed because of the pressure by most religious groups which wanted to retain denominational schools. It should also be noted that 137 briefs were submitted by "Native bands, associations, and other bodies" and 126 of these dealt with education (Miller:1996:378). The briefs all articulated the need for education as a means of survival in modern society, although the diversity of interests was reflected in the fact that they were not unified in their objectives.

The Department saw the policy of integration as more advantageous, mainly because it supported the government policy of assimilation. Although Native groups had become united and vocal, they had not been able to break the grip of the Department over their lives. Cardinal attacked the policy of integration as: "a one-way street with the government. Always it is the Indian who must integrate into the white environment, never the other way around" (Cardinal:1969:57). It can be argued that this was a time when the government could have begun working with Native groups in the search for alternatives. But, as Cardinal argues, "No thought is given to building facilities on the reserve, where feasible, so that integration might have a chance to work within an Indian environment..." (Cardinal:1969:57). This would not happen until the 1970's with the implementation of the Indian control of Indian education policy. Despite the strong opposition to integration by some church groups, the government's "open door" policy allowed students to travel to nearby provincial schools. The result was that the enrolment at residential schools began to decline drastically by the 1960's. This was the beginning of the end of the influential role the churches had had in the education of Native people.

The result of the Inquiry by the Senate Committee was a revision of the existing *Indian Act* in 1951 which authorized the integration of First Nations into mainstream Canadian society. The new Act authorized the Department to negotiate agreements

with the provinces for services (including education) to Native people (Armitage:1995:106). The changes began a process wherein the exclusive responsibility of the Federal government for Native people was being altered; the provinces were now given a legal mandate to deliver programs to Native people. The First Nations have always believed that their schooling, as well as other treaty rights, were the sole legal responsibility of the Federal government. They believed that the legal authority for this responsibility was contained in the treaties and in the Indian Act, and that "any transfer of jurisdiction for Indian education can only be from the Federal Government to Indian bands" (NIB:1973:5). But the change to integration occurred without their consent. Andrew Armitage states that the objection to the integration policy was that it had been imposed on Native people without consultation. He states:

In fact, the policy of integration was, itself, a further exercise of internal colonialism, and it was made possible by the development of new forms of social policy administration (under the name of the Welfare State) in the postwar period (Armitage:1995:230).

A review of this period reveals that the government was determined not to allow the participation of Native people in their own schooling. The reasons for this become clear when we understand the historical ideological orientation of the Department. The problem was that, although the Department of Indian Affairs was forced to change its outdated policies, it was not able to change the attitudes of its personnel. We now know

that it was influenced by the paternalistic belief that Native people did not know what was good for them. The attitudes of the officials of the Department has been a powerful force in maintaining the status quo (Dyck:1992; Weaver:1981).

Instead, the government transferred the responsibility for the education of Native people to the provinces, which, first of all, were unwilling, and secondly, were unprepared to accommodate the needs of the Native students. But they became willing participants when they saw the financial rewards accruing from this involvement. The fact was that the influx of Indian students into provincial schools created a "whole new revenue source for provincial school boards across Canada" (Littlechild:1995:13; Cardinal:1969; Frideres:1988). The issue of Tuition Agreements, those agreements between the provinces and the government, has been a source of conflict with Native groups (Longboat:1986). Initially, the band was not involved in the signing of the agreements, and the provinces were not held accountable for failure rates or lack of Native programs, and for many years these agreements could not be changed by Native people. Indian leader Harold Cardinal commented on the opportunistic tendencies of the provincial schools:

Local school boards piously open their schools for integration, ostensibly to offer Indian children greater opportunities. What they really want is the per capita school payments they earn from federal coffers by opening their doors to Indians. Their interest in the welfare and education of their new charges is usually minimal (Cardinal:1969:57).

The schools received lump sum payments for the children. In many cases, when children dropped out early in the school year the school was able to keep the funds. This is a serious matter which has exacted human and financial costs, considering high drop-out rates by the students who felt like outsiders in these schools, and considering the monies that the provincial schools gained without being accountable for the welfare and education of Native students.

The result of the integration policy was that Native people were being forced to begin to participate in mainstream society - a society they had never really interacted with! What needs to be explored is the racist attitudes that the defenceless Native children had to contend with. It should be remembered that the majority of Native people from the reserves in the Western provinces had been segregated, with minimal contact with white society. Many former students remember the anguish of suddenly being 'pushed' into all-white schools. Here I am speaking from experience, as I was one of the 'fortunate' ones to proceed beyond Grade eight in the 50's and attend an all-white institution. And I remember that several fellow Native students and myself transferred from a religious educational institution because of racism exhibited by at least one nun. At the time, the transfer of Native students to provincial schools from the residential schools was heralded as a positive change by non-Native people and some Native people, but it can also be seen as

compounding existing problems of alienation and dislocation. The statement by the national Native organization, the National Indian Brotherhood (NIB), provides an apt description of this policy:

Integration in the past twenty years has simply meant the closing down of Indian schools and transferring Indian students to schools away from their Reserves, often against the wishes of the Indian parents. The acceleration with which this program has developed has not taken into account the fact that neither Indian parents and children, nor the white community: parents, children and schools, were prepared for integration, or able to cope with the many problems which were created (NIB:1972:25).

The policy was first adopted in 1948, and was implemented without consultation with the First Nations parents and the non-Native community. Consequently, there was no preparation of teachers or and no curriculum modification to accommodate the children of another culture (Kirkness:1992:12). The feelings of children were not considered, as the NIB document stated, "The Indian child needs a preparation and orientation before being thrust into a new and strange environment" (NIB:1973).

A review of existing literature of this period revealed the important role of traditional social and education theories, such as 'acculturation' and 'structuralist functionalism' in the perpetuation of assimilation and paternalism. The fact that these theories are based on the principle of integration results in the assimilation of peoples and cultures which are different from the norm (Paquette:1986:1). As Paquette points out, "The basic goals of education of Native people ... are taken to be

given and to be essentially identical to those for the general population" (Paquette:1986:1). Therefore, the problems are seen as "imperfections in the educational 'delivery mechanism' for Native students and these imperfections are seen as correctible by fine tuning that mechanism (with more funding, better provision of special-education services etc.)" (Paquette:1986:1). When applied to Native education the recommendations are measures which further integrate and assimilate Native students into the education system. Structural functionalist theories support the way administrators carry out their tasks, and they gloss over "any evidence that the general failure of Native education to achieve its traditional goal of assimilation is the result of a serious conflict between Native and non-Native governments over that goal" (Paquette:1986:2).

The same arguments are raised by critics of acculturation models. For instance, Marilyn Assheton-Smith claims that an important element of acculturation framework is the idea of assimilation. This is based on the idea that "Socio-economic advancement is seen to be open to Indian people once they adopt appropriate North American values: the individual is then in a position to compete equally with all members of society" (Assheton-Smith:1977:n.p.). Assheton-Smith reveals that the acculturation theory legitimates government policies, and provides scientific justification for the treatment of Native people (Assheton-Smith:1977:n.p.). Anthony D. Fisher also

critiques acculturation theories which focus on the student and do not deal with the relations of ruling (Fisher:1980:3). A knowledge of the acculturation model is useful because it provides a perspective from which to evaluate studies on Native education that were being produced into the 1990's.<sup>28</sup> The theoretical perspective of Native educational literature explains why issues and concerns of Native people are not addressed in the literature.

Studies based on structural functionalism and acculturation models attribute problems encountered by the students as resulting from cultural conflict, the problem being defined as the student's inability to cope with acculturation, thus resulting in blaming the victim. William Ryan identified the "blaming the victim ideology" as an important tool which has played a crucial role in policy-making (Ryan:1976). Through the distortion of reality it attributes blame to the victim and thus absolves social scientists, politicians, and social workers, for instance. The theme of blaming the victim runs through the whole history of Native administration, and it is so pervasive that Native people are still being blamed for problems in their community.

Extensive literature on Native education of this period

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<sup>28</sup> What emerged from this study is that Native scholars are replicating traditional functionalist models. What is significant is that they are not critiquing the role of government (Littlechild:1995; Wildcat:1995). This could probably be attributed to the lack of alternative models, as well as the type of education that these writers are receiving.

exists. What is distinctive of this literature is that it was written by non-Native educators who essentially supported government assimilation and integration policies. The problematic nature of integrated schooling is reflected in the statistics relating to drop-out rates, retention rates, age retardation, and absenteeism. A report that is much quoted is the *Hawthorn Report* entitled: *A Survey of the Contemporary Indians of Canada, Economic, Political, Educational Needs and Policies* (Hawthorn:1967).<sup>29</sup> The focus of the second volume of this comprehensive study is on Native education. The report is considered very important by scholars generally, and by some Native people, for instance, as it provided the concept of "Citizen-Plus" to the Native struggle against the government *White Paper* of 1969. That is, Native organizations began to use the term "Citizen Plus," and developed a document with that title. The Hawthorn report commissioned in 1967 concluded that integration as conceived by the Department of Indian Affairs was not working. The Report questioned whether an integration policy which attempts to change the cultural identity of the Native child is necessary (Hawthorn:1967:1922). Their concern is articulated in the following quote:

It is difficult to imagine how an Indian child attending an ordinary public school could develop anything but a negative self-image. First, there is nothing from his culture

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<sup>29</sup> But the Study was not without its critics; for instance, see (Clifton:1979).

represented in the school or valued by it. Second, the Indian child often gains the impression that nothing he or other Indians do is right when compared to what non-Indian children are doing (Hawthorn:1967:142).

Considering the problematic nature of Native schooling, it is a wonder that any Native students made it to higher education. But some did, and one of them was Harold Cardinal, who became a prominent Native leader in the 1960s and 70s. There is also evidence that other Native organizations were submitting proposals which are included in the Government of Alberta Task Force report dated June 1972. In his report as President of the Indian Association of Alberta, Cardinal outlined some concerns and made several recommendations. A major concern was the lack of involvement of Indian people in the education of their children. Cardinal revealed that the problem of Indian children dropping out of school was a "national problem." He cited research data revealing that "94% of all Canadian Indian students who enter grade one fail to complete grade twelve" (Cardinal:1971:14). The reasons cited by Cardinal are (1) lack of economic opportunity and dependency on welfare; (2) cultural conflict in the schools; and, (3) discrimination of various kinds (Cardinal:1971:14).

There have been no systematic studies conducted on the issue of racism that confronted Native students, although there are some references to it. James Frideres made an interesting distinction when he surmised that, while Native students in

residential schools had been subjected to "indirect" institutionalized racism, the Native students in integrated schools were exposed daily to direct discrimination by teachers and other students (Frideres:1988:181).<sup>30</sup> Frideres observed that sustained exposure to racism in the long term "results in a serious and permanent distortion of the Native child's self-image...more short term effects of discrimination include lower marks and a tendency to drop out at an early age" (Frideres:1988:181).

#### The End of Colonial Education?

The educational experiences of Native children up to this point generated resistance movements against educational policies and this resulted in changes which gave a limited control to Native people. As mentioned, the catalyst for reform was the NIB document entitled "Indian control of Indian education" (1973) which was accepted in principle by the federal government in 1973. The question which confronts Native scholars is the nature and meaning of control. The following section will argue that native educational control is a myth (Kouri:1973). That Native people are forced to conform to provincial curricula and standards means that the historical cultural domination is being perpetuated and maintained. Studies of the Indian control of

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<sup>30</sup> I cannot agree that the racism in residential schools was 'indirect.' What has emerged is that the racism of the nuns and others was anything but indirect. It was manifested in physical, psychological, and emotional abuse.

Indian education movement must explore the meaning of this involvement.

## CHAPTER VI

### THE FIRST NATIONS CONTROL OF FIRST NATIONS EDUCATION MOVEMENT - A POSTCOLONIAL PERSPECTIVE

*Yet all is not well. Disquiet persists in aboriginal education. Far too many aboriginal pupils lag behind their non-aboriginal counterparts. Stories of families whose lifestyles and other factors interfere with or work against their children's education are all too commonplace. One very significant reason is not difficult to locate. The legacy of residential schools still hangs heavy in the air, tainting the very concept of schooling. School for many aboriginal people is much more an object of fear to be avoided than a place of learning (Barman:1996:272).<sup>1</sup>*

The introduction of a policy paper entitled *Indian Control of Indian Education* by the National Indian Brotherhood in 1972 heralded a new era - a postcolonial era. The postcolonial era was epitomized by a shift in the relations between the First Nations and the Federal Government. After years of domination and control by an alien governing system, the First Nations now had the opportunity to define their epistemological and pedagogical reality once again - *but within a whole different cultural context*. As will be revealed in this section, the policy for the First Nations to assume control of First Nations education had to be implemented within a framework dominated by European Canadian society. The challenge is to revitalize suppressed Native knowledges, cultures, and languages, and

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<sup>1</sup> This quote, from a very recent publication, articulates the theme which is central to this dissertation. The theme is that many problems exist in Native communities, and many of these problems must be recognized as products of a colonial legacy epitomized by residential schools. All too often positive aspects are stressed by the government for propoganda purposes, and by others, Native and non-Native writers. I can understand the reluctance of Native people to publicize their problems, especially when we have been victimized by the 'blame the victim ideology' for most of our lives. But, following the dictates of postcolonial theory, an essential component of decolonization is to acknowledge the problems in order to resolve them.

attempt to integrate these elements in a pedagogical environment that is predominantly Western European. This section will explore issues related to band-controlled or band-operated schools generally, and will discuss the way one band continues to replicate the hegemonic system in its implementation of a 'band-operated' education system.<sup>2</sup>

The study of the movement to assume control of Native education by Native people is a complex task because of the scope, multi-dimensionality, and cross-cultural nature of the phenomenon of Native education. While an enormous amount of literature on this topic exists, it was not useful for this dissertation because it ignores the historical, political and social dimensions which underlie the Canadian/Native relationship. Associated with this is the lack of critical theoretical and analytical models of Native schooling that had to be developed for the purposes of this dissertation. This was necessitated by the need to recognize that assuming control of First Nations is occurring within a context that is different from that of the pre-contact period. Contemporary First Nations reality is that Native people are continually in contact with, and impacted by, Western European society. This involvement is characterized by a hegemonic relationship with the dominant society, a relationship which has its roots in historical

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<sup>2</sup> See Hall (1992) for a critical discussion of the distinction between band-controlled or band-operated schools.

colonialism. Earlier chapters have shown the disastrous effects of this relationship. A theoretical assumption of this study is that the changes regarding educational control have not transformed this hegemonic relationship.<sup>3</sup> Thus, the theoretical framework adopted in this dissertation demonstrates that the struggle against ideological control by the dominant society is unending.<sup>4</sup> Using the feminist framework discussed in Chapter Three, it is possible to conclude that the Native standpoint is based on the premise that Native people are a subordinate people, who have been, and continue to be, socially constructed by a colonial-based "relations of ruling." Native people are implicated in forms of power which are fundamentally different from pre-contact forms of power.<sup>5</sup> While historical colonialism

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<sup>3</sup> Postcolonial theory is useful because it demonstrates that previously-colonized people continue to be haunted by the effects of historical colonialism. One of the dimensions of colonialism is that the effects of oppression are inter-generational. Legal expert Leonard Ian Rotment argues, "Although overt policies of assimilation, such as the residential school system and the White Paper, have been shelved in favor of the recognition and protection of aboriginal rights through Sections 25 and 35 of the Constitution Act, 1982, the effects of British colonialism on aboriginal people in Canada are still being felt" (Rotman:1996:64). Recent events which are reproducing principles of the White Paper confirm the argument by David G. Perley who warns that previous changes in the Native/Canadian relationship "do not constitute a movement away from domination but rather a reinforcement of dependency and colonial status" (Perley:1993:123).

<sup>4</sup> See the text *Surviving as Indians, the Challenge of Self-Government* (1993), where Menno Boldt argues that the Indian nations cannot achieve "sovereign authority." Dyck argues: "It is hardly a secret that 'political negotiations' are exercises in power politics. The party with the most power prevails. What weapons can Indian leaders bring to such negotiations?" (Boldt:1993:106). It is true that Native leaders have been able to struggle against assimilation, but the present situation where individual bands are signing accords and agreements which undermine treaty rights is an indication that they are losing the battle against assimilation.

<sup>5</sup> A distinction between contemporary societies and precontact indigenous communities is provided by the authors Hunter College et al, who state that "As societies have become larger and more complex, forms of government have become more specialized and exclusionary"(Hunter College Women's Studies Collective:1995:505). These authors state that it is only in the smallest, simplest society, such as a hunting and gathering band, that full participation through public discussion and consensus could occur. The fact is that we cannot attempt to revert to traditional forms of power because we cannot extricate ourselves from present forms of power. We can only work to mitigate and continually struggle against oppression based on race.

no longer exists, postcolonial writers, feminists, and other critical thinkers, have demonstrated that Native people are now subject to other forms of power which are more subtle but are more pervasive. These forms of power are manifested in institutions, organizations, and practices of society.<sup>6</sup> As defined by sociologist Dorothy Smith, the *Relations of Ruling* is

...a complex of organized practices, including government, law, business and financial arrangement, professional organization, and educational institutions as well as the discourses in text that interpenetrate the multiple sites of power (Smith:1987:3).

Everyone, Native and non-Native, is subject to the relations of ruling, although in different ways. Theories of inequality based on race, gender, and class have been developed. For instance, feminists have shown that Western society is male-dominated and women are marginalized in this system. Feminist scholars found that as long as the system of patriarchy exists, their struggle against the system can never end. The use of theories of inequality and oppression in this paper facilitates critical analysis of the relationship of Native people with the dominant society, as well as demonstrating that education in general is political and is a site of contestation (Banks:1993; Apple:1996; Giroux & McLaren:1989). The changes that have occurred in Native communities since European contact call for the development of theoretical, analytical, and pedagogical models. The approach

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<sup>6</sup> The fact is that we unwittingly participate in our own oppression; this is one of the reasons why we need to be aware of the way power works.

adopted in this study of Native education is based on the definition of the concept of control as ideological and intellectual control by the Native community. As mentioned before, the problems of funding and jurisdiction have been addressed in other literature, and will not be central to this inquiry.

This study is based on the assumption that Native people have the right to have control over the education of their children, as articulated by the NIB Policy Paper of 1973. The principles of local control and parental responsibility, as endorsed by the NIB policy paper, are based on the recognition of aboriginal people as having a unique heritage and rights as the indigenous people of this continent. This is recognized in the Constitution of Canada. And, as the preceding chapters indicate, it is also imperative that they have this control because their historical experience with a dominant cultural group has demonstrated that they cannot expect justice and equality from this society.<sup>7</sup> Since the acceptance of the Indian control of Indian education policy by the government in 1973, the majority of bands in Canada have established band-controlled schools on their reserves. The focus in this study is on the problems associated with taking control. However, the last chapter will

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<sup>7</sup> Laverne Lewycky is quoted by Augie Feras as stating that "State policies for 'managing diversity'... are driven by the logic of control and co-optation rather than justice or fair play" (cited in Feras:1996:151).

illustrate that band-controlled schools are beneficial to Native children. DIAND reports that in 1994/95 there were 412 band-operated schools (DIAND:L995:45). Education levels of Native children have improved and more Native children are staying in school. The numbers of children remaining in school to Grade 12 have been rising steadily in the last twenty years. These figures rose from 3 percent in 1960-61; 15 per cent in 1970-71; 20 percent in 1980-81; to 47 per cent in 1990-91 (Barman:1996:271). Native educator Verna Kirkness presents other statistics which demonstrate an increase in the participation rate of on-reserve school-aged children; 856 students graduated from secondary schools in 1990-91 (Kirkness:1992:100).

It must be understood that while improvements have occurred, many problems remain and they will continue to plague Native communities for many years. It has been found that Native control of Native education did not turn out to be the panacea as expected (Kouri:1983; Paquette:1986; Koens:1989; Kirkness:1984), but it is a process which is long overdue.<sup>8</sup> There is still a high drop-out rate, and the retention rates for Native children are still far below the national average. For instance, the RCAP reports that although retention rates have improved, the majority

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<sup>8</sup> Koens argues that "Local control of Indian education is usually perceived by the community as a celebration of educational autonomy -- an epiphany leading toward a reclamation of an authentic cultural environment grounded in a worthwhile educational framework. In reality, the establishment of locally controlled schools does not necessarily ensure the development of an improved system of Indian education" (Koens:1989:37).

of aboriginal youth are leaving before completing high school (RCAP:1996:438). The RCAP states that we must question why schooling has continued to be an alienating experience for Native students (RCAP(5):1996:440).

### Definitions of Native Educational Control

Preceding chapters have demonstrated that Native people did not have control over their own affairs until the 1970's, when a reform movement provided the means for their involvement through *devolution*, and the acceptance of the NIB *Indian Control of Indian Education* Policy Paper in 1973. *Devolution* was the government policy which facilitated the transfer of responsibilities to Native bands. Analyst Peter Clancy describes the practice of devolution as a "transfer of power or authority from a central government to a regional or local one" (Clancy:1990:15). Clancy explains that it can be "a means of bringing decision making closer to the people" (Clancy:1990:15). Clancy describes devolution as a "multi-faceted phenomenon", but, in the case of Native people, devolution has been limited to the transfer of authority to carry out administrative duties on the reserves. Through the policy of devolution, band councils became subordinate units of state bureaucracy.<sup>9</sup> The Penner Report found that the government was "devolving responsibility to Indian bands

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<sup>9</sup> Native leader Harold Cardinal described this bureaucracy as a "bureaucratic jungle into which a poor Indian could disappear for months, emerging, if ever, wrapped up in red tape like a mummy (Cardinal:1969:17)."

for the delivery of services, while retaining departmental control of policy through control of funding" (Special Committee on Indian Self-Government Task Force:1982:86). In one of the submissions to the Task Force by a Native band, the Chief complained that "band councils are just fancy cheque writers for the federal government." As one of the submissions pointed out, band councils had become branch offices of the Department of Indian Affairs. It reported that 75 per cent of their time was spent in "record-keeping, data analysis, reporting, forecasting and evaluation requirements established by the many agencies of government which regulate our lives" (Special Committee on Indian Self-Government Task Force:1982:86).<sup>10</sup>

#### Two Opposing Definitions of Reality

The historical conflict between the government and the Native people in defining Native reality is reflected in the way Native control was defined. On the one hand, Indian control of Indian education policy was accepted and defined by DIAND through a devolution framework with limited powers assigned to Native bands.<sup>11</sup> On the other hand, Native leaders conceptualized control as a historical right which entitles them to total

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<sup>10</sup> The problem is that inadequate funding, training, and the lack of people with the necessary skills compounded problems inherent in taking educational control. Precious time which could be used in planning and conceptualizing for self-determination was expended in the attempt to respond to the numerous directives emanating from DIAND. Margaret Ward argued that within the first ten years of the implementation of Indian control the government continually diverted the energies of Native bands by forcing them to respond to its proposals and policies (Ward:1986:19).

<sup>11</sup> The change of government policy was from assimilation, which did not allow any participation by Native people, to 'devolution' which allowed them to administer policies which had been developed by DIAND.

control.<sup>12</sup> In its 1988 study the Assembly of First Nations found that, in practice, the government had failed to implement the policy of Indian control of Indian education as it was defined by the NIB. The government had retained the power to define Native education control as "participation and administration of previously developed federal education programs" by First Nations (Assembly of First Nations:1988:13). According to the AFN report, the government interprets Native control as *delegated authority*, transferring "very limited decision-making powers to First Nations" while retaining "total control over the determination and allocation of resources needed to establish, manage, and operate local First Nations schools" (AFN:1988:13). Delegated authority, as opposed to autonomous local jurisdiction, is unsatisfactory to First Nations, because they "must comply with federal directives or be subject to reprisals and loss of resources" (AFN:1988:13). This situation contributed to the reluctance of many First Nations to assume control over their education systems (Hall:1992; Paquette:1986).<sup>13</sup>

The First Nations definition of Native control is that full control and authority were to be transferred to Native bands.

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<sup>12</sup> While it will be argued that many Native bands were not prepared for assumption of responsibilities, Native people argue that DIAND had made a mess of Native schooling and that Native bands could not do any less, that decolonization is the right to make your own mistakes (Pauls:1984). Native bands expected DIAND to provide training and support in the process of taking control, and in most instances it did not happen (Paul:1993).

<sup>13</sup> Government policy has evolved to a situation where bands no longer have a choice. They are required to assume control under terms defined by DIAND. If they are unable to do this, another education body is designated to run their educational affairs. Through downsizing, education departments have disappeared, leaving them with a skeleton staff which has a limited mandate.

According to the NIB and AFN studies, the First Nations articulated their views on educational control of First Nations education in 1973 and 1988 respectively. Their views are summed up in the statement that education is an aboriginal right which must be entrenched in the Constitution (AFN:1988:11). The AFN report argued that the First Nations cannot exercise "jurisdiction over education and any other program without full fiscal and operational control" (AFN:1988:5). And the report reiterated that only First Nations "will determine the extent of the need for resources and the allocation of resources to the various programs and services required in their communities" (AFN:1988:5). The right to the control of Native education is supported by the *Third General Assembly of the United Nations World Council on Indigenous Peoples* which adopted in principle a Draft Proposal which read, "The Indigenous People have the right to fully control the care and education of their children, including the full right to determine the language or languages of instruction" (cited in Littlechild:1995:22).

The theoretical framework of this dissertation makes it possible to focus on the role of the Department of Indian Affairs in order to demonstrate how it continually reproduces the dependency and marginalization of Native people (Dyck:1991; Paul:1993). According to the government definition of Native control of education, Native people are expected to implement "previously developed federal education programs" (AFN:1988:13),

and are subject to the priorities, guidelines, and funding set by external agencies (Barman, Hebert, & McCaskill:1986:17). Therefore, according to the framework adopted in this study, inquiry should focus on the way the 'relations of ruling' determines the everyday life of Native people. Through a focus on the department we are able to see how Native leaders and band members are continually socially constructed by the department which has been characterized by ambivalence, lack of planning and vision, hostility and arrogance (Dyck:1991; Hall:1992; Paquette:1986; Paul:1993). For instance, in 1980 the Auditor General of Canada in a review of the performance of DIAND found the department to be "an organization with no sense of its own mandate and no substantive long-term policy planning process" (Paquette:1986:110). What needs to be studied is the role and consequences of DIAND administration in the construction of the everyday reality on the reserves. (Paul:1993; Dyck:1991).<sup>14</sup> For instance, to what extent does it contribute to the apathy, powerlessness, and mistrust, that is found in many reserves?<sup>15</sup> A non-Native educator and administrator, Denis R. Hall, who has extensive experience with the DIAND, found that the government's

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<sup>14</sup> Abdul JanMohamed, in his critical exploration of the life of Richard Wright, illustrates how oppression is internalized by the minority, and shows how social construction can be fought and transcended (JanMohamed:1990).

<sup>15</sup> I came to this conclusion when observing the practices on the reserve where everyone comes in late for meetings etc. It is possible that it is not only because of "Indian time." I believe that anyone dealing with DIAND has to have defense mechanisms to cope with delays and disappointments. For instance, what happens to someone who is determined to effect changes and then comes up against the tactics and practices of DIAND?

devolution policy was

... quick, poorly planned, and ill conceived. Indian band councils, anxious to exert control over matters pertaining to their own destinies, have virtually *jumped from the frying pan into the fire* by entering into devolution agreements with the federal government (Hall:1992:57).

Jerry Paquette, who conducted an extensive study of Native communities in northern Ontario, argues that "Everyone expects to know, within reason, the rules of the policy game" (Paquette:1986:32). But, he argues, the lack of a firm sense of the decision-making process makes "aboriginal education a particularly troubled and uncertain educational arena" (Paquette:1986:32). What has not been addressed is whether a colonial-based government organization such as DIAND can be expected to develop goals and objectives which would enhance and empower Native communities. For instance, Feras points out the inappropriateness of DIAND as a change agent. "An unshakeable commitment to "rational control" appears to disqualify DIAND from an active role in indigenizing the aboriginal agenda" (Feras:1996:149). The historical record of DIAND suggests that the only vision that is clear in government policy is the unending desire to eliminate indigenosity through assimilation (Dyck:1991; Armitage:1995).

An advantage of a theoretical framework which takes into consideration the hegemonic nature of society is that it makes it possible to focus on the issues which Native bands have in common

as a result of their relationship with the dominant society. The Native/Canadian relationship is the key element in Native analysis. This approach addresses the confusion which can occur when Native literature focusses on successes achieved by bands, or individuals. This type of literature contributes to obfuscation because it ignores the fact that successes by bands or individuals are the exception rather than the norm. The fact that great diversity exists among bands, and within the bands, calls for theoretical and methodological guidelines which are clear. As well, a problem is that the concept of 'success' needs to be clearly defined.<sup>16</sup> Existing literature has demonstrated that bands should adopt different strategies in the operation of their schools (Littlechild:1995). Some bands are more successful in developing schools which are culturally-based in practice and pedagogy (Gardner:1986; Archibald:1995), while others either are forced to, or chose to, replicate the existing system. Using this theoretical framework, the problems which are common to all bands should constitute units of analysis in any study of Native education. And problems do exist in all communities, as Jerry Paquette asserts:

If there is one idea central to this discussion of the rights and resources involved in Native education in Canada, it must be that *no simple, easy way exists for Native people to assert their hegemony over the education of their children.* The situation, including all possible

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<sup>16</sup> By this I mean that diversity of opinion and needs exists; Native people do not always agree on the "cultural mix" that should inform schooling in reserves.

alternatives to the *status quo*, is fraught with complexities, ambiguities and paradoxes (Paquette:1986:40).

### Inadequate Funding as a Constraint on the Success of Band-Operated Schools

Jerry Paquette argues that inadequate funding has been and continues to be a constraint on the proper management and administration of band-controlled schools (Paquette:1986). Paquette found that funding for Native education on the reserves is much lower than that provided to other provincial education systems in Canada. He argues that, although the department recognizes that "Indian education is intrinsically more expensive than public-school education, funding levels for INAC schools lag behind provincial norms (Paquette:1986:22)." According to Paquette, the annual operating costs do not reflect the realities of the needs and costs of band-operated schools. Inadequate funding has serious implications for the initiation and development of special programs to address the problems resulting from historical colonial policies and practices. Inadequate funding affects all areas of Native education, including the existence of substandard school buildings and infrastructure (Longboat:1987:39). The lack of funding resources has serious implication for curriculum development; the RCAP study found that it is a serious deterrent to the development of systematic, integrated Aboriginal curricula (RCAP:(4):1996:462). The RCAP Report also found that inadequate funding affected cultural and

language programs.

### Socio/Cultural Change - Knowledge Production

Since European contact, Native communities have been in the process of cultural change. The fundamental change was the transition from an oral society to participation in a society characterized by highly developed forms of writing, technology, social science, bureaucratic structures, and complex economic systems. The attempt to make a transition into this type of society is a challenge for any group, but for Native people other factors have interfered in their transition. And it is these factors which must be seen as playing an important role in their future attempts to develop their own educational institutions. Firstly, it must be recognized that the development of educational institutions and curricula must be based on the recognition that the traditional way of learning had to change.<sup>17</sup> A major factor which hampered the efforts of Native people to decolonize themselves is that the formal education available at residential schools was inferior and substandard, and it did not prepare them for participation in modern society and for the future task of developing institutions of their own (Wyatt:1978-79; Koens:1989; King:1987). Their participation in provincial schools was a negative experience because of racism and curricula which were alien to their own cultures. And yet, in modern

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<sup>17</sup> There is a need to recognize that any new developments have to blend the old and the new (Cajete:1994; Couture:1985).

society, access to positions of influence and authority depends on the acquisition of professional knowledge and skills. Although cultural knowledge was possessed by elders, most Native people did not have the necessary knowledge, professionals, and qualifications for the development of their own educational models and institutions. Therefore, they had to depend on non-Native professionals to mediate their relations with the dominant society. Because of the long history of colonial oppression, Native people had "little or no experience or expertise in administrative, pedagogical, and educational practices" (Taylor, Crago, & McAlpine:1993:177). Today, although the numbers of Native people who have acquired the necessary education, skills, and expertise have increased, attendance at postsecondary institutions is still very low (RCAP:(4):1996:3; Barsh:1994:26).<sup>18</sup>

These factors have compounded the problems inherent in the development of culture-based pedagogical models and practices. In most cultures education is about the acquisition of knowledge of life and society, in whatever form it is transmitted. The study of the control of Native education is about knowledge and who controls the construction and transmission of knowledge which

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<sup>18</sup> Russel Lawrence Barsh states that "Compared to other Canadians, Aboriginal people are less likely to have any post-secondary training, and more likely to attend vocational, technical or trade schools than degree-granting universities...Aboriginal people are under-represented in science and engineering, moreover, which can have serious consequences for the development of isolated communities that must depend on agricultural, fisheries, forestry, mining and processing for growth in the future" (Barsh:1994:26).

includes norms and values. In precontact societies, knowledge of the role and place of individuals was learned informally through observing and doing. Knowledge of the symbolic aspects of culture and the universe was learned from elders, mythology, and the ceremonial and ritualistic life of the community. As Native leader Harold Cardinal has argued, the nature and role of precontact indigenous learning was sufficient for indigenous societies (Cardinal:1969). The difference now is that Native people are implicated in the formal education system of Western society. Their task, which will be addressed in the next chapter, is to integrate indigenous cultural knowledges and languages in this formal educational framework.

Forms of power and authority in Native communities have also been transformed. The effects of the long years of colonial rule are that Native people are now subject to Western hegemonic structures, institutions and practices at the mainstream level, as well as at the level of band government (Boldt:1993). Menno Boldt explains:

Traditionally *Indian* leaders were the servants of their people. But, under colonial political and administrative structures, which are based on hierarchical authority delegated by the DIAND, Indian leaders, without choice, were cast in the role of managers of their people. In effect, traditional systems of *Indian* leadership have gradually been transformed into a ruling-class system (Boldt:1993:120).<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> See also Boldt's discussion of the *modus operandi* by the federal government in the transformation of Indian leadership. The government adopted the practice of political and economic favoritism towards selected leading families who were willing to ally themselves with the government (Boldt:1993:120).

The effects of the transformation of Native community organization is summarized succinctly by Anastasia Shkilnyk in the following quote, which is worth reproducing in its entirety:

... there has been a definite change in the role and responsibilities, qualifications, tenure and authority of the political leadership. Second, certain sanctions on social behavior and forms of self-help, once internal to the community, have been replaced by a system of paternalistic controls and administered social assistance, external to the community. Third, government policy set in motion the conditions for the emergence of a class society. Social inequality developed as a result of the fact that family groups no longer had equal access to resources, which became controlled by the federal government and administered by the Chief and Council. As people began to compete for scarce jobs and other government-sponsored privileges, they created fiefdoms of power and influence exclusive to members of their own kinship group. Latent and historic interfamily tensions have sharpened and intensified in the process (Shkilnyk:1985, cited in Paquette:1986:41).<sup>20</sup>

Thus, control of Native educational institutions is being attempted by Native communities which have been greatly impacted and transformed by their involvement with colonialism historically, and with Western society in the contemporary period.<sup>21</sup> What emerged in this study is the crucial importance of a healthy family and community in the life of the Native students. While this applies to all children, the welfare of Native children has not received the attention it deserves at the reserve level. This is also borne out by the presentation by

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<sup>20</sup> Also see the text, *Surviving As Indians, The Challenge of Self-Government*, by Menno Boldt, (Boldt:1993) where he discusses the changes in Native leadership culminating in a "Native elite."

<sup>21</sup> See Menno Boldt's text which analyzes the way band leadership has been transformed to that of governance by an elite (Boldt:1993).

several Native people to the RCAP; they stressed that the renewal of the family is at "the core of the process of renewal" (RCAP:1996).<sup>22</sup> The presenters to the RCAP considered family violence so pervasive as to prevent nations and communities "from achieving their policy and economic goals." They added that the "goals of re-establishing norms of mutual respect and caring for injured spirits must be pursued in concert with that of self-government" (RCAP:1996).<sup>23</sup> The Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples report assigns responsibility to social policies which were determined by colonization and assimilation and which resulted in "a heritage of dependency, powerlessness and distrust" (RCAP:1996).<sup>24</sup> And, as the RCAP report stressed, it is the failure of social policies which has contributed to the current imbalance and distress in Aboriginal life which was originally centered around the family. They argue:

Let us clarify at the outset that the failure of responsibility that we seek to understand and correct is not a failure of Aboriginal families. Rather, it is a failure of public policy to recognize and respect Aboriginal culture and family systems... (RCAP:1996).<sup>25</sup>

#### The Creation of Imbalance - Imposition of Patriarchal Systems

During the colonial period the imposition of European values

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<sup>22</sup> See Volume 3, of the Final RCAP Report, Chapter 3 entitled The Family, page 10.

<sup>23</sup> See Volume 3 of the RCAP Final Report (1996), Chapter 3 entitled The Family, page 10.

<sup>24</sup> See Volume 3 of the Final RCAP Report (1996), Chapter 1 entitled New Directions in Social Policy.

<sup>25</sup> See Volume 3 of the Final RCAP Report (1996), Chapter 2 entitled The Family, page 9.

and governing systems destroyed cultural systems which were once based on egalitarian social organizations. Literature exists which confirms that the relations between men and women were egalitarian in nature (Government of Manitoba:1992; RCAP:1996).<sup>26</sup> These egalitarian relations were destroyed by the imposition of patriarchal and hierarchical social structures in which men were considered to be the head of the house. Kathleen Jamieson provides evidence that the Native woman became subject to her Native husband. One of the principles embodied in the Statutes of 1869, Section 6, was that

Indian women should be subject to their husbands as were other women. Their children were his children alone in law. It was inconceivable that an Indian woman should be able to own and transmit property and rights to her children (Jamieson:1978:38).

It is also significant that, in the legal definition of an Indian, descent through the male was specified. The first Act, enacted in 1876, which bore the title 'Indian Act' "emphasized descent in the male line." (Jamieson:1978:43).<sup>27</sup> The Deputy Minister of Indian Affairs, Duncan Campbell Scott, elaborated on this policy in a speech when he proclaimed: "Again Parliament has provided the legal definition of an Indian; descent in the male line alone gives the individual legal standing as an

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<sup>26</sup> I am referring to the RCAP study entitled *Bridging the Cultural Divide, A Report on Aboriginal Peoples and Criminal Justice in Canada* (1996)

<sup>27</sup> This same Act continued the discrimination of women, which was now included in the Indian Act. It stated that a Native woman marrying a non-Indian man would cease to be an Indian (Jamieson:1976:43).

Indian..." (Jamieson:1976:50). While the situation of Western women has improved, historically they had few rights at the time of European contact. In Western society, European men were considered to be women's

social, legal and political masters. Any rights which women had were those derived through their husbands. The law of England, for example, held that women did not have the right to vote, to own property or to enter into contracts (Government of Manitoba:1991:476).

Thus, it is during the period of colonization that Government policy laid the foundation for Native male domination based on Western patriarchy. And although the historical relationship between men and women based on respect has survived to a certain extent, the patriarchal system is predominant. Although there have been changes, (for instance Native women have been able to vote in band elections since 1951, and Bill C-31 meant to eliminate discrimination against women who marry outside the reserve has been enacted), the system favoring men has survived to the detriment of the community. The oppression of Native women has been worse than that of Native men because they are victims of sexism as well as racism. For instance, Cora J. Voyageur points out that during the period of colonialism, the concerns and needs of Native women "were determined and articulated by their husbands and fathers, missionaries, and government agents" (Voyageur:1996:95). And although Voyageur asserts that the situation has changed for Native women, many

Native women on reserves are still dominated by men and a socio/economic system which is based on patriarchal power.<sup>28</sup> It is not easy for many Native women to transcend years of conditioning. Gerber's observation is useful and more realistic when she states:

Native females suffer multiple jeopardy on the basis of a number of objective indicators of social and economic well being. The fact that Indians as a group are disadvantaged and Indian females in particular suffer the greatest disadvantage suggests that Indian status, with its historical trappings of colonial dependency does indeed create additional barriers to economic and social health...(cited in Voyageur:1996:95).

#### Violence and Abuse in Native Communities<sup>29</sup>

The changes on the reserves, the loss of values and aboriginal institutions, have been detrimental to Native communities. For instance, a study entitled *The Justice System and Aboriginal People* (Government of Manitoba:1991) included a chapter discussing the changes on reserves and the impact on the role of Native women. This study confirmed that Native women were never considered to be inferior to men. It asserts that traditional

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<sup>28</sup> We need to recognize that the women who are successful are the exception rather than the norm. This will remain the case until the patriarchy which exists on reserves is transformed. What needs to be explored is the difficulty for Native women to leave abusive husbands because of economic circumstances and a shortage of housing. In most cases, the house and land are the property of the husband or male relatives. The growing Native population makes it difficult to find alternative housing.

<sup>29</sup> See Ross (1996) for a discussion of power and domination. They argue that the treatment of Native men who have been made to feel worthless and "essentially invisible" is at the root of physical and sexual abuse. He states: "At some point people brought to this position stand up and demand to be noticed, to be recognized as being alive, as having influence and power. And the easiest way to assert power, to prove that you exist, is to demonstrate power over people who are weaker still, primarily by making them do things they don't want to do. The more those things shame and diminish that weaker person, the more the abuser feels, within the twisted logic of victimization, that they have been empowered and restored themselves..."(Ross:1996:48).

teachings and cultures "emphasized the equality of man and woman and the balanced roles of both in the continuation of life" (Government of Manitoba:1991:476). And while domestic violence and abuse on reserves, in the contemporary period, is documented by this Manitoba study, the study also asserts that historically, "Traditional Aboriginal society experienced very little family breakdown" because "Husbands and wives were expected to respect and honour one another, and to care for one another with honesty and kindness" (Government of Manitoba:1991:476).<sup>30</sup> In his study of abuse in Native communities Rupert Ross reports how an abused victim made him and others realize that "her abusers, Aboriginal people all, did not abuse because they were Aboriginal people, but because they were *changed* Aboriginal people (Ross:1996:46).<sup>31</sup> The problem is that abuse became objectified - and not seen as part of the historical colonial experience (Duran & Duran:1996). The extensive treatment by the Royal Commission Report on Aboriginal People which devotes a chapter on the Native Family, demonstrates that the problems of family breakdown, abuse, and violence are beginning to be acknowledged and solutions explored.

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<sup>30</sup> There is cultural confusion on most reserves; Native men have made statements which reveal that they feel that male domination is part of the Cree culture. One person attempted to attribute domestic violence to culture. (See Emerson (1987) for a discussion of cultural confusion). See also Duran & Duran who write that: "After so many decades of abuse and internalizing of pathological patterns, these dysfunctional patterns at times became very nebulous to the families themselves. The dysfunctional patterns at some point started to be seen as part of Native American tradition ... Therefore, many of the problems facing Native American people today -- such as alcoholism, child abuse, suicide, and domestic violence -- have become part of the Native American heritage due to the long decades of forced assimilation and genocidal practices implemented by the federal government" (Duran & Duran:1995:35).

<sup>31</sup> Ross deduced from this that something could be done "to reverse the downward spiral that had everyone so firmly in its grip: they could look back to see when the changes began, what they were, how they touched people--and how they might be reversed (*italics in text*) (Ross:1996:46).

An Informal Study of the 'Plains Cree Reserve' (PCR)<sup>32</sup>

As part of a general study of the First Nations control of First Nations education movement I conducted an informal study of a particular Cree reserve in Alberta. This was not a case study; in an exploratory study such as this it is not possible to conduct an in-depth study. The primary objective of this study was to present an overview of the First Nations control of First Nations education movement through the use of a holistic perspective. My involvement with a particular reserve in Alberta enabled me to use it as part of my study, making it possible to ground the study in Native experiences and reality. It is very significant to this study that the community under study exhibited the problems which have been identified by (Wyatt:1978-79; King:1987; and Taylor, Crago, & McAlpine:1993).<sup>33</sup> The argument of this dissertation is that Native bands share a common oppression through their relationship with the dominant government. Therefore, problems that are common to them will emerge in any study. That the Alberta community under study exhibits tensions, contradictions, and other problems, I believe, is more typical of Native communities, as was argued by Paquette (1986) cited above.

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<sup>32</sup> This is a pseudonym that is used for the study of this community.

<sup>33</sup> Through previous research, observation, and just plain common sense, I began this study with the assumption that there would be numerous problems associated with taking control.

## Description and Profile of the Plains Cree Reserve

The Plains Cree Reserve is a large reserve with an estimated population of 4,900 band members. This community is located in an area which is settled or 'urbanized'<sup>34</sup> as opposed to remote, and thus has access to several small towns and a big city. It is important to identify the degree of acculturation in a community to prevent classifying all Native communities as exhibiting traditional lifestyles.<sup>35</sup> Joe Couture recognizes the diversity which exists among Native people when he states that Native reality is reflected in a "continuum defined on one extreme by highly acculturated urban Natives through to traditional outback Natives on the other extreme" (Couture:1985:5). While some communities have been able to retain more traditional lifestyles, other groups exhibit "varying degrees of cultural and social breakdown, personal disorganization, and near complete identity loss among their members"(Couture:1985:5). Communities which are located in 'urbanized' areas find it more difficult to withstand the pressures of modernization than do the communities in remote areas. The loss is usually in the ability to maintain traditional economic activities, and cultural and linguistic traditions (Faries:1991; Boldt:1993; Ryan:1988; Ryan:1991-92).

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<sup>34</sup> In Native literature the term 'urbanized' is part of the language used; it has been used by DIAND.

<sup>35</sup> I have been turned off by writers who make sweeping statements regarding the cultural status of Native communities. Many writers do not acknowledge that Native communities have been greatly impacted by European contact. This is a form of oppression because it does not acknowledge the suffering of many Native people.

The Plains Cree Reserve would be classified as a community which manifests acculturation in terms of a weak cultural identity and weak cultural language maintenance. The descendants of the once proud Cree nations of the Prairies have been settled in the existing reserve since the late 1880's. The origins of the reserve are closely tied to the establishment of a Catholic Mission in the area. Through this Mission a residential school was established in the late 1800's. The existence of the residential school on the reserve has had a great impact on the Plains Cree people. The majority of the people were converted to the Catholic faith, most of them attending the Residential School, with a few others converting to Protestant religions. The residential school was finally shut down in the 1960's. But the decades of involvement in the residential school and with the Catholic Church has resulted in a community which is mired in cultural loss, confusion, and contradiction. The Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples identified various losses stemming from the disruption of the Aboriginal family which have resulted in "identity problems and difficulties in functioning" (RCAP:1996).<sup>36</sup> The fact is that cultural confusion and contradiction are an everyday reality and it could be argued this leads to "chaos" as an important component of this reality

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<sup>36</sup> See Volume 3 of the Final RCAP Report (1996), Chapter 2 entitled The Family, page 18.

(RCAP:1996).<sup>37</sup>

The descendants of Cree hunters and gatherers were not able to maintain and preserve the traditional way of life. Their way of life is now strongly influenced by the Western economic system.<sup>38</sup> The community, which at one time was based on a communal type of society embodying principles of sharing and cooperation, is becoming more and more consumer-oriented.<sup>39</sup> The involvement in consumerism was reinforced by the discovery of oil reserves on the reserve. In the 1970's, after years of residential schooling and colonialism had eroded their cultural identity and values, the members of the community were confronted by other challenges. Geoffrey York writes about the way the financial windfall from oil revenues resulted in the destruction of the people themselves. As York argues, the lack of preparation for financial wealth left them vulnerable. The period is known for the high suicide rates and self-destructive behavior, such as accidents caused by alcohol and drug abuse (York:1989). The events of this period have had a significant

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<sup>37</sup> See Volume 3 of the Final RCAP Report (1996), Chapter 2, page 19. The tragedy underlying cultural confusion and its impact on Native children are discussed under the Chapter entitled The Family. This is one of the reasons why we have to focus on the development of material which explores Native cultures and history and which can form a basis for the interpretation of contemporary life.

<sup>38</sup> For instance, Simon Brascoupe argues that there has been "a dramatic shift in the past century for aboriginal families living a traditional lifestyle, trapping and gathering and living off the land. Within this period aboriginal peoples shifted more into the primary sector of the labour market in agriculture, forestry, fishing, and trapping. The most recent shift has been into the service sector" (Brascoupe:1996:364).

<sup>39</sup> By this I mean that driving cars and trucks, shopping in malls, playing bingo etc. are everyday realities. Again you see contradictions; there are instances which show that money and material possessions are not revered in the same way as in Western society. But see the discussion of 'Communalism' by Menno Boldt (Boldt:1993:144).

impact on the members of this community because it was also a period when children were removed from their homes and put in care of social service agencies (York:1989; Armitage:1995). One can speculate that the events of this period reinforced cultural confusion in some people and cultural alienation in others. It can also be argued that the legacy of this period was an undermining of any remaining sense of family and community.

The discussion of cultural erosion, confusion, and alienation must be conducted within an understanding that elements of traditional ways of interaction and communication have survived and still play an important role in the everyday life of Native people. For instance, James Ryan discusses the persistence of Native values: "Although the social context in which many Native people live has changed over the past two centuries, many of these people still retain elements of these values" (Ryan:1992:94).<sup>40</sup> The mixture of traditional practices and values and acculturation leads to confusion and contradictions, and this is why it is so crucial to develop Native epistemologies based on systematic studies and analysis. During my involvement with the band, it became necessary to identify certain trends which would help explain the

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<sup>40</sup> See the discussion on egalitarianism by Jerry Paquette who states, "Native egalitarianism is a powerful cultural force which instinctively rejects any attempt by the individual to place himself in control of the group" (Paquette:1986:42). Paquette discusses this problem regarding the attempt to integrate local organizations into national organizations. What needs to be explored is the impact of individual achievement on traditional egalitarian communities.

contradictions, diverse interests, and cultural knowledge which characterize groups or families within the reserve itself. I found it expedient to identify the existence of three distinct groups.<sup>41</sup> The one group would be considered to occupy the bottom of the social and economic totem pole. The members of this group do not participate in the activities of the community; this would include religious, business, and band council activities.<sup>42</sup> The extent of the involvement of some members of this group would be to attend Native traditional cultural activities such as pow-wows and sundances. But the members are also very involved in bingo. This group survives without the benefit of guidelines from either their own culture or from mainstream culture. What is significant is that the lifestyle of this group makes it difficult for the children who attend school, because the parents seem alienated from this institution. Out of this group you will find some people who still practice Native spirituality and who speak their Native tongue although they are not passing these on to their children.<sup>43</sup>

The second group is more akin to the first group except that

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<sup>41</sup> I believe it is important to identify the existence of these groups to prevent generalizations. For instance, existing literature perpetuates the myth that all members participate in band council elections or in employment opportunities, because it is not so. There are groups of people who even claim that they do not have anything to do with the band council. In my discussion with a band member, he said it in such a way as to make it sound like a form of resistance.

<sup>42</sup> What I found is that programs initiated at the school would not have an impact on most of these groups.

<sup>43</sup> I will be discussing the fact that none of the children under twenty years of age speak their language, as I was informed by a language teacher in the community.

the members of this group participate more in community activities, for instance, serving on Band Councils and being employed in the community. Some of these members also live without the benefit of strong cultural values or ties to other religious groups, although you will find some of them going to the Catholic Church located on the reserve. It is tempting to classify these two groups as 'traditional' since they maintain some connections to Native beliefs, traditions and languages, and they have made statements to the effect that they believe they are living traditionally.<sup>44</sup> But the problem is that they are not actively involved in fighting for cultural and language maintenance; they have not been able to exert power in the community. If a "Native elite" exists, as was proposed by Menno Boldt (1993), then the elite would come from the second and third group.

The third group is not tied to Native culture in any way. Some families from this group follow a fundamentalist religion, which reproduces negative colonial-based representations of Native cultures and beliefs. Members of this group refuse to have their children learn about Native culture or languages. The members of this group tend to be very involved in the community, as members of the band council and as employees in the various

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<sup>44</sup> Arguments for the preservation of the culture on the reserves were articulated in the struggle against Bill C-31. The fact that Native people were turning against their own kin was never recognized as a symptom of the loss of cultural unity.

business enterprises. The members of this group are united by community activities through their churches. This unity is translated into the ability to support their own candidates in band elections. Members of this group are gaining strength and this can have only dire consequences for those Indian people who would like to rediscover and reinstate cultural knowledge and practices. An example of their influence is that one of their members was the 'education manager,' who accepted the status quo and left it intact. The head of the Community Wellness Program comes from this group.<sup>45</sup> Elements of the traditional kinship structure still exist and are useful in elections and in hiring.<sup>46</sup> Politics and political activity, where the issue of who controls what has become important, are now a way of life on the reserve. The fact that one group is able to exert control over decision-making demonstrates that the traditional concept of consensus does not exist. The issue of control parallels the situation described by Richard King when he argues "that the lack of an ideological consensus and explicitly defined role expectations by the band as a whole, means that some group is going to assume the role of decision-making" (King:1987:61). It is significant that other writers have written about the

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<sup>45</sup> No one recognized the negative implications of this arrangement; that it could be a constraint on accepting the traditional healing model. These members have stated unequivocally that the only acceptable people were those who were "certified psychologists."

<sup>46</sup> That is, members of the Band Council hire their own relatives. Historically, "families and clans were also the principal avenue for political representation in Aboriginal societies" See Volume 3, Chapter 2 of the Final RCAP Report (1996) page 17.

importance of community and cultural goals, where the majority of members are in agreement on the need for the preservation and maintenance of cultural traditions, values, and identity (Archibald:1995; Gardner:19986). Considering the implications of involvement in the dominant society, these types of communities are more likely to be an exception, because, as Richard King argues, "Proponents of local control tend to assume more homogeneity within communities and even among communities than, in fact, exists" (King:1986:61).

#### The Plains Cree Band Government

The band is administered through a band council whose members are elected for a three-year term. Denis R. Hall explains that a band council "is a duly elected legislative body of adults from among the members of the band. It derives its power to govern from the Indian Act (1961)..." (Hall:1992:60). The power of decision-making and financial management for the band is held by the Chief and Council which have become a ruling hierarchy *within the reserve* (see Boldt:1993:120). Administration by the Chief and Band Council is supplemented by a large bureaucracy necessary for overseeing the numerous programs, such as education, health, welfare, housing and economic development, which sustain the community. These programs are administered by band members who have been appointed managers of the programs, and by a band administrator who is a liaison between the various programs and the Band Council. In carrying

out its responsibilities, the Band Council relies on a contingent of lawyers and consultants, most of whom are non-Native.

The administration of the Band is facilitated through continuous meetings held by the Band Council.<sup>47</sup> An indication of band acculturation is that all business is conducted in English.<sup>48</sup> The pressure to conform to bureaucratic structures is a significant factor in the continuing loss of cultural practices and norms. I noted that the persistence of some cultural elements causes the Native people to think that they are living traditionally. For instance, band organization is based on communal ownership. Although individuals live on plots of land, they do not own the land in the Western sense; it is owned collectively. There are some businesses which are owned by individuals while some are owned collectively by band members.<sup>49</sup> It is this communal orientation which enabled the band members to benefit, more or less equally, from oil revenues. I say more-or-less because decision-making is not based on consensus. Decisions are made by members of the Band Council without input from the band members, so that the band members remain in the

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<sup>47</sup> The members of the Band Council are kept extremely busy in meetings, attending national meetings and conferences, and meetings with the various government officials. The band is not getting the benefit of educated and skilled Native professionals, because the family members of band council members are hired regardless of skills or qualifications.

<sup>48</sup> See a discussion by the RCAP report which argues that giving priority to English denotes a devaluing of the indigenous culture (RCAP:1996).

<sup>49</sup> But there is inequality; members of the band council always derive benefits from their position. For instance, although the land is supposed to be collectively owned, throughout the years certain families have amassed more land than others, so that many people do not have any land while others have acres of land.

dark about band matters and decisions.

The Plains Cree band has two main sources of funding provided by DIAND. Firstly, funding for programs, capital expenditures, operations and maintenance is provided to bands through transfer-agreements. The second main source of funds is oil revenues. In addition to farming by several families, the band has been able to establish some businesses. However, it is still not sufficient to provide employment for most of the band members. The band-controlled schools in the reserve have provided employment for band members in the roles of maintenance, security, teacher's aides, and in student transportation. But, still, many band members rely on welfare and social services. The people no longer live in traditional style dwellings such as tents and teepees,<sup>50</sup> but they live in housing which ranges from ranch-style to box-style houses.<sup>51</sup>

#### 'Indian Control' of Education Framework

The existence of band-controlled schools on the Plains Cree Reserve provided me with the opportunity to observe whether the principles of the NIB document, i.e. local control and parental responsibility, were being implemented. The way educational control was defined in this community was significant because it did not conform to descriptions in existing literature which

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<sup>50</sup> Most people lived in these earlier types of dwellings 50 to 60 years ago.

<sup>51</sup> Large houses were built at the time when the band had considerable oil revenue, but now housing that is being built is basically small box-style housing.

focussed on positive developments in the band-control educational process (Gardner:1986; Archibald:1995). Although the band has given a high priority to planning and business administration, an appreciation of the important role of education in the self-determination process is lacking. In this context, these attitudes reflect the attitudes of leadership at the national level where priorities have focussed on the issues of self-government, treaties, and the constitution.<sup>52</sup> Historical circumstances have made it difficult for many band leaders to appreciate the meaning of band control of Native education.<sup>53</sup>

One of the educators interviewed by Brian Wildcat comments on how difficult it was at the beginning to convince the Chief, and the Band Council members, that it was possible for them to run their own schools (Wildcat:1995:96). He raises the point that it is difficult for many Native communities to transcend the effects of hundreds of years of conditioning when they were not allowed to have input in the running of their own affairs. It was difficult to "change the mindset of our community people, for them to believe that we could ... operate our systems"

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<sup>52</sup> This is borne out by the Final RCAP Report (1996) which does not prioritize Native education. Instead its focus is on issues pertaining to self-government. I did not have an opportunity to review this Final Report which was completed in 1996, until the last few weeks of completing this dissertation. But I was disappointed by the replication of issues related to self-government and aboriginal rights. I believe that the Report should have focussed more on the fundamental role of education in the drive for self-determination.

<sup>53</sup> The alienation of many Native parents on the issue of Native education is extremely significant and it must be acknowledged and addressed. Previous chapters have attempted to provide the reasons for this alienation. For instance, educators Lorna B. Williams and June Wyatt argue that the "alienation of Native communities from schools is often deeply rooted" and is often a constraint to community involvement (Williams & Wyatt:1986:213).

(Wildcat:1995:96). Jerry Paquette(1986) and Richard King(1987) record the same lack of educational involvement in the bands they studied. In addition, economic deprivation makes it difficult for Native people to give priority to the political realities involved in the control of Native education. As Wildcat explains, when parents are struggling with immediate survival concerns, local control is not high on their list of priorities (Wildcat:1995:76). Existing literature has shown that the bands that have been successful in educational control had band leaders and membership who were committed to Native educational control (Irwin:1992; Gardner:1996). What emerged is that when the band had an opportunity to liberate itself from historical colonial domination, it chose to let itself continue to be dominated by non-Native people who occupy key leadership positions in the band-operated school system.<sup>54</sup>

It is informative to note that cultural institutions such as churches and schools of the Plains Cree Reserve were controlled by outsiders. For instance, the buildings constructed in the reserve are modelled on Western European type buildings. There is nothing distinctively Native about them. Colonial influences can be seen in the way the Native cultural centre was built. It is reminiscent of a residential school recreation hall; a large

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<sup>54</sup> What should be noted is that having Native people in positions of authority does not necessarily result in positive cultural developments. That is why we need to go beyond appearances and discover other problems and dynamics which constrain the First Nations control of First Nations education movement.

picture of the Queen hangs over the mantle. I was informed that this painting had been done by a Native artist. There were no pictures of former chiefs or leaders. It makes one wonder why they call it a "cultural centre."

Native elders achieved prominence in the 1970's. They regained their rightful position as purveyors of wisdom and cultural knowledge (Couture:1995; Couture:1985); and they now play a central role in the healing and decolonization of Native communities. The respect for and support of elders by a community is an indicator of the cultural health of the community. In the Plains Cree community, although there are still several elders who perform in ceremonies and pow wows, they do not play a prominent role in the governance of the community.

#### Establishment of Schools on Reserves

The residential school, which had been established in the 1880's on the Plains Cree reserve, was phased out in the late 1960's. It was some time before the religious group left for good. After the residential school closed, the remaining nuns and priests built a day school, and a boarding school, even though most of the students had transferred to provincial schools in town under the integration policy which began about this time. But the federal day school was forced to close when the reserves that it served began to take control of their own education. What remains are a Church and personnel such as priests, etc. The few remaining nuns left about three years ago. On the Plains

Cree Reserve a day school serving students from elementary to Grade Nine had been established by the Seventh Day Adventists. The authority for the school was transferred to the Plains Cree Reserve in 1989 when it assumed control over its education. The contradictions which exist in the reserve are difficult to fathom unless explanatory theories have been developed, and unfortunately these theories do not exist. I did find that you have to look behind the 'rhetoric' of Native leaders who argue for the importance of education and yet do not support it in practice.<sup>55</sup> Littlechild discusses the motivations that lie behind a band's decision to take control of education. One of them is the advantages that can be gained by controlling education funding. And there are advantages, the main one being the ability to control the way the money is spent. Judging the practices of the band in this community, I am inclined to believe that they were motivated by the control of funding rather than the opportunity to control their own education. At least this is one explanation for the contradictions that exist in the reserve.

At the present time, the Plains Cree Band has four schools: a Kindergarten/Primary, an Elementary, a Junior High School, and a Community School. A High School is being built and will be

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<sup>55</sup> In her article "Values-Spoken and Values-Lived: Female African Americans' Educational Experiences in Rural North Carolina," Maike Philipsen distinguishes between what is said and what is carried out in practice. Her analysis can be very useful in understanding the way minority students deal with the contradictions in their everyday lives (Philipsen:1993:419).

completed within the next three or four years.<sup>56</sup> At the moment, Grade Nine graduates have to transfer to schools in nearby towns. The Primary and Elementary schools which accommodate approximately two hundred students each are full to capacity, and many students attend various provincial schools in the area.

#### Band Control Process- Models of Governance

In order to establish band-controlled schools, individual Reserves negotiate agreements with the Department of Indian Affairs.<sup>57</sup> In this process, bands have a number of options in terms of governing agreements. In a study of Alberta band controlled schools, Bruce Littlechild identifies and discusses several of these options (Littlechild:1995). It is not possible to discuss all the options, except as they relate to the Plains Cree Reserve.

Littlechild outlines various pieces of legislation which would apply to the bands depending on which governance model was chosen by the bands (Littlechild:1995:74). A model which is significant is one where the band applies for incorporation as a "Society", a registered non-profit organization recognized under

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<sup>56</sup> I was able to observe the way the non-Native consultant had a difficult time trying to arrange meetings with the band on the building of the high school; the lack of interest jeopardized the building of this school.

<sup>57</sup> The explanation of the "myth of Indian control" by Karen Kouri is instructive; she explains that "... control of education was formally with the band council and the local Indian community through its elected representatives at each level. The appearance of 'Indian control' was created in this way. But the realities of control were quite different. Educational policies in general for Indian bands were framed by DIAND. DIAND controlled the budget. Effective decision-making at the local level over the school system of the Band was largely made by non-Indian professionals trained in standard administrative, managerial and educational practices" (Kouri:1983:46). But we need to go beyond this and recognize that Indian bands ensure they have some control. They have control over how the money is spent once it is transferred to them.

provincial statutes. The issue of incorporation according to provincial statutes is significant. I was informed by the band administrator of the Plains Cree Reserve that all bands are expected to incorporate in the future, and they will have their own boards, etc. An incorporated society receives funds directly from the DIAND and not through Band Administration. Littlechild states that incorporation prevents the band from using education funds for other purposes. Although authority for the Board comes from the Chief and Council, adherence to provincial charters and statutes minimizes interference by the Chief and Council, as happens in other models.<sup>58</sup> The Council is able to monitor the activities of the Board by having one of its Councillors on the Board. In this case, the Education Director acts as the Chief Executive Officer of the Board and oversees the Board's operations (Littlechild:1995:75). What this means is that the Education Authority which opts for this arrangement is bound to provincial legal statutes and acts. The difference is that the education boards have more autonomy from the band in the running of their schools and in decision-making. The 'trade-off' is control by the province which regulates their every action. Bands which have not incorporated have more autonomy from the province but are under the control of band councils.

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<sup>58</sup> For instance, Denis R. Hall discusses the issue of conflict of interest on the part of members of the Band Council. He states: "The real authority in 'all matters' of government or reserve is firmly held by band councils. This sets the stage for conflict of interest situations where individual band councillors charged with the management of other reserve programs are able to redirect and veto educational spending and initiatives ..."(Hall:1992:61).

The Plains Cree Chief and Council chose to establish an appointed Education Committee. During the period I was there, the Education Committee was made up of six members: three Councillors and three members from the community appointed by the Chief and Council. The Education Committee derives its powers from the Chief and Council and received its delegated authority through a Band Council Resolution. Instead of an Education Director, an "Education Manager" administers the operations of the Education Department and coordinates the affairs of the Education Committee. The Education Committee, together with the Education Director, develops the budget for the school operations and maintenance, essentially deciding how the fiscal resources will be distributed. The yearly budget is then presented to the Band Council for ratification. The fiscal resources are forwarded directly to the Band Council by DIAND. The resources are administered by a central accounting office set up to administer all programs. The Band Council has ultimate control over the educational fiscal resources.

In theory, the Education Committee and Education Manager are given a considerable amount of decision-making power in hiring and firing of education support staff and teachers, in the operation and maintenance of the schools, and in the operation of student transportation. But, as will be demonstrated, in practice, control of the schools is left to the principals and

teachers.<sup>59</sup> Events that occurred during the year I was engaged in observing the community indicated that the band is in the process of changing the committee authority structure. There was an election and the former Chief and Education Chairman were voted out.<sup>60</sup> The Education Committee was phased out and statements were made to the effect that authority and responsibility should rest with the Chief and Council. The process is evolving, and it is difficult to forecast which direction it will go.

#### Relationship of Band Council with the Schools

Although they may change the governing structure of the education component, it will be difficult to change the role definition of the education staff and administrators. This is because the operation of the schools has been left to the Principals and the teachers. The schools are expected to follow provincial programs, curricula, and other educational standards. Diane Longboat explains that the DIAND lacks a philosophical basis, and lacks policies on the issues of "testing, student achievement, curriculum, and evaluation." Therefore it adopted provincial standards as guidelines for its own policies.

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<sup>59</sup> It is fortunate that the schools are able to operate amidst the turmoil that is a constant state of affairs.

<sup>60</sup> What is unfortunate is that the former Chief was advocating the hiring of their own educated people or professionals. The election demonstrated it was not possible to have continuity in policy-making. The institution of an Education Director and a Board that is autonomous from band politics would facilitate continuity. As long as the present situation continues the non-Native administrators and principal have nothing to fear. Any changes that were proposed were lost through the election of a new Chief.

(Longboat:1987:38). The way educational administration and management was defined by the Plains Cree Band Council indicates a lack of interest in educational matters. The relationship between the band and the schools is the same as described by Karen Kouri who wrote of the "peculiar lack of relation between the local school committee and the Band Council" (Kouri:1983:50). This lack of connection was reflected in their relationship with the schools. The principals have voiced their desire to have some interest shown by the Education Manager and the Education Committee members, by dropping into the schools, attending functions, etc.<sup>61</sup>

Although there was an Education Committee, and an Education Manager, these entities did not interfere with what they considered to be "professional knowledge," such issues as the teaching, the curriculum, testing, and the programs. The Education Manager, who was not a high school graduate, was reluctant to interfere with the teachers who, she stated, are "the professionals."<sup>62</sup> The dilemma is that the educational staff looks to the Native educational authorities to show leadership, while the authority expects the professional staff to

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<sup>61</sup> I found that the principals need the support of some kind of an authority in dealing with students and staff.

<sup>62</sup> This is a situation where cultural values are used to explain that what was most important when it came to the Education Manager was "people skills." In Native traditions, people came first; anything else is not important if it means turning away from people in need. For instance, see the way teachers were hired in the community studied by Karen Kouri (1983). See also the article by David A. Lynes where he discusses the conflict inherent in rational bureaucratic structures and the Native cultural value system (Lynes:1995).

"use their professional expertise (Paquette:1986:36).<sup>63</sup> A non-Native ex-DIAND employee was recruited as superintendent and as a consultant to help out the Education Manager. The 'Consultant' takes on a tremendous amount of responsibility through default. That is, because, in his 'temporary role' as superintendent, he is expected to do everything.<sup>64</sup> Jerry Paquette provides an explanation which clarifies the practices of the Plains Cree Band. Paquette points out that classroom practice and policies have traditionally been seen as the "domain of the teacher as *practicing professional*" (Paquette:1986:35). For various reasons, "classroom practice and policies were generally left to the individual teacher's discretion" (Paquette:1986:37). Although this practice no longer exists in mainstream schools, it has continued in Native communities which do not have the required control and expertise. Thus the Plains Cree band was merely following the traditional practice of letting the "professionals" run the schools. Paquette has argued that, apart from a few reserves which had access to "fiscal and administrative expertise," most Native communities lack the necessary expertise to be able to assert substantive control over

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<sup>63</sup> See also King (1987) who found the same dilemma in the study of a Native community.

<sup>64</sup> In the process of taking over, many bands solved the problem of the lack of expertise by hiring ex-employees of the Department of Indian Affairs, employees who were being released through downsizing. The inside knowledge and expertise of these employees were valuable. There is nothing wrong with this arrangement as long as it is a short term arrangement. The problem is that the Plains Cree band has become very dependent on this person, who is supposed to train them to take over the responsibility.

the educational programs.<sup>65</sup> Therefore, it could be argued that, in this context, it would be easier for band members to have the 'professionals' manage these programs.<sup>66</sup> Paquette describes this as "policy-making by default, in a word, non-decision" (Paquette:1986:36).<sup>67</sup> The result is an arrangement in which the majority of non-Native administrators and teachers have control over the education of Native children by default. There was a need to find explanations of the contradictions. I found that it is not only because of a lack of expertise; it is also related to educational goals. The educational goals of Native communities are not clear cut. Native communities are confronted by challenges regarding the kind of schooling they should have for their children. Not all agree that Native culture and language should be taught in schools. For instance, at a meeting the chairman of the Education Committee made the statement, "If we go for a Native curriculum we will lose our funding." Without the necessary understanding and expertise by the band members, this

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<sup>65</sup> My studies revealed that the lack of experience is not a reflection of Native ability but it is a reflection of the degree of oppression that Native people were subjected to through policies based on domination and subjugation. This study also found that the conflicts and contradictions are not strictly the result of cultural differences but they are the products of centuries of colonization and marginalization. As mentioned before the same point is made by Taylor, Crago, & McAlpine (1993:177).

<sup>66</sup> Taylor et al provide an apt explanation of this situation: "In a sense, Aboriginal communities that are in the process of adjusting to local empowerment confront the problem of replacing one form of inexperience with another. Mainstream educators in Aboriginal communities usually lack experience in terms of the Aboriginal culture, whereas Aboriginal decision makers lack experience in the field of education" (Taylor, Crago, & McAlpine:1993:177).

<sup>67</sup> It is worth exploring the issues raised by Rupert Ross in his book *Dancing with a Ghost, Exploring Indian Reality*, where he discusses the way cultural codes, which are thousands of years old, have constrained Native people from breaking the code of non-interference and respect of individuals, from speaking out and telling others what to do (Ross:1992).

seems to be a common concern among parents.<sup>68</sup> Many parents are sending their children to various schools in nearby towns.

### Social Demography of the Schools

Within the past year the number of Native principals has increased. Three schools out of four schools now have Native principals. The kindergarten/primary school (K - three) has a Native principal. The population of the school is 428 Native students, most of them Cree-speaking. This means 19 classes with 23 teaching staff and 20 support staff. Out of 23 teachers there are two teachers who are Native, and one Cree Language teacher is also Native. Support staff is comprised of Teacher's Aides most of whom are Native, and two counsellors one of whom is Native. There is one Native librarian for the small library located in the school. The 'operation and maintenance' staff is comprised of members of the band.

The elementary school, Grades four to six (recently split from Junior High), has a non-Native principal. As of November the student population was 236 Native students. There are 15 certified teachers, one of them Native, two Cree Language teachers, one staff member for physical education, one non-Native computer teacher, one non-Native librarian, who is the wife of the principal of that school, and two Native counsellors.

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<sup>68</sup> Paquette writes about what he terms "parity paradox," where Native communities are driven to look for "parity with provincial standards and direct across-the-board comparison to the provincial model of education" (Paquette:1986:241).

The recently established Junior High School has a Native Principal. The total school population is 142 day students and 23 students who are taking home schooling. Although I did not get the number of teaching staff, there are four teacher's aides and one computer teacher. The Community School also has a Native principal. There are severe problems in terms of attendance. While the enrolment is high in September, students gradually drop out - by the end of semester the student population was 40.

#### Plains Cree Youth and Schooling

Because of the lack of educational concern in the ruling hierarchy, the Band Council, Native students are left with the responsibility of dealing with the contradictions, insensitive teaching practices, and irrelevant curriculum and textbooks.<sup>69</sup> Is it any wonder many of them drop out? While there are a lot of problems on the reserve, they are not documented or addressed. Jean Barman argues that the lifestyle of the family can interfere with or work against the children's education (Barman:1996:272). When a community is characterized by family breakdown, abuse and violence which are the legacies of residential schools, the children become victims. The adults and children are dealing with the loss of familial and cultural institutions which were central to their very existence. For instance, if the family was

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<sup>69</sup> This idea was introduced by Barbara Harrison (1982). In her critique of the lack of preparation of non-Native teachers she observed that "It was the Yup'ik children who were left to resolve the conflicting expectations between the way they were expected to learn in informal settings and the way they were expected to learn in school (Harrison:1982; cited in Stairs:1995:146).

the center of the community then the breakdown of the family constitutes a greater loss for Native people. If the family was fundamental to their survival, it could be argued that educational statistics are not going to improve until the family is restored, and that the needs of the child are met. The RCAP report states:

The family in Aboriginal societies stood between the individual and the larger society, playing an interpretive or mediating role. It helped individuals understand and respond to society's expectations, and it helped Aboriginal society engage individuals in constructive ways and discipline them should they venture in a course that conflicted with prevailing social values and expectations of behavior (RCAP:1996).<sup>70</sup>

Because of historical experiences, many parents and grandparents of today's Native children are unable to perform the functions associated with the family (Duran & Duran:1995). Therefore, according to the RCAP report, Native children suffer from identity confusion and impairment of learning when they are reared "by parents who are insecure in who they are, what their responsibilities are, and how they should fulfil them" (RCAP(2):1996:19). The other problem identified by the RCAP report is that a disconnection is continually reproduced because the family is no longer able to "interpret the world" for the children (RCAP(2):1996:17). Problems of communication with parents need to be recognized. Colin A. Thomson writes that

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<sup>70</sup> See Volume three of the Final RCAP Report (1996), Chapter 2 entitled the Family, page 17.

"Because Native people have had little or no influence in  
→ deciding their schools' curricula, and often no control over a  
choice of textbooks or teaching staff, they often regard the  
educational system as an "outside" institution (Thomson:1978-  
79:46).

Therefore, it is important that institutional support be  
provided for the welfare of Native children through a school  
which takes their lived experience into consideration. The  
problem is that formal education and infrastructure is not  
structured for this kind of support. The motivation behind the  
NIB policy paper was to enable Native people to construct schools  
which would benefit and empower their students. Many Native  
bands are developing these types of institutions (Williams &  
Wyatt:19887; Battiste:1986).

Like other Native communities, there is not much of a future  
for the youth who make up over half of the population of the  
Plains Cree Reserve.<sup>71</sup> The Superintendent provided the following  
figures: in 1995 the total reserve population was 4,900. In  
1992 there were 1600 children ages 0 - 9; 985 children ages 9 to  
20; 791 adults ages 20 - 29; 538 ages 30 - 39; 129 ages 50 to 59;  
108 seniors over 60. Although there are no official statistics,  
people are aware that many young people are not attending school.

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<sup>71</sup> Overcrowding, predominantly younger population, poverty, and unemployment are issues  
which are becoming major problems in most reserves. Statistics Canada reported in October-  
November 1995 that the youngest population is found on Reserves, "Registered Indians living on  
reserve represented the most youthful population of any group with nearly 40% aged 15 years or  
less and 20% aged 15 to 24 years" (Statistics Canada:1995).

It is known that many young women drop out because of pregnancy. Unfortunately, the band does not keep records of the progress of students, or drop out rates, and although I attempted to obtain some figures I was not successful. The problem that emerged is that special effort is not being expended to provide innovative programs for children from problem homes.

### Formal Schooling in the Plains Cree Reserve and the Hidden Curriculum

To maintain their accreditation, the Plains Cree Schools are required to adopt an Alberta approved Program of Study, and to employ Alberta Education certified teachers to instruct the courses. Therefore, in order to understand the meaning of schooling for Native children in this community it is necessary to have a knowledge of the Western education system. First, it must be noted that the philosophical and cultural foundations of this system emerged from the same system which was used to destroy Native cultures and languages not that long ago. It is necessary to understand that the role and function of the dominant education system is the transmission of Western ideologies, values and beliefs; that education is not neutral (Apple:1996; Giroux & McLaren:1989; Banks:1993a).<sup>72</sup> It is also crucial to understand that the *curriculum* is integral to the transmission of these ideologies, values, and beliefs. Because

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<sup>72</sup> This is confirmed by James Ryan who states that "The organization of schooling in Canada follows the conventions of Euro-Canadian society" (Ryan:1989:397).

"its content is, for the most part, directly related to what form of knowledge and content is recognized as legitimate and necessary for those who dictate curricular decisions"

(Darder:1991:19). Oppositional theories identified the function of a *hidden curriculum* which emphasized "consensus, social conformity, and stability" thus perpetuating the dominant culture and world view" (Darder:1991:20). Henry Giroux provides a useful explanation when he states:

The dominant school culture functions not only to legitimate the interests and values of dominant groups; it also functions to marginalize and disconfirm knowledge forms and experiences that are extremely important to subordinate and oppressed groups. This can be seen in the way in which school curricula often ignore the histories of women, racial minorities, and the working class ... (Aronowitz & Giroux:1985; cited in Darder:1991:20).

In their discussion of the culture of the school in an aboriginal community, Taylor et al describe the problem which is central to Native educational experience. They point out the "profound discontinuity between the culture of school and that of the home and community" (Taylor, Crago, & McAlpine:1993:178). I believe that this quote expressed the main problem confronting Native students as well as parents. The school culture is discontinuous for many reasons. Not only are Native students not learning about their culture, but the system promotes alien values such as individualism and competition (Goodman:1992). In this context, the school is part of a process which "is methodically transforming not only [student's] day-to-day activities, but also

their values and world views" (Ryan:1991-92:95).

A study of the school culture will reveal that the activities promoted in the schools pressure the students not only to think in terms of, but to believe in, the "individualizing philosophy" of the school.<sup>73</sup> As James Ryan argues, "The individualization that Innu in the community and Innu children in the school have come to live with induces them to turn away from their traditional communal spirit and accept a more self-oriented approach to life" (Ryan:1991:94). While Ryan is writing about the Innu, his remarks apply to other Native people. Ryan points out that the "meticulous regulation of space and time, [in the schools] takes on a much more concentrated character" than found in the community. In the Plains Cree Schools the main practices are regulation through teaching and curriculum, discipline, and evaluation. One of the discontinuities identified by Taylor et al is "punctuality, turn-taking, verbal testing of learning, and individual demonstration of knowledge" (Taylor, Crago, & McAlpine:1993:178). In order to resolve problems related to attendance and learning, incentives were instituted for high marks and perfect attendance.<sup>74</sup> As a supplement to learning, the

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<sup>73</sup> See the text by Jesse Goodman for a critical discussion of how the education valorizes individualism (Goodman:1992).

<sup>74</sup> What stands out is the lack of questioning of the system. For instance, in his study of several bands, Bruce Littlechild writes about the adoption of certain incentives by two band systems that he studied. He writes that the bands "opted to develop instead school incentive programs to keep the kids in school and reward them for their achievements. Examples include rewards for academic excellence, student allowances for perfect attendance, individual academic achievement programs for students ...." (Littlechild:1995:65). This problem has to be addressed and explored, because I found that educators do need incentives. Because of the lack of alternative practices, I supported these kind of incentives while on an Education board. I guess

students are taken on field trips to places such as science centres and zoos, etc.

### The Role of Teachers

Although the band has the authority to hire and fire teachers, the majority of teachers in the Plains Cree Schools are non-Native. The procedure is that the principals notify the members of the Education Committee to sit in on the teacher interview sessions. I was able to observe that most of the time they were not able to attend. Therefore, the hiring and evaluation of teacher performance is left to the principals. Essentially, the situation is no different than that found by Karen Kouri who wrote that "the local committee people had no training in interviewing, or evaluating professional trained teachers, they didn't know how to appraise teacher qualifications" (Kouri:1983:52). Control over the hiring of teachers is considered integral to the First Nations control of First Nations Education movement (NIB:1973). This option has played an important role in some Native communities as has been shown by other studies. For instance, in the study of the Seabird Community by Ethel Gardner, the band, which was in control and knowledgeable of its goals and objectives, was able to hire teachers who would conform to its requirements (Gardner:1986). Because the band had control initially it was

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the question is what kind of incentives should be adopted by Native schools.

able to dictate that the teachers, whether Native or non-Native, learn the local Native language and use it in their teaching. The Seabird Community demonstrated that it is necessary for the whole community to work together in order to gain, and maintain, control of its educational institutions. In the Plains Cree Community, the lack of support by the band council made it difficult for the few Native teachers to have an impact on its schools. It is true that the training of Native teachers may not have provided them with the necessary political consciousness. Unless Native teachers are able to attend the few existing Native teacher's programs, they are forced to attend the same schools as non-Native teachers.<sup>75</sup> Rick Hesch discusses an "internal contradiction" which, while it helps "produce some critically inquiring graduates" it also functions "to mediate between the biographical and lived experience of the new recruits to the teaching work force and Eurocentric state" (Hesch:1993:3). While some students might become agents for change, most "simply contribute to winning the consent of aboriginal people in a continued regime of racialized capitalism" (Hesch:1993:3).

In my observation of hiring practices, qualifications did not call for special cross-cultural or multi-cultural knowledge and skills. Applicants were judged by teaching skills and

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<sup>75</sup> Rick Hesch conducted a study of a particular teacher's education program in Saskatchewan. He identified numerous problems confronting teachers from minority groups. For instance, even if alternative forms of teaching are instituted, they bring students into "direct conflict with the Eurocentric administration and ideology embedded in their extended practicums" (Hesch:1993:2).

experience in general and their ability to build a rapport with students. The presence of non-Native teachers in the schools is accepted in the same way that everything about Western schooling is unquestioned. While concerns are expressed by individual Native parents, critical theoretical discourse regarding non-Native teachers in Native classrooms does not exist. The only option seemed to be to have individual teachers make innovations in the curriculum in an effort to include cultural material. I was informed by one Native teacher that teachers are overworked, that, even with the support of teacher's aides, they cannot be expected to spend time in creating culturally-relevant curricular teaching on the spot.<sup>76</sup> Ryan discusses the Western education framework which organizes the activities of teachers:

Teachers are required to follow school conventions -- time-tabling schemes, institutional hierarchy, evaluation procedures, and so on -- not merely because they are required to, but because these characteristics furnish possibilities that open avenues for teachers to fulfill desires that have arisen within a multitude of contexts both in and out of the school (Ryan:1989:397).

The biases of non-Native teachers have been extensively documented. For instance, Common & Frost point out that "Many teachers have intellectual or racial prejudices stemming from non-Native notions about the incapability of Native students" (Common & Frost:1994:165). The issue of non-Native teachers in

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<sup>76</sup> Also see Ryan's account of his experiences as a substitute teacher in an Innu school. He writes, "I went into the classroom initially believing I could find alternate ways to teach that would alleviate potential student stress. This was not to be the case. I found myself shackled to those teaching practices that I as a former student and teacher had been immersed in for years (Ryan:1989:399).

Native-controlled schools is a very important issue and will be discussed in the next chapter.

### Alberta Education Curriculum and Textbooks

The school day of the Native student in the Plains Cree Schools is taken up with the teaching of subjects which conform to the Alberta Education Guidelines, except for the one hour that is spent each day in a language learning class where he or she has an opportunity to learn the Cree language, and be taught about aspects of Native culture. The main curricular concern that has been articulated is that the curriculum does not take into consideration the lived reality and the cultural specificity of the Native child. Common & Frost have shown that the curriculum and teacher-student relationships are key factors in the drop-out problem (Common & Frost:1994:143). The following example will demonstrate that Native schools, in using provincial curricula, are using programs which do not fit into the reserve culture. This situation became clear in the adoption of a particular reading program at the Plains Cree Reserve Primary School, as will be demonstrated in the following section. The adoption of the reading program at this school revealed the lack of awareness or acknowledgement of the lived reality of the Native children from the Plains Cree Band.

For various reasons many Native people are caring for their grandchildren. Many grandparents are unable to read, and yet I found out that teachers, through its reading program called the

*Metra Companion Reading Program*, are sending form letters home with the students, letters which ask the parents or guardians to review a "Share Sheet" with the child.<sup>77</sup> The "Share Sheet" reviews things learned previously, and, as "the year progresses, they [share sheets] become more complex." The parents are required to complete forms regarding their child's progress. The letter instructs the child's parent or guardian to "Place the Share Sheets in a permanent file so they can be reread by your child. Make it a practice about once a month through the year to have your child re-read some of the stories on the Share Sheets."

It is obvious that the Companion Reading Program has been developed for middle-class homes where the parent might be fortunate to have a "permanent file" and the time and inclination to spend time with the child. But the program does not belong in the reserve. The alienation of many parents from the school culture must be recognized. An Alberta study on Native education reported that "Many parents do not know what is happening behind the doors of the classroom. They are normally shy and hold back" (Government of Alberta:1984:124).<sup>78</sup> The concern that was articulated by the Plain Cree primary school Native teacher is that children arriving at the Grade One level are not familiar

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<sup>77</sup> This information is derived from a form letter which is included with the Companion Reading Manual that I obtained from one of the teachers, who tells me that this is common practice.

<sup>78</sup> There are many people who feel shy and intimidated by Western institutions. I was able to observe this myself, and it makes me wonder how we can ever bridge the gap.

with books and reading. Taylor et al articulate the situation of Native parents:

Many Aboriginal parents have not themselves had a school experience that remotely resembles what their children are experiencing. Thus parents may have a difficult time supporting their children's educational experience. Furthermore, white, middle-class North American cultural patterns of guiding children's performance in preliteracy activities may not exist in Aboriginal homes (Taylor, Crago, & McAlpine:1993:178).

The use of the reading program in the primary school is an issue that needs to be explored further; in fact it would make a good case study on the use of middle-class material being used in aboriginal communities. The question that arises from this is, how can a Native-controlled school allow its teachers to send instructions home expecting parents or grandparents to spend so much time reading to the children, when it is possible the parents can't read or are not in command of the English language? Because family breakdown means that the children are not getting the care that they need, many of them are neglected. The use of the reading program raises totally unrealistic expectations which can have dire consequences. It is obvious the schools do not take into account the social and cultural environment of these children. As was told to me by a Native teacher, the children need a lot of attention, more like one-on-one, but as the teacher reported in an informal discussion, "with twenty-three students in my Grade One class I am unable to provide the attention they need, or they are unable to get at home." What has become

apparent is that the special needs of the children would be addressed through additional funding that would result in smaller classes.

The preceding chapters have shown that the historical experience of Native people has been misrepresentation of their cultures as primitive and inferior. Stereotypes based on the negative images of Native people were reproduced in history books which were used in residential schools and in provincial schools. Native students had to endure the ordeal of using textbooks which attacked them, their people, and their culture (LaRoque:1975; Lewis:1987). The representation of minorities takes many forms. For instance, Cameron McCarthy writes about a "system of representation and productions of media and popular culture and school texts that position minorities, women, and third world people in relation to dominant whites" (McCarthy:1993:297). This has contributed to self-hatred, low self-esteem and a high drop-out rate in the student population. The books that are used in the Plains Cree Schools are prescribed in the Alberta Education curriculum. In my brief review of four of these textbooks the impression that emerged was the predominant image of white people and their society. This was not alleviated by the addition of blacks and other minorities. The subject of residential schools was covered in the history book, *Early Canada, Kanata The Canadian Studies Series*, by Emily Odynak, which recounts the story of how missionaries came to help Indians through

Christianization. What is damaging in this rendition is that it is one one-sided; it does not mention how lands were appropriated and cultures destroyed.

#### Language Instruction - Cree as Second Lanaguage

I was informed by one of the Cree Instructors that young people under the age of twenty do not speak their mother tongue, that it is not being passed on to the younger generation. There are certified Cree Instructors in all the schools. The problem that I saw is that the language is not spoken at home, and it has been stressed by language analysts that there has to be community and family support (Kirkness:1989). A Cree language curriculum and texts have been developed in the past few years by one of the Cree women who has a Masters Degree. The textbooks which are for Grades one to seven, are being marketted to other communities and educational institutions. Funding for language programs is provided by DIAND. I found that the Province of Alberta has a language policy wherein it is able to support the efforts of provincial schools and Native communities.

#### Plains Cree Students Attending Provincial Schools

Many Native students attend provincial schools in nearby towns. There are various reasons given for this practice. A major reason is that many Native parents feel that their children can obtain a better education in a provincial school.<sup>79</sup> The fact

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<sup>79</sup> As mentioned before, Paquette explains that the need for parity with provincial schools influences many parents to opt for provincial schooling (Paquette:1986:241).

that there are many problems associated with these schools has not deterred Native parents.<sup>80</sup> A government newsletter stated that in 1987 over 23,000 Native students attended provincial schools.

A problem for bands is the tuition agreements signed between DIAND and provincial school boards for each child attending these schools. For many years, Native people did not have any control over these agreements, although this is beginning to change. Some bands are beginning to take over the administration and control of tuition agreements. Another problem is the lack of representation of Native parents on provincial school boards, and thus an inability to exert influence on the education of their children in these schools. In 1987 the Province of Alberta developed a Policy Statement regarding Native Education. The Policy Statement, which was introduced in the legislature, was issued as a policy by the Government of Alberta rather than by Alberta Education.<sup>81</sup> A result of this was the development of a component of Alberta Education entitled *Native Education Project*, which has offices and staff. The mandate of this project is to function as a support group for provincial schools through the development and publication of materials and resources. This encompasses Native language development and cultural awareness.

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<sup>80</sup> A major problem is streaming of students to non-academic routes, and the designation of Native students as "special education students" because it means more funding. This was reported to me by concerned Native parents.

<sup>81</sup> This was in response to the Gitter Report of 1984 mentioned earlier.

The meaning and impact of the initiatives by the Alberta government on Native students need to be explored and assessed. Although the policy of the Alberta Education system articulates a determination to respond to the needs of Native students, the question is: how much influence can they exert over the individual schools board across the province? An initiative of this project is to provide funding for Native home-school liaison programs, which are situated in various provincial schools. The Plains Cree Nation also provides a Student Support Officer. Many students from the Prairie Cree Reserve attend provincial schools. For instance, a 1993 document stated that the total for that year was 447 students attending twenty different schools in the area.

#### Postsecondary Education at the Plains Cree Reserve

The band has control over, and administers, postsecondary education. A separate postsecondary education committee was appointed by the Chief and Council. There is more autonomy exercised by this committee; that is, there is minimal band interference over the funds. As of December 1996, 160 postsecondary students were being funded. This is a positive development for the future of the reserve. It means that the decision-makers and administrators of the band will be better educated than previously.

#### Conclusion

In conclusion, my observation of this community led me to believe that, despite external constraints such as inadequate

funding and conformity to the provincial curriculum, bands have a great opportunity to develop schools which can benefit and empower their community. But there are key elements that have to exist in the reserves. The most important is the presence of committed and knowledgeable people who have the support of the band leadership and the community. The problem is that this is not happening in this community. But there are other positive developments which indicate that there is a cultural revival of sorts. Ceremonial dances, such as Pow Wows, Sundances, Round Dances, and Traditional Feasts, continue to play a prominent role in the community. A tradition of holding a Feast at the beginning of, and end of, the school year has been established. This is a good mechanism for creating cultural awareness and can have a positive impact on the students. What this dissertation hopes to accomplish is to identify factors which constrain the development of Native schools and to develop strategies which will address the historical problem of low education levels. There is a need for theoretical explanations of successful strategies for achieving the principles of local control and parental involvement. The next chapter is devoted to critically analyzing the various challenges that confront Native educators, and it provides a discussion of strategies which can be developed to address these challenges.

## CHAPTER VII

### DREAMS, VISIONS, AND RESISTANCE- THROUGH A POSTCOLONIAL AND SACRED CIRCLE PERSPECTIVE

The sacred circle is an ancient symbol used by almost all Native people of North and South America. Just like a mirror can be used to see things not normally visible...the sacred circle can be used to help us see or understand things we can't quite see or understand because they are ideas and not physical objects (Bopp, Bopp, Peter & Baker:1988b:62 cited in Regnier:1995:387)

The Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP) reported that current educational policies for Native people have failed to provide the tools for young people to survive in this society. The Royal Commission found:

the majority of Aboriginal youth do not complete high school. They leave the school system without the requisite skills for employment, and without the language, and cultural knowledge of their people. Rather than nurturing the individual, the schooling experience typically erodes identity and self-worth (RCAP:1996).<sup>1</sup>

Yet statistics show that Native youth outnumber Native adults; in 1994 more than 50% of the Registered Indian population was under 25 years of age (DIAND:1996).<sup>2</sup> The RCAP report, in its 'Economic Development,' section states that the rapid increase in youth population means that thousands of Native youth will be entering the labour market over the next two decades. One estimate is that "more than 300,000 jobs will need to be created for aboriginal people in the period 1991 to 2016 to accommodate the

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<sup>1</sup> See Volume three of the Final RCAP Report (1996), Chapter 5 entitled Education, page 434.

<sup>2</sup> The statistics cited here are from the report *Basic Departmental Data 1995*, but issued under Issue No. 12 - May 1996.

growth in the aboriginal working age" (RCAP:1996).<sup>3</sup>

The above statistics have serious implications for the survival of the First Nations, as education is considered to be a primary mechanism for decolonization, political change or social transformation by postcolonial countries. The problem is that First Nations leaders do not recognize the crucial role of education in the decolonization and self-government process. It has been established in previous chapters that Western education was an instrument of domination and oppression for Native people. But it has also been shown that education can be an instrument for liberation (Freire:1970; Giroux:1983; Simon:1987). RCAP pays lip service to what it terms "transformative education," in which it devotes one paragraph to a discussion of critical pedagogy (RCAP(3):1996:482). This is indicative of the priorities of this multi-million dollar study. It is disappointing that it replicates the priorities of the male-dominated Native leadership in its focus on self-government and economic development. While there has been a concerted effort to assume control of Native education by the First Nations, they have not acknowledged and accepted the fact that education is about power and knowledge; that education is indispensable in today's society; and a people cannot hope to survive unless they ensure their total involvement and participation in this institution. Paulo Freire saw

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<sup>3</sup> See Volume 2, Part 2, of the Final RCAP Report (1996), Chapter 5, page 775.

education as a "struggle for meaning and a struggle over power relations" (Freire:1985:xiii). Henry Giroux describes Freire's view of education as:

the terrain where power and politics are given a fundamental expression, since it is where meaning, desire, language, and values engage and respond to the deeper beliefs about the very nature of what it means to be human, to dream, and to name and struggle for a particular future and a way of life (Freire:1985:xiii).

As part of the decolonization process, Native educators need to critically assess the way Native education is defined, and they need to develop the necessary theoretical and analytical educational frameworks which will incorporate the changes that have occurred since European contact. In order to address contemporary problems in Native communities, I advocate the use of a *Sacred Circle perspective* as well as a *postcolonial perspective*.<sup>4</sup> I argue that while the Sacred Circle Perspective was predominant in precontact indigenous societies, there is a need to address the great imbalances created by European contact through a postcolonial perspective. This provides the space for critical discourses which were not necessary and did not exist in

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<sup>4</sup> The concept of 'Sacred Circle' is raised by Robert Regnier who defines it as "a mirror which serves as a system of meaning reflecting the essential interconnectedness, harmony, and balance among all beings" (Regnier:1995:387). The problem that I saw with its use by Regnier is that he does not recognize contemporary change in Native reality, a reality which is characterized by the subordination and oppression of Native people. Therefore, I conceptualized the use of the Sacred Circle as representing the need to preserve our traditional values in a world which is characterized by oppression and chaos; and I argue that these changes can be addressed through the use of oppositional theories as reflected in a postcolonial perspective.

the precontact period.<sup>5</sup>

Definition of Control by the National Indian Brotherhood (NIB)  
Policy Paper

Because of the importance and centrality of the NIB Position Paper in the definition of Indian control and the establishment of band-controlled schools, we need to critically explore the way that Indian control was defined and implemented by the NIB and DIAND. NIB's demand for local control and parental involvement was long overdue. It proved to be a catalyst for change, as it provided the impetus for the Federal government to transfer educational control to Native bands. This Position Paper played a pivotal role in the establishment of band-controlled schools and was described as providing "solid philosophical direction" to Native educators (Archibald:1986:35). The goals and objectives regarding the role of Native education are clear. The NIB Position Paper stated:

We want education to provide the setting in which our children can develop the fundamental attitudes and values which have an honoured place in Indian tradition and culture ... We believe that if an Indian child is fully aware of the

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<sup>5</sup> There is a need to explore the role of critical thought in precontact Indigenous societies. The work of Rupert Ross raises the issue of the lack of criticism in precontact societies, i.e. "codes of conduct" relating to non-interference. These codes have survived in many native communities and make it difficult for Native people to take critical action against injustice and violent behavior. (Ross:1992). Through reading Ross, I discovered that the issue of non-interference in Native communities must be critically reviewed. In its study of Native suicide, the RCAP also raises this issue. The report claims that "the stigma associated with open communication of personal feelings and the expression of grief" must be eliminated (RCAP:1995:85). Their recommendation is a "reconsideration of traditional norms of non-interference where they might interfere with whole-community responsibility for those at risk" (RCAP:1995:85). The ethic of non-interference continues to play a strong role in many Native communities. And while I believe it is a valuable ethic, Native reality has changed. Native communities now have the worst type of interference in the form of abuse and violence. Violent behavior was never part of traditional cultures. There is now a need to take action against behaviors which encroach on the rights and well-being of individuals and communities.

important Indian values he will have reason to be proud of our race and of himself as an Indian (NIB:1973:1-2).

The following critique is not about the goals and objectives of this Position Paper. It is to argue that the historical and political relationship between the Native people and the dominant government did not provide the context through which educational control could be exercised. The result is that the NIB Position Paper did not address the fact that assuming control was an enormous undertaking with political and ideological implications. As the following arguments will demonstrate, postcolonial, anti-racist, and critical pedagogical perspectives would reveal that this undertaking constituted involvement in political and ideological relations and practices. And, as has been argued in this study, the necessary critical discourses, which would inform the Native bands as to the complexities involved, did not exist. The movement by Native bands to establish band-controlled schools is a decolonization process. (It should be noted that the decolonization of Third World countries occurred in conjunction with the emergence of postcolonial discourses.) While the NIB is not to be faulted for historical and cultural circumstances which prevented the development of critical discourses, it is significant that the necessary foundation or framework for decolonization did not exist.

The definition and implementation of the Indian control of Indian education Policy Paper was characterized by confusion and

contradiction. For instance, the expectation by the NIB for 'training' to be provided by DIAND reveals the confusion inherent in the Policy Paper. On the one hand, the NIB was promoting the extrication of Native people from the educational domination of DIAND, and yet the organization expected the DIAND to provide training and funding. A critique by Peter Koens is also useful because he points out the confusion that accompanied the DIAND's responses to the Position Paper. Koens states that the DIAND espoused philosophies which were antithetical as it "utilized a synthesis of essentialism and reconstructionism to meet its educational mandate" (Koens:1989:37). Koens also points out the Department's contradictory objectives when it espoused "educational objectives of assimilation and integration within a system of increased local autonomy" simultaneously (Koens:1989:37). The lack of a clear postcolonial discourse to guide the development of philosophies and strategies demonstrates that the historical colonial context did not play a significant role in the assumption of educational control.<sup>6</sup> The result has been the acceptance of, and insertion of, a "romanticized and limited interpretation of Indian culture" into the classrooms (Koens:1989:38).

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<sup>6</sup> See Margaret S. Ward (1986) for a discussion on the way DIAND thwarted the efforts of NIB from developing a nationally-coordinated comprehensive plan of action. An interesting development is the DIAND's literal interpretation of the NIB Position Paper's call for "local control" and which established a pattern. That is, the Federal Government recognized "only individual Bands as initiators and implementors of all educational matters;" it refused to recognize NIB as the national body for the implementation of the policy (Ward:1986:20).

## Native Education and Western European Education - The Integration of Two Realities - Two World Views

The postcolonial tradition arose as a reaction against historical colonialism and imperialism. As was argued in Chapter IV, these theories revealed the centrality of colonialism and imperialism in the oppression of racial minorities. Postcolonial and anti-racist perspectives are useful for the contemporary analysis of Native reality because they deal with change as well as with control and power. Native people have been confronted by a dual reality ever since European contact. This dual reality is manifested in all areas of Native experience through an interweaving of the political and cultural dimensions. One of the problems is both ontological and epistemological. Native people, emerging from traditions and a world view grounded in spirituality, have been forced to live in a society characterized by a scientific world view. The other problem is political, and it pertains to the fact that Native people are oppressed on the basis of race. Postcolonial theories have demonstrated that a fundamental problem which affects minorities is political. Their reality is determined by their subordination to the dominant society. Any change or reform occurs within this relationship, and Native people are attempting to assume control of their own educational institutions within this context.

Assuming control of Native education is about knowledge, control and power. It is about addressing centuries of

oppression wherein Native knowledges, cultures, and languages were either suppressed or maligned. The movement to take control has resulted in attempts to develop Native curricula and practices within a dominant societal framework.<sup>7</sup> On the one hand, the question that confronts Native people in the development of curricula is how to resolve the dichotomy between the scientific world view and the spiritual world view. On the other hand, the question is how this can be achieved within the dominant Western education system.

In order to get a proper perspective, we need to interrogate the way the Western education system determines the implementation of the Indian control of Indian education policy. This domination needs to be distinguished from the control exercised by the DIAND, although they both originate from the same relations of ruling. This kind of domination by the Western education system is not obvious. It is manifested in ideological, textual, and hegemonic practice. One of the reasons that Native bands cannot achieve full autonomy is because their schools have to conform to the provincial curriculum and other educational standards. The meaning of this has not been questioned or critically analyzed. The problem is that the necessary critical discourse has not been available.

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<sup>7</sup> This is my own conceptualization. Existing literature does not acknowledge the power relations inherent in native education. My argument throughout this dissertation is that we cannot ignore our involvement with the dominant society.

Critical educational and postcolonial discourses have found that education is not neutral, that schools are part of an institutionalized hegemonic system, process, and practices (Darder:1991; Freire:1985; Apple:1996; Giroux & McLaren:1989).

Critics of the education system have revealed:

the general and specific ways that schooling privileges those who are White or of European ancestry, those who are male, and those who are economically advantaged while deprivileging those who are female, of color, working-class, and poor (Swartz:1993:493).

The chapter on colonial education in this dissertation clearly demonstrates the way education was used to destroy Native cultures and languages by imposing a Eurocentric world view on the "Natives." What is significant is that the Eurocentric world view, while dismissing and denigrating other indigenous knowledges and cultures, falsely claimed and promoted "European knowledge as objective and universal" (Swartz:1993:493). This process is described as "an aggressive seizure of intellectual space" in the same way that land was seized from colonized peoples (Swartz:1993:493). The result is that "Eurocentric ideology and content" is a form of racial and cultural hegemony operating on the principles of omission, denigration, and misrepresentation (Swartz:1993:493). It is now recognized that racism is a social construction which is a part of the "social relations" of mainstream society where it functions as a "frame of reference" (Figueroa:1991:35). Figueroa writes, "'Race' is generated in and through a racist frame of reference and in and

through particular social relations" (Figueroa:1991:35).

Figueroa reveals:

the circular and mutually reinforcing relationship between a (de facto) racist power structure and the racist frame of reference. The racist frame of reference springs from, expresses, is embodied in, and (supports or underpins) certain forms of social relations -- that is, the power structure of institutionalized racism (Figueroa:1991:39).

The issue for Native people is to realize the pervasiveness of institutionalized and systemic racism, and to realize the need for critical discourses such as anti-racist pedagogy which can address the issue of racism in their everyday lives and in the education system (Rezai-Rashti:1995).

Non-Native Professionals, Administrators and Teachers

Postcolonial and anti-racist theories have provided theoretical frameworks for the critical analysis of the relations between minorities and the non-Native population. In the field of education these theories are crucial for addressing complex issues such as the role of non-Native professionals in the education of minorities. It has been shown how historical circumstances resulted in Native dependency on non-Native professionals. This dependency is exacerbated by the need for accreditation by white institutions. Although the number of Native teachers has increased, the RCAP pointed out that the formal education of Native people is still "predominantly the domain of non-Native professionals" (RCAP:1996).<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> See Volume 3 of the Final RCAP Report (1996), Chapter 5, page 449.

Native organizations and Native educators recognized the need for Native teachers for the First Nations-controlled schools (NIB:1973; Kirkness:1986). For instance, the NIB document argued for Native teachers with an "in-depth knowledge of Native culture and history," and who would be able to teach Native students using their "maternal language" (NIB:1973:27-31). A Native educator wrote in 1986 that "Native teachers are a key to progress in the education of Indians; [that they] are critical to the realization of quality education for the Indian population" (Kirkness:1986:47). Kirkness wrote that there were very few Native teachers prior to the 1970s (Kirkness:1987:47). It is a tribute to the collaboration of Native people and universities that, by 1985, a survey found that approximately 400 Indian/Inuit had acquired degrees and an additional 546 had teacher certification (Kirkness:1986:48). There is still a great need for Native teachers at all levels of Native schools (RCAP(4):1996).

While Native educators realized the need for Native teachers for cultural reasons, the political and ideological ramifications of non-Native personnel in Native schools have not been addressed. As the critical discourse did not exist, and I saw the need to address the issue of non-Native professionals in the Native decolonization process, I was able to use postcolonial and anti-racist discourses. In this context, Jon Young argues that "Anti-racist education requires that teaching be conceived as a

political and moral activity before it is regarded as a technical or vocational one" (Young:1995:61). Anti-racist education facilitates the analysis of the political, historical and social processes which have institutionalized and worked to sustain unequal power relations (Young:1995:61). Goli Rezai-Rashti found "many school principals, teachers, and guidance counselors are still very much influenced by the ideology of colonization" (Rezai-Rashti:1995:90). This influence is manifested in ethnocentrism and a belief in negative stereotypes of Native people. Eurocentrism is reflected in the belief that the Western education system is superior, and that previously colonized peoples are "poor, underdeveloped, and uncivilized" (Rezai-Rashti:1995:90). Christine E. Sleeter, in her article, "How White Teachers Construct Race," offers arguments which cut through the confusion and obfuscation which accompanies the participation of white teachers in minority education. Sleeter states unequivocally that "Teacher race *does* matter, and for reasons that include and extend beyond issues of cultural congruence in the classroom" (italics in text) (Sleeter:1993:157).<sup>9</sup> The main reason is that teachers "bring to their profession perspectives about what race means, which they construct mainly on the basis of their life experiences and

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<sup>9</sup>There is a lot of confusion in the field of Native education regarding the role of non-Native educators. Without the necessary critical discourse, they are judged as individuals and not as members of the dominant system.

vested interests" (Sleeter:1993:157). I found that white professionals represent power, and unless a Native community is strong and has sufficient control over its education system, non-Native people tend to dominate the 'Natives' (Heimbecker:1994; Faries:1991; Ryan:1988). In this sense, they are a negative force in the decolonization process. I also found that the issue of racism makes it crucial that Native people have a 'safe' place wherein they can work out the issues of racism, and this cannot occur in the presence of white people.<sup>10</sup>

Non-Native professionals cause divisions in the communities and many emerging Native professionals have to compete with them. In many cases Native people, because of an internalization of colonial oppression, prefer white professionals (Williams & Wyatt:1986:216). Lorna Williams and June Wyatt write about Native community members who had a difficult time accepting the idea of their own people becoming teachers. The difficulty is that they have identified teaching as a "role occupied by non-Indians from outside the community" for so long that they found it hard to believe that their people could be good enough (Williams & Wyatt:1986:216).<sup>11</sup> The theories of Paolo Freire are useful because he identifies the way oppression is internalized

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<sup>10</sup> Feminists have shown the problems inherent in attempting to deal with gender oppression in the presence of men. It should also be noted that men, because of the politics involved, do not teach in women's studies. This is similar to having white people teach Native studies.

<sup>11</sup> This is a common problem that makes it difficult for Native teachers and professionals. In many cases, bands have been found to hire white lawyers because they find it difficult to believe that Native lawyers were good enough.

by minorities. In his study of Brazilian peasants, Freire found that the peasants developed "their own way of seeing and understanding the world, according to cultural patterns that are obviously marked by the ideology of dominant groups" (Freire:1985:31). Freire provides an explanation for the division and conflict which exists in most Native reserves, where self-hate, created through colonialism as discussed in Chapters IV and V, translates into hatred of one's own people and kin. Another explanation is the concept 'cultural invasion,' where the denigration of Indigenous cultures is used by the dominant group as social control. Freire argues:

For cultural invasion to succeed, it is essential that those invaded become convinced of their intrinsic inferiority ... The more invasion is accentuated and those invaded are alienated from the spirit of their own culture and from themselves, the more the latter want to be like the invaders: to walk like them, dress like them, talk like them (Freire:1970:151).

The crux of this is that Native educators are not a solution unless they have transcended the ideological effects of colonialism.

#### Resistance by First Nations through Educational Control

Oppositional theories provide a language of critique and a language of resistance. These theorists found that the dominant society is never able to completely subordinate minorities. For instance, Paulo Freire argued that "society contains a multiplicity of social relations, which contain contradictions [which] can serve as a basis from which social groups can

struggle and organize themselves" (Freire:1985:xii). Through the perspectives developed here, while Native people have achieved extensive ground in the field of Native education, it has become clear that they left intact the power relations which shape educational institutions and practices. This can be attributed to the way Indian control was defined. It failed to acknowledge the power relations inherent in educational institutions. Consequently, a review of the First Nations control movement revealed that involvement with the dominant education system is accepted without question and critique. Thus, the problems of racism and power in the everyday lives of Native people and students are left unresolved. There is no critical discourse which would provide explanations and interpretations differing from the usual conventional mainstream discourse.

Despite the problems of residential schooling and the substandard schooling that Native people received in the Western provinces, Native people have never stopped struggling against their oppressors. For instance, in a span of fifty years a few Native people from the Western provinces had acquired an education so as to be able to become spokespersons for their people.<sup>12</sup> A good example of this is Harold Cardinal who became a leader and spokesperson for the emerging Native political

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<sup>12</sup> It is always necessary to distinguish between the experiences of Native people in Western Canada from Native people in Eastern Canada. The Native people in the East were colonized at least two hundred years before the people in the West.

organizations. He published one of the first treatises against oppression with the publication of *The Unjust Society, The Tragedy of Canada's Indians* (Cardinal:1969). He was at the forefront of the resistance to the 1969 Government White Paper which attempted to eliminate the special status and rights of Native people. In the field of education, the resistance movement culminated in the presentation of the NIB Policy Paper to the Federal government in 1973 demanding Native control of Native education. Since then Native educators have shown ingenuity in developing teacher training programs, Native language training, and Native curricula. The fundamental problem confronting Native educators is the need to integrate Native knowledges with Western knowledges, this issue will be discussed later.

Resistance to oppression by the dominant society culminated in a cultural and spiritual revival beginning in the 1960's. This revival continues to be manifested in numerous ways in Native communities (Couture:1996:44). Joseph Couture provides a history of an emerging Native consciousness, which began with the development of Native political organizations in the 1960's and 70's. Years of frustration and confrontation with the dominant government culminated in a "major shift in consciousness" when Native leaders began to seek out the advice and wisdom of Elders (Couture:1996:44). This encompassed a time of learning and reflection on how "to change the direction of the destructive

currents." Native leaders began to ask questions. They stated, "The white man hasn't got any answers. What can we do for our children and our children's children? Maybe, if we talked to some old people..." (Couture:1996:44). These reflections set the theme for future struggles. Other manifestations which Couture mentions are "milestone events" such as the Smallboy and Mackinaw Camps, and other such Camps, where groups of Native people trekked to retreats in the mountains where they hoped to rediscover and preserve their cultural traditions. Couture writes of a meeting between elders and Native leaders from Alberta where the "1972 Declaration," as it is described by Couture, was formulated. This was the first time since the signing of the treaties that elders were able to resume their traditional role and speak in an Assembly "as historians of their tribes, as philosophers and teachers of Tradition" (Couture:1996:46). In a discussion of education-related issues, the following statement was made by an elder:

In order to survive in the 20th century, we must really come to grips with the White man's culture and with White ways. We must stop lamenting the past. The White man has many good things. Borrow. Master and use his technology. Discover and define the harmonies between the two general Cultures, between the basic values of the Indian Way and those of Western civilization -- and thereby forge a new and stronger sense of identity. For, to be fully Indian today, we must become bilingual and bicultural. We have never had to do this before. In so doing we will survive as Indians, true to our past. We have always survived. Our history tells us so (cited in Couture:1996:44).

The important contribution of the "1972 Declaration" is that the

elders offered a way out of a conundrum. As Couture writes, "They expressed anew for the people the meaning of their history, in light of present conditions, and pointed out a saving and safe direction to pursue ..." (Couture:1996:46).<sup>13</sup>

Looking back throughout the last twenty years, one must wonder what went wrong. Native people are slowly being pressured into assimilation and they have not developed the necessary theoretical/oppositional and cultural material which can ensure their survival. What this dissertation has attempted to demonstrate is that there are powerful external forces which continue to oppress Native people and prevent them from achieving self-determination and empowerment. Therefore, it is suggested that we need to identify and understand the nature of these forces. I have attempted to show that the source of these destructive forces is the power of Western society as it is manifested in all areas or spheres of the everyday lives of Native people. In the field of education Native educators need to explore why Native youth, who represent the future of the First Nations, continue to be marginalized and prevented from gaining the education so necessary in today's society. This is where the theme *knowledge is power* comes from. We have to

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<sup>13</sup> It is important to recognize that not all Elders would subscribe to these views. Elders are not a homogeneous group; they also manifest different views and identities determined by multiple realities. The important thing is that this 1972 Declaration offered a way out for academics and educators. I know that finding it and reading it while writing my Master's Major Paper made all the difference in the way I was able to conceptualize my work - it offered a way out. The Declaration recognizes change and the need for new strategies for survival.

acquire knowledge, not only cultural, but knowledge regarding the ideological and political forces that continue to impact on our lives.

Before I explore the development of an indigenous paradigm I will provide the context within which this development should occur. The context includes the educational needs of Native youth, the role of Elders in contemporary society, and technological changes in the mode of communication as they relate to Native people. Following the theme of this dissertation, this discussion will be conducted within the framework determined by change stemming from European contact.

#### The Needs of Contemporary Native Children and Youth

In the development of a contemporary cultural paradigm, the needs of contemporary Native children and youth must be identified. It must be recognized that their experiential world is different, as they were born in a computer age. In order not to further alienate them, it is necessary to view the world through their perspective. We must design cultural curricula which are clear, relevant, interesting, creative, and empowering. But at the same time, it must be recognized that many Native children are victims of abuse within their own communities, and from racism in the outside world. Therefore, contemporary indigenous curricula must have the facility to empower and inform Native students on how to survive in the world of today. An indigenous holistic curriculum would ensure the development of

the spiritual, mental, physical, and emotional attributes of Native students. This will ensure that they can venture into the broader global society armed with pride in their culture and identity, and with an assurance that they deserve a good life whether it is in their own culture or within the dominant society. The indigenous component of the curricula must teach them values based on respect for all creation. The curricula must appropriate from other discourses which are attempting to develop alternatives to a system which they consider to be disempowering and dehumanizing. We need to explore the role of anti-racist education in the development of our schools.

#### The Role of Elders in Contemporary Native Education

The RCAP writes that traditionally elders have always played a central role in aboriginal education, and that the transmission of knowledge is "fundamentally an inter-generational process" (RCAP(4):1996:523). The RCAP describes elders as "the keepers of tradition, guardians of culture, [and] the wise people" (RCAP(4):1996:524). Colonialism disrupted this process of transmitting indigenous knowledge. This was the time when elders were persecuted and verbally attacked by missionaries. Consequently, elders were forced to go underground in order to preserve their knowledges, and to continue to perform ceremonies and rituals. Joseph Couture writes that the elders began to resume their rightful role in the 1960's through the support of the emerging political organizations. Since then, although the

role of elders as spiritual advisors and healers has not changed, the social and cultural context has changed. For instance, contemporary reality requires accreditation of educators, and, in this context, Native elders are being kept from transmitting their knowledge in formal educational institutions. Although they have been accepted in many schools including postsecondary institutions, there are no policies to ensure that their role as resource people is acknowledged and respected. What should concern Native people is that valuable knowledge possessed by elders will disappear when they pass on. Because of their unique role as spiritual people, and their role in the performance of sacred ceremonies and rituals, elders are irreplaceable. But we can develop strategies for the interpretation and documentation of Indigenous knowledges for contemporary use.<sup>14</sup> This can be facilitated by the use of contemporary technologies as will be discussed in the following section.

An important component of the development of a contemporary indigenous paradigm is the recognition of technological change. Native people are no longer dependent on the oral transmission of knowledge. They can now utilize different modes of communication such as writing and computers. The meaning of these changes need to be explored as far as benefits or disadvantages are concerned. The complexities of formal schooling have demonstrated the need

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<sup>14</sup> I am aware that this is already happening in many Native communities. My concern is that we need to ensure that it is occurring at all levels of academia.

for written texts on Native knowledge, languages, and cultures. While it is true that these materials are being produced, most are not designed to deal with complex cultural and philosophical data.<sup>15</sup> The need for Native professionals who can produce indigenous knowledges based on the Native world view has become extremely urgent. This is confirmed by Joseph Couture, an elder with a Ph.D. in psychology, who points out the need for Native people who can document traditional views (Couture:1996:43). Although there are numerous problems associated with the writing of indigenous oral cultures, it is necessitated by contemporary needs. The ideal situation is for Native professionals to write about their own reality instead of depending on anthropologists and other non-Native academics. Native professionals can obtain their knowledge from elders and play the role of interpreters, i.e., interpreting the knowledge for classroom use. Native people are needed to interpret the sayings of the elders. This was confirmed by an elder who stated that young people had to interpret the knowledge obtained from elders (Couture:1985:6). The North American Indian Studies program, at the University of Lethbridge, demonstrated that their program worked because they had Native professionals who were able to act as interpreters (Thomson:1978-79:51). The Chairman of the Department, who is of Native descent, stated, "We wear two hats...We must translate an

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<sup>15</sup> Although this is beginning to happen; for instance, see the work of Gregory Cajete (Cajete:1986; Cajete:1994).

idea expressed by someone into a course, program, or whatever it is that will fit into the university setting" (Thomson:1978-79:51). The key factor here is that it was Native academics who were doing the interpreting or translating. I was able to observe another Native College where there were no Native academics acting as intermediaries between the non-Native staff and the elders. There was a split between the Native language Instructors and elders, and the non-Native staff who held the key-decision making power. I felt that there was a loss of control by the Native community in this situation.

#### The Development of Indigenous Epistemologies in a Changing Environment

In this section I will begin a dialogue regarding the development of an indigenous educational paradigm which can be used in Native formal educational institutions. It has to be recognized that this can only be achieved by the efforts of Native people working together. What follows is my contribution to this endeavour. The determining factor in the development of this paradigm is *change*; that is, since European contact it has been necessary to redefine our ontological and epistemological reality. Since European contact we have been confronted by major challenges. For instance, in the field of education the concept of indigenous knowledge has expanded to include other types of knowledge. These can be categorized as 'local indigenous knowledge,' 'a universal form of knowledge which is manifested in

an indigenous world view,' and Western forms of knowledge which are based on a Western scientific world view. I argue that while local indigenous knowledge is integral to the survival of particular Native communities, there is a need to identify certain characteristics which are shared by indigenous peoples everywhere. These are embodied in what I identify as an indigenous world view. The shared beliefs are described as "universals" by Native educator Gregory Cajete, who views them as "archetypes of human learning and [which are] part of the indigenous psyche of all people and cultural traditions" (Cajete:1994:18). In a previous study I found that there are certain beliefs regarding nature, land, and the cosmos that are shared by indigenous peoples everywhere.<sup>16</sup> I believe that the development of Native curricula could be simplified if we concentrated on the identification and understanding of these common beliefs so that they can serve as the foundation of an indigenous paradigm.

Within this paradigm I have included Western forms of knowledge because of the need to appropriate certain elements to ensure our survival in contemporary society. These include academic tools and technology. An example is the appropriation

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<sup>16</sup> I found that Cajete (Cajete:1986; Cajete:1994) has done an extensive amount of research, and the material he offers is rich and profound. The problem is that it would take a long time to review, learn, and understand it. Therefore, I am using the model of a world view that I constructed, because I find it simpler for the purposes of this discussion. The same values are being discussed in either work, except that so much more detail is offered by Cajete and it would take a lot of time to unravel the various and multiple strands of cultural complexity which he offers.

of ideas from oppositional theories for use in this dissertation. In this task I was guided by an understanding of the meaning of the Native struggle, and by the fact that these theories offer a language of resistance and possibility. Another example is the need for professional knowledge and skills for interaction with the dominant society. Even in band-controlled schools we are forced to conform to provincial curricula and standards. This approach recognizes that Native people are irrevocably part of Western society, and that they are continually impacted by it. The challenge is to identify indigenous values which can be useful in counteracting the pressure to conform to Western society. The strategy espoused by this study is for the First Nations people to develop a knowledge and understanding of contemporary reality so as to ensure their survival. An example is that my years of experience with, and study of, Western society provided me with the necessary knowledge to understand and critique it. It is essential that Native educators and Native leaders understand "that the unexamined application of Western education can condition people away from their cultural roots" (Cajete:1994:18).

Time does not permit me to provide an indigenous model which is comprehensive, but I would like to discuss some characteristics of what I consider to be an indigenous world view. It must be recognized that this short explanation cannot do justice to the complex forms of indigenous philosophical

thought. But I am suggesting that a focus on the 'universals' which underlie the Indigenous world view will simplify the development of an indigenous paradigm. In a previous study I compared an Indigenous world view with a Western world view. I found that the comparative approach made it easier for me to understand the differences between the two cultures.<sup>17</sup>

Therefore, part of my future work will be to explore the development and use of comparative models for use in Native schools. I believe they would be more useful than the essentialization of one culture, whether it is Native or non-Native. It is also a useful way to demonstrate the way the dominant culture is continually impacting on Native reality, and thereby transforming it. The task for Native educators is to find the best way to teach Native cultures, languages, and values.

I will provide an example of how certain themes such as holism, respect, and egalitarianism can serve as the basis for the discussion of the indigenous world view. I found that these themes formed the basis of the way indigenous people viewed reality. The indigenous holistic conception of reality was embodied in the perception of all natural phenomena as being alive, interdependent, and having equal status in the Universe. This holistic thinking permeated every aspect of aboriginal

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<sup>17</sup> This research was conducted for my Masters Degree (see Perrott:1989). The following discussion of an indigenous world view is drawn from this work.

consciousness, beliefs, and values, as well as social organization. Generally, this world view fostered a respect for the human and natural species, and for the natural environment, resulting in a harmonious co-existence based on the concept of co-operation and integration. These are themes which are universal to indigenous people. The discussion can vary depending on how in depth one wishes to go. Native students from primary grades onward can be introduced gradually to these concepts, through discussion, observation, and experience.

The work of Vine Deloria was useful in explaining how aboriginal peoples derived their sense of reality or beliefs from experience grounded in the natural world (Deloria:1979:153). Indigenous peoples did not separate their world of experience into separate realms. Therefore, they were able to maintain a "consistent understanding of the unity of all experience" (Deloria:1979:151). In contrast to this is the fragmentation and compartmentalization found in Western society (Miller:1996:1). John P. Miller writes that the principal cause of the destruction of the environment can be traced to the "fragmentation of life" in Western society. He writes, "In our world we compartmentalize to the extent that we no longer see relationships" (Miller:1988:1). Therefore, the business man is unable to see the "relationship between his business and the destruction of the environment" (Miller:1988:1). Of course, the main cause of the destruction of the environment is consumerism and greed. This

can be contrasted to the lack of materialism which characterized precontact indigenous societies. It is true that this has changed, but a knowledge of Native values may help curb and modify our involvement with a materialist society which is slowly destroying our environment.

The concept of interrelatedness was manifested in the communal nature of social life which was based on respect, sharing and cooperation. The communal nature of society was undermined by the Western society's affirmation of individualism. Menno Boldt and Anthony Long describe the Western-liberal tradition as viewing society made up of an "aggregate of individuals, each with their own self-interest" (Boldt & Long:1984:478). These authors explain that the "*individual* is considered to be morally superior to any *group* and in relation to the state, individuals are viewed as acting for themselves, not as members of any collectivity" (Boldt & Long:1984:478). On the other hand, indigenous peoples had a different conception of human beings and society. "Their reference point was not the individual, but the 'whole' which is the cosmic order. Their conception of the individual was one of subordination to the whole" in the interests of the whole (Boldt & Long:1984:478). They believed in the interrelatedness of all phenomena and the need for "harmony in all its parts" (Boldt & Long:1984:478). The contemporary reality is that we are implicated in Western society and an education system where the individual is considered to be

dominant. Jesse Goodman points out the need for a balance between the individual and the community, but he argues that in Western society the dominance of the individual is at the expense of community (Goodman:1992). This is an example of how contemporary knowledge comprises an interweaving of indigenous and Western knowledge within a comparative framework.

Through my research I found that the respect for the individual (male or female) and the egalitarian nature of Native society were inseparable. In the precontact period, respect played a fundamental role in human relationships and in the relationship to the environment and to the natural species. The teaching and learning of respect as conceived by indigenous peoples would be valuable for Native people in general for Native students specifically. There is a need to revive notions of respect between men and women in order to counteract the abuse and violence. This can provide the basis for teaching the role and meaning of respect. The teaching of respect should begin in the primary grades.

A major concern in Native schools is the question of social control and discipline. The question that concerned me was whether Native educators could draw on indigenous traditions for the development of models that would produce balance and harmony in the schools. In reading Rupert Ross' text, I gained some insights on how this could be achieved. It means learning about codes which are centuries old and which guide people to believe

in the innate goodness of people, that people are "born to goodness and harmony rather than to sin" (Ross:1992:174). In his observation of elders' involvement in court cases in the North, Ross was able to observe the application of these beliefs. Ross noticed that offenders were treated very differently by the Native people than by the Western justice system. The elders focussed on the rehabilitation of the offender rather than punishment. Ross writes that "the Elders seem to do their best to convince people that they are one step away from heaven instead of one step away from hell" (Ross:1992:169). Ross explains that the elders defined "their role not within anything remotely like the doctrine of original sin but within another, diametrically opposite doctrine [which he calls] the doctrine of original sanctity" (Ross:1992:169). Ross explains that there is an emphasis on "re-building self-esteem by positive reinforcement" (Ross:1992:174). Following the example of these elders, Native educators could learn from these approaches which use positive reinforcement through a belief in the innate goodness of children. These approaches could be used with Native students because, as Ross learned, "if you are dealing with people whose relationships have been built on power and abuse, you must actually *show* them, then *give them the experience of*, relationships built on respect" (Ross:1996:150). This could resolve the adversarial position between many students and their mostly white teachers. Native people need to recognize that the

discipline used in their schools is derived from Western concepts which are adversarial. These concepts are based on a belief in the innate inferiority of human beings due to and based on a system which believes in the innate inferiority of "original sin." High drop out rates and the alienation of Native youth indicate the need for new approaches. Ross demonstrates that these approaches can be found in Native traditional values.

The numerous problems found in Native communities are legacies of the colonial period. Native people were prevented from using and maintaining their own social and spiritual resources for solving problems. Ross acknowledges that Western society did everything it could to prevent Native people from using these resources. He states, "We outlawed and denigrated their healing techniques, requiring instead that they utilize ours and, in the process, [to] break more of their ancient commandments" (Ross:1992:181). Fortunately, Native people are survivors, although many have not survived. Many Native people are rediscovering their cultural values and are using them in their own healing processes, as well as in the healing of whole communities. The healing of whole communities is based on the concept of holism - the interrelatedness of reality. The traditional indigenous world view contains the elements of spirituality, balance, harmony, and respect, which are necessary for healing. Cajete states: "The legacy of the traditional forms of American Indian education is significant because it embodies a

quest for self, individual and community survival, and wholeness in the context of a community and natural environment"

(Cajete:1994:34). Native educators, Native professionals, elders, and the construction of a contemporary paradigm can play a fundamental role in decolonization and the healing process of Native people and communities.

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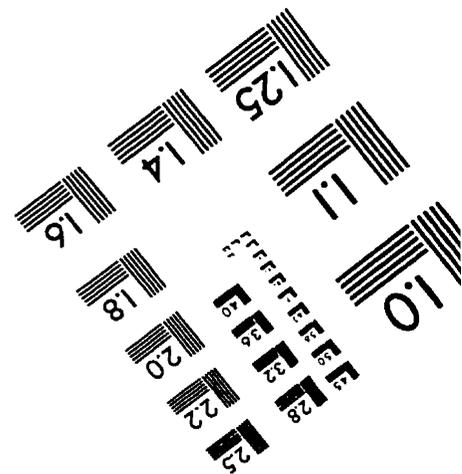
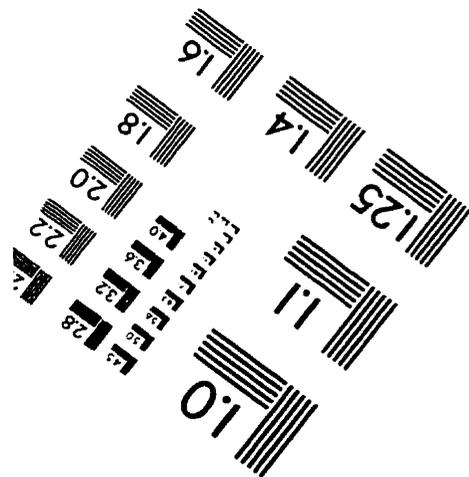
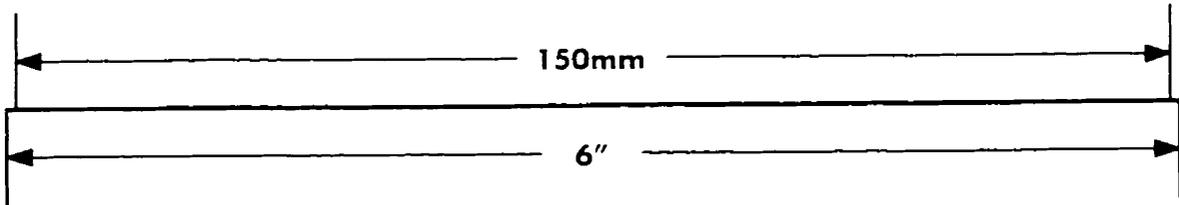
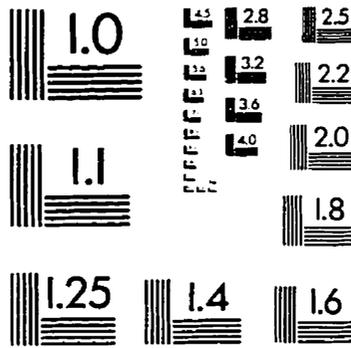
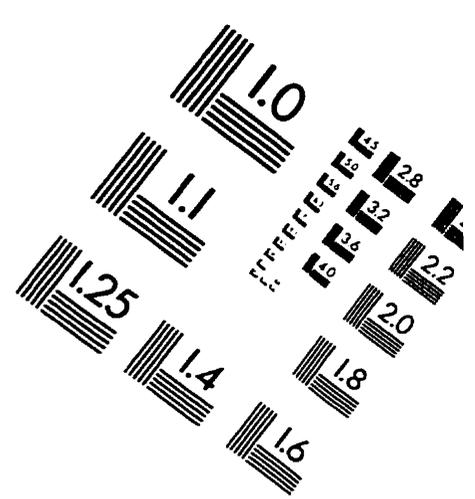
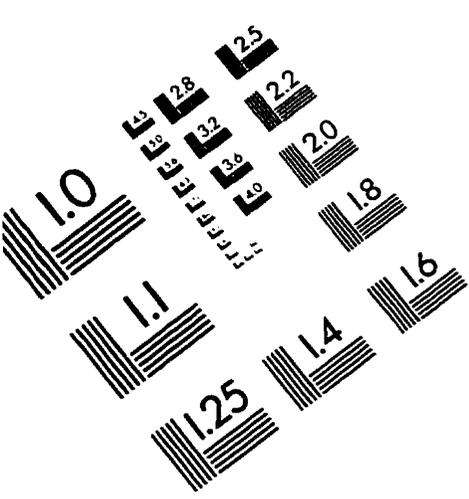
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