

**"HOW ARE WE DOING?"
EXPLORING ABORIGINAL REPRESENTATION IN TEXTS AND
ABORIGINAL PROGRAMS IN SURREY SECONDARY SCHOOLS**

by

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ABSTRACT

In its annual report “How Are We Doing?” British Columbia’s Ministry of Education assesses Aboriginal students’ participation and graduation rates, both of which have been consistently below those of non-Aboriginal students. In addressing the question, “How are we doing?”, this thesis examines the following: visual images and mis/representations of Aboriginal peoples in British Columbia’s secondary social studies textbooks and a self-reflection as a public school educator teaching social studies at the secondary school level in the Surrey School District. The implications affect both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students as the study hopes to encourage and improve cross-cultural responsiveness among them and to promote public discourse in the education for and of Aboriginal peoples.

Negative portrayals and mis-representations of Aboriginal peoples were common in textbooks of the past as documented by various studies. In reviewing British Columbia’s currently recommended social studies textbooks, four main features persist: Aboriginal peoples continue to be marginalized, essentialized, seen as a problem, and decontextualized. However, BC First Nations Studies 12 attempts to address these inequities. Its recommended textbook is based on Aboriginal knowledge and epistemology, empowering and giving voice to Aboriginal peoples.

From the literature, analysis of textbooks, and personal experiences in the classroom addressing Aboriginal issues and concerns, this study offers some of recommendations to improve student success. Aboriginal students need to accept and embrace their identity, not only to build their self-esteem but also to honour their own cultures. Educators need to redefine success beyond academic achievement to include Aboriginal knowledge and epistemology within their pedagogy and evaluations. They also need to become more cognizant of and sensitive to the challenges and triumphs of their students, both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal. Universities need to re-address the training of future educators to include Aboriginal issues in order for them to gain greater historical understanding and, in turn, empathy and compassion. These practical initiatives reflect the progress and movement in addressing the challenges and hopes of Aboriginal peoples in their journey toward real self-determination and decolonization.

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CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

Growing up as a Chinese immigrant whose parents were teachers, I was taught to value education, and in the process I developed a passion not only for learning but for teaching as well. I still clearly remember my Grade 7 teacher who cared not only for his students' academic success but also for their future success in life. He saw us as individuals who had individual strengths and challenges, yet he would look for the potential in all of us amidst our failures, encouraging us to achieve our own excellence. From that time on, I believed that teaching would not only be my profession but my vocation.

My path in becoming a teacher became more of a reality after being accepted into UBC's Faculty of Education in 1990. I distinctly remember the motivating mantra as I walked out of the first orientation class as a student teacher that September - "we can make a difference." Inspired, I wanted to "make a difference" just as my Grade 7 teacher made a difference for me.

During the last 17 years of public school teaching in the Surrey School District, however, a number of challenging circumstances have tested my hope and aspiration of making a difference in the lives of students: teaching courses outside my field of expertise; being bounced from school to school without a permanent contract; adapting and modifying course content for a growing number of special needs students in the classroom; adopting the changing expectations, requirements, and prerequisites from the provincial Ministry of Education both for courses and for graduation; and dealing with the occasional conflicting politics among school boards, school administrations, and unions. Yet, despite these issues, my focus as a teacher has remained the same -- how do I make a difference in the lives of those I teach? With a little more wisdom now, I have come to realize and accept that I may not in the end make much or even any difference in the lives of students but perhaps more importantly that students will continually make a difference in mine.

Journey to the PhD

After completing my master's degree in Curriculum Studies at UBC with a focus on multicultural education, I thought my journey into the world of institutionalized academia would end and life as a public school teacher would continue uninterrupted. However, with

encouragement from a colleague who completed his doctorate in the Department of Educational Studies, my passion for learning and academic research was again piqued. I applied to the Department with the initial intention of furthering my work in the field of multicultural education in the Surrey School District, examining its historical evolution and developments. I had to make sacrifices and take risks in pursuing a doctorate degree: professionally, I left my teaching position at the secondary school where I had taught for the last 7 years; financially, I lost a year's income while fulfilling the doctoral residency requirement; but most of all, academically, I had to face my fears of seminars where higher education and intellectual discourse would be debated, critiqued, and challenged.

I began my course work in the summer in the familiar field of multiculturalism and anti-racism. Given the brevity and intensity of the course, however, I found selecting a research topic difficult and in the midst of panicking, I chose to write a paper analyzing the images and portrayals of Aboriginal peoples in Social Studies 11 textbooks.¹ Though I had no intention in pursuing research in Aboriginal education or issues at that time, it would become the start of a new journey in the PhD program.

I began to question why I was so reluctant in researching Aboriginal issues after my first course was completed. Was I scared of the unknown, in a field in which I was not familiar? Was I so comfortable with the topic of multiculturalism that I was steadfastly holding on to it as my chosen topic to a doctorate degree? To a certain degree, yes. However, as I delved deeper, I came to a greater realization. As a public school educator, despite having a graduate degree with a thesis about multiculturalism, despite having used various lesson plans and approaches in the classroom, and despite having more than a decade of teaching experience, I had failed to dispel some students of their negative stereotypes and images of Aboriginal peoples.² I found that

¹ I have taught Social Studies 11 numerous times and was well acquainted with the course and its recommended textbooks as approved by the Surrey School District Learning Resource Services. I found, therefore, the topic to be manageable and “do-able” given the time constraints.

² The term “Aboriginal peoples” will be used throughout this dissertation as a collective name for the original peoples of North America and their descendants before European contact (see Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, Communications Branch, 2002). According to the federal government, Aboriginal peoples include “First Nations” (sometimes referred to as “Indian”), “Inuit”, and “Métis.” The term “First Nations”, which is also used in the dissertation, came into usage in the 1970s to replace the word “Indian,” although it has no legal definition. “First Nations” carries a significant political connotation while “Aboriginal peoples” has become an accepted self-identifying term used to designate those of First Nations ancestry. The term “Indian” refers to all Indigenous people in Canada who are not Inuit or Métis (similar to First Nations) and is occasionally used here to be consistent with historical sources, although the term itself is becoming outdated. British Columbia’s Ministry of Education uses both terms in their documents and learning resources.

students in general tend to see Aboriginal peoples as illegal and occasionally hostile protesters, alcohol abusers and drug addicts, welfare recipients with generous tax benefits, homeless people, (or what students would colloquially and derogatively call “hobos”) and prostitutes. The more I read and researched, the more I realized that such gross misconceptions of Aboriginal peoples were perpetuated not only from contemporary media sensationalization but from some of the images portrayed in textbooks used in the classroom. Furthermore, I realized that I was also part of the problem and the *moiré*, and I felt compelled to address the issue in a research study.

My shift in research interest became clearer when one evening the local news reported that only 40% of Aboriginal students graduated from secondary schools in British Columbia. Questions flooded into my mind. Why is their graduation rate so low? Why are they failing or dropping out so much? What about the Aboriginal students in my classroom? How are they doing academically and socially? How can I reach out to help guide their secondary school years? Am I failing them? Or worse yet, how am I failing them? As I grappled with these questions and issues, continually wanting to make a difference in students’ lives, I decided to change my dissertation topic from multicultural education to Aboriginal education and programs specifically in the Surrey School District, as it would hold greater meaning and relevance to my own professional development and perhaps make a difference to others in the district as well.

Rationale and Statement of the Topic

Historically, the federal government has for much of the 20th century imposed upon the Aboriginal peoples its assimilative educational philosophies and institutions. It has paternalistically ignored and effectively silenced the voices of Canada’s Aboriginal peoples. Only recently has the history and legacy of this colonization been documented and legitimized in public discourse, which has begun to embrace Aboriginal knowledge and epistemology.

In addressing the educational concerns of Aboriginal students in British Columbia (BC), one of the first provincial reports to examine this issue stated that only 33.8% of the self-identified Aboriginal students graduated from high school in its *Aboriginal Report - How Are We Doing?*, which tracked statistics of Aboriginal students from 1997 (BC Ministry of Education, 2004a). Modest improvements in terms of performance and success occurred since 1997 (BC Ministry of Education, 2005a). However, concerns of non-achievement among Aboriginal

students at both provincial and district levels still exist as graduation rates have remained consistently low: 42% in 2002, 46% in 2003 and 2004, 48% in 2005, and 47% in 2006 (BC Ministry of Education, 2006a, p. 3).³

As a public school educator in the Surrey School District, I have a vested interest in these results, not only to improve upon the work of the school district and its professional educators but also, more importantly to increase the success of Aboriginal students in the classroom. Although Surrey only has 2,799 (or 4.2%) of the province's self-identified Aboriginal students, it is the largest school district provincially. Statistically, the graduation rate for Aboriginal students in Surrey has fluctuated during the last 5 years, somewhat matching the provincial averages: 37% in 2002, 41% in 2003, 39% in 2004, 50% in 2005, and 38% in 2006 (BC Ministry of Education, 2006b, p. 3).

In addressing Aboriginal education in BC, both the Ministry of Education and Surrey School District have initiated and implemented various policies and programs not only for Aboriginal students but also for non-Aboriginal students. The Ministry of Education has proposed and mandated greater inclusion of Aboriginal peoples' history in the social studies curricula, including a newly revised BC First Nations Studies 12 course implemented in the 2007/08 school year in order to raise the profile, relevance, and connectedness for Aboriginal students to their respective communities. For the first time, a separate course that "focuses on the diversity, depth, and integrity of the cultures of British Columbia's Aboriginal peoples" is formally recognized and examined provincially (BC Ministry of Education, 2006c, p. 3).⁴ The course is unique in social studies in that it is designed to "introduce authentic Aboriginal content into the senior secondary curriculum with the support of Aboriginal peoples" and emphasizes the traditions, history, and present realities of BC's First Nations Peoples (p. 3). The Surrey School District has established its own Aboriginal Education Department, which has continually evolved and developed with a focus on creating and adapting learning resources and programs for both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students in order to achieve greater success.

³ The Dogwood Diploma is BC's certification of graduation from secondary school after completing the necessary combination of credits and ministry approved courses.

⁴ Although BC First Nations Studies 12 was first introduced in 2000, it was not a provincially examinable course. With the newly revised curriculum in 2005/2006, the course became not only a provincially examinable course but one that could replace Social Studies 11 as a prerequisite course for graduation.

Purpose of the Study and Research Questions

As part of a broader critique of colonization/decolonization and of social inclusion/exclusion, the main purpose of this study is to examine how Aboriginal peoples are depicted in visual images and representations in secondary social studies textbooks, as students would be more exposed to them in that particular subject than in any other. The study may, if disseminated more broadly, help teachers in the classroom address and explain possible misrepresentations and negative stereotypes of Aboriginal peoples to students. The study is also a narrative about my personal reflections as an education in the public school system who is thinking about Aboriginal issues in the classroom. This narrative includes a brief examination of Surrey's Aboriginal Educational Programs at the secondary school level. This aspect of the study (if brought to the attention of others) may help to improve cross-cultural responsiveness between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students. It offers some experiential insights that may help to inform others' teaching practices. This study may also encourage further research in Surrey and in other school districts, thus promoting discourse in the evolving and transforming nature of education for and of Aboriginal peoples. Just as important, non-Native teachers who learn about the Aboriginal local culture and engage in meaningful cross-cultural experience may broaden their teaching encounter, which helps them become an educational asset to the community (Marker, 2000). This study also provides a challenge to me, as a public school teacher for the last 17 years, teaching social studies in the various grades to consider how I might address Aboriginal issues and concerns in more effective and culturally sensitive ways.

More specifically, the study then explores three main research questions: 1) How are Aboriginal peoples (mis)represented in secondary school texts? 2) What are the needs of Aboriginal students in the classroom? 3) How can Aboriginal students succeed more successfully?

Negotiated Roles and Identities

In positioning myself in this study, I have two main roles and identities, each dichotomous and potentially problematic. The following sections describe my conflicting roles as a public educator and as a non-Aboriginal researcher, since both represent an institutionalized

system that historically has oppressed the Aboriginal peoples of Canada. Yet, a balance exists with these identities that offers a unique perspective into the study, one that consists of being both an insider and outsider.

Role and Identity as an Educator

As an educator in the public school system, I am both an insider and outsider in this study. Teaching secondary students in Surrey has provided me with inside knowledge and experience in addressing students' academic needs and concerns as well as being familiar with the various learning resources, programs, and policies at the school, district, and provincial levels. However, I am also an outsider from the perspective of Aboriginal peoples, one who symbolizes and represents the institutionalization of education. Formal education has been and continues to be a "value-laden political process that takes place in the classroom, a contested site that displays competing discourses, unique experiences, silences, resistance, and compliance" (Bruno-Jofre and Schiralli, 2002, p. 120). For Aboriginal peoples, formal education has been historically synonymous with colonization and assimilation through residential schooling despite the efforts of recent federal governments in apologizing and offering reconciliatory redress and compensation. According to Smith (1999), imperialism "still hurts, still destroys and is reforming itself constantly. . . . [It is] a shared language . . . as an epic story telling of huge devastation, painful struggle and persistent survival" (p. 19). I, as a public school educator, still represent part of that legacy and must remain vigilantly aware of this in the classroom.⁵ Thus, as an outsider, I can only know about the history and experiences of Aboriginal peoples intellectually but not of their history and experiences.

Philosophically, my view on education and its purposes continues to evolve, as I reflect upon my past and present experiences in and out of the classroom as both a graduate student and a public school teacher. Initially, to hide my insecurities as a rookie teacher, I began my career with the noble yet perhaps overly naive notion that I would and could academically make a difference in students' lives, that I would instill students with a great wealth of historical knowledge, understanding, and empathy. Following mostly an Eurocentrically prescribed curricula and using the recommended textbooks, I focused not only on critical thinking skills but

⁵ Examining and analyzing classroom resources for Eurocentric bias has become a priority for me in order to address and confront potentially negative stereotyping and prejudiced images and ideas among students.

also on the historical content of the courses I taught. However, despite incorporating simulation games, role-playing, debates, and discussions into the lesson plans, results on tests remained generally static. I viewed knowledge of historical people, events, and their impact more than mere trivial pursuit. Agreeing with Jack Granastein who would later write that “history matters, and we forget this truth at our peril” (1998, p. xviii), I adamantly believed that history formed the heart of a nation - past, present, and even future - and attempted to convey this ideal to my students. However, what I had forgotten in the midst of teaching history was my audience. Some students thrived on learning history while others (and perhaps most) did not as they appeared apathetic at worst, indifferent at best. However, I did not want them to memorize for the sake of memorizing; instead, some meaning and purpose had to exist. Memorization and recollection of history were skills, but as I gained more teaching experience (and hopefully more wisdom), I began to realize that they were not the main skills I wanted to instill in my classes. Scoring high on examinations was not the determining factor or indication of learning as I had once believed. For students, learning was being in the moment, engaged in the processes and the experiences in and out of the classroom - academically, socially, and affectively. Although I would like students to know that 1867 was the year of Canada’s Confederation, that Riel resisted the federal government in 1885, and that Canadians fought valiantly at Vimy Ridge in 1917, I no longer expect them to memorize such historical facts. Following the principles of the four R’s by Kirkness and Bernhardt (1991), my philosophy on educating students is now based on respect (showing regard for students which include their cultures, backgrounds, strengths, and weaknesses), relevance (making learning relevant to students by making connections to their “world”), reciprocity (learning from students becomes part of teaching them), and responsibility (empowering students with a sense of accomplishment and success). Having students actively engaging in and enjoying the process of learning history has now become my main concern and goal as an educator.

Role and Identity as a Non-Aboriginal Researcher

As a Chinese-Canadian, I consider myself as an outsider in this study; however, my distinctive position of as a non-Aboriginal researcher provides a unique perspective. Despite the political recognition of Trudeau’s policy of “multiculturalism within a bilingual framework” in the 1970s, incidents of ethnic prejudice and racism were not uncommon across Canada and as an

immigrant child, I did not escape the name-calling and bullying while growing up in Vancouver during that time. Thus, at a young age, I became highly aware of and sensitive to my status as a cultural minority often through painful references by members of mainstream society to superficial visible differences. In response, I attempted to shed my ethnic baggage by quickly acculturating and assimilating. I coerced myself into learning English to hide my sense of inferiority and to prove my sense of equality in society, so much that regrettably I now have lost fluency in my native tongue. Perhaps more tragically, I simply felt ashamed of my cultural background, at times to the point of public embarrassment and overt rejection of it.

Although I cannot even begin to compare my experiences of racial intolerance with those suffered by Aboriginal peoples, I can to a very small degree empathize with them on the pressures of assimilation. However, my assimilative process was self-imposed as a reaction and response to societal intolerance and rejection while those of the Aboriginal peoples was officially prescribed and externally imposed by the federal government often with great violence.

I must also be vigilantly aware of the multicultural and anti-racist lens that I have espoused and championed as both a teacher and former immigrant. While multicultural education generally focuses on the cultural similarities and differences, anti-racist education generally focuses on issues of equality and equity. Though both have their own merits in the classroom, they do not analyze the impact of colonialism nor do they adequately challenge the Eurocentric curriculum (Fletcher, 2000). Moreover, multiculturalism “does not adequately include the unique experience of indigenous people, nor does it describe epistemic collision with the dominant society” (Marker, 2006, p. 7). Marker further argues:

Whereas other minoritized groups demand revisionist histories and increased access to power within educational institutions, indigenous people present a more direct challenge to the core assumptions about life’s goals and purposes. . . . [Indigenous] cultures posit a social stance outside of assertions of pluralism, rather, claims to moral and epistemic pre-eminence based on ancient and sustained relationships to land. (p. 5)

A curriculum and classroom culture that emphasize bankrupt abstractions such as “thinking globally” only promote a marketized version of ethnocentrism and chauvinism in its disinterest in the local land and history. (p. 18)

Marker has challenged me as an educator and as an individual to critique mainstream cultural assumptions of local ecology and history, to encourage students “to see their own surroundings

as constructed out of ideological and ecological histories” as a way to produce more “cross-cultural consciousness and awareness of indigenous perspectives” (p. 18).

Today, in the eyes of mainstream society, I have succeeded despite ethnic or racial barriers by becoming a teacher with academic and professional credentials, yet my success partially rests on being a beneficiary of colonialism where academic achievement in Eurocentrically institutionalized schools is rewarded, a factor I must consciously continue to acknowledge.

Though described here as separate categories, my roles and identities as a public school teacher and as a non-Aboriginal researcher are inextricably integrated and synthesized, forming a lens through which my own identity is shaped that cannot be deconstructed or decontextualized.⁶ For this study, my position constitutes a unique perspective that may provide greater objectivity and validity. First, I am freer to explore the issues of Aboriginal education and programs in the Surrey School District without the political and social pressures of being too close to the study. Second, I am perceived as a colonized other without the political and social stigma of being a colonizing other. Finally, through this study, I have learned more about cross-cultural relations among Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students and teachers, gaining wisdom and experience that I wish to pass on to both students and colleagues, a role with which I have been bestowed and for which I am grateful.

⁶As Alcoff argues that identity politics is “one that recognizes the dynamic, variable, and negotiated character of identity” (2000, p. 341), the roles that one plays are interdependent and cannot easily compartmentalized. Identity is also largely developed through the process of ‘othering’ in which it is not positively defined in terms of what it consists of, but negatively in terms of what it is not (van Hoven, Meijering, and Huigen, 2005).

CHAPTER 2 METHODOLOGY

This study mainly explores images of Aboriginal and their mis/representation in social studies textbooks at the secondary school level. Examining these images provides a glimpse into what students (both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal) are exposed to in the classroom. Such an analysis may help increase cross-cultural responsiveness between not only Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students but their teachers as well.

Analysis of Images Within British Columbia's Social Studies Textbooks

According to the Ministry of Education's secondary school curricula guides for social studies, Aboriginal peoples and issues are found in Grades 9-12: Social Studies 9, 10, and 11 and BC First Nations Studies 12. Each of these courses is further explained in its own Integrated Resource Package (IRP), which prescribes and describes (i) a rationale for the course, (ii) themes in the course, (iii) considerations for program delivery (i.e. how to implement the course in the classroom), (iv) content and skills to be acquired through the course, (v) classroom assessment and measuring student achievement, and (vi) recommended learning resources. The IRPs are thus the curriculum guides for the provincial courses that specify what students should learn in the course and suggest tools teachers might use to deliver it.⁷ The IRPs define the required knowledge, skills, and attitudes for each subject, while textbooks remain an important tool used by teachers. To be approved by the district, textbooks must closely follow the provincial ministry's prescribed learning outcomes. As a window into the social studies curriculum, this study examines the current textbooks that have been approved by the Surrey School District's Learning Resources Services, which compiles and updates a list of recommended learning resources.⁸ Because approval of textbooks is based on how well they match these learning outcomes, this study also examines the curricula themselves (i.e., the prescribed learning outcomes) with regard to their inclusion of and cultural responsiveness to Aboriginal peoples and issues.

⁷ Integrated Resource Packages, however, do not cover "locally" developed courses that may be accepted in certain districts and not in others. IRPs provide a curriculum with intended learning outcomes written for provincially approved courses.

In total, I examined 13 textbooks recommended by the Surrey School District's Learning Resources Services (May 2007). Three textbooks were listed for Social Studies 9: *Canada Revisited* (Clark & McKay, 1992)⁹; *Community Canada* (Cruxton & Walker, 1993); *Crossroads - A Meeting of Nations* (Cranny & Jarvis, 1998). Two textbooks were listed for Social Studies 10: *Horizons - Canada Moves West* (Cranny, Jarvis, Moles, & Seeney, 1999); *Challenge of the West - A Canadian Retrospective From 1815 to 1914* (Cruxton & Wilson, 1997). Seven textbooks were listed for Social Studies 11: *Canada Today* (Scully, Smith, & McDevitt, 1996); *Canada - Face of a Nation* (Bolotta, Gerrard, & Shortt, 2000); *Canada - Our Century, Our Story* (Fielding & Evans, 2001); *Canadian Issues - A Contemporary Perspective* (Francis et al., 1998); *Counterpoints - Exploring Canadian Issues* (Cranny & Moles, 2001); *Spotlight Canada* (Cruxton & Wilson, 2000); *Towards Tomorrow - History* (Morton, 1988). One textbook was listed for BC First Nations Studies 12: *BC First Nations Studies* (Campbell, Menzies, & Peacock, 2003).

In evaluating the images of Aboriginal peoples and issues, I used the criteria from Jo-Anne Dillabough and Lynn McAlpine's research (1996) and the BC Ministry of Education's evaluation guidelines (2002). Despite some commonalities, the criteria from the two sources complement and extend each other in developing a more holistic approach in evaluating textbooks.¹⁰

Images in studies textbooks need to reflect and imbue culturally responsive standards in order to present and represent Aboriginal peoples and issues fairly. More specifically, according to Dillabough and McAlpine (1996), textbooks need to avoid both covert and overt forms of racism when representing Aboriginal peoples: "First Nations people should not be portrayed as a thing of the past, they should be brought into the future, i.e., the contemporary representation of First Nations people 'in their voice' is as important as historical representations of First Nations people" (p. 191). Textbooks should avoid (i) treating First Nations Peoples as a multicultural group, (ii) overemphasizing European exploration and history, (iii) generalizing from one First Nations group to another, and (iv) portraying First Nations Peoples as violent and aggressive.

⁸ The most current list of resources for the Surrey School District is dated May 2, 2007 which teachers in the district may access from their schools or from the employee-linked website.

⁹ For *Canada Revisited* (Clark and McKay, 1992), the Surrey School District has approved chapters 1 to 6 to correspond with the Canadian component of Social Studies 9 and chapters 7 to 11 for Social Studies 10.

¹⁰ Dillabough and McAlpine use the term "First Nations" in describing their evaluation criteria, which I will use when referring to their work.

Textbooks should also recognize Aboriginal peoples' identities, which includes their culture, spirituality, and history. Aboriginal ways of life, ways of knowing, ways of teaching, and ways of communication (including their oral tradition and language) all need to be recognized in which their identity "should not be expressed or defined in relation to non-First Nations people" (p. 193). Dillabough and McAlpine emphasize that the need for textbooks to include certain values inherent in Aboriginal cultures (e.g., cooperation, collaboration, community relationships, harmony and balance, respect, and the importance of family linkages) and a description of the survival of Aboriginal peoples and their cultures, especially the "importance and need for celebrating, through rituals and related activities, the strength and richness in First Nations culture" (p. 195). Textbooks should also note spiritual issues, such as a description of the role the creator plays in the lives of Aboriginal peoples and how the creator and other spirits interplay to educate them about the universe and life. Textbooks should also educate students about the historical role of governments in the evolving processes of self-government, land claims, and legal rights. Textbooks should describe how governments have "rob[bed] people of their cultural and spiritual identity through the forced repression of language in public and residential schools," which help explain the historical reasons underlying the current hardship faced by Aboriginal peoples (p. 193). More important, textbooks should explain the role the natural environment plays in the life of Aboriginal peoples. This includes a description of why the natural environment is crucial to their survival, a point made by Marker (2000) who notes that without cross-cultural tools to reflect on their location, educators may not only be alienated and ineffectual but also they can do a lot of harm.

The Ministry of Education also lists criteria for textbooks awaiting provincial recommendation (BC Ministry of Education, 2002a, pp. 16, 41). Resources should take into account the following guidelines:

1. Recognize the contributions Aboriginal people have made and continue to make in society.
2. Recognize the diversity of Aboriginal societies and avoid traditional stereotypes.
3. Provide accurate information on historical and contemporary Aboriginal cultures.
4. Promote knowledge and understanding of local Aboriginal cultures.
5. Provide an Aboriginal perspective of historical and cultural issues.
6. Avoid undue emphasis on particular problems or conflicts involving Aboriginal groups by balancing content with issues.

7. Avoid putting emphasis on traditional aspects of Aboriginal people to the exclusion of their contemporary realities.

Combining the criteria suggested by Dillabough and McAlpine with those of the Ministry of Education (which occasionally overlap) provides a broader perspective and approach for examining social studies curricula and textbooks at the secondary school level. These criteria are less Eurocentric and are more culturally sensitive toward Aboriginal knowledge and epistemology.

Self-Reflection as a Teacher

This section will focus on my personal journey and reflections as a social studies teacher at the secondary school level, highlighting the challenges and triumphs I have experienced in and out of the classroom setting. As a decolonizing methodology, this narrative reflection includes the evolution and development of my teaching philosophies and practices that relate to Aboriginal issues from when I first started in the teaching profession at the age of 23 to the present. I also reflected on experiences as an elementary and secondary school student and how they have shaped me as a teacher and how they have impacted my views on Aboriginal issues and peoples. As a public school teacher for almost two decades, I have also gained insights into the changes in the education system with regard to curricula, textbooks, class composition, and students' needs. Through this self-reflection, the study briefly examines the various Aboriginal education programs in Surrey. The sources include the school district website for information regarding the relevant departments and available resources. These programs offer teachers a structure, foundation, and ultimately guidance in the Surrey School District as to how to address Aboriginal issues in and out of the classroom.

Limitations to the Study

This study has several limitations that need to be made explicit from the onset. Although other courses contain texts that incorporate Aboriginal content, this study focuses on social studies where such content is most prominent and therefore invites closer examination. The main limitation of the study, however, is more practical than theoretical: schools, and in particular subject departments, have limited budgets and thus cannot obtain or purchase

supplementary texts or resources that would enrich and enhance the course material which are further constrained by the district's approval process. In the Surrey School District, schools can only purchase textbooks listed in its Learning Resources Services. Because of such financial and educational restraints, the texts that teachers and students use in the classroom are those that most closely and comprehensively follow the prescribed learning outcomes. The individual narrative, my self-reflection, is only one voice and highly influenced by the school settings I have been in, the students I have taught, and the educational support I have received. Thus, although the study may inform future and/or other teachers, it cannot be generalized to all.

Concluding Remarks

By examining high school social studies curricula and their corresponding district recommended textbooks, this study is intended to encourage greater cross-cultural responsiveness among Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students. It is my hope that from this study more teachers will re-examine their role in including Aboriginal issues in their classes for both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students.

For me, this research has been a remarkable and at times difficult journey. During the PhD process, I have gained valuable insights as I continually re-evaluate my own philosophies and teaching practices. Professional development in the field of teaching and conversations with colleagues both have enriched my own role as an educator, which has allowed me to recognize more readily my own struggles and biases. As a result, I have been made more cognizant of the cultural awareness and sensitivity that are needed in addressing Aboriginal issues and concerns, especially the needs of students, and I have learned important lessons from mistakes during this process. Through this study I hope for better understanding and a continued reflective praxis as an educator. A key to being a successful teacher is to be self-reflective and even critical of one's own pedagogical philosophies and practices, and from this study, I had to unlearn in order to relearn what are effective practices.

CHAPTER 3

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

As background to this study, the literature review is divided into two main sections. First, it provides an historical overview of the colonization of Aboriginal peoples in Canada, focusing on their mis-education, which includes the rhetoric, reality, and legacy of residential schooling. This legacy has led to the beginning of an Aboriginal movement toward decolonization and self-determination. The section on Aboriginal education concludes with a brief description of what the BC Ministry of Education (Aboriginal Education Department) considers as “Effective Programs” in the province for Aboriginal students as a process toward decolonization. Second, the literature review provides an historical overview of social studies textbook evaluations that focused on Aboriginal content, which resulted in some positive changes in the visual and textual portrayals of Aboriginal peoples.

Aboriginal Education in Canada

European education of “Indians” began as early as 1620 in New France by Catholic missionaries for the purpose of “bringing Christian civilization to the heathen ‘Natives’” (Kirkness and Bowman, 1992, p. 7).¹¹ Religious affiliation with formal education continued as both Catholic and Protestant churches began to establish day schools for “Indians” which evolved by the later 19th century into residential schools. For the next 100 years, Aboriginal peoples would be subjected to this form of education, which only officially ended with the closing of the last government-run residential school in 1996 in Saskatchewan.

Colonization: Residential School Rhetoric and Reality

Between 1830 and 1867, the government began to take some responsibility in providing education for some Aboriginal peoples using funds formerly designated to supply gunpowder and gifts to Native people to construct school buildings and to pay teachers (Burnaby, 1980). More specifically, Egerton Ryerson, the Chief Superintendent of Education for Upper Canada,

¹¹ I have used quotation marks here around the term, “Indian,” only to note that this was the term used by the government and historical documents.

recommended in 1847 that boarding schools and day schools should be established to provide practical skills and religious training. In essence, according to Ryerson, education for the “Indian” would be couched in Christianity: “With him (the Indian) nothing can be done to improve and elevate his character and condition without the aid of religious feeling” (cited in Connelly, Chalmers, and Clark, 1965, p. 13). With the collaboration of Methodist missionaries, the government established reserves and schools where, according to Furniss (1995), “Natives would be settled and taught basic literacy, agricultural, and industrial trades, as well as principles of Christian morality and belief. The ultimate goal of this program was to create Christianized, civilized, and self-governing Native communities under the protection of the British government” (p. 20).

In 1867, the federal government of Canada, under the terms of the British North American Act, encoded Aboriginal peoples as non-citizens and wards of the state. Federal policy toward Aboriginal peoples explicitly became assimilationist as they were treated as children and even “problems” of the state. As a national goal, Prime Minister John A. Macdonald publicly advocated in Parliament “to do away with the tribal system and assimilate the Indian people in all respects with the inhabitants of the Dominion, as speedily as they are fit to change” (cited in Milloy, 2001, p. 6).

By 1880, the Canadian government shifted its emphasis from day schools to residential schools in order to assimilate Aboriginal peoples, as recommended in Nicolas Davin's *Report On Industrial Schools For Indians and Half-Breeds* (1879).¹² Miller (1996) argues that the main purposes of residential schools became entrenched in paternalistic beliefs and rhetoric: to provide basic academic training, to teach “usable” economic skills, and to assimilate Aboriginal students into mainstream society. Thus, from this assimilationist policy, preference was given to the creation of industrial residential schools away from reserves for older students and to boarding schools for their younger siblings. Attendance would be ensured, and all aspects of life, “from dress to use of English language to behaviour, would be carefully regulated” (Barman, Herbert, & McCaskill, 1986, p. 6). These residential schools would operate under church auspices, both Catholic and Protestant, which became partners in the formal education of Aboriginal peoples. Churches took responsibility for the daily management and operations of

¹² Sir John A. Macdonald commissioned Nicolas Davin, a newspaper journalist and politician, to write this report on industrial schools for Aboriginal students. The document is commonly referred to as the *Davin Report*.

the schools, which in essence meant civilizing, moralizing, and ultimately assimilating them into mainstream society (Furniss, 1995).

Following the recommendation of Davin's *Report* (1879), the importance of denominational schools at the outset for the Indians became obvious:

The first and greatest stone in the foundation of the quasi-civilization of the Indians, wherever seen, was laid by missionaries . . . Schools are scattered over the whole continent, wherever Indians exist, monuments of religious zeal and heroic self-sacrifice. These schools should be utilized as much as possible, both on the grounds of efficiency and economy. . . .

One of the earliest things an attempt to civilize them does, is to take away their simple Indian mythology, the central idea of which, to wit, a perfect spirit, can hardly be improved on. . . . a savage sceptic would be open to civilizing influences and moral control only through desires, which, in the midst of enlightenment, constantly break out into the worst features of barbarians. (pp. 12, 14-15)

This assimilative policy officially marks the first phase of Canada's "Indian" education policy (Assembly of First Nations, 1994).

However, Barman (1995a) challenges this rhetoric of providing useful education for assimilation and argues that residential schools schooled Aboriginal children primarily for inequality and hence failure. She claims that the federal policy of assimilating the Aboriginal peoples failed mostly because the system was "fundamentally flawed" (p. 57).

First, as wards of the federal government, Aboriginal peoples were not only essentialized but were objectified and marginalized as a uniformed Other. Premised in biological determinism, the rhetoric and reality both assumed racial inferiority as history textbooks consistently depicted Aboriginal peoples as "wild," "savage," "cruel," and "uncivilized" (see Decore et al., 1981; Werner et al., 1980).

Second, Aboriginal students received less time in the classroom than non-Aboriginal students in schools that were grossly underfunded when compared to provincial institutions. Funding barely covered the costs of sustenance let alone quality education (Milloy, 2001; Barman, 1995a). The goal was basic literacy (Persson, 1986), as Aboriginal students were to acquire the "practical skills permitting their entry into mainstream society, but only at its very lowest rungs," thus reinforcing the status quo (Barman, 1995a, p. 63). Because residential

schools remained under the control of various Christian denominations, schools focused on religious conversion rather than providing an academic education. Though the government rhetoric championed Aboriginal peoples to assimilate into mainstream society, the reality was one of restriction if not prevention: “However much federal rhetoric might have maintained the illusion of assimilation, the Department of Indian Affairs was assuring failure in terms of Aboriginal pupils competing socially or intellectually with their White neighbours” (Barman, 1995a, pp. 63-64).

Third, with “White refusal to accept educated young Indians into the dominant socio-economic order,” segregation and inequality became the norm across Canada (Barman, 1995b, pp. 353). The rhetoric of assimilation shifted to one of isolation and discrimination whereby the reality quickly paralleled the rhetoric. Barman argues that the policy of assimilation ironically became an undesirable outcome that threatened the status quo: rhetoric thus became reality. Instead, only through inequality would Aboriginal peoples attain their respective place on the racialized hierarchy of contemporary mainstream society.

In a more critical and comprehensive analysis of residential schools, Milloy (2001) asserts that the school system’s failure was complete and immediate. According to Schissel and Wotherspoon (2003), this educational colonialism became a “national crime” resulting in a cultural genocide. Residential schools were to wipe out all cultural characteristics of being an Aboriginal person. Marker (2004) echoes this sentiment and argues that the residential school was in effect a “dark experiment . . . deployed to replace the Aboriginal child’s actual identity, language, and connection to the land with a shadow personality that would serve the interests of mainstream economic and cultural goals toward colonial dominance” (p. 103).

The beginnings of integration mark the second phase of Canada's policy on schooling for Aboriginal peoples, extending between 1951 and 1972. Integration of Aboriginal students into mainstream schools from the early 1950s meant decreased influence and involvement of Christian denominations and increased influence and involvement of public (secular) administration. Teachers were now employees of the federal government, academic curricula were standardized to those of public schools, and half-day work/half-day study began to disappear. Milloy (2001) makes an important point in stating that

integration was inspired by financial rather than philosophical first principles. Philosophy there was, but it came as an afterthought, and even then it was not

well thought out. Its rhetoric was at times contradicted by the very details of the new education policy.

Education remained assimilation. . . . the new hallmark of post-war assimilative rhetoric was “citizenship.” Integrated education would . . . prepare Indian children to take their place as citizens. (p. 195)

The *Hawthorn Report* in 1967 reinforced this policy with its description of the ideal “Indian” child/student: “What the school wants the child to be like above all is the ideal middle-class Canadian child. Furthermore, the *Report* continued, “teachers must continue to take refuge in the ‘rightness’ of their ways and struggle onward in the task of helping children overcome their Indianness” (cited in Schissel & Wotherspoon, 2003, pp. 56, 57). Fundamentally, this “discourse of public policy was framed around ethnocentric propositions that were hidden by a discourse of progress and mobility” despite its politically astute terminology and attempt to be “culturally sensitive and somewhat self-reflective” (p. 56). In the process, the *Hawthorn Report* effectually condemned Aboriginal culture.

No symbolic or political document epitomized the integrationist philosophy more than the 1969 federal *Statement of the Government of Canada on Indian Policy*, known as the *White Paper on Indian Policy*, which stressed the “equality” of Aboriginal peoples in Canada (Government of Canada, 1969):

To be an Indian is to lack power -- the power to act as owner of your lands, the power to spend your own money and, too often, the power to change your own conditions. . . . Special treatment has made of the Indians a community disadvantaged and apart.

Obviously, the course of history must be changed.

To be an Indian must be to be free -- free to develop Indian cultures in an environment of legal, social and economic equality with other Canadians. (p. 3)

The policy was premised on the “achievement of individual Indian equality at the expense of cultural survival” (Barman, Hebert, & McCaskill, 1986, p. 15). As outlined in the *White Paper*, the Department of Indian Affairs would be abolished and the reserve system dismantled. Aboriginal peoples as individuals would become equal participants in Trudeau's “just society.” Despite its integrationist philosophy and rhetoric of equality and justice, the *White Paper* in reality proposed the “most complete expression of Canada’s traditional assimilative intent” (Milloy, 2001, p. 190), which would effectively abolish not only the status of Aboriginal peoples but also terminate the federal government’s assumed responsibility to protect and uphold this

constitutional right (Longboat, 1987). However, it would also be the impetus for the resurgence and reawakening of Aboriginal peoples' political and social consciousness in Canada. The consequence would be a third phase from 1972 onwards in the continuing and evolving journey toward self-determination.

Despite all the policy changes and philosophical rhetoric of the federal government, the reality of residential schools remained firmly and fundamentally rooted in a colonial vision. As Henderson (1995) states, “[f]ederal government regulations were not benign intrusions; they were deliberate psychological experiments which attempted to destroy First Nations consciousness” (p. 254). The legacy has also become more personalized and real with a growing number of experiential and poignant accounts from former students and survivors of the colonial education system, thus culminating into many realities.

Colonization: The Legacy of Residential Schools

Before reviewing the third phase in Canadian government policy, it is essential to note the lasting impact of the residential schools. The devastating legacy of residential schools for Aboriginal peoples surpasses the experiences of any group in Canadian history. No other peoples in Canada experienced such a coercive, prolonged, and systemic subjugation and oppression. The legacy of residential schools has forever touched, threatened, disrupted, and, in some cases, destroyed Aboriginal peoples' language and culture, identity, sense of place, Indigenous knowledge and ways of learning.

Language and Culture

Language, in all its written, verbal, non-verbal, and symbolic forms, is the foundation of a people's culture. It is the crucial medium through which culture is created, accumulated, shared, and transmitted from one generation to another (Milloy, 2001). Kirkness (1998a) provides some tragic statistics: of the more than 60 Aboriginal languages once spoken in Canada, 8 are already extinct, 13 are near extinction, 23 are “seriously endangered,” and at the present rate of declination, only 4 are projected to have a reasonable chance of survival - Cree, Ojibwa, Inuktitut, and Dakota (p. 95).

In her article, “Micmac Literacy and Cognitive Assimilation,” Battiste (1986) argues that teaching a strictly English language education to Aboriginal students was not only disruptive to

Aboriginal cultures but was also cognitively imperialistic. As she puts it, such an education “became the tool of cognitive manipulation used to disclaim tribal knowledge and values” that resulted in the “destruction of tribal identity and values along with the tribal soul” (p. 37).¹³ Thus, as Aboriginal languages declined and died, so too did Aboriginal cultures and identities. Doige (2001) elaborates:

This means that a student’s personhood is devalued, he or she disconnects from the attributes that assist in the development of self-respect, confidence, and the ability to trust oneself and others. This rift is the insidious tool of disenfranchisement, because the student is not only told he or she is unacceptable; the student now feels inferior and rejected. (p. 126)

Well-documented testimonies attest to the suppression of Aboriginal students’ language, cultural beliefs and practices, and identity in residential schools, which often and tragically resulted in physical, mental, and emotional abuses.¹⁴

Identity

Identity for Aboriginal peoples was seriously compromised and even jeopardized as a result of residential schooling. The physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual trauma experienced by Aboriginal students left an indelible mark on their identity, both individually and collectively.

Physical abuses included malnutrition, inadequate clothing, punishment (often justified as discipline), and, most damaging, sexual violence (Assembly of First Nations, 1994). Exceptionally high rates of disease and mortality were also common (Kelm, 1996). Mental abuses included stunted creativity, verbal discouragement and suppression of Aboriginal traits or customs, and verbal belittling. Emotional abuses included humiliation, isolation, and alienation. Spiritual abuses included denial, devaluation, and denigration of traditional ceremonies, practices, and beliefs (Assembly of First Nations, 1994). As a legacy of residential schooling, Aboriginal peoples lost generations both literally through death and figuratively through

¹³ See also “Maintaining Aboriginal Identity, Language, and Culture in Modern Society” in an edited collection by Battiste: *Reclaiming Indigenous Voice and Vision* (2000).

¹⁴ For only a small sample of such testimonies, see Furniss (1992), Knockwood and Thomas (1992), Chrisjohn, Young, and Marun (1997), Assembly of First Nations, *Breaking the Silence*, (1994), Milloy (2001), and Schissel and Wotherspoon (2003). Detailing individual testimonies and experiences, however, is beyond the scope of this dissertation.

survivors who felt displaced, silenced, and alone. They were taught, and perhaps learned too well, to hate themselves and their culture. Consultants working for the Assembly of First Nations detailed the social pathologies produced by the school system:

The residential school led to a disruption in the transference of parenting skills from one generation to the next. Without these skills, many survivors had difficulties in raising their own children. In residential schools they learned that adults often exert power and control through abuse. The lessons learned in childhood are often repeated in adulthood with the result that many survivors of the residential school system often inflict abuse on their own children. These children in turn use the same tools on their own children. (cited in Milloy, 2001, p. 299)¹⁵

Thus, a vicious cycle of abuse and neglect began. Other common responses among Aboriginal peoples included depression, inappropriate or limited forms of expression, running away, frustration and substance abuse. Even more tragic was the burdened and fragmented identity they carried as adults after residential schooling. For these survivors, the search for identity was the greatest challenge for many. As Milloy (2001) writes, the "painful and repeated denigration of their way of life, including the banning of their language, had left former students with little or no sense of what constituted being a First Nations person" (pp. 95, 105). A survivor of residential schooling poignantly and eloquently states this perspective:

It makes me angry that the people who almost destroyed me got away with it because they grew old and died before I could confront them. My anger led to frustration because there is nothing I could do to even things up. I cannot confront those who lied to me about myself and about my people and withheld knowledge from me, which could have allowed me to live up to my fullest potential. (cited in Knockwood & Thomas, 1992, p. 158)

The legacy continues:

The spirits of many First Nations people remain lost and wandering as a result of the people's experiences in residential school. This loss has not only affected the survivors of residential school. Their children, partners, extended families and communities have all been impacted in some way. Some have been able to reaffirm their identity . . . [Others], however, are still lost and searching. (Assembly of First Nations, 1994, p. 108)

¹⁵ Further reading would include Ing's PhD Dissertation, "Dealing with Shame and Unresolved Trauma" (2000).

Sense of Place

By relocating and dislocating Aboriginal children to residential schools, Canadian authorities purposefully and physically prevented intergenerational cultural transmission and stripped young people of their Aboriginal cultures and languages. For Eurocentric education, the place where education occurs is theoretically and practically inconsequential (except being physically isolated from Aboriginal communities) and was thus easily transplanted into residential schools. However, for Aboriginal peoples, education is inextricably and fundamentally linked with its location (i.e., sense of place and location). In contrast with the Eurocentric approach, "Indian education recognizes the importance of an Indian sense of place, land, and territory. From this point of view, it is clear that a uniquely Indian place promotes involvement rather than isolation or segregation" (Hampton, 1995, p. 40).

Smith (1999) uses the term "space" to point out the difference between Western and Indigenous knowledge:

For the indigenous world, Western conceptions of space, of arrangements and display, of the relationship between people and the landscape, of culture as an object of study, have meant that not only has the indigenous world been represented in particular ways back to the West, but the indigenous world view, the land and the people, have been radically transformed in the spatial image of the West. In other words, indigenous space has been colonized. (p. 51)¹⁶

By breaking ties to the land, residential schools severed the connection to Aboriginal knowledge and ways of life. Aboriginal students instead faced an alien and alienating school culture, one that inevitably would lead them to failure. The legacy of this disjuncture would further exacerbate the loss of identity and culture.

Indigenous Knowledge and Ways of Learning

With Western education forced upon Aboriginal peoples, Indigenous knowledge and ways of learning were ignored and denigrated. From a holistic to a fragmented and compartmentalized approach, Aboriginal students' ways of learning and knowing were abruptly suppressed (Archibald, 1995; Joe, 2000). Educationally, the legacy of residential schools stunted

¹⁶ The term "Indigenous" usually refers to Aboriginal people internationally and therefore connotes a more global context (see Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, Communication Branch, 2002).

the development of First Nations peoples - spiritually, emotionally, psychologically, and academically.

With only basic knowledge for assimilative purposes, Aboriginal students were mostly trained not for academic pursuits but for practical skills and Christian theology and values (Barman, 1995a; Persson, 1986; Doige, 2001). A gross lack of qualified teachers, funding, and academic supervision along with excessive devotion to chores reduced the educational potential of Aboriginal peoples (Milloy, 2001). As a result, the federal educational system “left the average First Nations student with only seven years of formal education,” thus schooled for marginalized occupations and even unemployment in mainstream society (Henderson, 1995, p. 255). Arguably residential schooling was used as a “class weapon” in which “the culture of poverty mentality that framed government and church thinking drew on education to create a self-fulfilling prophecy whereby poor children from poor families could not possibly succeed in educational institutions built upon middle-class parochial values and temporal demands” (Schissel & Wotherspoon, 2003, pp. 61-62).

Though most residential schools officially closed by the late 1980s, their legacy remains and is still unfolding. Wounds still need to be addressed and healed. With the resurgence of Aboriginal peoples’ political empowerment in the 1970s a shift in perspective from a colonized to a decolonizing history began with a new history of self-discovery, self-preservation, and self-determination. As well, a third phase in Canadian government policy on Aboriginal education quickly emerged.

Decolonization: A Journey Toward Self-Determination

Responding to the federal government’s *White Paper*, the National Indian Brotherhood published its policy paper entitled *Indian Control of Indian Education*, an historic significant document outlining Aboriginal peoples’ concerns and vision for their own education. Laying the groundwork for the future of Aboriginal education, the document called for “education to provide the setting in which [Aboriginal] children can develop the fundamental attitudes and values which have an honoured place in Indian tradition and culture” (National Indian Brotherhood, 1972, p. 2). Another aim was to “make education relevant to the philosophy and needs of the Indian people . . . to give [their] children a strong sense of identity, with confidence in their personal worth and ability” (p. 3). More specifically, the purpose of “Indian” education

was defined as “salvaging Aboriginal languages, cultures, and societies, and of transmitting those cultures, with their unique understanding of North American ecology and their distinctive world views” (Battiste, 1995, pp. viii-ix). In order to achieve these goals, the National Indian Brotherhood challenged the rights to and ownership of educational voice and authority. Because the federal government had grossly failed Aboriginal students educationally, the National Indian Brotherhood (1972) believed that “Indian parents must have FULL RESPONSIBILITY AND CONTROL OF EDUCATION” (p. 27). Since this historical document was published, “Indian” education has experienced continual renewal both philosophically and practically.

Philosophically, Aboriginal education begins with Indigenous knowledge and epistemology, grounded in the “self, the spirit, the unknown” (Hampton, 1995, p. 108). As Henderson (2000a) points out, it is centred in space and place, not time or history:

[All] life is sacred and that all life forms are connected. Humans are neither above nor below others in the circle of life. Everything that exists in the circle is one unity, of one heart. . . . Aboriginal knowledge is not a description of reality but an understanding of the processes of ecological change and ever-changing insights about diverse patterns or styles of flux. (pp. 259, 265).

Thus, Indigenous knowledge is not static but is dynamically interrelated and interconnected to specific places. Education consequentially emphasizes how knowledge comes from a concrete place where the “Indian relationship to the land is not abstract, but very particular, tied to one piece of ground” (cited in Marker, 2000, p. 41). Similarly, Battiste and Henderson (2000) argue that

Eurocentric thought demands universal definitions of Indigenous knowledge, even though Indigenous scholars have established no common usage of the term. The quest for precision and certainty is a typical Eurocentric strategy. . . . This is the strategy of a language system that is not attached to an ecology or to its intelligible essences. . . . [Researchers] have tried to make Indigenous knowledge match the existing academic categories of Eurocentric knowledge. They have relied on these categories for comfort and security, instead of embarking on an intellectual adventure to connect more deeply with Indigenous ecologies. (pp. 36, 39)

They both acknowledge that Indigenous ways of knowing “is the way of living within [the] contexts of flux, paradox, and tension, respecting the pull of dualism and reconciling opposing forces” (p. 42). Furthermore, a disconnect appears to exist between Indigenous knowledge and Western knowledge. While Indigenous epistemology is experiential, natural, and holistic,

Western epistemology is objectified, artificial, and compartmentalized (Henderson, 2000a; Kawagley and Barnhardt, 1999).¹⁷

In the case of studying history, Bruno-Jofre and Schiralli (2002) argue that “content knowledge and mastery of the subject matter is critical in the inquiry model. . . . The emphasis on stressing the process of general thinking skills in history classrooms may effectively displace genuine historical content” (p. 121). From an Indigenous viewpoint, however, their sense of history becomes narrowly Eurocentric. In contrast, Ermine (1995) claims that the

fragmentary self-world view that permeates the Western world is detrimental to Aboriginal epistemology. The Western education systems that our children are subjected to promote the dogma of fragmentation and indelibly harm the capacity for holism. The mindset created by fragmentation impedes the progress towards inwardness that our ancestors undertook. Only through subjectivity may we continue to gain authentic insights into truth. We need to experience the life force from which creativity flows, and our Aboriginal resources such as language and culture are our touchstones for achieving this. (p. 110)

More important than these differences is the fundamental awareness that “beyond the immediate sensible world of perception, memory, imagination, and feelings lies another world which knowledge, power, or medicine is derived” (Battiste, 1998, p. 18). This awareness of Indigenous epistemology in turn becomes a force of survival and empowerment for the Aboriginal peoples of Canada.

Aboriginal education continues to evolve and redefine itself in order for Indigenous knowledge and epistemology to be legitimized. Once a central tenet of the National Indian Brotherhood, “Indian control over Indian education” no longer suffices. A process of decolonization has begun in a journey toward self-determination for the Aboriginal peoples of Canada.

Decolonization, according to Laenui (2000), is a long yet necessary process. Aboriginal peoples need to rediscover their history and recover their languages, cultures, and identities. Afterward, they need to mourn their losses and sufferings from the colonial past. They then need to dream by exploring their own cultures, experiencing their own aspirations, and considering their own structures of government and social order. Finally, they need to be proactive by making their dreams a reality. In acting proactively, Aboriginal peoples are moving toward a

¹⁷ The apparent incongruities between Western and Indigenous knowledges are expanded further in Kawagley and Barnhardt’s article, “Education Indigenous to Place: Western Science Meets Native Reality” (1999).

postcolonial framework, one that not only revitalizes Aboriginal ways of life but also challenges the conventions and structures of a hegemonic Eurocentric education system. Eurocentrism, according to Henderson (2000b), “represents a cognitive force of artificial European thought, a differentiated consciousness, ever changing in its creativity to justify the oppression and domination of contemporary Indigenous peoples and their spiritual guardians” (p. 59). The new forms of colonization create an illusion that the practice no longer exists; however, colonization has instead been reformed in different and subtler ways (Smith, 2000). Because the national legislature and policy makers “make decisions for Indigenous peoples, tell them what they can and cannot do, refuse to support them, or effectively shut them out of the process,” Aboriginal peoples are still living in the legacy of colonialism (Yazzie, 2000, p. 46). Decolonization will remain a process and a postcolonial era will remain an elusive dream until self-determination is achieved. However, decolonization does not imply a complete rejection of Western knowledge. Rather, it is about “centering [Indigenous] concerns and world views and them coming to know and understand theory and research from [Indigenous] perspectives and for [Indigenous] purposes” (Smith, 1999, p. 39).

One fundamental, practical goal of “Indian” education is political, financial, personnel, and, perhaps most important, curricular control (Barman, Hebert, & McCaskill, 1987). A decolonized education not only includes Aboriginal peoples’ control of their own education but also the affirmation and transformation of and for their own peoples.

In her case study of the Stó:lo people, Archibald (1995) outlines three main objectives that embrace the ideas of affirmation and transformation. Although specific to a place, these objectives may be used for Aboriginal education more generally. The first objective is to help Aboriginal students develop a more positive self-image. The second is to help non-Aboriginal students develop an increased awareness of and a more positive attitude toward Aboriginal peoples. The third is to provide students with the opportunity to make a comparison of traditional and contemporary Aboriginal cultures, focusing on “culture change, social organization, technology, child-rearing, language, and world-view” (p. 301).

Similarly, Hampton (1995) offers twelve comprehensive standards or objectives on which practical Aboriginal education is redefined and refocused:

1. Respect the spiritual relationships between all things.
2. Serve people.
3. Actively implement diverse cultures.

4. Validate First Nations culture.
5. Continue First Nations traditions.
6. Demand relationships of personal respect.
7. Acknowledge a colonial history.
8. Relentlessly battle for First Nations children.
9. Recognize and even nourish the powerful pattern of life that lies hidden within personal and tribal suffering and oppression.
10. Recognize conflict, tensions, and struggle between Western and Indigenous education.
11. Recognize the importance of an “Indian” sense of place, land, and territory.
12. Transform the relations between First Nations and non-First Nations as well as in the individual society.

This decolonized typology places a priority on the quest for sovereignty, the recognition and legitimization of Indigenous knowledge as the epistemological foundation, the Earth as a spiritual centre, and the continuation and evolution of tribal and traditional ways of life as sociocultural frames of reference.

Both the philosophical and practical aims of Aboriginal education are heading toward a postcolonial approach; however, challenges also lie ahead. Politically, and most problematic because of its paradoxical nature, Aboriginal peoples are seeking to have the federal government provide funds for quality education while they are still seeking to end the federal government’s control of them. Structurally and administratively, the Department of Indian Affairs was not designed to operate or administer schools: “The relatively low funding levels of federal schools, and their geographical separation, have meant that the department does not provide services equivalent to those offered by local school boards. Nor does the department have the specialized infrastructure provided by provincial education ministries to support local boards” (Longboat, 1987, p. 35). Socially, Aboriginal education is not only education for and of Aboriginal peoples. It is arguably even more important for non-Aboriginal people to learn about Aboriginal peoples. Because little has been taught in schools about Aboriginal peoples, most Canadians know little about them. Even more detrimental are the “erroneous and blatantly ethnocentric” media exposures of Aboriginal peoples in film, print, and on television (Douglas, 1987, p. 184). Philosophically, potential harm exists in codifying Indigenous knowledge too firmly, thus essentializing it. Rooted in diversity and in practical activity and social relationships rather than

abstractions separate from the learner or knower, Indigenous knowledge does not and cannot fit into preconceived notions of culture (Schissel & Wotherspoon, 2003).¹⁸

Though seemingly insurmountable, these challenges poignantly illustrate the continual growth and depth of Aboriginal peoples and Aboriginal education. From oppression and even threat of extinction, Aboriginal peoples have struggled, contested, persisted, and survived. Too long have Aboriginal voices been silenced, muted, or ignored. Through the process of decolonization, however, they are finally being heard, listened to, and validated.

The federal government encouraged the decolonization process in December 2006 by passing Bill C-34 (The First Nations Jurisdiction over Education in British Columbia), which formally recognizes the Aboriginal right to make decisions about education from K-12. This federal and provincial acknowledgement is a step toward Aboriginal epistemology as it validates Aboriginal peoples to have control over the education of their children if they choose. However, the initial phase of this control is limited to jurisdiction over K-12 First Nations schools located on reserves (BC Ministry of Education, 2007). BC's provincial government has also recently initiated Enhancement Agreements between the Ministry of Education, school districts, and local Aboriginal communities. They are designed to "enhance the educational achievement of Aboriginal students" through a "collaborative partnership between Aboriginal communities and school districts that involves shared decision-making and setting specific goals to meet the educational needs of Aboriginal students" and "integration of Aboriginal perspectives into learning experiences" (BC Ministry of Education, 2003, p. 8). In 2007, Surrey's School District drafted an Enhancement Agreement with a number of purposes:

1. Build on the established practice of shared decision-making between the Surrey School District and local Aboriginal people.
2. Acknowledge, respect and affirm relationships between the local Aboriginal communities, parents and the Surrey School District to enhance Aboriginal student success.
3. Continually enhance the academic performance of Aboriginal students from Kindergarten to Grade 12.
4. Continue to meet the needs of Aboriginal learners by maintaining and expanding academic support programs as necessary while providing staffing and transportation that support these programs.

¹⁸ Although a growing body of research has been published on education programs for Aboriginal students (see Williams & Wyatt, 1987; Hesh, 1995; Grant, 1995), not much has been studied on education programs for non-Aboriginal students about Aboriginal peoples.

5. Ensure the collection of data through formal and informal assessments, which measure student achievement in the selected performance areas. (p. 1)

In addition, the district identified two main performance goals: to enhance the achievement of Aboriginal learners from K-12 in literacy and engagement; and to enhance the communication and relationships between the Surrey School District and the Aboriginal communities and parents.¹⁹ These practical initiatives indicate real progress in addressing the needs and hopes of Aboriginal peoples in their journey toward real self-determination that recognizes Indigenous epistemology.

Aboriginal Images and Mis/Representations in Texts

When we speak of education, it is not only meant that the Aboriginal person must become better educated in the non-Aboriginal school of thought. The non-Aboriginal person must be made aware of our history, our traditional lifestyle and the downfall and resurgence of our peoples as history has evolved today. This information must become a compulsory component in the teaching of all Canadians. (Department of Indian and Northern Affairs, 1996)

Cited from the *Royal Commission Report on Aboriginal Peoples*, this quotation reflects the legacy of Canada's colonial history and voices a profound concern over the education of and for students and teachers alike. Canada's history has been a narration of conquest, focusing on English and French relations and their resulting domination and colonization. However, some historians have recently challenged this traditional canon with the inclusion of those once ignored and even scorned peoples - women, ethnic minorities, and Aboriginal peoples. Chief David Ahenakew in the House of Commons in 1984 echoed this sentiment and criticized the biases against Aboriginal peoples found in history textbooks:

Have you read your child's history book lately? What do they say about the First Nations? You will usually encounter them in the first chapter, after which they conveniently disappear from sight as a succession of white discoverers and explorers pass in parade. About us you will find quotations such as this, "They fought more ferociously than any other Indians we encountered in our westward movement." The fact we were fighting for our own land and survival was not mentioned. (cited in House of Commons, 1984, p. 126)

¹⁹ The document also includes a breakdown of specific objectives and corresponding performance indicators and performance targets for each goal.

Through both omission and commission, school textbooks have traditionally silenced the voices of Aboriginal peoples. Moreover, as Orlowski and Menzies (2004) argue:

Many of the Social Studies and History textbooks read by British Columbian students remained locked in a colonialist discourse of European arrival and hard working settlers who, by dint of their hard work built the nation we now call Canada. Within the dominant narrative Indigenous peoples are rarely presented as actors in their own right: history acts upon them and they are usually represented as passive recipients, or occasionally, as reactors to what the dominant culture is doing. (p. 66)

However, as Canada constitutionally espouses the notions of inclusion, textbooks should reflect these tenets in addressing and redressing the colonization of Aboriginal peoples.

Textbooks as Collective History and Memory

Because of their ubiquitous presence in the classroom that “have formed, and continue to form, the basis of instruction,” textbooks have been, Clark (1996) argues, “central to the quality and content of education” (p. 7). Although textbooks are not the only means of transmitting a nation’s history, they have effectively become a universal medium and foundation of school instruction that potentially mold the “knowledge, attitudes and values of our young people. Ultimately, [textbooks] can reflect and shape the beliefs and actions of the nation itself. The value of their content for classroom use cannot be understated” (McCluskey, 1993, p. 3). As a result, within their particular sociocultural context of “demographic, social, political, and economic conditions, traditions, and ideologies,” textbooks serve three main purposes (Cornbleth, 1990, p. 31).

First, textbooks link national memory with national history. Since memory depends on social conditions, it is not an objective fact (Adam, 2000). The memories of a nation (i.e., collective memory) constitute the “accepted perceptions of past events in which the collective identity of a people is mirrored” and, in turn, are constructed and reconstructed, interpreted and reinterpreted over time (p. 88). National memories are thus temporal and dynamic. As Kavanagh (2000) points out, “[o]ur memories are pure to us in that moment, but they are not necessarily a direct route back into the past. Because we often accept the fallibility of our own

memories, we attempt to aid remembrance by gathering images and other materials of those things we deem to be relevant to our lives” (p. 19).

Francis (1997) provides another perspective, that memory also implies its opposite - forgetfulness - in which "we forget as much as we remember, and what we choose to forget tells as much about us as what we choose to remember" (p. 11). This elusiveness becomes fixed contextually through textbooks as these recorded memories become documents of history. As Podeh (2000) comments, “[t]extbooks thus function as a sort of ‘supreme historical court’ whose task is to decipher from all the accumulated ‘pieces of the past’ the ‘true’ collective memories which are appropriate for inclusion in the canonical national historical narrative” (p. 66). Therefore, textbooks may be contested in terms of its content, interpretation, and perspective. In constructing the collective memory, textbooks play a dual role: "On the one hand, they provide a sense of continuity between the past and the present, transmitting accepted historical narratives; on the other, they alter - or rewrite - the past in order to suit contemporary needs” (p. 66). They become “artifacts of historical commemoration” (Coates and Morgan, 2002, p. 167) and remain “fascinating not because they explain what actually happened to us, but because they explain what we think happened to us” (Francis, 1997, p. 14).

In addition to the text, visual images, especially photographs, play a role in manufacturing memory. They constitute a “meta-value of memory construction, [their] tentacles spread out, blurring and constructing memory” to become “objects of memory” (Edwards, 1999, p. 221). As photographs provide a snapshot of history in textbooks, they are made to “hold the fleeing, to still time, to create memory” with intention (p. 222). They have a profound effect on the interpretation of historical events and people. However, because they are “detached from physical nature and consequently from the functional context,” meaning has to be provided within the text in order for viewers to understand (p. 225). Thus, when incorporating visual images in textbooks, the accompanying texts become as important as the images themselves. As Werner (2002) argues, readers do not passively receive meaning from the visual images but interpret them:

[Readers] make meaning by understanding how the parts (e.g., symbols, conventions, context) are related to the whole (e.g., message). . . . Visual texts are more than ‘things’ or instructional means set before students; their meanings emerge during interactions with readers (viewers). To think of images independent of readers is naïve, for they do not speak apart from interpreters. . . . Understanding is not simply a matter of grouping an author’s intended meaning or

of uncovering the correct message . . . but also of bringing one's imagination to the reading, recognizing that varying interpretations are possible as the text is engaged from different purposes and biographical locations. (pp. 403, 404-405).²⁰

Teachers should therefore direct and teach students how to analyze and interpret (i.e., to deconstruct) the various meanings behind the visual images.

Second, textbooks become both politicizing and socializing instruments. Not only are textbooks often used as “ideological tools to promote a certain belief system and legitimize an established political and social order,” they are ideologically driven (Podeh, 2000, p. 66). They are “always influenced to some degree by the value system and the knowledge level of the writer” (Devine, 1991, p. 12). With this role, textbooks reflect, reshape, and even redefine national identification(s) and identity(ies). According to Coates and Morgan (2002), textbooks historically “have been vehicles used to inculcate and develop national identity. The ‘story’ of Canada’s past was often the imagined and desired narrative of [its] future” (p. 164).

Furthermore, even with the goals of objectivity, the content in textbooks is inherently biased through their inclusion and hence exclusion of particular events and peoples (Clark, 2002). Issues of elitism, racism, and prejudice become inextricably bound in textbooks by simply ignoring the existence of those who are different. By failing to recognize particular groups of people, “they are stigmatized as the ‘other’ and are stripped of the dignity they deserve. Failure to recognize the existence of the ‘other’ is to cast aspersions on them and to insinuate that they carry no inherent value as a people” (Ashley & Jarratt-Ziemski, 1999, p. 50). The issues of voice and viewpoint become problematic to historians, whereby whose voices and whose viewpoints are presented and re-presented become points of contention. Because historians have authority over the past, they “determine which voices of the past are heard through their expositions and thus which viewpoints are represented in their discourses” (Berkhofer Jr., 1995, p. 170). Values, morals, and norms of mainstream society are also usually reflected in textbooks while those of non-mainstream are usually omitted, and, in turn, textbooks normalize what is accepted and marginalize what is contested.

Third, textbooks serve as practical pedagogy. They have, as both Tomkins (1986) and Hirschfelder (1999) claim, become the universal norm in the classroom and main determinant of curriculum. Textbooks approved at the ministry and district levels and used in schools by

²⁰ See also Werner’s article “Reading Authorship Into Texts” (2000).

teachers often constitute authority simply because of their endorsement and validations by the former, and as such they consequentially become the primary source of knowledge for the latter (Clark, 1996; Seixas, 1994).

An Overview of Textbook Evaluations

As a result of the federal government's publication of its *White Paper on Indian Policy* (1969), various institutions conducted surveys regarding the attitudes toward Aboriginal peoples.²¹ Researched and published by the Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, 3 main reports show an overwhelmingly ambiguous position (Cooke, 1984; Gibbins and Ponting, 1978; Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC), 1980).²² Gibbins and Ponting (1978) discovered in their national survey of 1,832 people that the general public did not regard Aboriginal peoples as a "high priority" nor were they well-informed about Indian affairs (p. 37). Seen indifferently and even "unquestionably pejorative" with negative stereotypes, a sizable minority of non-Aboriginal people viewed Aboriginal peoples as inferior. They state that in this sense, "Indians are seen as lazy, lacking in motivation, factionalized, overly dependent upon government handouts, and facing serious problems with the use of alcohol" (p. 11). These sentiments echo Bradford's previous yet much smaller sampled study that was published in the INAC report (1980).²³ Recommending further research, intercultural workshops, sensitivity training sessions, information dissemination, and community projects, Bradford concluded that the public held toward (and perhaps against) Aboriginal peoples:

1. A resigned despair of pessimism as "latent prejudice, apathy, and ignorance" dominated their attitudes.
2. A fragile sympathy conditioned upon "no cost ... for the non-native."
3. A fear of attracting "hostility" by "heightening the profile of Indian matters."
4. An incompatibility between "non-native approaches to research and policy/planning" with "Indian tradition."
5. A positive yet vulnerable attitudinal change.

²¹ Most of the studies regarding the perceptions, attitudes, and images of Aboriginal peoples were conducted in the 1970s and 1980s, mainly as a reaction to the *White Paper*, the resurgence of the Assembly of First Nations as a political voice, and the recognition and growth of the human rights and "minority" movements (Cooke, 1984). However, fewer of these national public surveys were conducted in the 1990s as focus appeared to have shifted toward other Aboriginal issues such as the environment, Canadian constitution, and land claims.

²² Within Cooke's and the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs Canada's publications are other cited studies regarding the perceptions and images of Aboriginal peoples.

²³ Bradford used 37 interviews in "public and private places from Ontario to Alberta, with non-Natives having a considerable awareness of Indian affairs" (INAC, 1980, p. 5).

6. A reserved tension as “current inward hostility is likely to be directed outwards” in the future. (cited in Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, 1980, pp. 5, 6)

Underlying both these studies were the pervasive negative and arguably intolerant and racist sentiments among non-Aboriginals toward Aboriginals at that time.

Following these studies, in her review of contemporary research of Aboriginal images, Cooke (1984) concluded that non-Aboriginal people had accepted an uneasy dichotomous image of Aboriginal peoples but she remained optimistic: “sometimes ambivalent, sometimes contradictory. . . . Indians are viewed as somehow symbolic of Canada, in part perhaps in recognition of their aboriginal status, in part because as a reminder of, or even a search for, a ‘heroic’ past” (p. 65). No longer viewed as politically and socially accepted descriptors, terms such as “heathen,” “barbarian,” “pagan,” and “savage” have mostly disappeared from public discourse. Yet despite having a more positive image, Aboriginal peoples were still seen as the Other and “peripheral to ‘real’ Canadian history,” which were reflected and reinforced in the school textbooks (Cooke, 1984, p. 31).

A number of textbook reviews were conducted along with the studies on public opinions and perceptions of Aboriginal peoples to see what students were learning about Aboriginal peoples. The methodology varied as some studies quantitatively used word counts (McDiarmid and Pratt, 1971; Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission, 1974; O’Neill, 1984), while most qualitatively used subjective themes (Indian & Métis Conference Committee of the Community Welfare Planning Council, 1964; Manitoba Indian Brotherhood, 1974; Kirkness, 1977; Berkhofer Jr., 1979; Decore et al., 1981).

Studies in the 1960s

At the Seventh Annual Indian and Métis Conference (1961), Aboriginal peoples voiced their concerns over their portrayal in textbooks and later concluded that most of the school texts tended to “promote patronizing and degrading attitudes,” be “harmful to the Indian child’s sense of racial dignity,” and “deal inaccurately with Indian life” (Indian & Métis Conference Committee, 1964, Introduction). In response, they resolved to have “such school textbooks discontinued as they are patronizing and degrading to Indians and to have new textbooks or revisions dealing with Indian life written with accuracy and sympathetic treatment”

(Introduction). The conference committee only surveyed 5 Canadian history textbooks that were used in Manitoba elementary schools. Though they concluded that treatment of Aboriginal peoples in the textbooks did improve over the ones a generation ago, there was still much to be done:

There are startling errors of omission as well as commission; the ancient Indian religious beliefs are always contemptuously dismissed; the authors find it necessary to repeatedly point out the lack of cleanliness of the wigwams and the food while more important virtues go ignored; and once we reach the period of Confederation there creeps in that smug paternalism that so undermines Indian pride and imposes on him either lethargy or a destructive resentment.
(Indian & Métis Conference Committee, 1964, p. 1)

However, a limitation on this particular study is the minute number of textbooks examined, which would not accurately describe or generalize to the remaining history textbooks used in the Manitoba school system. Nonetheless, the committee argued that the treatment accorded to the Aboriginal peoples of Canada in the history textbooks was still unsatisfactory:

That these people have long been misunderstood, misrepresented and their contributions overlooked . . . The frequent derogatory presentation of a segment of [the Aboriginal] population has had a devastating effect upon those so pictured, and to some extent has reflected upon the rest of the [Aboriginal peoples] who have far too readily accepted it. (p. 18)

The report concludes with a passionate criticism of the history textbooks in general: “To picture [Aboriginal Peoples] as fierce and predatory savages; as simple and innocent sub-humans; or even just to ignore them as much as possible may make it easier for us to accept their many tragedies, but if history is to serve the future, such presentations are as impractical as they are immoral” (p. 18).

Two other surveys were also completed in the 1960s that reviewed history textbooks used in Ontario. Sluman (1966), who was on the committee for the Manitoba survey, also surveyed Ontario textbooks and concludes that they were more objective and complete than those reviewed in the Manitoba survey.²⁴ She claims that some authors “point out the courage and ingenuity with which the Indians coped with their environment. . . . Without exception, every book reviewed provides some evidence, at one point or another, of sympathy and understanding

²⁴ Sluman, in her article published in *The Toronto Education Quarterly*, does not mention the number of textbooks reviewed.

for Indian people” (pp. 11, 12). In another review of Ontario’s Grades 1 to 8 Social Studies textbooks, the conclusion was not as optimistic (Study Group on the Canadian Indian and Eskimo of Port Credit University Women’s Club, 1966). The study reviewed 36 textbooks and was based on answering a series of questions on 3 topics: i) the original culture of Canadian Indians; ii) the history of culture contact between Indians and non-Indians in Canada; and iii) the situation of the Canadian Indian today (Vanderburgh, 1966, p. 2). The report concludes that there were some

enormous omissions in the information of Canadian Indians . . . The original social and political organization of the various Indians groups [was] not adequately covered, and there [was] almost no material on religion, values, ethics, or esthetics. Nowhere [was] there a really complete description of even one Indian culture. The omission of any factual material on the situation of the Canadian Indian today [was] equally serious. It [was] just as bad to leave out the facts as it would be to misrepresent them. (p. 18)

Despite some improvements, response to these criticisms was essentially ignored as Aboriginal peoples’ voices, although voiced, was simply not heard. Not until the 1970s did educators and education ministries begin to listen to the concerns of Aboriginal peoples regarding their mis-representation and mis-treatment in textbooks.

Studies in the 1970s

In a comprehensive quantitative study of 143 authorized social studies (Grades 1 to 12) textbooks for the Ontario Human Rights Commission, McDiarmid and Pratt (1971) conclude that most of the authorized textbooks used in Ontario classrooms grossly omitted and thus prejudicially ignored Aboriginal peoples who emerge as the least favoured group:²⁵

An overwhelming number was portrayed as primitive and unskilled; not infrequently they were shown as aggressive and hostile as well. Although most have worn western dress of generations, 95 percent were shown in tribal dress or partly clothed. In 86 percent of the illustrations, one or more Indian males were shown wearing feathers or feathered head-dresses. . . . representing [Aboriginal peoples] only as a primitive people seems entirely unjustified. (p. 51).

By failing to note the positive contributions and qualities of Aboriginal peoples, textbooks commit the “main sins of omission” (p. 25). Also, by using an “excessively political approach,

resulting in emphasis on war and conflict, the unscholarly reproduction of stereotypes, and the casual use of emotive or pejorative terms” for Aboriginal peoples, textbooks commit the “main sins of commission” (p. 25). Aboriginal peoples mostly disappear from the traditional canon of Canadian history or are negatively presented within it.

In *Prejudice in Social Studies Textbooks* completed in 1974, the Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission examined the bias and potential prejudice in 60 Saskatchewan textbooks.

[Because] no book can ever be entirely free from prejudice or bias . . . it is important to expose types of prejudice, even if they cannot be entirely eliminated, and to generate a healthy skepticism toward the attitudes contained in written material. Beyond this, some textbooks are clearly worse than others with respect to their prejudicial content, and it is of worth to point these out. (p. 3)

These researchers calculate that positive terms such as “skillful” was used 59 times, “beauty” 32 times, “friendly” 25 times, and “proud” 19 times; however, negative terms such as “savage” was mentioned 58 times, “hostile” 42 times, “massacre” 30 times, “warlike” 25 times, “murderer” 22 times, and “rebellious” 20 times (p. 15). With such descriptors, students’ impressions of Aboriginal peoples would be overwhelmingly negative.

In response to the federal government’s publication of the *White Paper*, the Manitoba Indian Brotherhood (1972) published its own “Red Paper” - *Indian Control of Indian Education*. In it, the committee charges that textbooks

are needed which emphasize the importance of the Indian’s role in Canadian history. Material for reading classes must be developed: material which is relevant to the experience of the Indian child living in isolated or northern areas. Federal and provincial governments must be ready to respond to the native people and support their legitimate wishes for improved texts. Indian people should be commissioned to work with historians and educators for the development of proper textbook material. (p. 10)

Following this report, the Manitoba Indian Brotherhood published in 1974 a substantial and influential review of school textbooks, reiterating the problems of textbooks as claimed in previous reports. The main purposes were to eliminate the persistence of omission and bias in teaching materials and to introduce alternate information to “provide a more balanced portrayal of natives” (p. ii). Based on ten criteria, the study contends that biases against Aboriginal

²⁵ The study by McDiarmid and Pratt also examined treatment in textbooks of other minority groups (Christians, Jews, Moslems, Africans, and “immigrants”), not only of Aboriginal peoples.

peoples remained prevalent in school texts: bias by omission, defamation, disparagement, cumulative implication, (lack of validity), inertia, obliteration, disembodiment, (lack of) concreteness, and (lack of) comprehensiveness (Part II, pp. ia, iia).²⁶ Therefore, according to the Manitoba Indian Brotherhood, textbooks (and all other teaching materials) must:

1. Present balanced material and various points of view, including Aboriginal epistemology;
 2. Avoid generalizations of Aboriginal peoples;
 3. Be sensitive in using descriptive terminology that may offend Aboriginal peoples;
 4. Take caution before selecting biased material / quotes from primary source;
 5. Ensure a complete on-going review of textual materials used in the classroom;
 6. Train / educate teachers to detect biased information and attitudes in classroom materials;
 7. Include and commission Aboriginal historians and writers to publish textbook material that incorporates their point of view and knowledge;
 8. Emphasize the importance of Aboriginal peoples' role in Canadian history.
- (Part V, p. 1).

Kirkness (1977), in "Prejudice about Indians in Textbooks," further criticizes textbooks for their portrayal of Aboriginal peoples and called for a "drastic change in structure, in substantive content, and in methodology" in which texts must "realistically depict the pluralistic quality of society, both past and present" (pp. 595-596). Using the same criteria as the Manitoba Indian Brotherhood, she echoes their findings and states that "Indians, by far, receive the worst treatment in textbooks of any class of minority, either by omission or commission; [that] recent textbooks still contain prejudice, but in more subtle manner; [and that] authors tend to use the same secondary sources for references and therefore tend to say the same thing" (p. 600).

Perpetuating the same colonial history only perpetuates the same colonial prejudices and biases. By directly addressing and challenging these portrayals of Aboriginal peoples, these studies paved the way for other textbook reviews and subsequent revisions in the 1980s. That the last two studies present the concerns of Aboriginal peoples is significant, as their voices become more politicized and legitimized in mainstream society.

²⁶ For further explanation of these criteria, see the study, *The Shocking Truth About Indians in Textbooks: Textbook Evaluation* (Manitoba Indian Brotherhood, 1974).

Studies in the 1980s

Following these revelations of Aboriginal images in textbooks, another comprehensive study was undertaken by Alberta Education and published in a 1981 report, *Native People in the Curriculum* (Decore et al.). The study examined 246 social studies textbooks prescribed in Alberta. Its purposes were to examine the positive, negative, and neutral portrayals of Aboriginal peoples in Alberta's social studies curriculum and to assess the learning resources in terms of inadequacies, errors, strengths, and overall impression and context of the social studies curriculum. From these purposes, the study's rationale was based on three recurring themes when portraying Aboriginal peoples in textbooks: first, charges of inadequacy (i.e., scarce coverage or "sins of omission"); second, charges of misrepresentation (i.e., stereotypical descriptions or "sins of commission"); and third, charges of bias and inaccuracies (i.e., "sins of interpretation") (Decore et al., 1981, p. 34). According to the study, "there is an adequate, though not abundant, amount of native content at most grade levels. There is evident in many resources . . . a conscious inclusion of material concerning native people" (p. 11). Though comprehensive in its review, the report cites examples "arbitrarily" that "do not represent, necessarily, the 'worst' or 'best' or 'most compelling' instance. . . . The examples are just that, examples" (p. 12). This arbitrariness in encapsulating potentially problematic resources for educators appears contradictory to the seriousness and to the breadth and depth of the study itself. This somewhat weakens its authoritative position. Nevertheless, the report further raises awareness of problematic textbooks and resources regarding stereotypes, biases, errors of facts and misinterpretations of Aboriginal peoples, resulting in the de-authorization and de-listing of several textbooks in the Alberta school system.

Using a much smaller sample of authorized Ontario textbooks in 1984, O'Neill quantitatively examined and recorded the frequency of terms such as "warlike" (89 times), "raiding" (46 times), "skillful" (72 times), "helpful" (32 times), and "important" (25 times) in Ontario textbooks (p. 36). Despite the apparent balance between negative and positive descriptors, the fact that the terms "warlike" and "raiding" were used so frequently may reinforce colonial stereotypes of Aboriginal peoples among students. Textbooks have traditionally and historically presented a damaging negative view of Aboriginal peoples, asserting the superiority of white civilization (van Brummelen, 1986). However, O'Neill only analyzed 10 Ontario textbooks in his study, which perhaps is too narrow to make substantial generalizations.

Nevertheless, he did see an encouraging trend of more positive images and portrayals, and points out that the “problem of prejudice towards Indians in recent history textbooks is less serious than earlier works” but also admits not to be “too optimistic as there is much room for improvement” (1984, p. 37).

Studies in the 1990 to the Present

No significant studies or reviews of school textbooks took place during the 1990s, as on the surface, improvements and changes in authorized curricula did transpire. However, despite the increase in the awareness and inclusion of Aboriginal peoples in the history of Canada, criticisms of textbooks began to shift from the absence and inaccuracies of and biases against Aboriginal peoples to the colonization of them. Images of Aboriginal peoples became clustered and collected into the “Textbook Indian” - the Indian which Anglocentric view of Canada “invented in order to justify its own hegemony” (Francis, 1997, p. 71).

The legacy of colonialism continued to form the structural framework of Canadian history textbooks as they do “little to explore Aboriginal motives and subjectivity, nor [do they] allow readers to see Native people as historical actors,” and as a result “narratives [make] it increasingly difficult to see them as anything but a vanished race relegated to anachronistic time” (Coates & Morgan, 2002, p. 190). Thus, the contemporary image of Aboriginal peoples was ironically an historical one. Francis (1992) argues that the image of Aboriginal peoples could not be modernized as they were defined “in relation to the past and in contradistinction to White society. To the degree that they changed, they were perceived to become less Indian” (p. 59). Moreover, what are considered authentic becomes essentialist and the Other. Smith (1999) argues that at “the heart of such authenticity is a belief that indigenous cultures cannot change, cannot recreate themselves and still claim to be indigenous. Nor can they be complicated, internally diverse or contradictory” (p. 74). The historical agency of Aboriginal peoples “could only be recognized intermittently: their construction as non-European allies was always laced with imperial ambivalence and apprehension” (Coates & Morgan, 2002, p. 180). Thus, Aboriginal knowledge, epistemology and inclusion need to be addressed not only in textbooks but also by the teachers in the classroom:

Departments and ministries of education are now fully aware that Indian people must be involved in the development of curriculum resources. But curricula and materials are not enough. Teachers must be knowledgeable about the history and

contemporary issues of aboriginal peoples. They must know how to choose materials that are appropriate and how to teach about [A]boriginal peoples in a respectful way. . . but more than this, it is imperative that teachers bring the appropriate values to their teachings. (Steinhauer, 1997, p. 258)

In a 2007 study, Clark examined 26 authorized Canadian history texts in British Columbia and Ontario published from the mid-1980s to the present.²⁷ Images of Aboriginal peoples “of the more distant past” are seen as a “spectator” or as a “savage warrior” (pp. 103, 104). As spectators, Aboriginal peoples are “separate from the real ‘action’ of the text narrative” (Clark, 2007, p. 103). They become objects of history rather than the subjects. As savage warriors, Aboriginal peoples are depicted not as heroes but as demonized people to be civilized or tamed. Clark (2007) categorizes the images of contemporary of Aboriginal peoples in textbooks as being exotic, a “problem,” uniquely spiritual, protesters, and invisible. Exotic images of traditional ceremonies to preserve and celebrate artistic and cultural accomplishments are captured but also frozen in the past without contemporary or historic context and explanation. Images of Aboriginal peoples as a “problem” usually include depictions of abuse (drugs and alcohol), suicide, and poverty. Spiritual images overly characterize Aboriginal peoples as uniquely spiritual and inherently environmental, which may seem to be positive attributes but are nonetheless still stereotypes. According to Clark (2007), images of protests are by far the most common depiction of twentieth century Aboriginal peoples in textbooks (p. 108). However, “invisible” images of Aboriginal peoples has been the standard practice for Canadian history textbooks. Although Aboriginal peoples may be included in the historical canon in textbooks, they mostly disappear from the narrative only to surface when they fit the images of the other categories. Teachers must therefore continue to be vigilantly cautious in using textbooks, in which they must examine and critique not only the textbooks’ content but also their omissions and misrepresentations of Aboriginal peoples.

27 Clark, in her study, covers various eras of textbooks (1911-1931, mid-1960s to 1980s, and mid-1980s to the present day). For the purposes of this section of the literature review, I have only included the last era while omitting the others.

Future Studies

In reviewing the literature for Aboriginal education in Canada and Aboriginal images and mis/representations in texts, a number of prominent issues of research that need to be addressed more comprehensively. First, there is a need for more urban studies where Aboriginal students are mostly integrated into the public school system but still constitute a minority. The academic, social, and emotional challenges and struggles they face, as Aboriginal students are vastly different from predominantly Aboriginal communities as the students becomes more integrated and perhaps more assimilated into mainstream society. Therefore, issues of identity and identification play a significant role for such Aboriginal students. Although Richards (2006), in *Creating Choices. Rethinking Aboriginal Policy*, provides a brief look at the performance of Aboriginal students in BC schools, he uses the results from the provincially administered Foundation Skills Assessment (FSA) in reading, writing, and numeracy for Grades 4, 7, and 10 as key measuring standards and concludes that the results “are not satisfactory” (p. 81). With statistical graphs and correlative data, he postulates several “variables of interest”:

Poverty, low education, single-parenthood, high concentrations of culturally marginalized groups, and a culture of welfare dependency may combine to “tip” a neighbourhood into ghetto-like status. One of the adverse outcomes of a poor neighbourhood is likely to be poor school results. . . . There is evidence that schools with large minority racial cohorts have problems with academic performance -- one reason is that good teachers are hard for weaker schools to retain. (p. 85)

Richards, however, apparently fails to grasp the concept of Indigenous knowledge and epistemology, and, through his Eurocentric lens, offers problematic assumptions as explanations. Although he does not directly claim such explanations as causations for the generally poorer Foundation Skills Assessment results among Aboriginal students, the language he chooses to use certainly does.

Second, because textbooks have become the main resources in the classroom, studies examining the effects of their use (and even non-use) with students regarding their perceptions of Aboriginal peoples and issues would prove insightful. To what degree do negative images and portrayals of Aboriginal peoples have on students versus positive ones? Although numerous evaluations of provincially recommended textbooks examining both positive and negative

images and portrayals of Aboriginal peoples have been conducted (and such reviews are continuously and professionally warranted in the future), they remain effectually limited as changes in texts have mostly remained cosmetic. While content information including visual aids and organizations has improved with greater inclusion of Aboriginal peoples and issues, the perspective is still mainly Eurocentric as Indigenous knowledge and epistemology are often ignored and therefore omitted within the texts.

Third, the teacher as informer and interpreter is as important as the textbook itself. Thus, studies of teacher education programs in universities are needed to address and examine more seriously the issues of Aboriginal content and epistemology. Future educators need to be culturally sensitive and aware both of the images and portrayals of Aboriginal peoples in texts and of their ways of knowing and thinking. The danger lies in the potential perpetuation and reinforcement of past negative images and mis-representations of Aboriginal peoples in texts that educators may mistakenly and/or unintentionally imply and convey to their students.

Concluding Remarks

From Confederation to most of the 20th century, education for Aboriginal peoples followed an assimilative model. Whether the government established industrial day schools or residential schools and whether the government segregated or integrated Aboriginal students, the goal was consistently oppressive aimed at colonial control. However, with a changing political and social environment, Aboriginal peoples' voices are being heard. Only recently has this history been acknowledged, legitimized, and addressed. Only recently has the healing process begun in Aboriginal circles. Only recently has the movement toward decolonization begun among Aboriginal peoples with governmental policies and initiatives.

Similarly, social studies textbooks depicting Aboriginal peoples have also evolved over time reflecting the political and social atmosphere: from the overtly racist and negative portrayals and descriptions of Aboriginal peoples of the 1960s and 1970s to more inclusive and neutral ones of the 1980s and 1990s. However, as Clark (2007) concludes in her study, "Canadian history textbooks have not yet come to grips with what reconciliation means within a postcolonial settler society. As such, they reflect the broader societal context in which they are written" (p. 111). Thus, Aboriginal peoples in textbooks continue to be the Other. Canada's

historical canon must be altered to a narrative not solely based on progression but one based on inclusion and evolution.

Ultimately, Aboriginal education and Aboriginal images and mis/representations in text are inextricably connected and reflective of the times. Not only did Aboriginal peoples experience a colonized history, textbooks objectified and viewed them as colonized peoples. As Aboriginal peoples began to assert their political voice, power, and rights, government, district, and school policies began to change that affected how they were portrayed and interpreted in textbooks. To have effective Aboriginal education requires positive and realistic Aboriginal images and representations in texts. Reflexively, to have positive and realistic Aboriginal images and representations in texts requires effective Aboriginal education. This dynamic relationship between educational programs and textbooks brings hope to the future of Aboriginal education. Only then will Aboriginal knowledge and epistemology be recognized and legitimized. Only then can decolonization be realized. Only then can Aboriginal education be truly transformative and empowering.

CHAPTER 4

ABORIGINAL MIS/REPRESENTATION IN BC SECONDARY SOCIAL STUDIES TEXTS

In examining Aboriginal images and representation in BC secondary school social studies textbooks, this chapter first describes the ministry's prescribed learning outcomes (PLOs) for Social Studies 9 through 11 as they pertain to Aboriginal peoples and issues. Twelve textbooks that the Surrey District approved for these courses are examined using the criteria from Dillabough and McAlpine's research (1996) and the Ministry of Education's evaluation guide (2002).

BC Secondary Social Studies Provincial Curricula

Social studies, according to the BC Ministry of Education, is a "multidisciplinary subject that draws from the social sciences and humanities to study human interaction and natural and social environments" whose main goal is to "develop thoughtful, responsible, active citizens who are able to acquire the requisite information to consider multiple perspectives and to make reasoned judgments" (BC Ministry of Education, 1997a, p. 9). Within each grade, the ministry outlines prescribed learning outcomes (PLOs). In the PLOs for the Social Studies 9 curriculum, Aboriginal peoples and issues are only mentioned 4 times in which students are expected to (1) analyze the relationship between Aboriginal people and Europeans and explain their role of each in the development of Canada, (2) describe daily life in Aboriginal communities, New France, and British North America, (3) demonstrate understanding of the ways in which Aboriginal people interact with their environment, and (4) explain the role of Aboriginal people in the fur trade and in the exploration of North America (pp. 24, 30). Social Studies 9, with regard to Aboriginal peoples, covers the origins of Aboriginal peoples to 1815 in North America. The PLOs for Social Studies 10 chronologically continue from the Grade 9 course with the history of Canada from 1815 to 1914. It mentions Aboriginal peoples only 4 times in its PLOs, in which students are expected to (1) assess the interaction between Aboriginal people and Europeans, (2) describe contributions made by Aboriginal people, the French, and the British to the development of Canada, (3) evaluate the impact of western expansion and federal policies on Aboriginal people, and (4) analyze the impact of the Red River Rebellion and the Northwest

Rebellion on the development of Canada (pp. 34, 38).²⁸ As for the newly revised Social Studies 11 curriculum, Aboriginal peoples and issues are specified only once in the PLOs in which students are expected to demonstrate knowledge of the challenges faced by Aboriginal people in Canada during the 20th century and their responses with reference to (1) residential schools, (2) reserves, (3) self-government, and (4) treaty negotiations (BC Ministry of Education, 2005b, p. 21).

Despite the limited profile of Aboriginal peoples and issues in the curricula, these integrated resource packages and curricular guides are a vast improvement from the ministry's previous ones established in 1988, in which Aboriginal peoples were seen as historical objects rather than active subjects in the history of Canada. Aboriginal peoples were scarcely acknowledged in the guide as they were seen as peripheral players in Canadian history. Questions such as, "How did geographic features, the presence of Native peoples, and military considerations influence the location and development of early settlements?" for Social Studies 9 and "What impact did the fur trade have on the Native peoples?" for Social Studies 10 placed Aboriginal peoples in secondary and objectified roles in Canadian history (BC Ministry of Education, 1988, pp. 41, 57).

The Integrated Resource Packages for the social studies strand also provide a list of comprehensive recommended resources for each course. In order to be labeled as "comprehensive," the ministry evaluates it to see how much it covers the learning outcomes.²⁹ This evaluation is a continuous process, and according to the ministry, resources

judged to have a potentially significant match to the learning outcomes for individual IRPs are evaluated by practicing classroom teachers who are trained by ministry staff to use provincial evaluation criteria. . . .

Learning resources will retain their recommended status for a minimum of five years after which time they may be withdrawn from the Grade Collections, thereby terminating their provincially recommended status. Decisions regarding the withdrawal of learning resources will be based on, but not limited to, considerations of curriculum support, currency, and availability. Schools may

²⁸ The PLOs for Social Studies 10 also expect students to analyze the impact of the "Red River Rebellion" and the "Northwest Rebellion" on the development of Canada; however, by stating the event as a "rebellion" as opposed to a "resistance" and without mentioning the Métis as key players, the curriculum confirms and reinforces a colonial perspective.

²⁹ For further information about the criteria for provincial approval of textbooks, see *Evaluating, Selecting, and Managing Learning Resources: A Guide* at http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/irp/resdocs/esm_guide.pdf.

continue to use a learning resource after withdrawal provided local school board approval is obtained. (BC Ministry of Education, 1997a, p. B-3)

At the time of this study, all of the provincially recommended Social Studies 9 and 10 textbooks were also approved by the Surrey School District. However, a slight anomaly existed with the Social Studies 11 textbooks as one that was recommended by the ministry was not listed by the Surrey School District (*Canadians in the Global Community*, 1997) and one surprisingly older textbook (*Towards Tomorrow: History*, 1988) was approved by the district but was no longer on the provincial ministry list.³⁰ Of all the recommended textbooks in Surrey, the Cranny series (*Crossroads*, *Horizons*, and *Counterpoints*) is the most widely used by teachers in the district because they follow most comprehensively the prescribed learning outcomes in the Integrated Resource Packages. Most of the other listed textbooks are used as reference or supplements in the classroom.³¹

Although teachers are not required to use the provincially recommended resources, school boards must approve any other resources before the school can purchase them. More complicated, however, is that the resource list for Surrey is constantly being updated.³² Most teachers in the end follow the recommended list by the province and school district for convenience as the approved textbooks closely cover the prescribed learning outcomes of the course.

Textbook Images of Aboriginal Peoples

In examining the authorized textbooks for the different grade levels, this section will show in general how textbooks portray Aboriginal peoples using images and accompanying texts. The selected images from the textbooks include sketches, paintings, works of art, and photographs. Because of the differing time frames for each social studies course, the images

30 I can only speculate as to why this specific textbook remains on the district list. First, it is a textbook that was provided in class sets to all schools by the Ministry of Education, and hence many of these textbooks are still in the schools. Second, the historical content, although only covering up to the 1980s, is quite thorough for the 20th century. However, I would argue, after informal discussions with other social studies teachers at provincial and district conferences and in district department meetings, that this textbook is no longer used as the main textbook in class but rather as a reference or supplementary text for teachers and students.

31 From discussions in district meetings, social studies department heads state that they all use the Cranny series while the other recommended textbooks are too expensive to buy for their classes as they do not cover all the necessary prescribed learning outcomes.

32 Even during the time of the first draft to the revision stage of this dissertation, three of the Grade 11 Social Studies textbooks were already “delisted” and therefore schools can no longer purchase them for use.

used in the textbooks show a trend. From Clark's analysis of the “more distant past,” textbooks are limited to the media of sketches, paintings, and works of art (such as for Social Studies 9), which tend to portray Aboriginal peoples as objects of history (2007, p. 103). However, in the “more recent past and present,” textbooks almost exclusively use photographs (such as for Social Studies 11), which tend to portray Aboriginal peoples as subjects of history (p. 105).³³ From a negative perspective, these visual and textual portrayals of Aboriginal peoples tend to be marginalized, essentialized, seen as a problem, and decontextualized. However, from a more positive perspective, some of the textbooks do challenge the status quo of the images through greater inclusion and critical thinking.

Aboriginal Peoples as Marginalized

Textbooks tend to depict Aboriginal peoples as peripheral objects in history. In surveying the origins of Aboriginal peoples to the early evolution of Canada, social studies textbooks generally marginalize them as spectators from a Eurocentric point of view. They are “separate from the real ‘action’ of the text narrative. They tend to be in the shadows, on the ground, with their backs to the viewer, or simply in the position of supplicant” (Clark, 2007, p. 103).

As subjects, individual Europeans are portrayed as the accomplishees, the achievers, and the makers of history. In a painting by J. D. Kelly, “Discovery of Canada,” Jacques Cartier is seen bartering with the Aboriginal peoples of the Gaspé Peninsula (see Figure 4.1). Here, the subject of the painting and of history clearly is Cartier, a European explorer sent to “claim the land for France” (Clark & McKay, 1992, p. 26). Although the text acknowledges European colonization where “European rulers claimed ownership” over lands and “extended their control over the people, even though the Native peoples had been living there for thousands of years” (p. 26), the image shows Aboriginal peoples as rather passive players in history. Only a few are standing while the rest are seated on the beach. This peripheral role is reinforced somewhat in the text as it continues the narrative with Jacques Cartier without much of the Aboriginal people of the Gaspé region:

33 For Social Studies 10, which covers 19th century Canada, all the various types of media mentioned are used.



(Figure 4.1 - "Discovery of Canada" by J. D. Kelly, found in Clark & McKay, 1992, p. 26. Courtesy of McCord Museum.)

Jacques Cartier was a French mariner who was commissioned by the king of France to search for a short route to the Far East. He reached the Gulf of St. Lawrence in 1534 and placed a cross on the Gaspé Peninsula that read "Long live the King of France," thus claiming French control in North America. . . . Cartier was treated with kindness and hospitality by the Native people he met upon arrival in the New World. (p. 26)

One potential message from this painting is that Cartier, not the Aboriginal people, is in-charge. The Aboriginal people act in response to the Europeans while Cartier initiates contact and trade with them. The term "Discovery" in the title itself acknowledges and reinforces the significance of Europeans in Canadian history and in the same manner acknowledges and reinforces the insignificance of Aboriginal peoples.

Similarly, in a painting by Rex Woods of Henry Kelsey hunting buffalo with the Assiniboine, the subject is Henry Kelsey with his profile looking at the buffalo herd while the faces of the 6 accompanying Assiniboine are mostly ignored.³⁴ As a European, his profile is painted onto the canvass, depicting his presence and hence control over the buffalo hunt. Even the face of the Assiniboine standing right beside Kelsey is not profiled. The context within which this painting is presented is in the chapter entitled, "Continuing Conflict between Britain and France" (p. 61). It describes the struggle between the two European nations in terms of controlling the growing fur industry. The subtle but effective message is that individual Aboriginal peoples of the Plains do not appear within the canon of Canadian history. Instead, individual European explorers and traders, such as Kelsey and Henday for the British and La

Vérendrye for the French, do appear in the canon and are seen as significant historical figures in Canadian history. Thus, the main players in this time of Canadian history remain Eurocentrically biased which reinforces and reaffirms European colonization. Students, in turn, may accept this one version of history without having an Aboriginal perspective presented.

This Eurocentric type of image is also found in *Community Canada* in such paintings as the one showing Étienne Brûlé, the “First Coureur De Bois” (see Figure 4.2). Again, the painting depicts Brûlé virtually in the middle of the scene and is leading the expedition with a concentrated gaze. The accompanying Aboriginal people are either looking down or they have a look of uncertainty. Their role in the expedition is thus minimized. Even the text states, “The coureurs de bois played a vital role in the fur trade. They acted as interpreters for the Native peoples and the merchants” (Cruxton & Walker, 1993, p. 191). The text also provides a brief profile on Brûlé claiming that without him,

Champlain would have had difficulty completing his maps of the vast new continent. . . .

Since he spoke [the Native Peoples’] languages and understood their ways, Brûlé gained the friendship and respect of the Native peoples. . . .

Many times during his life, Brûlé faced death. Once he was captured by some Seneca, enemies of the Huron. He was tortured and would have been killed. Reports say he managed to escape by persuading his captors that an approaching thunderstorm was a sign from the spirits that he should live. . . . In the end some Huron killed Brûlé in the summer of 1633. No one knows why. Perhaps Brûlé had insulted or betrayed them. There is no record for the reason of the first coureur de bois’s death. (p. 191).

The history centres on Brûlé without much consideration of and for the Aboriginal peoples’ significant role in the fur trade. The only mention here of them is the “capturing” and “torturing” of Brûlé whose textual image only demonizes them as primitive aggressors.

³⁴ The image can be found in Clark & McKay (1992) on page 63 as copyright permission was not granted.



(Figure 4.2 – "Étienne Brûlé at the Mouth of the Humber" by F. S. Challener, found in Cruxton & Walker, 1993, p. 192. Courtesy of the Government of Ontario Art Collection, Archives of Ontario.)

Arguably one of the most recognizable and historically famous paintings in Canada's history is "The death of Wolfe," which illustrates General Wolfe fatally wounded on the Plains of Abraham in 1759 surrounded by soldiers and a lone Iroquois sitting contemplatively and mournfully at his feet (see Figure 4.3).



(Figure 4.3 – "The Death of Wolfe" by Benjamin West, found in Cranny & Jarvis, 1998, p. 248. National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa.)

Viewers may sympathize with Wolfe, the British "hero" in the battle, as his face and body language show his hopeless and helpless fate in the narrative of the fall of New France. In contrast to Wolfe, who is relatively centred in the painting, the nameless Iroquois is physically marginalized, placed in the corner facing Wolfe with his back to the viewers. He has been stereotypically depicted with having feathers in his hair, large hanging earrings, and scarce

clothing above the waist. Despite being perceived as an authentic view of the English-French battle among Canadians, this painting is largely a work of fiction where in reality no Iroquois was ever present near Wolfe (Francis, 1992). The painter, Benjamin West, was an admirer of the “Noble Savage and so included him the contemplative Native” (p. 14). Thus, while the token Iroquois in the painting has been publicly accepted as historically accurate, he remains an imaginary image.

By marginalizing Aboriginal peoples in Canada’s history, the narrative becomes one about Aboriginal peoples and not of or by them. They become accompaniments along the way of the canon without much voice or agency. As such, these images of Aboriginal peoples overemphasize European exploration and settlement and dismiss Aboriginal peoples’ cultural and historical identity.

Aboriginal Peoples as Essentialized

Textbooks that account for the more distant past tend to present images of Aboriginal peoples that stereotypically and historically romanticize, overgeneralize, or even demonize them as “primitive” or “savage.” Textbooks that survey the more recent history tend to glorify Aboriginal exoticism and spirituality. From such depictions, Aboriginal peoples are essentialized into a prescribed image.

In a photograph of a “Blackfoot family with a travois,” the image presented appears neutral, making this particular Blackfoot family the subject of the photograph and capturing what seems to be a historically accurate event (see Figure 4.4). However, in the caption, the question reads, “What is being carried on this travois?” (Cruxton & Walker, 1993, p. 120). Although the authors most likely did not intend to objectify the Blackfoot child or romanticize the image of the Blackfoot on the Plains, the question should read, “Who and/or what are being carried on this travois?” This semantic difference may not seem significant, but in portraying Aboriginal peoples in image and text, cultural sensitivity, especially in the classroom to students, is essential. An explanation of the family’s attire and adornments on the horses would also

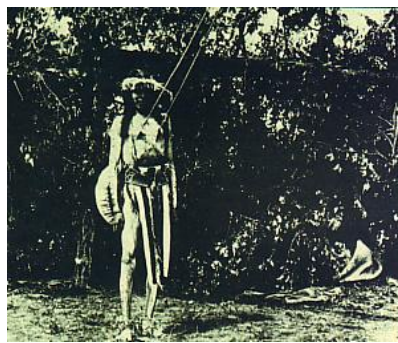


(Figure 4.4 – "Blackfoot with horse travois" found in Cruxton & Walker, 1993, p. 120. Courtesy of Glenbow Archives.)

contextualize and give greater meaning and understanding of them. Readers need context for a clearer perspective and understanding that Aboriginal peoples are more than "furs and feathers." As Fletcher (2000) argues,

being First Nations is not something that can be put on and taken off like a pair of jeans. Teachers and students who call on images of tipis, tomahawks, beads and buckskins reveal dehumanized thinking about First nations people. Such representations can position First Nations people as the Romantic Mythical Other and reflects an understanding of history that supports the "forgetting" of past injustices and their implications for the present. (p. 343).

In *Crossroads: A Meeting of Nations*, a more graphic photograph of a young man performing the Sun Dance as a rite of initiation demonizes the past (see Figure 4.5).



(Figure 4.5 – "Cree Sun Dance, Battleford, Saskatchewan, 1896," found in Cranny & Jarvis, 1998, p. 201. Courtesy of Library and Archives Canada.)

In the section titled, "Plains Spirituality: The Sun Dance," the text explains:

The Sun Dance was the central religious festival of the Plains peoples. Actually, it has nothing to do with worshipping the sun. Among the Plains Cree, it was called the “Thirsting Dance.” This is a more accurate term, since the dancers sought visions by subjecting themselves to pain and suffering. . . .

Dancers were not allowed food, drink, or rest until the Sun Dance was over. They danced in place, following the rhythm of chants, keeping their gaze fixed on the top of the centre pole. To prove themselves, young men would have their chests pierced with skewers of bone, which would be attached by ropes to the centre pole. As they danced, they would lean backward until the skewers were ripped out. The scars that resulted were held in high esteem as badges of the ability to withstand pain -- essential for a warrior. (Cranny & Jarvis, 1998, p. 201)

By highlighting this particular festival for the Plains Peoples, the textbook in its graphic description may have inadvertently perpetuated the stereotype that Aboriginal peoples are primitive and savage. Critical questions come to mind. Although historically and photographically accurate, does the image do more harm than good in terms of students learning about the Sun Dance? What impressions does this image leave? Whose voice is used to describe this sacred ceremony?

Similarly, the same textbook seems to oversimplify and overgeneralize the First Nations peoples on BC’s coast in its section titled, “Exploration”:

The Coast Indians had large populations and powerful, well-organized societies. They could deal from strength. Maquinna, a famous Nu-chal’-nath leader from the area of Nookta Sound, on Vancouver Island, demanded respect. Mariners were careful in their dealings with Maquinna and his people. It was easy and very dangerous to give offence. The crews of more than one trading ship were killed when they insulted or otherwise angered the Northwest Coast peoples. (Cranny & Jarvis, 1998, pp. 274-275)

This description in essence portrays Coastal First Nations peoples as violent aggressors. Similarly, the authors describe the Iroquois with potentially damaging images, in which the “powerful Iroquois moved in and almost annihilated the Huron and other Native bands in southern Ontario. They destroyed all the missions in Huronia . . . Jesuit priests were captured and tortured to death . . . The Iroquois were skilled aggressors” (p. 234). Although they may be subjects of history in this specific event, they are nonetheless demonized and vilified in the historic canon.

In the famous painting portraying the Battle (or Massacre) of Seven Oaks by C. W. Jeffreys, the Métis are depicted as the "savage warrior" as they are clearly seen as the violent aggressors who are on horseback instigating the battle (see Figure 4.6).



(Figure 4.6 – "The fight at Seven Oaks, 1816," found in Cranny & Jarvis, 1998, p. 282. Courtesy of Library and Archives Canada.)

The European settlers are seen as defenders and victims where only two are shooting back with rifles and the rest are timidly standing back or lying down. Three of the textbooks show slightly different variations of this painting. In the accompanying text, Cruyton and Wilson (1997) in their narration explains that the "Métis and Nor'Westers harassed the settlement, burning crops and destroying the buildings of Fort Douglas" (p. 80). In *Crossroads: A Meeting of Nations*, the text provides a simple description: "The conflict came to a head at Seven Oaks, when the governor and 21 settlers and HBC employees were killed in a fight with some Métis, supports of the NWC" (Cranny & Jarvis, 1998, p. 282). Interestingly, however, the same main author, Cranny, provides a more reflective, less demonizing approach to the same painting in his other textbook, *Horizon: Canada Moves West*, in which the caption reads: "This romanticized view of the Battle of Seven Oaks shows Semple and his army of 28 colonists taking a brave stand against the Métis" (Cranny, Jarvis, Moles, & Seley, 1999, p. 145). The description in the text itself also provides a different perspective which does not sympathize with Semple and his men as the painting would otherwise evoke: "Grant and a party of Métis arrived at the Red River colony. . . . Grant, an intelligent, well-educated leader, was also an employee of the NWC. Semple, and his underlings, however, regarded all Métis as inferior, because of their mixed ancestry" (p. 146). Despite this depiction, however, the subject of history remains ethnocentrically European as the Métis remain nameless while Grant and Semple are written within the narrative.

In more contemporary settings, textbooks continue to essentialize Aboriginal peoples as inherently traditional and spiritual. Photographs of traditional dances in traditional attires appear commonplace. As an example, in celebrating the Supreme Court's Delgamuukw decision during a press conference in Vancouver, members of the Gitksan band are photographed in a dance in a Social Studies 11 textbook, *Canada: Our Century, Our Story*. The photo shows a woman dancing in traditional attire with a large cape.³⁵ Behind her is another member also in traditional attire shown to be drumming. The explanation in the textbook accompanying the photo only states: "Members of the Gitksan band celebrate the Supreme Court's Delgamuukw decision during a press conference in Vancouver in December 1997" (Fielding & Evans, 2001, p. 406). Although images of celebrations are positive, the text does not explain the cultural significance and implications of the dance and drumming in relation to the historic event.

In another Social Studies 11 textbook, *Counterpoints: Exploring Canadian Issues*, the use of contemporary photographs to capture events can also be seen as essentializing Aboriginal peoples. For example, Phanuelie Palluq performs a drum dance before federal ministers at a ceremony who offered on behalf of the government an apology for the cruel treatment of children in residential schools.³⁶ In this image, Palluq is seen drumming and dancing while government officials are seen in the background. In another instance, Rod Robinson (who was the executive director of the Nisga'a Tribal Council at the time of the photograph) carries the sacred Talking Stick in leading a procession of elders.³⁷ He is wearing a cape with a design (which cannot be made out) and a mask (which also cannot be made out) over his head, walking with a large talking stick. Again, the texts do not provide teachers and students with an adequate explanation of the cultural tradition and significance. This absence may lead to greater generalizations and stereotypes of Aboriginal peoples in Canada.

In celebrating a potlatch, a photograph shows a dancer performing the eagle dance.³⁸ In this particular photograph, a person has feathers extending from his hands and fingers and is wearing an eagle mask, all to depict the animal. The photograph shows this performer leaping in the air, representing the flight or dance of the eagle.

³⁵ The image can be found in Fielding & Evans (2001) on page 406, as copyright permission was not granted.

³⁶ The image can be found in Cranny & Moles (2001) on page 209, as copyright permission was not granted.

³⁷ The image can be found in Cranny & Moles (2001) on page 246, as copyright permission was not granted.

³⁸ The image can be found in Cruyton & Walker (1993) on page 146, as copyright permission was not granted.

Despite the potential positive interpretation that these contemporary photographs may have as role models, further explanations and descriptions are needed in order for students and teachers to understand the historical, cultural, and spiritual significance of each. Instead, the physical images of Aboriginal peoples wearing feathers, masks, and a cape tend to strip the cultural, historic, and symbolic meanings away while in essence promoting and perpetuating an exotic and romanticized view of them. Yet, these cultural traditions are important for students to learn and understand in order to bridge cultural relations and should be included in the textbooks. By overemphasizing these images without deeper explanations and descriptions, however, students in turn may become desensitized into believing that these are the only traits and characteristics that make Aboriginal peoples “Aboriginal.” As a result, an opportunity for greater cross-cultural experience and understanding is lost.

By essentializing Aboriginal peoples, textbooks of the more distant past tend to overemphasize them as violent and aggressive where exoticized and romanticized images of Aboriginal peoples seem to be the norm for this time period. Textbooks of the more recent past and present tend to stereotype Aboriginal traditions without contextual descriptions or explanations and with the exclusion of their contemporary realities. In turn, Aboriginal peoples appear frozen in time where such portrayals become their present-day reality. More important, however, Aboriginal voices continue to be missing in these narratives.

Aboriginal Peoples as a Problem

Textbooks surveying Canada’s 20th century appear more apt to present images of conflict and poverty. With images of conflict, Aboriginal peoples are seen as the perpetrators who are stereotypically protesting for more rights, protection of the environment, or land claims. With images of poverty, Aboriginal peoples are seen as the victims, mostly living in substandard and impoverished communities.

Although not within the time frame of the 20th century, an historically significant conflict occurred in 1885 between the federal government and the Métis. Labeled as the “North-West Rebellion,” the Métis are negatively seen as rebels as opposed to resisters to the government (Cranny, Jarvis, Moles, & Seney, 1999; Cruyton & Wilson, 1997). Evoking images of violence and treason, the term “rebellion” carries with it negative connotations. However, only Clark and McKay use the phrase “Red River Resistance” of 1870 and the “North-West Resistance, 1885”

in their textbook (1992). Using the term “resistance” as opposed to “rebellion” changes not only the Eurocentric point of view, but also the public image of the Métis and the historical interpretation of Riel. Parliamentary debates have centred on whether Riel was a traitor to the Queen or a Father of Confederation and textbooks have begun to reflect on this issue.

Textbook images and photographs of Aboriginal peoples in the 20th century, however, have increasingly depicted them as protestors. For example, one textbook shows an Aboriginal woman who has been photographed performing a traditional dance during a protest for Native rights, and in the background, signs read, “Indian Nations Forever” and “We’ve Only Just(ice) Begun” (Morton, 1988, p. 208).³⁹ Yet, the caption and surrounding text do not contextualize the situation. Is the image depicting more of a dance or a protest? Are there dances that are used for protests? What specifically do the protestors want? What were the political, social, and economic conditions that led to this protest? Why do they feel injustice?

In another photograph, a Mi’kmaq boy is shown to take part in a demonstration over Native fishing rights in New Brunswick where placards read, “My parents want to provide a living for me!,” “Respect our ancestors,” and “Negotiation applies to you. Dictatorship applies to us” (Fielding & Evans, 2001, p. 408).⁴⁰ In this particular photograph, these signs are wedged into the logs by the water presumingly for the public to see. A boy is seen running by the signs. It is not clear if the boy is actually participating in the demonstration or he just happens to be running in the area, but because he is captured on film running by the protest signs, viewers may assume that he is. These images do not invite or encourage dialogue and may inadvertently evoke negative stereotypes of Aboriginal peoples among students as constant protestors and complainers.

Arguably one of the most infamous photographs that captures First Nations resistance to the federal government is the one of a Mohawk confronting a Canadian soldier at Oka in 1990 as found in a number of social studies textbooks.⁴¹ In this photograph, a Canadian soldier in full army uniform is staring at a Mohawk First Nations person also with camouflaged army gear. However, the Mohawk First Nations person has his face covered and is wearing dark glasses, as

³⁹ The image is found in Morton (1988) on page 208, as copyright permission was not granted.

⁴⁰ The image is found in Fielding & Evans (2001) on page 408, as copyright permission was not granted.

⁴¹ The image can be found in Cranny & Moles (2001) on page 211 or Cruxton & Wilson (2000) on page 483, as copyright permission was not granted.

one would stereotypically imagine a terrorist would look. In their explanation, textbooks generally use terms such as “crisis,” “face-off,” “stand-off,” and “confrontation” to describe the events at Oka during this time. Depicted as the aggressor, the anonymous Mohawk warrior in this photograph is seen physically leaning toward and looking down at a Canadian soldier as if he is trying to intimidate him. In another image of the same event, a woman is seen on the ground, clutching on to her child with her right arm while holding onto a soldier with the her left.⁴² Perhaps she is holding back the soldier with her left arm, but textbook does not explain. Her face, however, depicts one who is in deep distress as her eyes are shut and mouth was open - signs that she is crying out loud. The caption in this photograph reads, “This Mohawk mother fled from the Kanesatake reserve during the Oka crisis of 1990. . . . Why would she flee from the reserve when the warriors were taking a position to protect Mohawk land rights?” (Fielding & Evans, 2001, p. 384). By posing this question, the textbook views the Mohawk First Nations as a problem who do not appear to help their own people. Also, the photograph is ambiguous in that the viewer does not know why the woman is crying on the ground. Is she distressed because of the soldier or because of the Mohawk warriors? Is she resisting the soldier or is the soldier trying to help her and her child? The caption seems to lead the viewers into believing the latter.

A similar image is presented of the incident at Ipperwash, Ontario where the caption in the textbook reads, “In 1995, the Ojibwa challenged the municipal government to return lands used as a golf course, one frequented by members of the Canadian military . . . The confrontation escalated, and actions taken by both sides in the dispute resulted in a violent confrontation” (Cranny, Jarvis, Moles, & Seney, 1999, p. 59). The image of the burning tires and an Ojibwa man, whose face is covered by a handkerchief and is holding an altered flag of Canada that has a First Nations person in the middle of the maple leaf, may unintentionally send a message that Aboriginal peoples believe in violence.⁴³ In addition to capturing the two Ojibwa men in army fatigues, the photograph also shows the large black smoke rising as a result of the burning tires. Again, such images do not promote cross-cultural dialogue between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students in the classroom but may instead provoke confrontation.

⁴² The image is found in Fielding & Evans (2001) on page 384, as copyright permission was not granted.

⁴³ The image is found in Cranny, Jarvis, Moles & Seney (1999) on page 59, as copyright permission was not granted.

In addition to overemphasizing conflict, textbooks tend to portray Aboriginal peoples in the 20th century as living in squalid communities or reserves plagued with the social ills of alcoholism, drug addiction, unemployment, and suicide.

In depicting the Stoney band in 1929, the authors of *Canada: Face of a Nation* write:

The quality of life on the reserves continued to decline. Even though alcohol was banned it was consumed in unhealthy amounts. Suicide rates were the highest in the country and diseases like tuberculosis continued to kill many more people. Most bands lived in terrible poverty with inferior housing, no running water or indoor toilets, and poor diets. (Bolotta et al., 2000, p. 77; see Figure 4.7).



(Figure 4.7 – Stoneys receiving payment for oil lease rights in their reserve, found in Bolotta et al., 2000, p. 77. Courtesy of Glenbow Archives.)

The accompanying photograph further reinforces this negative image, in which the caption asks, “How would you feel as an Aboriginal person receiving government money?” (p. 77). The textbook itself has misrepresented the Stoneys as the money received from the government was a legal obligation for oil lease rights, not because of poverty and welfarism as the textbook infers. In an attempt to empathize with the Stoney band during this time, the text Otherizes them. One band member is dressed in traditional attire with head feathers while the others who are behind him in the line are dressed in Western clothes. Students may wonder how contrived the photograph may actually be. Why would this one particular Stoney band member be dressed up to receive his government cheque whose image is exactly captured on film at that precise moment? Was this photograph a set-up for a story? Is this some sort of historic propaganda from mainstream society or the government?

Referring to more recent times, in an “up-close” section entitled, “Poverty on Aboriginal Reserves,” the text states that

high rates of infant mortality, substandard housing, few social services, and low life expectancy create conditions closer to those found in countries associated with the bottom half of the Human Development Index. . . . Poor sanitation and water quality, substandard housing and health care are linked to the high levels of infant mortality, infectious diseases, and safety concerns. (Cranny & Moles, 2001, p. 354)



(Figure 4.8 – Residents in Davis Inlet, found in Cranny & Moles, 2001, p. 355. Courtesy of Greg Locke.)

The accompanying photograph reinforces this description (see Figure 4.8). It shows an unpaved road in the reserve and repeats its message of poverty in the caption: “Residents of the reserve in Davis Inlet, Labrador, have high unemployment and a low standard of living” (p. 355). By specifically segregating this story outside the main text into a profiled box and calling it, “Poverty on Aboriginal Reserves,” the textbook has continued to victimize the victims. Negative images such as this one further stigmatizes Aboriginal peoples. Although there may be some truth to poverty on some reserves, this particular image may have been misused, as perhaps the photographer's intention is not to interpret that this reserve on Davis Inlet is impoverished. Perhaps the photographer wanted to capture children running and playing instead. It is the context that needs further explanation as to how this image is related to poverty on the reserve at Davis Inlet. The reason and intention in capturing this particular photograph is unclear. Thus, the textbook, in using this photograph without clarification, appears to portray Aboriginal peoples in a negative and damaging way - making the assumption and conclusion that people on this particular reserve live in poverty. In turn, Aboriginal students within the classroom may feel alienated and embarrassed with these colonial stereotypes.

In *Canada: Face of a Nation*, the authors affirm and confirm this portrayal, as they refer to the report, *Survival for Tribal Peoples International*, which labels the 500 Innu of Labrador's

Davis Inlet as “the most suicidal-ridden people of the world” (Bolotta et al., 2000, p. 289).

Unfortunately, such descriptions and images are common within textbooks where readers tend to see and read about the contemporary struggles and problems of Aboriginal peoples.

Similarly, in a photograph from *Canadian Issues: A Contemporary Perspective*, 6 Aboriginal children are portrayed as living in an impoverished reservation in northern Manitoba.⁴⁴ The photograph shows children outside a house on a wooden porch. Most of them are looking at the camera. From what is seen in the picture, the house of which they are standing outside has some wires running down a side near the door to a pole. It is assumed that the cables or wires are for electrical purposes. The caption in the textbook reads, “These Aboriginal children in an impoverished reservation in northern Manitoba” (Francis et al., 1998, p. 342). Because it is written in present tense, readers are led to believe that life on this reserve is dismal. Perhaps life on this particular reserve may not have improved. However, images of other reserves that are not in poverty should be presented in the textbook to provide a better balance of different realities. As in other cases, the context for this photograph is ignored, in which no explanation or description is provided as to when, how, and why this situation has come to be. How can a photo of 6 children outside a house portray poverty? Moreover, the black and white photograph further evokes a sense of hopelessness within the reservation.

By portraying Aboriginal peoples with problems, textbooks have unduly emphasized events and situations of conflict and/or social and economic hardships. The danger lies in the interpretation and conclusions that readers may have. In these cases, they may essentialize and believe that Aboriginal peoples are overly impoverished and depressed. Though such experiences do need to be documented as they do reflect some reality, a balance of positive and negative stories is needed. Although textbooks do try to explain the issues at hand, greater depth is needed in the historical and contemporary narratives of Aboriginal peoples, especially in describing and clarifying snapshot images of them.

Aboriginal Peoples as Decontextualized

In decontextualizing Aboriginal peoples, textbooks tend to treat them in isolation or even misappropriate their cultures. Perhaps the most prevalent portrayal of them in these textbooks is

⁴⁴ The image is found in Francis et al. (1998) on page 342, as copyright permission was not granted.

ironically their absence in the narrative text itself, especially for the ones surveying 20th century Canada.

First, in presenting Aboriginal peoples and issues, textbooks generally have at most a chapter or unit about them. Most often, textbooks will have a section or a special box within a chapter or unit that profiles them. In the Grade 9 textbooks, images and descriptions of Aboriginal peoples are more prevalent as they usually discuss the different groups culturally before European contact and describe their interactions during and after contact. However, as much as Aboriginal peoples are incorporated into the text, they are for the most part interspersed within the European narrative of explorers, traders, and settlers, as more images of Europeans than of Aboriginal peoples are present in the textbooks. In the Grade 10 textbooks, images and descriptions of Aboriginal peoples mostly centre on the fur trade, buffalo hunt, Red River settlement, treaty negotiations, and Métis “Rebellion.” Again, however, they are generally presented in relation to European development and progress. After Louis Riel, Aboriginal peoples seem to disappear from the narrative. This disjointed inclusion of them in textbooks is seen most at the Grade 11 level. In general, Aboriginal peoples are included with a few images and brief descriptions of their participation in the world wars, especially the individual heroism of Tommy Longboat and Francis Pegahmagabow in World War I and Tommy Prince in World War II (see Bolotta et al., 2000; Fielding & Evans, 2001; Smith, McDevitt, & Scully, 1996; and Cruxton & Wilson, 2000). A few textbooks provide a glimpse of life on reservations during the 1920s and 1930s, although they mostly focus on their poverty. For example, a statement made in one of the Social Studies 11 textbook reads, “Social and economic conditions on reserves were poor, and many who sought employment in the cities faced discrimination and hostility” (Cranny & Moles, 2001, p. 69). Other topics covering Aboriginal peoples in the 20th century usually include issues surrounding residential schooling, voting and Aboriginal rights, land claims, and self-government. Textbooks have generally excluded Aboriginal peoples, despite their active participation throughout the 20th century in Canada. Their absence and invisibility become an accepted part of the curriculum, leaving students to wonder, “Where did Aboriginal peoples go? What were they doing?” In seeing wide gaps of omission, students may incorrectly conclude that Aboriginal peoples played insignificant roles in Canadian history and that the roles they did play are token ones. The gaps may also lead to an inaccurate conclusion that Aboriginal peoples

have not progressed and therefore have remained essentially static throughout the century, with the same attire, same beliefs, same ceremonies, same traditions, and same issues.

Second, a number of narratives are misappropriated, particularly in the Cranny series. In an attempt to include Aboriginal viewpoints, the authors use fictional stories to introduce a unit. However, the voices of Aboriginal peoples are missing. As an introduction to “The Northwest to 1870,” a Métis girl narrates a story, “I Am Anne-Marie Lepine,” to the readers about life in the Red River region:

At night, when all are asleep, we go near their homes, and fire off guns and shout at irregular intervals, so that the dogs bark wildly and everyone in the family wakes up . . .

We also set fire to the colonists’ barns and burn their crops. This also disturbs me because destroying food will mean starvation for these people in the winter. It is terrible to see the smoke rising from the colonists’ fields. At these times, it saddens me that we can’t live together in peace . . .

Last month, the killing started . . . The colonists are farmers, not soldiers, and they stood no chance against our skilled hunters. My father says that the colonists were all killed within a quarter of an hour, and their bodies still lie out on the prairie. . .

While I am sad that killing took place . . . I have a new respect for what is rightfully ours, and declared that this is our land, for all time. (Cranny, Jarvis, Moles, & Seney, 1999, pp. 127-128)

This image is reinforced with a painting depicting two fleeing Métis on horseback with torches raised in their hands.⁴⁵ The fictionalized character of Anne-Marie Lepine is seen in profile in this painting on the ride side, and the readers can see other Métis men along the road, cheering on the two Métis on horseback. In the background, viewers see a burning barn, assumingly set ablaze by the Métis while settlers are depicted watching or attempting to shoot at the Métis. Not only does this story appear as an apologetic narrative that assumes a Métis perspective, it shows them as violently aggressive. Similarly, in presenting the myth, “Why the Salmon Came to Squamish Waters,” the authors do not clarify from whose perspective the story is written (Cranny & Jarvis, 1998, pp. 182-184). Is the story an adaptation from an Aboriginal legend?

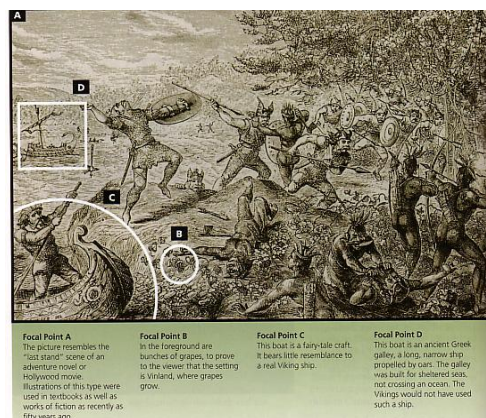
⁴⁵ The image is found in Cranny, Jarvis, Moles & Seney (1999) on page 128, as copyright permission was not granted.

Are the authors of the story in the textbook from an Aboriginal community? Whose story is it to tell? Unintentionally, the textbook has misrepresented and misappropriated these stories as authentic to Aboriginal cultures but do not give voice to the original authors of such narratives.

By decontextualizing Aboriginal peoples, textbooks have inadvertently denied their identity, culture, spirituality, and history. Their exclusion from the main accounts in the textbooks does not recognize fully the contributions they have made and continue to make in Canadian society. Textbooks should promote the knowledge and understanding of Aboriginal peoples by giving them voice not only in image but in text as well. Despite these criticisms, however, the textbooks do show some cultural sensitivity. Some challenge the traditional images, some do include positive images, and some attempt to have greater inclusion of Aboriginal peoples and issues in their texts.

Challenging Traditional Images of Aboriginal Peoples

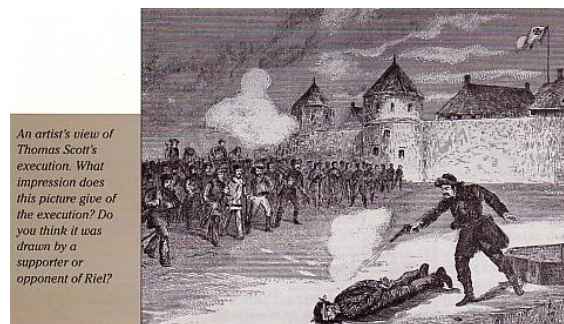
In challenging traditional images, textbooks ask students to think critically about the images and possible biases presented. In *Crossroads: A Meeting of Nations*, a sketch of the Vikings' violent interaction with Aboriginal peoples is shown, but the authors note that such a depiction is often romanticized, stating in its caption that "the illustration is also misleading," and asks, "Does this picture help us understand the history of the Vikings in North America in any way?" (Cranny & Jarvis, 1998, p. 218; see Figure 4.9).



(Figure 4.9 – "Thorwald Erikson's Battle with the Indians," found in Cranny & Jarvis, 1998, p. 218. Courtesy of Library and Archives Canada.)

Students are asked to examine the image more closely and not accept it as plain truth, but through critical thinking the image can be analyzed for a better understanding of the reasons behind the depiction, especially in uncovering its propagandic intentions.

Similarly, in a sketch that depicts the execution of Thomas Scott, the image, if left on its own, would portray the Métis as heartless and brutal people as Scott lies on the ground bound, blindfolded, and shot (see Figure 4.10). However, on the margin, questions are posed to students that encourage dialogue and discussion surrounding point of view and bias: “What impression does the picture give of the execution? Do you think it was drawn by a supporter or opponent of Riel?” (Cruxton & Wilson, 1997, p. 107). The text also explains that Scott “was in jail on a charge of taking up arms against Riel’s government, struck his guards, called the Métis a pack of cowards, insulted their Roman Catholic religion, and threatened to murder Riel” (p. 107).



(Figure 4.10 – Execution of Thomas Scott, found in Cruxton & Wilson, 1997, p. 107. Courtesy of Archives of Manitoba.)

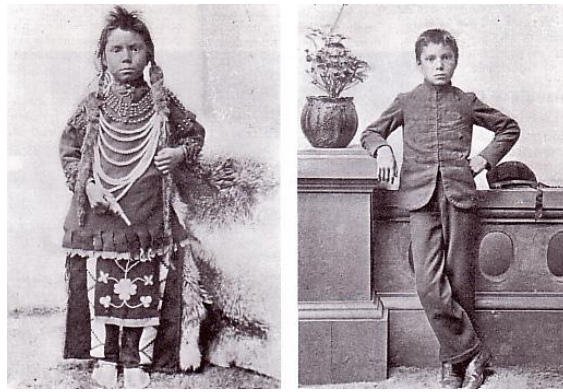
In a similar account in *Horizons: Canada Moves West*, Scott is described as “the most belligerent member of the Canadian member of the Canadian Party. In prison, Scott loudly publicized his anti-Métis views, verbally and physically abused his guards, and threatened the life of Louis Riel” (Cranny, Jarvis, Moles, & Seney, 1999, p. 161). The language of the text is strongly against Scott as the textbooks depict him as the “villain,” which in itself can a point of discussion and debate. As a result, the traditional image of a violent and aggressive Métis executing Scott is somewhat muted.

Images of residential schools tend to depict changes from what Aboriginal children looked like before (traditional attire looking savage and primitive) and after (Western attire looking civilized). However, the photograph of an Aboriginal traditional-looking father

(Quewich) posing with his Westernized-looking children challenges the status quo in which the caption reads, “This kind of photograph was used to promote residential schools. What message would it send to White Canadians? To Canada’s Native peoples?” (Fielding & Evans, 2001, p. 100; see Figure 4.11). In this particular case, the authors are challenging students in their perceptions of Aboriginal peoples through critical thinking. In another before-and-after photograph of an Aboriginal child, the authors write in the caption that such photographs “were commonly used to illustrate the supposed benefits of the residential school experience. How do these photographs summarize the purpose of the residential school system?” (Francis et al., 1998, p. 76; see Figure 4.12). Both of these photographs demonstrate that images can be challenged in their historic intent. Students can then question the meaning(s) and purpose(s) behind each image for a better historical and cultural understanding of Aboriginal peoples.



(Figure 4.11 – Father and children attending Qu'Appelle, Saskatchewan Industrial School, ca. 1900, found in Fielding & Evans, 2001, p. 100. Courtesy of Library and Archives Canada.)



(Figure 4.12 – Transformation of Thomas Moore, found in Francis et al., 1998, p. 76. Courtesy of Saskatchewan Archives Board.)

Positive Images of Aboriginal Peoples

In presenting more positive images of Aboriginal peoples, textbooks can begin to challenge negative stereotypes and portrayals. A number of such depictions are found in each textbook, but the more effective ones show Aboriginal peoples in contemporary settings without the trappings of being overly traditional. For example, in a section entitled, “Native Peoples Find Solutions,” a photograph shows an air transport service in northern Quebec run by a First Nations group where the text states, “The best solutions are those that come from the Native

peoples themselves, rather than from the government” (Cruxton & Walker, 1993, p. 158). The image of Aboriginal peoples has therefore progressed beyond traditional stereotypes as they are not frozen in the past.

Focusing on the positives and the solutions rather than the problem, this particular section of the textbook aims to provide a balance in portraying Aboriginal peoples. In the same chapter of the textbook, a section on “Native Contributions” states that the “Native peoples are an important part of Canada’s founding heritage. They have made many contributions to Canadian life” (p. 165). For example, one textbook cites an Aboriginal play, *Diary of a Crazy Boy*, written by John McLeod and directed by Tomson Highway and Rene Highway of Native Earth Performing Arts. Here, students have exposure to contemporary Aboriginal life through the arts. Entering the world of the western theatre, Aboriginal peoples can demonstrate to others that they are not the Other.

In another textbook, three photographs depict contemporary lifestyles in which the caption reads: “Some aspects of Aboriginal culture have changed, but some traditions continue. What traditions are shown in these photos? What changes are shown?” (Smith, McDevitt, & Scully, 1995, p. 348).⁴⁶ Here, one photograph shows an Aboriginal student working on a computer. Another one shows an older Aboriginal man posing with a toddler (readers may conclude that this is a grandfather-grandson relationship). The third photo shows a scene with children sitting on the grass with a teacher. None of them are wearing traditional clothing. None of them are demonstrating a traditional dance. None of them are protesting.

A balance is therefore needed between tradition and modernity. Textbooks should not ignore the traditional ways and cultures of Aboriginal peoples as they remain integral to their being. However, incorporating images of Aboriginal peoples in textbooks that show contemporary life helps debunk the stereotype that Aboriginal peoples are only Aboriginal peoples if they wear certain clothing, if they sing, drum, and/or dance to certain traditional music, or if they perform certain spiritual or sacred ceremonies. Including more positive images of them in textbooks may help promote greater cross-cultural dialogue and understanding between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students in the classroom.

⁴⁶ The images are found in Smith, McDevitt, & Scully (1995) on page 348, as copyright permission was not granted.

Inclusion and Integration of Aboriginal Peoples

Despite the Eurocentric narrative in these social studies textbooks, a significant step forward in Aboriginal education is the greater inclusion of Aboriginal peoples and issues in the texts themselves. More important is that the inclusions are integrated into the main text as opposed to presenting them literally in the margins to be treated as different or special. However, most important is that textbooks give voice to the Aboriginal peoples in the narratives told.

In *Canada: Face of a Nation*, the authors highlight Aboriginal participation in World War I into the main body of the text rather than in a marginalized box: “When war was declared the Canadian government did not anticipate many Aboriginal enlistments. . . . Many Aboriginal Canadians became accomplished snipers (Bolotta et al., 2000, p. 52). Similarly, in a description of volunteering for World War II, the authors of *Canada: Our Century, Our Story* state that a “particularly large proportion of Native Canadians enlisted - about 6000 in all” and mention the accomplishments of Officer William John Bolduc, an Ojibwa who was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross (Fielding & Evans, 2001, p. 185).

A few textbooks also recognize the paternalistic and forced assimilative nature of the federal government, admitting an "historic mistake":

Relations between the Aboriginal nations and the government were paternalistic, with the government managing their children. After the resistance in 1995, the government had felt that paternalism was the only solution. . . . the Canadian government felt that they only solution to future resistance was to force assimilation on these Aboriginal people. The government wanted them to become like other Canadians in customs and viewpoint. (Bolotta et al., p. 7)

Tragically, the Native people's historic contributions and achievements were undervalued and overshadowed by the growing and ambitious immigrant population. (Fielding & Evans, 2000, p. 18).

Aboriginal peoples are an important part of our early national experiences. . . . In true ethnocentric and Eurocentric fashion, the French and English disregarded the cultures of the Aboriginal peoples. . . .

The government was misled by ethnocentrism and racist assumptions. It believed that European culture was superior, and by adopting it, the First Nations would improve their lives. (Smith, McDevitt, & Scully, 1996, pp. 3, 33, 110)

By acknowledging the omissions and commissions of the past, textbooks can begin to give agency to Aboriginal peoples as opposed to passive victims. Furthermore, although small and highly selective, the incorporation of personal accounts, literature, and art from Aboriginal peoples in the textbooks provides a voice to a once unvoiced, unheard, and silenced peoples in the making of Canadian history.

One of the more famous Aboriginal spokespersons is Chief Dan George, Chief of the Squamish Band of Burrard Inlet from 1951 to 1963, who became an actor committed to portraying Aboriginal characters more positively and breaking mainstream stereotypes. An excerpt of his thoughts on Aboriginal peoples and the modern world entitled, “My Heart Soars,” is provided in *Canada: Face of a Nation*:

For thousands of years
I have spoken the language of the land
and listened to its many voices.
I took what I needed
and found there was plenty for everyone.
The rivers were clear and thick with life,
the air was pure and gave way
to the thrashing of countless wings.
On land, a profusion of creatures abounded.
I walked tall and proud
knowing the resourcefulness of my people,
feeling the blessings of the Supreme Spirit.
I lived in the brotherhood of all beings.
I measured the day
by the sun’s journey across the sky.
The passing of the year was told
by the return of the salmon
or the birds pairing off to nest.
Between the first campfire and the last
of each day I searched for food,
made shelter, clothing, and weapons,
and always found time for prayer.

The wisdom and eloquence of my father
I passed on to my children,
so they too acquired faith,
courage, generosity, understanding,
and knowledge in the proper way of living.
Such are the memories of yesterday!
Today, harmony still lives in nature,
though we have less wilderness,

less variety of creatures.
Fewer people know the cougar's den in the hills,
nor have their eyes followed
the eagle's swoop, as he writes endless
circles into the warm air.
(Chief Dan George, cited in Bolotta et al., 2000, p. 292).

Although the selection recounts life in the past, it offers a glimmer of hope for the future where "harmony still lives in nature." Chief Dan George eloquently describes his people and their relationship to the land; yet, at the same time, he avoids attacking the colonial past. Rita Joe, a member of the Eskasoni First Nations known for her experiential poems, is also quoted in one of the textbooks. In "Lost My Talk," she recounts her life in residential school and expresses the disheartening struggle to keep her language and identity:

I lost my talk
The talk you took away
When I was a little girl
At Shubenacadie school.
 You snatched it away;
 I speak like you
 I think like you
 I create like you
 The scrambled ballad, about my word.
Two ways I talk
Both ways I say,
Your way is more powerful.
 So gently I offer my hand and ask,
 Let my find my talk
 So I can teach you about me.
(Rita Joe, cited in Cranny & Moles, 2001, p. 212).

By giving voice to Aboriginal peoples in textbooks, poems like these do not misrepresent or misappropriate them. Regardless of differing messages, experiences, and sentiments, both of these excerpts provide a venue for Aboriginal peoples to express themselves openly and honestly. However, usually the textbooks surveying the 20th century would include these works, mostly because Aboriginal peoples come from an oral traditional. Thus, the only written primary sources during that time would come from literate Europeans. In addition to the pieces of literature, fine arts in the form of portraits, sculptures, paintings, architectural designs, and music, are all profiled in textbooks (e.g., painter Daphne Odig, playwright Tomson

Highway, architect Douglas Cardinal, master carver Bill Reid, classical musician John Kim Bell, and singer/musician Susan Aglukark.⁴⁷

By presenting more inclusive and positive images of Aboriginal peoples that both challenge the traditional images and provide a voice, textbooks can take a step toward acknowledging and accepting Aboriginal knowledge and epistemology. Textbooks can also promote greater understanding of Aboriginal cultures as they provide a different perspective of the historical and contemporary events and issues in Canadian society.

Concluding Remarks

The recommended Social Studies 9 to 11 textbooks examined in this study mostly cover the prescribed learning outcomes as directed by the provincial ministry. As the curricula themselves primarily focus on a Eurocentric narrative, the recommended textbooks are also written with that perspective, leaving Aboriginal peoples and issues mostly on the side. Textbooks are in general inconsistent in portraying images of Aboriginal peoples. At times, they marginalize images by not recognizing Aboriginal contributions to Canadian society. At times, they essentialize them by overgeneralizing and freezing them in time. At times, they see them as a problem by portraying them as violent and aggressive, emphasizing particular conflicts. At times, they decontextualize them by isolating or even overlooking them in the historical narrative. Yet, despite these criticisms, textbooks are showing more positive images and having greater inclusion of Aboriginal peoples. They occasionally challenge the status quo by asking students to think more critically and not accept given images and portrayals so readily. They occasionally present positive images of Aboriginal peoples without the potential danger of stereotyping their traditional ways. They do include greater voice for Aboriginal peoples as they express their own personal experiences and sentiments of their “Aboriginalness,” especially through art, literature, and music.

In presenting images of Aboriginal peoples, textbooks need to contextualize them for students for a more balanced perspective. Using supplemental materials and resources produced by Aboriginal peoples is also important in the classroom. As Fletcher (2000) states, “Only when literature written by First Nations and art produced by First Nations artists become part of the curriculum and are found in all subject areas will students begin to recognize that there is far

⁴⁷ See Cranny & Moles, 2001, pages 211-212 for examples.

more to being First Nations than beads and feathers and that our identity is not something that can be pulled on and off like a pair of jeans” (p. 354). Incorporating Aboriginal peoples as agents of history with their voice is therefore needed not only in textbooks but also in the curriculum:

Finding traces of ourselves in the stories is a source of affirmation. . . . In the process of affirming our connections we are responding as members of the First Nations community: asserting our collective right and our responsibility to accomplish representation. The stories of our ancestors make a claim on us, and in turn, we are called upon to share the stories with others. We have a responsibility both to ourselves and our ancestors to take up the project of (re)telling. . . .

It was and continues to be the violence of colonization that created conditions wherein Aboriginal people lost the power to control the ways in which dominant society constructs and interprets images of Aboriginal people. (Dion, 2004, p. 65)

Although Social Studies 9-11 courses attempt to integrate Aboriginal peoples more into the curricula, they continue to be based on a colonial past. Greater inclusion of them within the main narrative is therefore needed. In creating and developing a new course, BC First Nations Studies 12, the provincial government provided an opportunity for all students to learn in greater the depth and breadth Aboriginal peoples and issues from their own perspective and from their own voices.

CHAPTER 5

BC FIRST NATIONS STUDIES 12

The Ministry of Education first introduced BC First Nations Studies 12 as a provincially approved and credited course in 1995. During the last decade, there have been two revisions to its Integrated Resource Package - one in 2000 and one in 2006.⁴⁸ To fulfill graduation requirements, students must take at least one provincially examinable senior social studies course (Social Studies 11, Civics 11, or BC First Nations Studies 12). In exploring BC First Nations Studies 12, this chapter examines the latest prescribed learning outcomes as established in the latest Integrated Resource Package (2006).⁴⁹ Images and representations of Aboriginal peoples in the recommended textbook, *BC First Nations Studies*, as approved by the Surrey School District, are also examined.⁵⁰

Overview of BC First Nations Studies 12

Although some of the content and foci have changed over the years, as historical developments continue to influence and shape the political landscape of Aboriginal peoples in the province, the rationale for BC First Nations Studies 12 throughout this time has remained the same. The course still focuses on the

diversity, depth, and integrity of the cultures of British Columbia's Aboriginal peoples . . . emphasizing the languages, cultures, and history of First Nations peoples. . . .

[The] course provides an opportunity for BC students to acquire knowledge and understanding of the traditions, history, and present realities of BC Aboriginal peoples, as well as a chance to consider future challenges and opportunities. [It] will help to promote understanding of First Nations peoples among all students. A curriculum that concentrates on Aboriginal content can lead to

⁴⁸ The scope of this particular chapter, however, is not to compare the past IRPs to the present one, although reference to those in 2000 and 1995 will be made.

⁴⁹ At the time of this study, the new IRP for BC First Nations Studies 12 was officially adopted (2006), replacing its 2000 version and is to be fully implemented in the 2007/2008 school year.

⁵⁰ The same criteria as in the last chapter will be used to examine the images and portrayals of Aboriginal peoples in textbooks (Dillabough and McAlpine's study and the Ministry of Education's evaluation guide). I also use these criteria to discuss the rationale and philosophy behind the course as they are as relevant to curricular development as to textbook evaluation.

enlightened discussion of Aboriginal issues and can also contribute to Aboriginal students' sense of place and belonging in the public school system.
(BC Ministry of Education, 2006c, p. 3)

In addition to the rationale of the course, the Integrated Resource Package also provides the ministry's philosophy of the course, which includes eight descriptors about Aboriginal peoples and their cultures, values, beliefs, traditions, history, languages, and land:

1. Aboriginal peoples have complex, dynamic, evolving cultures that have adapted to changing world events and environments. Aboriginal peoples' values and beliefs are diverse, durable, and relevant.
2. It is necessary to understand and appreciate that all contemporary events have their roots in both oral and written history in order to understand Aboriginal issues.
3. Language and land are the foundations of Aboriginal identity and culture.
4. Aboriginal views of knowledge and learning may differ from those of other societies.
5. The resilience and durability of Aboriginal cultures serve as a basis upon which Aboriginal peoples can build a brighter future.
6. Aboriginal culture and history have an integral place in the evolution of BC and Canadian society.
7. Aboriginal peoples play a key role in the determination of future prosperity in BC, Canada, and the world. (p. 4)

With these beliefs and intentions, BC First Nations Studies 12 follows the criteria of BC's Ministry of Education and of Dillabough and McAlpine, mainly because it is grounded within an Aboriginal focus and perspective, which is not commonly found in standard history textbooks. It avoids treating Aboriginal peoples as a multicultural group, making overgeneralizations, and perpetuating negative stereotypes, and, in doing so, acknowledges and affirms Aboriginal identity.

Though the course and corresponding recommended textbook focus on First Nations peoples in BC, the Métis are still referenced and the term "Aboriginal" is used when discussing rights and titles (see Index of *BC First Nations Studies*). The course itself is based on four main themes: (1) land and relationships, (2) contact, colonialism, and resistance, (3) cultural expressions, and (4) leadership and self-determination. Each of these themes in turn contains specific prescribed learning outcomes. In land and relationships, the course attempts to bridge historical and contemporary First Nations societies by examining the traditional relationships with the land and the natural world. Moreover, students are expected to (1) describe the location

of the traditional territories of BC First Nations peoples, (2) analyze their relationship with the natural world, (3) explain the importance of traditional education with respect to land and relationships, and (4) analyze the exchange of ideas, practices, and materials involving First Nations pre-contact and post-contact (p. 18). In contact, colonialism, and resistance, students are to (1) demonstrate knowledge of the origins and history of the Métis, (2) assess the economic, social, political, and cultural impacts of contact with Europeans, (3) analyze post-Confederation government policies and jurisdictional arrangements that affected and continue to affect BC First Nations, and (4) analyze the varied and evolving responses of First Nations peoples to contact (p. 18). In cultural expressions, students are expected to (1) explain the functions and significance of the oral tradition, (2) explain the significance of First Nations creation, origin, and trickster/transformer stories, (3) interpret literature by Aboriginal authors, (4) explain the significance of traditional and contemporary Aboriginal art objects, and (5) evaluate the importance for Aboriginal peoples to determine the use of their artistic traditions and historical artifacts (p. 19). In leadership and self-determination, the course focuses on Aboriginal identity and political developments in the process of self-government and self-determination where students are expected to (1) describe the challenges during the 20th century, including reference to Aboriginal veterans, Aboriginal women, Métis, Aboriginal leaders and organizations, (2) compare traditional and contemporary First Nations systems of governance, and (3) analyze contemporary legislation, policies, and events affecting the self-determination of Aboriginal peoples (p. 19).

These descriptions and prescriptions show a much greater depth in the knowledge and comprehension of Aboriginal peoples that include their histories, their cultures, their governments, their identities, than in the prescribed learning outcomes about Aboriginal peoples in the social studies curricula. The main difference is not only because the course inherently has greater Aboriginal content, but also it has a different viewpoint that gives voice to the Aboriginal peoples. Moreover, according to Marker (2000), “without showing respect for the local history, language, and traditions of the place where they are studying, Native students can internalize a generic image of what it means to be an Aboriginal person. This can increase their sense of alienation and marginalization. It is the distinctiveness of the local sense of place that animates meaning and ideology from an Indigenous perspective” (p. 42).

BC First Nations Studies 12, however, has not escaped its share of controversy, skepticism, and even resistance. Because BC First Nations Studies 12 is now a provincially examinable course, teachers and students feel certain pressures and expectations as the government publicizes the performance statistics of these examination results.⁵¹ The main debate among some teachers, however, is that students may take BC First Nations Studies 12 to fulfill their senior social studies requirement in the Graduation Program as opposed to the standard Social Studies 11.⁵² As such, some teachers feel this course to be a threat to Social Studies 11 and strongly believe that students should be required to take a survey course of 20th century Canada as opposed to one that focuses only on Aboriginal history and issues. Even the BC's Social Studies Provincial Specialists Association was

so strong in its condemnation of FNS 12 [First Nations Studies] as a substitute for SS [Social Studies] 11 that a committee was struck to revise the curriculum, a committee comprised of social studies teachers and Aboriginal educators. Apparently, the SSPSA [Social Studies Provincial Specialist Association] thought that the PLOs [prescribed learning outcomes] of the original FNS 12 curriculum did not have enough overlap with the SS 11 curriculum. The revised FNS 12 curriculum is considered to be a reflection of the concerns raised by the SSPSA. In other words, it appears to be more in keeping with the colour-blind yet subtly Eurocentric revised curricula. (Orlowski & Menzies, 2004, pp. 68-69)

Despite this curriculum controversy and regardless of its examinable status, BC First Nations Studies 12 is the only course that truly gives voice to Aboriginal peoples. Students may assume that the course is intended for Aboriginal students, but because the course is open to all students irrespective of their background, it has one of the best potentials to provide opportunities for dialogue between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students. Having such a course may lead to greater cross-cultural understanding and respect in and out of the classroom.

Textbook Images of First Nations Peoples in BC First Nations Studies 12

The Integrated Resource Package for BC First Nations Studies 12 (2006) only lists one recommended comprehensive resource - *BC First Nations Studies*. In its proposal to develop a resource for the provincial ministry, Pacific Educational Press ensured that its textbook would

⁵¹ The provincial examination for BC First Nations Studies 12 is worth 20% of the overall grade (the same value as the examination for Social Studies 11) and is mandatory for all students.

⁵² These sentiments were voiced in an informal discussion among the Social Studies department heads in Surrey during a district meeting where teachers shared their reluctance to and, in some instances, rejection of the course.

follow closely to the Integrated Resource Package's prescribed learning outcomes. Not only would the textbook be issue-oriented, it would “strongly recognize that the land and its resources and the languages of the First Nations peoples are the foundations of their cultures and heritage” (Edwards, 2000, p. 5). Not only does this particular textbook address all the prescribed learning outcomes, it fulfills them in a positive way using local Aboriginal knowledge.

BC First Nations Studies – The Textbook

In its preface, *BC First Nations Studies* claims to document the “history and cultures of First Nations and Métis people in British Columbia from before the arrival of Europeans to the present” (Campbell, Menzies & Peacock, 2003, p. 7). Because the focus is on the First Nations peoples, their inclusion and validation not only in the textbook but also in the social studies strand are significant in which “Aboriginal people’s contributions to British Columbia and Canada are highlighted, and important leaders and role models are profiled” (p. 7). This recognition is further demonstrated with the introduction and epilogue written by two Aboriginal individuals who each reflect on the challenges Aboriginal communities face as they regain their place as self-governing nations.

One of the most important aspects of this recommended textbook is the legitimized voices of and decolonized approach toward Aboriginal peoples. The “Introduction” incorporates “The Voice of the Land is Our Language” (see pp. 8-15) and speaks from a First Nations’ perspective, emphasizing their values and beliefs within their cultures:

First Nations people in British Columbia have enduring values and beliefs that are as relevant today as they were in the past. We have a great responsibility to protect not only our families, but also the land in which we live. Families are responsible for maintaining a connection to the land, to honour and respect the way we live today, and to remember our past. First Nations’ histories impart a sense of belonging and a way of holding on to the values that sustain us. Instilled within our languages are the ties to the land, family, community, and the great respect and honour we have for all nations. (Reid, cited in Campbell, Menzies & Peacock, 2003, p. 8)

This opening paragraph sets the tone for the rest of the textbook: the narrative remains focused on Aboriginal perspectives using Aboriginal voices.

Each of the profiles and case studies throughout the textbook provides greater breadth and depth of Aboriginal experiences. A quotation from Chief Gweh as recorded by a North West Company agent regarding the fur trade in 1811 provides such a salient example in the textbook:

You [North West Company agent] send a great way off for goods, and you are rich and want for nothing. But do not I manage my affairs as well as you do yours? . . . When it is the proper season to hunt the beaver, I kill them; and of their flesh I make feasts for my relations. I, often, feast all the Indians of my village; and, sometimes, invite people from afar off, to come and partake of the fruits of my hunts. I know the season when fish spawn, and then send my women, with the nets which they have made, to take them. I never want for anything, and my family is always well clothed. (cited in Campbell, Menzies & Peacock, 2003, p. 74)

In another documented primary source, the text provides an address by Chief Neeshot of the Tsimshian to an employee of the North West Agency in 1883:⁵³

We are living in peace for this reason, that this Tsimshian tribe belongs to no government. God has put us here Himself. That is why our minds are at peace, for we know God is the only one who governs us. We have heard that the government has appointed you here. You have told us yourself that the land belongs to us the Tsimshians. (cited in Campbell, Menzies & Peacock, 2003, p. 93)

The historical written records of two First Nations chiefs by a European during a time when not many Aboriginal voices were even documented are significant. Standard history textbooks tend to omit these type of narrative in their accounts of the Canadian fur trade. Taking BC First Nations Studies 12 and reading this textbook therefore inform and enlighten students more.

Of equal and perhaps even greater importance are the recognition and challenge to the colonial history of Canada. In “Legacy of Colonialism,” the authors provide a balanced and reflexive view of Canada’s colonized history:

Five hundred years of European settlement in the Americas is painfully and tragically represented in any number of statistics, such as high rates of suicide, un- and under-employment, and substance abuse. This is not to deny impressive and important examples of successful First Nations people. Rather, it underlines the fact that the social inequality experienced by First Nations people is directly linked to the processes of colonization and to the government policies directed at undermining Aboriginal institutions and social organization. . . .

⁵³ Again, this documentation and quotation is one that is often overlooked in most history textbooks. *BC First Nations Studies*, therefore, becomes a unique and invaluable source for and of Aboriginal history.

The journey of First Nations people is not over by any means. There are many significant challenges facing them today and communities are working to heal from the legacies of colonialism through social programs, education, and revitalization of language and culture. (p. 148)

Thus, the textbook not only acknowledges a colonial history but also challenges it. It not only acknowledges Indigenous knowledge, traditions, languages, and cultures but also applies them. It not only acknowledges Aboriginal peoples and histories but also embraces and accepts them.

Visually, the textbook provides both historic and contemporary images and photographs of Aboriginal peoples and their environment and issues and concerns. Although some of them are found in other social studies textbooks, they are better contextualized to give more in-depth explanations to them without having Aboriginal peoples essentialized or seen as a problem.

In documenting the various historic photographs in the textbook, many cite a time frame so that students are not be misguided into thinking and believing that such lifestyles or conditions continue to exist for Aboriginal peoples. In the photograph of a young woman from Hagwilget Canyon weaving lynx strips, the accompanying caption states that it was taken around 1897 when there was an “abundance of fur-bearing animals in the northern interior” which “led the people to develop skills in making clothing from furs” (p. 30; see Figure 5.1).



(Figure 5.1 – Woman weaving lynx strips c. 1897 found in Campbell, Menzies & Peacock, 2003, p. 30. Image courtesy of Royal BC Museum.)

Similarly, a photograph of household goods assembled in preparation for a potlatch in Alert Bay is dated approximately 1910 (see Figure 5.2). The photograph’s caption gives further

explanation to the potlatch which contextualizes the image for students: “When a chief distributes gifts, he is publicly repaying his debts, while at the same time he is investing for the future. A chief who gives away resources can fully expect to receive the same value back with interest at another feat held in the future” (p. 57). The textbook, in providing such accompanying contexts to the images of Aboriginal peoples, avoids freezing and stereotyping them in time.



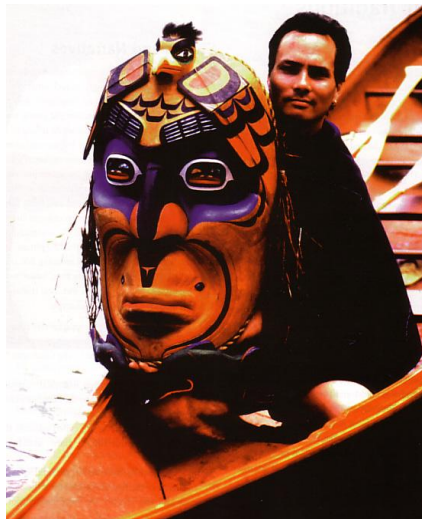
(Figure 5.2 – Preparation for a potlatch in Alert Bay, c. 1910, found in Campbell, Menzies & Peacock, 2003, p. 57. Image courtesy of Royal BC Museum, BC Archives.)

Many of the images presented of Aboriginal peoples in this textbook, however, are contemporary photographs. Even within the historical units of the textbook, the authors have interspersed current photographs to connect the past to the present. For example, most of the chapter, “Living on the Land,” discusses the historic ways Aboriginal peoples adapted and managed the land; however, a contemporary photograph of a member of the Stó:lo Nation shows that a connection to the land is still an integral part of life. The photograph shows a woman carrying bark.⁵⁴ The attire that is stereotypically associated with Aboriginal peoples with the traditional feathers, capes, masks, and even clan symbols is absent here. Instead, it is complemented, not replaced, by a more westernized attire. A balance between tradition and modernization is also seen in the photograph where Gwen Point and Helen Joe of the Stó:lo Nation are “working with cedar bark, a traditional skill that has been passed down through many

⁵⁴ The image can be found in Campbell, Menzies, & Peacock (2003) on page 35, as copyright permission was not granted.

generations” and who still use storytelling to teach skills (p. 211). The image here too is a modernized depiction of Aboriginal peoples with western attire and housing.⁵⁵

In depicting the cultural expressions of Aboriginal peoples, the authors of the textbook avoid misappropriating and essentializing their images. As the textbook explains: “Today, cultural expression is often a means of reasserting Aboriginal identity. By examining the wisdom of the past, Aboriginal artists in contemporary society are able to bring into focus their own cultural beliefs and values and express them both for their own people and for the wider Canadian society” (p. 208). A photograph of David Neel, a Kwakwaka’wakw artist, without explanation does perpetuate a stereotype Aboriginal art through making masks (see Figure 5.5); however, the caption explains that the “Keeper of the Animals mask . . . is a representation of the endangered species of the world”, which provides context to this particular cultural work. Students may in turn understand better the meaning behind the mask and not misinterpret it as just art.



(Figure 5.3 – David Neel with his "Keeper of the Animals" mask, found in Campbell, Menzies & Peacock, 2003, p. 209. Photograph courtesy of David Neel.)

Although the textbook delves thoroughly into the historical and contemporary political and legal struggles of Aboriginal peoples, only a small handful are depicted and, even within this small amount, only a very few may be seen as negative. In a case study, “The Constitutional

⁵⁵ The image can be found in Campbell, Menzies, & Peacock (2003) on page 211, as copyright permission was not granted.

Express,” the authors describe the mass protest in 1980 against the proposed changes to the constitution (see pp. 139-140). The two accompanying photographs do show Aboriginal peoples rallying and marching with placards in hand as a protest to Trudeau’s proposed constitutional changes (see Figures 5.6 and 5.7). Yet, these are the only two photographs that show Aboriginal peoples marching and holding protest signs in public.



(Figure 5.4 – 1980 mass protest against proposed changes to the constitution, found in Campbell, Menzies & Peacock, 2003, p. 139. Photograph courtesy of Union of BC Indian Chiefs.)



(Figure 5.5 – same 1980 mass protest, found in Campbell, Menzies & Peacock, 2003, p. 140. Photograph courtesy of Union of BC Indian Chiefs.)

In another photograph, a Gitx̱san Elder is seen quietly sitting, blocking a road through Gitx̱san territory in order to keep logging trucks from passing - no signs, no violent look of protest, no aggressive behaviour.⁵⁶ Instead, the image depicted is one of solitude and peace. She

⁵⁶ The image is found in Campbell, Menzies & Peacock (2003) on page 146, as copyright permission was not granted.

is seated with her hands crossed on her lap in a chair behind the back of a car with the hatchback open. There are no signs, no shouting, and no violence. In the background, readers can see a semi-truck, but it is difficult to assess whether the truck is stopped because of this blockade or if it is in support of the protest. Similarly, in a photograph showing the Native Youth Movement, the participants are seen drumming and singing.⁵⁷ They are not dressed in traditional Aboriginal attire. Some of the youth are standing in a line either singing or bowing their heads, assumingly listening and participating in their own way. Just as in the photograph with the Gitx̱san Elder, there are no signs of protest or violence. Although the textbook does state that in recent years, the Native Youth Movement has “emerged as a strong, militant voice for land claims and other issues” and has “proved their determination and defiance” against the encroachment of Native lands, the image is far from being overly aggressive (p. 204).

The selection of photographs in the textbook therefore is important in forming positive or negative images of Aboriginal peoples. *BC First Nations Studies* does not dwell on the negative aspects of self-government and treaty negotiations. Missing in this textbook are the photographs of masked warriors staring down Canadian soldiers, burning tires to block a road, and yelling, angry protestors, and impoverished reserves with high unemployment that are found in other social studies textbooks.

One main criticism of the textbook, therefore, is the absence of these images that are undeniably part of Aboriginal peoples' experiences. Perhaps the textbook purposely omits such negative visual images to counter the ones already existing in other textbooks. Understandably, the authors may have intended to raise students' awareness that such positive images and representations of Aboriginal peoples do exist and are part of reality as well. However, a balance is needed between positive and negative images of Aboriginal peoples and issues in order for students to become more critically aware and thoughtful of such situations. With contextual background, negative images may be used in more positive ways by explaining the different circumstances and illustrating the different realities.

The last chapter of *BC First Nations Studies* nevertheless captures the essence of how textbooks should portray Aboriginal peoples following the criteria of Dillabough and McAlpine and the Ministry of Education. Titled “Beyond Stereotypes: The Portrayal of First Nations

⁵⁷ The image is found in Campbell, Menzies & Peacock (2003) on page 204, as copyright permission was not granted.

People,” the chapter challenges the stereotypes and offers “honest, thoughtful reflections” of the various cultures in the images that it presents:

From the earliest days of European contact, First Nations cultures have been described in simplistic and stereotyped ways. When early explorers and traders, with predominantly British roots, encountered ways of life that were unfamiliar to them, they viewed First Nations people as “less than” and “other”. . . .

Some myths about First Nations people still exist in the popular culture of mainstream North American society. One is that they make up one homogenous group. . . . Another is that their ancestors all wore feather headdresses, carried tomahawks, and lived in tipis. A third is that they are people of the past, that anything identifiable as Aboriginal culture belongs to the past, or if it is practiced today it is out of a romantic attachment to the past.

None of these statements is true, and none refers to real people. The statements refer to some notion of “Indian” created by a society that consciously or subconsciously marginalized First Nations people. (p. 257)

Textbooks, in general, do not challenge the images of Aboriginal peoples by the media. This textbook takes an important step forward in not overly emphasizing the stereotypes of Aboriginal peoples. They are seen as dynamic as opposed to static, honouring not only the past but also the present. Contrary to the imaginary “Indian,” the portrayal of Aboriginal peoples in this textbook is commendably real.

Concluding Remarks

“As First Nations peoples we still have some distance to go to be free from the oppression we live under. . . . We can and must persist in our critique of Colonialism, but we cannot rely on Canada alone to give us more power. Power comes from within, and though cannot expect that the most important victories we achieve will be from any other source but ourselves” (Borrows, cited in Campbell, Menzies, & Peacock, 2003, p. 271). The “Epilogue” of the textbook centres on the future hope of an Aboriginal self-government. BC First Nations Studies 12 is a course that will help students understand the political, social, and economic contexts for this movement. As the course is intended to “document, recognize, and express [a] holistic perspective”, it also provides an opportunity for students to examine the past, analyze the present, and consider possibilities for the future (BC Ministry of Education, 2006c, p. 4).

The recommended textbook, *BC First Nations Studies*, not only follows the prescribed learning outcomes closely but it also follows the ministry’s textbook criteria. First, it recognizes

the contributions Aboriginal peoples have made and continue to make and their diversity while avoiding traditional stereotypes. Second, it promotes a deeper understanding of Aboriginal cultures. The textbook moves beyond the superficial trappings of “making masks, constructing totem poles and building replicas of Indian villages” (Fletcher, 2000, p. 353). Such activities, although may entertain students about Aboriginal peoples, they do not provide any "true appreciation of the complexities of First Nations cultures" (p. 353). Instead, the textbook provides students with the values and philosophies of Aboriginal peoples. Third, it avoids focusing on victimizing the Aboriginal peoples and on essentializing them into traditional stereotypes. The images of Aboriginal peoples depicted in the textbook are for the most part culturally sensitive and affirming. In effect, both the BC First Nations Studies 12 course and its corresponding textbook place the Aboriginal peoples first, allowing their voices, knowledge, experiences, and wisdom to be heard.

CHAPTER 6

ABORIGINAL EDUCATION: MINISTRY OF EDUCATION AND SURREY SCHOOL DISTRICT

In exploring Aboriginal education at the provincial level, this chapter first examines various ministry reports, policy implementation, and resources as a general background to and snapshot of its current state and direction within British Columbia. The chapter then provides an overview of the Surrey School District's corresponding reports on Aboriginal education as well as a description of its existing Aboriginal programs.

Ministry of Education Overview

British Columbia's Ministry of Education is responsible for the education of approximately 665,000 public and private Kindergarten to Grade 12 students. Annually, it compiles and publishes a number of reports and policies. The following sections provide a brief overview of (1) the current performance of Aboriginal students, (2) ministry strategies and initiatives to assist Aboriginal students, and (3) recent ministry policies regarding Aboriginal education.

Assessing the Climate

Since the mid-1990s, the Ministry of Education began to collect data in order to track BC's self-identified Aboriginal students demographically, academically, and even behaviourally in its annual publication, *Aboriginal Report: How Are We Doing?*⁵⁸ Its primary purposes are to help improve the understanding of "public school system performance in relation to Aboriginal students" and to provide a context for examining Aboriginal student performance and improvement (Morin, 2004, p. 194).

Demographically, the enrolled number and percentage of Aboriginal students in the province has steadily increased from 1995 to 2006: from 35,755 (5.9%) to 57,229 (9.5%) respectively (BC Ministry of Education, 2006d, p. 1). The report further details the number of

⁵⁸ According to the Ministry of Education, Aboriginal students are self-identified as being of Aboriginal ancestry, which include First Nations status and non-status, Métis, and Inuit.

Aboriginal students by gender, on or off reserve, region, and population of Aboriginal enrollment compared to non-Aboriginal students. Academically, the report uses results from the following categories: Foundations Skills Assessment (FSA for Grades 4 and 7), Participation and Success Rates in various Grade 12 provincial examinations, and Number of Aboriginal Graduates Receiving a Dogwood/Completion Rate.⁵⁹ Socially, the report mainly focuses on comparing the percentage between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students identified in Special Education, Special Education Behaviour Disabilities Group, and Intensive Behaviour Intervention/Serious Mental Illness Special Education Category.

From the report, there continues to be an overrepresentation of Aboriginal students in the Behaviour Disabilities group in the 2005/06 school year: 3% of Aboriginal students from Kindergarten to Grade 3 (compared to 1% of non-Aboriginal students); 5% of Aboriginal students from Grades 4 to 7 (compared to 2% of non-Aboriginal students); 5% of Aboriginal students from Grades 8 to 10 (compared to 2% of non-Aboriginal students); and 6% of Aboriginal students from Grades 11 to 12 (compared to 2% of non-Aboriginal students) (p. 7). More startling, however, are the comparative statistics for ungraded elementary and secondary Aboriginal students to non-Aboriginal students who have behaviour disabilities: 39% of Aboriginal students who are ungraded at the elementary level (compared to 8% of non-Aboriginal students); and 26% of Aboriginal students who are ungraded at the secondary level (compared to 7% of the non-Aboriginal students) (p. 7).⁶⁰ As for graduation rates, the publication reports that only 47% of Aboriginal students completed their Dogwood Diploma as compared to 82% of non-Aboriginal students in the 2005/06 school year (p. 28).

However, even with this statistical evidence, the interpretations of these numbers and percentages prove inadequate, lacking specificity in definitions and explanations. In turn, they may be easily and dangerously mis-interpreted or overly interpreted, as no precautions or analysis are offered, especially in addressing the question, “How are we doing?” As such, the Ministry of Education has narrowly focused on academic performance and graduation rates as its

⁵⁹ More specifically, the Foundations Skills Assessment is a standardized test administered to Grades 4 and 7 on reading, writing, and numeracy. Grade 10 students no longer are assessed through the FSA; instead, they write provincial examinations for English, Science, and Math. As for the Dogwood Completion Rates, the Ministry of Education defines a student cohort by those who enroll in Grade 8 for the first time and within six years, complete secondary school to receive a Dogwood Diploma. The Ministry uses this cohort as an indicator of success.

⁶⁰ “Ungraded,” according to the Ministry of Education, are students who are taking courses at the elementary or secondary level where the school personnel do not consider them to be in a specific grade level.

primary indicators in defining success. Nevertheless, the *Aboriginal Report: How Are We Doing?* (2005/06) does provide a snapshot of Aboriginal achievement and success, showing steady improvements.

Strategies and Initiatives

As a response in the mid-1990s to the issue of Aboriginal achievement, the Ministry of Education in cooperation with administrators and educators implemented a number of strategies and initiatives to improve the education of not only Aboriginal students but of all students. With regard to student achievement, the province introduced Accountability Contracts, District Reviews, Enhancement Agreements, the Parent and Education Engagement Partnership Project, and an Aboriginal Support Worker's Handbook, all of which are interrelated and interconnected to form a cycle of accountability.

Accountability Contracts

Implemented in 2001 and written by local school boards, Accountability Contracts are wide in scope as they are to “articulate how the District’s overarching efforts and directions link to and reflect annual school plans developed throughout the school community in support of student achievement” and are intended to “build a coherent process of collecting information related to student achievement, analyzing this information, developing plans for improvement, implementing the plans, reviewing results, and communicating with the public” (BC Ministry of Education, 2005c, p. 3). They are based on the district’s goals and objectives with an emphasis on performance indicators (evidence), performance targets (expected results), and achievement of performance targets (actual results) of students. As well, strategies specifying the “actions and activities, directed toward student learning in the classroom” and structures reflecting “the way the district has organized resources, time, personnel and organizational planning to support achievement of goals and objectives” are reported and submitted annually to the Ministry of Education (pp. 9, 10).

District Reviews

District Reviews provide feedback and recommendations for further improvements to the school districts based on their Accountability Contracts. Using ten categories, an external review team assesses the school district.

1. Goals and objectives need to be clear in order to define a strong instructional focus.
2. The district's rationale is evaluated in which the district needs to have a thorough and connected set of reasons for the goals and objectives.
3. The district needs to collect and analyze data as "evidence."
4. Strategies should include focused and well-organized improvement plans.
5. Structures need to be in place in order to achieve the desired goals and objectives.
6. The district needs to show coherence that establishes a connection between school and district goals and objectives.
7. Dialogue and communication must be evident whereby relationships are developed to promote public dialogue about student achievement.
8. Parent involvement is encouraged and monitored.
9. The district needs to show strong leadership -- having a clear vision for and commitment to improving student achievement.
10. The district should be achieving results (i.e., showing improvements in student performance). (BC Ministry of Education, 2005d).

Each category is assessed as "sustaining improvement," "meeting expectations," "approaching expectations," or "not yet." In essence, District Reviews are to ensure that the Accountability Contracts are "accountable."

Enhancement Agreements

In addition to emphasizing the importance of academic performance, Enhancement Agreements explicitly acknowledge and legitimize the integral role of Aboriginal peoples' traditional culture and languages in the development and success of Aboriginal students. They are "working agreement[s] between a school district, all local Aboriginal communities, and the Ministry of Education" that fundamentally requires school districts to "provide strong programs on the culture of local Aboriginal peoples on whose traditional territories the districts are located" (BC Ministry of Education, 2003, p. 8). More specifically, they provide a framework for involving Aboriginal communities in the decision-making process, a "road map for helping schools effect a shift in focus towards performance-oriented Aboriginal education based on educational outcomes" and "mechanisms to dialogue with the schools, [and] the school district"

(p. 8). In order to examine each district's progress, three indicators of assessing success are used: academic, cultural, and engagement. Academically, school districts use (1) the Foundations Skills Assessment results, (2) the rates of participation, success, transition, and relevancy of modified programs, and (3) report card grades, transition rates, and suspensions from school. Culturally, they use (1) the participation rates of school district officials, teachers, and students in cultural education, (2) the number of schools offering BC First Nations Studies 12 with corresponding participation and success rates of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students, (3) the number of schools offering locally developed Aboriginal languages courses, (4) the extent to which the district has "fostered and implemented locally developed cultural learning opportunities", and (5) the extent to which "technology initiatives related to the particular needs and interests of Aboriginal students have been undertaken" (p. 23). With regard to engagement, school districts use (1) the extent to which Aboriginal students participate in extra-curricular activities and (2) increase in the "quantity and quality of interactions between family/caregivers and the [school]" (p. 9). With these goals and indicators implemented, Enhancement Agreements hope to increase the knowledge of and respect for Aboriginal culture, language, and history, and in turn facilitate better understanding of Aboriginal peoples.

Parent and Education Engagement Partnership Project

Student achievement, however, is not an isolated process, as parental involvement becomes a significant factor and influence. In a discussion paper entitled, "Parent and Education Engagement Partnership Project" (July 30, 2002), a committee consisting of provincial ministry, parent advisory council, teacher, school board, and Aboriginal participants recognized the "significant disparity between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal parent engagement in BC schools" and thus called for greater Aboriginal parental involvement in the public education system (BC Ministry of Education, 2002b, p. ii). Through a survey of 120 Aboriginal Education Coordinators in 7 school districts across British Columbia, including Surrey, the committee identified 4 communication-related issues regarding school-Aboriginal parent engagement:⁶¹

limited engagement of school staff with Aboriginal parents in activities such as Parent Advisory Committees and extra-curricular activities; teacher and Aboriginal parent dissatisfaction with school-parent communications; lack of

⁶¹ Seven districts throughout BC were used in this research varying in size and location: Prince Rupert, Prince George, Fort St. John, Kelowna, Castlegar/Trail, Courtney/Comox, and Surrey.

teacher and administrator awareness and understanding of Aboriginal culture; and distrust and antipathy expressed by Aboriginal parents of the public school system in their region. (p. ii)

With a key goal of increasing the “school success of Aboriginal students and to increase Aboriginal communities’ satisfaction with the public school system,” the document examines the state of Aboriginal involvement in the public schools, key barriers to Aboriginal parental involvement, current and best practices, and guiding principles for its enhancement (p. 5).

First, from the collected data (in 2002), 47% of the 120 Aboriginal Education Coordinators surveyed characterized the relationship between Aboriginal parents and the education system as being “good/positive” while 35% said “fair/improving/neutral” and 18% said “poor/negative,” but only 18% to 27% of teachers were satisfied with the level of communication they have with Aboriginal parents (pp. 6, 7). The results speak volumes in terms of satisfaction where less than half of those surveyed have a positive attitude regarding a necessary and significant relationship between Aboriginal parents and the school system. Thus, communication between and among the coordinators, teachers, and parents has become and should be a priority in the province.

Second, the survey results point to a number of barriers to a healthy Aboriginal parent-school partnership: personal negative educational experiences; mis-understanding of language and educational jargon; lack of cultural awareness and non-value or under-value of Aboriginal culture within the school; poverty among Aboriginal families; lack of genuine engagement strategies by schools; intimidation factor; and the general negative nature of parental contact regarding students non-achievement or misbehaviour (see pp. 9-13). These barriers are deep-rooted as a legacy of residential schooling where parents from their own experiences may have negative views toward the formalized and institutionalized education system. In turn, these barriers to a more positive partnership between Aboriginal parents and schools pose a formidable challenge and need to be addressed at all levels - from the ministry to the school boards to the administrators to the staff to the parents and to the students.

Third, the committee offers four guiding principles to consider before implementing any policy or program. Respect for and celebration of Aboriginal culture are essential elements of an engagement strategy where increasing the knowledge and understanding of teachers and administrators about Aboriginal history, culture, and issues would better facilitate effective

communication with Aboriginal parents. Schools need to be “welcoming and friendly” with an “open-doorway” policy where “parental input is welcome and that there is a special place for Aboriginal students and parents in the school” (p. 29). Parents, staff, and district leadership need to work cooperatively to “create a sense of belonging” and build trust (p. 29). Finally, measurable and realistic targets need to be set and assessed for their effectiveness.

Fourth, noted by the committee as initiatives to enhance Aboriginal parent engagement in the educational system, a number of activities have been implemented in various districts, including establishing an Aboriginal Education Committee or Department within the school district, offering Aboriginal Support Services, providing school orientation activities for Aboriginal parents and families, and inviting parents as participants in cultural awareness and culturally inclusive activities. In addition to these initiatives, the committee highlighted what it considers to be “best practices” in establishing effective strategies for both Aboriginal students and parents: engaging parents in the decision-making process as being partners in the education of Aboriginal students; building trust with parents for better communication; recognizing and addressing Aboriginal issues and culture; and recruiting Aboriginal staff in instructional and leadership positions as positive role models. The committee, however, cautions that one strategy will not fit all as regional differences must be considered. It concludes that strategies to engage Aboriginal parents require administrators and teachers to develop “partner relationships with Aboriginal parents based on mutual respect and trust. These guiding principles should provide for establishing successful practices” (p. 30).

Aboriginal Support Worker’s Handbook

To enhance the delivery of Aboriginal education to all students, the Ministry of Education (1997b) published the *Aboriginal Support Worker’s Handbook*, applicable to locations where a staff position within the school district (i.e., Aboriginal Support Worker) was established. Although each school district has its own emphases on the responsibilities and duties of Aboriginal Support Workers, their main objective is to “assist Aboriginal students to achieve greater success in all school programs” (p. 7), as they work collaboratively with the district/school personnel (including teachers, counselors, and administrators), the community and its services, and parents/caregivers (see p. 13). Serving as role models, Aboriginal Support Workers in turn:

bring extensive formal training to their position but just as important are [their] life experiences and cultural heritage as an Aboriginal person. [Their] unique understanding and sensitivity to the values, beliefs, and needs of the students' Aboriginal community as well as the needs of the school system, make [them] a valuable asset to school staff. (p. 7)

[They] are encouraged to empower Aboriginal students to succeed. . . . to be a facilitator for [students'] learning and to offer support, when needed, for self-esteem, self-identity, and cultural identity development . . . by offering warm, consistent, stable, and non-hostile environments and by being involved in the life experiences of the student. (p. 27)

Recent Policies

These ministry publications that promise greater accountability, involve greater parental involvement, and provide greater number of resources will all hopefully result in an increase in awareness of the challenges, successes, and future of Aboriginal education among teachers, administrators, parents, and students.⁶² The most recent and promising progress made (at the time of this study) is the Tripartite Education Jurisdiction Framework Agreement formally signed between the federal and provincial governments and the Aboriginal peoples (through the First Nations Education Steering Committee). These agreements will lead to the country's first recognition of First Nations' jurisdiction over Aboriginal education (BC Ministry of Education, 2006e). It is, in the words of BC's Premier, "the first of its kind in Canada and is a major step toward our goal of closing the education gap between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal British Columbians [that] marks the beginning of a new partnership" (cited in BC Ministry of Education, 2006e, p. 1). The agreement, according to federal Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, "will strengthen First Nations' capacity to exercise control over their educational systems and institutions (cited, p. 1). More important, it is "based on respect that recognizes the jurisdiction of First Nations peoples over the education of their youth" according to Chief Negotiator, Nathan Matthew (cited, p. 1). With this formalized agreement in place, hope and optimism remain high in the future of Aboriginal education in BC.

⁶² Most of the Ministry of Education's documents examined in this section are found within the links of its Aboriginal Education website: <http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/abed/>.

Surrey School District Overview

Accommodating more than 64,000 students, the Surrey School District is the largest and fastest growing in BC with 99 elementary schools, 18 secondary schools, 5 learning centres, and 1 home learner program (on-line education - Surrey Connect). It is also one of the most diverse districts culturally, linguistically, and socio-economically. Approximately 25% of students attending school in the district are from a household whose first language is not English, and approximately 20% of the overall student population, which represent over 90 different languages, receive instruction as an English Language Learner (ELL)⁶³. Over 5,000 students (8%) come from families on income assistance. Approximately 2,600 (4%) of the total district enrollment are self-identified Aboriginal students (BC Ministry of Education, 2005c, p. 1).⁶⁴ Although the number of self-identified Aboriginal students in Surrey was small, an Aboriginal Department was created in 1998 to respond to the growing concern for their needs. From this department, a number of policies, programs, and initiatives were implemented focusing mainly on improving Aboriginal students in the district.

District Reports

Surrey has published a number of District Reports, including an annual Accountability Contract, District Review, and District Report. While the Accountability Contract projects into Surrey's future with goals and objectives until 2010, the District Report and Review reflect upon the quantifiable performance (i.e., achievement results) of the previous school year in the district.

Accountability Contract

In 2005, the Surrey School District outlined a comprehensive long-term plan for the 5 years, 2006-2010, based on 4 themes, known as "Vision 2010," in order to develop and improve students' academic achievement, community involvement, social and moral responsibilities, and future roles in society: (1) provide quality education programming where students will "experience a well-rounded educational program" with "access to a broad spectrum of

⁶³ The term "ELL" (English Language Learner) has replaced "ESL" (English as a Second Language) but the latter is still quoted in documents that used that term. ELL is a more accurate term though as it does not assume that English would be a secondary language for students.

⁶⁴ Parents self-identify their children as Aboriginal if one of the grandparent's lineage can be traced to an Aboriginal group, although the specific group does not need to be identified.

educational . . . choices and timetable options” and “smooth transitions from preschool through post secondary”; (2) involve parents and community where there will be enhanced communication between schools, parents, and the community as well as participation of parents in the schools; (3) nurture “morally and socially responsible citizens” where students will “demonstrate respect, social responsibility and global citizenship”; and (4) prepare graduates for the “multiple roles of their futures” where students will be “knowledgeable about a broad range of post-secondary and career options” and will develop the “confidence and competence to be self-directed in pursuing their personal and career goals” (BC Ministry of Education, 2005c, p. 2). More immediate, however, are the district’s 3 main goals of improving reading skills, writing skills, and students’ skills in social responsibility.

With regard to improving students’ reading skills, the district “has consistently demonstrated lower than provincial averages in FSA results,” and while “there has not been evidence of significant improvement in FSA results over the past five years, it is noted that there has been a consistently higher rate of participation of [its] ESL, Special Education and Aboriginal students in comparison to the provincial average” (p. 5).⁶⁵ The report further states that while Aboriginal students continue to “perform at a lower achievement level than non-Aboriginal students in the district and provincially,” they are “performing better than Aboriginal students provincially” (p. 8). As one of its strategies, Surrey’s Aboriginal Education Department plans to continue to work collaboratively with Curriculum and Instructional Services to “ensure that Aboriginal students are included in district literacy interventions” where the primary focus is “academic support using culturally relevant materials” (p. 10).

With regard to improving students’ writing skills, the district cites that its English 12 provincial examination results among Aboriginal students have consistently been below the provincial average for the past 12 years and that the gap in performance between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students are evident.⁶⁶ To address this concern, greater use of technology is

⁶⁵ In addition to the FSA results, the district also uses report card data (English marks), the District Reading Assessment (RAD36) based on performance standards, and the English 10 provincial examination results as indicators /evidence.

⁶⁶ Although the report states that the district has been consistently below, the difference in average percentages is not high (approximately between 1-3% difference).

being used to “enhance the quality and quantity of student writing” in 20 elementary schools (p. 14).⁶⁷

With regard to improving students’ skills in social responsibility, the district supports a wide range of initiatives that promote “safe and caring communities” (p. 16). Such programs include conducting (1) Secondary Student Forums where students discuss safety at school, bullying, racism, and substance abuse, (2) Secondary Student Safe Schools Surveys, and (3) Ministry Satisfaction Surveys.

In order to achieve these main immediate goals, the Surrey School District has targeted funds to provide “over and above” services for Aboriginal students: employing Aboriginal Child/Youth Care Workers, Educational Assistants, District Cultural Facilitators, Aboriginal Helping Teachers, and classroom teachers providing in-school support; offering after school programs that provide academic support for Aboriginal students; providing culturally relevant reading materials to support Aboriginal learners; and establishing the Elder in Residence Program to help build bridges between the school and the Aboriginal community. Aboriginal Child/Youth Care Workers play a similar role to counselors in terms of ensuring a steady and encouraging transition from grade to grade, especially from elementary to secondary school. They also make parental contact when necessary and look after the well-being of Aboriginal students, not only academically, but also socially and emotionally as well. Educational Assistants are trained staff working with students with learning difficulties and act as a liaison between student and teacher in the classroom, focusing on academics. District Cultural Facilitators are responsible to facilitate students and teachers of the various and diverse Aboriginal cultures in order to improve the image of Aboriginal peoples and the cross-cultural responsiveness among and between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students. Aboriginal Helping Teachers are trained staff from the district’s Curriculum and Instruction Services Centre (CISC) who mainly assist and provide teachers with resources and lesson plans that pertain to Aboriginal peoples and issues. Upon request, they also may facilitate teachers in the classroom, but their focus is more on academic as opposed to cultural or emotional support.

⁶⁷ Unfortunately, secondary schools do not receive this support.

District Review Report

The District continues to face the challenges of rapid growth and increasing complexity. The rich diversity among the schools and program offerings in Surrey makes this district an exciting place to work and learn. The sense of purpose and teamwork displayed by Surrey School District will provide a strong foundation for its future efforts. (BC Ministry of Education, 2004b, p. 2)

This excerpt from Surrey's District Review Report that was completed in 2004 expresses a general consensus of diversity, dynamism, and development within the schools. Through their observations, the review team focused on student achievement and concluded that there is a solid district leadership emphasis on student achievement with effective support by staff and helping teachers. As well, the review team noted teamwork between the district and the schools as they observed a strong "commitment, professionalism, and dedication [among] educators in meeting the diverse needs of their learners" (p. 7). To reinforce and support student achievement, the team recommended that the district (1) "strengthen the culture of assessment for learning through the increased use of BC Performance Standards", (2) continue to "pursue ways of actively involving parents in the review of student achievement data", (3) continue to "identify specific strategies to address the needs of Aboriginal students in school plans" and to work with the Aboriginal communities to develop an Enhancement Agreement, and (4) continue the "significant initiatives underway in order to deepen understanding of the powerful effects this work may yield for [its] students" (p. 8).

Annual District Report

Written by the Improving Student Learning Committee of the Surrey School District (mainly composed of the district's senior management and administrators), this 12th annual district report highlights the progress made in attaining student achievement goals for the 2005/06 school year and echoes much of the data collected and presented in the district's Accountability Contract and District Review documents. Although emphases still remain on student achievement and performance - graduation rates, provincial examination results, literacy rates (reading and writing both provincial and district assessments/examinations) - the report also considers social responsibility (e.g., students leadership conferences, community volunteer work, substance prevention workshops, and ministry satisfaction surveys) and participation (e.g., fine and performing arts, athletics, and student council) as part of a student's well-rounded education

(Surrey School District, 2007a). In its research findings, the report through a survey of classroom teachers, parents and students found that 35% of teachers “are not well informed about Aboriginal culture or history” (p. 37).⁶⁸ Also, 91% of the Aboriginal parents surveyed want teachers to “help their students in the classroom but only 65% felt that students would be helped by encouragement to share their culture” (p. 37) and only 42% of these parents feel that their culture is not respected at school. The section on Aboriginal education concludes with considerations for the future:

- 1) More collaboration between the Aboriginal Education Department and the Students Services Department to better meet the needs of Aboriginal students who have identified behaviour difficulties.
 - 2) Completion of the Enhancement Agreement.
 - 3) Aboriginal Education professional development activities for educators.
- (p. 37)

Aboriginal Education Department

Surrey School District’s Aboriginal Education Department has organized the educational services for Aboriginal students and implemented a number of programs in order to improve their success and graduation rates. In addition to recording, analyzing, and interpreting results from provincial and district assessments/examinations, the district (through the Aboriginal Education Department) also examines grade-to-grade transitions (i.e., the percentage of students who enter a grade for the first time from any lower grade) of its students. The collected data indicate that little difference exists between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students in transitioning from a lower grade to a higher one at the elementary level. However, far fewer Aboriginal students at the secondary level transition to a higher grade compared to non-Aboriginal students. For example, in the 2004/05 school year, 97% of non-Aboriginal students transitioned from Grades 8 to 9, compared to 88% of Aboriginal students.⁶⁹ This percentage gap between the two groups increases from Grades 10 to 11 and is even greater from Grades 11 to 12: 90% for non-Aboriginal students and 73% for Aboriginal students for the former; 88% for non-Aboriginal students and 66% for Aboriginal students for the latter (Surrey School District, 2006a, p. 20).

⁶⁸ The report, however, does not mention how many people were actually surveyed.

⁶⁹ Data for the 2005/06 results were not available in this publication.

District Initiatives and Programs

In addressing these issues and concerns, the district offers a diverse range of educational initiatives for Aboriginal students. First, itinerant Aboriginal Enhancement Teachers provide academic support to elementary schools that have high Aboriginal student populations. Second, Aboriginal Cultural Facilitators are available for presentations at all schools in the district, working in classrooms with all students and discussing Aboriginal cultures and doing hands-on activities. Third, Child and Youth Care Workers support Aboriginal students mainly in secondary schools and learning centres as academic and cultural liaisons. Fourth, Educational Assistants provide academic support in the classrooms mainly at the secondary level and offer after school support programs. Fifth, Helping Teachers provide curriculum assistance to teachers, focusing on the integration of Aboriginal content across the curriculum. Sixth, Aboriginal Support Teachers assist secondary Aboriginal students mainly for academic improvement. Seventh, Aboriginal Literacy Teachers and Aboriginal English Language Development Teachers support literacy and numeracy development for students at the elementary level.

In addition to this staff, the district has implemented a number of programs to help Aboriginal students transition from one grade to the next. First, at the elementary level, the Eagle Feather Program focuses on academic skill-building through a “culturally enriched curriculum to prepare students to achieve success in regular secondary school classes to graduation” and is aimed at Aboriginal students in Grades 4 to 7 (Surrey School District, 2006a, p. 1). Second, at the junior high school level, the *Smuqwa* Program and the *Stqeye* Program focus on Grades 8 and 9 who need extra academic support to better prepare them for the secondary school experience where an emphasis is placed on integrating Aboriginal content into the curricula and programs. Third, the “Learn and Earn Program” is a partnership between the *Lka-how-eya* Aboriginal Centre and the Surrey School District targeting 15 to 17 year-old Aboriginal students who are finding mainstream education a challenge. Designed to support and build students’ literacy and numeracy skills, the program emphasizes working toward the Grade 10 academics (i.e., English, Math, and Science provincial examinations) and is not considered an intensive behaviour support program. Incorporating life skills and workplace components, the goal of this particular program is to integrate the students back into their own schools. Fourth, at the senior high school level, the *Kwasun* Program is intended for Aboriginal students in Grades

10 to 12 as a transitions program, similar to the Learn and Earn Program. It also focuses on literacy and numeracy skills with an extensive workplace experience component.

According to Surrey's "Twelfth Annual Report," Aboriginal students in the district "have demonstrated success by winning awards and scholarships and acting as leaders and role models for other students. While many Aboriginal students are achieving well, others are not. The goal is for Aboriginal students to achieve at the same level as their non-Aboriginal peers" (Surrey School District, 2006b, p. 35).

Concluding Remarks

In an era of accountability, both the Ministry of Education and Surrey School District have been proactive in initiating policies and programs to improve the education of both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students. At the ministry level, with respect to Aboriginal education, Accountability Contracts, District Reviews, and Enhancement Agreements all on paper appear to move in the same direction of addressing Aboriginal peoples' needs and concerns. In a recently agreed document between the provincial government and Aboriginal representatives, "The New Relationship," both parties believe in a "shared vision" which includes "respect for our respective laws and responsibilities" and a commitment to a "reconciliation of Aboriginal and Crown titles and jurisdictions" (BC Ministry of Education, 2005e, p. 1). Furthermore, it includes a celebration of diversity and an appreciation of commonalities whereby Aboriginal peoples are striving toward the following goals:

1. To restore, revitalize and strengthen First Nations and their communities and families to eliminate the gap in standards of living with other British Columbians, and substantially improve the circumstances of First Nations people in areas which include: education, children and families, and health, including restoration of habitats to achieve access to traditional foods and medicines.
2. To achieve First Nations self-determination through the exercise of their aboriginal title including realizing the economic component of aboriginal title, and exercising their jurisdiction over the use of land and resources through their own structures.
3. To ensure that lands and resources are managed in accordance with First Nations laws, knowledge and values and that resource development is carried out in a sustainable manner including the primary responsibility of preserving healthy lands, resources and ecosystems for present and future generations.

4. To revitalize and preserve First Nations cultures and languages and restore literacy and fluency in First Nation languages to ensure that no First Nation language becomes extinct. (pp. 1-2)

This document by far appears to be one of the boldest steps that the provincial government has taken in terms of acknowledging Aboriginal rights, self-determination, epistemology, and decolonization. However, the key remains in the practical implementation of these policy initiatives - how they will come about, what would they look like, and when will they occur.

Similarly, at the district level, Surrey has signed an Accountability Contract, been assessed in its District Review, and drafted an Enhancement Contract for provincial approval. It has also implemented a number of programs whose aim is to improve graduation rates, retention rates, and academic performance among its Aboriginal students. With these district programs and staffing in place, Surrey has taken Aboriginal education very seriously, examining and considering recent literature and research. These policies and programs have been brought to the attention of teachers in the school district and are now aware of the importance of student success among Aboriginal students. At the centre of all these programs is the student, whose needs appear to be addressed with these agreements, contracts, and policies. However, their delivery, effectiveness, and, most importantly, success, are still to be determined, which remains a continuing and evolving journey in Aboriginal education for BC's largest school district.

CHAPTER 7

PERSONAL REFLECTION AND JOURNEY AS AN EDUCATOR

This personal journey into Aboriginal education began unintentionally when I was a teacher entering the PhD program. However, upon further reflection, my experiences as a student in the classroom both at the elementary and secondary levels primarily shaped my ideas, thoughts, and even prejudices of Aboriginal peoples as the curriculum for Aboriginal issues were limited and Eurocentrically biased. I partially inherited this educational legacy into the classroom as a teacher. However, through this process of researching and writing this dissertation, I have learned better. Though there is still a very long way to go, I have begun a new chapter as an educator in teaching Aboriginal issues in the classroom.

My Educational Past as a Student

When I attended elementary school student in Vancouver in the 1970s, not much was taught about Aboriginal peoples or issues. It seemed like they were not part of the mainstream curriculum. My best recollections were of Grade 4, in which I can recall two learning experiences.

The first one I remember was a black and white film on the “Eskimo” (now referred to the Innu) way of living. I did not recall the title at the time, but now looking back, it could have very well been the pseudo-documentary film, *Nanook of the North*, which has been proven to be mostly fabricated. What I do remember, however, was the scene when the “Eskimo” people ate the raw blubber of a whale that was either washed up on shore or that they hunted. At nine years old, I thought that the “Eskimos” were primitive and mildly disgusting. “Who would eat something like that?” was the question that ran through my mind. I remember that the documentary described the meat as rather chewy like gum and that it was a treat for the children. I interpreted it as something equivalent to candy, although I did vow never to try whale blubber. Whether the teacher explained, clarified, or even denied the reality and validity of the documentary, it did not seem to matter as that particular image stayed in my mind and formulated one of my first memories of Aboriginal peoples in Canada. I did not even know the differences between the Inuit, Métis, and First Nations peoples - they were all the same to me. Unconsciously, the curriculum and media shaped my stereotypes and prejudices of Aboriginal

peoples as wilderness loving, whale eating, and parka wearing peoples who had darker skin than I and lived in isolation in the Arctic regions of Canada. As Riddington (1990) argues, the media "reinforces the language of those it defines as insiders" (p. 246). As a result, the "Native Indians" and "Eskimos" (as they were called and taught in class) inadvertently became marginalized, otherized, and problematic.

The second teaching moment I remember is the unit on explorers in Canada. My specific project was on Henry Hudson, well-known to us all at the time since Hudson Bay and the Hudson's Bay Company were named after this famed explorer. Other students were assigned John Cabot, Christopher Columbus, Jacques Cartier, and Samuel de Champlain – all European. There were no research topics on Aboriginal peoples and their roles in European exploration and conquest. Much of the research I collected was on Henry Hudson and his crew in their search of the elusive Northwest Passage. I even remember a black and white film about Henry Hudson and his crew and how they mutinied against him. I remember the scene when he and some of his loyal crewmembers were put in a little boat while the mutineers sailed back to England. The narrator said that Hudson was never to be found again. I felt sorry for Hudson by that fact: a heroic explorer doomed in the Arctic and betrayed by his own people. It never occurred to me or to my classmates to include Aboriginal peoples in the project – perhaps it was not an expectation or criteria. Nevertheless, most research and learning in that social studies class were Eurocentric in nature with regard to First Nations history and peoples. Narratives from history therefore are about power and domination (Cruikshank, 1992). I do not recall reading any stories, myths, or legends about Aboriginal peoples in elementary school. "Indians" continued to exist in my mind as being primitive with their native dances, attire, songs, and spiritual ceremonies.

This did not seem to change too much in secondary school. Textbooks, at least, by that time stopped using terms such as "noble savage" and "primitive" to describe Aboriginal peoples. However, they were still marginalized in Canadian history, at least in the classroom. Not until Grade 10 do I recall learning anything else about Aboriginal issues and peoples. Louis Riel was a main topic under the "Northwest Rebellion," but as the title suggests, the excerpt in the textbook only saw Riel as a rebel, never to be considered as a hero in Canadian history. Because of the Eurocentric bias of the curriculum, students including myself were not exposed to Aboriginal issues in depth. Rather, the occasional land claims topic would arise in class with a briefly glossed-over mention of residential schools in Social Studies 11, but certainly nothing

regarding the devastating legacy and impact of them were ever discussed in the classroom. Perhaps the presentation of Canadian history was one that was masked with "imperialist nostalgia" which mourns the passing of traditional society and attempts to reestablish a time of innocence "to cover [its] involvement with processes of domination" (Rosaldo, 1989, p. 86). Sadly, I do not recall any mention of residential schooling, a significant impact on our history. Instead, I only remember the history of conquering and exploring that was taught in the classroom.

I do remember that I had the same social studies teacher for the last three years of high school. He had a picture of Queen Elizabeth II up in the classroom, even though the singing of "God Save the Queen" and the saying of the Lord's Prayer were no longer required in public schools for a number of years. I had an inclination that he favoured the British and the empire Britain had built. He would recall and expound on any positive impact that the British may have had in the last century. It was a very Eurocentric experience in his class, but it was what I learned, what I knew, and what I accepted, and even what I would teach.

I do, however, remember feeling some sympathy toward First Nations peoples for their past but I certainly did not see myself as being responsible or liable for their position in Canadian society, nor did I feel any need or obligation to advocate for their concerns and rights. "They should be like any other Canadian and pay their taxes. Why should they get any special treatment or privileges from the government?" were the general thoughts and attitudes of my peers. Nothing in my classes ever addressed these issues directly. Even at the senior level in high school, I do not recall any essay topics on Aboriginal issues. Instead, we focused on Canadian prime ministers from Macdonald to Trudeau and their respective achievements. The colonial framework of Canadian history was strongly entrenched: World War 1, Boom of the 1920s, Depression of the 1930s, World War 2, Cold War, French-English relations, and our new Canadian constitution. Thus, my knowledge of Aboriginal issues and peoples was extremely and embarrassingly limited, given the fact that the Aboriginal peoples laid the foundation for Canada. The notion of the two founding nations was strongly entrenched in the curriculum and in the classroom.

As a result, in university, I consciously decided not to take any Aboriginal history courses (not that there that many back in the mid-1980s), mainly because I believed that Canadian history was uninteresting. There was a general conception that nothing much happened, which

included native history, a belief among graduating high school students at the time. I had discounted and, in effect, disregarded Aboriginal history – their stories were not important or even legitimate to the Canadian historical canon. I therefore concluded that Canadian history was boring even before entering university, so I selected American, European, Ancient Greek and Roman, 20th Century World histories as part of my major – topics and histories I found and thought were more engaging. Looking back now, these courses were perhaps better advertised, sensationalized, and even romanticized for students to take. Perhaps it was the way Canadian history was taught in secondary school – “chalk and talk,” little interaction between the teacher and students, and even less among students themselves. As a result, I only took one Canadian history course only to fulfill the mandatory requirement to enter the Faculty of Education at that time. I remember specifically selecting the social history of Canada. The first half of the survey course focused on pre-Confederation. Although there was definitely more topics on Aboriginal history, the story of Canada remained fundamentally European, with some additional articles and readings on women’s roles and ethnic minorities’ roles. The second half of the course focused on post-Confederation, but again there was little mention of Aboriginal peoples. Unfortunately for my academic and personal growth, my previous notions of Aboriginal issues and peoples remained intact even at the end of this course in university.

Entering the Faculty of Education in 1990 was a step toward fulfilling my early ambition of being a teacher. I thoroughly loved the methodology courses in social studies as they fulfilled both my theoretical and practical expectations. At this point in time, Oka recently occurred, land claims were being brought forward in BC, and a barrage of news coverage of “Indian” poverty, alcoholism, and crime filled the newspapers and television. These all reinforced my previous stereotypes of Aboriginal peoples in Canada – again, like in secondary school, I would feel some sympathy toward Aboriginal peoples but would blame them for their current situation and would hope they would simply move on in their lives. Now upon reflection, these stories from the media portrayed very negative images of Aboriginal peoples, which Riddington (1990) argues, documents the normal and perverts the real. It was hard to understand and empathize with Aboriginal peoples, as I was so uninformed and misinformed of their history – a colonized history that I would not begin to realize until after I started teaching.

However, 3 individual professors/instructors in the education program during that year did make some impact which influenced me to start to rethink and reflect on my beliefs of

Aboriginal issues and peoples – one from Curriculum Studies, one from Psychology Education, and one from Educational Studies.

The first professor I remember was an expert in multicultural and anti-racist education who taught a course in social studies education. He used an example of racism with an Aboriginal person as the victim/target of discrimination. Posing a question to the class, he asked us what we would do as teachers if such a controversial discussion came up in the classroom. Some answered that they would confront the student who made the comment and state that the comment was racist; some answered that they would further interrogate the student as to why he or she would make such a conclusion; and some would engage the class into a discussion about racism. Though there was no consensus in addressing the scenario, our professor did focus on the possible reasons for prejudice, racism, and discrimination. Ultimately, he stated that in order to change the cognitive and affective beliefs of students regarding different cultural groups, teachers should focus more on the similarities than the differences. By emphasizing the latter, teachers are in danger of exoticizing and hence alienating the Other. According to this professor, differences of cultures may lead to further prejudice. At the time, I thought this was a simple yet effective way of addressing uncomfortable issues of prejudice and discrimination in the classroom, especially when it came to racism against Aboriginal peoples. I also started to reflect on my own prejudices, thinking of ways of how Aboriginal peoples are similar to mainstream Canadians. Yet, after I began to teach, I soon realized this strategy was not enough. It was a start, but definitely not the end goal.

Although all student teachers had to take both educational psychology and an adolescent psychology course to fulfill the Faculty of Education's requirements for the program, we had the freedom to select the professors. I selected one who taught both courses and whose interest was in multicultural and anti-racist education – an interest and passion I had developed in the program. How and why do students become prejudiced or racist against certain groups? Again, there were no simple answers. The professor occasionally used Aboriginal cultures as part of the course in analyzing the possible reasons for prejudice and racism. This further exposed me to Aboriginal peoples and issues, which affected the way I thought about them while growing up. It challenged my notions and beliefs about Aboriginal peoples and why people may see them so negatively. One conclusion from these psychology courses I learned is that people's backgrounds (cultural, racial, and economic), circumstances, and environments all shape their

beliefs about themselves (i.e., their self-esteem) and about others. As an ethnic minority, I believed that I shared some of the experiences of prejudice and racism while growing up in Canada with ethnic slurs and insults. I am reminded now of Deyhle's research with the Navajo in which systemic and institutionalized racism marginalized them (1995). In the same manner, our own historical racist institutions have also marginalized Aboriginal peoples in Canada, including our educational system. At the time, I naively believed that when I became a teacher, I could help students' self-esteem, which would then address any prejudices they may have had against other cultures, including Aboriginal peoples. Again, I learned that this too was not enough for students to be successful in the classroom.

The third instructor who had an impact on my thinking about Aboriginal peoples and issues taught a Sociology of Education course. It was he who challenged our Western linear way of thinking and knowing especially in the sciences and mathematics as he was an ethnomusicologist and practicing teacher. As a historian, I believed that written history was more legitimate than oral history.⁷⁰ From this class, I began to realize the value and importance of other ways of knowing. The instructor encouraged his students to view issues and concepts we had traditionally accepted as "truths" from a different perspective. He gave examples from the Aboriginal communities of how they would think more holistically on a particular subject as opposed to the Western way of a fragmented curriculum and pedagogy, which Kawagley and Barnhardt (1999) argue:

When examining educational issues in indigenous settings, we must consider the cultural and historical context, particularly in terms of who is determining what the rules of engagement are to be, and how those rules are to be implemented. As indigenous people have begun to reassert their aboriginal rights to self-determination and self-government and assume control over various aspect of their lives, one of the first tasks they have faced has been to reorient the institutional infrastructures and practices that were established by their former overseers to make them more suitable to their needs as a people with their own worldview, identity, and history. (p. 138)

Although the instructor never mentioned the term, "decolonizing" education (Smith, 1999), it was what he was introducing to the student teachers. By being open about other perspectives, he particularly opened my eyes on Aboriginal way of knowing and thinking even though I did not realize it at the time. However, the most significant influence in my knowledge and

understanding of and about Aboriginal peoples and issues would come much later - 12 years later.

My Educational Past as a Teacher

After completing my education degree, I was set to teach - eager and willing, feeling competent and confident of success - at least that was the thought. When I did acquire my first teaching post as a full time social studies teacher, it was in an inner-city school in Surrey. I taught Social Studies 8, 9, and 10. Eventually that would build up to Social Studies 11 and History 12. However, as a relatively new teacher, I relied heavily on the textbooks that the school used, which were all provincially approved. At the time, I felt I would advocate for multicultural and anti-racist education, the topic for my master's thesis. I even believed I did a fairly decent job of teaching Aboriginal topics in the classroom, as I would use some of the information from my past courses in university that addressed Aboriginal peoples and issues.

Yet, the lessons remained more intellectual with some discussions in class regarding the merits and legitimacy of oral histories. However, not every student believed that oral history was valid. It was even proven in class that oral history could easily change over time as they all knew the "telephone tag" game, in which one student would whisper a statement who would whisper it to the next and so on and so on until the very last student. Now I realize this is an unrealistic and even detrimental teaching activity as it reinforces stereotypes of Aboriginal peoples and ethnocentric thinking. However, by introducing the concept of historiography in the classroom, I was able to explain that even written history has its weaknesses. To reinforce this concept, I developed an oral history assignment for my Grade 10 social studies students in which they were to interview someone in the classroom regarding 3 events of his/her life that he/she considered to be significant and was willing to share to both the interviewee and the class without writing anything down. From that, students summarized and presented their partner's mini-biographies. After debriefing the process in class, most students realized that oral history could be a legitimate source for history. From an Aboriginal perspective, oral traditions and histories provide teachers and students with "stories of resilience and the maintenance or reassertion of cultural autonomy" (Cruikshank, 1992, p. 35). I have found that this assignment is

⁷⁰ I do acknowledge that not all written histories are accurate as they are all subject to biases and even propaganda. I believed however, that written histories could be more easily proven or discredited than oral history.

much better in having students exposed to oral histories. Not only do students acknowledge oral histories, but they now appreciate and value them as credible and valid sources of history.

Other topics I covered in class included a brief lesson about residential schooling and about the impact and role of Aboriginal peoples in the fur trade. I cannot recall any student who believed that the residential school system was a positive or good part of Canadian history, especially with the reported physical and emotional abuses that took place. I was able to include the issue of racism into the history of residential schooling. I tried to focus on the racial (and hence racist) beliefs for students to understand the historical context and reasoning behind residential schooling. However, I only mentioned the loss of language and culture briefly as a consequence of that schooling. I did not emphasize nor go into great detail of the devastating legacy of residential schooling, mostly because the textbook only glanced over the topic as well and I was not knowledgeable with those experiences. As for the fur trade, most students agreed that the Aboriginal peoples had a significant role in the fur trade, especially women's role (thanks to the research and articles of Sylvia van Kirk that I used as excerpts in the class).

However, I found the most difficult topic was Aboriginal land claims, mostly because I felt uncomfortable with the topic myself. How could I convince students that Aboriginal peoples have rights to land? The only analogy I could come up with at the time to ask my students was that if strangers or foreigners came to our province, took over our land, and relocated us to another part of the province, how would they feel? Students would mostly agree, but some students continued to believe that since Europeans won and negotiated treaties that the Aboriginal peoples signed, they should be able to make the laws. Case closed. That was difficult to swallow because I did not have an adequate response, as this historical interpretation was the one I grew up with in school and did not challenge myself. Even for the students who voiced that Aboriginal peoples should have land claims did not seem convincingly assured, as their written responses appeared only to appease what was politically correct and not what was historically, legally, and morally correct.

I thought that by showing documentaries and other educational videos such as the National Film Board's series, *First Nations: The Circle Unbroken*, I would be teaching students about Aboriginal rights and the concerns they continued to face. However, most videos seemed to perpetuate the stereotypes of "Indians," especially with the media portrayals in the news: Kanesatake Mohawks setting up a blockade near Oka in 1990 leading to a standoff for 78 days;

Micmacs from Nova Scotia setting up gill nets in the Miramichi River in 1995 leading to a blockade to the fishing camp and a protest; three Aboriginal protesters protecting a sacred burial ground were shot by police at Ipperwash provincial park in southern Ontario in 1995; confrontations between the RCMP and "native rebels" in Gustafsen Lake, BC in 1995 led to two RCMP officers shot in their bullet-proof vests; various news stories on drug addictions among Aboriginal youth; current events that would cover Vancouver's Downtown Eastside which seemed to have exclusively examined Aboriginal peoples' problems of alcoholism, addiction, and prostitution; and excerpts on traditional native clothing, dances, prayers, and rituals. These stories unfortunately reinforced that Aboriginal peoples were troublemakers, radical environmentalists, drug addicts, and spiritually primitive. I could tell that some students believed in the same conclusions. Their world, as well as mine, was so different from the experiences of Aboriginal peoples that I could not seem to bridge the gap between the two. Simply stating that Canada's historic and even current treatment and attitude toward Aboriginal issues were wrong in class did not suffice: it was like a parent telling a child to do something because "I told you so." I had to learn new strategies and equip myself to facilitate uncomfortable dialogue and discussions in class if I were to help change students' attitudes and beliefs about Aboriginal peoples and issues, but this would not happen until I entered my PhD program.

As for teaching Aboriginal students in the classroom, I had mixed feelings. I knew of some of their family background from either counselors, youth workers, or from the learning support team (formerly known as learning assistants) so I would feel for them, for their circumstances, especially when I was teaching at an inner city school in Surrey. While some Aboriginal students did absolutely great in class and did not need any assistance, the majority of Aboriginal students, it seemed, did not do so well. I remember 3 of the most difficult challenges I faced as a teacher in addressing the needs and concerns of Aboriginal students: inconsistent attendance, incomplete assignments, and poor results on tests. Using what I learned from my Educational Psychology class, I thought that I could help their self-esteem by being more positive with any of the work they submitted. It was clearly not enough. To me, I assumed that they did not seem to care about school and simply gave up. Although I would give them many chances to submit assignments and not deduct any marks for late assignments, their learning gap was too large to overcome with so many absences and missed assignments from class that a

number of them would not pass the course. I tried not to give up on these students, but it became more and more difficult, as this was becoming a negative pattern and vicious cycle of accepted failure. Although I did feel that I failed in teaching these students, I also believed that students had to be accountable for their work. I could not just pass a student who did not meet the provincial ministry's prescribed learning outcomes and achievement indicators. The statistics by BC Ministry of Education stating the graduating rates of Aboriginal students seemed to hold true at the inner city school I was teaching. I would do the best I could though, given the resources at the time, but I knew that the battle to win over students was going to be a very long and difficult journey. The question I kept asking was, "Is it worth all the effort?"

My Educational Present as a Student and Teacher

Becoming a student again in the PhD program has enriched my professional life as a teacher in which I have gained a wealth of knowledge and a better understanding of Aboriginal issues. However, there will always be so much more to unlearn, learn and relearn. The process of reading, analyzing, synthesizing, formulating, and writing has been challenging, not only from an intellectual perspective but also from an emotional and empathetic one. One important lesson from this journey that I have shared with all my students is the truth that we are all beneficiaries from our collective history - in particular, our colonial history. Whether we were born here in Canada, have been living in Canada for the majority of our lives, or are recent immigrants, we all share in the fact that Canada was formed by colonization and that we have politically, economically, and socially benefited from it. Thus, it is pedagogically and morally important that I as teacher encourage students to at least acknowledge and understand that perspective.

I have been enlightened and challenged with my graduate classes, stretching my conceptions and misconceptions of Aboriginal histories, including the issues of colonization and decolonization (or as some may argue, decolonizing). Having taken First Nations and Educational Change and Indigenous Research and Epistemology, I have been able to incorporate key methods from the core readings into the classroom. Acknowledging the identity of Aboriginal students was one of my priorities in the classroom. Examining images in the social studies textbooks also became a priority. Understanding more about Aboriginal ways of learning and knowing, I have adapted and altered assessment methods and assignments in the classroom to include the various ways for students to be more successful. Although reading and writing

continue to be important as evaluation sources, I have used oral histories as well as other visual and audio forms of evaluation in the classroom. I have included guest speakers who have Aboriginal ancestry to discuss the sensitive issues of land claims and role in society in an attempt to break any potentially preconceived negative stereotypes among students. I no longer penalize students for late assignments: however, they would not have the benefit of rewriting and improving their initial assignments as opposed to those who did submit their assignments on time. Success in the classroom has improved as a result.

From conversations with other teachers and from this research, I have come to some conclusions regarding the important issues when addressing Aboriginal education in the classroom. As both a practicing teacher and doctoral student, I see some challenges that need to be faced and overcome, as there seems to be some sense of disconnectedness in terms of identity, success, teacher preparation, and parent-student-teacher relationship. However, I also see some positive progress, as there is also a sense of hope as Aboriginal education is beginning to reformulate and regenerate in the province. I am continuing to strive to be a better teacher who will be able to recognize and address the real needs and concerns of both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students.

A Sense of Disconnectedness

First, I see that the issue of “Aboriginality” is a concern as students do not easily or comfortably embrace their identity. Second, success appears to have polarized meanings as different people have different interpretations of and expectations for it. Third, teacher-education training programs at universities do not seem to prepare their students adequately in addressing Aboriginal peoples and issues. Fourth, Aboriginal parents appear indifferent toward their children’s education which has led to this disconnectedness and even disengagement. Fifth, teachers feeling the pressures of provincial exams, curricular expectations, and limited resources may inadvertently overlook deeper First Nations issues. Ultimately, however, this sense of disconnectedness needs to be addressed, as it becomes a potential barrier to the future of Aboriginal education.

Identity and Culture

From the experiences at the different schools I have taught, students are generally proud of their Aboriginal culture and heritage and would occasionally vocalize it in class. However, most Aboriginal students tend to be reticent about their Aboriginality whenever the latter perceive themselves to be singled out or are receiving special treatment simply because of their Aboriginal background. This identification may not be intentional or even real, but as long as students believe they are being labeled, they are more willing to shy away from their Aboriginal identity. They, for the most part, do not seem to want to be taken out of the classroom for First Nations fieldtrips or presentations that are made exclusive to them. This disconnectedness perhaps is normal as students, especially teenagers, want a sense of belonging and acceptance among their peers, and segregating them or treating them differently in school or in the classroom either by teachers or support workers may negatively affect that bond. According to Pepper and Henry (1991), without a sense of belonging, students may

withdrawal, become nonverbal, or seek attention through inappropriate and nonproductive behaviour. [Aboriginal students] need to have their cultural needs met. [They] need to experience a sense of significance, a feeling of acceptance and friendly good-will by their peers, and a sense of respect and caring by their teachers. [Aboriginal students] need to be valued as a learner and as a person with dignity and worthwhileness. (p. 148)

As a result, Aboriginal students' identity may be more associated with their peers in the dominant culture than with their own culture, at least during these high school years.

However, issues of identity do correlate with educational achievement (Deyhle, 1989), and "the retention of heritage and a strong cultural identity has been identified as being the single most important factor in predicting . . . academic achievement" (Brade, Duncan, & Sokal, 2003, p. 237). I hope that over time, Aboriginal students will accept, embrace, and celebrate their "Aboriginalness" more positively. As Mendieta (2003) writes about identity politics:

[Identities] are not only unstable because they are fragile negotiations, but also because they are always succumbing to the shock of visual mis-recognition. . . . They are always constituted, constructed, invented, imagined, projected, suffered and celebrated. Identities are never univocal, stable, or innocent . . . [and] in the process of constituting them and negotiating them, we discover that we were like we never imagined ourselves to have been. And simultaneously, we discover that we have become something that has little resemblance to what we thought we were. (pp. 407, 412)

To exacerbate this issue, students may also feel awkward with their Aboriginal identity when textbooks, such as the ones used in social studies classes, tend to depict Aboriginal peoples historically static and stereotypic. These negative images do not help foster positive cross-cultural responsiveness between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students. As Deyhle (1995) argues, “school context and curriculum are not neutral” as racism “frames the stage and remains a barrier” for Aboriginal students (p. 61). She advocates that a “culturally non-responsive curriculum is a greater threat to those whose own cultural ‘identity’ is insecure” (1992, p. 42).

In response, one main goal of Aboriginal education is to re-connect the students to their cultural heritage such that they will not feel embarrassed or ashamed or that it is replacing or compromising their identities with their peers. Yet, a vicious cycle needs to be broken where Aboriginal students appear caught in the middle. On the one hand, they want to belong but seem attracted to the dominant culture. On the other hand, the dominant culture has not fully embraced them. Education in cultural sensitivity for non-Aboriginal students becomes essential in this case, as all students should learn to appreciate the depth and breadth of Aboriginal histories and cultures. From the process of this doctoral program, I have learned that land is inextricably tied to the Aboriginal culture and I can now comfortably explain this to students. Following the *enow'kin* process, our education system should presume that

we all have minds, have good thinking, that we all have the best intentions but we do not know what everybody else is thinking. If we know what everybody else is thinking, that can help us make the best decisions because we care about each other. (Thorpe, 2001, p. 251).

I have also become more cognizant of the language and terms I use in teaching students and in conversations with colleagues. For instance, I periodically hear students and colleagues use the term, "Native Indian" which I politely correct them with "Aboriginal peoples" or "First Nations peoples." Using the terminology guidelines by the Assembly of First Nations, I have taught my

students both historically inaccurate terms and currently accurate ones. I hope that by learning this, students will have a better understanding and knowledge of the reasoning and nuances for the different names. More importantly, I hope that students will have a better respect for Aboriginal peoples when using proper terms. When more controversial topics are discussed in class, such as land claims and fishing rights, I try to provide the historical context and background for students so that stereotypes and misconceptions are interrupted and addressed. These may seem small and insignificant steps, but they are at least starting points.

Success

Although I acknowledge and agree that increasing academic achievement and graduation rates are measurements of success, as determined and prescribed by the Ministry of Education, some teachers, including myself, believe that it should be measured more broadly and holistically. Thus, there appears to be a disconnectedness and polarization regarding the definition of success. On the one hand, success may be measured with academic goals and academic results (both in terms of literacy and numeracy); on the other hand, success may be measured beyond scholastic performance to include the social/cultural components of education, especially for Aboriginal students. The Ministry of Education and effectually school districts and schools have tended to focus on provincial exam results, and to some extent the Fraser Institute has exacerbated this issue through its annual publication of rating all the schools in BC, both private and public, basing its ranking mostly on performance results. From Deyhle's perspective, however, tests become events that judge personal academic performance in the classroom and thus counterproductive to learning: "To continue to judge children with criteria that will assure their continued failure is to ignore the underlying problem of clarifying misunderstandings of the operating forces within the existing system in order that conflict can be minimized and learning promoted" (1983, p. 84).

Also, I now believe that success comes in various forms, which should be equally celebrated. First, it can be achieved when students reach their potential and attain personal goals. Second, it can be achieved when Aboriginal students become transformed when they become aware, proud, and accepting of their own Aboriginal background. Third, it can be achieved when Aboriginal students simply stay and persevere in the education system, regardless of scholastic performance. In the end, I have come to believe that success, regardless of the

definition and criteria, is measured one student at a time. A more holistic approach to success should be used in order to re-connect students to the goals of education, one that acknowledges and works with each student individually. The process of learning is as important (and some may even argue more important) than the product:

It seems paramount to remind our school boards and teachers that effective classroom learning styles and context need to compliment or overlap with the learning styles and context present in the child's non-school environment. The behaviour of the teachers, the social organization of the classes, the types of participation structures, and the means of academic assessment need to be carefully analyzed in light of the culture of the students. It is only then that we can move from description to prescription to create a culturally congruent education for [Aboriginal students]. (Deyhle, 1983, p. 83).

Thus, success needs to be deconstructed and reconstructed to have greater relevance for Aboriginal students. Moreover, I believe that we as educators all need to look at these issues more positively rather than negatively, where we should focus on what the ministry, districts, schools, teachers, parents, and students are doing well instead of merely criticizing them and attempting to fix the problem.

Universities

Through discussions with other teachers and pre-service teachers, there is a concern regarding the teacher-education programs at universities. Programs reveal a level of disconnectedness as not all student-teachers are exposed to the cultural and historical sensitivities needed in teaching Aboriginal students (or teaching non-Aboriginal students about Aboriginal peoples). I do not recall any cohorts in the educational program that specifically addressed Aboriginal issues when I was a student teacher. However, there seems to be some progress in this field as Simon Fraser University in its Professional Diploma Program in the Education Faculty offers an Aboriginal Education cohort, but this remains as an elective. I recommend that all student teachers in any teacher-training program, regardless of subject specialty, take a course in Aboriginal Studies in order to understand and appreciate more about Aboriginal peoples and issues. In turn, this training may lead to greater cross-cultural awareness and sensitivity of the future teachers toward Aboriginal students. Mandating such a course, however, will take political will among university administration, faculty, and students. Nonetheless, if the goal of

university teacher-education programs is to train effective teachers, learning about and from Aboriginal peoples cannot be overlooked.

Parents

From my teaching experience, a number of Aboriginal parents appear to have become somewhat estranged with their children's education.⁷¹ With little or no involvement in the schools, a number of Aboriginal parents appear disconnected with the education system, sensing that systemic/institutionalized racism is still very much alive. During the parent-teacher interviews, I have seen only a handful of Aboriginal parents who come to inquire of their child's progress. Perhaps there are circumstances that prevents parents from attending, but studies have shown that when families are involved and participating in their children's education through reinforcing the curriculum, promoting cognitive development at home, and volunteering in the classroom, children "achieve higher grades, have better attendance rates, complete more homework, demonstrate more positive attitudes and behaviours, graduate at higher rates, and have greater involvement in higher education" (Friedel, 1999, p. 139). As a teacher, I would like see Aboriginal parents be more involved not only in the schooling but the education of their children.

As a lasting legacy of colonialism, however, some Aboriginal parents have learned to mistrust the educational system, having lost so much of their culture and traditions, and more importantly having lost their dignity and identity, through their experiences in residential schooling: "alienation that they feel about their own negative cultural experiences in residential or public schools and their unwillingness to support or promote the aims of the school" (p. 141).

Parents see their own schooling experience as a cultural invasion where residential schools

assumed responsibility for educating and raising children and that Native people, convinced by administrators of the schools, began to question their own capabilities of being able to raise their children. Gradually, it becomes accepted that schools and administrators do a better job – they are the "experts" and their assumed positions of power are not to be questioned. . . . This can be seen as "cultural occupation." (p. 141)

⁷¹ Again, not all Aboriginal parents are disconnected with their children's education but from my personal observations and experiences, many unfortunately are.

To exacerbate the issue, according to Friedel, public schools “tend to remain closed to Native parents; they continue to exist as isolated ‘islands’ outside the community . . . [in which] perhaps public schools can be seen as ‘cultural occupation’” (pp. 141-142). Thus, to address this outside perspective and mentality, I have come to believe that schools should invite Aboriginal parents to the facility even before requesting their involvement as a social gathering rather than a formalized reporting session. To enter physically into a school is a major step for some Aboriginal parents as negative images and memories may still exist from their own experiences of residential schooling. Teachers, in turn, must take initiative in playing a more significant role in parental communication and contact.

Teachers

Teachers, however, are unfortunately reluctant or hesitant to incorporate more Aboriginal content into their courses, mainly because of both time constraints, due to exam pressures, and limited resources at the secondary level.⁷² From personal experience, I have noticed that provincial exams appear to have taken precedence and predominance in the senior social studies classes, and teachers in turn have mainly adapted (whether consciously or unconsciously) and have become well-adapted to teaching to the test. Many times, I admit to planning my lessons around topics that may appear on the provincial exam, which in many cases rarely include more than five multiple choice questions on the exam. I have also taught students strategies for the essay topics and encourage students to include Aboriginal history whenever possible: voting rights, land claims, self-government, residential schools, roles in the wars. I hear many teachers who have voiced their disagreement with the provincial exam as a standardized test, that it has ruined the course and that they are now teaching trivial pursuit in Social Studies 11. Although I realize that we as teachers do need to work within the parameters of the prescribed curriculum to be tested on the provincial exam, I also believe that we have the autonomy to teach beyond the curriculum when we feel there is a lack of knowledge and understanding among students. Only from this can we begin to address cross-cultural understanding between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students and the educational needs of both.

⁷² Of course this is not true for all teachers as some show exceptional sensitivity toward their Aboriginal students.

Furthermore, textbooks may not offer adequate information about First Nations peoples and issues as most provide fragmentary snapshots of them with little historical context. Often neglected in the units on First Nations peoples is the understanding that knowing the person makes the culture known. Thus, to be effective,

educators need to listen to the counsel of Aboriginal educators who from their own experience are in position to know what makes education culturally appropriate for Aboriginal students. . . .

[To] understand Aboriginal culture one must understand the Aboriginal people, the individuals who are living it now. Traditions are only one aspect of the ever-changing dynamic within a culture. So to focus on traditional dress, food, music, ceremonies, and artifacts freeze a culture in time and perpetuate stereotypes. Artifacts are static. People and their values, beliefs, feelings, and thoughts are dynamic, and these define the culture. (Doige, 2003, pp. 148, 150)

In this sense, there is a disconnectedness between the curriculum, the course, and available resources as topics become prioritized according to the corresponding exam specifications and not necessarily according to students' relevance or interests.

A Sense of Hope

Despite all these disconnections, there is a sense of hope in the future for Aboriginal education and programs in Surrey. First, I do see and hear from other teachers that Aboriginal identity appears more acceptable as students get older and more mature. Second, although the Aboriginal Department in Surrey is concerned with academic performance of their Aboriginal students, it appears more important that high school retention of them (and hence a higher graduation rate) is a main goal. Third, the ministry in establishing Enhancement Agreements, elevating the profile (and hence status) of BC First Nations Studies 12, and giving Aboriginal leaders a voice in education are all major steps forward toward Aboriginal self-determination. Fourth, the establishment of Aboriginal Parent Advisory Committees will hopefully encourage greater participation of Aboriginal parents in their children's education. Fifth, with greater cultural awareness, teachers can have a greater impact on the education of Aboriginal students. Without having and seeing these hopes, I believe that such policies and programs would be ineffectual and without purpose.

Identity and Culture

As Surrey continues to build on its programs, Aboriginal identity and culture among Aboriginal students appear to be developing. There are growing signs that Aboriginal students are beginning to feel more comfortable with and are more willing to embrace their identity and culture as they begin to open and share their heritage to classmates without embarrassment or shame. Not only would this acceptance of their identity increase their own self-awareness and self-esteem, it would honour their cultural heritage and the people who were forced to lose their identity in the past. However, acknowledgement and acceptance of their Aboriginal identity may take time and maturity as I have observed in schools. As students enter their senior years of high school, they tend to be more aware and accepting of their Aboriginal heritage. Even acknowledging Aboriginal territory is an important practice not only for symbolic reasons but also for decolonizing reasons. As policy and standard practice, all meetings of the British Columbia Teachers Federation begin with a formal acknowledgement of the Aboriginal territory(ies). Following this model, I recommend that schools should do the same before all assemblies and staff meetings. This would certainly be a bold and important step in building a real relationship between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students as it acknowledges our colonial past.

In addition, the District's Aboriginal Department plays a significant role to help encourage and promote Aboriginal cultures, including the organization of an Aboriginal week, the graduation and awards ceremony for Aboriginal students, and the distribution of resources and funds at the various levels to assist Aboriginal students (including allocation of Helping Teachers, Support Teachers, Child and Youth Care Workers, and Cultural Facilitators to the various schools in Surrey). I believe that the district's commitment is essential not only to the development of Aboriginal students' cultural identity but also to the improvement of their academic performance. Financially and politically, these programs and activities must continue in order for Aboriginal students to succeed.

Although some textbooks still occasionally portray Aboriginal peoples and issues with subtle negativity, they have improved vastly within the last decade with greater inclusion and more positive profiles of prominent Aboriginal people. However, the images and representation of Aboriginal peoples in textbooks need to be deconstructed in which students should not leave with a negative impression of them: classrooms need greater dialogue to address Aboriginal

issues and to analyze critically any negative images and mis/representations. I believe that with more inclusive and positive portrayals of Aboriginal peoples, Aboriginal students will have a more positive identity about and of themselves. I have begun to deconstruct and analyze such images from the prescribed textbooks in the classroom. I ask students to consider: What is the image about? What purpose or message is being stated from the image? Whose perspective is this image from? Why is it portrayed in this way? What types of biases could there be in portraying such an image? By inquiring these types of questions, students seem to have a better understanding of the images textbooks portray of Aboriginal peoples I am hoping that with such an analysis of these traditionally accepted images, it would challenge any preconceived notions of Aboriginal peoples and that it would lead to greater respect and cross-cultural acceptance between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students.

Success

Although the emphasis remains on the academics, teachers are beginning to rethink their evaluation methods, differentiating between assessment for learning and assessment of learning, shows progress in the area of defining success. In my particular school, teachers are self-reflecting on their assessment practices. For example, some teachers in the past may have given marks for attendance (i.e., deducting marks for being late to class). However, attendance is not part of the prescribed learning outcomes and therefore should not and cannot be formally evaluated. I was guilty of this when I first started teaching, but soon learned that this was not helping students succeed. In effect, it did the contrary - it helped students fail. Now, I only look at attendance through the work habit mark ("G" for good, "S" for satisfactory, and "N" for needs improvement). Further discussions among teachers have begun around accepting late assignments without penalties. This practice would alter students' evaluation and would in the end enhance success for students. I have adopted this practice in the last several years and it has helped students in gaining confidence in completing assignments. There will, however, be students who may take advantage of this policy by constantly submitting assignments in late, but they are very few in numbers. Overall, I find this evaluation practice effective for the majority of students, which in the end do allow for greater success.

As well, teachers can adapt assignments to reflect the learning strengths and challenges of students. Differentiated learning is a reality in the classroom and teachers need to acknowledge

the varied types of intelligences and incorporate them not only into their activities and assignments but also their evaluation of them.

In addition, District programs such as the *Smuqwa*, the *Stqeye*, the *Kwasun*, and the *Kla-how-eya* all address the issues and needs of Aboriginal students at the secondary level, with the primary goal of keeping them in school, which in turn is the key to the students' success. From the ministry's and district's perspectives, the statistics used for measuring success are encouraging for Surrey since the ministry began to record graduation rates and provincial exam results for Aboriginal students as they are showing steady improvements. Thus, success among Aboriginal students in Surrey is beginning to look more hopeful.

Provincial Ministry and School District

The fact that the ministry and school districts have established Aboriginal departments and implemented policies and programs specifically for Aboriginal students shows not only a level of concern but also a sense of hope in the future for these students. With the implementation of BC First Nations Studies 12 as a fully credited and a provincially examinable course, the ministry has provided a legitimized space for all students and teachers to learn and understand more about the rich histories and cultures of the Aboriginal peoples. By being an examinable course and an option for the senior social studies graduation requirement, BC First Nations Studies 12 has greatly increased its status and thus value and importance among the senior social studies courses. I am hoping that my school will be able to offer this course to students as an elective, but that may take time as the social sciences have not been traditionally a high demanded field among senior students. Instead, science and mathematics appear to take precedence in students' minds that wish to go into general sciences to become a doctor, pharmacist, engineer, or computer scientist. This is also a challenge for social science teachers, especially for those who wish to teach BC First Nations Studies 12. The stigma of it needs to be addressed but the fact that it is offered in a few of the schools in Surrey is a promising sign.

Along with approving this course, the ministry has initiated a number of agreements with Aboriginal groups. In particular, Surrey's Aboriginal Education Enhancement Agreement (2007b Draft) has put some weight and, in essence, has affirmed the district's Aboriginal policies and programs. I believe that both the provincial ministry and the school district are moving in the right direction together.

Parents

Hope is also seen in the role of parents as they are continually encouraged by the district to participate and be more engaged in the educational process of their children not only through parent-teacher interviews, which unfortunately tend to have poor turnouts, but also through joining the Aboriginal Parent Advisory Committee or through home visits by the Support Workers, Cultural Facilitators, or Elders. As Elders become more involved in the district by contacting and meeting with Aboriginal parents, the hope is that the latter will not fear the schools anymore and will be more willing to participate in their children's education. With better communications between the schools and parents, the hope of establishing trust and not only a relationship but also a partnership between the two is being rebuilt and restored.

Teachers

In earlier studies, the cultural identity of teachers appeared to matter (see Kirkness, 1986; Sanders, 1987; and York, 1990). They showed that Aboriginal students felt that non-Aboriginal teachers did not like their peoples and that more were willing to participate in classroom activities when their teacher was an Aboriginal person. However, in a more recent study, the opposite was found, but the authors do provide some precaution to their conclusion:

[Being] exposed to Aboriginal teachers and/or Aboriginal languages in school is associated with lower educational attainment. The greater the number of Aboriginal teachers and/or exposure to Aboriginal language use in the classroom, the lower was the education attainment, and vice versa. . . .

However, when the participants in this research were going to school (approximately 1948-1980), Aboriginal people may not have been much encouraged to take pride in their heritage. To be Native was to be excluded from the social, educational, and employment arenas enjoyed by the white majority, and therefore it may not have been desirable to imitate like role models or to seek identification with Aboriginal cultures. (Brade, Duncan, & Sokal, 2003, p. 237)

Although a disconnect may appear in that those who are directly teaching Aboriginal students are not Aboriginal themselves, I believe, from having conversations with other colleagues, that it should not matter as much. Teachers, as professionals, have become empowered and should realize that they are empowering others in their teaching. They are the experts to whom students can turn to for assistance. From my experience in the different schools I have taught, what

makes teachers effective in the classroom is not their ethnicity but rather their care and compassion for their students as they continually build relationships and rapport with their students, both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal.⁷³

The relationships between students and teachers create and maintain the learning dynamic that comes from open, honest discussion and negotiation. The relationships keep the personal, psychological meaning-making at a deep level where more is understood than information about different cultures. . . . Teachers must operate and plan around the dynamics of interpersonal relationships because knowing a person makes a culture known in personal, meaningful ways. (Doige, 2003, p. 152)

Through this process, students will hopefully have a sense of belonging.

With greater awareness of Aboriginal issues through professional development workshops at the provincial, district, and local school levels comes greater hope for success among Aboriginal students. However, teachers need to take the initiative to be educated and be willing to learn. Teachers, in particular, are the ones who can bring hope to their students, both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal, and by being aware and sensitive to the needs of all their students, they can surely “make a difference”. It is my continuous goal and hope that I as an educator can make a difference in the lives of students and that they can experience success in their high school years. This journey of mine is far from over as there are still many other challenges ahead.

⁷³ The relationship between students and their teachers is vital according to Deyhle and Swisher (1997) in their study of American Indian and Alaska Native education. Although the study is American, its discussion on low high school graduation rates resonates with those in Surrey.

CHAPTER 8 CONCLUSION

This dissertation began with three questions: (1) How are Aboriginal peoples (mis)represented and (“mis”)reflected in secondary school texts? (2) What are the needs of Aboriginal students in the classroom? (3) How can Aboriginal students succeed more “successfully”? Textbooks, policies and programs, and people are critical elements in schools. This concluding chapter summarizes the findings from the analysis of social studies textbooks and the examination of provincial and district policies and programs. The chapter then offers pedagogical implications as relating to these findings and concludes with additional personal implications.

Summary of Findings

First, despite all the textbook reviews and evaluations that examine the treatment of Aboriginal peoples during the last four decades, today’s recommended social studies textbooks at the secondary school level in BC still fall short. Improvements have been made. Derogatory and thus racist terms such as “noble savage” and “primitive Indians” are no longer accepted or acceptable. The images of Aboriginal peoples in textbooks have historically been challenged and criticized for their stereotypes, biases, and racism (Manitoba Indian Brotherhood, 1974; Decore et al., 1981). Textbooks since the 1970s progressively began to reflect the realities and experiences of Aboriginal peoples. As a result, they have become more inclusionary in content and approach. However, these cosmetic changes remain insignificant as Aboriginal peoples and issues remain mostly marginal in texts. Introduced as special topics, Aboriginal peoples have become objectified and otherized as they are seen and interpreted as different. They mainly disappear from the history canon but occasionally reappear, usually as another interest group or even minority group within the confines of multiculturalism, vying for political recognition and/or economic compensation. Because mainstream textbooks usually re-present Aboriginal peoples from a non-Aboriginal viewpoint, any inclusion of literary, visual, oral, or even tactile source from an Aboriginal person would be invaluable, not only to challenge the use of textbooks in the classroom but to enhance the learning experiences and perspectives of both students and teachers. Battiste (1998) argues that educators

cannot continue to allow Aboriginal students to be given a fragmented existence in a curriculum that does not mirror them, nor should they be denied understanding the historical context that has created that fragmentation. A postcolonial framework cannot be constructed without Indigenous people's renewing and reconstructing the principles underlying their own world view, environment, languages, and how these construct our humanity. (p. 24)

Social studies textbooks are colonial in nature and perspective. Yet, glimpses of hope do exist as textbooks are beginning to provide greater inclusion of Aboriginal content and voice, challenging the pervasive Eurocentric narrative of Canada. Most significant is the development and implementation of BC First Nations Studies 12, both the course and the recommended textbook. With an Aboriginal perspective and focus, the course depicts Aboriginal peoples in a more positive light, providing context and meaning to the images presented. This addition to the social studies strand is a bold yet needed step forward in Aboriginal education as it challenges teachers and students to re-examine the traditional canon and how it has stereotypically portrayed Aboriginal peoples.

Second, the overwhelming concern and need of Aboriginal students is re-claiming and re-appropriating their identity. Feeling trapped between the westernized mainstream culture and their own Aboriginal culture, Aboriginal students feel lost: on the one hand, they want to fit in with their non-Aboriginal peers; on the other hand, they want to embrace their Aboriginality. Reaching a balance between the two seems virtually impossible from their point of view. With Eurocentric curricula and textbooks, images of Aboriginal peoples are not always positively seen or interpreted. Raising their self-esteem through encouraging and appropriate experiences, which includes the school setting, becomes paramount in restoring a sense of connectedness:

When children are treated with mutual respect and given encouragement in the form of acknowledgment, appreciation, or admiration of their constructive actions and contributions, they begin to bloom. The fundamental sense of connectiveness can be nurtured . . . As their illumination grows, their sense of power expands . . . They can then come to know and accept themselves, to resolve conflicts more constructively, to mature . . . Finally, they can feel whole with knowledge and experience of constructive models . . . Such growth of self-esteem is like that of a grass on the plains growing slowly, blade by blade, to become a rich and flowing tapestry that contributes to the cycle of life. (Pepper & Henry, 1991)

Establishing and building self-esteem, however, is necessary but not adequate. Aboriginal students need to feel safe in the classroom and school: safe from vilification, racism, and

harassment. Teachers need to provide those assurances and reassurances to Aboriginal students before they can experience real success.

Third, a number of initiatives and partnership agreements between the provincial, district, and school levels have been signed in hopes of addressing Aboriginal students' needs. Enhancement Agreements, Accountability Contracts, District Reviews, and even Parent Education Engagement Partnership Projects have all be designed to help Aboriginal students succeed. In the case of Surrey, its Aboriginal department is committed to improving literacy and numeracy among its Aboriginal students. Through the district helping teachers (who develop additional curricular resources), the support teachers in the schools (who help students in the classroom with learning difficulties), and the child and youth care workers (who counsel and guide Aboriginal students and educate all students about the various Aboriginal cultures), the Surrey School District has taken initiatives to improve the success rates of its Aboriginal students. However, the classroom teachers are the ones who have the most direct effect on Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students. Unfortunately and ironically, this is the main obstacle as most teachers continue to treat all students equally. Treating students equally is not necessarily treating them equitably. The individual needs of Aboriginal students essentially must be addressed here where classroom teachers need to develop greater cultural sensitivity and understanding of Aboriginal ways of knowing.

Fourth, success needs to be broadened in its definition, as it is much more than academic performance and achievement. In a traditional school setting, Deyhle (1983) warns educators: "To continue to judge children with criteria that will assure their continued failure is to ignore the underlying problem of clarifying misunderstandings of the operating forces within the existing system in order that conflict can be minimized and learning promoted" (p. 84). Success for Aboriginal students in Surrey can be as basic as regular attendance. Being present in school, initially, may be more important than being a straight "A" student. Having a safe environment in the school, initially, may be more important than focusing on a history or geography lesson. Small steps and small successes need to be not only recognized and acknowledged but also expected. When these basic needs are met first, academic achievement and success can then be realized.

Pedagogical Implications

Pedagogically, four main implications from this study can help students, both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal, to succeed: the training and in-servicing of teachers, the use of textbooks in the classroom, the method and criteria used for evaluation and assessment, and the relationship and dynamics established within the classroom. These implications, however, are not a panacea for the state of Aboriginal education or a blueprint to achieve success among Aboriginal students. Instead, they are insights gathered from scholars and educators, both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal, with the hopes of acknowledging, recognizing, and embracing Aboriginal ways of knowing and ways of being.

Teacher Education Programs and Teacher In-Service

As teachers play a pivotal role in introducing and exposing their students to the issues of Aboriginal education so should the education programs at universities. The training of future teachers should include cultural awareness, understanding, and sensitivity toward Aboriginal issues regardless of the subject area and level taught. Ideally, an Aboriginal course that examines the histories and cultures of Canada's Aboriginal peoples should be mandated to all student teachers entering the education program. At the very least, a core unit within a mandated course should expose them to such issues. By being cognizant of the colonial history, student teachers become better equipped in their future classes to address Aboriginal issues and concerns and for better cross-cultural communication and understanding.

Similarly, workshops and in-service regarding Aboriginal issues for teachers should be part of professional development. Whether provincially or locally based by district or even by school, such in-service is invaluable for teachers as they need to be aware of issues and concerns for their Aboriginal students to better equip them for success. Discussions should not solely focus on cultural practices of Aboriginal peoples, though they too have much value; instead, issues of colonization, decolonization, Aboriginal knowledge and epistemology should all be introduced to teachers. In turn, teachers may empathize more with the needs of their Aboriginal students and be able to facilitate better in their learning and educational success.

Textbooks in the Classroom

As ubiquitous as they are, textbooks should not and cannot be the sole resource of information for both students and teachers because of their inherent biases and exclusions, nor should they be used as the primary pedagogical tool in the classroom (Clark, 1996). Teachers should not use textbooks blindly; instead, textbooks should serve as guides for further exploration and investigation in building greater knowledge and understanding. In terms of Aboriginal experiences, complementary sources should be incorporated into the curriculum that presents a balance between the negative struggles and positive accomplishments. Because mainstream textbooks usually re-present Aboriginal peoples from a non-Aboriginal perspective, incorporating literary, visual, oral, and even tactile sources from or by Aboriginal peoples to be used as various forms of knowledge in the classroom would prove invaluable. These additional teaching sources would further enhance the learning experiences and perspectives of students and teachers alike.

Teachers should not only teach from the textbook but also about the textbook. Because survey textbooks cannot examine all events, peoples, and experiences, class discussions about biases (i.e., the inclusion/exclusion and use of language to conceptualize history) become a crucial pedagogical responsibility of teachers. Integral in the discussion are critical thinking and empathy. Critical thinking encourages students and teachers to challenge textbook omissions and commissions. Empathy provides a new paradigm for students and teachers not only to perceive how their own culture is viewed from the outside but how to perceive other cultures from the inside: it helps “develop the modes of reasoning for arriving at judgments concerning how people of differing backgrounds should be treated” (Wright and Coombs, 1981, p. 6). Students and teachers in turn may view Aboriginal peoples and issues from a different lens - an acceptance of Aboriginal knowledge and epistemology.

Perhaps most important are the approach, attitude, and effort of teachers. Because teachers make most of the decisions regarding textbooks selections, they should be vigilant in analyzing and challenging any possible inaccuracies, over-exaggerations, and discriminations. That textbooks are provincially recommended does not licence them to indiscriminate use. At the very least, by synthesizing Aboriginal peoples and issues into the story of Canada, students

will receive not only a more inclusive history but also a more complete history.⁷⁴ Textbooks that weave Aboriginal peoples, events, and issues into the tapestry of Canadian history provide such an opportunity. Aboriginal peoples should be seen as having been and continue to be an essential and integrative part of Canadian society. Textbooks therefore should reflect and honour this fact. It is an issue of recognition, affirmation, and social justice.

Evaluation and Assessment

Educators need to redress the methods of evaluations/assessments in order to re-address the issue of success. Though the provincial government rhetorically states that the goal of education is to create well-rounded and educated students upon graduation, the reality is that with the new mandatory provincial examinations starting in Grade 10 (testing the academic core of English 10 and 12, Science 10, Math 10, Social Studies 11), the goal of education will create less-rounded and, in turn, mis-educated students upon graduation.⁷⁵ Emphasis remains heavily on the academics which hold a false allure of educational elitism as courses with provincial exams have an elevated status of being superior to those without, which essentially undermines and even threatens other invaluable subjects (e.g., fine, industrial, and physical arts). Students who mainly focus on the academics may graduate with a narrow education. Evaluation therefore continues to be an imperial instrument that reinforces a colonial past - a highly compartmentalized and hierarchal way of learning. Ultimately, by overemphasizing the academics, educational institutions deny the holism that is fundamental to Aboriginal education (Corbiere, 2000).

Although educators cannot change (at least at present) ministry policies of provincial evaluations, they can change their own policies in the classroom. Assessments need to be not only more holistic but also collaborative. Because much evaluating rests upon written work, students are only awarded merit if they conform to the Eurocentric standard of literacy. However, a more holistic approach would value a variety of learning styles and reward students in different ways - audio/oral, visual, symbolic, and kinesthetic. Activities and assignments thus

⁷⁴ Though no history can ever be “complete”, by synthesis, history can appear more comprehensive than fragmentary. Teachers, however, should continuously and vigilantly be aware that most history textbooks are colonial in nature with inherent biases.

⁷⁵ Alternatives do exist, however: Communications 12 can be taken instead of English 12; alternate courses for Social Studies 11 include First Nations 12 or Civics 11. Each of these courses has a provincial examination.

need to reflect these forms of evaluation. Furthermore, viewing assessments as collaborative processes with students is an inclusive necessity for educators. Providing opportunities for students to revise work is one key to success. While the rhetoric is for students to learn from their mistakes, the reality is that few opportunities are ever given to students to reflect, revise, and resubmit their work.

Classroom Delivery and Dynamics

Despite being bound by ministry guidelines of the intended and prescribed learning outcomes, teachers within the curriculum have much autonomy in the classroom. In terms of content, teachers should introduce students to the history of Canada as a history of colonialism. Such a revisionist history will provide students with a more real understanding of and knowledge about Aboriginal peoples in their struggle toward self-determination. Included in this socio-historical analysis is the continuing effect of internalized racism and oppression, as an Ojibwe educator describes: “We are not abstractly removed from history; we are products of it. The process of colonization, the Christianization and the ‘civilization’ of the indigenous people in this country continue today to affect both the colonizer and the colonized in more ways than we first discern” (cited in Goulet, 2001, p. 70). Students need to understand that colonization

was and is an oppressive system that strives to subjugate a group of people to keep them from having equitable access to the economic opportunities and social privileges enjoyed and taken for granted by the members of the colonizing group. Historical and ongoing colonization has a major impact on Aboriginal communities causing, among other things, disempowerment and poverty. (Goulet, 2001, p. 76)

Concepts within Aboriginal epistemology, such as the importance and interrelatedness of geography, orality, and spirituality, should also be incorporated into the class for students to have a better understanding and appreciation for other ways of knowing and learning. This is an important step toward a decolonized collective narrative.

Exposure to various Aboriginal peoples, issues, and stories are also necessary as most mainstream and hence Eurocentric textbooks fail to include such information in a significant and meaningful way:

The universality of Eurocentric creates a strategy of difference that leads to racism, which allows Europeans and colonialists to assert their privileges while exploiting Indigenous people and their knowledge. . . . Drawing on this limiting

knowledge base, schools and curriculum texts have maintained the legacy of cultural and linguistic imperialism. Federal government policy that restricts First Nations schools to this curriculum bias exacerbates the problems of engaging Aboriginal students in this conspiracy. (Battiste, 1998, pp. 22, 23)

Moreover, teachers should incorporate a variety of teaching styles to meet the different needs of students. Emphasizing a holistic approach, examples of effective teaching styles include group and class discussions, active learning, group work with student-student interactions, and one-on-one interaction between the teacher and the student (Goulet, 2001). Excessive lecturing, seatwork, and worksheets as teaching strategies tend to reinforce a colonized education system.⁷⁶ Inviting Elders to share and impart stories and experiences is also an invaluable teaching tool. As “keepers of the wisdom, the libraries of Native communities, repositories of knowledge from time immemorial, a sort of Native World Wide Web” (Hanahano, 1999, p. 216), Elders bring knowledge, teachings, and wisdom to students and teachers. Teaching must also extend beyond the physical and artificial space of the sterile classroom and out to the community with field studies:

The Native notion of place or sense of place refers to appreciation and recognition of certain lands, locations, natural monuments, and places as sacred and imbued with special power and spirit. . . . Thus for Natives, sense of place anchors their being and identity in who they are and their relationship to Mother Earth, and the places that have special meaning for tribal groups and members. (p. 215)

Most important, educators must build, develop, and maintain a warm, caring, sensitive, and trusting relationship with their students. In addition to these characteristics, teachers must demonstrate the four R's: respect, relevance, reciprocity, and responsibility (Kirkness & Barnhardt, 1991). Students seek a better education, “an education that respects them for who they are, that is relevant to their view of the world, that offers reciprocity in their relationships with others, and that helps them exercise responsibility over their own lives” (p. 14). Building such personal connections and relationships will transform and empower both students and teachers that will begin to dismantle the legacy of colonialism.

⁷⁶ Although lectures, seatwork, and worksheets are not completely ineffective as teaching strategies, overuse and dependency on them are. A key is to have a variety of teaching styles.

Concluding Remarks

From examining the recommended textbooks used in high school social studies, I found that Aboriginal peoples are presented and integrated more than ever before. However, not all the images or representations depict a positive image of Aboriginal peoples as traditional stereotypes continue to exist, albeit more subtly and politely. Nonetheless, texts are usually under constant review with periodic changes over the years to adapt to revised or revamped provincial curricula (i.e., Integrated Resource Packages and corresponding prescribed learning outcomes). Though no text is perfect, they are improving in terms of highlighting Aboriginal content and issues.

From this journey of shared experiences with colleagues, I have gained a richer understanding of and appreciation for the Aboriginal programs in the Surrey School District. I have been challenged professionally and personally to better empathize with and comprehend the needs of Aboriginal students as they struggle with their own self-identity, their ownership of their education, and their shared colonized histories. More importantly, though, I have learned to celebrate the successes of Aboriginal students no matter how insignificant they may look or feel. As an educator, my journey into Aboriginal education has only begun, and this research represents only a small part of that journey. I am reminded of what Aboriginal education should be about by Fyre Jean Graveline, an Aboriginal scholar and author, who writes:

Exemplary Indigenous education
requires change for ourselves
for our families
for our communities
in our relationship to Earth Mother.
We want change in the systems
in educational models currently in place
We want to change the world.
How can our Vision become a reality?
Recognize that teaching and learning is a process
a transformational cycle.
An exemplary Indigenous educational practice
is also a Healing one.
Power with Not power over
Revitalization Not acculturation
will help us move
Into a more hopeful Future
will create
A greater Circle of Interconnectedness.

Will contribute
To a healthier
Happier future for us All.
Megwetch.
(Graveline, 2002, p. 21)

A disconnectedness, however, does and still exists between the present educational system and that of Indigenous knowledge and epistemology. Aboriginal students continue to “see themselves and their heritage as [only] part of the educational system” and, in effect, “Indigenous heritage and the transmission of that heritage are missing” (Battiste & Henderson, 2000, p. 88). Thus, Aboriginal students need to re-connect with their dynamic heritages. They need to be free from “the self-doubt, inferiority complexes, and confusion created by public . . . schooling”, and instead “develop the self-confidence and tools necessary to reclaim and restore [their] knowledge through curriculum development and implementation” (p. 91). Though the ideal educational setting would acknowledge, accept, and apply Aboriginal knowledge and epistemology, the process of decolonizing the system is fraught with uncertainty and at times even contested. Teachers play an essential part in this process as they need to become active partners rather than passive observers in this educational journey, to see and believe that Aboriginal students can, do, and will succeed.

In exploring and addressing the question from the provincial Aboriginal Report "How are we doing?" the Surrey School District has a promising future as it continues to implement various programs in an attempt to meet any and all types of needs among its Aboriginal student population. Statistically, in comparing the Surrey to the province, Aboriginal students in the district are generally not fairing much worse than other districts, nor are they fairing much better; however, they are steadily improving empirically.

Regardless of the recorded statistics, success is occurring daily among Aboriginal students in the District, but to see the success of each student, we need to look beyond the performance standards and results with a new lens and a broader definition. We need to look at and respect the differences in Indigenous knowledge and epistemology among Aboriginal students in order for them to develop self-awareness and self-identity. We need to look at and honour their dreams and aspirations in order to develop with them manageable and realistic personal goals. We need to look at and acknowledge the unique gifts that they provide to the class in order for them to value their individualness. But most importantly, we need to walk with

them in this short journey in life through high school in order to see them not only as students in the class but as citizens and human beings in the global community. With hope, these reflections will become reality.

In the inspiring and encouraging words of Arthur Solomon, an Anishnawbe spiritual leader, I begin a new chapter in education:

“Education”

The traditional way of education
was by example and experience
and by storytelling.
The first principle involved was total respect
and acceptance of the one to be taught.
And that learning was a continuous process
from birth to death.
It was a total continuity without interruption.
Its nature was like a fountain
that gives many colours and flavours of water
and that whoever chose could drink as much or as little
as they wanted to and whenever they wished.
The teaching strictly adhered
to the sacredness of life whether of human
or animals or plants.
But in the course of history, there came a disruption.
And then education became “compulsory miseducation”
for another purpose, and the circle of life was broken
and the continuity ended.
It is that continuity which is now taken
up again in the spiritual rebirth
of the people.
(Solomon, 1991, p. 79)

IMAGE CREDITS

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