WOODEN SHOES, WOODEN PENCILS, AND THE WOODEN CROSS: 
A COMPARISON OF ETHNIC DIVERSITY IN THREE 
BRITISH COLUMBIAN CHRISTIAN SCHOOLS

by

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May, 1997

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Department of Educational Studies
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Date May 27, 1997
There are many unanswered questions concerning the nature of post-World War II Dutch Calvinist immigration to British Columbia and how it led to the establishment, growth, and evolution of Christian Reformed Schools in the Society of Christian Schools in British Columbia (SCSBC). The prevailing belief that post-war Dutch Calvinist immigrants assimilated rapidly into Canadian society makes it seem perplexing that there is still support for independent Christian Reformed Schools. Even more interesting is the fact that not only are these denominationally-specific schools surviving but presently are part of a consistently growing independent Christian school movement in British Columbia.

One of the possible reasons Calvinist Christian Schools have stood the test of time is that it has become attractive alternatives for ethnic minorities outside of the Dutch Calvinist religion and culture. Schools in Richmond and Vancouver, especially, have experienced a student population that has a growing Asian ethnic component. Given these current multicultural realities in British Columbia society, many questions can be asked concerning the effect of ethnic diversity on the past, present, and future evolution of Christian schools started in the Dutch-Calvinist tradition. The purpose of this study, therefore, is to investigate how Christian Schools of Dutch Calvinist origin are currently experiencing and responding to ethnic diversity. The answer to this question should provide a valuable perspective for educators within Christian schools and also prove informative for governments evaluating whether the 18-year tradition of funding independent Christian schools should increase or continue at present levels.
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<td>1995 VCS Families by Ethnicity</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>1995 VCS Leadership by Ethnicity</td>
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<td>1996 ACS Teachers by Church Affiliation</td>
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Many individuals helped to make this thesis possible. First, and foremost, I would like to thank my committee members. My advisor, Dr. J. Donald Wilson consistently shared resources and provided advice from his wealth of personal experience. I especially appreciate his encouragement to press on despite changes in the research design and complications in data collection. Developing the questionnaire and preparing the study for ethical review was made much easier through the assistance of Dr. Jean Barman. Jean’s advice concerning the scope and sequence of the second and third chapters was also extremely helpful. I am grateful to Dr. Kogila Adam-Moodley who supplied excellent theoretical sources concerning multicultural education and suggested how to reduce the scope of the study into a manageable size. A thorough critique of the penultimate draft was provided on very short notice by Dr. Dan Brown. Dr. Harro Van Brummelen’s research in Christian schools provided a solid foundation for this project. I feel privileged to have continued building on the work he began.

For historical sources and most of the contemporary data I am particularly indebted to the teachers and principals who agreed to participate in the study. Without their input there would have been no thesis. Special thanks to Mrs. Romy Vanderbos and Mr. Fred Pel who provided crucial information concerning the histories of the Richmond and Vancouver Christian Schools. Mrs. Liz Stevens of Prince George provided an excellent questionnaire model. Mr. Vic Wiens made available an extensive collection of primary documents concerning the Seacliff and Richmond Christian Schools. A comprehensive compilation of independent school statistics was prepared for me by Mr Fred Herfst, Executive Director of
the Federation of Independent Schools. Mrs. Mary-Ann Smith provided an interesting historical perspective on the Seacliff Christian School and also gave important feedback in pretesting the questionnaire. Shelley MacDonald of To The Letter Word Processing at the University of British Columbia proved invaluable in helping prepare the final document. Not only did she rescue me from a host of computer problems but also suggested many stylistic improvements to the final version.
DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my wife, Patsy who provided more encouragement and emotional support than I ever felt I deserved. Her patience, sacrifice, and constructive criticism helped immeasurably in completing the project, especially in the most stressful final stages.
INTRODUCTION

There are many unanswered questions concerning the nature of post-World War II Dutch Calvinist immigration to British Columbia and how it led to the establishment, growth, and evolution of Dutch Christian Reformed Schools in the Society of Christian Schools in British Columbia (SCSBC). Groenewold in his article, “The Christian Reformed Church in Canada” asks perhaps the most all-inclusive question: “Why are Dutch Calvinist immigrants eager to participate in Canadian public life yet insistent on functioning through alternative schools?”

The prevailing belief that post-war Dutch Calvinist immigrants assimilated rapidly into Canadian society makes it seem all the more perplexing that there is still support for independent Christian Reformed Schools at all. Even more interesting is the fact that not only are these denominationally-specific schools surviving but are part of a growing independent Christian school movement in British Columbia; a movement increasingly fueled by sources of enrollment outside of the founding Dutch Calvinist community. According to statistics from the Federation of Independent School Associations (FISA), the enrollment total of students in independent schools has increased every year since 1985. In addition, the independent school proportion of total school enrollment in British Columbia has increased every year since 1974/75 from a low of 3.7% to a high of 8.5% in 1996/97 (see Table 1 below). Of the various diverse groupings that comprise independent school enrollment, the Dutch-Calvinist SCSBC is one group that has enjoyed consistent growth over the last ten years. Between 1977 and 1995, the SCSBC has grown from an enrollment of 2,471 students to 8,700, and has increased from 10% of total independent school enrollment to 17%. Although Christian schools in the Calvinist tradition have enjoyed continuous
TABLE 1: GROWTH OF INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS IN B.C.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Enrollment: Public Schools</th>
<th>Annual Public School Growth %</th>
<th>Enrollment: Independent Schools</th>
<th>Annual Independent School Growth %</th>
<th>Enrollment Total</th>
<th>Independent School Proportion of Total %</th>
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<td>74/75</td>
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<td>-1.7</td>
<td>562,630</td>
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<tr>
<td>75/76</td>
<td>542,680</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>23,071</td>
<td>9.6</td>
<td>565,751</td>
<td>4.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>76/77</td>
<td>536,237</td>
<td>-1.2</td>
<td>23,318</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>559,555</td>
<td>4.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>77/78</td>
<td>527,769</td>
<td>-1.6</td>
<td>23,691</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>551,460</td>
<td>4.3</td>
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<td>517,786</td>
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<td>3.7</td>
<td>542,342</td>
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<td>79/80</td>
<td>511,671</td>
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<td>24,827</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>536,498</td>
<td>4.6</td>
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<td>80/81</td>
<td>509,805</td>
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<td>521,590</td>
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<td>85/86</td>
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<td>39,772</td>
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<td>559,730</td>
<td>7.1</td>
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<td>91/92</td>
<td>539,300</td>
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<td>42,815</td>
<td>7.7</td>
<td>582,115</td>
<td>7.4</td>
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<td>554,590</td>
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<td>45,989</td>
<td>7.4</td>
<td>600,579</td>
<td>7.7</td>
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<td>7.3</td>
<td>618,002</td>
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<td>94/95</td>
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<td>52,274</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>635,055</td>
<td>8.2</td>
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<tr>
<td>95/96</td>
<td>594,773</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>54,207</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>648,980</td>
<td>8.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>96/97 (est.)</td>
<td>607,644</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>56,669</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>664,313</td>
<td>8.5</td>
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</table>

growth through the 1990's, these are not the only Christian schools to grow and flourish. FISA reports that non-SCSBC Christian schools, such as the Mennonite Educational Institute (MEI), which dominate FISA's Associate Member Group (AMG) have grown from 1,357
students in 1977 to 10,548 in 1994/95, an increase from 6% of total independent school enrollment to 21%. In 1994/95, the AMG enrollment was strongly bolstered by over 400 students when the Richmond Christian School discontinued its long-time association with the SCSBC. The AMG also includes large Christian schools such as the Pacific Academy in Surrey and White Rock Christian School.³

Some of the possible reasons Dutch-Calvinist Christian Schools have stood the test of time is that the philosophy, instructional program, and general environment have made the schools attractive alternatives for ethnic minorities outside of Dutch Calvinist religion and culture. Schools in Richmond, Vancouver, and Burnaby, especially, have experienced a student population that has a growing Asian ethnic component. According to Statistics Canada, immigrants to British Columbia from Asia between 1981 and 1991 made up approximately 64.1% of all immigrants to British Columbia during the same time period. It is also interesting to note that nearly three-quarters of these recent immigrants chose to reside in the metropolitan area of Vancouver.⁴ Given these current multicultural realities in British Columbia society, many questions can be asked concerning the effect of ethnic diversity on the past, present, and future evolution of Christian schools started in the Dutch-Calvinist tradition.

The purpose of this study, therefore, is to investigate how Christian Schools of Dutch Calvinist origin are currently experiencing and responding to ethnic diversity. Answering this question effectively can be accomplished by dividing the study into three parts. In the first chapter, an attempt will be made to generally summarize the historical evolution of Dutch Calvinist schools in British Columbia. Understanding the past may provide useful
hints for understanding the multicultural issues currently facing Christian schools founded upon Dutch Calvinist culture and tradition.

The second chapter of this study primarily concerns the multicultural reality currently facing the three oldest Christian schools started by Dutch Calvinist immigrants in British Columbia and how this has changed over the years. Establishing the degree of change in ethnic diversity and its impact on the inner workings of the Vancouver, Abbotsford, and Richmond Christian Schools can be accomplished by comparing the ethnicity of students and teachers at crucial periods in each school's history. Once the extent of each schools ethnically diverse milieu has been established it is possible to look more closely at pedagogical issues relating to ethnic diversity within Dutch Calvinist schools.

The third chapter of this study will deal with the curriculum and how the teachers within these schools have responded to multiethnic classrooms and the issue of multiculturalism in general. For example, do Christian schools feel it necessary to address the issue of multiculturalism? If so, do the schools develop multicultural units/programs that are distinctively Christian or merely duplications of current government curricula? If not, which pedagogical issues do Christian teachers feel are more important in their classrooms? What are parental expectations concerning the school and curriculum? Do visible ethnic minorities want multicultural education for their children? These questions warrant consideration and the answers should provide a valuable perspective for educators within Christian schools.5
NOTES TO INTRODUCTION


2 Federation of Independent School Associations Brief, supplied by Mr. Fred Herfst, Executive Director of F.I.S.A., April 1997, p. 1. This brief summarizes most current data concerning independent school growth and funding in British Columbia.

3 Federation of Independent School Associations Brief, supplied by Mr. Fred Herfst, Executive Director of F.I.S.A., January 1995, pp. 1-12. This brief summarizes most current data concerning F.I.S.A. member schools and groups.


5 In order to answer these questions key leaders in each school were interviewed and an ethnic diversity questionnaire was handed out to each teacher in the schools who participated (see Appendix 4). Written results were then prepared and sent back to each school to solicit reactions from the interview subjects as well as other principal leaders within the schools. In short, triangulating the interview and questionnaire data was a strategy used to both validate the interview data as well as involve more key school leaders in the research.
CHAPTER ONE

DUTCH CALVINIST SCHOOLS SINCE 1945

In British Columbia, Dutch Calvinist schools were all started after World War II and predominated in the Greater Vancouver area and Lower Fraser Valley. The first school established was the Calvin Christian School. It was begun in Vancouver in 1949 and became the third school of its kind in Canada. At the outset, Calvinist Christian schools were merely an extension of various Dutch Calvinist communities and thus were relatively closed to outsiders. Examination of the community as a whole, however, reveals that it became more and more inclusive as it lost its visible Dutch distinctives. Although most Dutch immigrants have merged into the Canadian mainstream today, the institutions they established represent the second largest single group of independent parochial schools. Only the Roman Catholics educate more independent school students than the Christian schools established by Dutch Calvinists. Before outlining the main reasons why Dutch Calvinists had such an impact on Christian education in British Columbia, greater insight into their contribution can be obtained by examining post-war immigration and tracing Dutch Calvinist integration into British Columbia society.

Overview of Dutch Immigration

Although many Dutch Calvinist immigrants came to Canada after World War II, they were not the only Dutch immigrant group to travel the same path. Van Brummelen has characterized Dutch immigration as essentially consisting of four groups: Roman Catholics,
TABLE 2: DUTCH IMMIGRATION TO BRITISH COLUMBIA

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Born in Netherlands</th>
<th>Total Population of British Columbia</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1941</td>
<td>1,484</td>
<td>817,861</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1951</td>
<td>4,524</td>
<td>1,165,210</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1961</td>
<td>18,496</td>
<td>1,629,082</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1971</td>
<td>22,000</td>
<td>2,184,625</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1981</td>
<td>26,045</td>
<td>2,713,615</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>24,870</td>
<td>3,282,061</td>
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</table>

religiously non-aligned, Dutch Reformed, and various Christian Reformed denominations. Of the four groups, the Roman Catholics lost their ethnic distinctiveness the fastest because priests were instructed by higher church authorities to encourage assimilation through the provision of English language services and community courses. Religiously non-aligned Dutch also lost their ‘Dutchness’ quickly because they relied on English language secular institutions for jobs and schooling. They were a more fragmented group of immigrants and could not depend on a religio-ethnic community for support as did many of the Dutch Calvinist groups. In particular, the Canadian agricultural attaché encouraged the religiously non-aligned to learn English quickly because of pressure from English employers to supply workers that would provide the least amount of hassle and frustration. Few Dutch immigrants moved into mainline Protestant denominations such as the United Church, but those who did tried to learn English quickly. Such speed in assimilation was reinforced in cases where the new immigrants moved into Lower Mainland towns or urban centers that did not have a strong Dutch ethnic presence.
Dutch Calvinist Schools: Agents of Cultural Maintenance

Although rapid assimilation was a characteristic of most of the Dutch immigrants, Dutch Calvinists initially seemed more resistant to losing their ethnic identity than their fellow countrymen. This is primarily because most Dutch Calvinists adhered to a strict religious orthodoxy that insulated them from other Dutch immigrants as well as from the dominant culture of their new Canadian homeland. Among Orthodox Calvinists, the Christian Reformed Church, the Canadian equivalent of what was known in Holland as the Reformed Church, was the largest Orthodox Calvinist church in British Columbia. Although the Orthodox Calvinists, hereafter referred to as Dutch Calvinists, constituted only 9.7% of Holland's population in 1947, they represented 41.2% of those emigrating to Canada in 1948-52.4 The reason the Dutch Calvinists represented such a large proportion of the Dutch immigrant population in British Columbia was that they mainly came from the crowded rural areas of Holland's northern provinces. B.C.'s fertile Lower Fraser Valley was viewed as a promising opportunity for innovative young Dutch immigrant families. According to Siemens, “the Dutch purchased and revitalized the dairy farms of elderly Anglo-Saxon, Mennonite, and other farmers who were without successors, funds, or the will to continue in farming themselves.”5 Although the strongest and most numerous group of Dutch Calvinists came from the northern parts of Holland and settled in Abbotsford, those who settled in Vancouver, Richmond, and Burnaby area tended to come from the more urbanized western area of Holland. In short, Dutch immigrants from the city tended to settle in the city whereas Dutch immigrants from the country tended to settle in the country. As Ginn points out, however, the Canadian immigration policy encouraged Dutch immigrants to enter Canada as agricultural labourers and this motivated some urban Dutch to make an occupational change
to agriculture when they arrived in British Columbia.\textsuperscript{6} Other reasons Dutch Calvinists in general felt compelled to leave their homeland included Holland's rapid secularization, increasing bureaucratization, and the growth of socialism in Eastern Europe. Some even feared another world war.\textsuperscript{7}

Instead of rapidly assimilating like other Dutch immigrants, Dutch Calvinists initially struggled with ethnicity issues because its community was a lot more conservative and resistant to assimilation then the Catholics, non-aligned, and Reformed Dutch communities. Ganzvoort states that the Calvinist Dutch-Canadian community "was on the front line of cultural adaptation and as such mirrored the desires, fears, and problems of the immigrants."\textsuperscript{8} The Dutch Calvinist struggle to maintain a distinctive identity manifested itself in a variety of ways throughout the post-war era.

First, strong ethnic sensitivity among Calvinists was evident in their passionate loyalty to Calvinist creeds and dogma. This uncompromising dedication to a theology dedicated to Calvinist reform produced a community that believed that human life in its entirety must be conformed to the teachings of the Holy Scriptures. Calvinists, in the various Christian Reformed churches, viewed themselves as the one true church. Rooted in a staunchly Protestant tradition, CRC members viewed Roman Catholics and the religiously non-aligned as apostate and lost. CRC churches also rejected the liberal tendencies of the more inclusive and latitudinarian National Reformed Church (Dutch Reformed) in the Netherlands. In the opinion of many staunch Calvinists, the National Reformed Church compromised Calvinist orthodoxy and succumbed to the growth of turn-of-the-century rationalism and romanticism.\textsuperscript{9} Calvinists, not surprisingly, were also somewhat uneasy with British Columbia's evangelicals who denied aspects of the Calvinist doctrine of divine
election\textsuperscript{10} and who seemed to limit religion to a personal conversion experience and personal morality.\textsuperscript{11} Dutch Calvinists, initially, were more focused on carving out and honing their own philosophical perspective within British Columbia's English religious establishment than on highlighting common theological ground and seeking alliances. Maintaining the purity of Calvinist doctrine through constant reform was a mission that Dutch Calvinist immigrants lived out proudly.

Because the Dutch Calvinist community had such a precisely defined religious framework, they soon developed the reputation of being ‘the Dutch Church’, a sectarian community that purposely insulated itself from the worldly assimilationist pressures of the Canadian mainstream and actively rejected any unification efforts with other non-Calvinist Dutch immigrants. In some quarters, the Dutch Calvinists of British Columbia were viewed suspiciously because of the ‘missionary’ work of their local church immigration committees. The post-war immigration landscape for many diligent Dutch Calvinists represented a missionary field. Many enthusiastic Christian Reformed men and women not only found jobs for new immigrants but also attempted to provide a religious link to ease the culture shock and anxiety new Dutch immigrants experienced upon arriving. Much like the Mennonites, Doukhobours, and Hutterites, key members of the Dutch community appeared to be forging a strong religious sub-culture within British Columbia society. This inevitably led to charges from non-Calvinist Dutch immigrants that Calvinist Church officials were ‘raiding’ or ‘sheep-stealing’ from their churches.

The initial existence of such a vibrant, competitive, and zealously mission-oriented Dutch Calvinist community in British Columbia might lead the novice scholar of Dutch history to believe that the Calvinists were successfully insulated from any pressures to
assimilate and therefore could maintain a separate religious and educational identity even though they had to come out of isolation to go to work. In rural areas, especially, Dutch Calvinists were a solidly homogenous entity, as independent and self-sufficient as the founding French and Anglo-Celtic immigrants. Reinforcing this notion is a sociological study done by Ishwaran in 1976. In his article, “Family, Church, and School in a Dutch-Canadian Community,” Ishwaran describes the rural community of Holland Marsh, Ontario as a closed, tightly knit culture in which outsiders were so unwelcome they were almost chased out of town. Such a community, although in Ontario, presumably would match various Calvinist Dutch communities that settled heavily in the Fraser Valley. It is interesting to note that 60% of the Dutch immigrants before 1956 settled east of Vancouver, largely on the Fraser River’s fertile valley and delta lands. In interviews with various Polish neighbors to the Dutch, Ishwaran found that such neighbors did not enjoy a very happy existence in the Dutch-dominated community. “‘We don’t belong to the Dutch Brotherhood here,’ regretted a Polish Canadian. ‘Most Poles here are Catholics, and nine out of ten are not happy living here’. ‘Boy, is it nice to get out of this community,’ said another.” Ishwaran also quotes the pastor of the local Dutch Calvinist church who stated, “there is some truth in the Dutch people here being highly partisan and sectarian. We should love our neighbours in the true Christian way of life, but we can’t simply invite everybody into our home, church, and school.” This case study by Ishwaran supports the notion that Dutch Calvinists were generally a homogenous group that actively and successfully resisted any outsider intrusions into their culture. Even the strongest Anglicizing pressures had barely infiltrated this group.
The religious rigor and cultural cohesion of the early Dutch Calvinist communities not surprisingly culminated in the establishment of a significant group of independent Christian schools. Dutch Calvinists believed that the school was an extension of the church and home. What was being taught in school should therefore match the values and expectations of the child's parents and religious leaders. Public schools operating on the principles of Deweyan humanistic philosophy stood in direct opposition to Calvinist reformed beliefs and morality. Dutch Calvinist immigrants worked diligently to preserve their value system and created Christian schooling alternatives to the public school. In the 1940's, the Christian Reformed Church across British Columbia began the work of building 'distinctively Christian' parochial schools. To ease the concerns of those immigrants who worried about appropriate schooling for their children, school builders in the Abbotsford area advertised three goals: "farm, church, and school." By 1960, schools were established in all major centers where there was a strong concentration of Dutch immigrants. Beginning in Vancouver (1949) and Abbotsford (1953), Dutch Calvinist Christian schools eventually spread to Langley (1955), Richmond (1957) as an annex of the Vancouver Christian School, and in New Westminster (1964), B.C.'s first Dutch Calvinist high school. Fraser Valley Christian High later moved from New Westminster to Surrey. Not surprisingly, Dutch Calvinist schools all across Canada grew significantly when Dutch immigration exploded in the 1950's (see Table 2 above). According to Van Brummelen, only two Christian schools existed in Canada in 1948 (in Holland Marsh, Ontario and Lacombe, Alberta with a total enrollment of 129 students). "This grew to twenty-three schools with 2,764 students in 1958;
to fifty schools with 7,184 students in 1963; and to ninety-one schools with an enrollment of 14,342 in 1977.”

Many of the Dutch Calvinists who founded these schools still give key educational leadership to them today. The schools, locally controlled by parent associations, have attempted to make Christian beliefs influence their entire program. One belief that was taken especially seriously by the Calvinists was the biblical ‘missionary’ command to ‘Be fruitful and multiply’. As former residents of one of the most densely populated countries, Dutch Calvinists appeared well on their way to helping “develop the bare spots on the map of the world.” In British Columbia, filling the bare spots included the establishment and propagation of the Christian schools.

Maintaining a distinctive approach to education through a separate Christian school system, however, became more difficult when the flow of immigrants from Holland began to dry up in 1960 (see Table 2 above). The improving conditions in the Netherlands in the late 1950's and the growing complexity of the Canadian economy increasingly discouraged the migration of unskilled and untrained Dutch immigrants. In fact, by 1959 the Dutch government came under pressure to curtail emigration activities because a labour shortage was developing in Holland. By the end of the decade, there seemed to be fewer reasons for the Dutch to leave their newly prosperous homeland. Without new immigrants to reinforce their numbers, the Christian Reformed Schools in British Columbia felt increased pressure to assimilate into the mainstream of Canadian life and thought. By 1981, Dutch Calvinists comprised less than one-fifth of the total number of Dutch immigrants. The stagnation of growth in the Dutch Calvinist community created an assortment of perplexities for the
faithful Calvinist because participation in Canadian public life was a necessity if they hoped to make any economic headway.

Over time it soon became apparent that the Dutch Calvinist community could not fight off the assimilationist tendencies of the dominant society. The description of Ishwaran's Holland Marsh, therefore, must be seen as the exception rather than the rule when analyzing the larger Dutch Calvinist community within British Columbia society after 1960. Although Holland Marsh may continue to typify some of the remaining rural Dutch communities scattered across Canada, Dutch Calvinists in British Columbia have, for the most part, succumbed to the forces of assimilation. The initial religious and cultural vigor of the early Dutch Calvinist communities produced a significant contribution to independent Christian education in Canada's western-most province. Instead of bastions of Christian Reformed culture, the schools established by Dutch immigrants are now part of a growing interdenominational educational alternative that appeals to a variety of ethnic backgrounds. Because of decreased immigration from Holland and the powerful forces of assimilation within British Columbia culture, the prospect of declining enrollments in many CRC church schools encouraged them to look out to the larger evangelical community for new growth.

**Dutch Calvinist Schools: From Exclusive to Inclusive**

The tendency of Dutch Calvinist immigrants to assimilate quickly into the Canadian mainstream can be seen both prior to and after the Second World War. Traces of the 29,000 prewar Dutch Calvinist immigrants faded quickly and in 1931 only 33% of Dutch immigrants still used their mother tongue. This trend continued after the war as well. In contrast to other ethnic groups, however, culture and language maintenance, although important to some
immigrants, was not the Dutch Calvinist's primary motive for establishing separate institutions. Burkinshaw states that most Dutch Calvinists were eager to accept Canadian social mores almost as soon as they arrived in the country. Dutch Calvinists even gave up their home language more quickly than many other similar immigrant groups. For example, 

unlike the early Mennonite churches in the Lower Mainland, which used the German language in worship services for an average of twenty to thirty years after their founding, the Vancouver Christian Reformed church began broadcasting its services in English less than ten years after its founding.

Dutch ethnicity was also downplayed "in favour of theological identity" when the Christian School in Burnaby was given the name John Knox, the famous Scottish Calvinist. Churches and schools in rural Abbotsford were also quick to adopt English in their services and business meetings. It was thus purely religious grounds that justified the separate institutions for Dutch Calvinists. Although other aspects of Dutch culture and language eroded, the belief system of their community remained intact. Faithful Calvinists, therefore, felt they must become relevant to the society in which they found themselves by adjusting to the culture, but should remain 'lights in the darkness' to the surrounding community by maintaining the purity of their doctrines and creeds.

Unfortunately, vigilant maintenance of doctrinal purity did not come without conflict and strife, and it soon became apparent that the Dutch Calvinists were as religiously fragmented as numerous other denominations and religious communities within British Columbia's society. In some cases, hostile divisions within the Dutch Calvinist community seriously compromised its collective strength and public testimony. The Protestant Dutch, according to Ganzevoort, became essentially divided into two pillars, the Dutch Reformed and the Calvinists, the one more liberal-minded and undogmatic, the other more aggressive,
dogmatic Calvinists. These groups had operated separately for years and had developed what Ganzevoort calls a “religious-ideological segregation.” Although the Christian Reformed Church initially provided solace for the majority of dissenting Calvinist groups, more conservative immigrants ‘jumped ship’ as soon as they became self-sufficient enough to build their own churches. In the 1950's, consequently, we see the emergence of conservative churches that split away from the larger Christian Reformed Church (CRC). The Canadian Reformed Church (1950), the Free Christian Reformed Church (1955), and the Netherlands Reformed Congregation or ‘black stockings’ all left the Christian Reformed Church because they felt it had compromised and grown apostate. These off-shoots of the CRC, however, did not have enough money to build their own schools. They may have insisted on worshipping separately but many still sent their children to the CRC schools.

Because the Dutch community was fragmented into a variety of different groups, leaders within Dutch Calvinist schools soon saw the need to emphasize their religious distinctiveness as opposed to their ethnic or cultural distinctiveness. It was nearly impossible to maintain a unified group consciousness through Dutch culture, except in areas such as Abbotsford where the Dutch community continued to sustain its population into the second and third generations of its founding immigrant families. As Margaret Ginn points out, Dutch immigrants tended to cluster in the Lower Fraser Valley where they found land which was readily available for purchase. In Abbotsford and Chilliwack, on the Matsqui and Sumas Prairies, Dutch immigrants had a wide range of farm sizes to choose from to establish dairying enterprises. By contrast, the majority of Dutch who were initially employed in Richmond, Delta, and Langley could not as easily find the type of farm they wanted.
Therefore, Dutch settlement was stronger and more homogenous in the eastern parts of the Lower Fraser Valley than in the more urbanized suburbs.

Today, most Dutch Calvinist families in Abbotsford have lost the remnants of their culture that make them visibly distinctive and see themselves as part of the larger evangelical religious community rather than the diminished Dutch Calvinist cultural community. Ganzoovort gives many indications of the distinctive Dutch ethnic characteristics that were lost since the war. For example, many Dutch immigrants changed their last names if they were either unpronounceable or had sexual or derogatory connotations in English. Picture windows that identified Dutch homes largely disappeared. Hamburgers, pizza, casseroles, and other ‘Canadian food’ became more commonly served in Dutch homes than peculiarly ethnic foods. As mentioned above, the Dutch language has been almost totally lost among immigrant children, and intermarriage has become more common as the differences between Dutch Canadians and their fellow citizens have begun to disappear.\(^\text{25}\) According to Ganzoovort, the only evidence of any ‘Dutchness’ remaining has been the maintenance of a strong sense of family and the continued success of a vibrant church and the Christian Reformed school network. Overall, the descendants of Dutch Calvinist immigrants have largely discarded aspects of their cultural identity that seemed irrelevant or inappropriate in the new Canadian society and have become an “invisible ethnic” group.\(^\text{26}\)

Invisible, however, does not mean dormant. Although the Dutch rapidly lost their visible ethnicity, they began to seek transformation in the culture around them. Much like other northern European ethnic groups (Germans and Scandinavians), there was a readiness amongst Dutch immigrants to transmit their values to others, not exclusively to their children.\(^\text{27}\) As Delafenêtre states, the approach to mainstream Canadian culture of many so-
called ‘invisible’ northern European ethnics was both intercultural and transcultural. The intercultural aspect of Dutch ethnicity can be seen in the transformation of their supporting school communities. Despite their relatively small numbers when compared to the total population of British (see Table 2 above), Dutch Calvinists initially were able to establish schools because of their tendency to cluster together. However, when the total number of Dutch-born in B.C. began to decline as immigration slowed in the 1960's, the Dutch became very innovative in finding new sources of enrollment for their schools. From the late sixties to the present day, it is thus more accurate to define Dutch Calvinist schools as broader religious entities rather than as closed ethno-cultural communities. Despite beginning in British Columbia as a more or less exclusive ethno-cultural community, Dutch Calvinists significantly impacted the wider evangelical community because of their ability to adapt to changing circumstances. In the 1960's and 1970's, a growing alienation from the public school system and a corresponding interest in Christian schools within a large number of non-Dutch evangelicals brought them into close cooperation with Dutch Calvinists, who by then had garnered a great deal of experience in establishing and operating separate schools and needed new students to fill the empty classrooms. It is possible to interpret Dutch assimilation as a calculated priority rather than as a helpless surrender to the forces of assimilation. Instead of steadfastly holding onto their own ‘culture’, Dutch Calvinists sought to transform the dominant culture of the world around them through their theologically conservative doctrines and evangelism, to ensure the survival of their Christian schools for years to come.

Another factor which made Dutch Calvinists so effective in building and maintaining an independent Christian school system was that they received significant help and support
from Dutch Calvinist communities in Northwestern Washington state that had been well-established since early in the century. According to former Vancouver Christian School Society member Fred Pel, speakers from the Lynden, Washington area, where the Christian school movement was well in place, came to address members of the Calvin Christian School Society in the late 1930's in order to revive the society and lay the groundwork for a new Christian school in Vancouver, a school that was eventually established in 1949. In addition, Dutch Calvinist dairy farmers in the Lower Fraser Valley appear to have developed ties with the dairy farmers in northern Washington state. According to Ginn, Dutch Calvinist dairy farmers were quite mobile. “The pattern of movement has been one of short hops within, and between, Matsqui and Sumas Prairies, with the immigrant really remaining within one social and religious community focused on Abbotsford.” Educational ties between Dutch Calvinists in British Columbia and Washington state are best exemplified by the annual teacher conference organized through the collaboration of two teacher associations, the Washington-based North West Christian Schools International (NWCSI) and the British Columbia Christian Teachers Association (CTABC). Every September, the two-day NWCSI-CTABC conference is held to provide professional development and fellowship for Christian teachers. Both of the associations represent teachers that serve in schools primarily aligned with Christian Schools International (CSI), an umbrella organization representing a diverse group of North American Christian schools, founded mainly in the Reformed and Presbyterian tradition.

As the Dutch Calvinist community came through the relativism and modernity of the 1960's, it became naturally allied with other evangelicals who were concerned about the loss of moral absolutes and Christ-centered education. When the Independent Schools Support
Act was passed in 1977, Calvinist Christian schools became even more appealing and affordable for Christian parents dissatisfied with the public system. The Act enabled each Calvinist school to receive thirty percent of the per student operating costs of the local public school district. Combined with this new government funding, recognition of shared values and beliefs between Dutch Calvinists and other evangelicals accelerated the growth of Dutch Calvinist Christian schools in the 1980’s and 1990’s.

Today, most Dutch Calvinist schools would classify themselves first as interdenominational Christian schools. Any ‘Dutchness’ within the school would be seen as secondary or even tertiary in importance. The ultimate example of the diminishing importance of Dutch ethno-cultural ties in Dutch Calvinist schools can be seen in the decision by the Richmond Christian School Board to withdraw from the Dutch Calvinist Society of Christian Schools in British Columbia (SCSBC). This decision to withdraw from its Dutch Calvinist parent organization despite a long history of affiliation and interaction shows that the ethno-cultural distinction has become a lower priority than the religious, philosophical and pragmatic issues facing certain Christian educators (see chapter two for more details).

Dutch Calvinist schools and churches have also demonstrated a commitment to cultural adaptation by adopting music, worship, and dress similar to the larger evangelical community. Vineyard music, popularized by charismatic Christian songwriters like John Wimber, has especially transformed the worship in Christian Reformed circles. Changing in these ways has helped Dutch Calvinists focus on attracting members outside their core group. In the 1980’s, for example, the Christian Reformed Church successfully launched new churches in Nanaimo, Surrey, and Abbotsford while their more liberal counterpart, the
Reformed Church in Canada, built two large non-ethnic Dutch churches in Surrey and Burnaby. The Reformed Church in Canada also added a Chinese congregation in Richmond to its growing list of adherents in 1986 and actively supports the Richmond Christian School. These innovative extensions of what were formerly Dutch Calvinist churches show how the community has grown, expanded, and changed to meet the needs of British Columbia’s diverse cultural fabric.

As Dutch Calvinists have sought to transform the dominant evangelical community as well as society as a whole it is not surprising to note that they may now be assisting the integration of other ethnic minorities completely outside of Dutch Calvinist culture. It is clear that the network of Christian Reformed schools currently is a popular educational alternative for many ‘visible’ ethnic minorities. Dutch Calvinist schools, in particular, seem to attract many of British Columbia’s recent Asian immigrants. Perhaps the attraction of Dutch Calvinist schools and other Christian schools is that they are perceived as bastions of a more traditional, disciplined form of education. Or perhaps Dutch Calvinist schools have become so flexible and adaptable that new immigrant groups such as the Chinese feel comfortable with their beliefs and practices. Christian schools in the Dutch tradition also may be more attractive to new immigrants because they are not constrained by the bureaucracy of monolithic public school boards. In independent Christian schools, parents have more access to the local decision-makers and thus have more control over the general operation of the school. Significant local control within the school community gives teachers, students, and parents a greater sense of empowerment, and a strong community ethos is thereby created. In studies done by Coleman and Hoffer in the United States, it was found that smaller private institutions are more capable of fostering a quality of
Some years ago, Erickson found that independent schools in British Columbia, including those in the Dutch Calvinist tradition, are characterized by an above average commitment on the part of teachers, parents, and students to provide quality education. Such a commitment to excellence seems to be a strong drawing card for minority parents. Adam-Moodley states that most minority parents “expect [from their schools] committed, demanding teaching aimed at the mastery of basic skills and the success in English, math, and science required to survive in the new home country.” If Dutch Calvinist schools are committed to (or perceived to be committed to) ‘the basics’, it represents a good match for the educational needs of certain minority parents.

A summary of the literature indicates that the forces of assimilation and initial divisions within the Dutch community resulted in Dutch Canadians evolving into an “invisible ethnic.” This group, however, appears to have developed schools that are attractive alternatives for other ethnic minorities completely outside the Dutch culture and religion. Unfortunately, researching the effect of cultural minorities on the Dutch Calvinist school system in British Columbia immediately presents some problems. Very little has been written about Dutch Calvinist schools since Van Brummelen produced a comprehensive work on the curriculum of the Christian Reformed Schools in 1984. Calvert has written a useful study of the growth of Non-FISA Christian schools in British Columbia but makes little mention of the cultural diversity within the institutions he studied. Wiens has also produced a very interesting case study of how a Dutch Calvinist school and a Mennonite school in Richmond eventually amalgamated into one organization. Although he made a detailed analysis of the feasibility of amalgamation between Richmond Christian School and
Seacliff Christian School, little mention is made of the effects of cultural diversity. A very interesting major paper by Henry Contant describes how the Abbotsford Christian School is developing 'communities of support'. The paper outlines strategies for creating support and gives very helpful statistics concerning the 'denominational' allegiances of the families supporting the school. In terms of understanding the Abbotsford Christian School, Henry Contant states that the school is better understood from a denominational perspective then an ethnic one. Determining the effects of cultural diversity in Dutch Calvinist Christian schools generally, would indeed be a useful study in the field of independent education in British Columbia.

Although such a study may be limited in scope (in 1994/95 SCSBC schools only made up 17% of all independent school enrollment which itself made up only 8.2% of the total provincial grade school population), it is hoped that a valuable perspective can be gained. How Dutch Calvinist schools are changing to encourage the participation of minority groups may provide insight into larger educational questions concerning multicultural education. Research into the recent Dutch Calvinist legacy of educational independence can serve as an effective starting point in revealing their distinctive ethnic contribution to Canadian culture and thought. It will also be interesting to see how teachers in Dutch Calvinist schools have responded to the multicultural education initiatives of British Columbia's Ministry of Education and whether or not a distinctively Christian approach to ethnic diversity has been developed. Insights into the multicultural reality facing many Christians schools may also provide useful insights for public schools dealing with similar issues concerning cultural diversity.
NOTES TO CHAPTER ONE

1 Federation of Independent School Associations Brief, supplied by Mr. Fred Herfst, Executive Director of F.I.S.A., January 1995, pp. 1-12. In 1994/95, schools grouped under the Society of Christian Schools in British Columbia (SCSBC) reported a total enrollment of 8,700. Catholic schools reported a total enrollment of 19,903. The Associate Member Group (AMG) reported a total enrollment of 10,548 but the member schools within this group are largely independent of each other.

2 Statistics Canada, Immigration and Citizenship (Ottawa: Supply and Services Canada, Census of Canada. 1941, 4: 662; 1951, 1: Table 45; 1961, 92-547, Table 49; 1971, 92-727, Table 36; 1981, 92-913, Table 1A and 1B; 1991, 93-316, Table 1 and 2).


7 R.K. Burkinshaw, p. 182.


9 R.K. Burkinshaw, p. 182.

10 The doctrine of Divine Election: God by his secret plan freely chooses whom he pleases for salvation, rejecting others...With respect to the elect, this plan was founded upon his freely given mercy, without regard to human worth; but by his just and irreprehensible but incomprehensible judgment he has barred the door of life to those whom he has given over to damnation. As stated in Calvin: Institutes of the Christian Religion 2, ed. John T. McNeil (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, MCMLX), 930-931. Also see “Of Effectual Calling,” Westminster Confession of Faith (Inverness: Free Presbyterian Publications, 1981), p.53 and


14 Ibid.


17 R.K. Burkinshaw, p. 182.

18 Herman Ganzevoort, p. 115.


20 Ibid.

21 Ibid.

22 Herman Ganzevoort, p. 97.

23 Ibid., p. 98.

24 Margaret E. Ginn, p.126.

25 Ibid., p. 123.

26 Ibid., p. 127.


28 Ibid.


Margaret Ginn, p. 126.

According to the 1993-94 CSI Directory, Christian Schools International's mission is to advance Christian education and to support schools in their task of teaching students to know God and his world and to glorify him through obedient service. Christian Schools International is divided into thirteen geographic districts cover most of Canada and the United States. District 7 includes Washington, Montana, and Alaska. District 12 is designated for British Columbia. As stated in *CSI Directory 1993-94* (Grand Rapids: CSI, 1993), p.4.

British Columbia Ministry of Education. *Bill 33 - Independent Schools Support Act, 1977*

R.K. Burkinshaw, p. 265.


Herman Ganzevoort., p. 127.


Henry, Contant, "Developing 'Communities of Support' Within the Abbotsford Christian School System" (Burnaby: Simon Fraser University, Major Paper, 1996).

Federation of Independent School Associations Brief, pp. 1-12.
CHAPTER TWO

ETHNIC DIVERSITY IN THREE CHRISTIAN SCHOOLS:
COMPARING THE PAST AND THE PRESENT

Dutch Calvinist schools that were started in British Columbia all began operations in the post-World War II era. Three of the oldest schools are the Vancouver Christian School (founded in 1949), Abbotsford Christian School (1953), and Richmond Christian School (1957). Compared to the rest of Canada, the Vancouver Christian School is actually the third oldest. In order to examine each of these schools in its unique environments, it is useful to examine the ethnic composition of each of the schools at crucial transition points in its histories. When these data are compared with the school’s most recent years of operation, conclusions can be drawn concerning the degree of change in ethnic diversity and how this has impacted upon each school community as a whole. Data from interviews with the current principals will also be included to shed light on each school’s Christian distinctiveness and how the leadership of each school has attempted to maintain or modify school policies to better serve its community.

The Vancouver Christian School

As mentioned above, the Vancouver Christian School is the oldest Dutch Calvinist school in British Columbia and the third oldest in Canada. According to the school’s 1995-96 Handbook, the idea for a Christian school in Vancouver was born as early as 1933. In that year, a group of parents who felt that Christian education was a necessity for their children gathered to begin the process of building a Christian school society. After much
hard work and many struggles during the Depression and the Second World War, the Calvin Christian School Association was finally able to open the doors of Calvin Christian School in 1949. That year, the school had eleven students and was located in a renovated private home which also served as the living quarters for one teacher. The school quickly grew to 175 students by 1954. In the late fifties, the Vancouver Christian School assisted Dutch Christian Reformed families who lived outside the city by starting sister schools in Richmond (Lulu Island Christian School, 1957) and in Burnaby (John Knox Christian School, 1959). As a consequence, the enrollment at the Calvin Christian School dipped slightly because the students from Richmond and Burnaby started to attend the new schools created in their communities. The drop in enrollment, however, did not diminish its popularity and by 1964, enrollment peaked at 170 students. Throughout these early years, the Calvin Christian School (renamed Vancouver Christian in 1965), was primarily supported by Dutch immigrants from a variety of Christian Reformed Churches in East Vancouver and Burnaby.

The Late 1960's: Expansion Amidst Decline

Although 1964 produced a record number of students, it also marked the beginning of a steady drop in enrollment as Dutch immigration to the region slowed and as Dutch immigrants moved into the suburbs. The Vancouver Christian School, in fact, would not reach the 1964 enrollment total again until twenty years later. The fact that the school continued primarily to serve a Dutch ethnic community in the 1960's can be seen in the composition of the Grade 7 graduation classes from 1966 to 1968. In the 1965/66 school year, for example, 12 of the 14 Grade 7 graduates came from Dutch families. In 1966/67, 14 of 15 graduates came from Dutch homes, and in 1967/68, 18 of 19. In all three of these
school years the school’s six-member teaching staff all came from Dutch Calvinist backgrounds.

As enrollments dropped, the leadership attempted to give the school a broader appeal by embarking on a modest building program in 1966. Their desire was to improve the school’s original facilities at 5621 Killarney Street. The expansion of the school appears to have been a ‘pay-as-you-go’, venture as the 1967 yearbook contained an advertisement which read: “We can build this summer with your support.” This was followed by a similar advertisement in the 1968 yearbook: “We can finish this summer with your support.” Although the school community rallied behind the building project, the leadership of the school appeared to be under pressure to balance the school’s books as enrollment continued to tumble. In 1967, association vice-president Fred Pel recalled harder times and tried to encourage the community to not become discouraged. “Few things test our faith like the use of money. As a man put it after the closing of the banks during the depression of the thirties, ‘What I spent is gone; what I saved is lost; only what I gave I have’.” In a yearbook address during Canada’s centennial year, Gerry Ensing, who was the principal of VCS, and who later became the director of the Federation of Independent Schools (FISA) in the late 1970s, chided the federal and provincial governments for their hypocritical attitude towards Christian education in British Columbia.

It is deeply regretted that after 100 years some Canadian provinces, and especially British Columbia, still have not moved to correct existing discriminatory practices in the field of education that require parents to pay for the Christian schooling of their children, after paying for general school taxes that are used solely for secular training.
The 1970's: Survival, Revival and Optimism

With the corresponding decline in Dutch Calvinist immigration throughout the 1960's, it soon became apparent that the school was failing to replace the vacancies left by the slowly eroding Dutch Christian Reformed family base. By 1974, enrollment dropped below 100 students, the school's lowest total since 1952. The school continued to be supported primarily by the progeny of Dutch Calvinist immigrants (see Figures 1 and 2).

If the school hoped to survive it would have to appeal to the broader evangelical community to fill the empty classrooms and this is exactly what it did. Although enrollment dropped to near-record lows in the early 1970's, it slowly began to increase almost every year after 1974. An examination of student directories shows that the school was gradually becoming more of an inter-denominational and inter-ethnic school. By 1979/80, the school directories and handbook reveal that VCS had quite successfully appealed to the broader evangelical community. The handbook states: "To many it is a matter of great interest to see how through the years Vancouver Christian School has become a truly inter-denominational
Christian School. The handbook lists 36 churches that were represented in the school community: five Dutch Christian Reformed, three Dutch Reformed, seven Baptist, seven Pentecostal, five Mennonite, and two United. Catholics, Anglicans, and even one Christian Scientist church are also listed (see Figure 3).

The fact that the school enjoyed increasing support from the broader evangelical community can also be seen in the birth of a new high school in 1978. In that year, an eclectic group of Christian parents from the Vancouver area formed the independent Emmanuel Christian School Society and started the Emmanuel Christian Secondary School in Vancouver in the basement of the First Baptist church at 2551 East 49th Avenue. In Emmanuel's first yearbook, principal Conrad Vanderkamp credits "the generosity of the Faith Baptist Church and donations from the most unlikely of places (not specified)" for the successful kickoff year. The founders of ECSS, however, may have been a little too zealous
in their endeavor because after two years of operation it was in desperate need of financial support.

Although Emmanuel struggled in its first two years of operation, enrollments at the Vancouver Christian School were boosted after the Independent Schools Support Act was proclaimed by the B.C. Government in 1977. As mentioned above, Gerry Ensing, when he was principal of VCS in the late 1960's, was quite vocal about the fact that Christian schools in British Columbia had been denied government funding. Thus, in addition to serving as principal, president, and numerous other board and committee positions, Ensing eventually served as Executive Director of FISA (Federation of Independent Schools) in the late 1970's to work towards greater funding for all independent schools. Eventually Ensing's lobbying work paid off and the newly elected Social Credit government passed Bill 33, which ended
the century-old educational policy of no public funding for independent schools in British Columbia.

Government funding put the Vancouver Christian School on a stronger financial footing and enabled it to contemplate further expansion and thus appeal to a wider cross-section of their community. By 1979, the Dutch Calvinist component within the school represented only 38% of total family enrollment. New growth in enrollment came from the German-Canadian (especially Mennonite Brethren), Euro-Canadian, and a small number of Asian-Canadian Christian families (see Figure 4). To honour Ensing for his lobbying efforts, one of the members of the school's Education Committee, Adrian Peetoom, wrote a tribute to him in the 1978 yearbook. According to Peetoom, Gerry Ensing:


guided the work of many people who kept telling governments of the day that there were educational wrongs to be righted. His organizational talent, his gentle persistence, his perseverance in the face of disappointment, and his energy were not to be denied in the long run.\textsuperscript{16}
This was all accomplished while Ensing was president of the VCS society, a member of the Fraser Valley Christian High School education committee, and a board member of the newly formed Emmanuel Christian High School.

Ensing’s contribution to the school underlines another important reality at the Vancouver Christian School in the late seventies. Although the school was becoming increasingly interdenominational and multicultural, the teaching staff of the school continued to be strongly dominated by Dutch Canadians (see Figure 5).

The 1980’s and 1990’s: Expansion and Reorganization

Because the Emmanuel Christian Secondary School had financial troubles almost from the moment it opened, it had to turn to the Vancouver Christian School for help. On March 24, 1980, the two schools amalgamated in an almost unanimous vote. From this point on, the schools were called Vancouver Christian Elementary School and Vancouver Christian Secondary School. At the time of the amalgamation, the elementary school had Grades 1-7 and the secondary school had Grades 8-10. In the 1980/81 school year the high school added
Grade 11 and the next year Grade 12. In addition to adding a new high school grade every year, the Vancouver Christian School Society also decided to lease property on 3496 Haida Street in Vancouver for its newly-acquired high school. Kindergarten was also added to the elementary program in 1982/83 and the high school’s location was eventually bought by the society in 1984.

Although the two schools were amalgamated, they operated separately and often adopted visions that were mutually exclusive. One of the reasons the high school struggled was because it expanded before building a strong enough base of support in the community.  

Although the high school was only supported by a handful of families, it proceeded to add a new high school grade in each of its first four years of existence. As it expanded, it was also quick to add new teachers even though the number of students was still fairly low. In 1982/83, for example, the high school had a mixture of 19 full-time and part-time staff members with only 133 students. By contrast, the elementary school had seven full-time and three part-time staff with 126 students. At first this strategy appeared to be working because the school enjoyed stable enrollments until 1984/85. In the following school year, however, enrollments experienced a sharp decline. Because of the quick expansion, programs in each of the grades were not given enough time to develop and thus did not reach the quality standards demanded by most parents. To offset the slide in enrollment, the school tried a variety of measures. One strategy was to meet with school families individually and try to persuade them to make a commitment to keep their children in the school until graduation. According to principal Ron Donkersloot, this only served to exasperate parents because they felt “guilted into staying.”
A second strategy to offset declining enrollments was aimed at the growing immigrant population in the neighborhood. The high school’s leaders hoped to attract students from the new immigrant populations by advertising the school as an ESL school. This strategy did not work and may have even discouraged certain non-ESL families already in the school community who felt the schools scarce resources and standards would suffer by the creation of new ESL programs. In the end, it appears that the high school, in its sincere effort to save itself, alienated many of the key families responsible for keeping it afloat. This is significant because many of the families responsible for taking leadership of the high school had a Dutch Calvinist background. Although Dutch Calvinists made up only a small percentage of the overall school enrollment, they still had a significant presence in managing the school through membership on the society’s board. When they left, the school was faced with a leadership vacuum.

Although the high school struggled throughout the late 1980's, the elementary school program remained strong and stable. This can be partially attributed to a distinctively different approach to growth. Instead of expanding quickly, it appears that the elementary school took a much more economically conservative approach. In 1982/83, for example, classes were kept fairly full by using split classes (28 Grade 1’s and 2’s in one class) and the staff was kept at a relatively small size. In 1984/85 the elementary school had 14 more students then the high school but seven fewer full-time staff. The elementary school also did not try to attract ESL students to augment enrollments. According to principal Ron Donkersloot, the school “remained focused on its Christian distinctives, high academic standards, and maintenance of a strong relationship with the school’s founding churches.”20
Although the elementary leadership did not make any concerted efforts to entice a particular ethnic group within the school community, it is interesting to note that Ron Donkersloot chose to join the Vancouver Christian Reformed Church when he became principal of the school. As a member of one of the key Dutch Calvinist founding churches, he was able to promote the school within his congregation and encourage the church to continue supporting the school even though it had lost much of its Dutch flavour. Vancouver Christian School also has continued to be an active participant in the Dutch Calvinist Society of Christian Schools in British Columbia (SCSBC) as Donkersloot has continued as principal. The school continues to enjoy leadership from members raised in the Dutch Calvinist tradition (see Figure 6) but to a much lesser degree than a decade earlier (see Figure 5).

As the high school dropped in enrollment, the Elementary school experienced strong growth in the younger grades and made modest enrollment gains in every year of the decade except 1981/82 and 1988/89. Unfortunately for the high school, however, the elementary school experienced a dip in enrollment in the intermediate grades in the mid to late eighties.
Enrollment, consequently, dipped so sharply in the 1985/86 school year that the high school never recovered. The next year it fell again to 92 students (the Grade 11 class had only eight students). In 1988/89 the board decided to cut the high school program down to Grades 8-10 and then finally closed the school at the end of the year. Some of the long-standing high school teachers were given severance packages and a wholesale reorganization began. The elementary program was moved into the high school facility and the old elementary campus was sold to the Formosa Academy for $1,000,000. In the 1990's this money was used to improve the school's facilities and the school has enjoyed substantial growth. Since closing the old high school program, the school has added Grade 8 in 1991, Grade 9 in 1992, and Grade 10 in 1994. At this point, there are no plans to expand any further. According to Donkersloot, the second attempt at building a Christian high school will be more of a 'pay-as-you-grow' approach rather than the 'leap of faith' taken in the late 1970's and early 1980's.

In 1988/89, the final school year of a physically separate secondary program, the Vancouver Christian School had reached an unprecedented degree of ethnic diversity despite internal
tension over the secondary school’s decline and differing views on how to address the ESL question (see Figure 7).

Vancouver Christian School Today

In recent years, the Vancouver Christian School has been supported by a variety of different ethnic groups who come from a wide range of predominantly evangelical churches. As mentioned above, only 9% of the students come from Dutch families that primarily attend Christian Reformed Churches in Vancouver and Burnaby, a considerable drop from 1988. Another 32% of the school’s students come from Asian families up from 22% in 1988. Among the Asians within the school community, the largest single group is the Chinese. The school also has ten Filipino families, two Korean families, and two Indonesian families. Two Native Indian families have recently joined the school body. It should also be pointed out that the leadership of VCS is still heavily supported by people from a Dutch and/or Christian

![Figure 8: 1995 VCS Families by Ethnicity](image)
Reformed background. In 1994/95 six of the ten board members were from a Dutch background. Of the 32 teaching and support members, 13 members had a Dutch Calvinist heritage. Although the board has been dominated by Dutch CRC and Euro-Canadian members, more Asian members have served on it in the recent past. On the whole, however, Asian parents have more of a hands-off view to Christian education and there is perhaps a sense of simply ‘buying a product’. Asian parents have high respect for the authority of the teachers and administration, and therefore trust them to run the school in a professional way. Consequently, very few Asian parents see the need to attend membership meetings or become involved in leadership roles. These parents still contribute greatly to the school community by becoming involved in less noticeable endeavors such as field trip driving and helping in the library.  

Although the school has a high degree of ethnic diversity, it is very difficult for new immigrants to gain entry into the school because of a strict registration policy regarding ESL students. As mentioned above, the elementary school had never advertised itself as an ESL
school. According to Donkersloot, the school does not make a big effort to attract ESL students and might even be accused of discouraging them. The 1995/96 handbook states:

> Vancouver Christian School is not a school where ESL (English as a Second Language) services are offered as part of the regular curriculum; therefore we do not have the resources to deal with students who require special instruction in the English language. This is an important consideration in admission of any foreign students. However, if circumstances permit and the proper documentation is presented, the application of a foreign student will be considered.26

The end result of this policy is that very few ESL students are accepted at VCS. The school currently has a long waiting list to get in and ESL applicants, according to conversations with Donkersloot, are most often relegated to the bottom of the application pile. Any ESL students that are admitted are mainstreamed and expected to keep up with the standard curriculum. As a consequence, most ESL students at VCS are usually found in the first three grades or in any grade that has a shortfall of registrants.

**Christian Distinctiveness and Policies**

Although the Vancouver Christian School has a high level of religious and ethnic diversity, it is proud of its Dutch Calvinist heritage and still manages to maintain many features of its Christian Reformed distinctiveness. The 1995/96 school handbook states: “the Vancouver Christian School is a denominationally diverse educational community whose basis is the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, the infallible Word of God, as explicated in the Reformed Creeds.”27 The handbook then goes on to describe, specifically, the basic Christian principles that are affirmed by the society. The fact that the school sees itself as an interdenominational community unified around certain basic Reformed Creeds suggests that the school sees its diversity as fundamentally interdenominational rather than
cultural. Any cultural values and beliefs held by the students may be expressed as long as they are subordinated to the key Reformed Creeds. In terms of denominational affiliation, however, almost one-third of the students attend the Willingdon Mennonite Brethren church, and one-third attend the Burnaby Christian Fellowship, a Pentecostal church. The remaining students belong to predominantly evangelical Christian churches scattered across Vancouver, Burnaby, and other nearby districts in the Lower Mainland. As a whole, Vancouver Christian is becoming less and less Calvinist every year because of the influence of non-Calvinist denominations.

In order to be admitted into the school, parents must agree with the basis and principles of the association and attend an interview conducted by the principal. If the principal is convinced that the parents are sincere in their commitment to Christian education in general, they are admitted if there is space. Although it is conceivable that non-Christian parents might learn to say the right words and thus gain entry, such an occurrence would be unusual because prospective registrants are required to have references from an evangelical church minister.

One final example of the school’s Christian perspective can be seen in the general expectations of the teaching staff. According to Donkersloot, a key component that makes his school distinctively Christian is that the teaching staff are expected to model Christian behaviour through their lives. The staff has members from a Christian Reformed background but there are teachers from other denominations as well. Although all staff have agreed to uphold the Reformed Creeds “many approach Christian thinking from their own perspective.”28 The school stresses collegiality and community and would rather agree to disagree on
some of the ‘finer theological points’. The most important thing teachers must remember is to model Christian love before the students. For this reason stress is put on maintaining good teacher-teacher, student-teacher, and parent-teacher relationships.

The Abbotsford Christian School

Although the Abbotsford Christian School (ACS) began operating in 1953, the idea for the school actually was born in 1950 when a group of parents, familiar with the concept of Christian education established the Abbotsford Christian School Society (ACSS). The first school began in 1953 with 75 students in the church basement of the First Christian Reformed Church on the Abbotsford-Mission Highway. Almost all of the children at this time were the progeny of recent post-war Christian Reformed Dutch immigrants. As former principal Henry Contant states, “this one church (and denomination) was, in essence, the most unified and most supportive ‘faith community’ of the Christian school.” From 1953 to 1955, the Abbotsford Christian School rented facilities from the Christian Reformed Church and leadership frequently alternated between the Christian Reformed Church council and the Abbotsford Christian School board. Since the same people were serving on both boards it can be said that “leadership within church and school were almost synonymous.” Society minutes from these early years seem to suggest that the membership had some difficulty in getting the school established because of the relatively low income base among the new Dutch immigrant community. According to former principal John Kampman, the membership tackled the problems “with a simple faith and very little else.”
1960-1969: First Expansion

During the 1960's a separate school facility was built and the school moved out of the First Christian Reformed Church basement. Although the early Dutch immigrant community struggled to keep the school operating in the early years, the high concentration of Dutch immigrants soon became well-established in Abbotsford and created a strong foundation on which to expand the Dutch Calvinist Christian school system in the area. In 1960, the school society built a facility housing four elementary classrooms on the site of what is today called the Heritage Campus (2884 Abbotsford-Mission Highway). This facility was then later expanded for the 1966/67 school year. During this period the school continued to be primarily supported by the Christian Reformed Church community.

1970-1985: The Developing Years and Tragedy

In 1973, the A.C.S.S. added a second elementary school at 35011 Old Clayburn Road. Three years later, this elementary campus was expanded and converted into a junior high school campus (Grades 8-10). In March 1979, the society approved the proposal to add Grades 11 and 12 to its secondary program and further expanded the high school facility to accommodate the new students. In 1981, the Abbotsford Christian School graduated its first Grade 12 students. In conversations with former principal Henry Contant, the school was still very much a CRC-run, CRC-supported school even in the early eighties. On May 1, 1985, however, an event occurred that marked a significant turning point in the history of the Abbotsford Christian School. On that day, most of the elementary campus on the Mission highway burned to the ground as a consequence of an arsonist's fire. "Without notice, over 200 students were without a school or any resources...[but] within 11½ months of the
devastating fire a completely new and expanded elementary campus opened its doors to welcome back its students that had been temporarily housed in a variety of locations.”

Once the rebuilt elementary campus was completed, John Kampman, principal of the school since its creation, retired as principal after 33 years of service. According to Henry Contant, this man is affectionately known today as Mr. Abbotsford Christian School among long-time members of the school community.

1986-1996: A New Direction and Rapid Growth

After the 1985 fire, the retirement of long-time CRC principal John Kampman, a period of rapid growth in the community, and an increasing awareness of Christian education among evangelical Christian parents, the school started to become more of an inter-denominational school. The largest non-CRC group to join the school was the Mennonite Brethren. Although the Mennonite Educational Institute, a secondary school, flourished in northwest Abbotsford, many MB families enrolled their students in Abbotsford Christian if they lived closer to the school. The fact that ACS offered an elementary program was also a strong drawing point for many Mennonite families. Other evangelicals also began supporting the school and it enjoyed unprecedented growth throughout the late 1980's and early 1990's. It is also useful to point out that, according to a promotional document, “Abbotsford/Matsqui became one of the fastest growing municipalities in Canada during this period and the Christian Reformed Churches, traditionally the source of most of the school's support, also experienced tremendous growth.”

In 1992, a brand new elementary campus was built named Clayburn Hills, and in 1994 the high school was completely full and needed nine portables to function. By the 1995/96 school year, the Abbotsford Christian School system
had become the largest Dutch Calvinist-founded Christian school system in Canada with 1250 students on three campuses. A new $4.5 million high school expansion has since been completed for the 1996/97 school year. In September 1996, Abbotsford Christian Secondary School hosted the huge NWCSI-CTABC conference (North West Christian Schools International - British Columbia Christian Teachers Association) that brought together over 1000 Christian teachers from all over British Columbia and Northwestern Washington State.

**Abbotsford Christian School Today**

The Abbotsford Christian School needs to be understood more along Caucasian denominational lines than along the lines of inter-racial diversity because there are very few visible ethnic minorities in the school and in the eastern part of the Abbotsford community (i.e. Asians, East Indians, African Americans - see Figure 10). In terms of ethnic diversity, the school is almost exclusively made up of a Dutch, German, and Euro-Canadian student body. There is only one East Indian student (who was adopted into a CRC family) and six Asian families.

Today, the Christian Reformed denomination remains the largest supporting denomination with 65% of Abbotsford Christian School families holding membership with one of its eight neighboring Christian Reformed Churches. Several of these Christian Reformed churches still take regular offerings for the Christian school. The fact that Dutch Calvinists make up approximately two-thirds of the student body and over half of the staff is not surprising given the fact that the surrounding community is one of the most densely populated CRC communities in Canada. The remaining 38% of the ACS families are spread among 24 different Christian denominations, of which Christian Missionary Alliance,
Baptist, Evangelical Free, Mennonite Brethren, and Pentecostal are the major ones (see Figure 11).
Although the leadership of the school board continues to be dominated by individuals from the Christian Reformed Church, other denominations are becoming well-represented at the committee level and on the teaching staff (see Figures 12 and 13). Many non-CRC families that come into the school community are unfamiliar with the concept of Christian Education and thus may be reluctant, initially, to become involved in the leadership of the school. Educating both CRC and non-CRC families about Christian Education requires significant effort from the administration. When asked about the possibility of non-CRC leadership in the present as compared to the past, Contant stated that the ACSS might not have hired a non-CRC principal ten years ago, but that today it is no longer an issue because the school board is more concerned that the individual have the right qualifications rather than simply a Dutch Christian Reformed denominational background.39

Since Abbotsford Christian School’s diversity is largely confined to various Euro-Canadian evangelical denominations, ESL has not been a pressing educational issue because
the number of new Dutch immigrants has dramatically declined since the late 1950's (see Chapter One, Table 2). Any ESL students that do join the school are usually recent Mennonite immigrants from Brazil or Paraguay. In the 1990's ESL has not been a big challenge for the school but the administration anticipates it will become one as more and more Asian and East Indian immigrants move closer to the school and as the school accepts more foreign students. If the school received more ESL students it would likely attempt to integrate them into regular classrooms as soon as possible.\textsuperscript{42}

According to 1991 Census Canada figures, the total population of the Abbotsford-Matsqui area was 132,426. When the population is divided by ethnic origin it is interesting to note that 6,670 residents reported Dutch as their ethnic origin and 6075 reported East Indian. Nine hundred forty-five residents reported having some knowledge of Chinese.\textsuperscript{43} Although the East Indian and Dutch population have almost become equal in Abbotsford, one of the reasons for the absence of East Indian families in the Abbotsford Christian School is
because most East Indian families are Sikh or Hindu, and have no interest in a Christian school. The homogeneity and religious orthodoxy of the East Indian community as well as the enrollment policies of the Abbotsford Christian School should not be underestimated when considering the reasons why the East Indian community has had little involvement with the Abbotsford Christian School.

Christian Distinctiveness and Policies

In a 1995 school promotional article entitled “Great Expectations in Abbotsford,” an anonymous author states:

in 1950, immigrants from the Netherlands who settled in Abbotsford established the Christian school to complement the ministry of the church by applying and developing the teachings of the Bible in all areas of study and living. To help assure that the school stays on that track, the school requires that at least one of the parents of a student has a clear commitment to Christ.44

These statements underline the school’s fundamental educational philosophy and is reinforced by the Abbotsford Christian constitution. In the constitution, it states that the Abbotsford Christian School Society exists “to provide education on the basis of the infallible word of God, as interpreted by the historic Creeds of the Protestant Reformation.”45

In order for a child to be admitted, at least one parent must demonstrate a commitment to Christ and provide a reference letter from a local minister. Most admissions are screened by the principal but if there are any ‘gray issues’ concerning an application, a second interview will be set up with a three-member admissions committee (usually the principal or vice-principal, a parent representative, and a board member). All new students who are admitted are on probation for three months or longer if needed.
If the school needs to limit its enrollment, admissions are prioritized in the following order:

1) Children of parents who are ACSS members

2) Families who are members of churches who financially support the school (i.e. the CRC churches)

3) Students transferring from other schools belonging to the SCSBC (Society of Christian Schools in British Columbia) and CSI (Christian Schools International) and other Christian schools.

4) All other Christian Families.\textsuperscript{46}

These registration distinctions suggest that the school continues to value highly its Christian Reformed heritage. The rules for ‘limited admissions’ appear to show that CRC families have a preferred status because their churches continue to be regular financial supporters of the school.

Although the largest group within the school continues to be the Dutch Calvinist or CRC community, the increase in representation of other groups of Christians has been profound in the most recent years. As a consequence, there are presently many divergent views of Christian education within the ACS community. Among the many denominations represented in the school, for example, few have a strong tradition of support for Christian education. Some evangelical denominations even have a strong tradition of encouraging Christians to attend public school so that they can be ‘witnesses’ for Christ in these institutions. Para-church organizations such as Inter-Varsity Christian Fellowship, and Youth for Christ also “actively encouraged a Christian presence within the public school.”\textsuperscript{47} Many
public schools have banned such organizations from its hallways and so some Christian parents have consequently reconsidered their views of public education. For many, however, Christian education and the Christian life remain “as somewhat of a paradox and a dilemma.” As Harro Van Brummelen states, “Christians sense that they must separate themselves and their students from aspects of our culture considered so evil that they cannot be redeemed and must be shunned. On the other hand they believe that God calls Christians to be leaven in society.”

In order to mold this diverse pool of opinions and attitudes into a strong ‘community of support’, the ACS leadership has pursued a variety of strategies. The school has recently developed ‘Honorary Memberships’ for grandparents who have been long-time supporters of the school. This has served to augment the highly successful ‘Grandparent’s Days’ and encourage the school founders to continue supporting the school. It also ensures that the CRC denomination will continue to strongly influence the direction of the Abbotsford Christian School. The strategy seems to be working because annual assemblies held during ‘Grandparent’s Days’ continue to enjoy standing room only crowds. In an effort to maintain good relations with the 38% non-CRC communities, a database has been developed that contains updated denominational lists and church membership information for each school family. In September, individual church lists of students attending ACS are sent to ministers within the community to emphasize “the partnership that exists between their church and Abbotsford Christian School.” By keeping the lines of communication open with the churches, both the school and the church are better able to minister to families in times of crisis. As Contant states,
the pastors often spend more time with the parents and the school spends more time with the children. Given this situation, it is helpful to keep the lines of communication open between the pastoral staff at the church and the principals, teachers, and counselors at ACS when a school family faces separation, divorce, abuse, extended illness, death, or other family crisis.\(^5\)

A summary of the distinctively Christian features of the Abbotsford Christian School would include allegiance to the Calvinist Reformed Creeds of the school’s founding fathers and the maintenance of a well-connected community network that intimately links the school, church, and family.

**The Richmond Christian School**

The beginnings of the Richmond Christian School (RCS) are found in Vancouver because many children from Dutch Christian Reformed families in Richmond attended the Calvin Christian School of Vancouver before a Christian school was started in Richmond. In 1957, the Calvin Christian School Society started the Lulu Island Christian school in a rented United Church facility in Richmond with an enrollment of 37 students in Grades 1-8. It was located at the corner of Cambie and River Road. The following year school enrollment grew to 55 and every student came from a family belonging to the small Dutch Calvinist community in Richmond. In 1959, the Richmond Christian Reformed Church members constructed a facility at 818 No. 2 Road in Richmond that was designed to accommodate both their church and the Lulu Island Christian school. In that first year, Kindergarten and Grade 9 were added but the school reverted back to Grades 1-8 in the following year. Throughout the first eight years of its existence, the school remained affiliated with the Calvin (Vancouver) Christian School Society and received almost all of its students from families who attended the Richmond Christian Reformed Church. The Dutch flavor of the
school was quite evident at this time, especially in meetings of the ladies’ circle. Long-time school supporter Romy Vanderbos recalls that Ladies’ School Circle meetings were often held in the Dutch language because so many new immigrants were arriving in the school community. “Husbands who picked their wives up from these meetings would often be heard complaining ‘Wat zijn jullie weer laat!’ (You are late again!),” if the meetings took too long.

1965-1979: Independence and Decline

Throughout the early 1960's the school enjoyed modest growth even though it reduced its program to Grades 1-7 so that all its graduates could be sent to the new Fraser Valley Christian High School that began operating in 1964 in Langley. As the years passed, parents who supported the Lulu Island Christian School determined that it would be desirable to establish their own society, separate from the Calvin Christian School Society. As a consequence, the Richmond Christian School Society came into existence in 1965, and the school has operated independently ever since. According to Vic Wiens, former vice-principal of Richmond Christian School, the school “continued to be supported by poor Dutch immigrant families who sacrificed up to one quarter of their incomes to send their children to the school.” Despite the modest income base of the school community the society decided to purchase the school facility from the CRC church. Throughout the 1960's, the Richmond Christian Reformed Church and Richmond Christian School continued to be defined by the growth of the Dutch Calvinist community in Richmond. In 1969, 12 of the 16 Grade 7 graduates came from Dutch-Canadian families.
Richmond Christian School reached 135 students in 1972/73, the highest total in its history, but then enrollment started to slide throughout the rest of the decade. Many reasons were offered for this slide in enrollment. One was that Dutch immigration had significantly dropped by this time and the community was losing much of its Dutchness. Family sizes, even among Dutch Calvinists, were becoming smaller and smaller and the few young Dutch families that did grow up in the school were moving out of Richmond to find more inexpensive places to live. School president Nick Loenen, who was later to serve as an MLA in the Social Credit government, attributed the school’s decline to a lack of faith.

Nobody has to eat dry bread or go barefoot because he is sending his children to a Christian school, nor do we have to have sleepless nights from worry where to get the school tuition. What we need in the first place is faith, because when we know that we’re doing the right thing for God’s Kingdom, He will also provide. Then we need the willingness to sacrifice a few luxuries maybe, and for some we need to swallow our ‘pride’ and accept help.

By the 1978/79 school year the enrollment had dropped to approximately 86 students and some members of the society called for a closure of the school because “projections based on the families in the Richmond Christian Reformed Church predicted that the school would likely have as few as 65 students within a few years.”

1979-1986: Revival and Expansion

Until 1979, every teacher and principal who had served at the Richmond Christian School came from a Christian Reformed background. In 1979, the school was floundering but a significant turning point took place when Ian Codling was hired as the school’s first non-CRC principal. As Vic Wiens states, “although the conservative Presbyterian Church he belonged to had very similar beliefs to the Christian Reformed Church, Ian was able to move
the school away from an ethnically Dutch school, to one seen by the community as a non-ethnic, interdenominational school. This was not done without any heartache. According to Ian Codling, non-CRC members like himself were respected within the school but in a sense viewed as ‘outsiders’. For example, when Codling started working at the school, the former principal (Gerry Dykstra) primarily referred to the local CRC church directory to help him see if there was any potential for growth. At that time, the thinking of the school’s leadership clearly was still very much entrenched in a Dutch ethnic mindset. This was about to change, however, as many evangelical Christian parents from non-Dutch, non-CRC backgrounds began sending their children to the school. In 1982, the school celebrated its twenty-fifth anniversary and there were signs that the school was moving away from its Dutch Calvinist roots. The changes in staff in particular, represented a significant departure from the trends of earlier years. In 1979, for example, all four of RCS’s teachers came from Dutch ethnic backgrounds. In 1982, only two of seven teachers were traditional Dutch Calvinists (see Figure 14). Not only was the teaching staff predominantly a mixture of Euro-Canadian Christians but the student body was becoming increasingly interdenominational and multiethnic as well. It is interesting to note that although the number of Dutch teachers declined rapidly after Ian Codling became principal, Dutch-Canadian students still were in the majority (see Figure 15). Growth at RCS can also be attributed to an expansion of the school programs in the early eighties. In 1982, a Kindergarten program was added and Grade 8 soon followed in 1984. By this time, the school was full to maximum capacity and a radical expansion program was begun. The school decided to sell its property, purchase cheaper land, and build a larger school facility at 5240 Woodwards Road. In September
1986, the school moved into a brand new building after spending a year in a rented public school facility on Sea Island.

**FIGURE 14: 1982 RCS TEACHERS BY ETHNICITY**

*N=7 Teachers*

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<th>Ethnicity</th>
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<td>Other Euro-Canadian</td>
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<td>Dutch-Canadian</td>
<td>25%</td>
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**FIGURE 15: 1982 RCS STUDENTS BY ETHNICITY**

*n=96 students*

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</thead>
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<tr>
<td>Other Euro-Canadian</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dutch-Canadian</td>
<td>51%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>German-Canadian</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
1986-1996: The Amalgamation

Although the new facility had just been built, RCS classrooms were quickly filled. Growth again came mainly from the larger non-CRC evangelical community. As a consequence, a High School Planning Committee was formed and overtures to the Seacliff Christian School, an evangelical Christian School begun in 1975 by the Richmond Bethel Mennonite Brethren Church (details to follow), were made to establish a joint Christian High School in Richmond. Philosophical differences at first prevented such a venture and RCS began building towards a full junior high program on its own. In 1988/89 Grade 9 was added and the next year Grade 10. Because enrollment continued to soar, a portable facility was set up on Number One Road and Blundell so that Grades 8-10 could be moved out of the Elementary school on Woodwards Road. One of the new sources of enrollment growth at RCS came from the high Asian immigration to Richmond. By 1990, 21% of the students who attended RCS came from Asian-Canadian Christian families (see Figure 16). The RCS board began to consider the possibility of purchasing land for a new High School but soon realized that the only suitable land available was on No.5 Road, a few blocks away from the Seacliff Christian School. After much deliberation, the leadership of the school decided that it would make no sense to compete directly with Seacliff, which by this time had also developed a solid junior high program (Grades 8-10) at the east end of Richmond. The land they hoped to purchase on No.5 Road was located in the agricultural land reserve and thus was very difficult to rezone. Overtures were again made to Seacliff about the possibility of developing a combined high school.
Seacliff Christian School

The Seacliff Christian School was established in 1975 by members of the Richmond Bethel Mennonite Brethren Church who desired to establish a day school in its new multipurpose facility. The school began as an A.C.E. school (Accelerated Christian Education) but switched to a standard B.C. curriculum when its junior high grades were added in 1976/77 (Grade 8), in 1977/78 (Grade 9), and in 1978/79 (Grade 10). Most of the original students who attended the school came from German Mennonite and Mennonite Brethren churches in Richmond. In the 1970's, Richmond Christian and Seacliff Christian saw each other more as rivals than as partners in Christian education. In a conversation with a former long-time member of the Seacliff teaching staff, the teacher recalled that the Mennonites did not like the smoking and drinking in the Dutch community and the Dutch were offended by the Mennonite propensity to go shopping on Sundays.
Although Seacliff was created by the members of a Mennonite Brethren Church, it is important to point out that the Mennonite founders did not have a large enough presence in the community to fill its classrooms with their own children. The school was consequently forced to turn to the larger evangelical community for support almost immediately. Seacliff's short history was also checkered with disputes over philosophical direction. Its founders had hoped to give it an academic focus but when enrollment faltered it became a 'missionary school' and attempted to reach out to non-Christian parents who wanted a traditional education. The school experienced some growth in the early 1980's, but its enrollment dropped substantially to 107 students in 1987/88.

Another reason for such unstable enrollments at Seacliff was the lack of stability in leadership (see Appendix 3). After 17 years of operation, not one principal stayed at Seacliff for longer than three years. It was not until the 1990/91 school year that the school was close to paying off its operating debt. Because of its long-standing debt, the school was also unable to acquire any equity but was forced to rely on the free rent provided by Richmond Bethel Church for much of its history. A close examination of Seacliff's enrollment also revealed that the school was serving relatively the same clientele as the Richmond Christian School (see Figures 16 and 17). In terms of enrollment, the two most noticeable differences between Seacliff Christian and Richmond Christian were the presence of 32 Indo-Canadian students and the complete absence of Dutch-Canadian students at Seacliff. Such differences can be attributed to the fact that the eastern side of Richmond had a stronger Indo-Canadian community and Seacliff Christian had a more open enrollment policy as mentioned above.
Although both schools had some minor differences in enrollment, on the whole, they were essentially competing for the same students. This realization as well as the strong equity position of the Richmond Christian School made the prospect of a partnership appealing. When the RCS overtures came again, the two schools were ready to cooperate and they officially amalgamated on April 1, 1992. The high turnover rate in the leadership could be attributed to the fact that the school had constantly struggled financially and never seemed to develop a unified educational mission.

**Richmond Christian School Today**

Since Seacliff Christian and Richmond Christian amalgamated in 1992, the school has managed to expand both the original Seacliff facility into a Grade 8-12 Secondary School and has increased the size of the Richmond Christian Elementary Campus on Woodwards Road so that it can accommodate over 400 K-7 students. Most of the families that support Richmond Christian are non-Dutch, non CRC evangelical Christians with over half being Asian Canadians (see Figure 18). Presently, 56% of the Richmond Christian School is a
mixture of Asian families. Twelve of the 360 families are Christian Reformed and the remaining families come from a host of different denominations. There is a much higher percentage of Asian families in the Elementary school than in the High school but this is expected to change as students graduate from the Elementary campus. The fact that the future growth of the school lies in Asian Christian enrollment can especially be seen in the growing Asian Christian presence in Kindergarten. In the 1996/97 school year, for example, 80% of the students in that class came from Asian families. The school also has an active ESL and learning assistance program. In 1995/96 there were 20 ESL students in Elementary school and six ESL students at the high school. On the whole, the high school mainstreams students into its basic curriculum but will set up a special individual program with a learning assistant if the student is struggling.

Richmond Christian’s parent-run school board and teaching staff has also become ethnically and denominationally diverse. From 1992-1995, the school board was led by
President David Ching, an Asian-Canadian. Today, two of 11 board members attend Chinese churches. The school’s teaching staff is composed of persons from a wide variety of denominations and ethnic backgrounds (see Figure 19). One unfortunate trend that has occurred in the last decade, however, has been the alienation of the Dutch Christian Reformed families. This trend began approximately eight years ago when Richmond Christian School started to seriously consider an amalgamation with the Seacliff Christian school. Before this time, Dutch members maintained a strong presence on the RCS board and there was a small but influential group of Dutch families. As the years passed and the school’s interdenominational and multicultural character increased, many Dutch founders became less and less involved in the school but continued to send their children to the school.
Christian Distinctiveness and Policies

Like most Christian Schools, Richmond Christian has clearly defined enrollment requirements. One rather controversial policy concerning enrollment has been whether to allow non-Christian families into the school. This policy came under considerable scrutiny after the amalgamation with the Seacliff Christian School. Prior to the merger, Seacliff, in order to evangelize non-Christians while at the same time augmenting enrollment, had chosen to allow non-Christian families into the school. RCS, on the other hand, had a long-time policy of Christians-only. After much debate, the Christians-only policy was chosen and children who are presently enrolled must have at least one parent who has demonstrated a Christian commitment and who is a full-time member of a local evangelical church. Parents have to fill out an extensive registration package that includes a pastoral reference letter, a statement of faith form, a church theology form, and a parent/student commitment form. After all the paperwork has been completed, the family is interviewed by the principal and registered into the school only if the parent(s) and student(s) demonstrate a commitment to the school’s philosophy and behavioural standards.

A second key feature of the Richmond Christian School is that it has remained firmly entrenched in Calvinist faith and practice despite splitting from the Society of Christian Schools in British Columbia (SCSBC), the Dutch Calvinist professional association it had been affiliated with for 37 years. The final split occurred in 1994 and while some Dutch members of the community might attribute the defection from the SCSBC to the Seacliff amalgamation, Principal Codling rejects such a notion and blames the inflexible machinations and liberal leanings of the organization for the break in ties. In his 1996/97
preschool address to the staff, Codling expressed a concern that many Dutch Calvinist Christian schools were looking more and more like public schools every year because they were failing to wrestle with the absolute truths of the Scriptures. In Codling’s opinion, most Dutch Calvinist Christian schools have handled Biblical truth subjectively and have thus compromised their Reformed theological roots by embracing primacy of the child educational philosophies such as the Year 2000 document produced by the B.C. Ministry of Education in the early 1990’s. This is inconsistent with the mission of RCS which is to teach a Christ-centered curriculum that examines every particle of life according to the infallible word of God. Unlike many Christian schools, RCS’s educational mission has put the ‘truth of the Scriptures’ ahead of developing a wholesome environment. It is believed that a wholesome environment and high academic standards would naturally follow as long as the school emphasized the absolute moral truths that emanate from Biblical critical thinking. To advertise a positive, loving environment ahead of Christian thinking is ‘to put the cart before the horse’.

Although Codling claims his objections to the SCSBC are fundamentally philosophical, it should be noted that he has had a history of personal conflict with the new leadership of the SCSBC. While the society was under Harro Van Brummelen, the Richmond Christian School felt as if it had a place within the SCSBC organization. After Van Brummelen left the organization, new leaders did not feel comfortable with Ian Codling’s focus on Christian critical thinking and made principal Codling feel like RCS no longer “fit the party line.” Because RCS leadership felt ignored by the SCSBC, they no longer saw any point in paying the increasingly high membership fees ($30,000 in 1993/94, its last
membership year). Although Richmond was a long-time member of the Society of Christian Schools in British Columbia, its departure can also be seen as a general trend within the SCSBC. In the 1990's many Christian schools began to look for a cheaper umbrella organization and switched to The Association of Christian Schools International (ACSI) as a professional resource. According to Van Brummelen, "one reason was a substantial difference in fees; another, that board, committee and staff positions in the SCS-BC since 1990 rested almost exclusively with persons of Calvinist background."72

Although RCS has zealously pursued a distinctively Bible-centered curriculum and Calvinist policy framework, it appears to have failed to mold together a community that embraces the same ideals. This especially can be seen when observing the various Caucasian and Asian families within the school. According to some informal comments given by vice-principal Irene Kraay, the Asian parents in particular come from essentially the same Chinese ethnic background, and this has caused the school leadership to rethink how they can involve these parents in the general workings of the school.73 At the moment, it appears that the school is segregated into two communities, a tight-knit and closed Asian community and a Caucasian community which becomes smaller and smaller every year. As a consequence, the leadership sees a need to break through tight-knit cultural barriers in order to build a larger sense of community that will provide greater connectiveness between Asian families, Caucasian families, and the school staff. Right now RCS is larger but is a far less united Christian community than it was when the school was started by Dutch immigrants 40 years ago. One step the leadership has taken to address the problem of communication between two different cultures is to hire Asian staff members. According to principal Codling, this
has greatly assisted in helping Chinese students adjust at the secondary level because Chinese students feel more comfortable seeking counsel from a Chinese staff member.

RCS has, for the most part, lost the visible, cultural aspects of its Dutch cultural heritage but has fervently sought to maintain the theological structures of its founders. In a sense, RCS has lost the ‘Dutch’ in Dutch Calvinist in an effort to preserve ‘Calvinist’ fundamentals in a community that is predominantly non-Dutch and non-Calvinist in orientation.

Comparisons Between the Schools

A comparison of the historical beginnings of the Vancouver, Abbotsford, and Richmond Christian schools confirms that they were all started by the same wave of post-World War II Dutch immigrants. Ties between the Vancouver and Richmond Christian school were especially close in that RCS was originally an annex of the Calvin (Vancouver) Christian school. For the first 15-20 years, all three schools were primarily supported by people who were both Dutch and Calvinist. In the early 1970’s, however, each school began to follow a different path because of the decline of Dutch immigration to the Vancouver area in the 1960’s. After experiencing significant declines in enrollment and near closure, Vancouver and Richmond turned to Christians outside the Dutch Calvinist community in order to survive. As a consequence, Vancouver and Richmond became interdenominational in character whereas Abbotsford continued to remain primarily a Dutch ethno-religious community. Abbotsford was able to maintain its Dutch Calvinist character longer because the Abbotsford/Matsqui area received a much larger proportion of Dutch immigrants in the early post-war years. By the 1980’s and 1990’s, all three schools had developed a significant
interdenominational component but Vancouver and Richmond increasingly became the school of choice for many visible ethnic minorities, particularly Asian immigrants. Although recent growth of the Asian community within the school strongly reflects the immigration patterns of the Greater Vancouver area, it should also be noted that many Dutch families moved out of Vancouver and Richmond in the 1970's to find cheaper housing in British Columbia's Lower Fraser Valley. As a consequence, the Dutch flavor of the Vancouver and Richmond Christian school communities has almost disappeared completely. At Abbotsford Christian there are almost no visible ethnic minorities but the school continues to enjoy growth and support from non-Dutch Caucasian Christians. The largest Caucasian minority group within the Abbotsford Christian school are families of German Mennonite background. The rest of the ACS student body primarily attend Christian Reformed churches founded by Dutch immigrants. Although all three schools enjoy support from different combinations of ethnic groups, they have all enjoyed unprecedented growth and expansion in the 1990's. Enrollments have increased and facilities have been improved through multi-million dollar building projects.

In the realm of leadership, all three schools had Christian Reformed principals who served for long periods of time and each school adopted a leadership structure in which a parent-run Education Committee and School Board governed the actions of administrators and teachers (see Appendices 1, 2, 3). Stable leadership has helped each school make the adjustments needed to survive over forty years of demographic and social change in their communities. It is interesting to note that the Vancouver Christian leadership has remained well-connected to the Dutch Calvinist Society of Christian Schools in British Columbia.
(SCSBC) despite losing most of their Dutch Christian Reformed families. The Richmond Christian leadership lost its Dutch connection increasingly as Dutch families moved out of Richmond. Part of the reason for this is that Richmond Christian took a much more radical approach to non-CRC expansion when Ian Codling, the first non-CRC principal in the school’s history, was hired in 1979. Another factor that may have contributed to Richmond Christian’s loss of ‘Dutchness’ is that the number of Dutch staff members at the Richmond Christian School declined sharply before the numbers of Dutch students. Conversely, at Vancouver Christian, the number of Dutch students declined rapidly before the percentage of Dutch teachers significantly dropped. Vancouver was thus able to remain well-connected to the CRC community since most of the leaders and staff remained dedicated to the Society of Christian Schools in British Columbia, the Dutch Calvinist professional association. By 1997, leadership within the Vancouver and Abbotsford Christian schools remained centralized among members of Christian Reformed churches, whereas Richmond Christian was led by a more eclectic group of evangelical Christians. The absence of Dutch links and leadership frustration with the SCSBC eventually resulted in Richmond Christian terminating its long-time relationship with the Dutch Calvinist umbrella organization in 1994. Richmond Christian completed its break with the Dutch Calvinists when it joined the U.S.-based Association of Christian Schools International (ACSI) in 1995.

An examination of the supporting communities also illustrates some important distinctions between each school. Since Vancouver and Richmond Christian experienced more profound social dislocation than Abbotsford Christian, both schools had to reach outside the Dutch Calvinist community to survive. This not only involved opening its doors
to the larger evangelical community but included complete mergers with other struggling Christian schools (Vancouver joined with Emmanuel and Richmond merged with Seacliff).

Because of the amalgamations, both schools tended to have more internal strife than Abbotsford. Greater diversity made the schools more heterogeneous and conflict developed between different groups of Christians with different sets of priorities. Without a strong homogeneous core, a clear vision for the future was marred and each school’s community of support became increasingly fragmented. For example, one family who attended RCS for many years told the principal they were moving to Delta Christian because Asians were ‘taking over RCS’. Abbotsford Christian received many of the Dutch families who moved out of Vancouver and Richmond and thus were able to strengthen its homogeneous core. As Contant pointed out, Abbotsford Christian has developed a deeply entrenched and highly organized community support network. This can be seen from the high attendance at the annual ‘Grandparent’s Days’ and the database link with the churches. The Abbotsford Christian support network is by far the strongest of the three schools studied.

A historical examination of ethnic diversity at the Vancouver, Abbotsford, and Richmond Christian schools reveals that there is more similarity in the ethnic make-up of Vancouver and Richmond than any other combination of the three schools. Vancouver and Abbotsford Christian appear more similar in terms of allegiance to Dutch Calvinist institutions. Philosophically, all three schools continue to follow the Reformed Calvinist theological faith and have approximately the same constitution and by-laws. At Vancouver and Abbotsford Christian, the schools focuses on Christian behaviour and an emphasis on a positive Christian learning environment, whereas Richmond is more biblicist/literalist and
thus preoccupied with uncovering non-Christian philosophies within the curriculum. The Richmond Christian leadership believes critical thinking from a Christian perspective should be the paramount focus in Christian education.

In order to better understand the philosophical approach to education in these three schools, it is important that the expectations of the supporting communities be revealed. In chapter three, teachers' perceptions of why parents choose Christian education and teachers' curricular responses to the issue of ethnic diversity will be examined to construct and critique the pedagogical position of the Vancouver, Abbotsford, and Richmond Christian schools.
NOTES FOR CHAPTER TWO


2. *Vancouver Christian School Annual*, 1965-1966, photograph with names written below. Ethnicity was determined by analyzing surnames.


9. *Vancouver Christian School 1971-72 Office Directory*, 1-8. The Dutch-Canadian proportion in Figure 1 represents every family listed in the directory with a Dutch Calvinist last name. Euro-Canadians are an amalgamation of different Caucasian last names and thus represent the total non-Dutch proportion of the school community in 1971.

10. Ibid.


18 Based on interview with Ron Donkersloot, August 16, 1996.

19 Ibid.

20 Ibid.


22 Ibid. The Indo-Canadian designation represents those families with Indian and/or Fijian last names. In 1988, one Christian family from India enrolled at the Vancouver Christian School.


24 Ibid.

25 Ron Donkersloot Interview.


27 Ibid., p.3

28 Ron Donkersloot interview.


30 Ibid.

31 Serving the Next Generation A Capital Campaign for the Secondary Campus Expansion 1994-1996, p. 2. This 26-page document is an official Abbotsford Christian School publication used for the purposes of fund-raising and raising community awareness of the schools expansion project.

32 Based on interview with Henry Contant, July 24, 1996. Henry Contant also reported that early records, such as yearbooks and directories, were burned in the 1985 school fire. As a consequence there is no readily-accessible sources for ethnic data prior to 1985.

33 Serving the Next Generation, p. 2.
34 Henry Contant interview.

35 Serving the Next Generation, p. 3.

36 Henry Contant, p. 171.

37 Abbotsford Christian School 1995-96 Directory, 4-32. The same definitions are used for the Abbotsford Christian School charts as are used for the Vancouver Christian School charts (see Notes to Chapter Two: Part One, pp. 35-36 above).

38 Serving the Next Generation, p. 5.

39 Henry Contant Interview.


41 Abbotsford Christian School Records, 1995-96. Selected documents highlighting ACS teachers and their home churches were provided by Henry Contant.

42 Henry Contant Interview.


45 Constitution and By-laws of the Abbotsford Christian School, Article 2B.


47 Henry Contant, Developing ‘Communities of Support’ Within the Abbotsford Christian School System, p. 172.

48 Ibid.

49 Ibid., p.173.

50 Ibid., p.161.

51 Ibid., p.174.

52 Ibid.


56 Romy Vanderbos, pp. 30-31.

57 Vic Wiens, p. 9.


59 Based on interview with Ian Codling, August 12, 1996.

60 Romy Vanderbos, *Silver Celebration 1957-1982*, 1-48. Data collected from the pictures and notations cited within booklet. The same definitions are used for the Richmond Christian School charts as are used for the Vancouver and Abbotsford Christian School charts (see Notes to Chapter Two: Part One on pp. 35-36 above).


64 Based on informal conversation with a former Seacliff teacher.


68 Ian Codling Interview.
Pre-school address to the teaching staff, Principal Ian Codling, Monday August 26, 1997. Every year the teachers at Richmond Christian gather together a week before the start of the school year for a series of spiritual enrichment and motivational meetings.


Ian Codling interview.


Informal 1997 conversation with vice-principal Irene Kraay.
Although an investigation of ethnic diversity in the Vancouver, Abbotsford, and Richmond Christian Schools produces an interesting set of past and present comparisons, such a study would be incomplete without including an evaluation of each school's pedagogical response to ethnic diversity. A useful way to begin analysing the school's response is by assessing the reasons parents send their children to Christian schools in the Dutch Calvinist tradition. Linkage between parental expectations and what actually happens in the classroom can then be established. This chapter, therefore, will include a description of how teachers have addressed the issue of ethnic diversity inside and outside their classrooms and will attempt to isolate and critique each school's underlying philosophical approach to ethnic diversity. Radical critiques from various authors in the field of multicultural education will be used in order to better distinguish the curricular approaches of the three Christian schools. Before delving into the specifics of each school's response, it is useful to define a few key terms to help clarify the investigation.

When examining a school's philosophy concerning its educational programs, it is useful to discern the relationship between the 'explicit' curriculum and the 'implicit' or underlying curriculum. The explicit curriculum is often contained within curriculum guides such as the BC Ministry of Education's Integrated Resource Packages (IRPs) or within a Christian school student handbook. These guidebooks typically contain a general philosophical statement, a broad outline of course requirements, and a carefully crafted series
of specific learning outcomes. For the purposes of this study, the terms ‘implicit curriculum’ will be used to designate hidden or underlying messages that are taught indirectly. In other words, by examining actual classroom activities as well as teacher attitudes towards the issue of ethnic diversity, a greater understanding can be gained of what actually is taught in a Christian classroom. Discovering the implicit curriculum will give a clearer picture of each Christian school’s approach to ethnic diversity and thus enable the establishment of a series of rudimentary philosophical generalizations.

**Parental Attitudes and Expectations within the VCS Community**

Although the Vancouver Christian School prides itself in its Christian Reformed heritage, parents have many different reasons for choosing the school. These reasons can be organized into three categories. According to principal Ron Donkersloot, the first group of parents sincerely desires a Christian education for its children and is concerned primarily that its children are being taught basic Christian beliefs and values. The second group of parents, although concerned about the school’s Christian beliefs, chooses a Christian school because it believes it is a more traditional form of education and thus upholds higher standards and more discipline than the public school system. A final group of parents puts its children in the Vancouver Christian School because it desires to shelter their children from the perceived ‘evils’ in the public school system such as gangs, drugs, and poor peer role models. In other words, these parents see the Christian school as a protective environment for their children. When asked to quantify these three categories, principal Ron Donkersloot estimated that each category represented about one-third of the parents.¹
One of the reasons high academic standards have become more of an issue at VCS in recent years is partially a result of an increasing number of Asians in the school community. According to Donkersloot, many Asian parents are concerned that the school provide an exceptional academic program. He also added that it is prestigious in many Asian cultures to pay for your child’s education. Donkersloot, however, rejected the notion that the school was elitist because many of the Asian parents are also devout Christians who want their children to learn Christian truths. Donkersloot also pointed out that the ethnic groups within his school come from a wide cross-section of socio-economic levels. The school has some very rich families but also a fair number on tuition assistance. Although some families can only afford to pay $10.00 per month, government funding for independent schools (50% of student costs since 1988) has enabled VCS to offer its programs to lower-income families. In the interview, Donkersloot also added that the school has become a richer place because of the wide variety of family needs and resources. In his opinion, VCS would be more in danger of becoming economically elitist if it did not receive government funding.²

To complement the interview with principal Donkersloot, a questionnaire (see Appendix 4) was given out to teachers and they were asked to rank the reasons parents choose the school in order of importance (see Figure 20). It is interesting that the factors Donkersloot cites as keys are very much in harmony with his teaching staff’s perceptions of why parents send their children to Vancouver Christian. Teachers ranked family tradition, location, discipline, and academics as the primary factors influencing parents to send their children to VCS. The athletic program, bus service, and school facilities were ranked as less significant reasons for choosing VCS. The fact that the athletic program is less of an
attracting force is very much in line with the general teacher perception that parents at VCS want a more academically focused program. Although Donkersloot believes the three groups of families represent three equal proportions of the total student body, it appears that the second group of parents, those who desire a first-rate academic program and a disciplined, more traditional form of education, are becoming the larger group in more recent years.
The fact that VCS teachers ranked family tradition, location, discipline, and academics ahead of Christian teachers and Christian curriculum shows that Christian thinking and morals may be becoming less prominent in importance than pragmatic concerns such as academic development and the continuation of family tradition. Many well-established Dutch and Asian families have supported independent forms of education for generations and see Christian education as a more prestigious form. Another possibility is that the VCS teachers may have seen Christian thinking and morals as part and parcel of the factors designated ‘family tradition’ and ‘discipline’. In the opinion of this researcher, it appears that the former is more likely because such a phenomenon is reflected in many parochial schools. In a 1990 study done by Dennis Hall, a Catholic school graduate and education consultant, it was found that most Catholic School parents in Victoria described Catholic values as being important but that they fell well behind other goals such as teaching students to read, write, and compute. Even instruction in computers and technology was ranked ahead of ‘values’ in the survey. The possibility that parochial schools in general appear to be pressured to become less and less faith-centred is also reflected in Jewish schools. According to Van Brummelen, the Vancouver Talmud Torah appears “to have been more successful in its secular curriculum than in its Jewish studies one.” As mentioned in chapter one, survival in the dominant culture appears to be the primary concern of parents, especially those from immigrant minorities. “On the whole, competence, not culture, is the major concern of minority-group parents. While the two are not mutually exclusive, it is foremost the mastery of knowledge, as well as the retention of functional aspects of their own traditional knowledge, to which the parents most aspire.” In short, parents, even in Christian schools
appear to be becoming increasingly pragmatic when evaluating whether to enrol their students at VCS. The next question that must be asked, therefore, is whether VCS teachers have shaped their programs according to the expectations of these parents or have taught according to a particular school emphasis or philosophy. In order to determine how teachers have responded, it is useful to take a closer look at the curriculum and some of the activities VCS teachers have undertaken both inside and outside their classrooms.

**Programs and Curriculum at VCS**

As mentioned in chapter two, Vancouver Christian does not have a special ESL program and does not advertise itself as an ESL school. An enrolment policy that demands a certain level of English competency, especially at the intermediate and middle school grade levels (Grades 4-10), prevents a high level of ESL enrolment. Although registration requirements are quite tough on families with older ESL children, younger ESL students (Grade K-3) are admitted to the school quite readily. Any ESL students admitted by the school then are integrated into the regular classes and given essentially the same requirements as the other students. In the early grades, a full-time learning assistance specialist gives extra help to students who struggle with reading and writing. Learning assistance, however, is for all students and there is no special program for ESL students within the Learning Assistance Centre. Elementary ESL students, therefore, are not segregated into ESL and non-ESL groups in the Learning Assistance Centre (LAC) but treated equally alongside other children with learning difficulties.⁶

At the Middle School level (Grades 8-10), few ESL students are present but some assistance is given to 'pull-outs' who have difficulty in English language skills. These ESL
students (no more than ten in the last five years) generally go to the LAC if there is a peer group they fit with and can benefit from. The approach to ESL at the Middle School level, therefore, is best described as full integration with informal LAC arrangements for a few borderline students. ESL is not a drain on resources because enrolment favours students who have stronger command of English. This is determined through English language competency tests given to all prospective registrants when they apply. ESL enrolment at the Middle School level consequently is kept to a minimum and extensive program efforts such as in-school and after-school ESL classes are not required or viewed as necessary.

When asked if they used the BC government curriculum in their classrooms, nine out of 13 respondents indicated that the government curriculum was primarily useful as a reference or 'bare bones' outline for the content they taught in their classrooms. In terms of ethnically diverse content, most teachers found the curriculum rather limited and needed to turn to additional resources to create interesting and dynamic units. Primary level teachers mentioned that they found some of the pictures supplied in government resources to be useful but like the other VCS teachers needed to rely on outside resources for creating the heart of their units. Some of the most useful outside resources teachers found were curriculum units purchased from teacher supply stores, the Internet, and library books that contained stories about the Ancient Worlds of China, India, and the Middle East. Greater enrichment of the cultural resources in the library has also been accomplished at Vancouver Christian through the purchase of new books. Increasing the number of books written by authors from a variety of ethnic backgrounds has also been beneficial for teachers concerned about cultural studies.
When asked to describe specific classroom activities that related to ethnic diversity, VCS teachers described a rich and diverse program of studies which included a wide variety of interesting and innovative activities. In Grade 1, teachers use multicultural themes and stories as well as discussions of different family traditions. The ethnicity implicit in each child's name as well as different Christmas traditions are discussed in Grade 3. In Grade 6/7 the teacher teaches four different countries from four different continents and uses the study of ancient civilizations to emphasize social and racial relationships. This teacher also reported that the school newspaper published articles on the Chinese New Year and that the school made an effort to organize multicultural days and celebrations. Multicultural studies are integrated with the health component of the PE curriculum in order to encourage proper social relationships among students of different ethnic origin. At the middle school level, Grade 9 and 10 journalism students work with articles that relate to cultural diversity as well.

In contrast to those teachers who treated ethnic diversity issues as a natural outgrowth of the curriculum, one middle school teacher felt her personal, informal interactions with students gave her ample opportunity to influence them positively. She felt that the example of her own Christian life would help students see what proper social relationships look like regardless of the culture or skin colour of the individuals involved. Another middle school teacher felt that formally addressing issues such as racism was not necessary at VCS because all students are taught that they are God's children and are all equal in God's eyes. In her opinion, there was no cultural tension at VCS because most students in the school stay in the school from Kindergarten to Grade 10. As a consequence, they become used to each other at
an early age and are therefore less susceptible to developing racist and anti-social attitudes and behaviours towards each other than children who do not have the benefit of growing up together.\textsuperscript{14}

**Philosophical Approach to Ethnic Diversity at VCS**

Examining how teachers at VCS approach ESL and the curriculum in their classrooms reveals that VCS has responded to ethnic diversity in a unique and distinct way. Five words or descriptors the researcher has chosen to describe the VCS philosophy are passive, academic, integrative, relational, and assimilative. From these words it is possible to extrapolate general understandings that link together to form the underlying VCS approach to ethnic diversity.

It can be said that the treatment of ethnic diversity is done passively because VCS does not have a specific ethnic or anti-racist curriculum that is taught as a separate entity apart from traditional courses such as social studies and language arts. Ethnic diversity at VCS is perceived by teachers to be a consequence of demographics and parental desires for Christian teachers who provide an academically challenging and disciplined program. As mentioned in chapter two, VCS had already started losing its ‘Dutch’ character in the 1970’s and has become largely interdenominational and ethnically diverse since then. In many ways, the ethnic change in the school has been a gradual process that reflects Vancouver. Such change having occurred naturally, addressing the issue should also be done in a natural way. There is, therefore, no specific programmatic effort to address the issue and teachers are left on their own to highlight cultural and racial issues as they see fit. It also is felt that racist attitudes and actions are not openly displayed within the VCS school environment. In the
opinion of VCS teachers and administrators, changing the curriculum to specifically address the issue of ethnic diversity when it is not creating problems locally would therefore be an unnecessary waste of valuable teaching time. In their minds, issues such as cultural differences and ethnic relations should be addressed as they naturally arise out of the standard curriculum and not aggressively imposed on students through an outside curriculum.

The VCS approach to ethnic diversity can also be described as academic because the school has minimum academic requirements and requires a certain level of English competency from students who enrol. ESL students consequently are discouraged from attending unless they begin in the younger grades. Ironically, one of the reasons that high academic standards and enrichment are a strong focus at VCS comes from the segment of parents who were most recently requiring ESL training themselves. One Grade 3 teacher reported that Asian parents highly value academics and a lot of homework and pressure teachers to challenge their children to work towards academic excellence. Teachers also reported that they are being pushed by parents to skip children ahead to the next grade more frequently than they had been in the past. In response to the supporting community’s desire for an emphasis on academic excellence, VCS has made provision for enrichment programs such as after-school math classes.

Although VCS offers special enrichment programs, ESL services are minimal and expansion of such services is currently not within the school’s goals and resources. All students, including the few borderline ESL students that have managed to secure admission to the school are all integrated into the regular classes of their grade level. Some assistance is given to students who struggle with spoken and written English but all students receive the
same course requirements and spend most of their time in the same classroom as their peers. Since there is no ‘streaming’, the overall approach to ethnic diversity at VCS also is fundamentally integrative.

A fourth descriptor of the VCS approach to ethnic diversity is relational. One of the most desired learning outcomes the teachers at VCS have for their students is to recognize their common faith in Christ as the primary foundation for proper social relations. The implicit curriculum being taught at VCS, therefore, is that all students are one in Christ and that the school community is bound together by their collective Christian faith. When asked to define the VCS philosophy in terms of ethnic diversity, teachers gave responses such as “Christ’s kingdom is necessarily inclusive” and “all students are equal in God’s eyes.” Teachers who felt that the school had no formal philosophical position on ethnic diversity made comments such as “VCS has become a better place because of more tolerance, respect, and openness” and “VCS is more accepting of new cultures and is a living example of ‘the church universal’.” These comments reveal that VCS teachers clearly believe that a key component of Christianity is to accept and be tolerant of others. To encourage similar attitudes and beliefs from students, VCS teachers feel that they must model such behaviour themselves. It is of paramount importance that teachers treat students fairly regardless of their race or colour and even ‘go the extra mile’ by developing informal relationships with the students. In their opinion, students are more likely to embrace the appropriate inter-ethnic
behaviours if teachers can disciple students personally through ‘teachable moments’ whenever they come in contact with them. In short, actions speak much louder than words when teachers are attempting to elicit the desired social and behavioural learning outcomes from their students.

Although VCS claims to accept all students, regardless of race or colour, it does not accept students whose families have non-Christian religious beliefs. In other words, VCS makes a key distinction between race, colour, and religion. Race and colour describe the person’s physical appearance, origin, and cultural background. Any cultural or religious tradition that encourages behaviours or beliefs in opposition to Christianity would be considered unacceptable within the VCS community. Church references are required for students to enrol in the Vancouver Christian School and at least one parent must demonstrate they are a committed follower of Jesus Christ. Assimilative or religiously assimilative is thus the final descriptor of the VCS view of ethnic diversity. From the VCS perspective, viewing all cultural and religious beliefs as equal is in contradiction to the Christian teachings and doctrines upon which the school is founded. In its eyes, all beliefs are not equal and some are better than others. Suggesting that all beliefs are equal is moral relativism and a primary belief of the secular humanist way of life. Social and racial harmony within the VCS community is achieved by proclaiming the superior ‘truth’ of Christian beliefs such as the need to love God and love your neighbour. VCS is therefore necessarily assimilative because they believe what they are teaching is objectively true and beneficial for any student, regardless of their race or colour. In short, Vancouver Christian sees itself as an interdenominational school that is tolerant and accepting of all cultural and
racial backgrounds but still distinctly Christian and thus not a place for families who adhere to a different religious faith. Within this environment, it is possible to celebrate cultural difference as long as culture does not trespass into the realm of religion and threaten to compromise objective Christian truth.

In conclusion, VCS teachers do not see the necessity to make an explicit effort to address ethnicity issues in any of their classes. Discussions concerning ethnic diversity may naturally arise as the teachers attempt to fulfil the content demands of the government curriculum, but there is no explicit anti-racist or racial tolerance curriculum. Teaching students proper social behaviours in relation to ethnic diversity comes from informal student-teacher interactions and indirectly through various courses, especially social studies where the origins of different civilizations are investigated in depth. Overall, it appears that most of the teachers at the Vancouver Christian School feel there is a need to make their curriculum more dynamic by including various cultural studies but there is a resistance towards adding to the curriculum in order to preach tolerance. It is also significant that nine out of 13 teacher respondents use the BC curriculum as a general outline for their program of studies. This indicates that VCS teachers feel compelled to meet government-prescribed content demands. It is believed, however, that students must learn the prescribed curriculum within a Christian environment in order to develop right thinking and Christian maturity. More importantly, it is believed that students are more likely to demonstrate proper inter-ethnic relationships if the teachers consistently demonstrate proper behaviours through a combination of Christ-like actions and words.
Critique of VCS Approach to Ethnic Diversity

An examination of Vancouver Christian's approach to ethnic diversity has revealed that there really is no purposeful, overt effort to address it in the curriculum or in the classroom. Although some teachers claim to address the issue of culture in the curriculum, the issue of racism is hastily dismissed as irrelevant in a school that is living the idea of the "church universal." Although it may be possible that little racism exists at VCS, there is no doubt that the problem of racism in a multicultural community like Vancouver is a reality that cannot be ignored. According to Ng, racism has both a relational and dynamic character and has become a 'taken-for-granted' feature of our society. Racism systematically oppresses ethnic minorities and is responsible for various levels of inequality. Proponents of multicultural education who embrace the notion of "systematic oppression and inequality" would argue that peripherally studying cultural groups as an interesting diversion within the 'standard curriculum' fundamentally fails to address the root causes of racism. Vancouver Christian may claim to be tolerant and accepting, but society is not. How then are VCS students being prepared to deal with the reality of racial inequality and prejudice outside of the Christian-only school community? McCarthy also argues that any school that wants to address the problems that ethnic diversity creates must develop a "more systematic critique of the construction of school knowledge and the privileging of Eurocentrism and Westernness.”

A new approach to multicultural education would require that schools embrace aggressive cross-curricular initiatives that promote critical thinking as the means to deconstruct the various systems of oppression that currently plague our ethnically diverse society. In light of the fact that Vancouver Christian School exclusively educates Christian children and has a
foundation built on the notion that Christian beliefs are the objective measures of truth, it is not likely that the secular conceptions of multicultural education would ever be considered if the school desired to remain true to its faith.

**Parental Attitudes and Expectations within the ACS Community**

According to principal Henry Contant, most parents choose Abbotsford Christian School because they believe it is ultimately the parents’ responsibilities (not the government’s responsibility) to educate their children. Therefore they choose a school with a philosophy that supports the teaching of their home and church. Parents transfer their children to ACS primarily because they are unhappy with the public school system and feel Christian school education is a superior alternative. Many Christian parents, even those who have not grown up in Dutch Calvinist families, are starting to recognize that education is not neutral and that public schools are teaching values that may be, and very often are, contrary to those being taught at home. These parents believe strongly that Christian beliefs should be integrated into the entire school program. Judging by the size of the CRC-related family support network (62% of total school enrolment), however, it would appear that there is an underlying religious community expectation that continues to heavily influence CRC parents to send their children to the Abbotsford Christian School. Although many CRC families feel proud to pay the extra money to send their children to schools operating in the Dutch Calvinist tradition, Henry Contant rejects the notion that his school is ‘elitist’ because the school community is represented by families with a variety of income levels. One of the primary concerns of the school community is that it remain affordable for everyone. The school, consequently, has developed a tuition assistance program for those parents who have
difficulty paying their tuition. Like all other independent schools, Abbotsford has also benefited greatly from the government funding provided after the proclamation of the Independent Schools Support Act in 1977. When the Independent Schools Act was revisited in 1989, the funding level was raised to 50% for independent schools whose per-pupil operating expenses did not exceed those of the public institutions in the same school district.22

On the whole, the school has enjoyed strong support from a wide variety of evangelical Christians who have a range financial resources. Most parents have shown generosity, loyalty, and a sacrificial attitude during the recent years of rapid growth. They have had to endure a fire that completely destroyed the elementary campus and five separate expansion projects. In 1991, the entire Clayburn Hills Campus was taught in portables. Before the most recent high school expansion began in 1994, many CRC society members were skeptical about the financial commitment of the non-CRC groups, especially the Mennonites. When the final donation figures were released, however, the managers of the project found that financial support was spread evenly across the board. Contant feels that this shows the school has become a truly interdenominational institution and Contant does his best to make these facts known to the few CRC members who doubt the loyalty of other denominations within the school community. Contant also eagerly pointed out that many Mennonite families have chosen to remain in the school despite the fact that M.E.I. (The Mennonite Educational Institute) has recently started an elementary program (Grades K-7).23

Although the fundamental reason for choosing Abbotsford Christian may be dissatisfaction with the public school system, it cannot be denied that the numerical strength
and corresponding cultural/religious pull of the Dutch Calvinist community has had some influence on the decision-making patterns of the parents who enrol their children at ACS. If Abbotsford Christian School fits the mold of many parochial schools it is also quite likely that parents choose the school for reasons that are both religious and pragmatic; namely good morals, discipline, and a more traditional academic program. Van Brummelen summarizes accurately the multifarious nature of the Calvinist parent's motivation for choosing Christian education for their children.

Like parents in other Christian schools, then, Calvinist school parents were uneasy about the effects public schooling might have on their children. Many wanted a protected environment that socialized children into the traditions and patterns of the Dutch Calvinist worldview, so that they could meet the issues of life in strong and constructive ways, and to claim areas for Christ in whatever they are doing.24

Other factors that influence parents to choose ACS are that it is an affordable school and tuition assistance is available both through the school as well as through local churches. ACS continues to be tied to the Calvinist community but recently has had significant growth from evangelicals outside of it. Efforts to link their denominationally diverse families into one vibrant evangelical Christian family has resulted in good relations with local churches of all denominations and has made ACS much more appealing to Christians who are not part of the large Dutch, CRC community in Abbotsford. This is one of ACS's most significant achievements.

Programs and Curriculum at ACS

Because the Abbotsford Christian School is supported by a more or less homogenous Caucasian Christian community and very few new immigrants, there are presently very few
ESL students at the Abbotsford Christian school. The only ESL students that might exist are children of Mennonite immigrants from Paraguay and Brazil. These Mennonite children primarily speak German and are sometimes in need of special assistance when they enrol in the school but are integrated into regular classes and work on the same program as their English-speaking peers. Although there is no need for ESL classes or programs, learning assistance is a priority at the ACS and students with difficulty in any courses enjoy the services of learning assistant specialists. As more immigrants move into the Fraser Valley, however, the Abbotsford Christian School leadership anticipates that they will need to address the issue of ESL and whether or not provision must be made for special ESL programs, resources, and/or professional development.

Since the administrative leadership felt the issues raised in the questionnaire concerning the school’s approach to ethnic diversity were of little or no consequence, given the school’s current ethnic make-up, it chose not to submit its staff to the task of filling out the questionnaire. Abbotsford Christian school’s non-participation in the questionnaire component of this research study thus makes it impossible to give any specific classroom examples of how teachers are addressing the issue of ethnic diversity. The reasons for not participating in the study, however, provide some insight into Abbotsford Christian’s philosophical position concerning ethnic diversity.

**Philosophical Approach to Ethnic Diversity at ACS**

The primary reasons given for not participating in the questionnaire component of the study were that the ACS principals were concerned how the information might be used. They felt that there was little ‘visible’ ethnic diversity at their school and therefore felt that the
study had no real relevance to their school in particular. One specific concern was that Abbotsford Christian School might be seen in a negative light because of its lack of non-Caucasian ethnic minorities and therefore be evaluated negatively by the researcher. The fact that the research compared Abbotsford Christian School to schools such as Richmond and Vancouver where visible minorities are much more prominent within the school community made them especially resistant to the questionnaire. Since this school has so few visible ethnic minorities, the principals felt they might be automatically 'branded' as ethnically insensitive by the researcher.

Principals at ACS also felt that the three campuses within their school system would be better understood from the standpoint of interdenominational diversity rather than ethnic diversity because of the almost complete absence of 'visible' or non-Caucasian ethnic minorities. Understanding the religious differences of various evangelical Christian churches is seen as a more pressing issue than how to pedagogically address the issue of ethnic diversity. Although the leadership of the Abbotsford Christian School did not permit the questionnaire to be distributed among staff (see Appendix 4), the reasons for not participating actually reveal some insight into the underlying pedagogical approach to ethnic diversity found at ACS. First, the view that there is no real ethnic diversity at the school shows that the leadership of the school would define the primarily Caucasian school community as one ethnic group. Differences between students are seen more along religious, denominational lines than ethnic or racial lines. Germans, Dutch, British, and Euro-Canadian students are consequently viewed as all part of one homogenous Christian family. In their view, a school only has ethnic diversity when visible ethnic groups such as Asian or East Indians enrol at the
school. If the school had more visible ethnic minorities then, in the opinion of the ACS principals, the questionnaire would be more relevant to their school's current reality.

The response of the ACS principals to the opportunity to participate in the questionnaire component of the study also reveals an interesting perception of the relationship between ethnic diversity and cultural studies or multicultural education. It would appear that inter-ethnic relations is not a highlight of the ACS program because ethnic diversity is not presently very noticeable at the school. Since ethnic diversity is not an issue, there really is no need to make a special effort to participate in a research study that asks teachers to reflect on the issue. The ACS response to ethnic diversity is thus very much in line with a popular definition of multicultural education: that it is only needed where substantial visible ethnic minorities exist. This is not to say that ACS is against ethnic diversity or proper social relations between different groups of people. Principal Henry Contant would argue that students are taught fundamental Christian truths in Bible class such as the commandment to love their neighbour and that such teachings inherently address issues such as inter-ethnic relations and the problem of racism in society. There is also some evidence that Abbotsford Christian has been concerned with the ethnic diversity that surrounds its community. Although there are very few 'visible ethnic minorities' in ACS presently, some teachers at the Heritage Campus have made an effort to address the issue of racism, especially as it relates to the large number of Indo-Canadians in their community.

The teachers begin the unit with two activities. First, they ask students to complete a survey of their attitudes (e.g., I think Punjabi clothing is beautiful). Then they act out a skit that included all the racial remarks, slurs, and jokes that the teachers had heard over the last year or two. The teachers regroup the five Grade 5 and 6 classes into five groups that rotate among the five rooms, three days a week from 10:30 to 12:00. The students all study five "strands": the history of Indo-Canadians in the community, the Sikh religion,
contemporary issues facing Indo-Canadian families, food and clothing, and language and music. The strands emphasize concrete experiences: Indo-Canadian speakers, visits to a Sikh temple and the local Sikh market, preparing and eating Sikh food, music performances, and so on. Each student makes a personal scrapbook, and also gives a detailed evaluation of the whole unit. The final culminating activity consists of the teachers acting out the skit again, but now reacting to comments on the basis of what happened during the previous five weeks.

What were the results of the unit? First, the students addressed an issue affecting the whole community. They had very positive experiences with a different culture group. When they completed the attitudinal survey again at the end of the unit, the results were startlingly more positive. The next school year the teachers found that almost all comments about East Indian culture among the students were positive ones. The unit also stimulated parents to talk and think about their own attitudes. Most responded positively and said they had gained some knowledge and understanding. The school plans to teach a similar unit each year, with the focus on different culture groups.25

**Critique of ACS Approach to Ethnic Diversity**

It is unfortunate that Abbotsford Christian School did not participate in the questionnaire portion of the study because it is very difficult to get a real sense of how ACS teachers, as opposed to the principals, perceive multicultural education without their input. The view that ethnic diversity is not an issue because there are very few ‘visible ethnic minorities’ at ACS, however, is rather limited. As mentioned earlier, it cannot be denied that British Columbia has become increasingly multicultural and that students will come in contact now, and later in life, with different ethnic groups and will need to communicate in a clear and socially-responsible manner. Since ACS is largely a homogenous Caucasian Christian community, the danger of developing an education program that excludes a variety of cultural perspectives is greatly enlarged. Although speaking from an American context, William Pinar would argue that the greatest deficiency of most canons of curriculum is that
they have excluded the perspective of minority cultures. Because the world views of minorities are essentially invisible, school subjects across the curriculum, will be riddled with “distortions, repressions, and silences.” Such a confined canon of knowledge is to the detriment of both the dominant Caucasian culture and the minority cultures within it because the ‘whole story’, with all of its intricacy and detail, cannot be told. The importance of broadening the canon is especially important when an examination is done of the role of textbooks throughout Canada’s educational history. According to Tim Stanley, textbooks have played an important role in indoctrinating students into the dominant culture. Textbooks in B.C. “presented the world not so much as it actually was, but rather as it was ‘represented’ to be in Western, and especially British, elite culture.” It is therefore of paramount importance that ethnic diversity be seen as an issue that transcends the local conditions in which a school finds itself. “An ethnically pluralistic view of Canadian society suggests that all Canadian classrooms need to be seen as multicultural even if it is not multi-ethnic.” In fairness to Abbotsford Christian, however, no serious critique of its curricular approach can be explicated without more concrete evidence from the classroom. At least some teachers from the Heritage campus have made some effort to address racism in their classrooms.

**Parental Attitudes and Expectations within the RCS Community**

When asked to assess parental attitudes towards the Richmond Christian School, principal Ian Codling classified the parents’ choices into five categories. As noted in chapter two, all students enrolled in the school must have at least one parent who is a professing Christian. Almost every member of the following five groups would be a Christian unless
they managed to fool the administration or lived in a family divided in its religious commitment. The first group of parents are those who sincerely want their children to understand the scriptures and follow the example of Jesus Christ. The second group, 'the traditionalists', are those parents who have traditionally sent their children to Christian schools because it is the expectation of their cultural community. Within such communities there is considerable cultural pressure to put children in a Christian school because they believe it is a superior form of education to the public school system. In fact, parents who do not send their children to a Christian school are looked down upon by their peers. The third group of parents are the 'protectionists'. These parents are concerned that their children be taught good moral values and that a safe learning environment be provided. They perceive public schools to be full of gangs, drugs, and violence and therefore choose Christian schools as an escape. The fourth group of parents can be labelled the 'involved parents' or those parents who would like to give a lot of input into classroom activities and their child's education. These parents are like the first group but also feel that their Christian school should provide them with greater access and greater say in their child's education. According to Codling, few Asian families would fall into this category because they seem to have a 'hands-off' approach to their child's education and are much more apt to trust the 'professionally trained' staff. The fifth group of parents can be termed the academics. This group's primary concern is that students get a lot of homework and receive a challenging, academically focused program. These parents often overlap with the second group. This final group of parents represent a strong lobby group that has pressured the school to develop state-of-the-art programs such as a computer lab facility and an expensive science lab at the
high school. Although the school has attempted to meet these parents’ expectations there has been no betrayal of “pure philosophical purpose” in Codling’s opinion. In other words, principal Codling does not believe the school has had to compromise its focus on distinctively Christian thinking to placate the pragmatic desires and wishes of its supporting community.  

Although each category has at least a few representatives from each ethnic group, Ian Codling feels that Dutch and Asian families more often tend to fall in both the ‘traditional’ and ‘academic’ categories. Within the Dutch and Asian cultures there is an underlying view that ‘you get what you pay for’ and that public school education must be avoided at all costs. Codling is also quick to point out, however, that the school has been ‘blessed’ by many Asian families who sincerely love the ‘Christian distinctives’ of the school. He also expressed concern with Richmond Christian’s version of ‘white flight’. Apparently certain Caucasian families left the school because they did not feel comfortable with the growing Asian presence within the school. A few parents even openly expressed sentiments that the Richmond Christian School was ‘being taken over by the Chinese’ and have since moved to Delta where Asian immigration is not as strong.

In contrast to these isolated examples of ethnic tension at RCS is a spirit of cooperation and working for the common good. The best example of this can be seen in the recent project to expand the school’s secondary campus. In an unprecedented agreement reached in the fall of 1995, three separate organizations collaborated and improved the school facility at 10200 No.5 Road in Richmond, the current location of the Richmond Christian Secondary School. Three separate, independent Christian organizations, the Richmond
Christian School Association, the Richmond Bethel Mennonite Brethren Church, and the Richmond Chinese Church agreed on a joint multi-million dollar expansion effort to improve the facility that they all used in common. On April 10, 1997, the new Secondary Campus was officially opened. Included within it was additional classroom space to be shared with the primarily Caucasian Mennonite Brethren congregation as well as an extra assembly room and office space for members of the Chinese congregation.

Although parents choose RCS for a myriad of different reasons, one factor that no longer appears to be of crucial importance is affordability. This can be seen when examining the issue of tuition assistance. In August 1966, a landmark decision was made to move to a flat family rate and to accept all families who were members of a Christian church “regardless of whether they were able to pay tuition.” Richmond Christian School remains committed to this long-standing tradition of unlimited enrolment for Christian families and there are consequently no waiting lists to get into the school even though tuition rates have risen sharply over the years. In short, if a Christian parent wants Christian education the school will make room. Unfortunately, however, West Richmond has become a very expensive neighbourhood to live in and the family base of Richmond Christian School is consequently much wealthier today than it was even a decade ago. The school has had a tuition relief program since its inception but it pays out less tuition relief now then it did five years ago despite the fact that tuition fees reached an all-time high in 1996/97 ($2,900/year flat family rate plus $425 for every elementary child and $1,000 for every secondary child). A family with one elementary child, therefore, must pay $3325.00 per year whereas a family with one secondary child must pay $3,900.00 per year. According to Codling, many lower-
income families have moved out of the community or no longer want the hassle of proving they need relief. The school also recently adopted a one-time $500 entry fee for new families. In previous years, great effort was expended to make RCS affordable for their families. In recent years this has not been necessary because of the relative affluence of the supporting community and high demand for Christian education in Richmond.³³

Codling’s assessment of the reasons Christian parents choose RCS is very useful for descriptive purposes but it must be presumed that there is a certain degree of overlap between the groups of parents within the RCS supporting community. Being concerned about quality academics, for example, does not necessarily mean the parents do not value the religious distinctives. It is even possible that some parents choose the school for all of the reasons Codling cited.

To add to principal Codling’s perceptions of the RCS supporting community, a questionnaire was handed out to each teacher at RCS to get their impressions concerning the expectations of the school’s families and to reveal their individual curricular approaches to the issue of ethnic diversity (see Appendix 4). When asked to select the key reasons parents choose RCS for their children, the RCS teachers responded by ranking location, academic program, Christian teachers, Christian curriculum, and discipline (see Figure 21) as the most significant reasons. As at VCS, bus service and the athletic program were seen as having low or no significance on parental selection. The teachers at RCS appear to perceive their parents needs and expectations as being primarily academic and Christian in nature and therefore have made sincere efforts to address these expectations in their classroom. In order to assess
the scope of the pedagogical response to parental expectations within the context of RCS’s ethnically diverse community, it is necessary to examine the treatment of ESL students within the school as a whole and highlight examples taken from the classrooms of each teacher-respondent.

Programs and Curriculum at RCS

At Richmond Christian’s Elementary campus (Grade K-7), ESL students are enrolled in a language program through the Learning Assistance Centre (LAC). Most primary students are integrated immediately into the classroom (Grades K-2) but in grade 3 parents
are enlisted to work with their own children in the LAC for one hour per week. Intermediate students (Grades 4-7) are also integrated into the regular classroom but after-school ESL lessons are available. During the day, ESL students also spend a lot of time in the LAC depending on what their homeroom teacher is teaching at that particular time. In order to assist all students with language acquisition, the LAC puts a great deal of emphasis on a strong phonetic program. The focus is on ‘mastery’ with a lot of pre-testing and post-testing. Rewards such as stickers, ribbons, and points are used to motivate students. There is also an accelerated reading program in the computer room that works on a points system. Parent involvement, as mentioned above, is thus of crucial importance to the success of the program. There is some feeling among teachers, especially in the primary grades, however, that the current ESL program is not sufficient to meet the needs of the students. In the 1996/97 school year the Primary department consequently appealed to the administration to augment the ESL program because enrolment projections for the following year showed a significant rise in the number of ESL students at the Kindergarten and Grade 1 levels. After meeting with the primary teachers, the Primary Department Head appealed for an in-school ESL pull-out program. The focus of the program would be oral language and vocal development and would be designed to complement after-school ESL classes and in-school learning assistance. According to the sentiments expressed by the primary teachers, such a program is essential if the school is really serious about meeting the needs of its growing ESL population.

At the Richmond Christian Secondary Campus, ESL is also a prominent educational issue. At this point, the high school has responded by providing two ESL classes in the timetable, three times per week for one hour. The ESL combined classes take up six blocks
of teaching time. Students who test two grade levels below their actual grade level in English are required to take ESL but are then completely integrated into the regular academic classes for the rest of their school day. The ESL class therefore is listed as a regular course and acts more as a ‘help’ class for the students who are required to take it. Although provision is made for ESL in the regular school schedule, the program is in desperate need of review and enhancement. In a letter to the Education Committee in January 1997, one teacher highlights some of the challenges ESL students present at the high school.

If we keep the present [open] enrolment policies as they work out practically we will need to structure ESL quite differently. At present we have a number of students who are very much English language deficient and are finding it very difficult to function in the regular classroom. This is particularly true at the Grade 8 level. They take up an excessive amount of teacher time and put a real strain on the dynamics of the class. It does not appear that the numbers of such students will diminish in the near future. The recommendation I would like to put forth is that no student be admitted to a regular academic class until his/her English skills (as determined by the ESL teacher) are adequate to anticipate reasonable success. I recognize this proposal would be a very costly one to implement. Alternative funding might need to be sought...In the light of the Gospel of Jesus these problems become more troubling and in some cases heart-rending. We all want to do what is right for the children in terms of what is honouring to Jesus. This in essence is what has prompted me to write this report. 34

In 1996/97, 19 of 170 students at the high school took an ESL course (11% of total high school enrolment). As the number of ESL students at RCS increases, clearly the leaders of the school are faced with a daunting challenge. The school faces a cross-roads and must decide whether to limp along with a policy of full integration or expand the ESL program using more of a ‘pull-out’ strategy. Such a policy would involve a substantial increase in staffing and resources. Such a program would then offer separate academic options for students who were struggling the most. In short, ‘streaming’ the ESL students into separate
programs of study is the high school teacher's most desired alternative but whether or not it can be implemented depends on the financial resources.

ESL students at RCS are encouraged to maintain their ethnicity but are also directed to learn the language of general communication through the regular and ESL programs. To assist in language acquisition, the school has adopted a policy of total English immersion and all ESL students are prohibited from speaking Chinese while on the school grounds. Both the elementary and high school are English-only zones and this is enforced quite strictly. RCS continues to have an open enrolment policy and will allow any child into the school regardless of English language competency. This has produced a strain on resources and teachers, parents, and administrators are currently wrestling with the future goals and objectives for the ESL program. Although there are no academic standards for admission at this point, ESL is focused on integrating all children into the regular program of studies. 'Steaming' ESL students would enable the school to offer a separate program of studies for ESL students until they could function more effectively in a regular classroom. The validity of such a program is currently being debated by the school leadership.

As seen in Figure 21 and as mentioned in chapter two, the leadership and teaching staff of the Richmond Christian School puts a great deal of emphasis on Christian thinking and developing a distinctly Christian curriculum. This emphasis was strongly reflected in the responses teachers gave to the ethnic diversity questionnaire. Of the 23 teachers surveyed, only 12 reported that they used the Ministry of Education as a guideline for their curriculum. These teachers feel that secular humanist documents such as the Ministry of Education's Integrated Resource Packages must be replaced with a more Godly framework. Teachers
who used the government guidelines, on the other hand, felt that the framework could still be used but that a Christian perspective must be integrated into the document. In general, teachers who used the ministry document only used it as a framework for content and claimed to develop their own ‘Christian’ learning outcomes.

Leaders of RCS have attempted to confront what they describe as ‘the false humanist views’ of the government curriculum through in-house professional development days and the employment of a curriculum developer at the secondary campus. This person is responsible for challenging and assisting teachers in their development of distinctly Christian learning outcomes. The mandate to produce a distinctly Christian program also is written into each of the teachers’ continuing contracts. One example of how government curriculum is rejected and then replaced with Christian curriculum can be seen in a statement written by the curriculum developer. “In the Ministry document, three words that describe the learning outcomes are tolerance, respect, and understanding. RCS, as a Christian school, replaces these general learning outcomes with love, truth, and Know what is Right.” The intention is clearly to replace the subjective truth of humanist thought with the Biblical truth of Christian thought.

In light of this mandate, teachers are instructed to develop programs of learning that are Bible-centred. Most RCS teachers, consequently, do not find the supposedly ‘neutral’ government resources to be useful for developing units that address the issue of ethnic diversity from a distinctly Christian perspective. In Kindergarten, ethnic differences are discussed in a Community Studies Unit and the teacher reported an emphasis on kindness and the Christian command to love. Implicit within the Kindergarten unit is the belief that
Christ’s teachings transcend ethnic differences. Grade 1 teachers use storybooks provided by Chinese parents and enjoy an ethnic food day. Chinese legends and a family unit are also used to study ethnic diversity at the grade one level. In Grade 2, students study Christmas around the world as well as the origin of certain Chinese words. In Grade 3, the literature program includes Asian stories such as Lon Po Po and a study of each student’s country of origin. One Grade 4 teacher uses a unit on the Haida Indians and encourages her students to pray for cultures around the world regularly. In Grade 5, art forms from different cultures are discussed and the contribution of Chinese miners during the gold rush is highlighted. In Grade 6, a multicultural luncheon is an annual event and the Grade 5/6 teacher teaches a Chinese unit. Although these are just a few examples of the activities teachers listed as pertaining to the issue of ethnic diversity, it should be pointed out that no explicit effort was made to teach inter-ethnic relations or an anti-racist curriculum. In fact, much of the above would suggest a bicultural curriculum (ie. Chinese culture and mainstream Canadian cultures).

At the high school level, teachers tended to focus on informal student-teacher interactions rather than formal curriculum content when questioned about how they dealt with ethnic diversity in the classroom. Discussions about traditions, cultures, Asian driving habits and racial stereotyping were mentioned as some of the more engaging class discussions high school teachers experienced in their classrooms. On the whole, no explicit curricular effort was made to address the issue of ethnic diversity at RCS. This can be attributed to the underlying philosophical assumptions and emphasis of the leadership as summarized below.
Philosophical Approach to Ethnic Diversity at RCS

Although there is no explicit official policy concerning ethnic diversity at the Richmond Christian School, the underlying philosophical position can be derived quite easily when the teaching mandate is examined within the RCS teacher contract and the type of classroom activities RCS teachers has developed. Three words or descriptors that best describe the RCS approach are passive-aggressive, integrative, and assimilative.

The RCS philosophy is best termed passive-aggressive because of its aggressive handling of the curriculum as a whole yet indirect handling of issues specifically related to ethnic diversity. An example of the aggressive philosophical stance can be seen in the language of the leadership and the Bible verses that are emphasized during Pro-D days and pre-school year motivational meetings. For example, one will often hear principal Codling challenge the teachers to ‘demolish the strongholds of worldly thinking’ and ‘stab students’ with the cutting truth of God’s Word (figuratively not literally of course). 

According to school policy, RCS equips students to serve God in His world. All creeds, races, and ethnic groups must fit within this mission. All students must be confronted with Christ’s truths, and Biblical teachings must permeate every particle of the curriculum. Students are viewed from a spiritual perspective rather than a racial one and the curriculum focuses on whether students are living in a right relationship with God. If their relationship with God is good then acceptance and love of all other students, regardless of their race or cultural background will naturally follow as students become disciples of Christ. Attitudes and prejudice can only be addressed by presenting the truths of the Scriptures and encouraging students to act in the appropriate fashion. Once this is done, God, as stated in Ephesians 2: 14-18, will destroy the
ethno-racial walls that may divide students.\textsuperscript{44} Focusing on ethnic diversity specifically is therefore not important in light of the fact that all of humanity are descendants of Adam and unified together by the Spirit of God according to His good pleasure.\textsuperscript{45} Since RCS teachers are challenged by the administration to wrestle with all issues within the curriculum, the approach in one sense could be termed aggressive. The RCS approach, however, has a passive element in that an issue such as ethnic diversity is expected to be handled naturally as it emerges in the curriculum. In short, teachers must aggressively address controversial curriculum issues in every RCS program but no priority or special treatment is to be given to one particular social issue.

Assimilative is a final descriptor for the RCS approach to ethnic diversity because the school feels working toward unity in Christ is more important than focusing on what makes us different. Because religious unity in Christ is the goal, it is therefore unnecessary to encourage or promote individual characteristics that create division and hatred among different ethnic groups. This is not to say that RCS forces students to give up every aspect of their uniqueness or reject every vestige of their cultural heritage. Diversity, rather, must be celebrated within the context of obedient submission to the teaching of God's Word. Such vigilance in the area of religious belief is of paramount importance if the school hopes to avoid sliding down the slippery slope of cultural and moral relativism. The school is also viewed as an extension of a Christian home at RCS and, therefore, it is required that at least one parent be a professing Christian. The registration policy stipulates that all children must come from families in which at least one parent is regularly attending a Christian church. The importance of parents in the overall workings of the school cannot be understated and is
best illustrated by the fact that children have had much greater success when parents have been faithfully involved at the Learning Assistance Centre. On the whole, the principals and teachers are merely the caretakers of a parent-run school. Parents are therefore strongly encouraged to become actively involved in their own child’s education. Without this crucial link between home and school, Christian education is severely limited if not irrelevant. The help and time investment of parents are needed to rightfully indoctrinate their children into Christian ‘truth’ as opposed to secular subjectivity. As the Bible says, “train up a child in the way he should go.”

Critique of RCS Approach

At the Richmond Christian School, great emphasis and effort is placed on permeating the entire curriculum with Biblical principles. Critical Christian thinking that uncovers and then demolishes the ‘false thinking of the world’ is the key component of the entire education program. Since racism is a topic that has been well-developed by ‘worldly thinkers’, in the opinion of the RCS leadership, one would expect that RCS would have a more overt response to ethnic diversity, especially since it has had such a profound effect on their own community. A close examination of the curriculum, however, reveals that problems such as racism are treated peripherally or ignored altogether despite the fact that there is evidence of some underlying ethnic tension within the community which in turn has led to a certain degree of white flight. Proponents of multicultural education can argue that Richmond Christian School has paid ‘lip service’ to the issue of ethnic diversity and has only included cultural topics to pander to the large number of Asian families. Although the school is very concerned about having an all-encompassing Bible-centred thrust, it is not clear from the
questionnaire responses whether the teaching staff has sought to develop a distinctive approach to ethnic diversity and racism. The approach is very similar to the one found at Vancouver Christian School in that ethnic diversity is only addressed if it naturally arises from a traditional curriculum. Treating culture as a side feature of the curriculum with no systematic critical attempt to challenge such oppressive relationships represents, critics would argue, a failure in the pedagogy. As McCarthy indicates, media images, cultural studies and school textbooks that position ethnic minorities in relation to dominant whites only serve to reinforce the dominance and subordination of the weaker group.\textsuperscript{47}

It can be argued, however, that Richmond Christian does not show any sensitivity to multicultural education because the administration believes it is fundamentally flawed. In their opinion, the reason there is racism within the Richmond Christian School and in British Columbia society is not because of a failure to train students to be more sensitive, understanding, and tolerant but because of a failure to convince them of the sin within their hearts. RCS would therefore see itself as having failed in its proclamation of biblical truth rather than failing to find the correct formula for multicultural education. It is possible that biblical principles still have not permeated the RCS curriculum sufficiently. Perhaps it is naïve to expect RCS or any other Bible-centred Christian school to “affirm that all ethnocultural groups are equal within our society”\textsuperscript{48} when they suspect that the underlying meaning behind such a statement is that all ethnocultural religions are equal. All religions cannot be equal because the Bible is the Word of God and believing in Jesus Christ is the only way to achieve personal salvation. Christianity, by its very definition is intolerant of any non-Christian religious beliefs yet fundamentally inclusive because of the Biblical command
to love and to make disciples of all nations. These beliefs are foundational to the Christian School movement.

**Comparisons Between the Schools**

Schools which originated in the Dutch Calvinist tradition want to ensure that the entire curriculum is permeated with Biblical principles. The Society of Christian Schools in British Columbia expends a great deal of effort developing Christian curriculum guides and units. It is rather ironic that Richmond Christian, a school concerned with developing a Christian curriculum, would end its membership with the SCSBC and join the Association of Christian Schools International (ACSI) when the ACSI has done very little in the way of curriculum development. As an organization, ACSI puts more stress on missions and evangelism than does the SCSBC and, in the opinion of this researcher, tends to separate the sacred from the secular in its formula for Christian education. As mentioned in chapter two, one of the reasons Richmond Christian left the SCSBC was that it was not Bible-centred enough and was slowly moving away from ‘distinctive Christian thinking’. Although the SCSBC had made efforts to develop ‘Christian curriculum’ its efforts were not distinctive enough in the opinion of the RCS leadership. In the end Richmond Christian is now the member of an organization that puts even less emphasis on Christian thinking than the SCSBC. It is also interesting to note that Vancouver Christian appears to put greater emphasis on Christian environment than on the development of a Christian curriculum and distinctively Christian thinking, even though the SCSBC has made progress in that area. In addition, Van Brummelen notes, “what happens in the classrooms of the SCSBC and ACSI schools in BC differs little. Almost all teachers stress both the need for personal faith and
piety and for acting responsibly in society personally, as well as in conjunction with other Christians.\textsuperscript{51} The SCSBC and ACSI are perhaps ‘shades of the same wall-paper’ when an examination is made of its supporting schools and formula for Christian education.

The Vancouver, Abbotsford, and Richmond Christian schools have a common heritage in terms of their Dutch Christian Reformed roots yet have journeyed in directions that have produced very different realities in terms of degree of ethnic diversity and homogeneity of their supporting communities. It is not surprising that, on the surface, there are many pedagogical differences among the three schools.

An examination of parental choices reveals that Vancouver, Abbotsford, and Richmond are all chosen by parents for essentially the same reasons. Certain reasons may be more prominent in some schools but the general perception of teachers and administrators is that tradition, academics, discipline, Christian teachers, and location are the most significant reasons why parents choose to enrol their children in each Christian school.

A closer look at registration requirements reveals that all three schools have policies and procedures that are relatively the same. All of the schools require that each registrant have at least one Christian parent. Some differences between the schools are that Vancouver Christian explicitly discourages ESL students from applying. Abbotsford Christian has an open registration policy but favours CRC church members if enrolment has to be limited.

A comparison of the affordability of each school reveals that Vancouver and Abbotsford exist in communities that have a relatively even distribution of family income levels. Both schools have an extensive tuition relief program and are very concerned that they be affordable for everyone. According to the principals, they are not ‘elitist’ schools but
attempt to serve all members of their community regardless of economic status. Both schools have an extensive tuition relief program and rely on government funding to keep the tuition rates as low as possible. Richmond has few people on tuition relief and is finding that its community is becoming increasingly affluent. RCS is less accessible to lower income families because of the high cost of housing in West Richmond.

The approach to ESL is very different at the three schools. Vancouver has very few ESL students primarily because of a registration policy that has strict minimum English competency standards. All students that struggle with English are given help through learning assistance. Abbotsford also has very few ESL students because of local demographics. Learning assistance is provided for a few German Mennonite ESL students. Leadership of the Abbotsford Christian School anticipates an increase in ESL students in the future as Asian and East Indian migration to British Columbia’s Lower Fraser Valley increases. Richmond has a growing number of ESL students because of an open registration policy and high numbers of new immigrants to Richmond. Increasing the present ESL program is an important topic at the school and many teachers are pressing for a strategy of separate program ‘streams’.

In the realm of curriculum development, Vancouver emphasizes a Christian environment and the development of good relationships between the students and teachers. Treatment of behavioural issues such as inter-ethnic relations are best addressed through the positive, loving environment created within the school. Such issues might also naturally arise as teachers teach a classical curriculum (i.e. Ancient civilizations in Grade 7 Social Studies). In this model, creating a Christian environment is crucial if teachers expect
students to internalize values such as the tolerance and acceptance of another student’s non-religious cultural characteristics. Abbotsford Christian School did not participate in the questionnaire portion of the study but it would appear that they treat the issue of ethnic diversity implicitly within the curriculum. Richmond Christian School handles ethnic diversity within the context of Christian critical thinking. Proclamation of Christian beliefs in the classroom is viewed as primary. A Christian environment that includes love for all students regardless of colour or race is seen as naturally arising out of the proclamation of ‘truth’. In this model, Christian thinking necessarily precedes Christian environment.

Comparing Vancouver and Richmond Christian’s response to what is popularly called ‘multicultural education’ reveals that there is no difference between the schools, although Richmond Christian appears to openly reject any such curriculum model. At the very least, each school embraces a limited form of what McCarthy would term the ‘cultural understanding’ model of multicultural education. In this paradigm, the matter of ethnic identity is understood in terms of individual choice and preference — the language of the shopping mall. As a consequence, the tendency is to focus on the acceptance and recognition of cultural differences. Evidence from this research shows that teachers at the Vancouver and Richmond Christian school have given passive treatment to the implementation of cultural studies in their programs. Even this rather limited conception of multicultural education is muted at the Christian school, however, because a Christian school, if it is truly Christian, would not accept cultural differences that trespass into the area of theology and religion. Indeed, the school’s enrolment policies attempt to mitigate against such a possibility. Authors such as McCarthy, would argue that even a strong program of ‘cultural under-
standing’ is completely inadequate to address the problem of ethnic inequality and racism. In his opinion, educators must move towards a more emancipatory model in which Eurocentrism within the curriculum is challenged and knowledge is recognized as being “socially produced and systematically relational and heterogeneous.” This view of knowledge construction, is completely contrary to the Christian educator’s belief that there is objective truth. Knowledge is not constructed but rather revealed by God through the Holy Scriptures. It is quite likely, therefore, that McCarthy's emancipatory multiculturalism would never find a home in a Christian school unless the program sincerely compromised its Biblical foundation.

Three Schools, Three Responses, One Philosophy

On the surface it would appear that the Vancouver, Abbotsford, and Richmond Christian Schools have chosen radically different paths when it comes to the issue of ethnic diversity and education as a whole. Underneath all of the different nuances and emphases, however, is a similar philosophical approach to ethnic diversity and multicultural education in particular. All three Christian schools have rejected any overt, explicit attempts to implement a special curriculum, and all three schools see religious unity as being accrued through the Christian beliefs, doctrines, and creeds that are the foundation or raison d'être of each school. The schools may have three differing histories, degrees of ethnicity, and approaches to the curriculum, but they all arrive at the same philosophical position: the exclusive religious integration and assimilation of their students into the Christian faith. They believe that the Christian faith intrinsically contains the only practical and effectual
answer to the problem of ethnic strife and hatred, love for God and love for one’s neighbour.\textsuperscript{54}
NOTES TO CHAPTER THREE

1 Based on interview with Ron Donkersloot, August 16, 1996.

2 Ibid.

3 Rebecca Burnham, “Choosing Computers Over Christianity,” B.C. Report, February 3, 1992. Dennis Hall’s study was cited in Burnham’s article.


6 VCS Teacher #6. All teachers who handed in the ethnic diversity questionnaire have been given numbers to maintain confidentiality. 30 questionnaires were handed out and 13 were returned for a 43% return rate.

7 Ron Donkersloot Interview.

8 VCS Teachers #1, #2, #3.

9 VCS Teacher #1.

10 VCS Teacher #3.

11 VCS Teacher #4.

12 VCS Teacher #8.

13 VCS Teacher #9

14 VCS Teacher #10.

15 VCS Teacher #5.

16 VCS Teacher #4.

17 VCS Teacher #9.
18 VCS Teacher #7.

19 Ibid.


23 Ibid.


29 Based on interview with Ian Codling, August 12, 1996.

30 Ibid.

32 Ian Codling interview.

33 Ibid.

34 Fred Greaves. Letter to the Education Committee (January 1997).

35 RCS Teacher #23 (Curriculum Developer). All teachers who handed in the ethnic diversity questionnaire have been given numbers to maintain confidentiality. 43 questionnaires were handed out and 24 were returned for a 56% return rate.

36 RCS Teacher #2.

37 RCS Teachers #6 and #7.

38 RCS Teacher #4.

39 RCS Teachers #3 and #5.

40 RCS Teacher #16.

41 RCS Teacher #10.

42 RCS Teacher #12 and #17.

43 Pre-school address to the teaching staff, Principal Ian Codling, Monday August 26, 1997.

44 The Holy Bible New International Version (Canadian Bible Society, Toronto: Zondervan Pub., 1984), p. 870. Ephesians 2: 14-18 is fully rendered: For he himself is our peace, who has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, by abolishing in his flesh the law with its commandments and regulations. His purpose was to create one new man out of the two, thus making peace, and in this one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility. He came to preach peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near. For through him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit.

45 RCS Teacher #11.

46 The Holy Bible, p. 489. Proverbs 22: 6 is fully rendered: Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it.


49 The Holy Bible, p. 743 Matthew 28:19-20 is fully rendered: “Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always to the very end of the age.


51 Ibid.

52 Cameron McCarthy, “After the Canon: Knowledge and Ideological Representation in the Multicultural Discourse on Curriculum Reform,” p. 291

53 Ibid., p. 301

54 The Holy Bible, p. 773. Luke 10: 27 is fully rendered: “He answered, ‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind, and your neighbour as yourself.’”
CHAPTER FOUR

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

With public schools under attack in recent years for being too lax, and independent schools drawing widespread media interest as an alternative, a study tracing the historical roots of three well-established Christian schools brings a fresh perspective to the increasingly diverse educational landscape in British Columbia. When the Vancouver, Abbotsford, and Richmond Christian schools were established by Dutch immigrants in the early years following World War II, they were essentially extensions of Dutch Calvinist religious communities. When these schools are examined over time, however, we can trace the movement away from an exclusive Dutch Calvinist community to a more inclusive interdenominational community. The Vancouver and Richmond Christian Schools have experienced a tremendous influx of Asian students and are the most ethnically diverse schools of the three schools. Ethnic diversity is more pronounced at Richmond Christian, in part due to an open registration policy that admits all students as long as they have at least one Christian parent. Vancouver Christian has very few ESL students because of English language proficiency requirements, whereas Abbotsford Christian simply has very few ESL families in their community. By 1997, the Dutch Calvinist ethnocultural community that built the Vancouver, and Richmond Christian schools has essentially become invisible. At Abbotsford Christian, the Dutch community has remained religiously strong but has otherwise been subsumed into the Caucasian majority in British Columbia.

Invisible, however, does not mean extinct. When an examination is made of school policy and leadership in the three schools, the Calvinist Reformed tenets of the founding
Dutch immigrants are still evident, although perhaps expressed in different ways. Vancouver Christian, although supported by very few Dutch Calvinist families, has remained loyal to the Society of Christian Schools in British Columbia, the Dutch Calvinist-dominated professional teacher organization. Richmond Christian, although no longer a member of the SCSBC, expresses its Calvinism in a distinctively Bible-centered program of studies that places heavy emphasis on critical Christian thinking. Abbotsford Christian continues to be dominated by Christian Reformed churches and has successfully built an intricate support network between the family, church, and home. Abbotsford Christian is also the largest and one of the most influential schools within the SCSBC.

After reviewing the data gathered from principals and teachers, it is interesting to note that the primary reason parents choose to enroll their children at the three schools is to provide students with the requisite skills and experiences that will prepare them for life in the ‘real world’. At the Vancouver Christian School, Christian curriculum is becoming less of an important concern for parents, whereas location, discipline, and a strong academic program appear to be more prominent. One would expect this to be the case at Abbotsford Christian school as well but the strong religious pull and community expectation to attend a Christian school cannot be overlooked. Family tradition is also a strong factor at Vancouver Christian but less so at Richmond Christian. The fact that parents may be choosing Christian schools more for reasons more pragmatic than spiritual can be attributed to the increasing secularization of the multifarious Christian communities and an increasing dissatisfaction with the public school. In other words, Christian parents who would normally send their children to public school may simply be fed up with a monolithic school system they perceive as
handicapped with poor discipline, low standards, and bureaucratic insensitivity. Such parents continue to view ‘school’ education as separate from ‘religious’ education and thus present a more pragmatic set of expectations to the Christian teachers entrusted with their children. It should be noted, however, that this study is based only on principal/teacher perceptions of parental choices. Further research is needed to more thoroughly and directly analyze the reasons parents choose Christian education.

In light of the teachers’ perceptions of parental expectations, it is interesting to note how the three schools have responded to ethnic diversity in the curriculum. Although all schools have similar beginnings and founders, each school has developed a distinctively different thrust to its conceptualization of Christian education. Vancouver Christian emphasizes a loving Christian learning environment. Abbotsford Christian promotes communication between the church, home, and school. Richmond Christian stresses a Bible-centered Christian curriculum. This is not to say that one emphasis excludes the other; each school may emphasize all of the factors mentioned above to a certain degree. The difference between the schools, however, sheds light on the responses to ethnic diversity and multicultural education in particular. Vancouver Christian, because of its emphasis on a loving Christian learning environment, encourages strong teacher-student and teacher-parent relationships as the means to address ethnic diversity and racism. It believes racial tolerance is an attitude that can be ‘caught’ by students when it is modeled by teachers, rather than ‘taught’ in the curriculum explicitly. Abbotsford Christian has very little visible ethnic diversity within its community so it is not surprising that the staff at Abbotsford Christian refused to participate in the questionnaire component of this research. Richmond Christian is
heavily influenced by visible ethnic minorities and feels that a distinctively Christian curriculum is the only effectual way to unite its heterogeneous and somewhat divided community of support.

All three schools lack a defined multicultural thrust, and treat the issue of ethnic diversity naturally as it emerges in the Christian program of studies. When the response to ethnic diversity are compared to the British Columbia Ministry of Education and various other secular proponents of multicultural and anti-racist education, it becomes apparent that these three Christian schools could not implement such programs and still remain true to their distinctively Christian religious beliefs. Because of this lack of a multicultural thrust in the pedagogy, critics of Dutch Calvinist Christian schools or any other religiously-defined school, might accuse them of being bastions of intolerance, seedbeds of racism, and plead for its extinction. Such criticisms should be dismissed, however, since there is little available evidence to demonstrate that Christian schools inculcate such anti-social attitudes. As Van Brummelen states, the available research has given no clear answer as to whether students have been prepared adequately to deal with the problems of modern life or whether they have successfully avoided conforming to the societal attitudes of their public school counterparts.¹

It also should be noted that the real value of multicultural education is still unclear, if not highly questionable. While multicultural education may provide a forum for talking about different cultures, "it just as frequently reifies them, neglecting the manner in which their mutual interaction produces new hybridized forms of identity and culture."² Authors of new emancipatory versions of multicultural education feel that most models of multiculturalism have failed to successfully address the issues of Eurocentrism, racism, and inequality.³
Instead of a new conceptualization of an old, tired idea, perhaps the Christian approach or lack of an approach to multicultural education should be given consideration rather than summarily rejected.

Christian schools and Christian beliefs can be viewed as a powerful force that unites different ethnic groups by focusing on their common spiritual needs. Such a belief system necessarily demands compliance with a common set of theological and moral absolutes, and will therefore move ethnic groups towards religious assimilation. Assimilation in this context, however, is not necessarily a bad thing. As Sweet states,

Togetherness and homogeneity do not, in of themselves, foster tolerance, but neither does separateness necessarily foster intolerance. It is only when we deny others the right to believe contrary to our beliefs, or if we use force in persuading others, that we can be accused of being intolerant.\textsuperscript{4}

Dutch Calvinist Schools exist today because certain Dutch families believed it was their right to express, promote, and inculcate their beliefs and values into their children on their own terms and in their own context. They have rejected the public school system which imposes superficial uniformity in the name of neutrality and responsible citizenship.\textsuperscript{5} When it comes to the issue of tolerance and social responsibility, Christian schools that desire to remain true to their faith can not accept the notion that all religions and all religious beliefs are equal, an opinion that is rife within most secular conceptions of multicultural education. Culture and ethnicity must submit to the sovereignty of God and his word, the Holy Bible.

This research has also demonstrated that Christian schools must ‘wake up’ to the reality of racism in society and respond appropriately. Christian schools have been touched by racism in their own communities and British Columbia’s version of ‘white flight’. The racist actions and attitudes of certain so-called Christian families represent a challenge to

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Christian educators and should inspire them to find a distinctively Christian curriculum or cross-curricular approach that addresses issues pertaining to ethnic diversity. Such a curriculum, however, must not compromise the moral absolutes and Christian thinking that is its fundamental *raison d'être*.

Christian schools also face the challenge of maintaining Christian distinctives within communities that are increasingly secular and pragmatic in their conceptualization of Christian education. Many visible ethnic minorities in the Vancouver Christian and Richmond Christian schools choose these schools because of the perceived discipline and quality academics. If this is true of visible ethnics in other parochial schools or even the public school system, why should so much time be spent opening the curriculum canon when all visible ethnic minorities really want are the tools to succeed in a world dominated by hierarchies since its creation? As Adam-Moodley states,

> What most minority parents want for their children is not condescending teaching of fragmented, diluted versions of their culture, taught secondhand by an inauthentic group member. They expect committed, demanding teaching aimed at the mastery of basic skills and the success in English, math, and science required to survive in the new home country. In many instances these expectations were the primary reasons for leaving their country of origin.6
NOTES TO CONCLUSIONS


5 Ibid.

1. PRIMARY SOURCES

i. Published Sources


Admissions Policy Pamphlet [Abbotsford Christian School] - no date available.


Constitution and By-laws of the Abbotsford Christian School, Article 2B.


Ethnic Diversity Questionnaire (see APPENDIX D). All teachers who handed in the ethnic diversity questionnaire have been given identification numbers to maintain confidentiality. 30 questionnaires were handed out and 13 were returned for a 43% return rate at Vancouver Christian. 43 questionnaires were handed out and 24 were returned for a 56% return rate at Richmond Christian. Abbotsford Christian refused to do the questionnaire. Approved by Ethics Committee February, 1997.

Federation of Independent School Associations Brief. Supplied by Mr. Fred Herfst, Executive Director of F.I.S.A. This brief summarizes most current data concerning


Greaves, Fred. Letter to the Education Committee (January 1997).


Statistics Canada. Immigration and citizenship. Ottawa: Supply and Services Canada, Census of Canada. 1941, 4: 662; 1951, 1: Table 45; 1961, 92-547, Table 49; 1971, 92-727, Table 36; 1981, 92-913, Table 1A and 1B; 1991, 93-316, Table 1 and 2.


ii. **Unpublished Sources**

Codling, Ian. Pre-school address to the teaching staff. Monday August 26, 1996.


Informal conversation with Richmond Christian vice-principal Irene Kraay.

Interview with Henry Contant, July 24, 1996.

Interview with Ian Codling, August 12, 1996.

Interview with Ron Donkersloot, August 16, 1996.

2. **SECONDARY SOURCES**


Burnham, Rebecca. “Choosing computers over Christianity.” *British Columbia Report*. February 3, 1992. Dennis Hall’s study was cited in Burnham’s article.


APPENDIX 1: VCS: KEY HISTORICAL EVENTS AND LEADERS

1933  Parents meet to form Vancouver Christian School Society.

1949  Calvin Christian School opened at a renovated private home in East Vancouver. School later moves into a facility at 5621 Killarney street.


1968  Vancouver Christian School completes expansion of its facility at 5621 Killarney.

1978  Emmanuel High School begins operations in the Faith Baptist Church on 2551 East 49th Ave. in Vancouver. They have one Grade 8 class and one Grade 9 class in the first year of operation.

1979  Emmanuel High School adds Grade 10.


1982  Kindergarten is added at the Elementary School. First Grade 12 graduation at the Secondary School.

1984  High School land (3496 Haida Drive) is purchased by the Vancouver Christian School Society (VCSS).

1988  Grade 11 and Grade 12 program discontinued due to lack of enrollments.

1989  The Secondary School program is discontinued altogether. Elementary location (5621 Killarney) is sold to the Formosa Academy. Elementary school is moved to the Secondary School location (3496 Haida Drive- address changed to 3496 Mons Drive in 1989).

1991  Grade 8 program added.

1992  Grade 9 program added.

1994  Grade 10 program added. School facility at 3496 Mons Drive is expanded using proceeds from the sale of the Killarney property.
The Vancouver Christian School is run by the Vancouver Christian School Association. This association is a society made up of parents in the school community. The school, therefore, is run and operated by parents, not by churches or government agencies. Every year the members of the society elect a board which includes a president, vice-president, secretary, treasurer, and members-at-large.

**VANCOUVER CHRISTIAN SCHOOL PRINCIPALS**

1949 - 1971  Mr. Munneke, Mr. VanderVelden, Gerry Ensing, Bill Weidenaar
(Length of terms from 1949 to 1971 are not available).
1971 - 1984  Frank Devries
1984 - Present   Ron Donkersloot

**EMMANUEL / VANCOUVER CHRISTIAN SECONDARY SCHOOL PRINCIPALS**

1978 - 1984  Conrad VanderKamp
1984 - 1985  Dennis Nickerson (Conrad VanderKamp full-time teaching)
1985 - 1988  Conrad VanderKamp
1987 - 1988  L. Boettcher (acting principal - part of year)
1988 - 1989  Jack VandenBorn

**VANCOUVER CHRISTIAN SCHOOL PRESIDENTS**

1949 - 1965  No data available
1965 - 1972  Case Pel
1972 - 1974  No data available
1974 - 1979  Gerry Ensing
1979 - 1981  H. Van Ryk
1981 - 1983  R. Ydenberg
1983 - 1985  I. Mills
1985 - 1987  H. Van Ryk
1987 - 1989  Peter Pel
1989 - 1990  Dennis Danielson
1990 - 1993  Dal Schindell
1993 - Present   Dennis Danielson
APPENDIX 2: ACS: KEY HISTORICAL EVENTS AND LEADERS

1950  Abbotsford Christian School Society formed.


1960  A separate school facility is built at 2884 Abbotsford-Mission Highway, Abbotsford. The facility has four classrooms.

1966-67  Further expansions are made to the Abbotsford Christian Elementary School.

1973  A second Elementary Campus is built at 35011 Old Clayburn Road, Abbotsford.

1976  Old Clayburn site is expanded to establish a Junior High School Campus. All Elementary students at Old Clayburn site are moved to the Elementary Campus on Abbotsford-Mission Highway. Old Clayburn Site becomes exclusively a Secondary Campus.

1979  Grade 11 and 12 programs are added after further expansion to the Old Clayburn Road facility.

1985  Fire destroys most of the Elementary Campus on the Abbotsford-Mission Highway.

1986  Abbotsford Christian Elementary School is rebuilt.

1991  Elementary School divides into two campuses. Original school on Abbotsford-Mission Highway is renamed Heritage Campus. Second Campus meets in portables while new school facility is being built in Clayburn Hills.

1992  Clayburn Hills Campus opens at 3939 Old Clayburn Road.

1996  A $4.5 million Secondary Campus expansion project is completed in the summer.

1996  In October the Abbotsford Christian School hosts the annual NWCSI-CTABC conference. This huge interdenominational Christian Education conference brings together over 1000 Christian teachers from British Columbia and Northwestern Washington State.
The Abbotsford Christian School is run by the Abbotsford Christian School Society, an interdenominational organization that serves Christian families in the Abbotsford area.

ABBOTSFORD CHRISTIAN SCHOOL PRINCIPALS

ELEMENTARY PROGRAM
1953 - 1986  John Kampman
1986 - 1991  Henry Contant
1991 - 1994  Henry Contant (Heritage and Clayburn Hills)
1991 - Present  Lloyd Den Boer (Heritage Campus Only)
1994 - Present  Ed Noot (Clayburn Hills Campus Only)

SECONDARY PROGRAM
1953 - 1976  John Kampman (Junior High Only)
1976 - 1986  John Messelink (Junior and Senior High)
1987-Present  Dwight Moodie (Junior and Senior High)
APPENDIX 3: RCS: KEY HISTORICAL EVENTS AND LEADERS

1957  Richmond Christian School begun as an annex of Calvin Christian School. They meet in the United Church Hall located on Cambie and River Road in Richmond. The school has two teachers and 37 students. The program is set up for grades 1 to 8.

1959  The Richmond Christian Reformed Church builds a multi-purpose facility at 8180 No.2 Road. The facility includes four classrooms, a kitchen, and a consistory/nursery/catechism room. Dutch Calvinist families use the facility as a Christian school, church, and community/meeting center. Richmond Christian School adds Kindergarten and grade 9 programs but decide to discontinue them at the end of the year due to a lack of resources.

1964  The Elementary program is reduced to grades 1 to 7.

1965  The Richmond Christian School Association is formed and the Richmond Christian School begins operating independently from the Vancouver Christian School.

1966  The Richmond Christian Reformed Church opens on 928 No. 2 Road in Richmond. As a consequence, the church and school are physically separated.

1975  Seacliff Christian School is established by the interdenominational Evangelical Education Society and begins an Elementary School program (grades 1-7) in the Richmond Bethel Mennonite Brethren Church at 10200 No. 5 Road, Richmond.

1976  Seacliff Christian School adds a grade 8 program.

1977  Seacliff Christian School adds a grade 9 program.

1978  Seacliff Christian School adds a grade 10 program.

1982  Richmond Christian School adds a Kindergarten program.

1984  Richmond Christian School adds a grade 8 program.

1985  Richmond Christian School sells its property at 8180 No. 2 Road to the Bank of Montreal. The Sea Island Elementary school, a vacated public school facility, is rented from the Richmond School Board for the 1985/86 school year.

1986  The Richmond Christian School moves into a new Elementary school facility at 5240 Woodwards Road in Richmond.

1988  Seacliff Christian School adds a Kindergarten program. Richmond Christian School adds a Grade 9 program.

1990 The Richmond Christian School constructs a portable complex on rented land at No.1 Road in Richmond. Grades 8-10 are moved to the portable complex.

1991 - Seacliff Christian School adds a Grade 11 program.


Grades K - 7 at RCS (Renamed RCS Woodwards Campus).
Grades 8 - 10 at RCS Portables (Renamed RCS No. 1 Road Campus)
Grades K - 12 at SCS (Renamed RCS Seacliff Campus)
RCS No.1 Road Campus students come to Seacliff Campus for use of gym.

Spring 1993 - November 1993 Classroom Expansion at Woodwards Campus

All RCS K - 7 combined at Woodwards Campus
All RCS 8 - 12 combined at Seacliff Campus
No. 1 Road Campus Portable #1 moved to Seacliff Campus. Portable #2 sold.

1994 Richmond Christian School ends its 37-year affiliation with the Dutch Calvinist Society of Christian Schools in British Columbia (SCSBC). RCS is put in FISA's associate member group (AMG) since it is no longer affiliated with the SCSBC.

1995 Richmond Christian School, Richmond Bethel Church, Richmond Chinese Church agree on a joint expansion venture for the Seacliff Campus facility. RCS joins the American Association of Christian Schools International (ACSI).

1996 Construction begins at Seacliff Campus (now called Richmond Christian Secondary School)
The Richmond Christian School is run by the Richmond Christian School Association. It is supported by families from a variety of Christian evangelical churches.

RICHMOND CHRISTIAN SCHOOL PRINCIPALS

1957 - 1960 Nick de Regt
1960 - 1961 George Yntema
1961 - 1964 Henk van Huizen
1964 - 1968 John de Vries
1968 - 1979 Gerry Dykstra
1979 - Present Ian Codling

SEACLIFF CHRISTIAN SCHOOL PRINCIPALS

1975 - 1977 Barry Ashton
1977 - 1980 Ron Funk
1980 - 1981 Wally Grip
1981 - 1983 Dr. Frank Martens
1983 - 1986 Dr. Len Sampson
1986 - 1987 Victor Janzen
1987 - 1990 Leo Regehr
1990 - 1992 Vic Wiens
The following questionnaire was approved by the UBC Behavioural Sciences Screening Committee for Research Involving Human Subjects (January 16, 1997). Vancouver Christian School and Richmond Christian School agreed to participate on November 30, 1997. Abbotsford Christian did not participate in the questionnaire. Questionnaires were distributed to every teacher at the Vancouver Christian School and every teacher at the Richmond Christian School. At Vancouver Christian, 13 of 30 questionnaires were returned for a 43% return rate. At Richmond Christian, 24 of 43 questionnaires were returned for a 56% return rate. Questions were as follows:

#1 How important is ethnic diversity in your school? How is it addressed within your school?

#2 The following factors may or may not significantly determine the distribution patterns of ethnic groups within your school. Please rank the following factors on a seven point scale ('1' represents no significance in determining ethnic distribution and '7' represents high significance)

| Factor                  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | high
|-------------------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|------
| Location                |   |   |   |   |   |   | 7 | high
| Bus Service             |   |   |   |   |   |   | 7 | high
| Tuition                 |   |   |   |   |   |   | 7 | high
| School Facilities       |   |   |   |   |   |   | 7 | high
| Christian Curriculum    |   |   |   |   |   |   | 7 | high
| Christian Teachers      |   |   |   |   |   |   | 7 | high
| Athletic Program        |   |   |   |   |   |   | 7 | high
| Academic Program        |   |   |   |   |   |   | 7 | high
| Safe Environment        |   |   |   |   |   |   | 7 | high
| Family Tradition        |   |   |   |   |   |   | 7 | high
| Discipline              |   |   |   |   |   |   | 7 | high

Please share any additional comments that might elaborate on your rankings above.
#3 How many students in your class have a first language other than English?

#4 What programs are used with children who have a first language other than English? Are these students segregated at first and then later integrated into the regular classes? If so, at what stage?

#5 What grade/age group(s) do you teach?

#6 What subjects do you teach?

#7 How many children are there in your class?

#8 What ethno-cultural backgrounds are represented in your classroom? (i.e. Dutch, East Indian, Russian, Chinese, First Nations, Scottish, German, etc.). If so, how many from each?

#9 What is your ethno-cultural background?

#10 What is your first language?

#11 What other language(s) can you speak?

#12 How do you use the B.C. curriculum? Have you found any of its content useful for dealing with issues concerning ethnic diversity? If so, please specify.
#13 What additional resources do you use to supplement your curriculum to deal with the changing ethnic composition of your class? If so, where are the additional resources found?

#14 Give some specific examples of what you do in your classroom that relates to ethnic diversity.

#15 Summarize the philosophy of your school in terms of ethnic diversity.

#16 Please share any additional comments that might elaborate on your answers and thus be helpful in my study. You may use the back of this page if you need more room.