

ADOPTION IN THE SEABIRD ISLAND BAND

by

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Abstract

In the past, the Ministry of Social Services and Housing has placed many native children from the Seabird Island Band, a Salish band in the Sta'lo Nation, in permanent placement or adoption off the reserve. Government agencies imposed a system of child welfare that superseded Seabird Island adoption practices. The Seabird Island Band members would prefer to see these children placed within the band through 'custom' adoption. In apprehension and placement court cases, the band social worker has needed documented information defining 'custom' adoption, and data regarding the benefits of this Seabird Island process. This thesis investigates and documents the process and results of adoption on the Seabird Island Indian Reserve.

This thesis begins with a brief history of Canadian adoption policy as it applies to First Nations people. The thesis is based on detailed taped interviews with Seabird Island Band members who had experienced foster care and/or adoption. This fieldwork was the result of negotiation with the Seabird Island Band to discover the type of research that they needed. The thesis documents four kinds of adoption experience of the Seabird Island members: foster care, closed legal adoption, open adoption, and 'custom' adoption. In my analysis of these adoption experiences, three main themes occur: (1) issues of ethnic identity, (2) power and the child welfare system, and (3) the definition and functions of 'custom' adoption.

The thesis concludes that the imposed system of child welfare based on Euro-western ideas of appropriate child care may have destroyed or seriously damaged some Seabird Island Band members' sense of ethnic identity. As well, it may be a factor in the break-up of the extended family. 'Custom' adoption, as defined by Seabird Island Band members, offers an alternate model for keeping apprehended Seabird Island children within the band. Open adoption, as defined by the pilot project documented, is an alternative for those children who cannot be returned to the band. I have made several recommendations in the conclusion for the Seabird Island Band's consideration.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

"Adoption" refers to the incorporation of a person into an existing family unit by a process other than procreation and birth. There are several kinds of adoption practices. Most adoptions take place between relatives; in North America, step-parent adoption (adoption by a spouse of a partner's child or children of a previous marriage or relationship) is the current most common form of relative adoption. Sociologists and social workers use the term "blended family" to describe the family formed as a result of step-parent adoption. New reproductive technologies have created the possibility of fetal adoption and surrogate parenthood that have added new dimensions to adoption processes and policies.

When we think of adoption, we often first think of stranger or orphan adoption. In this form of adoption, the child has no genealogical connection to the adoptive parent(s); the family incorporates the child, a stranger, within the family unit. In North America, cross-cultural or trans-racial adoptions by non-aboriginal families have become more frequent due to their low fertility rates and over 90 percent of their out-of-wedlock children remaining with the birth mother (Eichler, 1988:260). Adoption of natives by non-natives causes grief for Indian people in Canada to-day. Government agencies have removed Indian children from their homes and reserves and placed them in non-native homes. This practice has created a sense of powerlessness among Indian people and resulted in the adopted Indian child's

loss of Indian identity and its connectedness to the band.

In 1983, in Ontario, 37 percent of the children adopted were of native origin; they were taken from a provincial Indian population of 2 percent. Similarly, in 1981, in Manitoba, 48.7 percent of the children adopted were of native descent. Government agencies placed the majority of these adopted children in non-native homes. Furthermore, over a ten year period ending in 1979, in Ontario, 78 percent of the status Indian children were placed in non-native adoption families (Eichler, 1988:263). British Columbia social services statistics for March, 1992, indicate that there were 6084 children in foster care; thirty-two percent (1948 children) were of aboriginal decent (Thomson, 1992). The Indians view this as genocide.

Welfare agencies place so few Indian children with Indian families because the agencies use non-native middle-class standards to select both temporary and permanent placements. These agencies do not consider Indian standards for a safe, healthy, happy, loving placement appropriate. The Indians recognize that past and current adoption and apprehension policies have meant that generations of children have been lost. Non-native parents have not made efforts to incorporate the children's heritage, but instead, have imposed their culture on the children. This means that not only does the band lose status members, but the children lose their Indian heritage as well. Thus, rights and obligations such as names, dances, masks, and property rights cannot be passed down to the rightful owner.

Literature Review

In my review of relevant anthropological literature, adoption, foster care, and kin-fosterage have not been singled out for in-depth research. The following ethnographies and research papers provide some data about adoption, foster care, and kin-fosterage: Hill-Tout, 1978a:43; 1978b:42,71,101-103; Hudson and Wilson, 1986:439; Jorgensen, 1969:80; Teit, 1906:262; 1973:150-172,261-281,374-376; Ray, 1939:5,9. Some mention of adoption in kinship studies based on the Inuit and South Pacific cultures is available (eg. Inuit: Burch, 1975:52-59,123-130; Guemple, 1979:11-102; Morrow, 1984:245-251; Balikci, 1970:108,122,123,150; South Pacific: Scheffler, 1965:88,96-102; Weiner, 1988:37; Firth, 1936:204,205,588-595; Sommerlad, 1977:167-177). However, most research relegates the adoption of family members or the incorporation of strangers to a few paragraphs (eg. Barnett, 1955:134-137,181; Duff, 1952; Leacock, 1949; Smith, 1945,1949; Suttles, 1987:17; Goody, 1982:38-54,180-181,250-255). With regards to Salish Indian adoption, there is no anthropological research that focuses directly on the issues of adoption or foster care.

However, there is a vast amount of literature on adoption/foster care in the social work discipline, also in psychology. In these disciplines, there is active debate on the merits of open adoption (a legal adoption where the identification of the birth parents is given, contact between the birth parents and adoptive family may be maintained, and where full family histories are

shared) versus closed legal adoption (a legal adoption where the identity of the birth parents is withheld, no contact between the birth family and adoptive family is made and where little or no family history is provided). The subject of North American trans-racial adoption has been covered thoroughly for Black and Asian children and less so for Indian children (eg. Day, 1979; Silverman and Feigelman, 1984:181-191; Gill and Jackson, 1983; Johnson et al, 1987:45-55; Allen, 1957). The American experience with American solutions is the basis of most of this literature (eg. Schapiro, 1956; Kirk, 1981, 1988; Small, 1987:33-41; Fanshel, 1972; Anderson, 1971; McRoy et al, 1988). There are also a number of research papers written from a Canadian point of view (eg. Sachdev, 1984; Kimelman, 1985; Ward, 1984; Johnston, 1983; Eichler, 1988:237-373; Hudson and Mackenzie, 1981:63-88; Hepworth, 1980; Kendrick, 1990).

Methodology

The Seabird Island Band reserve, where this research took place, is located on the lower Fraser River, east of Agassiz, British Columbia. In 1879 government representatives created a reserve on Seabird Island for seven bands located between Yale and Popkum on the Fraser River. In 1992, there were about 330 status members of the Seabird Island Band. The band is part of the Sta'lo nation and is considered by anthropologists to be part of the language group called Halkomelem. The band is composed of both Halkomelem and Nlkapamuxw descent members.

I was determined that my thesis be useful to the people and my

choice of the Coast Salish was based on my particular interest in their culture. I initiated this research as a result of my negotiations with the Chief and band social worker. In 1989, I contacted the Chief and asked if the band required any research to be done, perhaps in the area of child welfare.

The Seabird Island Band required the documentation of adoption experiences and the definition of "custom" adoption. Social Services had removed many of their children over the years without regard for native practices of child care. The band members wished to return to "custom" adoption but said that neither the Social Services Ministry nor the courts understood what Seabird Island people meant by this term. Documentation of band members' experiences would give the Band Council the data they need to argue for the return of "custom" adoption.

After a lengthy discussion with the band social worker, an Indian woman employed by the band, I defined a thesis project that would allow me to complete the research needed by the Band Council. The band did not require a contract or a formal written agreement. We have a verbal understanding that I will give them a copy of my thesis, which will document these adoption experiences and define 'custom' adoption. It is a research document that may be used by the band in court in adoption cases.

I received permission to carry on this research project after completing the "Request for Ethical Review" form, which included a letter of permission from the Seabird Island Band Chief to

conduct the research and to conduct in-depth interviews with band members (See 4, Appendices).

The band agreed to give me the use of an office for private interviews. It had a comfortable seating arrangement for interviews and a table where I could place a tape recorder and microphone. I could use the electricity so did not have to depend on batteries. The band social worker made the historical primary documents of the band available to me, also photocopies of the original field notes of Marian Smith and Eleanor Leacock. They had done field work on the Seabird Island Reserve in 1945. An office clerk prepared photocopies of maps at no cost to me. The office staff made me very welcome and between interviews or at coffee time, I spoke informally with them and other band members who wandered in. I travelled anywhere on the reserve that I wished to and had permission to take photographs of anything. After my field work, the Chief took me on a tour of the reserve to show me the various historical and current points of interest; this tour put into context many bits and pieces of historical data that I had collected.

In my initial discussion with the band social worker, I asked her to list everyone on the reserve who either had experienced adoption or had knowledge of it. As the interviews progressed, informants named others who had experienced adoption; I then added those names to the list. I started with a list of seventeen possible candidates. I suggested that I would want to interview everyone on the list. I asked her if she would

introduce me to the first few people so that I could arrange interview times. The band social worker was extremely cooperative and helpful. Her workload was extremely heavy, yet she was always available to me. She set up the appointments with the informants and introduced them to me when they arrived at the band office. Periodically, over the seven week period (November and December, 1989) that I spent on the reserve, I would meet with the band social worker to discuss various questions that had come up and add prospective informant names to the list. When an interview had to be done in a private home, she took me there, introduced me and then left. She shared some publications that she thought pertained to the research.

I interviewed informants to obtain narratives of foster care/adoption experiences. These interviews varied from thirty minutes to two hours, depending on the informant. Some Elders could only talk for a short period due to ill health.

The interviews began with a brief discussion of the research and its application to the band and to my work. I then asked informants to sign an "Informed Consent Form" (See 6, Appendices) and gave them a copy. I discussed anonymity with my informants and assured them that I would use pseudonyms in the thesis. Informants were free to refuse to answer any questions with which they were uncomfortable. I explained that the tapes and notes from the interviews would remain in my possession and I would use them for research purposes; I told the informants that should they require a copy of their interview, that I would give them a

copy. I also indicated that the Band Council would receive a copy of any papers or publications based on the research and that the thesis would be available to the public at the University of B.C. library.

I taped and transcribed the interviews; all direct or indirect quotations in Chapter 5 come from these transcriptions. The reference gives the tape identification number and the date of the interview (eg. Z10, Nov.4/89). Though it is true that the choice and use of quotations may suggest my bias, I have made a concerted effort to maintain the Seabird Island person's point of view. To provide context and maintain the authority and integrity of the informants' accounts, I have edited the interview data for clarity and extraneous data only. Bracketed information [eg. ()] is paraphrased. Each account is an oral history of a person's experience - a reconstruction of the past. Informants came from a cross-section of the band: elders, middle-aged, and young adults, male and female. The interviews were twenty accounts of adoption experiences: custom adoption, legal closed adoption, open adoption, and foster care experiences. All informants gave their permission to have their interviews taped.

Field observations, slides, and files pertaining to my field work remain in my possession. I maintained telephone contact with key contact people so that queries about data collected could be confirmed.

Over the years, Indian bands have dealt with self-determination

issues such as health, education, justice, and social welfare. Anthropologists should not take a parochial colonial approach to fieldwork. The needs of First Nation people must be considered first in our research. We must ask what kinds of work the bands require and negotiate with respect for their values. Negotiation means that the time frame for organizing field work may be more protracted, but it will help ensure that our work is more responsive to the people we study. Indian nations have current cultural problems that require research. By negotiating to do research, anthropologists may receive the co-operation of those involved. The researcher has access to the band members and to the primary documentation required. The anthropologist is working with and for the Indian band, not doing anthropology to them. Negotiated research is a pragmatic and practical solution for both the Indian band and the anthropologist.

Types of Adoption Experience

Adoption experiences of Seabird Island people are more extensive than those of North Americans, generally. Kirk suggests that one in five persons in North America has had personal experience with adoption (Kirk, 1981:4). In the Seabird Island Band, almost everyone has had some experience with adoption or apprehension.

These experiences fall into four general categories: foster care, closed legal adoption, open adoption, and "custom" adoption.

1. Foster Care

Foster care is generally considered in the literature of social

welfare and sociology, to be a separate welfare issue from adoption. To be placed into temporary or permanent foster care means that social workers or government agents remove the child from the family and reserve. They then place the child in a private home, where surrogate parents, acting for the provincial government, care for it.

These parents cannot make any major decisions regarding the child's medical, educational, or psychological needs; a social worker, acting on the government's behalf, makes all decisions. The government gives parents a monthly allowance to cover the child's expenses. In an ideal world, an Indian child would stay with a native family until s/he reached adulthood. S/he would be aware of her/his heritage and encouraged to maintain her/his identity. The home would be a safe, happy and loving place, where a child apprehended abruptly from its own family, could find security. The reality is that Indian children in foster care may be passed through a series of social workers and non-native foster care placements.

Over the years, the child may never feel secure and happy. Foster parents do not encourage the child to develop an Indian identity and the child enters a no-man's land, neither native nor non-native. S/he is left to wander eventually to the streets of large urban areas where kinship ties are forever severed. Because social workers are assigned case loads and are subject to transfers, they do not maintain the same files. This means that the foster parents, Indian children and Indian band must deal

with a succession of social workers who must constantly up-date themselves on the children who are their responsibility. Beside lack of security and stability, Indian children are aware that welfare agencies pay their surrogate parents to look after them. The children see fostering as just another job with no investment in ties that would bind them into a family.

Another aspect of fostering, is the use of group homes for older Indian children who have already gone through a series of private homes. In group homes, the children are under the care of either a team of non-native adults or group home parents. The children view the group home as a dumping ground for runaways and children with substance, physical, or sexual abuse experience. Both private homes and group homes are places from which to escape. The Indian child does not consider it a safe, loving, stable, and secure home. Private and group homes usually are not geographically close to the reserve.

The Indians classify apprehension for either temporary or permanent placement as adoption. From their point of view apprehension means the child is lost, gone forever. Seabird Island people often use the word "apprehension" where non-natives would use the word "adoption."

2. Closed Legal Adoption

Closed legal adoption takes place after social workers apprehend a child from the band and place the child in a temporary foster home. The children are the wards of the provincial government.

There is no requirement that native children must be placed in native homes. Recent changes in British Columbia policy now state that the social worker will try to find a suitable home on the reserve first. Failing that, the regular adoption placement proceedings will place the child in a non-native home. The regulations do not require adoptive parents to raise the child with the knowledge of its heritage. However, social workers must now consult the band prior to placement.

In the past, social workers did not give the band any information about the child. Because social workers use middle-class standards for placement, they seldom place the children on the reserve. After one year, the child is legally a member of the adoptive family. The welfare agency does not release the identity and location of the birth parents and extended family to the child or the adoptive parents. They do not tell the adoptive family which band the child is from, so it is difficult to give the child its Indian heritage. A status Indian maintains his/her status, but adoptive parents unconcerned with status rights or uneducated in the child's rights may prevent the child from exercising those rights.

3. Open Adoption

Open adoption is not yet available to Indian children, as a general policy. The Seabird Island Band is participating in a pilot project under the auspices of the Ministry of Social Services and Housing. In this project, an Indian child for whom return to the reserve would be unsafe, has been legally adopted

by a non-native family. He is aware of his Indian heritage and his adoptive parents encourage him to learn as much as they can teach him about the customs of the Seabird Island Band. Though he may not have contact with his birth mother, he has had visits in his adoptive home by his sister. As well, he has visited the reserve to talk with an older sister. He knows about his birth father's recent death. The Band Council has appointed an elder to be his "aunt." She maintains contact with the adoptive parents so that both parties can be informed about the child's development, the birth family's situation, and changes at the band level. By using open adoption as described, the child is secure and happy in a loving caring family and aware of his heritage. When this child matures, it is less likely that there will be a no-man's land for him to wander in. He will be encouraged to rejoin the band as an adult member, with his rights and obligations intact.

4. "Custom" Adoption

I suggest that this method of open adoption is necessary for those children who cannot find safe homes within the band due to substance, physical or sexual abuse. However, many children need adoptive homes for other reasons. The Seabird Island Band wishes to return to what the elders call "custom" adoption. This adoption process involves either a close relative such as a grandparent, uncle or aunt, or a close family friend, who agrees to adopt the child. Band members do not exchange money or gifts, nor do they make formal contracts or court visits. The transfer of the child is by verbal agreement. The child becomes a full

and equal member of the adoptive family, assuming the new family's name. This child may receive names, masks, dances, and property from the adoptive family. The adoptive family use family kinship terms as if the child had been born into the family. Still, the child also will know who its birth family is and may freely visit them as it gets older. There is no interference in the child's up-bringing by the birth parents. Once the families make an agreement, the community recognizes the adoptive parents as the parents of the child. The parents' role is socially and symbolically constructed. The openness of custom adoption is important because it is important to know the genealogy of band members. Secrecy would not allow members to know the relationships of band members. "Custom" adoption would allow the children to retain their heritage, kin ties, and to be knowledgeable about their rights and obligations; it also would allow the extended family to assume its role of care-giving.

Of the above adoptive experiences, "custom" adoption is the process that band members wish to return to. Open adoption is an alternative for children who cannot return to the reserve. Both methods allow the children to maintain ties to their birth family and to their heritage. They allow the extended family unit to work together for the benefit of the child and the band. Neither method may be construed as genocide because the children are not lost to the band. The power and strength of the band is maintained.

Some notes regarding this research:

I use the ethnographic present in this work to discuss current practices and past tense to indicate past practices either prior to contact or since contact with other societies.

Seabird Island Band members use the term "custom" adoption, already mentioned in this introduction, to define the child welfare actions taken by the band members for the protection of their children. This specific usage will be placed in quotation marks throughout this thesis. In the chapter detailing the adoption experiences of band members, the terms "apprehension, adoption, fostering," and "foster care" are used interchangeably by some informants. Because the informants did not differentiate between processes, it is difficult at times, to make sense of the informants' use of the terminology. The categorization of the experiences should help define what kind of experience is being discussed.

As well, informants used several different expressions to refer to the federal and provincial government agencies with which they have had contact. In the province of British Columbia, the Ministry of Social Services handles child welfare matters. Seabird Island people refer to this ministry variously as: "Social Services, the Ministry of Human Resources (M.H.R.), Human Resources (H.R.), the Ministry, the Welfare, the Welfare Department, the Social Department, the Welfare system," and "Social Welfare." The Indian and Northern Affairs Canada ministry in Ottawa, handles Indian concerns. Seabird Island people refer to

it variously as: "the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development (D.I.A.N.D.), Department of Indian Affairs (D.I.A.), the Department," and "Indian Affairs."

I have used pseudonyms to ensure confidentiality for informants. Within the Seabird Island community, many adoption experiences detailed here are local knowledge. For the larger community, that is the people outside the reserve and the readers of this work, it serves no useful purpose to identify informants by their real name.

The Plan of the Thesis:

Finally, an overview of the contents of this thesis seems in order. Following this introductory chapter, Chapter Two provides a brief overview of Canadian adoption history, particularly as it pertains to First Nations people and some statistical information on First Nations adoption. Chapter Three puts the Seabird Island Band in perspective by providing a geographical, historical, and current context. Chapter Four provides the data that resulted from interviews. It begins with definitions of the adoption terminology used throughout the thesis, followed by a selection of some experiences related by band members and a summation of answers to interview questions about adoption. Chapters Five, Six, and Seven contain the analysis. Chapter Five deals with issues of identity, loss of self-esteem and the feeling of belonging, and the effect of the loss of contact. Chapter Six discusses power and the child welfare system. It is in this chapter that the effects of the current child welfare system are

presented. The loss of power and respect, foster care, group homes, separation of siblings, serial care, subsidization, and status of First Nations children are the main areas of analysis. Chapter Seven provides a definition of "custom" adoption on Seabird Island and analyses the issues of legalization of custom adoption, validation of custom adoption, and cross-cultural custom adoption. Chapter Eight summarizes the results of the field work on Seabird Island, discusses the ethnographic findings of the thesis. It also looks to the future by presenting issues that the Band Council is still working on such as lack of adoptive parents, rejection, and the use of open adoption as an alternative to closed legal adoption or "custom" adoption. It closes with recommendations for action. The remainder of the data are placed in the Appendices. The Appendices offer examples of the forms used for this research and a list of the interview questions.

Chapter 2

First Nations Adoption in Canada: Historical and Statistical Background

2.1 A Brief History of Canadian Adoption¹

Present day adoption policy in Canada, is based on late 1800 and early 1900 North American adoption practices and policies (Kirk, 1988:142). The central governing tenet, both in Canadian and American adoption policies has been that social agencies and the courts base their decisions on what is in the best interests of the child. In the nineteenth century, society used social moral values to define the best interests of the child. As interest grew in psychology, social workers and the courts based their decisions on the definition of the psychological parent. Decisions based on 'in the best interests of the child' should mean that the adoption system is working for the children, but in practice, this universal principle has acquired the patina of a well-worn euphemistic phrase, used to justify whatever action social agencies have thought appropriate in child welfare cases, despite the child's best interest. Several factors confound what seems to be an altruistic axiom. The needs of social agencies,

¹For a more comprehensive history, see Lipman, 1984; Hepworth, 1980; for adoption statistics, see Johnston, 1983.

birth parents, and adoptive parents have often superseded those of the child. Changes to social agency policy and practices such as criteria for adoptive homes, criteria for placement of children, and suitability for placement have put pressure on the social agencies to make decisions that have not always been in the best interests of the child. Some adoptive and birth parents want adoptive files sealed forever, putting their interests before those of their child. In this brief overview of adoption history, it is important to discover just whose best interests have been served.

Early in child welfare matters, common law gave the father control over the child; the child was his to care for as he saw fit; the state lacked absolute control. As laws were rewritten to provide for the equality of genders, either parent had control of the child, thus maintaining the parent/child relationship. The state became increasingly involved in the creation and enforcement of child welfare laws. These statutory laws, concerned with legitimization and the care of children both outside and inside the family, were in direct opposition to common law (Schapiro, 1956:90). The family, once thought to be a private domain, has become a very public matter. The child welfare policies of Canada now give the ultimate responsibility for the children to the state, rather than to the parent/s.

In North America, adoption, formalized as a legal process, has not had a long history (See Schapiro, 1956:14-21). Private deeds were used in the United States prior to the ratification of adop-

tion laws by states, beginning with the state of Massachusetts in 1851. The Massachusetts statute

"...provided for a judicial decree of adoption based on a joint petition of the adoptive parents, accompanied by the written consent of the child's natural parents" (MacDonald, 1984:45). "By 1952, thirty-four states provided for mandatory investigation by the State Department of Public Welfare" (Schapiro, 1956:91).

In Canada, adoption legislation dates from 1873 in New Brunswick, to 1896 in Nova Scotia, 1920 in British Columbia, 1921 in Ontario, 1922 in Manitoba and Saskatchewan, 1924 in Quebec, 1927 in Alberta, 1930 in Prince Edward Island, and 1940 in Newfoundland (MacDonald, 1984:45). In the New Brunswick statute, Canada's first adoption law, a single adult or a married couple could petition the court for adoption.

"Written consents were required from the child, if over 12 years, and his parents, or if the parents were deceased, his guardian. The judge had to be both satisfied that the petitioners could 'bring up and educate the child properly' and convinced of the 'fitness and propriety' of the proposed adoption... (There was no reference to)...secrecy of adoption records, an adoption probation period, or the requirement of a report to the court from a public official on the suitability of the petitioners as adoptive parents" (MacDonald, 1984:45).

In 1901, British Columbia passed the Infants Act, which provided for a Provincial Superintendent of Neglected Children. Shortly after, three Children's Aid Societies were incorporated: Children's Aid Society of Vancouver (a Protestant organization), Catholic Children's Aid Society, and the Victoria Children's Aid Society (non-sectarian) (New Families For Young Canadians, 1967). The British Columbia Adoption Act, passed in 1920, was

"...similar to the much earlier New Brunswick legislation. It contained no provisions for secrecy of adoption records. No report to the court was required on the fitness of the adoptive parents, although notice of application for adop-

tion was required to be served on the Superintendent of Neglected Children" (MacDonald, 1984:45).

After the Second World War, government agencies took on a greater role within what had been the private domain of the family. The position of social workers became more prominent and credible. People were willing to let 'the experts' make decisions that they thought would solve the problems of the community. When the provincial government extended social services to Indian reserves, there was little concern that such an extension would adversely affect Indian people (Johnston, 1983:3).

In 1950, the government established the Provincial Advisory Committee on Indian Affairs. The Department of Indian Affairs provided all health and welfare services.

"The Provincial Welfare Branch did not extend its services to the Reservations except for the protection of children and for the investigations for the 'Family Allowance Act' (Elmore, Clark and Dick, 1974:3).

In 1952, the province and the Department of Indian Affairs jointly extended services to the Indians of B.C. for delinquent children, adoption cases, and unmarried mothers (Ibid., 1974:3). The provincial government set a new policy in 1955 for the apprehension of Indian children; prior to that time, the provincial government apprehended Indian children if the Department of Indian Affairs requested their help (Ibid., 1974:4). These changes set in motion a continual argument between the federal and provincial governments regarding responsibility and payment for Indian child welfare services. This jurisdictional dispute had a bearing on the policies set by

provincial governments (Johnston, 1983:4).

In the 1950's, based on the social work philosophy of that time, government administrators decided that an adopted child should sever all connections with her birth family and become like and equal to a natural child. The new British Columbia Adoption Act of 1957 specified

"...that upon adoption, a child 'for all purposes' became the child of his adoptive parents and 'for all purposes' ceased to be the child of his natural parents" (MacDonald, 1984:47).

This act was to cause irreparable psychological damage to generations of adoptees, who, according to the Act, must look like and act like the other members of their adoptive family with no recognition of the importance of maintaining their identity (Kirk, 1981). At this time, social workers began to match the physical attributes of adoptees to those of the adoptive families. The act of adoption was a big secret; the child's parentage was often not revealed to the adoptee. Cultural differences were not recognized. Adoptive parents incorporated the child into their family, based on the similarities of appearance and the similarities of the sketchy family history presented by social workers. Adoptive parents and social workers gave no consideration to the adoptees' need to know their connections with the past or their family of origin. This adoption model excluded the adoptee from his/her birth right and the birth family from their child (Bagley, 1986:233). This model also excluded adoptive parents who did not have the appropriate values, level of education, and economic status. The exclusion

model also excluded any opportunity for other models of adoption such as aboriginal custom adoption to guide practice.

In Canada, recruitment of homes for visible minorities began in the 1960's. These programs attracted white adoptive parents and the number of inter-racial adoptions increased dramatically.

"This is especially true in the western provinces where native children constitute approximately 50 per cent of the children admitted to the care of child welfare authorities. Thus, of 137 status Indian children adopted in Canada in 1965, 44 were adopted by Indians and 93 by non-Indians. By 1977 the total number adopted had risen to 581, with 135 adopted by Indians and 446 by non-Indians" (MacDonald, 1984:55).

Social Work literature refers to the adoption pattern of the 1960's as the "Sixties Scoop." Great numbers of Indian children went into care under the auspices of the B.C. Ministry of Social Services. At that time there was a large migration of native people from the reserves to the urban areas. This caused the loss of adults of child-rearing age from the bands. It also meant that those who moved to the urban areas lacked community support. Many of their children went into care instead of being cared for by the extended family on the reserve. On the reserves, those children who needed care, could not be placed because there were too few adults available to provide that care. As well, the government closed residential schools for Indians and the young adults who had been in the residential school system had reduced parenting skills.

"In 1955 there were 3,433 children in the care of B.C.'s child welfare branch. Of that number it was estimated that 29 children, or less than 1 percent of the total, were of Indian ancestry. By 1964, however, 1,446 children in care in B.C. were of Indian extraction. That number represented

34.2 percent of all children in care. Within ten years, in other words, the representation of Native children in B.C.'s child welfare system had jumped from almost nil to a third. It was a pattern being repeated in other parts of Canada as well. One longtime employee of the Ministry of Human Resources in B.C. ...admitted that provincial social workers would, quite literally, scoop children from reserves on the slightest pretext. She also made it clear, however, that she and her colleagues sincerely believed that what they were doing was in the best interests of the children. They felt that the apprehension of Indian children from reserves would save them from the effects of crushing poverty, unsanitary health conditions, poor housing and malnutrition, which were facts of life on many reserves. Unfortunately, the long-term effect of apprehension on the individual child was not considered. More likely, it could not have been imagined. Nor were the effects of apprehension on Indian families and communities taken into account and some reserves lost almost a generation of their children as a result" (Johnston, 1983:23).

During the period between 1963 and 1969, there was a concerted effort by the Adoption Placement Section of the B.C. Ministry of Social Services to find more Indian homes. They advertised information about particular children, presented articles in native print media and used the media for promotions and public relations. They also participated in a research project with the University of British Columbia School of Social Work, held meetings with native agencies to stimulate interest, and participated in the Open Door Society program directed towards Indian adoption. These efforts met with little success due to a number of factors. There was a high ratio of children to adults resulting from the migration off the reserves of adults in the child-rearing age of 20 - 39. There was an increase in social problems, resulting in many children needing temporary or permanent foster care. The economy of the reserves was restricted and the size of Indian families precluded them from

accepting more children. As well, there was a lack of a central source of information on Indian homes available. (Elmore, Clark and Dick, 1974:21).

In 1971, "...a movement in the United States began to promote the placement of native children with native families" (Lipman, 1984:35). By the late 1970's, First Nations leaders in British Columbia, expressed concern about the loss of their children to non-native adoptive families who did not place a priority on maintaining the native child's ethnicity and identity. Thousands of native adoptees grew up without any knowledge of their cultural heritage or their rights and obligations as status Indians.

In 1975, the report by the British Columbia Royal Commission on Family and Children's Law was presented. The Commission made the following key recommendations:

- "1. The highest priority should be given to recruiting native Indian adoption homes for native children. To reduce the financial impediments to adoption among native families, the commission recommended a program of short- and long-term financial subsidies. It also recommended outreach to native communities by child welfare agencies, as well as genuine efforts to recruit and train native personnel for employment in the child welfare field.

2. Although not prepared to recommend the exclusive adoption of native children by native Indian adoptive parents, the commission urged that an 'ethnic release' by natural parents be a precondition to adoption by non-Indian parents. This would be similar to the 'religious release' required in some jurisdictions when the child is to be placed with adoptive parents of a religion different from that of the natural parent.

3. The commission was aware of cultural traditions among some Indian bands that sanctioned custom adoptions. Since such practices were frequently at variance with conventional adoption with respect to inheritance rights and on-going contact between the adoptee and his natural parents, the

commission recommended that Indian custom adoptions be explicitly recognized in provincial statute law, as had earlier been done in the federal Indian Act and the Child Welfare Ordinance of the Northwest Territories.

4. To ensure that native children raised in non-Indian adoptive homes would be aware of their Indian status and culture, the commission recommended that non-Indian adoptive parents be required, prior to placement, to take part in an orientation course in native Indian culture, designed in conjunction with Indian people. Such parents would also be required at the time of placement to sign an agreement to familiarize the child with her Indian heritage.

5. To ensure that status Indian children placed for adoption would at a later time be able to share in the activities and benefits of Indian band membership, the commission recommended that the Provincial Superintendent of Child Welfare be required to notify the Registrar of Indian Affairs in Ottawa of the child's adoption, and the adoptive parents of his registered Indian status and band membership" (MacDonald, 1984:56).

Eighteen years later, the provincial government has implemented few of these recommendations. Native personnel have been trained for employment in social work, but the training does not give them the level of credentials (Master of Social Work) to be social workers for the Ministry of Social Services, so they lack the power and position to be effective agents of change. Social workers recruit native homes for foster care and adoption, but white middle-class standards for selection continue to be used. Social workers consult Band Councils before apprehension and placement take place. Band Councils now have access to information regarding the whereabouts of their recently apprehended native children.

Because the government did not change social policies to accommodate the recommendations of the Commission, native children continued to constitute the majority of children

available for adoption in B.C. Lipman reports that in 1980 at the federal level, native and Metis children formed the largest minority group waiting for placement with the national Adoption Desk, a registry of adoptees.

"Of the 265 children registered with the Desk... 40 per cent were Indian children and 26 per cent were Metis" (Lipman, 1984:36).

MacDonald describes some characteristics of this large population of potential native adoptees:

"Such children are less likely than other children to be placed for adoption from birth because most Indian children admitted to care are admitted for reasons of protection. Consequently, Indian children available for adoption tend to be older than non-Indian adoptees. Also, given a history of deprivation or neglect, accompanied in many cases by lengthy periods in foster care, these children are more likely than non-Indian adoptees to have physical or emotional problems. Moreover, in light of the much higher birthrates among native families, there is a greater chance that the adoption placement of single adoptees will result in the severance of ties with siblings as well as natural parents" (MacDonald, 1984:56).

In 1980, the Band Council of the Spallumcheen Indian Band passed a by-law (No. 2-1980) that gave them the exclusive jurisdiction over child custody cases involving band children (Johnston, 1983:106). In October of 1980, the chief of the band signed an agreement with the Ministry of Social Services that gave the band the authority to assume responsibility and control of child welfare concerns (Ibid., 1983:107). The agreement also gave the band the authority to take back children who were already under the care of the Ministry of Social Services. This was a landmark decision for British Columbia bands. Starting in 1981, other natives across Canada began to take responsibility for their child welfare cases: the Dakota-Ojibway Child and Family Service

in Ontario, the Fort Alexander Child and Family Service in Manitoba, the Montagnais-Naskapi Indians in She-shat-shit, Labrador, the off-reserve Metis and Cree of Sandy Bay, Saskatchewan (Johnston, 1983:112-118), and the Awasis Agency in Northern Manitoba (Damm, 1992:53). The return of band responsibility for the children is just one of the aspects that bands are now dealing with in their move towards self-government.

The rates of adoption for status Indians in Canada for the years 1961 to 1985 suggest that there is still an inordinately high percentage of Indian children being adopted by non-Indians (See Figure 1. next page). In British Columbia (Figure 2.), adoption by non-Indians remains high as well. In Manitoba (Figure 3.), where recent changes have allowed Indian bands to move towards custom adoption, statistics indicate an increasing number of Indian adoptive parents. The following graphs indicate the number of Indian adoptions over a twenty-four year period (data for 1971-72 are not available). I chose British Columbia for this comparison because this province has no instituted custom adoption. Manitoba has made some policy changes that incorporate Indian values, but custom adoption is not yet legal across the province.

(See 2, Appendices for tables showing adoption rates for Indian and Non-Indian parents, 1961 - 1985).

Figure 1. Number of Indian Children Adopted
by Ethnicity of Adoptive Parent
in Canada, 1961 - 1985.

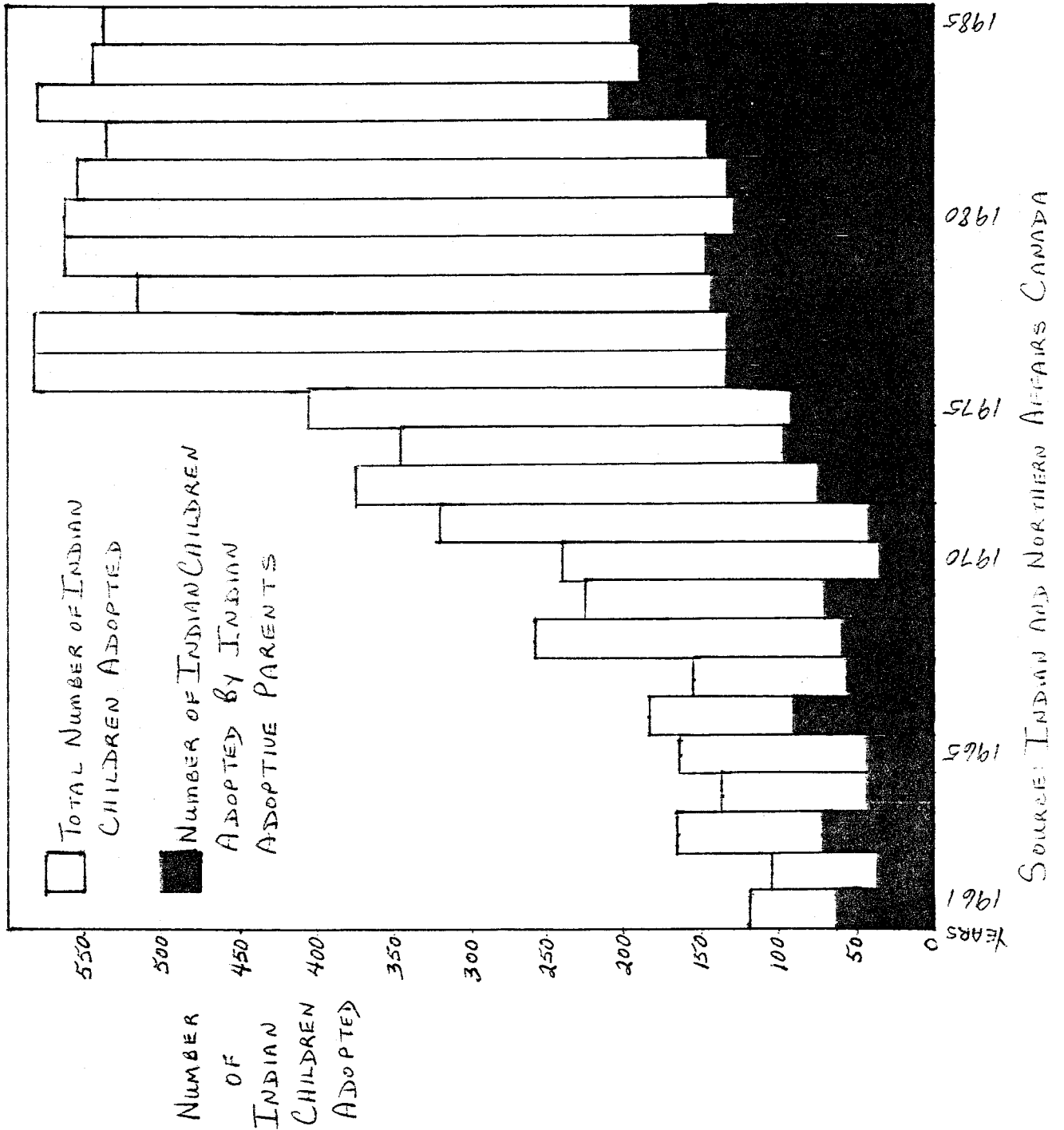
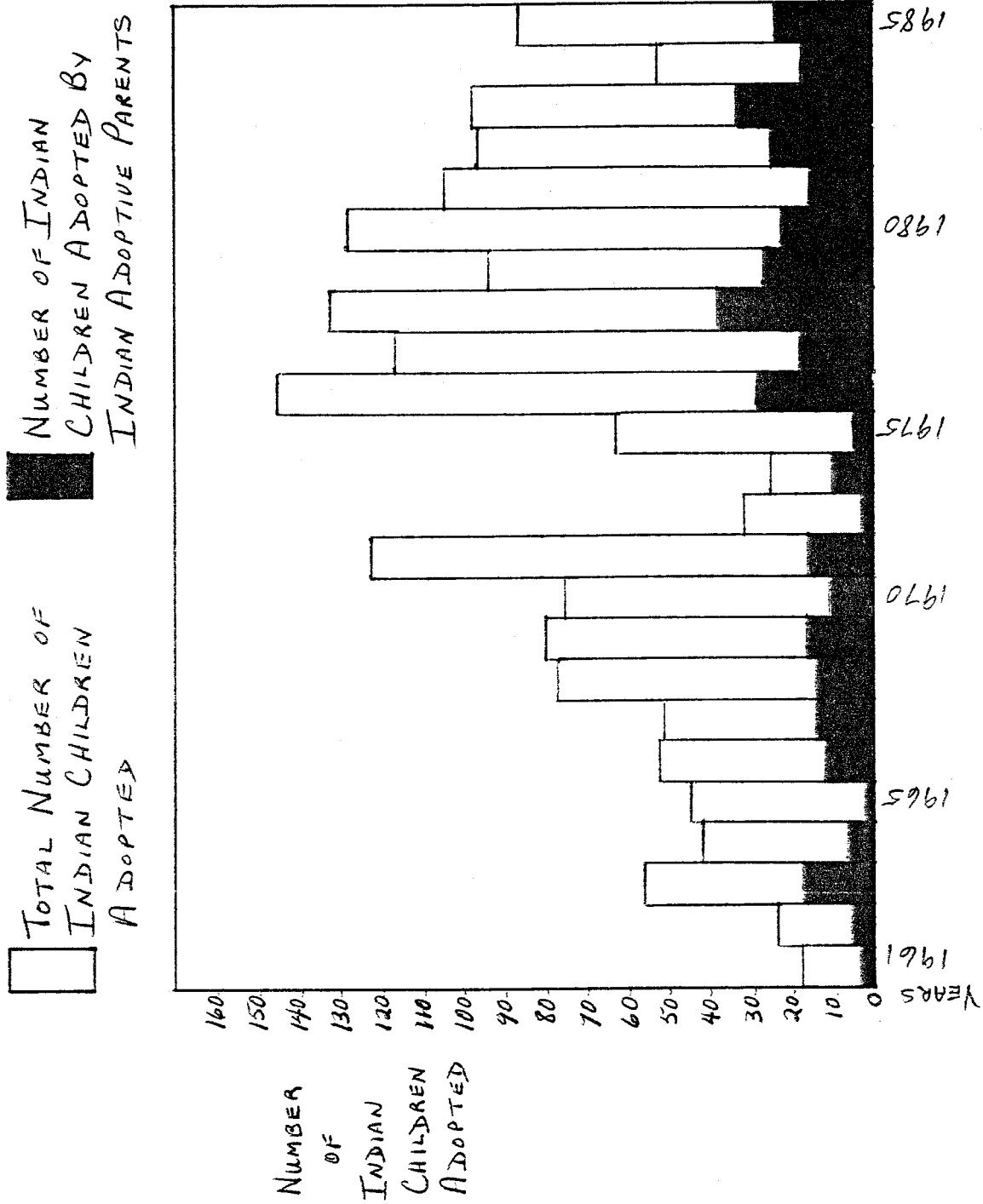
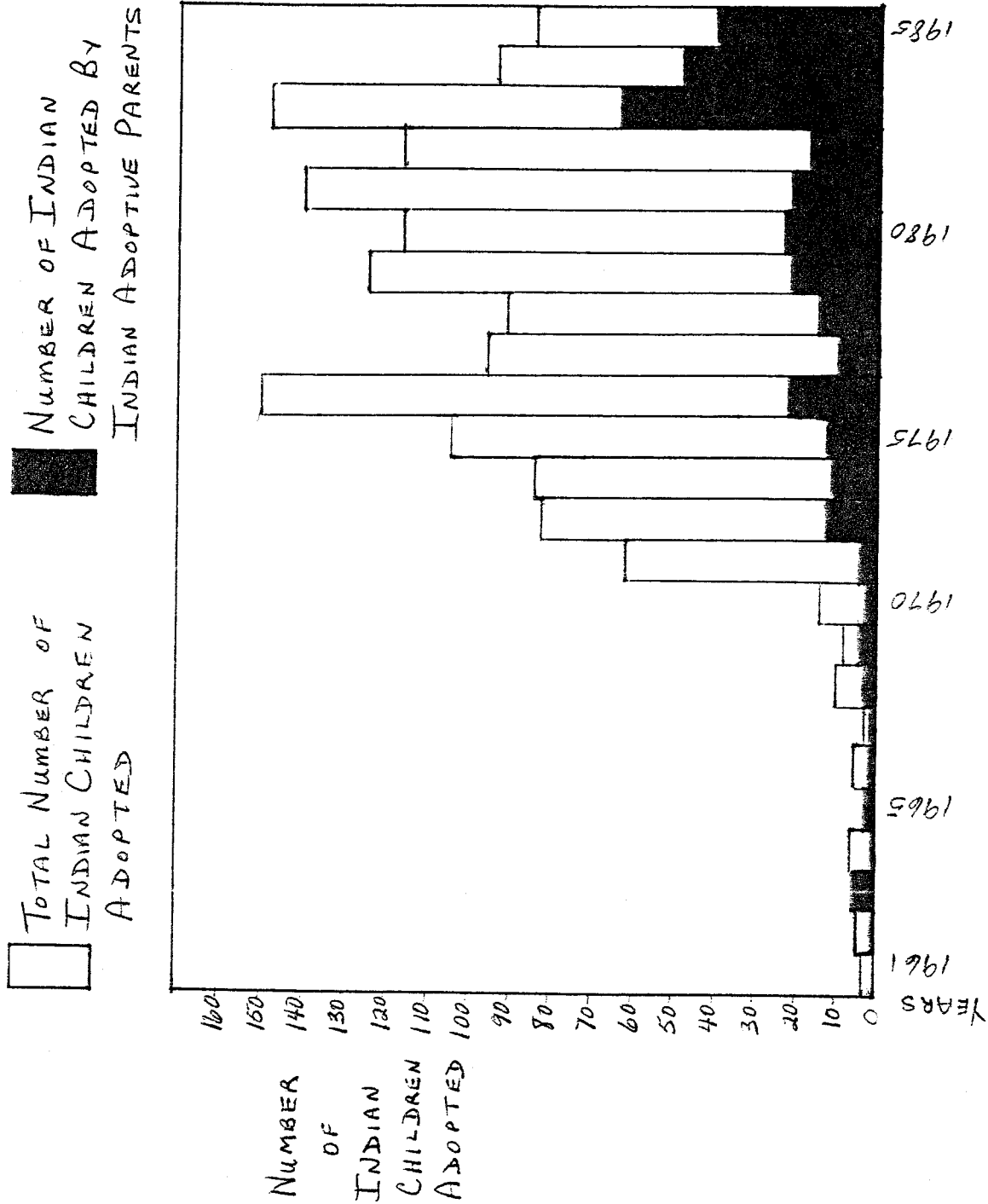


Figure 2. Number of Indian Children Adopted
by Ethnicity of Adoptive Parent
in British Columbia, 1961 - 1985.



SOURCE: INDIAN AND NORTHERN AFFAIRS CANADA

Figure 3. Number of Indian Children Adopted
by Ethnicity of Adoptive Parent
in Manitoba, 1961 - 1985.



SOURCE: INDIAN AND NORTHERN AFFAIRS CANADA

2.2 Confusion, Conflict, and Myths in Adoption Policies

As Canada moves towards the twenty-first century, adoptees have increased pressure on social policy makers to change the policies regarding access to identifying information on birth families. The adoptees' have realized that their rights to know who their biological parents are, have been superseded by the rights of birth parents and adoptive parents to withhold that information. Confusion has resulted in the courts as common law and statutory law issues remain unresolved. Conflict arises from the inconsistent provincial and federal policies. The three myths of adoption: (1) that adoption is a well-constructed institution, (2) that adoptees are as if born into the family, and (3) that all decisions are "in the best interests of the child," promote the continuation of sealed adoption files. When changes have been made to co-ordinate the law and policies and to base policy on factual research, adoptees and their families will then have the rights that other Canadians have had.

The confusion between statutory law and common law creates philosophical differences that make it difficult to find agreement on the most basic of child rights, that is, the right of a child to know who its birth parents are.

"Twenty years ago confidentiality was the rule of the day and was seen as a necessary protection for the biological parent and the adopting parent. Also, it was a fact of life for the adopted child and assumed to be good for her" (Lipman, 1984:39).

Such a ruling denied the child her/his birth right. This kind of ruling was based on the common law principle that the natural parent has the absolute right to conceal their parentage of a

child despite the child's right to know who their parents are.

"Legal practice ordinarily observes the doctrine that anything contrary to, or in derogation of, the common law must be strictly interpreted. In most states, therefore -- unless they have a statute expressly providing for liberal interpretation in light of stated principles -- a very strict interpretation is given the adoption statute, letter-by-letter, so that common law philosophy favoring absolute right of natural parents may prevail, in many cases to the detriment of the child's best interests" (Schapiro, 1956:91).

In addition, the offer of the adoptive parents to take the child in, creates another set of pressures on the judiciary to consider their needs beyond the right of the child to have the name of their birth parents.

"As a principle and in the abstract, people agree that adopted children should be afforded every protection, but at the same time the notion still prevails that the offer to adopt a child is something intrinsically fine, stemming from unquestionably charitable, altruistic impulses, and that such an offer should not be subjected to too close inquiry" (Miller, 1951:46).

Closed legal adoption maintains for the adult adoptee, the mechanisms that the courts put in place to 'protect' the child. By keeping files closed, the government is saying to the adult adoptee, "You do not have the right to the most fundamental and personal information about yourself. You do not have the capacity to deal with this knowledge." An adult person who cannot legally obtain basic documents relating to her/his life, does not have the same rights and obligations as other adults within the society.

It is particularly important to adolescents to discover identifying information about their birth family. At this age they

begin to establish their sense of who they are and how they fit into their society.

"In 1975, Sorosky, Baron and Pandor reviewed the literature on genealogical concerns and identity-crisis development in adopted individuals. They found a consensus in these studies that adoptees are more vulnerable than nonadoptees to identity problems developing in adolescence and young adulthood" (McRoy et al, 1988:4).

Open adoption for band members who cannot stay on the reserve and "custom" adoption for those who can, would help to alleviate any concerns for these children about who they are and where they came from. In another study, an adoptee felt that without any knowledge about her biological family, she could have no sense of personal significance and identity (Ibid, 1988:5).

"People who experience unresolved emotional cut-offs from significant others are at a greater risk emotionally and psychologically than those who have resolved such cut-offs. Therefore, all adopted children should not only have good parenting, but access to information about, and perhaps eventually contact with, their biological families" (McRoy et al, 1988:5).

Having information about one's birth family gives children a more complete picture of themselves. Questions like, "Who do I look like? Who do I act like? Do I have siblings? Are my parents still alive?", can be answered more readily by adoptive parents in open adoption. Besides the previous questions that are likely to be universal despite the culture of the child, First Nations children have questions like, "Which band do I belong to? What are the characteristics of that band? and What is my status in that band? Currently, unless children are adopted through an open adoption or "custom" adoption process, it is unlikely that they will receive enough identifying information to establish their sense of identity within the non-native society.

As well, conflict arises because child welfare is both a provincial and territorial jurisdiction in Canada, and the adoption policies are not consistent across the country. The rights of the birth parents and the adoptive parents may supersede the rights of the child. This inconsistency between provinces and territories permeates the interpretation of child welfare law in the legal system. Added to this inconsistency of policies, are additional sets of policies for aboriginal people at the national level under Indian and Northern Affairs Canada. Confusion often results in this fractured method of deciding what is best for the native child.

In the 1940's and 1950's, when social agencies closed adoption files and adoption became a secret process, three myths were created. The first myth was that adoptive kinship was a "firm, well-constructed institution" (Kirk, 1981:95). Adoptive kinship was considered to be the equivalent of blood relationships. Families who had adopted were no different from biological families. To support this myth, the courts changed birth certificates and closed the birth files. An adoptive family is a form of kinship and it needs to be acknowledged and institutionalized as different from the biological family. The adoptive family and the birth family give the adoptee a duality of roots that should be celebrated. Many countries have now instituted policies that ensure that adoption files are open and accessible to adopted persons and their families (See Hoksbergen, 1986, for open adoption policies in Sweden, the Netherlands, England, Wales, and Israel).

The second fundamental myth of adoption was that all adopted children were 'as if they had been born into the family.'

"It is as if we have all been victims of a faulty belief system in which we forget that the child is a child first and that adoption happens second. It seems we would like to think that an adopted child did not exist before adoption and that, unlike all other children, an adopted child is neither conceived nor born and has no ancestry and no past" (Small, 1987:34).

Open adoption and custom adoption allow the children to grow up with the knowledge of who they are. Open adoption and custom adoption do not perpetuate the cultural hoax that the adopted child is the equivalent, that is, as if born into the family. To maintain policies based on the equivalency doctrine is illogical and promotes dishonesty.

The third myth was that social agency decisions were 'in the best interests of the child.' Kimelman notes that this myth was defined by a white bias (Kimelman, 1985:29). Even now, when years of research have proven that adoptive kinship is different from consanguineous kinship, that there is a difference between adopted and biological children, that these differences must be recognized as such, and the best interests of the native child have not been served, the social policies still maintain the myths and the files are not opened.

The three myths of adoption have been shattered. Adoption is not a firm, well-constructed institution; it is a flexible kinship process that varies according to the needs of the culture. Adoptive families are different from biological families;

adoption is not about being the same but about recognizing the difference. The best interests of the child have not been served by adoption laws and policies. Because the myths are just that, it is time to open the sealed documents.

In 1988, British Columbia opened a passive registry to allow adoptees, siblings, and birth parents to make contact. This contact is possible only if the birth parent and adoptee or the siblings and adoptee make a written request for such contact. Once both parties have made the request, the Reunion Registry staff arrange a reunion. Adoptees have to be the age of majority (nineteen). Since October, 1991, an additional change in policy now allows adoptees to search for a birth parent or a birth parent to search for an adoptee through the active registry. The Reunion Registry charges a search fee of \$250.00 and acts as a mediator. The Registry staff contact the birth parent or adoptee and ask if they wish to have contact with the family member. A negative response means that there is no contact; a positive response means that the Reunion Registry sets up a reunion. These two social policy changes suggest that the Ministry of Social Services recognizes that they need to make major changes; they are a positive step towards open adoption. However, it is still a matter of luck if an adoptee is reunited with her/his birth parent. There is no guarantee that the birth parent will wish a reunion. Now, the use of the registry ignores the adoptee adults' rights to the ownership of the most fundamental information of their history. For those native children who have not been told that they have status, it ignores their right to

have this information and act upon it.

In 1992, the British Columbia government called for a review of child protection legislation and set up a Committee to study the child welfare problems (Langston et al, 1992; White and Jacobs, 1992). The results of this study, like those of the 1975 Royal Commission on Family and Children's Law, indicate that changes need to be made to the social policy so that First Nations people can institutionalize their custom adoption model (White and Jacobs, 1992:77).

Adoption practice has changed dramatically in recent years as the population of adoptees has decreased from the large number of available children prior to the 1980's. Birth control methods have improved in success and availability, as well, many single women have decided to keep their babies as there are now fewer social sanctions against single mothers. There has been an increase in inter-racial and inter-cultural adoptions, as barren women look to third world nations as a source of children available for adoption. Issues of ethnicity and identity for these children, long a concern of First Nations people in Canada, have not yet surfaced. Open adoption, where the adoptee has contact with their birth parent/s from birth, is increasing in Canadian private adoptions. Social agency adoptions are still closed adoptions, for the most part, though there has been a move recently to plan open adoptions for older adoptees.

"Adoption is no longer a quiet arrangement between adoptive applicants and adoptive workers, with an almost invisible unmarried mother and totally invisible biological father

hovering in the background" (Lipman, 1984:40).

As our society becomes more complex, it will be necessary to accept new definitions of family. Part of that definition will include the birth family.

At best, the decisions that have been made for adopted children in Canada have been ambivalent. For Indian children, decisions from the very beginning have confirmed that the best interests of the child were seldom considered. The custom adoption model used by aboriginal people for thousands of years before the arrival of Europeans was given short shrift; the ethnocentrism of those Europeans almost eradicated Indian social organization and kinship patterns. It is paradoxical that we are now looking to open adoption, which is much like custom adoption, as the way to serve the best interests of the child.

Chapter 3

Seabird Island Band

Adoption practices cannot be separated from the culture in which they arise. This chapter presents geographical, historical, and current data about Seabird Island to give context to the informants' adoption experiences. Seabird Island reserve is atypical in its inception.

3.1 Geographical Context

Seabird Island, for which the band is named, is situated in the upper Fraser Valley, approximately five kilometres east of Agassiz. It is the largest island above the delta of the Fraser River, being about 5 miles long and one and three quarters of a mile wide. The Fraser River runs along the east side of the island. Maria Slough, once a deep, fast flowing body of water on the northwest side of the island, is now a shallow water course subject to seasonal changes in water levels. It is stagnant and polluted with dairy farm effluent and runoff from band agricultural activities and now cannot be used for swimming or fishing.

The island lies among the Coast Mountains: Agassiz Mountain to the west, Bear Mountain to the north, and Mt. Cheam to the south. All furnish areas of use for the band ranging from hunting and gathering sites to areas important for sacred purposes. Seabird Island Band members refer to the four side peaks of Mt. Cheam as

the children of Lady Cheam (Smith, 1945: Box 4: Notebook 13).

The island is scarcely apparent as an island, as the narrow slough forming it is crossed by short highway and railway bridges. The Canadian Pacific Railway (1882), two Westcoast Transmission natural gas rights of way (1956 and 1973), a B.C. Hydro and Power Authority electric power transmission line (1969), and the Haig Highway (#7) traverse the island's length (Seabird Island Archives).

The 4,511.5 acre island reserve retains a rural setting with a mix of cultivated farm land, pasture, and timbered areas. Band members hold five percent of the reserve by Certificates of Possession, as defined under the Indian Act. One home and the Seabird Island Cattle Ranch are on the less developed side of the island, east of Haig Highway. The west side of the island is the main centre for residential and commercial use. Here, a green belt zone parallels Seabird Access Road and Seabird Island Road. Within this zone, residents' homes are randomly located (Seabird Island Archives). The village centre, at the south end, includes the church, community hall, administration offices, sports fields, school, fire department, pump house and water tower, and maintenance buildings. The Band Council has designated the mid-point of the island as a commercial area to serve both band members and travellers of the Haig Highway. They have located a cafe, store, and card-lock gas pump on the highway.

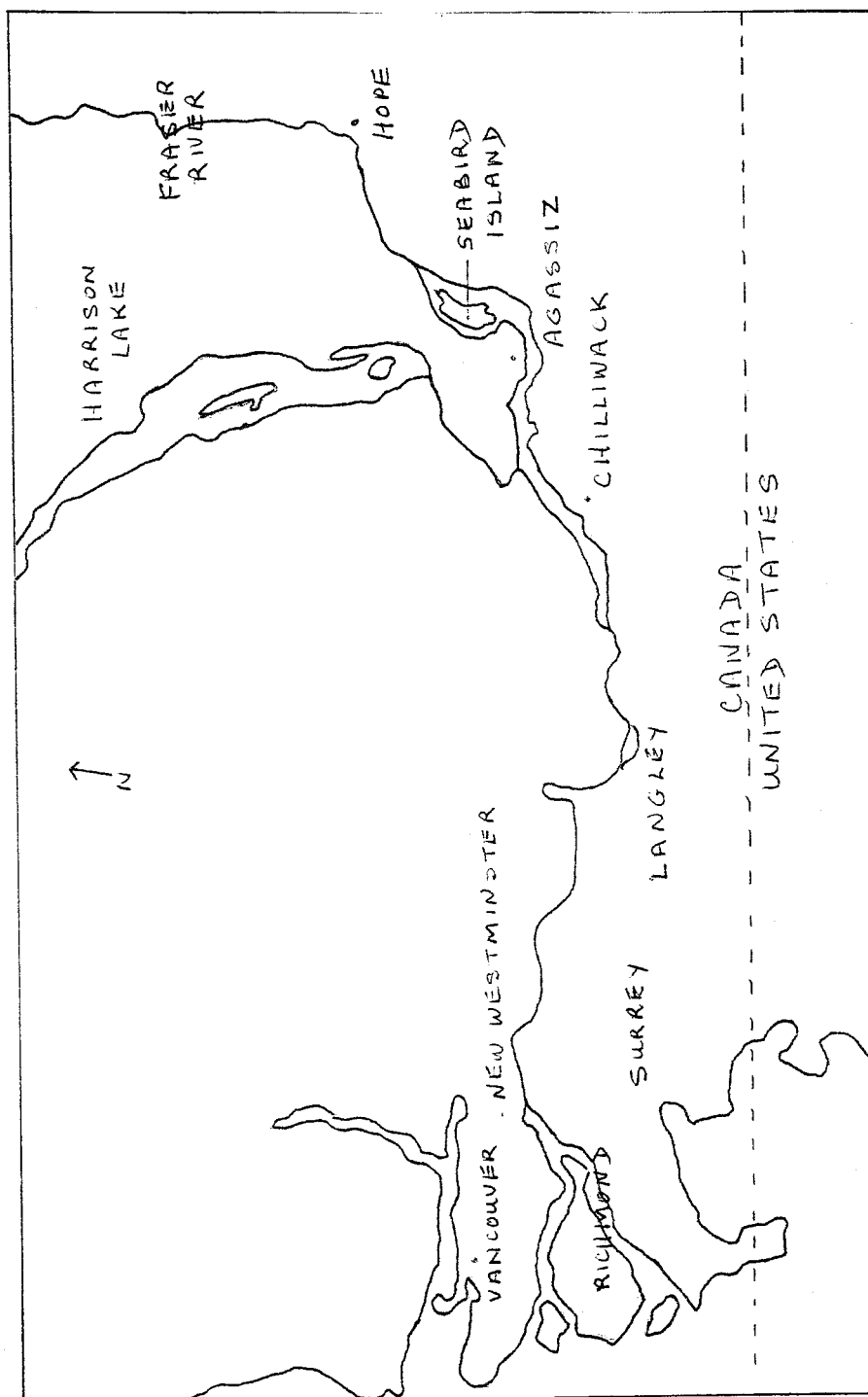
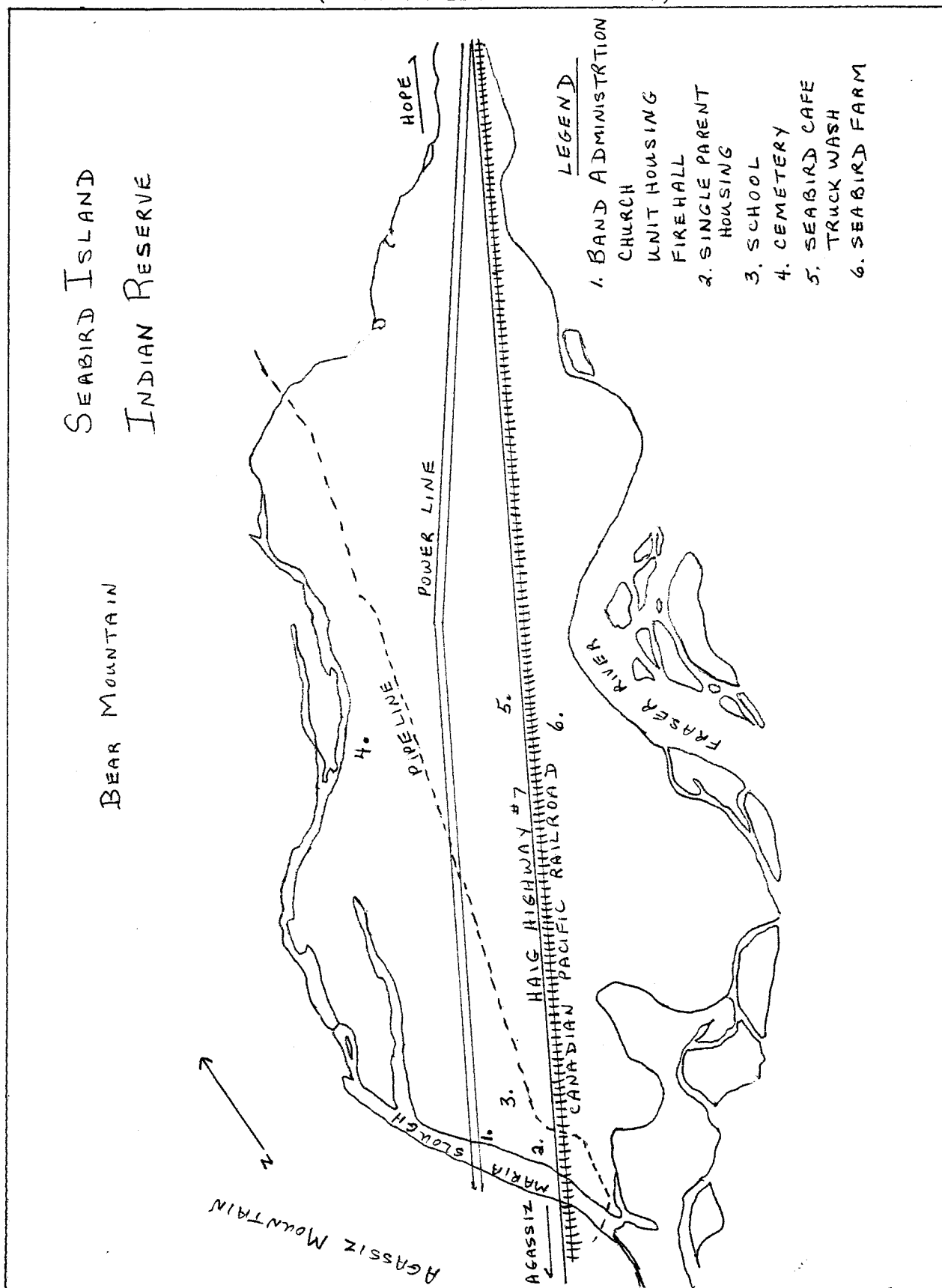
Figure 4. Fraser Valley

Figure 5. Seabird Island Indian Reserve, 1991
(Seabird Island Archives)



Seabird Island² is part of the Upper Sta'lo or Sta'lo nation; the name Sta'lo comes from the Halkomelem word sta'lu meaning 'river' and has been spelled in various forms in English (eg. 'Stalo,' 'Stallo,' or 'Stahlo' in Duff, 1952:11; 'Sta:lo,' currently used by Tribal Council). Yale, to the north, is the northern transition point between the Sta'lo and the Lower Thompson cultures. A large rock in the Fraser River, about seven miles below Spuzzum and six miles above Yale is a strictly kept boundary as it was in past times. The rock demarcates northern boundaries of fishing properties that belong to Seabird Island Band members and it also is the point of change in language use (Smith, 1945:3:2). The Sta'lo had direct contacts with the Thompson and Lillooet for marriage and trade (Duff, 1952:11).

3.2 Historical Context

The Public Archive files of the Indian Affairs department, which contain primary documents such as official letters from government Indian agents to Indian Affairs representatives, provide much of the historical data of Seabird Island. Some

²What is now called Seabird Island, has had several names depending on who was referring to the island and under whose domination the island was at the time of naming. It has been called Skow-a-kul, Maria Island, Squatits Reserve, and Seabird Island. The Halkomelem word "skow-a-kul" (alternate spelling sk'a'ukal in Smith, 1945:4:13 and SK''AW'K-ehl in Wells, 1965:30) used by the Sta'lo people to refer to the island, which is located in their territory, means "bend in the river" (Seabird Island Archives). When the government allotted the island as a reserve in 1879, they referred to it as Maria Island and Sea Bird Island. Both names come from the names of steam-driven paddle wheel boats that plied the Fraser River upstream to Yale during the Cariboo gold rush. The "Seabird" ran aground just below Hope in 1857 on what is now called Seabird Bar (Seabird Island Archives).

historical data are available in the 1945 field notes of Marian W. Smith and Eleanor Leacock. The material included in this chapter provides a sketch of the development of the island from a hunting-gathering site for many bands to a reserve.

Until the 1880s, the Indians used Seabird Island as a fishing ground and camping spot; settlement only occurred after pressure from the government (Smith, 1945:4:1). Yale and Chehalis were areas of winter residence, where one chief would take charge of a group of villages. In pre-contact as well as post-contact times, there was a continual internal mobility of the population, ". . . which caused villages to split up, shift, grow, or decrease at fairly frequent intervals" (Duff, 1952:30). Part of the reason for this movement, was the need for a continuous supply of game, roots, and firewood. Another reason was to find security from attacks by the Douglas people (Duff, 1952:40) and the salt water people (Indians from the coast).

On June 13, 1879, Indian Reserve Commissioner Sproat set aside Seabird Island Reserve for the use of seven bands, in common, because he felt that the areas where their reserves were located held little timber or agricultural land for cultivation. The Minute of Decision stated

"For all the Indians between Cheam and Spuzzum, namely Popkum, Skawtits, Ohamil, Ska-wah-look, Hope, Union Bar and Yale Indians. . . This island is believed to be called Skow-a kull by the Indians" (Sproat, 1879; Dewdney, 1891).

The federal government expected the Indians to clear and farm the

island. They were concerned that upon the completion of the Canadian Pacific Railroad, Indian labour would no longer be required; the unemployed Indians needed more land so that they could cultivate it to sustain themselves (Public Archives, file 46,607-1; Burjess, 1888). He further decreed that

"...if the Indians have not in 6 years from the 13th of June 1879 sufficiently used this land in the opinion of the Government of Canada, the unused portion is to cease to be Indian land" (Sproat, 1879; Bray, 1903; Dewdney, 1891). (He explained that) "...20 years have failed to attract any one to this island, except for logging. It therefore seemed a suitable place for productive farms for the numerous Indians..." (Sproat, 1879).

Band members of the seven bands who had been allocated the island, continued to use the island as they had before it was declared a reserve area. They did not construct permanent dwellings, nor did they clear the land. Seabird Island remained a fishing, hunting, and gathering site. The Indians left the forested areas for the children, in the future, as the band members lacked interest in turning to an agricultural-based economy. Each band had its own village site for the winter months; the island was to be a commonly-held resource. Under the leadership of Lequaton, families came to the island, following their annual migration route. In their eyes, they were using the island, living on it, and having their children there. (See Cail, R.E., 1974; Fisher, Robin, 1977; and Tennant, Paul, 1990; for comprehensive history of B.C. land disposal of this period.)

The railway was the first of several encroachments on Seabird Island over which the Indians had little control. In 1882-83, the Canadian Pacific Railroad (C.P.R.) was built along the Fraser

River and across the middle of Seabird Island. During construction, the C.P.R. paid little heed to the Indian fishery of the area. Railroad engineers constructed a dam at the head of the slough and rock was used to fill a portion of the slough to build a railway bridge at the southern end (Smith, 1945:2:1; 5:5). Maria Slough's water course was changed from a fast flowing water way to one that was low and stagnant. Until this construction, the slough had been a source of a great sturgeon fishery, which the Sta'lo people caught with trawl nets. Fraser River people came from all over to participate in this fishery, staying in fish camps at the southern end of the slough. (Smith, 1945:2:2; 5:5). After the construction, when the sturgeon came up river to spawn along the gravel, they tried to get into the slough from the Fraser River side, consequently undermining the C.P.R track. After several years, the C.P.R. decided to blast the area with boxes of powder; many fish were killed and the sturgeon fishery never recovered (Smith, 1945:5:5).

As settlers moved into the upper Fraser Valley, they put more pressure on the government to turn over arable lands that had been designated as reserves, to in-coming settlers for farm production. A.F. Cotton's letter to H.B. Aikman, Agent of Dominion Lands, New Westminster, sets the prevalent tone of letters of that time. He said,

"As regards the squatters and Indians on this island. (sic) On the west-shore and about one mile from the head, there is an old Indian, one belonging to Spuzzum. He has been there, as near as I could find out almost four years. He has very little improvements they consist of a house if you could call such a thing a house, about one acre of clearing on which he grows a few potatoes. He does not live on it

continuously, but only during the slack season, that is when the fishing is done. (He is one of two) ...so called residents upon the Island. No others have ever gone there to live. ...There is ample room for about thirty families and will eventually be a first-class settlement, provided it is taken away from the Indians, who have, as I have had an opportunity of seeing, too much of the really first class lands in the Fraser Valley" (Cotton, 1887.)

Cotton's letter illustrates ethnocentric ideas of appropriate housing and residence patterns, also a contempt for the right of Indians to have land he considered too good for them.

In response to Mr. Cotton's request, Mr. Aikman contacted Thomas White, Minister of the Interior. He suggested that

"...the conditions upon which the island was set apart for the use of the Indians have never been fulfilled and therefore the Reserve has, in point of fact, lapsed, and is now virtually cancelled by operation of law. It is also evident from the fact that there is no Indian village or settlement on the island that the Indians do not actually require this land either for agriculture or pastoral purposes. ...Much dissatisfaction is expressed on account of its being so held by the Indian Department, to the great detriment of the District and to the exclusion of bona fide settlers with families" (Aikman, 1887).

Aikman recommended that the land be surveyed and opened for settlement without regard for the needs of the Indians who had used the island for years as a hunting and gathering resource area. The key reason for the need for settlement on the island was the availability of rail transportation. As well, politicians were threatened by the movement of settlers to the United States (Oppenheimer, 1889).

In 1888, because the Indians had not occupied the island, nor used it, it was recommended that the island be taken back by the Canadian government and offered for sale to settlers. The

Indians did not understand that the governments expected them to live permanently on the island. The island had been the site of both hunting and gathering at appropriate seasons by all seven bands and they were annoyed at the prospect of losing the island. They had planted potatoes and vegetables on the island for several years and some band members had occupied the area from one to thirteen years; two families had houses on the island. The Indians argued that the agreement involved the use of the land, not the residing on it. (McTiernan, 1888). However, by 1893, due to pressure to live on the island or lose it, thirty-one Indians lived and worked on Seabird Island (Vowell, 1893).

In June of 1896 the government made the decision to grant a separate and distinct reserve for each band. For the Indians of the Upper Fraser Valley, the government made an exception to grant only one reserve for the seven bands; Seabird Island was designated Maria Reserve and the rules for surrender (that the majority of each band had to agree) did not apply (Vowell, 1896). This action forced the seven bands to become one band for administration purposes despite the wishes of the band members to retain control of each band as a separate entity and without regard for the cultural differences of those bands. Although two bands refused to sign, affidavits of execution were taken before Vowell, but not before a judge or stipendiary Magistrate as the Indian Act required. Vowell was not sure that this surrender would be accepted by the authorities (Vowell, 1896). Indeed, Parr, the Acting Deputy Minister of Justice verified that a majority of each band must assent to the surrender (Parr, 1896).

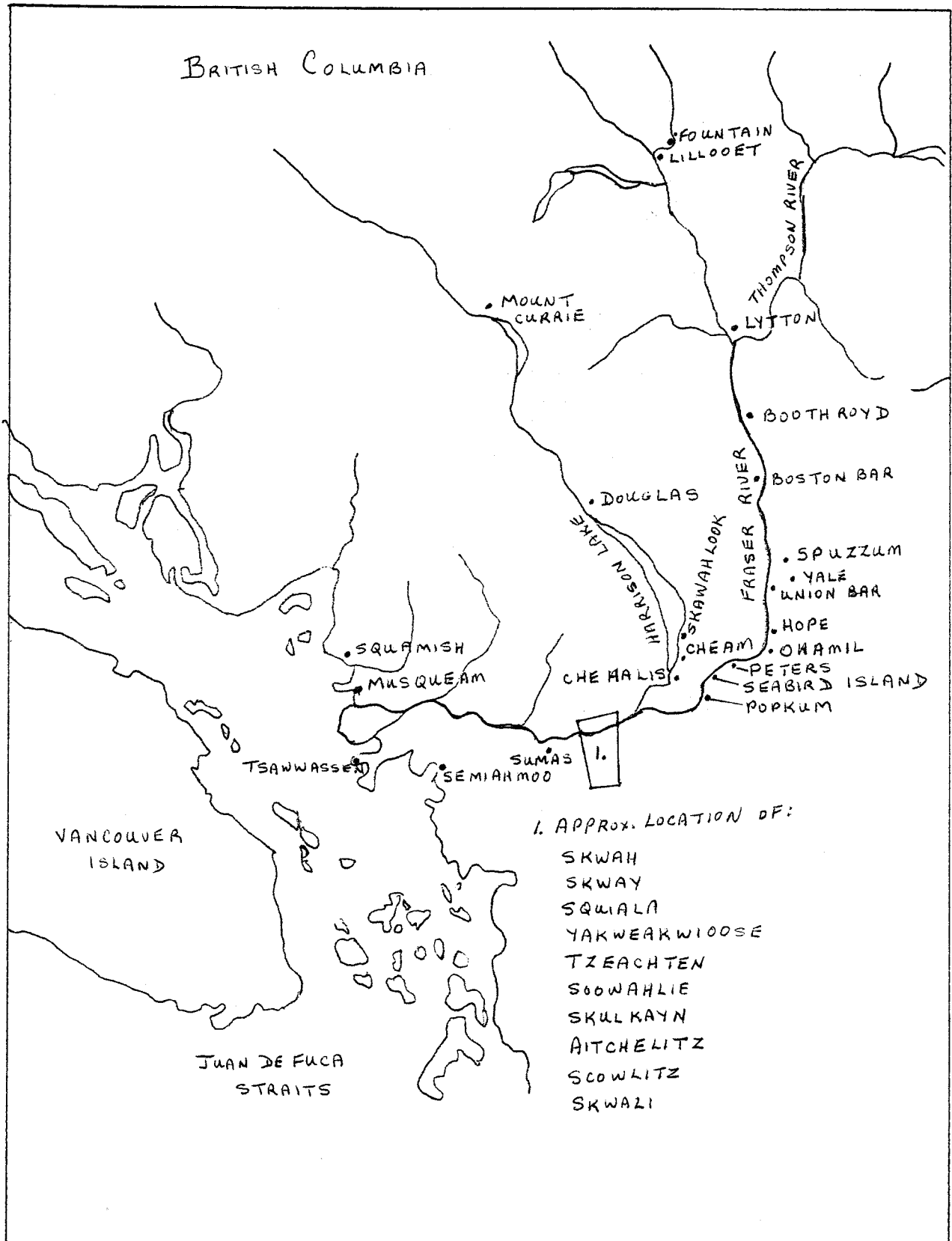
In 1913, Commissioner McKenna convened the McKenna-McBride Royal Commission on Indian Affairs for the province of B.C. to resolve reserve acreage and land reversion problems (Cail, 1974:235). At commission hearings, a Mr. McCaffray made a submission suggesting that Indians did not need farmland (McCaffray, 1914). At this time, there were thirty-one Indian families residing on the island (121 individuals). Band members made a concerted effort to retain the island as a reserve and were successful in their appeal to the Commission (Seabird Island Archives).

All the reserves of the lower Fraser River and adjacent Thompson reserves held an interest in Seabird Island. Of those Indians who settled on the island, many had migrated from the seven lower Fraser River bands who had ownership of the island; migrants also included Thompson (Spuzzum and Boston Bar) band members who had moved from interior homes to the coast and Cheam people who had moved up from Rosedale. The island became a multi-band community, where members were, through kin relationships, all one people, though two languages and cultures existed. Of the seven bands (Popkum, Skawtits, Ohamil, Ska-wah-look, Hope, Union Bar, and Yale), only the Ohamil people did not settle on the island. The migrant Indians severed administrative connections with their bands and claimed to belong to Seabird Island. The population on Seabird reserve in 1958 was 212 with a total of 310 in the seven bands (McKinnon, 1958:75).

Prior to 1959, Seabird Island was a band under the Central Reserves from Popkum to Yale, but the residents of Seabird Island

did not have band status separate from their membership in one of the seven bands. This meant that the Seabird Island residents lacked control over the land. The chiefs of the seven bands

Figure 6. Indian Bands of the Lower Fraser River
(Jilek, 1974:5)



owned all the reserves in common and they controlled how that land was developed. The Seabird Island Band members wanted to create better living conditions for their children, create livelihoods for band members, and build homes. These chiefs feared such a move and did not want to give permission for development to begin. They thought that the Seabird Island Band members would sell the land. The band members, however, had already decided to lease the land to non-Indian farmers. The Indian Affairs Department ruled that Indians could no longer transfer into the Seabird Island Indian Band until the ownership of the land and band funds had been decided (Letcher, 1957).

There was another matter of great concern to the seven chiefs; the chiefs did not want the Thompson tribes or Cheam people on the Seabird reserve. Over the years many Cheam and Thompson members had moved to Seabird Island. It was the Cheam people who had built the island church. The chiefs said that the Minute of Decision did not include other bands, therefore the Thompson and Cheam people did not have the right to settle on the island (Smith, 1945:2:6). The Seabird Island people signed a resolution in 1951 asking for the release of Seabird Island to become a separate reserve. When the seven chiefs declared their intention of having all the Cheam people removed from the island, the Cheam members said that if the seven chiefs did not relinquish their right to the island, that the Cheam would take over the western half of the island where they had constructed the church.

In 1958, the government established a Commission of Inquiry under the chairmanship of George Cassidy to determine if a separate band should be established for the residents of Seabird Island. The Chiefs of five of the seven bands, Oscar Peters, Hope; Harry Peters, Peters; Fred Cheer, Popkum; Wilfred Wells, Union Bar; and Patrick Charles, Yale, met with the Commission. No one represented Skawahlook and Ohamil. On January 1, 1959, Seabird Island achieved band status. Officially, at this point in the island's history, the island was in the custody of a band of Indians who were neither of all Sta'lo nor all Thompson descent. (Seabird Island Archives).

3.3 Current Context

a) Administration

Currently, Seabird Island has approximately 500 residents, 330 of whom are status band members. A Chief and four Band Council members handle the administration of the band. The number of Band Council members is determined by the band population (one council member per 100 persons). The band is part of the Sta'lo Nation Tribal Council, which is comprised of the following bands: Cheam, Ohamil, Chawathil, Popkum, Seabird Island, Sumas, Soowhali, Fort Langley, Yakaweakoose, and Scowlitz. Band members have been trained and hired for administrative positions at the band office. The band has increased its control over administration, education, health, and recreation matters. Seabird Island Band has a stable population, serviced by telephone, power, and a community water system.

b) Residence

People on Seabird Island Reserve live in single family (ie. nuclear family) residences, with extended family members residing nearby. The homes of the elders are adjacent to the modern homes of their sons and their families. These houses are about 25 yards from the elders' homes, as if in a small sub-division. There is generally one main driveway and fences do not separate the homes. Each family group is situated on a large piece of land that they own on the reserve. New homes located on band property close to the centre of the community house single women with children. Duplexes also on band property adjacent to the Band Council offices house widows and single men without land. Over the years, the residence patterns have changed as the band members redefine the use of the reserve land. Now, houses are built within the green buffer zone on the west side of the island, leaving the east side mainly for agricultural purposes.

As the population of the band has increased, the Band Council has addressed the housing needs of the band by increasing the number of homes on the reserve. As well, with recent changes to the Indian Act regarding band membership, the Band Council has had to provide for many families who have returned to the reserve. Construction crews finished six new houses in 1990 for single parent families. There are approximately seventy-three houses situated mostly on the west side of the island (Seabird Island Archives). Eight new houses are to be built in 1991.

Before granting a mortgage for a new home, the Canada Mortgage

and Housing Corporation requires that the home is built for a nuclear family (mother, father, and non-adult children) or for single parent families (parent and non-adult children). This practice is in direct opposition to the housing practices of the Sta'lo people and may weaken the extended family ties. It tends to separate grandparents from grandchildren and since the grandparents play an important role in child care, teaching, and discipline, the strength of the family is probably weakened by this housing policy.

Table I. Band Population, Selected Years.						
	1879 a	1909 b	1915 c	1951 d	1963 e	1989f
Popkum	18	12	11	6	8	7
Squatits	45	46	39	36	--	--
Ohamil	65	54	46	33	46	85
Skawalook	48	16	14	27	27	54
Hope (Chawathil)	25	82	93	96	116	208
Union Bar	96	} 78	69	58	} 102	49
Yale	267		75	24		94
Seabird Island	*	*	121	212	243	**380
Total	564	288	468	492	542	877

(a) Duff, 1952:42

(f) Indian and Northern Affairs, 1989

(b) Bray, 1909

* reserve belonged jointly to above

(c) Duff, 1952:42

bands

(d) Duff, 1952:42

** includes 165 children under the

(e) Duff, 1969:28

age of seventeen and 25 elders

c) Education

In 1978, the Seabird Island Education Committee negotiated to open its own school on the reserve. This school offered pre-school and grades one to six. The Committee did not limit

attendance to Seabird Island residents as a bussing program brought students from neighbouring reserves. Seabird Island Band members had their choice about which school their children would attend -- the public school or the reserve school. Senior students took the bus to public schools off the reserve. The most recent report on school attendance (1984-85), indicates that eighty students were registered in the Pre-school to Grade six program on the reserve and that thirteen band members attended public schools; thirty-five reserve students attended grades seven to twelve in Agassiz and three students attended a private Christian school in Agassiz. In 1986, the school on the reserve had eleven full-time and four half-time teachers. Nine of the fifteen teachers were native. The school taught to the B.C. provincial school curriculum standards with the addition of language training in Halkomelem and an active native arts program. Band parents supported the school because of the cultural content of the curriculum, the proximity of the school to homes, and the small class size.

In 1985, the band began a five year capital plan to build a new school that would include kindergarten to Grade twelve. The band has placed a high priority on education (Seabird Education Report, 1986). A new school, of unique design, opened June 4, 1991. Approximately eighty-five students from kindergarten to Grade eight moved into this new structure, built by band members with sub-trade skills. There are six teachers, two Halkomelem language instructors and three teacher aids. In September, 1991, Grade nine began; each subsequent year the next grade level will

be added until Grade twelve is reached. The school will accommodate 220 pupils and fifteen staff members (Godley, 1990:A7).

Adult band members may receive high school up-grading courses at the Fraser Valley College, where the band administration purchases seats directly from the College. For those band members who have registered at the College, there has been an approximate completion rate of 75 percent.

d) Language

Seabird Island has retained influences from both the Thompson and Sta'lo cultures. The Sta'lo ties are more prevalent because of the geographical proximity of the Sta'lo Tribal Council member bands. Some elders retain knowledge of the Thompson language; two Sta'lo elders are fluent in Halkomelem, the Salishan language of the Sta'lo; one of these elders teaches Halkomelem in the school.

e) Social and Health Concerns

In recent years, the band has declared the reserve to be a dry reserve so that the band can control alcohol-related health and social problems. Until recently, sexual abuse has been a hidden problem on the reserve; some band members thought it was only a white problem. An educational program has been in place in the school; counsellors encourage adults who have been the victims of sexual abuse or who have been abusers to get appropriate help. In April, 1991, the Sta'lo Tribal Council negotiated with the

federal government, to have the control of health care turned over to the Tribal Council. The Council felt that through their control, a more consistent level of care could be provided (The Vancouver Sun, 1991:B4).

f) Employment

Band members have cleared part of the island for farming. Those areas that are cleared, are leased to non-Indian farmers for silage crops and a sheep farm. In the past, the band members ran a dairy farm, which was closed because of poor sanitary conditions. In the 1950's, the main sources of employment were logging, fishing, agriculture, and railroad work (Duff, 1952:12). Currently, there is a small amount of logging on the island, but it is not a major industry.

Band members work at seasonal jobs in the lumber and fishing industries (eg. fishing, tree reforestation, and a fish hatchery); several band members work in construction sub-trades both on and off the reserve. As well, band members work in administration, education, and social work jobs. The Band Council employs a number of band members at the band-owned restaurant, store, card-lock gas outlet, and cattle ranch. Band members own three private businesses (plumbing contractor, electrical contractor, and a gravel truck company.) Employment on the reserve has moved from resource-based occupations to service-oriented work.

g) Recreation

In a 1984 recreation report, the band indicated the following kinds of recreation activities on the reserve. Softball, slow-pitch, baseball, and soccer teams use the large field adjacent to the administrative area. Band members use the community hall for floor hockey and aerobics. Band members support crafts such as beading, knitting, carpentry, embroidery, carving, and leather work. There is an active Catholic church that sponsors missionary groups for young people and girls' and boys' clubs. On the long weekend in May, the band members hold the Seabird Festival; entertainment includes tournaments and canoe races. Alcoholics Anonymous, Alateen, a Movie Night, and a Card Night are available for entertainment, as well. Band members use most of the weekly community Bingo proceeds to support community activities (Seabird Recreation Report, 1984).

Seabird Island Band members have worked hard to develop their reserve for the present needs of the people and the future needs of the band. The Band Council recognizes housing, education, health, social, and employment problems and has taken concrete action to deal with them, using their skills. The issue of cross-cultural foster care and adoption, with the ensuing loss of identity and ethnicity, concerns band members. As with previous challenges that threatened band survival, band members will meet this concern with determination and a will to find a solution. Seabird Island reserve, based on two cultures, has not had a long heritage to fall back on. In spite of a history of government interference, the band has survived, thanks to the determination

and sound leadership of wise and caring people.

Chapter 4

Adoption At Seabird Island: Interview Results

This chapter begins with a short description of the four types of adoption: foster care, closed legal adoption, open adoption, and "custom" adoption, followed by the results of the interviews. As much as possible, I use the voices of the informants to describe their experiences. These are their narratives. Within these narratives of experience band members discuss issues of adoption that are important to them and they express what their experience means to them. The analysis of these results follows in chapters five, six, and seven.

4.1 Adoption Defined by Social Agencies

Social agencies use two words to describe action taken in adoption cases. The word 'apprehension' refers to the action of taking a child from its family. The social agencies have a set of criteria for removing a child; these criteria usually are based on concerns for the health of the child. The word 'placement' refers to the location where the child is put so s/he can receive the care needed. In British Columbia, the most often used locations are temporary or permanent foster care homes, group homes, and adoptive homes. Until the children are returned to their parents or legally adopted, they are wards of the provincial government.

"Foster care" means care given by surrogate parents, either on a

short term basis (temporary care) or on a long term basis (permanent care). In British Columbia, foster parents work for the Ministry of Social Services and receive a monthly allowance for the care of the child. The amount is supposed to represent the amount needed to house, feed, and clothe the child. Extra funds are provided for sports and educational costs, dental costs, or other costs beyond the basic allowance provided. Foster parents who care for special needs children, receive higher allowances to compensate them for the additional care costs. A child in foster care may use her/his own name. S/he does not have inheritance rights within the foster family. The child is included in the family, but the child and the foster family understand that the child may be moved at any time. In foster care, the child does not have to be like the other members of the family; differences in appearance and behaviour are accepted. Although a child in foster care may have contact with her/his birth family, generally, foster children do not have contact with their natal family if they have been apprehended for protection.

Foster care may also be given in group homes. The children who are placed in these homes are generally the older children or sibling groups for whom no appropriate home can be found. Many of these children have been the victims of physical, mental, sexual, or substance abuse. They may act out their frustration and psychological pain from these abuses and it is difficult to find foster homes for them. A number of the children have experienced serial foster home placements, often moving every six

months over a period of years. The group home is almost the last resort for unsuccessful foster home placements.

Group homes are supervised by either one couple or a team of adults. The supervisors are hired and paid by the Ministry of Social Services. In group homes, the children are not incorporated into a family; there are no inheritance rights involving the group home parents or supervisors. A few years ago, Indian residential schools were used as an alternative to foster homes for native children. Group homes for Indian children are not usually located close to the reserve. Group homes can best be described as holding units to house the children until they reach adulthood. When a child reaches the age of nineteen, s/he is released from the care and supervision of the government.

In Canada, adoption is defined

"...as a procedure whereby the legal relationship of parent and child is transferred permanently by judicial order from natural parents to adoptive parents. In the legislation of most Canadian jurisdictions, this has the effect of terminating all pre-existing legal relationships between the child and his natural parents" (MacDonald, 1984:43).

Social agencies define adoption as a 'fictional legitimate birth' (Eichler, 1988:353), a kind of kin relationship.

"Adoption involves usually that one or two natural parents give their consent that their child be placed for adoption, and that one or two other adults adopt the child as their own" (Eichler, 1988:371).

In Canada, adoption may be closed or open. In a closed legal adoption, the system prevents the child from maintaining

relations with her/his birth family. The child is incorporated into the adoptive family as if s/he had been born into it. The courts give the child the adoptive family name. The closed legal adoption process extinguishes all parental obligations, liabilities, and rights of the birth parent. All inheritance rights from the birth family are relinquished and the child now inherits from the adoptive family. Because the inheritance laws with regard to 'unnatural' children are often read quite strictly by the courts, adoptive parents must protect the right of adopted children to inherit from the adoptive family by specifically including them in their wills. The adopted child has no contact with its birth family and has only a brief outline of a family history to connect it to the past. This history usually provides a minimal amount of medical information about the birth family, the education level and religion of the birth parents, and a list of the interests of the birth parents. The social agency provides no identifying information about the birth family to the adopted child.

Open adoption has been defined in various ways as Western society has moved to greater disclosure of birth records. It is a return to adoption practices that pre-date the Second World War. Open adoption can take a number of forms, depending on the social agencies and communities that determine adoption policy. The most candid of open adoptions generally means that the adopted child has personal contact with the birth family and is able to gain both family history and cultural knowledge from that family. Variations on this practice involve written contact between the

adoptive family and the birth family, written contact between the two families through a third party, and/or more detailed family histories that provide the names of the birth parents. In open adoption, the adoptee takes on the adoptive family name. The laws of inheritance for legal closed adoption apply to open adoption as well. Private adoptions, that is adoptions that have been arranged through a third party (usually a lawyer or private adoption agency) rather than through a social agency such as the Ministry of Social Services, tend to be more open than social agency adoptions, as both sets of parents have more control over the procedure.

In this study, the term 'open adoption' will be used to refer to a pilot project begun by the Ministry of Social Services. In an effort to maintain a Seabird Island child's ethnicity under difficult circumstances, the Ministry has found an adoptive family that has made a commitment to the maintenance of the adoptee's cultural identity. The adoptive family teaches the child as much information about his culture as they are able. The child maintains his status as an Indian and his right to property on the reserve. He has contact with birth family members, yet he also has a caring family off the reserve. The child may not return to the reserve for adoption because he would be at risk. Social Services have arranged for a member of the band to act as a liaison between the adoptive family and the band. Adoption, so arranged, allows those children who can not return to the reserve for safety reasons, to keep their Indian identity.

Social agencies, such as the Ministry of Social Services, understand custom adoption, as practised by aboriginal people in North America. The term 'custom adoption' is used in the social work literature with reference to Indian and Inuit practices. Custom adoption is legal in Canada for the Inuit people and some Indians. Though the term is used in the literature, it is not a recognized legal form of adoption for most Indian people. Adopted native children must go through the closed legal adoption process. Open adoption for native children has not been widely practised. Custom adoption as defined by the Inuit, uses criteria similar to open adoption. The child has personal contact with her/his birth family and all cultural and familial knowledge is shared. In addition, the child is adopted by a relative, usually a grandparent, or a close family friend, rather than by a stranger.

It is the incongruity and inadequacy of the administration of child welfare programmes that create problems for the families from the reserves. Seabird Island peoples' experiences with the child welfare actions of the Ministry of Social Services are incongruent with their own cultural understanding of child welfare. These two systems of child care are further complicated at the national level by Indian and Northern Affairs Canada policies. In the following accounts of adoption experience, it is evident that immediate change is required. Children should not suffer these contradictions any longer.

4.2 Adoption Experiences on Seabird Island

The adoption experiences of the Seabird Island Band fall into four categories: foster care, closed legal adoption, open adoption, and "custom" adoption. The first three categories are based on the terminology used by child welfare organizations and policies set by government social agencies. The last category is based on a term used by Seabird Island people in their discussions of child welfare issues. Twenty in-depth interviews provided a cross-section of adoption experiences by six men and fourteen women; most of the informants recounted more than one kind of experience (see Table II, next page). The data in Table II indicate two regularities: (1) that many "custom" adoptions were validated by closed legal adoption and (2) nearly every informant had something to say about foster care. Age does not appear to be a factor. Throughout the interviews, some informants used the terms "adoption, foster care, fostering," and "apprehension" interchangeably. Therefore, in order to make sense of the information, the data were categorized using the social agency definitions for foster care, closed legal adoption, and open adoption (as defined by the pilot project); "custom" adoption experiences were categorized as such based on Seabird Island people's definition. Many informants provided long narratives of their adoption experiences. This provides a rich body of data from which I have chosen one narrative for each category of adoption. Additional data are placed in the Appendices.

Table II. ADOPTION EXPERIENCES RECOUNTED BY INFORMANTS						
INFORMANT'S PSEUDONYM	ADOPTION OF:	APPROX AGE NOW OF INFOR- MANT	FOSTER CARE	CLOSED LEGAL ADOP- TION	OPEN ADOP- TION	CUSTOM ADOP- TION
1 Randy Smith (m)	self	65				X
	girl			X		
2 Mildred Roberts (f)	2nd cousin, male	60	X			
	2nd cousin, female		X			
	boy		X			
	girl		X			
	nephew		X			
	girl		X			
4 E. Ames (f)	girl	70		X		
5 L.Howard (m)	cousin	55		X		X
6 S.Jenkins (f)	cousin	35		X		
7 Frances John (f)	niece	40		X		X
	nephew			X		X
8 F.Masters (m)	self	68				X
9 Walters (f)	grandson	40				X
10 Walters (m)	grandson	40				X
11 Gladys Little (f)	self	45	X			
	grandson			X		

(f) = female (m) = male

Table II. ADOPTION EXPERIENCES RECOUNTED BY INFORMANTS cont'd

INFORMANT'S PSEUDONYM	ADOPTION OF:	APPROX AGE NOW OF INFOR- MANT	FOSTER CARE	CLOSED LEGAL ADOP- TION	OPEN ADOP- TION	CUSTOM ADOP- TION
12 L.Duncan (f)	self	16	X			
	brother 1		X		X	
	brother 2		X			
13 R.Smiley (m)	self	70				X
14 J.White (m)	father	34		X		X
15 Hardy(f)	cousin	35	X			
16 I.Duncan (f)	self	48				X
	daughter 1		X			
	son 1		X			
	son 2		X		X	
	daughter 2		X			
17 Y.Duncan (f)	self	29	X			
	niece 1		X			
	niece 2		X			
	brother 1		X			
	sister		X			
	brother 2		X		X	
	nephew 1		X			
	nephew 2		X			
18 N.Tom (f)	sister 1	48	X			
	sister 2		X			
	sister 3		X			
	brother		X			
	son		X			
19 S.White (f)	father	35		X		X
20 S.Parker (f)	son	29			X	

(f) = female (m) = male

a) Foster Care

The Seabird Island Band is concerned about the number of children who have been taken from the reserve and placed in non-native foster homes. In the twenty in-depth interviews completed for this project, seven informants described such foster care experience. These ranged from personal foster care to foster care experiences of their children, siblings, husband, nephews, and nieces. The ages of these informants ranged from late teens to the late sixties. All seven informants were women.

Informant 12. (Z6, Nov. 14/89)

Linda Duncan's experience with foster care is typical for its pattern of serial foster care. She went into care at the age of eight and is still in care at the age of sixteen. She has been in six foster homes in eight years. She now lives on the reserve with her older sister, who is acting as her foster mother. Her mother lives on Seabird Island reserve; her father died in Harrison Lake.

"(Social Services took me from my home when I was about eight.) They took me out of my home on.. I don't know.. they took Steve, (my older brother) with me and Scott, (my younger brother). It was kind of scary. Like I never.. like I haven't been out of the house.. like I wasn't allowed out of the house.. it's kind of scary living into a new house, having strangers showering you.. like I mean, you don't know these people they are bathing you, scrubbing you down.. not even to know them yet. Well., I was eight, but they still did it. I don't know why. Coming out.. getting these clothes on.. and they're not even mine.. Where am I going? Am I going home? Would I ever see my mom and dad again? Questions popping into my mind. (My older brother) was there for awhile, but he took off. That's why he's at home now. He lives down (the road) and I live up here. (I don't see him.) I'm just starting to get to know my family again. I just came back (five months ago.) I've been gone ever since I was eight -- about four or five years. I know they're my brothers and .. my mom.. but then.. then I don't

know if I want to know them or they nice and what are their favourite things and what do they do.. Questions like that. I lived with (one family on the reserve and then another.) After six or seven months I got shipped off to Agassiz to another home. It was a white home (I felt) kind of like more confused. Like.. why are they moving me around? How come I don't have nobody around me? It was .. kinda okay though.. Quiet at first, staying in my room, just going downstairs to eat, going back up.. looking out the window and thinking to myself, crying at night, wondering everything. (My little brother wasn't with me. The reason I moved to the second house was to get away from him.) Cause I was starting to hate myself.. because I was hitting him. So that's why I wanted to move away. It hurts him but it hurts.. I'm not just hurting me, I'm hurting both.. I had to get out of there for awhile. (It was better for awhile.) He ended up getting shipped off to where I was. Stayed there for awhile. We used to live on the farm, there.. I showed him all the things.. all the names of the cows.. and the dogs and.. tried to show how to milk while I'm learning. It was okay.. had fun. I was allowed out more often.. I never felt part of their family. I just didn't feel so right. Like arguing with a lot of kids.. and not talking to anybody.. all this.. I talked to the parents.. but then we're always out and in, gone, working and something like that. You could say I was sort of part of (the family) but then just inside of me it didn't feel right. They tried to make me part of the family nice. That's when (my brother and I) got moved again. (We went) to Chilliwack. Got moved all the way up to Chilliwack. By that time, I was getting used to moving cause I knew.. mostly every five or six months when I get to know somebody then I'm gone again.. Then I said to myself, what's the use of starting to know somebody when you're only going to get moved again. So.. when this home in Chilliwack, I didn't bother talking to them. I just took off.. went wherever and came back. But then.. It was kind of getting harder on me cause.. don't even know these guys for a week or two now and then I said, well.. I was thinking to myself.. Well, it's kind of good to know people like around you.. Probably meet a lot more friends than just making enemies or just people. What happens if I stay here? And not having a good start with them.. Now I might have to stay there permanently. I made it bad in the beginning but then at the end time I was good. It was okay. I was the spoiled one. They make me feel like a part of home.. They had two other kids. We used to fight a lot though, but that's called sisters. After a few months, I went to Hope. (It was) different because there's kids at my age and a lot older. I was the youngest, though. But there's kids.. teenagers like my age.. mostly boys.. It was okay.. (I stayed there) two years.. just about two years. I went on Canada Day, July first. I made it hard, eh.. That was in my bad years.. like you know, stealing, staying up late, lying. In those years.. that's when I started doing all that stuff. So, I made it kind of hard for me. I get

along with them good, now. There was a lot of people, there's ten of us, about there. It was just a group home for teenagers, but then some kids spent nights or stayed there just to get a job or stay somewhere. Just the two of us girls and the rest were boys. On.. June 16, Wednesday night, I think it was on the Wednesday. It was.. when I took off.. was at lunch time. Then I came back after school.. picked up whatever I had in my locker.. and I told (the other girl), "Tell them at night time I'll be gone." She wanted to come with me.. so I said I don't think so. I just didn't want to be there no more. I wanted to be home. So (she) said I'm coming with her. I didn't drag her or anything. She wanted to come and I couldn't stop her. So we went off, grabbed everything, whatever was in our locker and our teacher starts coming down the hallway. (The other girl) went off this way and I took off this way and I said I'll meet you at our place.. our private place.. and we went running and took off. Next thing.. about an hour after we've went.. cops, we heard them going this way, going down this street. Oh no, cause we thought we could make it before dark. So we're sitting here.. watching these cop cars going slowly by. There goes one! Watching them. We went wandering around town. Nobody noticed. It was about dark time, I guess you would say about an hour after dark. The trains go by every hour and on the hour most likely. An hour after dark because the train went by. Well, I guess it's about an hour .. bye. So we took off across the bridge and once we hit the road, we went down lower to the tracks and we took off down the tracks. We walked all the way down here from Hope. We got here on Thursday at eight o'clock. I wasn't (hungry). I was too cold to be hungry. (Now I am) with my sister, my oldest sister. She has no kids. (She has two of my other sister's kids.) She has me for permanently. She's an approved foster home for me.. for them to know that I'm going to be safe. (I feel okay about it.) It's just me and her having a hard time to knowing each other still because I'm having a hard time.. thinking.. does she love me or is she just taking me.. I have been used just for my money like some foster moms or parents have just taken me.. because they wanted the money that they get for me. Cause they get eight hundred and some dollars for me. Just mostly for things like.. for my clothes, my allowance, the water I waste, the electricity that I use, all this stuff and the things that broke or anything. (It's important to me, knowing that she loves me.) If she don't love you, then what's the use of knowing her or living with her or anything like that, cause it's kind of hard to know who loves you or.. if they hate you or not.. can you trust this person? Just most of.. some of (my foster parents) used me for money. I was heart.. like a lot of people are saying if your mom don't want you, then nobody else would want you. It hurts. I don't know if I want to love my mom because she gave me up when I was eight. She didn't love me no more. (I know that) because the government.. my social worker (told me that.) She's the one who put me up for adoption

and (my younger brother) up for adoption. Just me, because she wanted (my younger brother) back and I didn't let her. The way I didn't let was because when she came up to visit us she never gave me.. she just pushes me away and goes see (my brother).. and she wanted him back and I didn't.. I didn't let her because when she came up, I make sure he was gone or hiding. Because I didn't want her to know him no more. I didn't want her to touch him, see him or talk to him. Because the only reason.. she did that with all my other sisters, too. Because she said we're just too much pain in the rear end.. because.. when we get older they get pregnant... and then give it to your mom for responsibilities. I haven't got that way yet and I don't want one because if I get one when I'm not impaired (sic) for a baby, they take me away and my baby away from me and have it up for adoption. I would feel hurt. So that's why I don't want anything right now. (I don't know Indian ways of adoption.) I'm just learning how to be a Indian and what are Indians like. When I as eight years old, I didn't know about adoption. (I would have liked it if people had asked) how I'm doing there, if I'm happy, if I liked to live here, would I like to stay here, how would I feel if I had to move again? (The social worker) just took me there, saying.. like I don't even say nothing.. it's just a.. temporary home. Well, they say how do I like it, but then they just tell me that I'm going because.. it's only supposed to be only six.. six months. I'm supposed to stay in a foster home until they find me a permanently foster home. My permanently foster home was in Hope. That's why I stayed so long there -- two years, just about two years. The first and only reason me (and my brothers) got taken away was because of mom and dad's drinking problem. Cause they never.. never bought no booze.. I mean like they bought a lot of booze and less groceries and they went out and out and out and they just never fed us and we had to cook for ourselves. So mostly I went to my auntie's. That's the only reason that they took me out.. I have another reason that is personal. There's certain ways.. cause some parents don't want kids, some parents drink, some.. kids have been verbally abused, sexually abused.. you know, um.. there's another one.. ignored too. There's different ways to settle them. Before I couldn't concentrate.. on school.. I used to get D's, no farther than a C-, C+. Because I heard so many things about Seabird, like the rumour about Seabird that.. kind of hard on me cause my dad's dead. My dad's gone.. well, you know, died on December 28, 1987.. shocked me cause I had a dream two days before he died. Coming back here still hurts because going to Harrison for swimming.. thinking that my dad's beside me. Going to his funeral was kind of easier cause I.. last time when I was a little kid.. I didn't go to (my older brothers' and younger sister's) funeral, because I was a little too young. I still feel sort of guilty to myself. It's just carrying the guilt for so long. I got to see pictures of the funeral and felt like I was just there. I pray for them every now and

then. I'm scared because who would I turn to after (my older sister.) I know she loves me. She wouldn't go through all this if she didn't. She told me she wouldn't care.. if she didn't get the money, but then she needs the money, cause she's hardly surviving right now. She hugs me. She tells me every morning that she loves me. She cares a lot because.. (foster parents) don't say be good, take care or.. they don't talk to you, they don't.. like, you know, give responsibilities.. they just let you do whatever. My dad was first. I only has three lights in my life.. that was (my younger brother, my dad and the older sister who looks after me now.)" (See 3, Appendices for additional data)

b) Closed Legal Adoption

No band members interviewed had been adopted using closed legal adoption. Of the twenty informants, eight persons had experienced closed legal adoption of a relative, for example, children, siblings, uncles, grandchildren, and nieces. Three informants (L. Howard, J. White, and S. White) referred to the closed legal adoption of the same person. The informants' ages ranged from the mid-twenties to the seventies. Five out of the eight informants were women. The Band Council's concern about closed legal adoption is that the band members so adopted usually have been adopted to non-native families and off the reserve. The children then lose their ties to the band and their cultural identity.

Informant 7. (Z8, Nov. 21/89)

Frances John, an adoptive parent, relates her experience with closed legal adoption. She and her husband adopted two children from separate families; the first adoption began as a "custom" adoption, but after three years, they legally adopted the little girl. Frances John is in her middle years.

"I was very young when I was in the hospital, eh. I had T.B. I had T.B. of the womb, so I could never have children of my own. So.. I was married, this (is) my second marriage now. My first husband was very upset cause I couldn't have children. I didn't tell him about it but I just assumed that he knew so when I got with my second man.. I made sure I told him when he asked me to marry him, that I couldn't have children. He said it was okay, he already knew that. So we were together for three years and then his sister.. she's deceased now. But she had five children of her own and she lost one and then she was having this last one and she said to me, 'If I have a girl you can take her.. and raise her as your own, but if it's a boy, I want to keep it.' She lost a boy so she wanted another one. As it turned out it was a girl and the father came and told me that I can pick up the baby when it was ready. So.. and then the mother had changed her mind in the meantime but.. I stuck with it and I said to my husband, 'What do you think?' And he said, 'Well, she did promise you.' So we went and talked to her again and she wouldn't answer. So when it was time for the baby to come home, I went and talked to the doctor and he said okay. He thought it was safe enough for me to take the baby because mom was an alcoholic, eh. And, so I took the baby and she was underweight when she was born. She was born ahead of time so she was premature. She was four pounds seven ounces and when I got her home she was five pounds seven ounces. So my husband went and talked to the mother and they agreed that I could raise the child. So I kept her for.. three years before we could finally get papers done up to have her adopted. Cause we weren't sure how we could do it without getting into trouble, eh. My mom and dad had a lawyer that they used to go to all the time, so they suggested him so we went to him and.. I told him the story and he said we had to get the mother's permission which we did. We went and talked to her and (my husband) did all the talking.. cause he's the brother so he convinced her more or less to sign the paper, eh. She signed the papers and we legally adopted her that way. We didn't even have to appear in court. The lawyer did all the work for us. He got the birth certificates done up and picked them up from there and then we just paid him for his duty, eh. And so that's how we got (our daughter). And we moved next door to where her real Mom was. And.. she came over.. pretty near every day to visit with (our daughter). We never stopped her from seeing her, eh. (It was hard on us, a bit) cause (our daughter) would call her 'auntie' and I thought kind of funny cause I knew it was her natural mother. (Our daughter) never found out till she was sixteen. And she was really upset when she found out that I wasn't her natural mother. But I had to explain it to her that we loved her as if she was our own and, otherwise we wouldn't have taken her. I convinced her that we were good for her, eh. And then when she sat down and thought about it she realized we must have loved her to raise her like that. She was allowed to see (her mother) whenever she

wanted. But, (my husband stressed to her that she wasn't to tell me how to raise her, then the mom would come over and spend time with her and hug her and hold her. And (my daughter) would always call her ('Auntie'), eh and then, (my sister-in-law), before she passed away, she came and thanked me for raising daughter the way I did. She said I did a beautiful job with her. So she said she probably would have died if she had taken her. I thought that was great."

Frances John's second experience with adoption involved the care and adoption of her sister's baby boy. In this experience, Frances had to move faster than the social workers to legally adopt the baby.

"The second one was from my sister, the youngest one. She committed.. well, she committed suicide. I think what happened there was when she was carrying (the baby), she was six months pregnant with him, and the father went to Prince George to look for a job.. cause that's where his mom is from and his other two kids are from there, too. He was planning on moving (my sister) up and him and his brother got into an argument over a hockey game. And, his brother stood behind the door and when (my brother-in-law) came in, (his brother) put the knife and slit (my brother-in-law's) stomach open and killed him instantly so (my sister) had no father for her boy. and then so she raised him by herself, like, you know, with no mate and when she wanted relief from the child, then she would come phone us and ask us to go and babysit for her. So we take him and keep him all weekend. We just loved him, eh, and we spoiled him rotten, not thinking we were going to keep him. Right from infant we used to keep him, you know and she trusted us with him. It didn't matter how long she left him with us. We could look after him. But we both worked, too.. So.. when (the baby) reached fourteen months old, then she phoned me one day and she says.. Oh, in between the home visits with us, she started asking me questions like, 'If anything happens to me, I would like you to take my child and raise him as your own.' The first three times I wouldn't answer her, cause she always asked me when I was by myself and it was a hard question because she was much younger than me. Finally, the other sister was there one time and (my youngest sister) asked again in front of my sister and I said, 'You know I will.' I said, 'We love (your baby), nothing will happen to you.' And about two months later, (the baby) was fourteen months old, then and.. then she was drinking with some friends and they were hitch-hiking home and she jumped out in front of a car -- well they said she did. I have my doubts about it, eh. That's why I have a hard time saying that she committed suicide, cause I think there's something else there. Anyways, Human Resources was going to put up a

little bit of a fuss with us taking the child and cause he was already awarded to them because of she was on social assistance. Anyway, we had the child in our home already. When they phoned me and told me that she was gone, well, I thought we have to fulfil her wishes somehow. So then I didn't wait very long after, we just barely got her resting, and I went into lawyers. I went to different lawyers in Mission and they worked on the case. And they had quite a time with Human Resources and the Department of Indian Affairs. Cause they didn't think that I.. It seemed like they didn't think I was suitable for the child because he was a different.. he had a little bit different nationality in him and he didn't match with us cause his complexion is very fair and he's got cat eyes, you know, they change colour with his clothes. I think they had different plans for him, cause there were other people waiting and then I just came in there and took him, eh, and said okay, I'm going to take over. I was a little bit disturbed by (their interference). I was scared I was going to lose him and I did promise her I was going to look after him. So it.. it really did put a gap in my heart, like, you know, cause I had to fight for him, more or less. But, (it's a good thing I didn't wait) cause they could've just came and taken him away from me. See, they were waiting for the funeral services to be over and Christmas, cause we buried her on the twenty-fourth of December. They had to kind of wait until the holidays were over. But I went ahead in between the holidays and started the paper work and it took us about six months to get it all legal. But Human Resources had to come out and interview us to make sure we were fit parents, eh. I didn't like it. I was really defensive.. cause my husband and I both drank and it was.. my husband had just quit. And then when Human Resources came in they were asking us all these questions. I was really afraid they'd find out I was still drinking. The questions they asked were mostly on (our daughter) and when she found out how.. that she was adopted and all this and when I planned on telling (my baby boy) what came about. There were so many questions that were kind of hard for me to answer but I had to think of good answers so they wouldn't.. And when I got through that, I was glad, because it took about three months before we really knew whether we were going to get him or not. I put a lot of work into that boy, because he missed his mom. He was just old enough to know that she was all of a sudden disappeared. So I had to be very careful when I said 'mom and dad', mostly, 'mom'. If I ever mentioned 'mom', He would start looking so.. cause once I tried to see if he would call me 'mom' and then when he started looking, I thought, oh no, I'm going to be up all night again. So I quit that and I just waited for him to automatically call me 'mom'. By the sixth month he was calling my 'mom'. When the legal papers came through, we were really happy. We finally had it all legalized. But the lawyers went through a lot of red tape trying to get those papers done up properly because they went.. That we were natural blood to this

boy so there shouldn't be any problem. So, now he's 10 years old. Oh, at the age of four was when he asked if I was his real mom or not and I couldn't answer. I had a hard time with it so he says, when he noticed I had a hard time, then he says, 'Oh, Mom, really, I don't really want to know yet, anyway.' So I figured some kids told him and he's asked a couple of times after and he's noticed the colouring in us. That my husband and I are both dark and he's real fair and he's kind of wondering why, I think. See, we believe in the traditional spirits and things so I had another man come over and look at (my dead sister's) picture and he can talk to her and she told him to tell me not to tell (the boy) for another month.. and then it was stopped again because.. my nephew committed suicide. So I figured, so (the spirits) worked that way to stop me again, so I don't know when I'm going to tell him. It'll be soon, I guess. (I'm kind of worried about that day) but I'm prepared for it, you know. I've been..I've been trying to prepare myself. I've put an album together to show him who his natural parents are and we have clippings from their deaths in there and I think he has seen, cause he can read now." (see 3, Appendices for additional data)

c) Open Adoption

There is just one instance of open adoption at Seabird Island Band to date. The data presented represent the experience of the adoptive mother. The data from the interviews of the birth mother and the two older sisters of the adoptee are located in the Appendices:3. The adoptee is now approximately seven years old. The adoptee is the youngest of a family of nine children, three of whom are now deceased.

Informant 20 (Z20, Dec. 18/89)

Sandy Parker is twenty-nine years old. She is a caring person, giving of herself for her children. She is knowledgable in recognizing the needs of children and talented in providing them with an holistic education seldom given in public schools. She and her husband understand the native sense of community and respect for the land. The Parkers are non-natives who have

accepted the challenge of raising Scott in a white home while teaching him native values and helping him to maintain his cultural identity. They have two daughters, Kim and Nadia.

"I was a single parent with Kim. I was eighteen when I had her. Dan and I met when Kim was two and a half. We were married when she was just over three. We'd been married a year and a half I guess, when Nadia was born. And Nadia seemed perfectly normal at first, we had no idea there was anything wrong. When she was about a year old, she wasn't developing properly, she wasn't gaining weight and growing. We realized that there was something wrong. It took until she was almost two to get a diagnosis. And Nadia has a terminal disease which is caused by a recessive gene. So at that point, we decided we weren't going to have any more children between us. Then she was about three when we decided we wanted to adopt another child and there was no way I wanted another baby.. because.. she's so much like a baby in her needs.. like basic needs of toiletry and feeding and it takes hours a day just to meet those needs. So I said okay, how about an older child. So we sort of set a minimum age of four, independent enough to get themselves.. dress, be able to bath.. and you know.. without a lot of one to one help, and a maximum age of eight because we figured after that, the child is getting so old, they might not bond to you. The social worker said that finding a child in that age bracket and alone, without siblings, would be a long search, because that's a very popular age bracket, a lot of people want kids that age. A lot of people.. want only one and not a sibling group and.. to find one without severely physical or even moderate physical disability or mental handicap or severe behaviour problems.. It would be difficult to find that child. Well, we applied in December, three years ago and we got through the whole home study and then once we were approved, you know, it was just sort of waiting. She would give us bulletins and Scott was always in it, but he was in it with Linda. We knew we didn't want to have a child older than Kim and really didn't want to take on two, so I never considered him. And then I got a phone call one day from his foster care social worker, who said, would we like to come in and learn about him, find out what she could tell us and then possibly meet him.. So that's what we did. I went in one afternoon and got all the information on him, came home, talked to (my husband) about it and we phoned her back and said we'd like to meet him. He knew.. why we were meeting with him, but he wasn't told. He said to his teachers at school. He said, "I think I'm moving again." And his teachers said why? He said, "Cause I met somebody." And there was absolutely nothing that we did or said that would've indicated that to him but he knew because he'd been through it before. He'd actually been going through an adoption placement visits and then the people had decided no and he had been told that that's what

they had been doing. And then he was told that they had decided not.. I didn't find that out until later. We met him at Cultus Lake, just on the beach and played baseball and watched him swim and things and decided, yes, that we did want to go through more visits. I guess it was the second time that he came over, his foster parents brought him to where we were living, just after dinner. We talked to his foster parents and it was after that, that he figured it out. So then, we told him, he came for a weekend visit and it was Sunday morning and he wasn't going to change into his clothes. He hadn't been told exactly what we were doing, you know. We were just saying to him that we wanted him to come and visit. Sunday morning he wasn't going to get dressed. There was no way on earth he was going to get dressed. It was because he didn't want to leave. He figured if he didn't get dressed, he didn't have to leave. So finally, after struggling with him for an hour we sat down and we said, you know, we explained it to him that the reason we wanted him to come and visit was because we thought we wanted him to come and live with us. As soon as we explained to him, he got up and got dressed. That was it. Went home that night, I mean he was upset to go home, back to his foster parents but he was happy to come back the next weekend. And it did help for him to know, to have it all explained to him. That was one thing that didn't seem to be.. a lot of explanations given to him.. I don't think his other moves he had any explanations. So we were really really lucky. Not only did we find him, but he lives so close, that we could do a lot of visiting prior to him moving in with us. It was good but it was hard on him. He was in a foster home. When he moved in with us, we were his eighth home in six years. He was.. he was six and three quarters years old. The first two homes were with his natural family for a year and a half. I'm not even sure it was a year and a half. Several papers I have are all different. Linda says he was only six months old but some of the papers I have say he was eighteen months old. Anyways, he was in a foster home quite a long time, almost two years, so then he made many successive moves before us. Some were four months long and some were.. the longest I think, was nine months. He was moved out of the first foster home with Linda, they were there together. He was moved because.. I think, the foster parents just didn't want to provide foster care for anybody any more. So he was moved into another native home, near the reserve. And he stayed there for only about six months. Then they became permanent wards and they wanted them out of the native home. I don't know exactly why but they moved them to a white home then and they stayed there for exactly six months and then.. They both enjoyed it there. They really liked it there. And at that point it was decided that Scott would go into.. adoption.. searching for an adoptive home. Linda refused to be adopted by anybody. So they were separated at that point so Scott could be prepared for adoption and Linda could just carry on with foster care. So that's why they both moved

out of there. They didn't want to leave one and move the other. So Scott moved to (another) home (in the area for four months.) Then he was moved in with a single woman for nine months and then she was working, she got transferred but he still lived here. And she was on the road so much that she didn't have time for him. So she asked to have him moved and he was moved at that point to another home. It was only half a mile away with a native father on a reserve, a native father and a white woman. They were just told that he would be there for a short time. And she was just pregnant and having morning sickness. He ended up being there for seven months and he enjoyed it there. I think he had a reasonably good time but they really didn't want him there. She was really tired and she was still working full time and she was pregnant. They wanted him moved and he knew it. The difficult time was.. we met him at the end of August and we decided, yes, we wanted to go ahead with adopting him. So we were going through weekend visits where he would come to us Friday night and stay till Sunday night. Well, he was so mixed up he wanted to stay with us and he'd get taken back to them and then she started having trouble with her pregnancy so she got put in hospital, so he got shipped to her parents in Chilliwack so he could continue going to school. And so he didn't know if he was coming or going, the poor little guy. It was his first year in real public school and he was just so messed up. He was a horror at school. So he would be with her parents all week and with us on the weekend. With his foster father hopping in all the time, in and out and that went on for over two weeks. And then she had the baby and she came home with the baby and he lived there.. another month, with visiting us on weekends. The social worker really wanted him to stay there and not think that because the baby came, he had to move. She just wanted him to know a way ahead of time that this was coming up. He'd have lots of time to figure it out. It took two months of visits. What I wanted to do was get a child that had problems that could be resolved. I mean, we don't know for sure that we can. If we work really, really hard, will we be able to help this child get over those problems that are caused by his past so that he will have a better future? I call it potential to be typical. Because he's not typical now, he's two years behind developmentally, academically, socially, every way, even his growth. He was really small. So that's basically what I was looking at. If I really worked hard with this child and gave him lots and lots attention, will he really benefit from it or am I going to be knocking my head against the wall. I mean, because if you take a really mentally handicapped child, you really can't change their life that much. You can make it interesting and comfortable, but they will never be typical. The same with the really physically disabled child. I already have a physically disabled child and I didn't want another one. And so, yeah, I really, really looked at him in that way, can we help this guy? We figured for sure we could. And I mean, there've been times since then that I

just think I'm not sure but then most days I'm quite positive that he's making leaps and bounds. It's just hard to see sometimes. Some days, I'm saying to myself, would a typical child do something so stupid? And, it's a good thing that I have friends that have little boys and one friend of mine says, "It's just cause he's a boy, it's not because he's Scott." And I have to believe her. Because my oldest daughter.. she got a lot of attention when she was young and she.. has always sort of been at the top of her class. I taught her at home for four years. She has always been above average and always had a good sense of what will happen if I do this? Consequences, you know? He doesn't have a sense of consequences. One of the wonderful things about Scott, is he's very affectionate. We had no doubt that he would bond to us. Some kids you get past the age of six and they've been moved and moved and moved and moved. They've made the decision in their head that they're not going to bond to anybody any more because they'll know they'll get moved. And he bonded to us quickly. I mean he didn't consciously make a decision that we're okay or anything. but.. he felt good with us right away.. and he's always been very affectionate. Actually, he was too affectionate. He was very insecure and so.. I swear in the first week, I had a million kisses when he came. He hung on me. He came for a hug and a kiss at least every two minutes. Some days, it was like getting his batteries charged? Sit down on my knee and have a cuddle. And at school, the same thing, I mean to extreme at school, good and bad. I mean affectionate and the opposite. But at home, it was pretty constant affection. It was really a nice thing because it's a lot easier to take than trying to convince somebody or.. trying to get that feeling from somebody resisting you totally.. hands off! We had a good feeling bringing him in. and seeing him with Nadia. They just love each other. They did right from the start. I think they have this common feeling that they've both.. need a little extra. And he'll play with her, like in the morning if she wakes up, he'll go up in her bedroom and he'll play with her. I mean, just basically, he's playing by himself and she's just watching but he's talking to her and they've gone on for two hours some mornings, which is just what she needs because other kids don't play with her. And he's always been one to be there and play with Nadia and be affectionate with her, which is.. really, really neat to see. One of the reasons I wanted to teach him at home is so I can spend a lot of time on his speech and on his past. We actually study his past and he's doing a scrap book and I have his life book and I have a photo album. And what we're doing is we started with now, talking about our home and then we went back to his last home, and talked about what it was like to live there. What he liked, what he didn't like, why does he think he had to move. And then he actually went and had a visit there overnight. Just to remember it all, and when he came back, you know, we talked about the difference between foster care and adoption. I want it to be really clear in

his head, the difference? We've done a lot of talking about that and I think he has a really good idea now on what the difference is. Because, now his foster parents that he had last, have another set of boys living there. They've actually had another set since he moved in with us, they have had one boy move in and move out. Now they have another set. So its becoming very clear to him that kids only stay there for a little while and then they move. We've always just said you are here forever, you know. When you are adopted that means that you stay with that set of parents forever. We'll always be your parents. You won't have any more new brothers and sisters, you know. It was neat because I take Scott to swim lessons and my older daughter too. And when he's waiting for Kim to swim, he kept playing with these two little native kids at the pool. I'd keep looking at them thinking, now where have I seen these kids before. They are in a picture in his Life Book that one of his old foster parents sent. After he moved in with us, I had the social worker contact all his old families and ask for pictures because there was very little in his Life Book, for me to refer to. One of them sent this picture. There's Linda and Scott and this other little boy and girl. And they all lived in the same foster home when he was about four. They remembered each other, but they couldn't remember their names. But they'd been foster brother and sister for three or four months. It was a bit of a shock to him to meet Yvonne. We didn't prepare him for it. I didn't know that we were going to be meeting her. So he's only ever known Linda and he knows that there's a mother somewhere out there. And he knows that his father died. When he was in one of his foster homes, he was playing out in the yard and somebody arrived and handed him the funeral write-up and said, "Your Dad died" and left him standing there. So, he took this to his foster mom and said, "My dad died." We're working back through his families, and we're only (as far as the family he lived with when he was four.) I'm going right back, I'm going to go through his natural family. I figure it will be another three or four months till we get there. And then I was going to explain to him that he has all these siblings and where they are and why he can't see them. I mean not give him specific details or anything but just give him an idea that they are out there and that maybe some day, he'll meet them. But we don't want him to know them and them to know him because they have too many problems. They have problems that we don't want him to deal with. So, we haven't got to that point, so he really only knew about Linda, so when we dropped Linda off that day and he met Yvonne, well, that was a total surprise to him. He really had no idea, you know. Not only that, but she's the same age as me. That's his sister? Like, he thinks I'm really old. I felt good about him meeting her. Like she was so excited to see him, but I'd like him to see her some more. Just to know that they're there because when he does come of age, he's a status native and he's got rights on that reserve. That's why we want to keep him in contact with the

band. When we were out (to the reserve) for a meeting one time, I got the feeling that (they) did really understand that we were adopting him and not just foster care because of something (a band member) said. He said to the social worker, 'You take these children and you put them in foster care, and you bring them up white.' He says, 'Then they are eighteen and you drop them back onto the reserve and they know nothing about reserve life. They're not white, they're not Indian, they have no identity.' He said, 'They end up on skid row, cause they can't handle it. They don't have either.' So that.. you know, we had already decided for ourselves that we wanted him to know he's native Indian and we wanted him to know what that means and we wanted him to be comfortable being a native Indian. But we are not native. So how do we do that? So we knew that he had to have some contact with this band, so between the social worker and ourselves we worked out that what we wanted was basically, continuing contact. Not daily, not weekly, or anything, but just to know where it is, some of the things that go on there.. What I was hoping for was something like a Big Brother.. some person we could find out there that we could trust to take him and just do things that you do on the reserve. Or to be able to go to some festivals, or a burial or to play soccer with, something that is native, you know, and only native so that he has this on-going memory that he has always been connected to this reserve.. to know about it just to have the knowledge, so that when he does turn eighteen, if he decides he wants to go there, he's not like a fish out of water, he's got the knowledge to back him up, so he can be comfortable there. Cause if you're not comfortable there, he's not going to stay. And I don't necessarily care if he goes there and stays or not. That's going to be his choice. But, if that's what he chooses, then I want it to work for him. I don't want him to end up with no identity.. feeling like he's not white and he's not Indian. Because growing up in a white home, he's going to be a lot of white. He is. Which, I don't know if that's a bad thing or not. I mean.. I don't think what we're teaching him is bad. Actually, some of the social workers have said, the way we live.. our values and what we appreciate.. they said we are more native than a lot of natives in that we care about the environment and we have a big interest in nature. We're not hunters and fishermen, but a lot of the stuff we do teaches respect for the land. What we're trying to do, is what's best for him. It's not easy. I mean, it's a lot of work. I have to write these progress reports every three months to the band, specifically to the chief, he requested it. A band member has been elected to be Scott's friend. She will be his connection and should be able to take him there. Just setting up the meetings and getting him there.. it is a fair amount of work. It's only once a month but everything else has to shut down in order to do that. It was ourselves and the social worker that went out and said to them this is what we propose and they said yes it sounds like a good idea. Let's try it. They were, I

think, quite interested in it. They don't want to lose him. You know, he is a band member. I think it really hurts them to lose their membership but they know they can't raise him. He can't live there where his mother is right on reserve. So this is the best alternative, to have him raised here and keep in contact. I've thought about (what would happen if he decides to leave our family when he is eighteen.) Quite often if I'm angry with Scott, or disciplining him, that's when I think, is he going to hold this against me some day? Like, is this building up in him, something that he isn't showing me right now? Because quite often, you know, if it's right before bed or something, and he gets in trouble for something and then, you know, we're tucking him in and we always.. always make sure things are resolved before he goes to bed. And we give him his hugs and his kisses. But sometimes he is not as affectionate back, like he's still hurting from being disciplined. And I'm thinking, is he laying in bed there, building up his thoughts that are going to build up over the years and then some day, he's just going to go forget it, you know. You're not my real mom. You don't love me and you used to swat me. Yeah, I definitely have thoughts and wonder what his decision will be when he's older. I think (the open adoption) might work better for us, because he's already going to know about them, and why he isn't with them. And he'll know what their problems are and I mean, he can see that what he's got here, is better than that. I can give him specifics about (his parents and the reasons he couldn't live with them.) I'm working on some little felt dolls that he can change, like clothing and things. And we're going actually to role-model them as we go along and some of them are a darker brown and some of them are Caucasian. And I want it to be very clear to him, who he is. And why he's here and why he's not there. The reason I am doing it is because I think it will tell him.. give him a good idea of who he is.. it's going to give him that identity.. that I am native and these people are white and that even though I'm in their house, I'm not white, I'm still native. But they're a good family and I have this other family over here and I have my whole band and they're native and I'm connected to them. I mean there's nothing wrong with being connected in both places.. And I want him to know that. But I don't want him to feel connected in neither. I think it's working so far. Knowing your parents and knowing who they were (is important.) Open adoption can be a real struggle, too, in that you've got the emotions constantly. Your child isn't mature when they get all this presented to them (as to) what this person is like. Basically, it went very smooth for us. Scott was first put into our family under foster care because the process was taking so long. We wanted him here and his other family had just had the baby and wanted him to move because they were tired. (It took six months before approval came.) I'm starting to think more and more that special needs adoption should have more coverage, continuing coverage for things like dental care. Like it's not my fault that he has

horrendous teeth, but it's going to cost us thousands and thousands of dollars to fix that problem. We'll definitely pay it and get it done, you know. We'll never deny him because nobody else is going to pay it. But I think it would make it a lot easier for people to adopt kids if those kinds of things were covered."

d) "Custom" Adoption

One of the problems I encountered in dealing with terminology, is that the meaning of the word "adoption" has been imposed on the Seabird Island culture. There is no appropriate English word to describe "custom" practices. The words "adoption, guardianship, fostering, and stewardship" all have meanings that are entrenched in the English language, but do not adequately describe the child welfare actions of the band.

On Seabird Island, some people refer to "custom" adoption when they talk about their adoption experiences. This term is not exclusive to one kind of process; it is used to cover a number of child protection actions taken by the band members when a child's parents can not care for them for a period of time. These actions include short term and long term care by one or more extended family members, followed by a return to the birth parents or permanent care by an extended family member. The band experiences of "custom" adoption therefore are varied, but the welfare of the child remains the basic concern. I could find no evidence of an appropriate kinship term in either the Halkomelem or Nlkapamuxw languages for "custom" adoption. From the interviews that were conducted for this thesis, it is evident that Indian adoption practices did not end when the child welfare

policies of the government were imposed on Indian people.

Of the twenty in-depth interviews conducted, ten informants had experienced what they termed "custom" adoption. These experiences ranged from the informants' own "custom" adoption to the "custom" adoption of extended family members, such as father, siblings, children, husband, grandchildren, and cousins. These experiences were equally divided between male and female band members. The ages of these members varied from elders to band members in their early thirties. Informants with other adoption experiences, also recounted their knowledge of "custom" adoption.

Informant 1. (Z1, Nov.2/89)

Randy Smith experienced his own "custom" adoption by close family friends. At age sixteen, he discovered he was adopted. At age sixty-five, he discovered that his adoptive name was not recognized by the government.

"(Adoption in the old times) was just sort of a verbal agreement like, you know, between two parents like, eh. Like in my case, well, I was adopted here, too. In my case, my Dad had.. a.. tuberculosis and he knew he wasn't long, eh,.. and there was.. a baby and I was just walking and.. there was four of us.. so Brian Smith had.. his pick of.. which ever one. Brian Smith was just a foster parent and they were just good friends between the Smith's and the Davidson's. I'm from Chilliwack. He adopted me. (I took on) his last name. (He was) just like an ordinary father. Well, he did what fathers are supposed to do, eh. Cloth you, feed you, and.. see that you get an education. Indian education plus.. going to school. All that.. like he taught us how to trap. A matter of fact he picked up about five children. He didn't have any children of his own. Like I said they were good friends, those two families and.. I guess there were two religions between them. Like my mother was Methodist and my real Dad was Catholic. He wanted me brought up Catholic and Lucy and Brian Smith were real strong Catholics. Religion has some play in it. My Dad had more say in it than my Mother. Then I went to Catholic

school. Didn't do me no good! You know, there was.. no papers drawn up between.. like Indian Affairs or anything. There was just a.. like.. they'd come around.. once a year or whatever to add to the band list. There's new people here.. they came and registered them and that's how I became a Seabird. There is one paper just between Brian Smith and John Davidson.. it's just a slip of paper like that... I got it. It just..authorizing Brian Smith to take one of his children and it was.. witnessed by Sam Jones.. at Seabird here. That's all it was, just a.. few lines. (There was no ceremony to bring me into the band.) Just everybody gathered here.. if there were any members to be signed in. It was simple in those days. I was around eighteen months old. I don't really remember. We never (had a name-giving ceremony here). People went elsewhere to do it and we don't have a longhouse here. Some wanted to build a longhouse and others said no. If the parents find (a name) or hear of one from their original family that nobody uses any more they transfer it over. They have a big dinner.. and call all the elders. They have to witness.. this name was given to him so nobody else can use it till he's gone or till he hands it down to somebody else. It's never been done much in this place around Seabird. Like I say, we have two cultures. I didn't have my name legally changed till I got my old age pension. I didn't even know it. I went into the army and they didn't catch it there. Then when I applied for my old age pension, there was no such name in their registry. I was registered at Seabird as Randy Smith. For my pension I was under Davidson from Chilliwack. There is a big family of them in Chilliwack. I didn't even know my own relatives, you know, up to that time. I knew (about my adoption). I found out when I turned sixteen, you know. My mother.. married a Davidson. We were making our family tree, eh. And it finally came out. I didn't even know my own relatives. Well, I guess they knew all the time, but nobody told me nothing, you know. In them days I guess everything was secret, you know, I couldn't tell you why. I guess they wanted a.. child for themselves and that was it. I didn't really have contact with the Davidson family). Oh it was round about twenty-two or twenty-three. I met my uncle. He said he knew all about it. He started talking and telling me about my Dad. Right to-day, you know they don't seem to be my.. family, you know. (They feel) like strangers to me. I've got some half-brothers and sisters. And their children, they all call me uncle and I.. don't even know them. One is a teacher here. I just got to know her when she became a teacher.. It's hard.. Try to get back in the track again, you can't. It's impossible. A long time. (That was) Wellington Band. Same traditions. All I lost was property but I gained it here. (From the Smith's, I inherited) land and their home. They didn't have any money to speak of. (The Smith's were first comers and the Davidson's were of the same class so I didn't change status). Well, I had to change my name to Smith, that's about all I had to do. (How do I feel about It?) Well,

it's so old now, it don't bother me any more but I think I learned something from it, you know, because, I don't like to see a person lose what they got here. There's 5,000 acres of land here that belongs to the community and a portion of that belongs to the child or the children to come and, they own it.. and if they are adopted out, they automatically lose it. I think it's changed now, really but.. I know they used to take you off the band list and.. put you on a different list. Then you got to start from scratch, there. I think it's wrong.. but to prove it is another thing. You can't, you know. (Adoption is) not a secret today. I wouldn't allow it, you know. I don't agree.. I don't believe in adoption really anyway.. any kind.. I'd like the child to agree upon it themselves, you know, have something to say.. in the adoption part of it.. because they are going to lose their identifying name, for one thing, and.. then they have a share in the property here that's theirs.. and if you adopt them away they change their name, you know. There's no checking. I don't know what I lost.. well I gained, you know. What if I went to.. a white home.. I would've lost everything. "(I am satisfied with my life.) Yeah, I mean I can't change it now. I got a nice place to stay, I had a good bringing up. My father never went to school a day in his life but he made sure.. that we all did, eh. Some of them are teachers.. (One of the things that I would like to say is that) I found out during my life span here the grandparents play a big role in bringing up the children.. and I think that's a good thing but in your case, in a white society, it's very different I guess. I've got some white friends say, 'What are you doing with all these children? Why do you look after them?' Well it's our job. It's what we're put on earth for. They tell me, 'No, no, no, it's not. You're supposed to be having leisure time now that you are old age.' The house is too quiet, you know. But it's been handed down all the way down the line. Grandparents bring up the children. They do the teaching role, you know. They teach the parents plus they teach the grandchildren. Both. If they get mad, they correct both, you know. They think it's the right thing. Brings the family together. Children.. That's the only resource we have, you know, that's concerning Indian people.. We got to keep it going. Our love for children is a big part of it. Like that gentleman there (Brian Smith), a lot of them there.. they'd have fell by the wayside somewhere. He cared, A big heart I guess that's what it really is. I'd like to see the population grow.. strong and healthy."

(See 3, Appendices for additional data)

The following information is a summary of interview results on the questions relating to genealogy, kinship terminology, rights,

obligations, inheritance, status, and name-giving. The majority of informants were in agreement in their answers to the questions. Exceptions are noted.

4.3 Genealogical Data

Informants were asked to provide genealogical data at the beginning of each interview. Some band members could provide a very detailed description of their family tree, while others struggled to remember immediate family data. One elderly informant indicated that grandparents choose the grandchild that appears to have the best head for remembering; this chosen child is then taught the family genealogical knowledge. Informants who had been given this knowledge were able to recite a family tree that went back to the beginnings of the reserve. This recitation covered seven generations. This information is significant because band members have to know the genealogy of the adoptive child's family. Without this knowledge, adoption can not take place because, based on their marriage rules, they would not know who the child could marry.

Informants were asked to provide the kinship terminology in their discussion of their family history. The majority of informants used kinship terms such as father, mother, sister, brother, cousin, aunt, or uncle to discuss their relationship with adopted members. They usually then qualified their statement by indicating that this was an adopted brother, adopted sister, etc. Later, in the interviews about their experience, they did not refer to these relatives using the adjective "adopted". Older

band members were more likely to refer to these family members as "my adopted sister", my adopted brother, etc." Seabird Island people indicated the birth order relationship of their siblings by referring to "my younger brother" or "my older sister", rather than saying "my sister" or "my brother". With one exception, all band members with an adoption experience, referred to their adoptive parents as "mom" and "dad" or "mother" and "father". The one exception called all adults by their first name, regardless of the relationship.

The genealogical information confirmed the wide prohibition of cousin marriage. Marriage to cousins closer than fourth cousin is still prohibited. Band members prefer that marriages take place between people who are unrelated. Many informants reiterated their need of the genealogical knowledge of family members; they have to know from where they come.

4.4 Rights, Obligations, Inheritance, and Status

Adopted children have the same rights and obligations as natural-born children, according to informants. Many examples were given to support this assertion.

The issue of heredity was more important to band members whose families placed importance on the ownership of land. With one exception, no one mentioned the inheritance of cultural objects, songs, or dances. The one exception was an informant who said that she had received her song from her grandmother; this was not a material inheritance, but a spiritual one. Without excep-

tion, band members said that the land was passed down from father to son, grandfather to grandson, or grandmother to grandson. Informants indicated that women were expected to "marry out" (eg. marry someone from another band); for this reason, they would not inherit band land. Adopted sons and grandsons received equal inheritances with natural-born family members. Informants also indicated that children from other bands who were adopted on Seabird Island reserve, could inherit property from their original band.

Without exception, informants stated that adopted children maintained the same status after adoption that they had had prior to adoption. As well, all informants said that adopted children received the same treatment as other children in the adoptive family. The majority of informants said that adoption was forever, meaning that the child maintained lifelong relations with the adoptive family. Other band members who still held out hope that particular children would some day return to the band from non-native adoptive families, maintained that the adoption was only for the time period that the child needed care and that the child would return to the band upon reaching adulthood.

The majority of informants stated that in "custom" adoption, the children knew who their birth parents were and the children had contact with them. Those informants who were the exception, had experienced "custom" adoption processes that were atypical (e.g. the child was not told they were adopted until they reached the age of sixteen). As well, the majority of informants indicated

that the band knew of the "custom" adoption of band members, it was not secretive.

Without exception, informants indicated that grandparents were the educators of the children. In "custom" adoption, it is the grandparents who are first asked to care for the children. In the last few years, because some grandparents have not wished to care for the children, aunts, and uncles have become the primary "custom" adoption care-givers.

4.5 Name-giving

Band members have the right to receive Indian names belonging to their family; this includes anyone adopted into the family. Informants stated that name-giving ceremonies had not been practised on the reserve for some time. They indicated that the fact that the reserve is the home to both Sto'lo and Thompson may be partly responsible for this.

Nora Tom indicated that,

"It's a great big potluck. Everybody's invited. Have a great big time and this child is the special child, you know, even if it's an adopted child or foster child. It's their day...but they can't carry a sxwayxwey name unless it's in their background."

Randy Smith described how the name is transferred. He said,

"If the parents find (a name) or hear of one from their original family that nobody uses any more they transfer it over. They have a big dinner.. and call all the elders. They have to witness.. this name was given to him so nobody else can use it till he's gone or till he hands it down to somebody else."

Mildred Roberts thought that the Thompson name-giving was

different from that of the Sto'lo. She said,

"(When it comes to naming ceremonies,) the Thompson Indians are different than down here again. Up there, they try to give you .. a person had passed away, a member of you family. They don't want to lose that name, so they give it to the child. Like my mother gave Bob White a name. They're related but very distant. This name was just laying there, like you say, waiting for someone to pick it up. So, rather than lose that name she gave it to him. As long as nobody had it and the person is dead.. Somebody wants to give their name, then they ask them if they want that name."

A comparison of Smith's and Robert's description yields a similarity rather than a difference.

Summary

In summary, this chapter began with a discussion of the terminology of adoption used by social agencies. The words "apprehension" and "placement" describe the action taken by social workers to put children in care (under the supervision of the government). The terms "foster care, closed legal adoption," and "open adoption" refer to three ways social workers may place children with families. The terms of the open adoption pilot project that involves Seabird Island band members are described briefly.

The interview data, which forms the main text for this chapter, presents the adoption experiences of Seabird Island band members. The data are organized following the social agency classifications of foster care, closed legal adoption, and open adoption and the Seabird Island classification "custom" adoption. Four adoption narratives are presented in this chapter. I chose Linda Duncan's narrative about her foster care because it

provides the most detailed account of foster care experience. Francis John's account of the closed legal adoptions of her children provides data on a number of issues of adoption. I chose Sandy Parker's narrative about her experience as an adoptive parent in the open adoption pilot project and Randy Smith's account of his "custom" adoption because they provide the greatest depth of information.

Based on the data presented, assumptions cannot be made about the rates of adoption in comparison with other First Nations people. Based on the literature I reviewed and my own knowledge, the incidence and type of adoption experienced by Seabird Island people is about average compared with other bands in Canada; it is not atypical.

Adoption is not a simple subject to deal with. There are no universal adoption laws or policies in Canada. Adoption is not simply the incorporation of a person into a family. As well as the process of incorporation, other issues such as kinship rules, rights, obligations, and inheritance must be considered. For this reason, interview data on these issues are presented.

The purpose of this research is to discover what these adoption experiences mean to the people of Seabird Island. The data raise a number of questions regarding the adoption practices currently in use. Regardless of the adoption method, the issue of ethnic identity of First Nations children is of paramount concern. The adoption practices now used by social agencies are dysfunctional

for Indian children. Issues of power and the effect of this imposed system need to be explored. Lastly, the term "custom" adoption needs to be defined and its function discovered if it is to be considered as a viable option for First Nations people by government administrators. Chapters Five, Six, and Seven present this analysis.

Chapter 5

Analysis of the Adoption Experiences: Issues of Ethnic Identity

There are a number of important issues raised in the Seabird Island Band members' accounts of adoption experiences. The first chapter of this analysis deals with issues of ethnic identity. When informants faced loss of ethnic identity, self-esteem and the feeling of belonging, and loss of contact, they said that their survival as Indians was in jeopardy.

The words "genocide" and "cultural survival" seem very strong when we talk about the rights of a cultural group in Canada, yet they are the words First Nations people use to describe processes happening to them. The Seabird Island people say that their children are their cultural resource. The use and deposition of this resource is key to their sense of survival. Randy Smith said,

"Children.. That's the only resource we have, you know, that's concerning Indian people..We got to keep it going. Our love for children is a big part of it."

John White said, "For a culture or tradition to survive, they need young people -- seeds -- and children are seeds."

Each of the following issues has had some bearing on the band members' ability to survive the adoption processes they experienced. Many informants struggle even now, past middle age, to define who they are and where they have come from. For many, the

puzzle will remain incomplete.

5.1 Identity

Identity may be defined as

"...an image, or set of images, either conscious or unconscious, that an individual has of himself or others have of him. It refers to the possession of actual, assumed or assigned qualities, characteristics, attributes and perceptions" (Edgar, 1970:61).

When a child has a strong sense of identity, s/he can then cope with problems that occur during her/his development and beyond. Without that identity, a child may feel that problems are insurmountable.

"Basic to identity is the sense of emotional rootedness in a family, sometimes called the psychological parent-child relationship, and (sic) is crucial to the development of a sense of self-worth. From this sense grows the subsidiary strands of identity, such as a sense of being an individual person and a sense of vocational identity. Any family can foster these senses in a child, regardless of its ethnic origin, language, or colour" (Ward, 1984:12).

The role of the family is extremely important in the formation of the child's identity. The child takes on the roles expected of her/him by learning to see herself/himself through the eyes of the other family members.

"Since the family is the forum in which, for the majority of people, these early learnings take place, we can regard the family as crucial for the creation of individual identity. There the person is given those earliest significant experiences, which make up the core of the social self. The family provides for the developing person a matrix of belongingness" (Kirk, 1981:14).

For children involved in serial foster care or serial adoption, this rootedness does not occur. They suffer from low self-esteem because they do not feel connected to a parent.

"For the child, adoption always means a loss of relationship with emotionally significant objects and a symbolic loss of roots, a sense of genetic identity, and a sense of connectedness. Becoming disconnected from one's ancestry is perhaps the loneliest experience known. It is like floating in time and space without an anchor. It means no belonging in a way that all others belong. A pervasive sense of anxiety accompanies this experience of disconnectedness" (Small, 1987:36).

When the very basis of identity becomes problematic for a child, the other stages of claiming one's identity become very difficult.

It is the loss of the ethnic identity of children in adoptive and foster homes that concerns Seabird Island Band members. When a social worker apprehends and places a native child in a non-native home,

"...the cultural stripping is complete. The child is isolated from the environment of his people, where there was some support and encouragement to insulate him/herself from the opinions and judgements of white people and institutions. It is difficult for any child to build a new identity, when taken into care, but when that child is native, and placement means physical uprooting and either implicitly or explicitly expressed cultural devaluation, the struggle for an identity is compounded" (Hudson and McKenzie, 1981:87).

In Manitoba, a child's right to ethnicity is affirmed by the Manitoba Child and Family Services Act, 1985 that ensures that:

"Where a child has a different ethnic or cultural background than the family in which it has been placed, that the child has a right to knowledge of its own genetic roots. Adoptive families, foster families, group homes, and institutions have a responsibility to provide the child with information and experiences which will foster personal pride. More than the above, every child entering the child welfare system has a right to expect that its ethnic and cultural background will be given full consideration in the plans made for care. The child has the right to expect the agency will make every effort to place it in an ethnically/culturally appropriate environment. The child has the right to expect that the ethnic/cultural community into which it was born

will assume responsibility to make the necessary resources available" (Kimelman, 1985:31).

Although this provincial government may recognize that the right to ethnic identity is important, it is critical that adoptive and foster parents ensure that there is a transfer of cultural knowledge. A recent Canadian study showed that adoptive parents did not make an effort to make themselves aware of Indian culture. Twenty-five percent of the adoptive parents did not discuss their native adoptee's background with the child. At least twenty-five percent of these parents received no counselling after the adoption placement (Kimelman, 1985:157).

For those children who must be placed off the reserve, care must be taken to allow them to formulate the very basis of identity, to acquire an emotional rootedness; this will then allow them to develop an ethnic identity as they mature. The band can play an active role in the maintenance of an ethnic identity by remaining in contact with the child and its foster or adoptive family. The children

"...critically need to have role models who are also Indians and can accurately interpret and teach their mutual tribal heritage. Placing them in the same community context can help minimize culture shock and facilitate return home" (Ward, 1984:48).

A problem with the high number of native children in care, is that

"...there is evidence to indicate that once native children have been admitted into care, they are less likely than non-native children to return to their parents. As a result, many native children grow up being so dislocated in terms of

their culture, their race and their family, that they have no clear sense of their identity and no home to which they can return; the circle has been broken. The community has been deprived of its right to regenerate itself" (Carasco, 1986:114).

A further problem exists with the cultural understandings of how identity is defined. The Euro-Canadian culture concentrates on the rights of the individual. Thus, when a judge makes a decision about the welfare of a child, s/he is basing her/his decision on what is best for the individual; a judge perceives identity as something learned in the foster or adoptive home. On the other hand, Seabird Island people express concern about the rights of the band and the child's identity within the group. Because judges don't think about identity this way, they place less importance on maintaining an Indian identity. Because the child needs the band around her/him to find her/his identity, maintaining an Indian identity is almost impossible in a non-native home.

One way that we define who we are and where we fit within the community is to use family memorabilia to remind us of the past. Foster children lose all sense of to whom they belong. Because they are young and perhaps traumatized, they do not always remember when social workers moved them and who they stayed with. For example, Linda suffered six moves in eight years. She has no visual record of those years, the way other children do. No one has saved photographs, report cards, swimming certificates, or other historical records to remind her of those years. She doesn't know the names and addresses of her foster parents and foster siblings. It is as if she lives in an ahistorical world.

The 'Life Book,' a book used to record the names of families that the child has lived with and meaningful events, mentioned by Sandy Parker, is only useful if the foster child and/or social worker is conscientious about filling it out. There is no narrative record to remind a child of important milestones during those years. Foster children have fleeting mental snapshots of time spent with people whose names they no longer remember. There is no one for them to ask about these images. Being in foster care may mean a child experiences several placements; s/he may have no record of this. With no history, no place to belong, and no one person who is constant throughout their life, foster children feel rejected and abandoned.

Adoptive children not only lose their history, but they lose their name. Their birth name is the only link they have with their birth family and the band. Children who have been adopted as infants generally are given the name of the adoptive family. That name becomes their name and as they mature, the name is synonymous with their identity. Mature adoptees often choose to search for their birth parent. When a child does not know their birth name, it is impossible to trace the location of their band and their birth parents. The status number that Indian Affairs issues to their birth parent has a family base number that is part of their personal status card number. Adopted children do not have access to this card until they are of the age of majority. Indian Affairs changes the base number when adoptees apply for a status card to protect the identity of the birth parent. On the other side of this issue, is the ability of the

band registrars to search for children who have been adopted off the reserve. There is no way of finding these children when their adoptive parents change their birth name to the adoptive name.

As children mature and enter the teenage years, they search for their identity. Sachdev notes that

"it is crucial in normal personality development that adolescents derive a sense of identity from the linkage or identification with their past, and any interference with this process is likely to result in identity confusion" (Sachdev, 1984:142).

Those teens who suffer serial foster care or adoption, experience greater difficulties. The movement from one home to another severely effects the adolescent's sense of identity and self-esteem.

"Abused by their own families, separated repeatedly from homes throughout their sojourn with the social agency, they feel they don't belong anywhere, to anyone" (Kendrick, 1990:22).

Informants recounted their experiences of family members trying to return to the band. It is because they have lost their ethnic identity that their return is difficult. They no longer feel they belong in the band because they experience culture shock upon their return. Band members who have returned to the band after a non-native adoption or foster care experience, have to get to know family members again and learn how to be Indians. This is an uncomfortable experience for they realize that they do not know how to learn. Informants offered this information with hesitancy, almost unwilling to speak aloud about their feelings

of no longer belonging. Informant Linda Duncan commented that she didn't know where she was from and who her relatives were. Ida Duncan lamented not knowing certain relatives before they had died. Repeatedly, band members who had been placed off-reserve, suggested that they were just learning to be Indians. Sarah White said that knowing how to be Indian could be re-awakened and remembered.

Band members expressed a number of concerns about maintaining their adopted children's ethnic identity. It is important for Ida Duncan that her youngest child knows his heritage. She does not want him to lose his Indian identity. Ida wants him to know both realities in his adoptive family. Leo Howard noted that adopted First Nations children face a clash of Indian and white values that create alienation and conflict. He thinks that maintaining a native identity would help alleviate this conflict. Mildred Roberts thinks that knowing a relative is well-respected by band members creates pride. Informants said that if native children knew who their families were they would have pride in their heritage.

Acquiring an identity depends on having relationships with people, on having somebody to question. On Seabird Island, a child learns its identity from the hands that shape the child. If only for this reason, "custom" adoption must be legalized. (See Sachdev, 1988:142-145 for a comprehensive review of literature on loss of identity in adoption).

5.2 Loss of Self-Esteem and the Feeling of Belonging

Because the foster care process is less permanent, band members experiencing this process said that they did not belong in the foster family. Most of their experiences were as temporary foster care placements, which meant that social workers moved them every six months, or more often. Frequently, the children did not know or remember why the social workers moved them so repeatedly. Social workers put some band members into permanent care, but they ended up moving often, even as permanent wards. This serial placement is extremely hard on the children. Linda and Scott Duncan experienced this kind of placement. For the temporary placement, social workers told them that they would be there only for a little while. However, both foster parents and the social workers indicated that permanent placement was forever. The Seabird Island experience was that forever could be just a year or two.

Children in foster care become hardened to the incorporation process. Sandy Parker suggested that this is why she and her husband would not adopt an older child. Linda Duncan's experience exemplifies this; she said that there was no use trying to get to know her new "family" because she would just get moved again. Later Linda recognized that she needed to try harder to get along in this new family. She found that she could be happier, but just as before, after a few months, the social worker moved her again. The children play a waiting game. Foster homes are just a place to stay until you are old enough to go back home to the reserve or move to the city. It is possible

for children to be in a permanent placement and feel that they belong in the foster family. However, that has not been the experience of Seabird Island people whom social workers removed for placement off the reserve. This feeling of belonging is a most basic need for children in order for them to maintain their self-esteem. Kendrick notes that

"the child welfare system persistently and systematically discourages any feelings of worth, self-esteem, or confidence a child may have had upon entering the system" (Kendrick, 1990:8).

The Seabird Island people who have experienced foster care or adoption off-reserve, cry out for someone to care about them. Linda Duncan admitted that she felt abandoned by her mother and that she could not trust anyone any more. She feels insecure in her relationship with her sister because she is afraid of being rejected once more.

This feeling of rejection, exacerbated by a series of failed foster care placements, lowers her self-esteem. In "custom" adoption experiences, this feeling of rejection is not as strong. Band members who have been "custom" adopted do not feel as rejected by their parent. They express pride in the things they learned from their grandparent, uncle or aunt; they appear to accept the adoption process more easily because they can retain their identity. These members do not suffer lack of self-esteem; they have a strong sense of who they are and where they have come from.

Gladys Little said she didn't belong in her foster family. It did not take the place of her birth family. Having a sense of belonging comes easier when social workers place children in a home of the same ethnicity as that of the natural parents. For First Nations people, placement needs to be with the same band.

Adults who have returned to the band after experiencing foster care or adoption off the reserve, have a very difficult time fitting into the band's social system. They have not been brought up with the knowledge of who they are and where they belong. They become frustrated and angry because they have no memory of a family history and no memory of family members, especially grandparents or great-grandparents. They have no patience with family members who repeat stories of long ago because they have no part in these. Nora Tom relates how her sisters and brother hate the other members of the family because they can share the family history and the fostered siblings cannot. Tom says that her sisters and brother were robbed of their heritage and their sense of belonging. These adults, now returned to the band, are having trouble relating to their kin. They cannot express the trust and love that would allow them to belong.

Patrick Johnston notes the effects of apprehension on self-esteem.

"The effects of apprehension are often as painful for the parents as they are for the child. This may be particularly true for Native families, who, if anything, are more child-centred than many non-Native families. Often, difficulties they may have been experiencing are further aggravated.

Problems of alcoholism and emotional stress can be exacerbated when a child is removed, which, in turn, increases the likelihood of other children being apprehended. For many Native parents who already have low self-esteem, the removal of a child is but another confirmation of their feeling of worthlessness" (Johnston, 1983:60).

When the judges decide that a parent is not fit to look after a child, the parents lose their self-respect and the respect of others on the reserve. However, when a judge refuses a person the right to foster or adopt their siblings, the person suffers both loss of self-esteem and a feeling of powerlessness. Yvonne Duncan, a foster parent to her sister, is frustrated that her family has disintegrated and she is powerless to prevent it. She has little confidence in her ability to parent. This is based on her experiences with the social system.

Sandy Parker is trying to make Scott feel that he belongs on Seabird Island. She knows that when he becomes eighteen, he has the choice of returning to the band. She is determined that if he makes that choice, that he will feel comfortable there and he will not lose his identity. Scott's mother wants him to understand that he belongs on the reserve with his people and he belongs in his adoptive family. She wants him to feel connected in both places.

5.3 The Effect of Contact on Identity

In all the adoption experiences, it is loss of contact that appears to be the most important aspect for the informants. Without contact, they do not know what has happened to family

members and they do not know where these family members are. This need relates to their need to know the genealogy of the family. Because of adoption and foster care off the reserve, many families have missing genealogical data. Of course, it also concerns them because they care about family members and they do not want them to lose their ethnicity.

Loss of contact by the birth parents in foster care and adoption cases is also a concern on the reserve. For parents who have lost their children, no contact is likely with any of the children apprehended and placed off the reserve. Some of these parents have indicated that they have not even seen a recent picture of these children. When the social workers apprehend and place the children on the reserve, contact can be maintained. The parent knows that the child is well and they can see the child growing and developing. For children at risk, the birth parent has no contact, however, it should be possible for foster parents to send information and pictures to birth parents via a social worker. The birth parent is entitled to know how their child is and what they look like. Several informants, whose relatives had been placed off the reserve, wished that they could see pictures of these children.

Because of family separation, many informants did not know their family; they said that they were just learning who was in their family. They expressed regret at not knowing family members who had died. Randy Smith said that he has had a hard time getting to know his birth family.

Loss of contact also means that important family information is not always given to a foster child or adoptee. For Seabird Island Band members, it is important to know what has happened to family members, especially when a death has occurred. Scott's birth mother has expressed her concern that he does not know of his father's death, yet his adoptive mother recounts how he was informed of his father's death while he was a foster child. Scott's sister still feels guilt because she was not on the reserve when her father died; she refers to hearing rumours about his death. "Custom" adoptees would know about this type of family information immediately.

Maintaining contact takes a concerted effort by adoptive and foster care parents. The first battle is to deal with the psychological feelings of the parents. Maintaining contact forces them to share the child with the birth parents. In the non-native community, this is difficult because the parents have been socialized into thinking that no contact should be made. For native communities, maintaining contact is part of their definition of the adoption and foster care process. For them the cessation of contact goes against Indian values.

Maintaining contact with grandchildren who have been fostered or adopted off-reserve is a concern of band members. Gladys Little thought she had lost her grandson because the Ministry of Social Services apprehended him. She was fortunate that her daughter could adopt the baby. This closed legal adoption enabled this family to maintain their ties. The child will be brought up with

his native heritage intact.

Open adoption allows the children involved to feel that they may have contact at any time. This is important because it is this contact that will keep them together as a sibling unit as they mature into adulthood. Linda Duncan is happy knowing that she may speak with her brother and visit him.

5.4 Genealogy

Remembering the genealogy of the band members related to the first-comers is particularly important to Seabird Island people. The recitation of the genealogies of the first-comers helps to provide a sense of the past. The ability to trace your connection back to the first people who settled on the island gives you high status in the social system on the reserve. Nora Tom described her role in her family as the "dictionary." It is her responsibility to remember her family's genealogy. Suttles notes that

"families with proper traditions gave their children, often individually and secretly, sn̓iw 'advice' consisting of their geneology and family history, gossip about other families, and rules of proper behavior" (Suttles, 1958:501; 1990:465).

Band members recite their genealogies with pride because they can remember and because they know who their relatives are. Adopted children often do not have that information. Many informants indicated their frustration at not knowing who their relatives were. They were embarrassed because they could not recite the knowledge that they knew was important to remember. This is part

of the birth-right of every person, to know where they have come from. In "custom" adoption and open adoption, band members have access to this knowledge because Seabird Island people acknowledge its value.

Another reason that genealogies are important to Seabird Island people, is that the marriage rules define who you can and cannot marry based on who your relatives are. Leo Howard noted that children were reminded often of who their relatives were so they wouldn't go around with unacceptable people.

Not knowing who a child's family is, is grounds for not adopting the child. Mildred Roberts had the opportunity to adopt but because the social worker could not release the child's family history to her and her husband, they decided not to adopt him. She didn't know where he was from or who his dad was. She was unable to help the child without this information.

On Seabird Island, everyone who can be remembered in a recitation of a genealogy is a relative. Seabird Island people may refer to those far-removed from the extended family as friends; thus a 'friend' who may "custom" adopt instead of an extended family member is likely to be, for example, a sixth or eighth cousin. The informants know that the 'friend' is related, but either cannot be bothered to work out the exact relationship because it is too far removed or they are not sure exactly how the person is related but they know there is a blood relationship at some level.

Knowing one's genealogy provides an oral history that places a band member within a particular class. To make a claim of being an aristocrat or noble, a band member must prove that claim through his/her genealogy. To have no knowledge of one's genealogy is to 'know nothing'. Persons who know nothing do not have a high ranking place within the band.

5.5 Role of Elders in Acquiring Identity

Seabird Island people respect and value their Elders. These grandparents play an important role in the Seabird Island community. It is their job to bring the children up. One informant related how his white friends teased him about having to look after his grandchildren. He said that it was his job. Another informant described how the role of the care-giver to children is repeated generation by generation.

A concern of informants was that the Elders get depressed because they do not feel useful in the band. Informants said that the Elders should get more involved with the children and become more active in the role of care-giver and teacher. One Elder who actively participates in the care of her grandchildren said that her grandchildren made her feel important.

The above issues of loss of identity, loss of self-esteem and a sense of belonging, and loss of contact may be ameliorated by genealogical knowledge passed down by oral tradition. It is here that the Elders can play a very important role in the well-being of the children of the band. Social agencies require a new model

so that apprehended children are no longer cut off from their identity.

Chapter 6

Analysis of the Adoption Experiences:

Power and the Child Welfare System

This second chapter of analysis deals with the effects of the current child welfare system on band members. It provides an analysis of the data dealing with foster care, group homes, separation of siblings, serial care, subsidization, and the status of adopted Indian children.

The current adoption policies are imposed by the dominant Euro-Canadian population. Until governments legalize "custom" adoption across Canada, this imposition will continue. The adoption policies are part of the colonialism that has taken place in North America. Hudson and McKenzie argue that the problems of child welfare on reserves follow "a conflict model of society" (Hudson and McKenzie, 1981:65).

"The lack of commonly shared values, and the historical subjugation of native people by a white, European based economic and social system can be fully understood only in this context. Here attention is given to the struggle between an intruding society with its own culture, and an indigenous society with markedly different values and objectives" (Ibid., 1981:65).

The Indian Act expressed and facilitated a process that created dependency of Indians on the federal government. This act, an

example of structural colonialism, controls the power and decision-making of indigenous people. It is the people of the dominant group who benefit by this control, as native people have been unable to decide for themselves how they will use their land and resources (Ibid., 1981:65).

"The missionaries, the educational system and the health system were all oriented to objectives associated with cultural colonialism" (Ibid., 1981:65). This included separating children from their bands and forcing them to recant their Indian culture. On Seabird Island, the informants who had experienced residential school or long stays in tuberculosis wards suffered such alienation. A modern day method of devaluing the culture of First Nations children has been to apprehend the children and place them in non-native foster or adoptive homes. Not only has this process devalued the culture of the Indian people, it has made the Indian people feel unqualified and inferior as parents. Informants experiencing apprehension often mentioned that they felt that they were not good enough to be parents. Often these apprehensions took place because the Seabird Island homes did not meet the white middle-class criteria set by the child welfare agency.

The power in the child welfare system has resided with the dominant group, not the native people. Until recently, governments have not asked First Nations people to participate in child welfare decisions about their children. Seabird Island people said that though they have the opportunity to make

suggestions about the child welfare plans for band children, their suggestions go unheeded. They consider this process a sham and said that the Ministry holds discussions to prove to the public that the Ministry is listening, yet the Seabird Island people do not have the power to make the changes they want. For over twenty years, First Nations people have been telling the government that "custom" adoption must be legalized. Government studies have made the same recommendation yet the change has not been made.

As First Nations people have empowered themselves to gain some control over their lives, the colonial relationship is breaking down. Professional people in education, health and law recognize Native methods of education, healing, child care, law and government as valid. To complete the decolonization process, First Nations people will move to self-government. Before that happens, government agencies must take care of the needs of the children. If Seabird Island Band takes responsibility for their child welfare matters, one part of the complex process by which their culture has been devalued will be reduced.

6.1 Demography of an Imposed System

The effects of an imposed system of child welfare are well documented in the social work literature, and in the accounts informants for this research provided about their experience with a system that has failed not only the Indian children of Canada, but the non-Indian children as well. The following British Columbia statistics show the tremendous increase in the numbers

of Indian children taken into care.

"In 1955 there were 3,433 children in the care of B.C.'s child welfare branch. Of that number it was estimated that 29 children, or less than 1 percent of the total, were of Indian ancestry. By 1964, however, 1,446 children in care in B.C. were of Indian extraction. That number represented 34.2 percent of all children in care. Within ten years, in other words, the representation of native children in B.C.'s child welfare system had jumped from almost nil to a third" (Johnston, 1983:23).

With the 1975 B.C. Royal Commission Report on Child Welfare and extensive amounts of research completed on the subject of foster and adoptive care, it could be expected that the percentage of Indian children in care would have dropped significantly. However, this is not so. The statistics for British Columbia indicate that there has been very little change, at least not enough to suggest that current child welfare policy is successfully working for the children of this province. In March, 1992, there were 6084 children in care in the province of British Columbia. Of this group of children, 1948 children (32%) were racially classified as aboriginal; to be classified as racially aboriginal, these children have to have either a mother or father of native origin (Thomson, 1992). Thus, in the twenty-eight years since 1964, the proportion of Indian children in care has declined by only 2.2 percent.

6.2 Loss of Power in a Colonial System

Band members with experience in adoption express a loss of control in their lives. They say that outside agencies make child welfare decisions without any concern for Indian values. The women who have had babies taken away feel robbed and violated. They suffer a great deal still, even after more than

twenty years after these apprehensions. Even now, with the band having an opportunity to make recommendations in child welfare cases, band members, male and female, express a sense of loss of control and power. Young women know what too often happens to babies born out of wedlock. Linda Duncan said,

"I don't want one (a baby) because if I get one when I'm not impaired (sic) for a baby, they take me away and my baby away from me and have it up for adoption. I would feel hurt. So that's why I don't want anything right now."

Seabird Island informants tell of their lack of control in the processes they are involved in with the Ministry of Social Services. The Ministry has taken a paternalistic stance, believing that they know what is right for the children involved, without accountability to the band. When band members have gone to the Ministry offices to enquire about Seabird Island children in care, the Ministry has shown a lack of concern for the family from which the children were apprehended. When an apprehension takes place, there are at least two parties involved; both parties, usually the parent/s and the child/ren, need help from social services. The child's needs come first, especially if the child needs protection, but it appears that the Ministry shows little respect for the rights of family members. This goes back to the problem that government agencies now have control of the child as opposed to the family having control.

It appears that some decisions have been high-handed. When one informant went to the local office of the Ministry of Social Services to discover what had happened to her son, the Ministry

representatives gave her the runaround. They gave both the child and the birth parents inaccurate information to convince them that both parties were geographically separated by great distances, so they would be discouraged from searching for each other. At this time the child was eighteen, one year younger than the age when they could reach each other through the active registry in Victoria. The social agency does not exist just for the child. With some compassion for the birth family, the social agency could have explained the new passive and active registry and helped the birth parents to locate their son. Giving the runaround to people is not an ethical stance. Part of the frustration in this case, is the position of power that the Ministry takes versus the lack of power of the child or birth parents.

When Seabird Island Band members have taken control, the results have been positive. For example, the Bob White adoption was difficult because he had a white father and a native mother. Band members considered him white. When his grandfather adopted him, he could not foresee that when the child matured he would be asked to leave the reserve by the other band members. Because the grandfather had power on the reserve, he could legalize the adoption and have his grandson made an Indian.

Frances John had to take control when her sister died and left an infant to be cared for. Because Frances moved quickly enough, she thwarted the Ministry of Social Services in its attempt to apprehend the child. The Ministry claims that before they apprehend a child, they ask all relatives if they will take the

child. Frances John's account tells a different story.

6.3 Loss of Respect

Having respect for others and oneself is an important value of the Seabird Island people. One way that band members maintain their existence is through their relationships with others. Losing respect is a key factor in the breakdown of relationships. The extended family bring children up to have respect. When the children face apprehension followed by placement, it has been their experience that they are not treated with respect by the social agencies or foster parents.

In Linda Duncan's experience, her foster parents lacked respect for her as a person. Here is a child, used to living on the reserve, suddenly taken from her home. She tells of being stripped, showered, and scrubbed by strangers, and then given clothing to wear that was not hers. Her foster parents did not afford her the privacy that a child might expect. How much extra effort would it have taken to be aware of a child's feelings and be sensitive to the trauma that was taking place?

For some Seabird Island children, their experiences with social workers indicated a lack of respect by workers for the children's ability to understand what was happening to them and the children's need to know what other actions the social agency would take. Children placed into care have questions that need to be answered. Linda Duncan was scared; she lacked answers to help her with her feelings. After apprehension, she didn't know

where she was going and why she was moved. She didn't know if she would ever see her parents again. Sandy Parker found out that Scott knew he was going to be moved again because he mentioned it to his teachers. After a family turned him down for adoption once, he was much more aware of what was happening to him than his social worker realized. It is hard to know just how much to tell a child because the worker does not know if the placement is going to work out as planned. For a child who has been involved in several placements, it seems important to let them know what is going on. The child has had enough experience to expect no permanency and to realize that change is about to happen. Not to tell the child, is to leave the child's imagination open to worry that something is going to happen that is worse. Sandy Parker's recounting of Scott's failed serial foster placements makes it plain that Scott needed to know what was going to happen to him next. After the adoption move, he was insecure because he didn't know when the next move was going to happen.

Robert Smiley noted his concern for the children who have experienced failed foster care and rebelled. He stated that they have no respect for themselves because of the way they have been treated in care. These children lose their ethnicity and they can find no place to belong in either the Indian or white society.

Social agencies do not appear to make a connection between the number of Indian people in prisons and the number of Indian children placed in non-native care.

"The John Howard Society reports that at least 75 percent of the inmates in Canada's institutions were known to child welfare authorities and that over 80 percent of this population were both abused during childhood and became wards of the state during their childhood or adolescence. Among this population, gross underachievement and low educational attainment are the norm" (Kendrick, 1990:68).

Robert Smiley believes that there is a direct connection because he visits the native inmates, many of whom he says, have experienced failed foster and adoptive care as children.

As a matter of survival, the Seabird Island people also respect the land. The land is their resource for food, clothing, shelter, warmth, and as leased land, it provides income for the band. The Seabird Island people see the land as a legacy that will be handed down to the children. Some band members used "custom" adoption to ensure that a parent could control who inherited the land. This is especially true for those adoptive parents who lacked biological children of their own.

6.4 Foster Care

Nearly every informant had knowledge or experience of foster care. Often they experienced not only the apprehension of a child and the initial placement with a foster parent, but they also experienced adoption or serial foster care of the same child or another family member.

As informants recounted their experiences, one startling thing that came out was that many of them did not know why the Ministry had taken away their children. Upon further investigation, it appears that the Ministry gave them reasons, but those reasons

did not make any sense to them. They lived in a child-centred culture where seeing to the needs of the child was paramount to the survival of the band. For example, Nora Tom was living at home with her grandparents. Several extended family members plus her husband also shared this home. The Ministry took this young mother's baby before she could even return home from the hospital because there were too many people living in the house.

Nora Tom also noted that the criteria used had no bearing on Indian values or way of life. The reserve nurse did not consider her qualified to look after the baby because the nurse thought that she was a dependent under the care of her grandparents. Nora defined good parenting as giving love, having patience, providing security and safety in the home, and providing food, clothing, shelter, etc. Each informant questioned the criteria used by child care agencies to apprehend a child; in particular, they questioned the criterion that defined neglect.

Few of the informants had their children returned to them; the Ministry fostered many of these children off the reserve. Consequently, this has resulted in the loss of children who are band members of Seabird Island. As well, when the Ministry apprehended children from the family, the band members had little or no counselling to help them deal with the problems that had necessitated the apprehension in the first place. For example, Ida Duncan and her husband needed alcohol abuse counselling when they were in their twenties, long before the Ministry apprehended their last child. Without their children, the Duncan's appeared

to move towards a greater dependence on alcohol resulting in a deterioration of their health and eventually Mr. Duncan's death.

6.5 Foster Parenting

Some informants have made a point of providing foster care on the reserve because the Ministry had apprehended them as children off the reserve. These informants are determined to stop the genocide of band members. Mildred Roberts, long past the Ministry of Social Services' maximum age requirement, still tries to help the children. She wants them to know their relatives.

Depending on the informants' experiences, many band members expressed concern over the criteria for choosing foster and adoptive parents. There was apprehension about participating in the home study process. Many members said that the home study would find that they were not good enough to be parents. Nora Tom said that it was degrading to have her home checked. Because the band is a small community, there is local knowledge about social problems and attempts to right them. Band members said that they would lose respect if they failed a home study. Because they value respect by others, some band members would not allow themselves to be put in the position of being turned down for foster or adoptive parenting.

There was also the concern that only perfect homes would be chosen. The band members know that the Ministry does a thorough inspection of prospective homes. Band members expressed anxiety that the Ministry might find out something in their background

that would prevent the Ministry from finding them acceptable. Some members even worried that something might be found that they didn't even know about. One informant indicated that when a relative requires care the Ministry should not be involved. Informants also suggested that they were afraid that during the home study, they would not have the 'right' answers to the Ministry's questions. Frances John said that if she didn't think of good answers, the Ministry would take her baby away. Band members are aware of the Ministry of Social Services' criteria. Randy Smith noted that he had to have a bank account and a good credit rating to be an acceptable foster or adoptive parent. The Ministry did not accept many band members who were good choices to be foster or adoptive parents because these band members did not have money saved in the bank or they had a low income. The Ministry felt that they could not afford to have a child in their home.

This is a major problem with all minorities, not just Indians. In North America, it has been difficult for minorities to adopt or foster children because of their low economic position in the larger population. The social agencies assume that low income means inability to parent. Because a middle-class income standard is used to determine the acceptability of foster or adoptive parents, low income minorities are not chosen for foster/adoptive care placements (Kirk, 1988c:59;). The Union of B.C. Indian Chiefs has also noted that this is the case for native people. Its report states,

"The format of Adoption Application, Background Study and

investigation process is intimidating and/or perceived as unnecessarily discriminating toward Indians of lower socioeconomic status either in the forms themselves or the approach of the worker involved" (Elmore, Clark and Dick, 1974:23).

Informants stated that they did feel intimidated by the social agency home study and investigation. They were concerned that they would not be able to answer questions correctly. They said that there were 'right' answers that would make them acceptable. One reason that Seabird Island people prefer "custom" adoption is that there is no investigation by the Ministry of Social Services to determine if they are fit parents.

Lack of parental experience is also a factor that causes frustration on the reserve. A key problem for Yvonne Duncan is that she tried to assume custody of several family members and was unable to because the courts did not recognize her parenting experience. Yvonne was the oldest of nine children. Because her alcoholic parents could not or would not care for their family, Yvonne had to assume the responsibilities of a parent and look after her younger siblings. It is extremely frustrating to see members of your family disappear off the reserve when you feel you can prevent it. In "custom" adoption, the children would have remained on the reserve, perhaps with Yvonne. Linda Duncan also played the role of "mom" to Scott, her younger brother. It is that very strong bond that now helps to make the open adoption work for both families. Scott will always have Linda as his connection to the band and his family. Linda will always look out for Scott, though he is off-reserve.

Age is another factor considered by the Ministry. This criterion makes little sense in a culture where many care-givers are in their fifties and sixties. One informant said,

"The Ministry's standards have to be young enough to care for the children and financially able to care for the child. So that takes the grandparents out of the picture and probably about seventy-five percent of the extended family out of the picture."

Besides the need for participation from the grandparents, the grandparents need to be needed. When the Ministry tells the grandparents that they are too old to care for a child, it is an insult not easily forgotten. Sarah White pointed out that the grandparents live at a slower pace that allows the child to develop at their rate.

Seabird Island people are concerned that criteria for adoptive and foster homes are based on material values, such as those values of the Euro-Canadian society. The Ministry's physical requirement of houses and the financial criterion are examples of these concerns. Many informants indicated that the values that were important to them concerned love, compassion, safety, and a caring attitude.

6.6 Off-reserve Foster Homes

Seabird Island Band members have a legacy of fostering experience that is not easily dealt with. The Ministry sent some of their band members to off-reserve foster homes where the foster parents criminally mistreated the children. Nora Tom recounts the experience of her sisters and brother, who the Ministry sent to a home where they were horse-whipped, sexually assaulted, and

given rotten food to eat. It is hard to imagine the horrors that those children faced. Not only did these children lose their Indian identity as mentioned by Tom, but they lost trust in other human beings, they lost a sense of belonging, and they lost their self-esteem; they also lost their family. It has become very apparent that this is not an isolated experience for foster children, especially native children (see Kendrick, 1990). No words can make this case better for the children involved, but the Ministry of Social Services can be made to be accountable for these atrocities. These are strong words, but very firm measures must be taken to protect the children. Had the Ministry given the grandparents extra funding or extra help to deal with the large family that needed care, perhaps then, these children would never have suffered from the Ministry's ineptness. Was this doing the best for the child?

6.7 Group Homes

Some group homes do not afford the child a caring, loving environment in which to develop. Kendrick notes that

"... at this point, there is less attempt at socialization, the emphasis is on control, punishment, containment -- not improvement of the child but protection of society" (Kendrick, 1990:54).

Group homes for native children are not usually geographically close to reserves. This makes it difficult for family members to maintain connections to the children from the reserve. The loss of kin connections may exacerbate the loss of identity and ethnicity. A group home on the reserve could mean no physical

move off the reserve. If the group home was on the reserve, the children probably would have a sense of permanence. They would more likely have a family to return to instead of going to urban areas. They would likely know their family, being able to visit them at any time. Possibly, they would retain their Indian identity and they would not be exposed to other children who had greater problems to deal with, such as drug abuse. Yvonne Duncan in recounting her experience in the residential school, describes how she became involved with the use of glue, marijuana and alcohol. Sibling groups might not be separated and the children would not likely have to suffer serial foster placements. Older children could stay in their peer groups, as they could attend school with their friends on the reserve. A group home on the reserve could possibly give the Band Council the opportunity to train and hire band members as house parents.

6.8 Criteria for Group Homes

Many band members said that the Ministry of Social Services uses too strict criteria for house parents. This is another example of the Ministry using white middle-class standards when those standards are not important to the culture involved. The Band Council began the process of creating a group home on the reserve; it followed all the guidelines from the Ministry, but the project had to be given up when the Band Council could not find house parents that met the Ministry's criteria. Randy Smith said, "All their rules were not important to us." The Band Council had qualified house parents, but because these parents had not gone through a Ministry course, the Ministry would not

accept them. He expressed concern over the fact that because no one on the reserve fit the Ministry's criteria, the band would have to go off the reserve to find house parents. This didn't make any sense to him because he thought that the children "should have house parents that they know..." In this situation, the band's criterion places what is best for the child ahead of what is best for social welfare administrators. Randy Smith also expresses his frustration with the rules of the Ministry of Social Services. It is an insult to band members to be told how to look after their children. The root of the problem is that the power and responsibility for child welfare need to be given back to the First Nations people and they need to be given the resources to manage it.

The Seabird Island people have lived for centuries on the food that they have hunted, fished, and gathered. Yet, when the Ministry of Social Services came onto the reserve, they indicated that this diet that had sustained the band from the beginning, was no longer acceptable to serve to children in a group home. This is another example of the ethnocentrism of the social agency. The Ministry gave the band menus that used foods that the band did not regularly eat and which band members considered junk food. Respect is an important value of the band. The Ministry showed great disrespect for Indian values by insisting that something so basic as diet had to be changed. With a consideration for Indian values, the Ministry could have suggested a typical meal plan for house parents to prepare that incorporated all the foods that band members use.

6.9 Seabird Island Criteria for Foster and Adoptive Homes

Seabird Island members know what criteria they would use if they were in control of foster care and adoption. They would base it on the person's ability to parent, the example s/he set, the stability of her/his relationships and her/his ability to discipline, love, trust, and understand. Band members know the families on the reserve better than the Ministry. All members interviewed said that the band chief and council were qualified to choose appropriate foster and adoptive parents for band children. Informants expressed concern that even when the Ministry has consulted the band, that band recommendations have been over-ridden by the Ministry; the band sees the Ministry as holding the power in all child welfare decisions. All informants said that Indian criteria for good homes should be used because Ministry of Social Services' criteria are ethnocentric and do not consider the cultural differences of minority populations. Randy Smith suggests that the Ministry should make it part of their responsibility to inform the child in care where s/he comes from.

6.10 Impact of Separation Of Siblings

Because it is difficult to place groups of children in adoption or foster care homes, sibling groups have been broken-up by the Ministry of Social Services. This has resulted in the total loss of contact between family members. When families are distressed to the point of having the children apprehended, there are often strong bonds between the children who support each other through the trauma they face. The act of apprehension and separation often tears apart that bond and causes psychological problems.

By not keeping sibling groups together, the Ministry denies the child the memory of her/his family and takes away from that child the concept of what a natural family is. This process has destroyed many Seabird Island families. Many informants indicated that in their adoption experience, they were separated from siblings. Some informants have never found these family members; others, having found them, face distant angry brothers and sisters who were too young at the time of apprehension to remember why this process happened. Some informants acknowledge that they know where their siblings are, but they do not wish to be in touch with them. The apprehension process destroys families; it is in direct opposition to the values Seabird Island people have about respect for others and the importance of the most basic unit of kinship, that of the mother and child.

Mildred Roberts, willing to adopt sibling groups, expressed frustration at the Ministry of Social Services who refused to allow such an adoption. In this case, it was the mother of the family in need who asked Mildred to take all the children. Mildred Roberts has never understood why the Ministry refused her. She saw several families torn apart because the Ministry separated siblings.

It is likely that Mildred and other informants suffering the same experience, did not meet the criteria set down by the Ministry of Social Services. Economic status, age or the number of rooms in their houses could have been factors in the refusals. Such criteria are not based on Indian values. It's tragic that white

middle-class values for protection of children have destroyed the very lives they were trying to save.

The social costs that occur because of family separation, such as psychological and justice costs, seem to be more than the extra assistance needed initially to maintain the family. For instance, Terry Hardy describes the separation of five siblings under the care of their grandmother. With extra help in the home and appropriate subsidization, perhaps the children could have stayed in the grandmother's home so that as they grew up, the children could give each other support and love.

Social workers separated sibling groups when the Ministry sent the children to residential schools. Ida Duncan recounts how social workers split up her family after her father died (an older brother went to Sechelt and a sister and brother went to Kuper Island). How can this woman ever put her family history together? This kind of separation is a violation of the child-centred values of the Seabird Island people.

6.11 Effects of Serial Care

It seems strange to use the expression "in care" when the typical foster care placement has resulted in the child feeling that no one cares for it. Apprehension and placement, much like divorce, do not form a single childhood trauma that will be healed by time (Wallerstein, 1991:233). Instead, from the informants' perspective, it is an on-going situation that will affect their life from childhood through to adulthood. Serial placement

exacerbates the trauma. Informants who recounted their feelings about the serial placements, often mentioned that no one cared about their loneliness, their fears, their hurt. They also indicated that though their life was difficult within their family, a move away from the reserve was worse for them than if they had stayed within the extended family. The children recognize that by staying in the extended family, they would know the rules and they didn't have to fear that they would be thrown out. They would have a place that they could call their own. An off-reserve placement does not provide them with a sense of security.

The feeling of rejection and loneliness that foster children experience is partially related to the way the Ministry sets up the foster care system. Both foster parents and foster children know that foster care is not necessarily a permanent situation.

"Bonding -- the emotional attachment of a child to a trusted adult, usually the mother -- considered the most significant psychological element of a child's development, is actively discouraged in the majority of foster parent -- child relationships. The children are only guests in their own home. The state, that vast web of agencies, departments, offices, and sub-departments, is the actual long-term parent" (Kendrick, 1990:11).

Linda Duncan's experience leads her to define foster parents as people who don't care about their foster children. Each time the Ministry places a child in a temporary home, the social agency is setting that child up for failure; if the social agency deems the birth home no longer a good place to live, the child has a right to expect that the alternative will be both safe and permanent and that the agency will act promptly to ensure this.

The Kimelman report on child welfare for the province of Manitoba stated that children had the right to a healthy, safe environment, a right to family, a right to express themselves, and a right to have "expeditious procedures" (Kimelman, 1985:28). Seabird Island Band members expressed frustration about the discontinuity of lawyers and the lack of promptness in child welfare cases. Often, the courts have held up a custody or adoption case for months while band members went over the case with yet another new lawyer. Band members indicated concern about the time the courts took to set court dates and complete custody and adoption hearings. While the courts move in slow and ponderous fashion, the children involved in these cases remain in limbo.

6.12 Permanency Planning

Until Seabird Island children who require foster care or adoption can remain on the reserve, some changes need to be made to the policies that determine what happens to them in care. What I have termed serial foster care or serial adoption has been termed 'drift' in some of the social work literature. Concern has been expressed that with little stability or continuity in the care process, the children suffer psychologically. The accounts of adoption experience of the Seabird Island people document this damage. These children needed a sense of permanency with their foster parent; this has not been their experience. Recently, in the United States, the term 'permanency planning' has been used to describe a process by which the child is assured of remaining with one family for the duration of their care period, or assured

of remaining with their birth family in their homes (Fein and Maluccio, 1984:205). Preplacement preventive services for the birth family, subsidized adoption, and periodic case reviews are used to implement this kind of plan. There is a concerted effort to reunite children with their birth families. In permanency planning, the child has a legal status within the family that creates a sense of belonging and creates the psychological child-parent bond that leads to self-esteem and identity. As well, the child is no longer considered a 'second class' person with no real status within the family or community. Fein and Maluccio suggest that permanency planning may lead to what they term 'half-way adoption' (Fein and Maluccio, 1984:211).

"Those youngsters who cannot live with their biological parents... may be 'adopted' by a family who will care for them. they may still visit and feel connected to their families of origin, but will have their center of stability and permanence in the 'adoptive' home... The more open and flexible approach to adoption is responsive to the universal need of parents and children to continuity, identity, and human connectedness" (Fein and Maluccio, 1984: 211).

This 'half-way' adoption is little different from subsidized open adoption or subsidized custom adoption.

6.13 Council of Elders

Seabird Island people believe that if the Ministry allowed the community to take back their responsibility for child welfare, the children and the band would be better off. Rather than asking the Ministry of Indian Affairs to make decisions for them, they would prefer to take problems to the community where discussion followed by consensus would provide the solution. Informants suggested the formation of a Council of Elders,

similar to one operating in Chilliwack, as a way to bring the community back into the decision making process. Prior to interference by the government agencies, the Chief and Elders solved problems; they talked to the families who were experiencing difficulties. The band worked together to deal with problems. Now, following Indian Affairs policies, the band has divided up the responsibilities that the Chief and Elders had and hired band members to work in the band office to take care of education, employment, health, and social work matters. Sarah White commented, "It's not working because they are separating all the parts of the body."

6.14 Subsidization

Foster children know that their parents receive money for looking after them. When a child experiences serial placements, aside from the feeling of not belonging, s/he feels exploited. The child may believe that the foster parent is only fostering for the money and that the foster parent lacks interest in the welfare of the child. Linda Duncan is not sure if she is with her older sister because her sister loves her or because her sister needs the money. This cynical attitude comes more from Linda's experience of serial foster care than her concern that someone receives money to help cover the cost of raising her. If the social agencies provided a subsidy for adoptive parents as well as foster parents and practised permanency placement, children like Linda would not have such negative experiences.

There is little doubt that more families on Seabird Island could

offer their homes for care, especially for sibling groups, if they could receive a subsidy. This view is supported by Ward (1984b:254).

The practice of the Ministry of Social Services has been that even if foster parent-foster child bonding has taken place, that relationship will be broken if an adoptive placement can be made. If 'what is best for the child' is not a myth, then permanency planning should ensure that the child stays with a successful foster parent under a subsidy and that the foster parent is allowed to adopt the child so that the foster parent has the rights and obligations of a parent. Subsidized adoption gives parents the right to make decisions for their child and creates a greater sense of responsibility in raising the child as opposed to foster care where stewardship is practised.

Subsidization would offer the band an alternative to having strangers take their children into care. Foster parents have to work to provide for their own family. When a caring foster parent is on a reserve and when they would be willing to foster more children if they had an additional subsidy, it seems prudent to use this opportunity to give care on the reserve, rather than having the child go off-reserve. Terry Hardy tells of her frustration at having to give up foster children because of the demands of her job. She would have preferred to stay at home to look after both her own children and her foster children.

When adoptive parents accept a child into their family, they also

accept the medical and dental costs that that child will incur. If they were supporting their own biological child, then they would be responsible for the health of that child from conception on. Adoptive parents have no control over how the birth parent treated the child before the Ministry apprehended the child. Thus, many adoptive parents must pay extremely high medical and dental costs to look after the adoptive child. That they are willing to care for and love the child should be enough. Sandy Parker suggests that such costs should be subsidized to make it easier for prospective adoptive parents to accept children with special needs.

6.15 Status for Adopted Indian Children

An Indian child who is adopted off the reserve may never know her/his status as an Indian. The adoptive parents have the right to inform a child of its status. Though social agencies recommend that the child should be told, the Ministry does not check to ensure that this is done. According to the Indian Act, application for status must be made by the age of twenty-one. In British Columbia, status registration must be completed by age nineteen. This is a concern of the Seabird Island people. When apprehended children are not registered with the appropriate status number, the band loses members. Those children who are never told about their heritage, rights, and obligations as band members and as Indians, are the 'lost children' that informants speak about.

The status card is the method the Indian and Northern Affairs

Canada uses to identify Indian people who are entitled to receive services from the government and the band. I.N.A.C. assign a status number to the head of the household and the minor children of that household have a status number that uses the family head's number as a base. Upon reaching the age of majority, the Indian child can then apply for its own number. A status child adopted by status parents retains their status. A non-status child adopted by status parents does not gain status.

However, I.N.A.C. does not issue a status card for those minor children who are adopted off the reserve to non-status parents. The concern is that if a card was to be issued, the confidentiality of the child's adoption would become public knowledge.

"Whenever a status number is assigned, the number and name appear on the Band list. The list is posted in a conspicuous location, as required by the Indian Act...In a small Band, the birth identity of the newly registered member could already be known or easily traced" (McGillivray, 1985:439).

The reason that Indian Affairs does not notify the children of their rights as status Indians is because Indian Affairs believes that the adoption by non-status parents meets the obligations of the Department. The adopted Indian child does not give up all her/his status rights or treaty benefits upon adoption. McGillivray argues that because Indian Affairs does not inform the child and parents of the child's rights and status, that Indian Affairs is in breach of its mandate. She says,

"DIAND does not ensure that the adopted child's treaty rights are protected or lawful obligations met. This inac-

tion may result in involuntary enfranchisement. The child who is unaware that he has status cannot apply for status recognition, and is effectively enfranchised without choice and without receiving the financial settlement made upon enfranchisement" (McGillivray, 1985:447).

There is a way that non-status adoptive parents may get the information that they need to enable their child to be aware of its status and rights. McGillivray says,

"Adoptive parents may apply to the Registrar on behalf of the child, giving all information they have about the adoption, including birth name and date. The Registrar will write confirming the child's Indian status and confirm the child's Band membership. The letter accesses all financial benefits and some educational benefits, including post-secondary education assistance. The letter will not access medical benefits as only a status number accesses the Indian health card" (McGillivray, 1985:463).

A booklet entitled Adoption and the Indian Child was produced in 1980 by Indian Affairs for the use of adoptive parents who are contemplating adopting an Indian child. While it does present some information on definitions of status and non-status Indians and the rights of status Indians, it contains a great many errors. It does not provide enough information for adoptive parents who have adopted an Indian child and who wish to provide that child with the information s/he needs to have some kind of understanding of her/his heritage.

The model of child welfare that is now in place is not working for the children. The power to control the child welfare decisions for Seabird Island Band should be returned to the people of Seabird Island. "Custom" adoption, used by the Seabird Island Band prior to the imposed child welfare model currently in practice offers an alternative. The next chapter of this thesis offers an analysis of "custom" adoption.

Chapter 7

Analysis of the Adoption Experiences: "Custom" Adoption

This chapter presents an analysis of Seabird Island "custom" adoption. The analysis begins with a definition of "custom" adoption and its functions, followed by a discussion of issues relating to "custom" adoption, such as a child-centred community, validation of "custom" adoption, the legalization of custom adoption, and cross-cultural examples of custom adoption. This chapter ends with a discussion of the advantages of "custom" adoption.

7.1 Seabird Island Band's Definition of "Custom" Adoption

Seabird Island people define "custom" adoption as the process or action of caring for a child or children whose parents are unable to care for them. This care may be of short or long temporary duration, after which the child or children return to the parent. It differs from child-minding or babysitting in that the parent asks the adoptive parent to take full responsibility for the child or children and make all parental decisions. "Custom" adoption is also the permanent care of a child or children when the parent can no longer care for them. The grandparents are usually the care givers of the grandchildren in "custom" adoption. This care is not related to any child welfare interference on the reserve by the Ministry of Social Services in British Columbia. Because there are few grandparents who can

give this care now, uncles and aunts or close family friends also act as care givers in the "custom" adoption process. It is also the experience of Seabird Island people, that a child may move from extended relative to extended relative for "custom" adoption care.

Band members complete "custom" adoption through verbal agreements. There is no use of the judicial system and no paper is used to record the exchange. The one exception to this was the "custom" adoption of Randy Smith whose father gave written authorization for his adoption. This adoption occurred when First Nations people became concerned about validating "custom" adoption so they would not get into trouble with the Indian Affairs Department; Randy Smith's birth father thought that the paper he signed would be legal enough for the Department. There is no exchange of money or gifts. The child knows her/his birth parents and often calls them by their first name. Knowledge of the adoption is public on the reserve. Adoption is not a secret process with closed files and no access to genealogical information. This openness is necessary because it allows the band members to know the genealogy of each member. Because of marriage rules and incest taboos, adoption secrecy cannot be maintained. "Custom" adopted children may freely visit their birth family. Children who have been "custom" adopted refer to their adoptive parents as 'mom' and 'dad' and use the terms 'sister, brother, aunt, uncle, cousin', and 'grandparents' to refer to their adoptive extended family. Band members substitute the stronger relationships and kinship terminology of father and

mother for the extended relationships of grandparent, uncle, or aunt, and cousins become siblings. The birth parents do not interfere with the upbringing of the child because the community recognizes the adoptive parents' role. In "custom" adoption, the child takes on the family name of the adoptive parents and has full inheritance rights and obligations as their adopted child. The child may be given an Indian name at a name-giving ceremony; "custom" adoption does not preclude this honour. As well, "custom" adopted people may receive dances, masks, and property. Both children and adults may be "custom" adopted by band members. "Custom" adoptees retain their status within the band; they remain in the same class that they were in prior to the adoption. Retention of class status occurs because adoptive parents only adopt children within their class. Though children may be adopted by non-family members, it is more typical that a family member would adopt them; the term 'family' may refer to fifth to eighth cousins. Seabird Island people practised "custom" adoption before contact and it is still practised to-day.

7.2 Function of "Custom" Adoption

"Custom" adoption allows the children to learn from other family members. "Custom" adoption creates alliances between these family members and shares the responsibility of bringing the children up; it also functions as a solution for dealing with families in crisis. "Custom" adoption provides the grandparents with the companionship of a child and the child, when old enough, helps the grandparent with daily work. The grandparents play a socializing role in the band. The band members view the children

as a resource of the band and "custom" adoption is a way of sharing resources which strengthens kinship ties. Seabird Island "custom" adoption also allows band members to pass on inheritances. Today, "custom" adoption allows the children of the band to remain on the reserve without the Ministry of Social Services intervening.

7.3 Who Are the 'Real' Parents?

Seabird Island people place a high value on the parenting skills of band members. In Euro-Canadian adoption, the child is seen to have a 'real' parent and an adoptive parent; the use of the terms 'natural parent' or 'real parent' indicates that the adoptive parent is unnatural. On Seabird Island, the people recognize the adoptive parent as the parent, perceiving it to be equal to and not less than the natural parent of the child. The Seabird Island people share the role of parent. This means that one person cannot be defined as a more 'real' parent than another.

7.4 A Child-Centred Band

All informants indicated that the children of the band were of special importance. One said that the children were the power and strength of the band. Seabird Island people see their future connected to the well-being of the children now.

The issue of methods of child rearing is one criterion that social workers use to apprehend children from the reserve. Social workers have apprehended children because in the workers'

view, they were not being properly cared for. Informants suggested that social workers from the Ministry of Social Services did not understand that the Seabird Island people had a different approach to child rearing than the approach used by Euro-Canadians. Patrick Johnston, referring to First Nations people in general, notes some of those differences.

"A pacifistic approach to child rearing meant that Native families adopted other means of socializing and disciplining their children. It was believed that children learned by imitation, so the concept of the adult-as-role-model was fundamentally important. The development of positive and appropriate behaviour in children was fostered by public opinion and the use of community approval or disapproval. Humour and teasing were employed as a means of discipline in both Indian and Inuit society" (Johnston, 1983:68).

Many informants stated that Seabird Island was a child-centred community. By this they mean that it is a community where seeing to the needs of the child are paramount to the survival of the band. Seabird Island people place a much value on their relationships with other people in the Seabird community. Their methods of child discipline are people oriented rather than related to objects such as money or careers.

Because Seabird Island is a child-centred community, the band members find the negative adoption and foster care experiences of band members incomprehensible. One informant noted,

"(The participation of the Ministry in child welfare) changes a lot. Where it used to be child-centred, it is care-giver centred. The needs of the child used to be the focal point. Like the child needed you. Nowadays, its.. the care giver needs this child so she can get money to do this and this...It's changed the whole focus of the way it was."

Informants do not recognize care decisions made for them as in the best interest of the child or band. The band wishes to

return to "custom" adoption so that the community can make decisions for the children. They see this process as preferable to the present process where a social worker, the courts, and the parent decide what will happen.

7.5 Validation by Closed Legal Adoption

Because governments have not legalized "custom" adoption, those band members who have used this adoption process usually formalized the adoption by completing a closed legal adoption. Of the six cases of closed legal adoption documented, three cases were initially "custom" adoptions that band members validated by closed legal adoption. These "custom" adoptions could not be legalized any other way. Had the government legalized "custom" adoption at the time, the parents would not have gone through the closed adoption process.

There are several reasons why parents choose closed legal adoption. For the parents of young children, "custom" adoption at the present time may leave the children and family unprotected, whereas the closed legal adoption does not. Band members suggested that they worried that the Ministry of Social Services could come in at any time and take away their children unless the parents legalized the process.

For older children or adults, band members followed "custom" adoption with closed legal adoption to protect the adopted child's status within the band or to protect the child's inheritance, usually property on the reserve. The Bob White

closed legal adoption is an example of this strategy.

Another reason families have decided to go through closed legal adoption is that after having a child in their family for a few years through "custom" adoption, they discover that this process has not been legalized in Canada and they feel they have to legalize it. Informants suggested that without the validation of the "custom" adoption, they might be cut off from assistance from Indian affairs or other government agencies. Leo Howard said,

"Now, for custom adoption, they usually sign papers, eh. Get custody, family allowance, transfers, and some of them are now adopting them legally."

One "custom" adoption informant was upset to find that, though he had used his adoptive family name for sixty-five years, the federal government did not recognize it as his real name. His adoptive parents had not validated his "custom" adoption by a legal adoption, therefore as far as the government was concerned, he was not adopted. This is one problem with "custom" adoption; since the legal system refuses to accept "custom" adoption as a legal process, the children and adoptive parents will be forced to either validate the adoption by going through another adoption process or remain in an illegal relationship. For First Nations people, this is untenable. It makes no sense to redo the adoption when according to their practices, the child is legally adopted.

7.6 Legalized Custom Adoption

The legality of "custom" adoption is a grey area in Canadian law.

Both Inuit and Indian matters fall under the Indian and Northern Affairs Canada jurisdiction, yet there is one custom adoption law for some Indians and all Inuit and no custom adoption law for most Indians. This situation could be called discrimination because aboriginal people living in the Northwest Territories, Quebec, and parts of Manitoba may custom adopt legally, while aboriginal people in other parts of Canada may not. In Canada, most of the custom adoption cases that have reached the courts have not been successful for First Nations people (see Carasco, 1986:111-138, for legal discussion of cases). There are several factors involved in these decisions.

To begin, the court system in Canada is based on the Euro-Canadian notion of the importance of the individual. In adoption cases, the decision is based on what is in the best interests of the child as an individual. Therefore, the court does not consider any legal argument with regards to the needs of a race, culture, or community. When an Indian band claims that the child must be kept within the band for the survival of the band, it is arguing against the primacy of the individual. To win such an adoption case, the band must prove that it is in the best interests of the child to remain on the reserve.

Another factor is the assumption in inter-racial adoption court cases, that we are moving towards a pluralistic society through inter-racial marriage and adoption. This kind of assumption implies that concerns over the ethnicity of children in inter-racial adoptions is of inconsequential importance. This is a

continuation of the idea of assimilation that Indians call attempted genocide. A review of custom adoption cases heard in Canada indicates that the court has not considered ethnicity a key factor in making decisions. Because there are few studies of adult adoptees who have experienced trans-racial adoption, there are few data to assess in order that one might determine the consequences that Indians have experienced and called genocide. The courts have decided that after a child has been with an adoptive parent for a period, it is the loving relationship that solidifies the union; the courts have not seen loss of ethnicity as a contributing factor to failed adoption or social problems once the child moves into the teenage years and beyond. Indian bands which have tried to have children custom adopted have seen the courts give the children to non-native foster homes or adoption homes because ethnicity was not an issue for the courts. Carasco notes that a report to a government minister indicated that the placement of Indian children in non-native homes did not improve the well-being of the child. Instead, Indian adoptees were unhappy, rebellious, and exhibited anti-social behaviour. Carasco notes,

"It is `obvious that a major reason...is that the native child is a product of an ancient, deeply-rooted North American culture, which is in almost every respect significantly at variance with the present Euro-Canadian cultural patterning" (Carasco, 1986:115).

I suggest that by not recognizing the consequences of trans-racial adoption, the courts have contributed to the destruction of the Indian culture.

In the 1960's, custom adoption was legalized in the Northwest

Territories for both Indian and Inuit people. In the Re Katie's Adoption Petition (1961), the court recognized that the adoption laws of the time were not working for the Inuit. In the judgement, the judge indicated that the Inuit should be allowed to retain those practices that have worked for them until they are prepared to accept a change to Euro-Canadian practices. The Judge further stated,

"In particular, although there may be some strange features in Eskimo adoption custom which the experts cannot understand or appreciate, it is good and has stood the test of many centuries and these people should not be forced to abandon it and it should be recognized by the court" (Justice Sissons in Morrow, 1984:246).

Now, an Inuit custom adoption is legal after a simple affidavit is given to the Social Services Department (Johnston, 1983:96). The court does not approve or disapprove the custom adoption, but merely certifies that the adoption has taken place in accordance with Inuit practices.

"The court order becomes a useful document for estate purposes, as well as for regularizing birth certificates and mothers' allowances. Because it is declaratory only, of course, it can be given at any time after the event, even after a person reaches her majority" (Morrow, 1984:249).

The province of Quebec also recognizes aboriginal custom adoption as legal. Currently in Canada, there have been precedent-setting cases but custom adoption as a universal legal practice has not occurred.

In British Columbia, the courts have interpreted adoption laws strictly regarding the definition of 'parent'. In the "Mitchell" decision (1984), where an adoptive parent of a custom adopted child brought action under the Family Compensation Act, the court

rejected the case because

"...in all cases dealing with customary adoptions, the adoptions had been validated. Without validation, the adoption did not confer legal rights or obligations on the adopted child or the adopting parents. The court held 'reluctantly' that a 'parent' of a child who is adopted by custom, but whose adoption has not been validated under a statute or ordinance, does not have the capacity to sue under the Family Compensation Act. The 'Mitchell' decision placed a different interpretation on the customary adoption cases from the one generally understood. According to that decision, adoption by custom is not in fact adoption as understood by the Adoption Act. The term is meaningless then because unless a custom adoption is validated, there is no adoption and no change of status" (Carasco, 1986:130).

Yet, the British Columbia Royal Commission on Family and Children's Law, completed in 1975, recommended that the government legalize custom adoption in B.C.

Recently there has been some movement towards recognizing the need for native adoptees to have contact with the native community, but governments have not translated this recognition into legalizing custom adoption across Canada. The courts have discussed the definition of custom adoption and the role of the band in custom adoption (see Carasco, 1986:127 re Natural Parents vs. Superintendent of Child Welfare, 1975). There appears to be enough precedence across Canada to justify legalizing "custom" adoption.

In 1985, the province of Ontario passed the Child and Family Services Act, which recognizes that,

"wherever possible, services to children and their families should be provided in a manner that respects cultural, religious and regional differences...(and) that Indian and native people should be entitled to provide, wherever possible, their own child and family services, that all services to Indian and native children and families should be pro-

vided in a manner that recognizes their culture, heritage and traditions and the concept of the extended family" (Carasco, 1986:133).

The passage of this Act means that preserving the child's cultural identity is now an important part of the considerations that the court must make in deciding what is best for the child. However, there is still no provision in this new act to make custom adoption legal. It is likely that the courts will need a test case to make custom adoption legal in Ontario. It appears that to deny custom adoption in such a case would be an action counter to the intention of the Act. (Carasco, 1986:111-138).

One informant from Seabird Island suggested that when an adoptive home is unavailable, that the band should make a tribal adoption so that the child can remain on the reserve. This would be a "custom" adoption where the child would stay with several band members over a period of time. Other Indian bands attempted this kind of custom adoption by going through the court system. The result was that the court did not recognize the band as a parent; the court was only willing to place the child with

"...a couple who were willing and able to meet the society's standard as to housing, maturity and parenting capacity" (Carasco, 1986:127).

The court does not consider the Indian band a legal entity so the it could therefore not apply for guardianship.

7.7 Comparison to Other Cultures

The kinship process of adoption is universal and though different in some ways, other cultures use adoption processes that are very similar to "custom" adoption as discussed here.

Though ethnographers of the various groups of Inuit people define slight individual differences of custom adoption, both Inuit and Indian custom adoption practices may be considered similar in purpose and practice (See Baliksi, 1970:108,122; Guemple, 1979:34,33,90; Burch, 1975:53,129).

In Australia, the Aboriginal communities have experienced similar child welfare problems to those of the First Nations people in Canada and, as in Canada, governments have imposed the adoption process on the Aboriginal people without consideration for Aboriginal child welfare processes (Picton, 1986:159; Sommerlad, 1977:170). Serial foster care, where foster parents changed the child's name several times without adequate record keeping, meant that the child became 'lost' and return to the child's birth parent became impossible. Aboriginal people have expressed their concerns about the use of white standards for foster and adoptive parents, loss of ethnic identity, and the paucity of Aboriginal care givers (Picton, 1986:158,159; Sommerlad, 1977:170). As well, social agencies eliminate many Aboriginal people from consideration as care givers because social agencies require parents to be legally married; Aboriginal practice has been to live in permanent de facto relationships that the courts do not sanction. (Sommerlad, 1977:171). As in the experience of First Nations people, in Australia, a majority of the people needing

"...legal aid have a history of institutionalization, repeated fosterings or adoption by white families" (Sommerlad, 1977:168).

Sommerlad notes that

"the concept...that children belong to a collective unit

rather than to their parents is...derived from traditional aboriginal social organization where the children were cared for by the combined efforts of a number of relatives, both male and female... In their methods of child-rearing aborigines emphasize undemanding security and the physical demonstration of affection rather than discipline, training and material comfort... In their view, if a child is well loved, it is well cared for, and parents cannot justly be criticised for their poverty, for they do not consciously deprive their offspring of a rightful due of material care" (Sommerlad, 1977:171,172).

The Australia Aborigines fear cultural genocide as well. This stems from their concern that their fight for survival as a distinct culture will lose the support of children who have been adopted by white families (Sommerlad, 1977:174). In 1976, an Australian adoption conference recommended that Aboriginal people set up their child welfare agencies. Aboriginal child welfare agencies have now been opened in the states of New South Wales and Victoria (Picton, 1986:161; Sommerlad, 1977:175). The purpose of these agencies is to increase the number of placements of Aboriginal children in Aboriginal families. The 1986 Australian Law Commission did not recommend the institutionalization of custom adoption, but did give support to the Aboriginal child welfare agencies (Chisholm, 1987:71; Commission Report, 1992:128).

In West Africa, Goody documents a kinship pattern that she refers to as kinship-fosterage that the Gonya practice. (Goody, 1982:38). Between the ages of five and eight a son leaves his birth parents and lives with his foster parents until he marries. The foster parent is either the mother's brother or the father's father or elder brother. A daughter may be taken by the father's sister; a second daughter is given to the wife's mother. In a

comparison of Gonya children, Goody found that many fostered children had come from homes where death or divorce had broken the parent's marriage (Goody, 1982:42). Kinship fosterage serves the purpose of providing training, companionship, and service to foster families as well as maintaining kinship ties (Goody, 1982:46).

Murdock provides a brief description of Javanese adoption. Adoption there is confined to people who have no biological children of their own. Adoptive parents complete no legal process except for the registration of the child with the head man. The child has the same rights 'legally, socially, and emotionally' as a biological child and retains equal rights of inheritance (Murdock, 1960:103).

Scheffler describes an adoption process in Choiseul Island that is also very much like the Seabird Island "custom" adoption. When parents die, children there are adopted; they do not usually change their descent group affiliation as other family members adopt them.

"If someone other than his immediate kin adopts a child and effectively assumes the role of 'parent' then the child purportedly acquires secondary membership in the adoptor's (sic) descent group. He does not thereby lose the right of membership in any other group to which he is related consanguineally" (Scheffler, 1965:102).

Firth describes adoption practices in Polynesia that are similar to "custom" adoption. The children have full rights, accept new names, are adopted by family members, have contact with their

birth family, and are considered to belong to the group rather than just to the nuclear family (Firth, 1936:204-205, 588-595). He defines the functions of these adoption practices as a means to ensure a male heir gets his inheritance, add members to the family, pay obligations to a spirit, ensure social unification, acquire resources, retain property within the family, and to provide companionship (Ibid.). As well, in the Trobriand Islands (Weiner, 1988:37) and in Borneo (Miller, 1928:60), adoption practice is based on similar criteria to those of Seabird Island "custom" adoption practices.

7.8 The Advantages of "Custom" Adoption

"Custom" adoption allows the child to retain her/his cultural heritage. The child is not removed from the family, the values and customs that the child understands are maintained, and no new system of understanding is imposed on the child. Kinship ties are preserved and the community supports the child as s/he matures. As well, a child who is "custom" adopted retains the rights of a status Indian on the reserve and can become knowledgeable about those rights and the obligations of a band member. Besides the benefits to the child, "custom" adoption allows the extended family to assume its role as care givers. This is particularly important to the grandparents. Some informants expressed their concern for the welfare of the grandparents; band members referred to them as 'depressed' because they had lost some of the respect reserved for Elders. This may be due in part to the fact that they have not played an active role in

teaching the children and in providing care for grandchildren. A return to more active use of the "custom" adoption process as opposed to the social agency adoption processes would return an important role to the grand-parents. "Custom" adoption also provides the children with the contact with their birth family and it allows the band members 'to know their relatives'. In "custom" adoption, the birth parents, adoptive parents, and the adoptee do not have to suffer from the fears of the unknown, such as not knowing where they came from, why they were put up for adoption, and how they are now. The children and adults can get on with the business of developing strong loving relationships because they do not have to fantasize about what 'really' happened. They have their birthright and it is a continuous process.

Chapter 8

Conclusion

8.1 Summary of Results of Field Work

This thesis answers the following questions: What are the adoption experiences of the people of Seabird Island? What do these experiences mean to them and how can they change adoption to suit their community?

I conducted this applied anthropology project using a negotiated research model. The purpose of this model is to work with a community to provide research that they require while satisfying the requirements of academic research. Seabird Island Band required the documentation of the adoption experiences of the band members and the definition of "custom" adoption. The twenty in-depth interviews provide a representative sample of band adoption experience.

I have documented the adoption experiences of informants who recounted four types of adoption experience: foster care, closed legal adoption, open adoption, and "custom" adoption. Of the four kinds of experiences, the open adoption process is atypical. The open adoption is the result of a pilot project involving a non-native adoptive family and a Seabird Island child who is at risk. In this adoption, the key concern is the ability of both the band and the adoptive parents to maintain the child's

identity and ethnicity. Open adoption as defined for the pilot project provides an alternate care process when a child is at risk on the reserve.

The analysis of these adoption experiences focuses on three areas of concern of the band members: ethnic identity, power and the child welfare system, and a definition and discussion of "custom" adoption. The imposition of Euro-Canadian methods of child welfare has challenged the Seabird Island band's very survival. Band members with Indian values that give importance to family, a child-centred culture, the role of Elders and respect, struggle to survive against the pressure of the dominant society to conform to Euro-Canadian values. I have documented the effects of an imposed system of child welfare that has failed the children and their families. Band members question the criteria used to both apprehend and house the children. Loss of identity, power, and status are the results of this failed system.

I have documented and described Seabird Island "custom" adoption. Band members, fortunate to be "custom" adopted, retain their Indian identity, ethnicity, and status. They suffer less psychological trauma because they maintain contact with their birth family, adoption family, and the band. "Custom" adoption allows extended family members to retain their roles as care givers. "Custom" adoption is not legal in British Columbia, therefore, some band members have validated it with the closed legal adoption process. The right to "custom" adopt means the right to survive as Indian people.

8.2 Ethnographic Findings

In this thesis I make several contributions to the understanding of adoption processes, kinship, and the Seabird Island people.

1. For the Seabird Island people, the term "custom" adoption is inclusive, that is, the process incorporates several child care responsibilities over both short and long periods of time. This care may be of short or long temporary duration, after which the child or children return to the parent or it may be permanent care. It differs from child-minding or babysitting in that the parent asks the adoptive parent to take full responsibility for the child or children and make all parental decisions. In the Euro-Canadian culture, the term 'adoption' is exclusive, that is, it is confined to permanent care only.

2. The Seabird Island people do not construct a lineal structure to describe their kin relations and genealogies. They refer to their kin structure as a webbed circle that overlaps and interconnects with other webs of extended families. The immediate family (mother, father, children, grandparents, uncles, and aunts) is at the centre of the web rather than the individual (ego).

3. The Seabird Island people refer to relatives far removed as 'friends'.

4. In adoption research, there are few studies that document the feelings and experience of the adult adoptee. In this thesis, I

have contributed to the knowledge about the inner world of the Seabird Island adult adoptees' experiences and what those experiences have meant to them.

5. I suggest in this thesis that the acts of apprehension and adoption do not form a single childhood trauma that may be healed by time. Rather, these acts impinge on the ongoing life of the native child and the results of the trauma may continue to erupt during its adult life.

6. In the view of Seabird Island people, the child belongs to the band and s/he is the responsibility of band members; s/he is a band resource. In custody cases, the court bases its decisions on defining the psychological parent. There are few longitudinal adoption studies and no longitudinal adoption studies that involve minorities. There is no research that provides proof that one parent is better than more than one parent (Wallerstein, 1991:232). For this reason alone, the courts should be open to accepting other notions of family not based on white middle-class criteria. "Custom" adoption on Seabird Island provides a group of parents who have the best interests of the child at heart. When a child belongs to the band, the band should be able to adopt it. The "custom" adoption model may be considered as legitimate for custody court cases.

7. In this thesis I have described "custom" adoption as it is practised by the Seabird Island people.

8.3 Concerns for the Future

a) Child Welfare Problems for the Band

Yvonne Duncan notes that one problem she faced when she and her siblings went to her uncle's home to live, was the large size of his family and the small size of his house. As much as they were welcome there, there just was not enough room for them to stay. There are 165 children up to the age of seventeen on Seabird Island. This is forty-three percent of the population. With large families and standard single family housing for nuclear families, there is little room for extra children who need care. This is one problem that needs to be planned for should the band take over child welfare responsibilities.

When a band works very hard to bring a child back to the reserve and arranges for foster care or adoption, it is not likely that they worry about what will happen if the parent leaves the reserve. One such parent does worry about this scenario. Terry Hardy asks,

"What happens if I decide to leave? Am I going to lose her?"

This is a valid question and it needs to be addressed in the band policies regarding child welfare. Is it in the best interests of the child to take the child away from the parent if the parent is moving to another reserve?

Another issue that needs to be faced by prospective adoptive or foster care parents is that of the effect that adoptees or foster

children have on the family already at home. Terry Hardy notes,

"It's hard to foster. You're exposing your own kids to hard kids and your kids don't understand why these kids use bad language and know more than they should. You protect your kids from this and then they got exposed through foster kids."

Should the band take over all the child welfare matters that are now the Ministry's responsibility, the issue of the children at risk will be a problem. A solution must be found that will ensure the safety of the child. This may mean that the child will be adopted off the reserve, perhaps through open adoption. The problem is that the reserve is a small community where it may be difficult to find a home far enough away from the birth home to ensure that the child is in a risk-free home. Yvonne Duncan's experience in trying to have custody of her siblings is proof of this problem. Perhaps the solution will be to look for a neighbouring reserve where the child has relatives. The Seabird Island people refer to their kinship connections as a webbed circle that overlaps and interconnects with the circles of other families over a large geographic area that extends far beyond the boundaries of the reserve. In this structure the immediate family (mother, father, children, grandparents, uncles, aunts) is at the centre of the circle, not the individual or ego (see Suttles, 1987b, 1987c, for a discussion on communities and kinship ties; see Miller, 1989, for a discussion of networks). The Ministry has often treated the bands as separate entities whereas the bands are connected to each other by a web of kinship ties.

Several informants expressed concern that the band could not easily take over their child welfare responsibilities because there is a paucity of acceptable homes. Other band members said the opposite; they indicated that there are lots of families that would be willing to take in children who needed care. It appears that the kind of criteria used by the band to determine safe, loving homes is at the crux of this problem. If the band used the criteria used by the Ministry of Social Services, there would likely be a shortage. This is because age and financial restrictions eliminate many band members from caring for children. However, if the band uses their criteria based on Seabird Island values, there are likely to be enough homes for the children in need of care. Several informants suggested that the number of homes available, would depend on the level of participation of the Ministry. The band members do not wish to go through a home study process.

b) Rejection, a Universal Concern

Adoptive parents have a universal concern, well-documented in the social work literature. They worry about what will happen when their adopted child finds out they are adopted. Even those parents who have very liberal views of adoption express concern. Their prime concern is the rejection of the adoptive family by the adoptee. Experience has shown that if parents are honest with their adopted children from the beginning and if they give the children a loving upbringing, the children will remain part of their family forever. This does not mean that the child will not express interest in searching for her/his birth parents or

actively search for them. The child is entitled to her/his birth right, that is the information about the birth parents. This concern crosses cultural barriers.

On Seabird Island, informants who had lost children to apprehension off the reserve, expressed concern about the return of a child. They were afraid s/he would reject the Indian values and Indian heritage. Part of that rejection may entail a misunderstanding of the circumstances of the apprehension. On the other hand, non-native mothers who had adopted or fostered Seabird Island children worried that the child would return to the band and reject their adoptive family. Nora Tom in discussing her son's foster mother, notes,

"She's a very nice woman, but she's stingy of him. She's scared to lose him. That's what she's afraid of... That's the first thing she said to me when I met her. 'Don't take him away. Don't take him away. He's my son. He's my son.' I said, 'He's our son.'"

Sandy Parker has thought about what will happen if Scott decides to leave his adoptive family and return to the reserve. She says,

"Quite often if I'm angry with Scott, or disciplining him, that's when I think, is he going to hold this against me some day?... (Is he) just going to go forget it, you know. You're not my real mom. You don't love me and you used to swat me. Yeah, I definitely have thoughts and wonder what his decision will be when he's older."

It is universal for adoptive mothers to be worried about the rejection of an adopted child; this is also true for mothers and their biological children.

c) Is Open Adoption a Solution?

One argument used by proponents of closed legal adoption is that by keeping the detail of the adoption secret, you do not have to burden the adopted child with potential conflict. There is a belief that the knowledge about having two mothers is too much to handle for the adopted child. In open adoption, the child has this information from the very beginning.

Sandy is dealing with a child who has survived many failed foster home placements. Sandy Parker has had much work to do to make Scott understand that he is not going to move any more. Scott is a small child who can't remember how many foster homes he's been in because there were so many. She is attempting to help Scott deal with this history by having him make scrap books about his family. She has requested that the social agency help her by contacting former foster parents for pictures and remembrances of his time with them. She had arranged for him to make short visits to these foster homes so that he can remember who the people are. Part of this work is to remind Scott that the family he is with now, is different; he will not have to leave in six months. Sandy has his Life Book as up to date as possible.

Sandy feels a responsibility for teaching Scott the ways of the Sto'lo people. Therefore, she has made small dolls that she and Scott can role model so that he can understand the different kinds of family he has. With the help of the band and a social worker, she has set up a contact person in the band, who will help to teach Scott about his culture. If "custom" adoption for

children at risk had been an option, Scott would be on the reserve with his younger sister. But since it is not an option, yet, this open adoption pilot project is the best alternative. There are few parents who are willing to put in such an effort into working with one child when they have to take care of the demands of family. Scott is fortunate to have found new parents who have this energy and dedication. Scott's birth mother should know that he is happy now.

8.4 Recommendations to the Seabird Island Band Council

In applied anthropological research, where the researcher works for an agency or culture, it is important to make recommendations based on the research so that the agency or culture can use the research effectively. With that in mind, I make the following recommendations to the Seabird Island Chief and Council. I recognize that some recommendations will require major changes in the child welfare services that now exist. The band has recognized this need for change; I hope this research will assist them in the tasks they undertake to improve their community.

As indicated in the history of adoption in Canada, several agencies have been formed to return child welfare services to Indian bands, using a variety of models. The Awasis Agency of Northern Manitoba (Awasis) has developed a comprehensive child welfare service, fully funded by both federal and provincial governments (Damm, 1992:55). Provincial legislation provides for this new approach to child welfare that is based on the beliefs, customs, and values of the Elders in each northern Manitoba band.

Awasis does not include custom adoption as named in their frame of reference, but two defined adoption types, that is 'spouse or grandparent adoption' and 'extended family adoption' (Damm, 1992:59), are equivalent to the "custom" adoption model as practised by Seabird Island people. To date, in British Columbia, the Ministry of Social Services has entered into agreements for the development of First Nations family and child services with four groups: the Nuw-Chah-Nulth Tribal Council, the Macleod Lake Band, the Carrier-Sekani Tribal Council, and the Spallumcheen Band (Ministry of Social Services, 1991:7). These people have set a precedent in this province and Seabird Island band has several models from which to choose. I recommend that the Seabird Island Band strive for the application of one of these models.

I recommend that the Seabird Island people ask the Ministry of Social Services to work out a joint plan for transfer of child welfare responsibility to the Band Council. To aid this process, I propose the following subsidiary recommendations:

1. That until the Band Council assumes social welfare administration and operation, that the chief and council take a more active role with the Ministry in telling children from the reserve already under care where they come from, that they have rights, obligations, status, and property, and that they are welcome to return to the reserve when they are released from the supervision of the Ministry of Social Services.

2. That the Band Council ensure that NO sibling group is separated upon apprehension unless it is a member of that group that is the cause of the apprehension order.

"Custom" adoption offers social workers the option of keeping the sibling group together. "Custom" adoption maintains the structure of the family. The family is more broadly defined, so there is greater support at the community level for the care of a group of children. The children stay with family members, on the reserve, so they never have to break the bonds between siblings. Should a sibling group be divided among a number of families, they are still connected and in contact with each other.

3. That the Band Council ask the province of British Columbia to institute custom adoption by requiring the Band Council to present an affidavit confirming the "custom" adoption to the provincial court office (this being similar to the requirements of the Northwest Territories).

4. That the Band Council contact and request Schools of Social Work to include the First Nations "custom" adoption models in their curriculum, that they encourage and support the hiring of aboriginal faculty members, that social workers in the field have training in aboriginal child welfare issues, and that the social workers begin to enable First Nations people to assume responsibility for their child welfare.

5. that the Band Council encourage some band members to complete Master of Social Work credentials so that when the band assumes child welfare responsibilities, the band social worker will have equality with other social workers working for the Ministry.

6. that the Band Council provide appropriate training for band members in child welfare matters prior to the band assuming child welfare responsibilities. To make self-determination viable, band members will need the skills necessary to deal with the dominant society and manage band interests.

7. that the Band Council ask the Ministry of Social Services to provide a subsidy for parents who wish to foster or adopt but who cannot because of costs.

Subsidization for adoptive parents would allow more parents to provide care. It would open the recruitment of adoptive parents to include those who are on a limited income; for First Nations children, it would create more homes on the reserve and provide the special medical and dental care that some children need.

Kimelman notes that the cost of placing one child in a group home is greater than the same cost to have an experienced child care worker provide full time service to one family and to pay for the expertise of other professionals that the

family might need, such as psychiatrists, homemakers or nutritionalists (Kimelman, 1985:300). He also suggests that the cost of maintaining a child in foster care is thirty-seven percent more expensive than paying subsidization for adoption (Ibid., 1985:249). If a solution makes human, cultural, and economic sense, it seems appropriate to institute it.

8. that the Band Council lobby for the resources to manage child welfare and that any agreement of transfer of funds cover quality care services.

8.5 Final Observations

Whether the Ministry of Social Services or the Band Council is responsible for child welfare in the future, a list of criteria for Indian adoptive and foster homes is needed. Hopefully, the new criteria will incorporate the social, cultural, and spiritual values of the band, rather than those of the dominant society. As well, the financial criterion must be adjusted to represent the material values of the band and the reality of band economics.

With any form of adoption process, social agencies involved should be more accountable and should be in continual contact over the period of the child's time with the adoptive family. Because social agencies have had little contact with adoptive parents after finalization of the adoption, social agencies know very little about what happens in an adoption as the child

matures. This contact should not be in response to problems but should be viewed as preventive work to ensure that failed care does not result.

When child welfare decisions are made for the members of Seabird Island Band, it is important for social workers, lawyers, and the courts to remember that the Seabird Island community offers its own helping network and support for its members. By using this network, the professionals involved in child welfare matters may be assisted to show sensitivity towards the Indian values and culture. There is more than one way, that is the Euro-Canadian model, to take care of children. When professionals recognize this, less anxiety and anger will emanate from band members. Rural communities pride themselves on their ability to survive without the special programs or resources available in urban areas. A new approach to child welfare concerns using self-help and community networks will ensure that what is best for the child actually happens.

Social workers need to show respect for children by finding out how they feel about a placement and discussing impending moves. Some older children have had more life experience than many adults. Social agencies should give these children more control over decisions social workers make for their care. The child's concerns about placements, supervision, and additional moves need to be dealt with. If the primary concern is to do what is best for the child, then decisions that put a child in serial placements need to be reviewed. Temporary homes should only be used

at the time of the initial apprehension. More care needs to be taken to find one home for an apprehended child. Serial placement in both foster care and adoption means a failed process. It fails the child and it fails the community. Through "custom" adoption, failed serial placements would be limited, if not eliminated.

The empowerment of the Seabird Island people can lead to self-government. The band will then have the means of ensuring that the fundamental value of cultural identity can be maintained. The success of taking over child welfare services and supporting custom adoption will depend on how well Seabird Island people respond to the challenge of taking care of their children.

"It is a bitter irony that a system that is designed to protect children and support families has served to weaken Native family life inestimably. And, in so doing, because the family had traditionally been the primary social unit in Native communities, it has also damaged a distinct way of life" (Johnston, 1983:123).

Adoption is an imperfect social invention that can be changed in response to the needs of the people. Policies are changed through the socialization of law, that is, changes brought about in response to new social theory and social science research (Hegar, 1983:431).

"Because laws usually embody acceptable compromises reached by the majority, they may not always reflect the most enlightened thinking of the community on a given issue. And the more fundamental the issues involved, the more deeply steeped in tradition and mores, the slower will needed changes come" (Schapiro, 1956:12).

The adoption processes that are in place in British Columbia today have failed the children of this province. The statistics

and qualitative data presented here and in many studies by others, completed over the past twenty years, provide the Ministry of Social Services with enough information to make immediate and progressive changes to the adoption and foster care policies. The changes must reflect what is best for the children, not the birth parents, the adoptive parents, government agencies or the politicians.

A solution to the child welfare problems facing First Nations children requires innovation and an open mind; especially, the problems call for an open mind that can consider solutions that do not come from the Euro-Canadian culture.

"Western individualism and communism both oppose the rights of nations-within-nations. Individualists focus only on the interests of the individual. Communists believe an ethnic group's rights should be subsumed in the larger class struggle. Canada...can work on a potentially exciting middle ground that blends individual and collective rights" (Terry Anderson in Todd, 1991:D13).

The implementation of the practice of open adoption and legalization of "custom" adoption at Seabird Island would be a good beginning.

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Appendices

1. Definitions

aboriginal people - people who first lived in an area; eg.
Canada: Inuit and Indians; Australia: Aborigines; New Zealand:
Maoris.

adoption - the incorporation of a person into an existing family unit, creating a socially-constructed family.

band - a small group of people who lived together during the year in one locality and who followed migratory routes for hunting and gathering. Membership was based on kin relations. Ownership of resources was held at the band level for some cultures (eg. Coast Salish). Names of bands came from the location of their winter residence or village. Currently, a band is a legal entity for the purposes of government administration. It may consist of several original bands which have been combined without regard for the rights and obligations of band members within their own bands. Membership is now determined by status, a term created by government officials to determine who is Indian and who is not. Non-status individuals may reside on the reserve, but they do not have the same rights as status band members.

Certificate of Possession - a certificate issued by the Minister of Indian Affairs stating that an Indian is in lawful possession of reserve land allotted by the Band Council and approved by the Minister of Indian Affairs. This certificate can be transferred to another band member with the permission of the Minister of Indian Affairs.

Indian - anyone who is of Indian ancestry, status or non-status.

Inuit - persons registered as having Inuit or Eskimo ancestry.

Metis - people of mixed Indian and non-native ancestry.

native - Indian or Metis

non-status - a term used by governments to denote ineligibility for registration under the Indian Act.

reserve - land set aside by the government for the sole use of status Indians of a particular band or bands. This land may be leased from the Indians by non-Indians. Members of a band live on the reserve. The title to reserve land remains with the federal government.

status - a term used by governments to denote eligibility for registration under the Indian Act.

2. Statistics: Indians Adopted by Indians and Non-Indians

Table III. NUMBER OF INDIANS ADOPTED BY:										
PROV	1961-62					1962-63				
	I	%	NI	%	TTL	I	%	NI	%	TTL
BC	3	17	15	83	18	6	25	18	75	24
ALTA	13	81	3	19	16	2	67	1	33	3
SASK	2	33	4	67	6	3	60	2	40	5
MAN	-	-	2	100	2	1	33	2	67	3
ONT	31	55	25	45	56	21	34	41	66	62
QUE	-	-	-	-	-	1	100	-	-	1
NB	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
NS	1	50	1	50	2	-	-	-	-	-
PEI	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
NWT	13	72	5	28	18	1	50	1	50	2
YT	-	-	3	100	3	-	-	1	100	1
TTL	63	52	58	48	121	35	35	66	65	101

I = Indian
 NI = Non-Indian
 TTL = Total
 % = percent of total

Source: Department of Indian Affairs
 and Northern Development,
 Facts and Figures
 1964.

Table IV. NUMBER OF INDIANS ADOPTED BY:										
PROV	1963-64					1964-65				
	I	%	NI	%	TTL	I	%	NI	%	TTL
BC	18	32	39	68	57	7	17	35	83	42
ALTA	20	74	7	26	27	15	79	4	21	19
SASK	2	100	-	-	2	2	40	3	60	5
MAN	4	100	-	-	4	1	17	5	83	6
ONT	30	41	44	59	74	17	29	41	71	58
QUE	-	-	1	100	1	-	-	-	-	-
NB	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
NS	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
PEI	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
NWT	-	-	1	100	1	1	50	1	50	2
YT	-	-	2	100	2	-	-	4	100	4
TTL	74	44	94	56	168	43	32	93	68	136

I = Indian

NI = Non-Indian

TTL = Total

% = percent of total

Source: Department of Indian Affairs
and Northern Development,
Facts and Figures
1964, 1966.

Table V. NUMBER OF INDIANS ADOPTED BY:										
PROV	1965-66					1966-67				
	I	%	NI	%	TTL	I	%	NI	%	TTL
BC	2	4	43	96	45	12	23	40	77	52
ALTA	18	90	2	10	20	7	78	2	22	9
SASK	-	-	10	100	10	3	30	7	70	10
MAN	2	100	-	-	2	1	20	4	80	5
ONT	19	24	59	76	78	59	61	37	39	96
QUE	-	-	2	100	2	1	100	-	-	1
NB	-	-	-	-	-	1	100	-	-	1
NS	-	-	-	-	-	1	100	-	-	1
PEI	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
NWT	-	-	1	100	1	2	50	2	50	4
YT	2	29	5	71	7	-	-	1	100	1
TTL	43	26	122	74	165	87	48	93	52	180

I = Indian
 NI = Non-Indian
 TTL = Total
 % = percent of total

Source: Department of Indian Affairs
 and Northern Development,
 Facts and Figures
 1967, 1970.

Table VI. NUMBER OF INDIANS ADOPTED BY:										
PROV	1967-68					1968-69				
	I	%	NI	%	TTL	I	%	NI	%	TTL
BC	14	27	37	73	51	14	18	64	82	78
ALTA	1	33	2	67	3	-	-	4	100	4
SASK	8	29	20	71	28	2	6	32	94	34
MAN	1	50	1	50	2	2	10	8	80	10
ONT	26	45	32	55	58	16	20	63	80	79
QUE	1	33	2	67	3	1	100	-	-	1
NB	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
NS	1	100	-	-	1	1	100	-	-	1
PEI	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
NWT	2	67	1	33	3	21	44	27	56	48
YT	-	-	3	100	3	-	-	3	100	3
TTL	54	36	98	64	152	57	22	201	78	258

I = Indian

NI = Non-Indian

TTL = Total

% = percent of total

Source: Department of Indian Affairs
and Northern Development,
Facts and Figures
1970, 1971.

Table VII. NUMBER OF INDIANS ADOPTED BY:										
PROV	1969-1970					1970-1971				
	I	%	NI	%	TTL	I	%	NI	%	TTL
BC	16	20	64	80	80	11	14	65	86	76
ALTA	4	40	6	60	10	2	13	13	87	15
SASK	4	15	23	85	27	5	17	25	83	30
MAN	4	50	4	50	8	2	13	13	87	15
ONT	23	30	53	70	76	12	13	80	87	92
QUE	-	-	-	-	-	2	100	-	-	2
NB	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
NS	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
PEI	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
NWT	19	86	3	14	22	2	33	4	67	6
YT	-	-	2	100	2	-	-	5	100	5
TTL	70	31	155	69	225	36	15	205	85	241

I = Indian

NI = Non-Indian

TTL = Total

% = percent of total

Source: Department of Indian Affairs
and Northern Development,
Facts and Figures
1971.

Table VIII. NUMBER OF INDIANS ADOPTED BY:										
PROV	1972-1973					1973-1974				
	I	%	NI	%	TTL	I	%	NI	%	TTL
BC	16	13	106	87	122	3	10	28	90	31
ALTA	8	62	5	38	13	3	33	6	67	9
SASK	4	12	30	88	34	10	12	74	88	84
MAN	3	5	58	95	61	12	15	70	85	82
ONT	5	8	55	92	60	15	14	92	86	107
QUE	1	50	1	50	2	3	50	3	50	6
NB	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
NS	-	-	1	100	1	2	100	-	-	2
PEI	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
NWT	4	27	11	73	15	27	55	22	45	49
YT	-	-	14	100	14	-	-	5	100	5
TTL	41	13	281	87	322	75	20	300	80	375

I = Indian

NI = Non-Indian

TTL = Total

% = percent of total

Source: Department of Indian Affairs
and Northern Development,
Membership Division
1973, 1974.

Table IX. NUMBER OF INDIANS ADOPTED BY:										
PROV	1974-1975					1975-1976				
	I	%	NI	%	TTL	I	%	NI	%	TTL
BC	10	38	16	62	26	5	8	57	92	62
ALTA	16	59	11	41	27	11	39	17	61	28
SASK	6	7	82	93	88	8	9	82	91	90
MAN	11	13	72	87	83	12	11	93	89	105
ONT	29	43	38	57	67	27	42	37	58	64
QUE	11	100	-	-	11	12	100	-	-	12
NB	1	100	-	-	1	1	100	-	-	1
NS	2	100	-	-	2	2	100	-	-	2
PEI	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
NWT	13	50	13	50	26	17	50	17	50	34
YT	-	-	5	100	5	-	-	8	100	8
TTL	99	29	247	71	346	95	23	311	77	406

I = Indian

NI = Non-Indian

TTL = Total

% = percent of total

Source: Department of Indian Affairs
and Northern Development,
Membership Division
1976.

Table X. NUMBER OF INDIANS ADOPTED BY:										
PROV	1976-1977					1977-1978				
	I	%	NI	%	TTL	I	%	NI	%	TTL
BC	29	20	116	80	145	19	16	98	84	117
ALTA	13	42	18	58	31	6	30	14	70	20
SASK	7	8	81	92	88	4	4	85	96	89
MAN	22	15	128	85	150	10	10	86	90	96
ONT	35	38	58	62	93	29	41	42	59	71
QUE	3	100	-	-	3	15	94	1	6	16
NB	1	50	1	50	2	2	100	-	-	2
NS	4	80	1	20	5	3	100	-	-	3
PEI	-	-	-	-	-	1	100	-	-	1
NWT	21	43	28	57	49	9	53	8	47	17
YT	-	-	15	100	15	-	-	9	100	9
TTL	135	23	446	77	581	135	23	446	77	581

I = Indian

NI = Non-Indian

TTL = Total

% = percent of total

Source: Indian and Eskimo Affairs
 Branch, Membership Division
 1977, 1978.

Table XI. NUMBER OF INDIANS ADOPTED BY:										
PROV	1978-1979					1979-1980				
	I	%	NI	%	TTL	I	%	NI	%	TTL
BC	39	30	93	70	132	28	30	66	70	94
ALTA	23	39	36	61	59	16	18	75	82	91
SASK	16	16	82	84	98	23	20	92	80	115
MAN	15	16	76	84	91	21	17	104	83	125
ONT	32	36	57	64	89	29	29	71	71	100
QUE	4	50	4	50	8	9	81	2	18	11
NB	2	100	-	-	2	6	100	-	-	6
NS	7	78	2	22	9	4	100	-	-	4
PEI	-	-	11	100	11	4	100	-	-	4
NWT	2	15	11	85	13	8	50	8	50	16
YT	3	43	4	57	7	-	-	2	100	2
TTL	143	28	376	72	519	148	26	420	74	568

I = Indian

NI = Non-Indian

TTL = Total

% = percent of total

Source: Indian and Inuit Affairs
Program, Membership Division
1980, 1981.

Table XII. NUMBER OF INDIANS ADOPTED BY:										
PROV	1980-1981					1981-1982				
	I	%	NI	%	TTL	I	%	NI	%	TTL
BC	23	18	106	82	129	16	15	89	85	105
ALTA	21	24	66	76	87	21	29	52	71	73
SASK	14	14	85	86	99	17	18	78	82	95
MAN	22	19	95	81	117	21	15	119	85	140
ONT	31	33	62	67	93	24	26	68	74	92
QUE	9	69	4	31	13	10	77	3	23	13
NB	-	-	1	100	1	-	-	1	100	1
NS	1	33	2	67	3	4	100	-	-	4
PEI	-	-	-	-	-	2	67	1	33	3
NWT	4	31	9	69	13	9	45	11	55	20
YT	2	15	11	85	13	6	25	2	75	8
TTL	127	22	441	78	568	130	23	424	77	554

I = Indian

NI = Non-Indian

TTL = Total

% = percent of total

Source: Indian and Inuit Affairs
Program, Membership Division
1981, 1982.

Table XIII. NUMBER OF INDIANS ADOPTED BY:										
PROV	1982-1983					1983-1984				
	I	%	NI	%	TTL	I	%	NI	%	TTL
BC	25	26	72	74	97	33	34	65	66	98
ALTA	17	30	40	70	57	35	40	52	60	87
SASK	14	14	84	86	98	12	12	90	88	102
MAN	18	15	99	85	117	64	43	85	57	149
ONT	30	32	63	68	93	23	37	39	63	62
QUE	13	76	4	24	17	15	75	5	25	20
NB	5	83	1	17	6	1	25	3	75	4
NS	3	60	2	40	5	1	25	3	75	4
PEI	-	-	1	100	1	-	-	-	-	-
NWT	18	60	12	40	30	26	51	25	49	51
YT	4	27	11	73	15	-	-	2	100	2
TTL	147	27	389	73	536	210	36	369	64	579

I = Indian

NI = Non-Indian

TTL = Total

% = percent of total

Source: Indian and Inuit Affairs

Program, Membership Division
1983, 1984.

Table XIV. NUMBER OF INDIANS ADOPTED BY:										
PROV	1984-1985					1985-1986				
	I	%	NI	%	TTL	I	%	NI	%	TTL
BC	18	35	34	65	52	24	28	63	72	87
ALTA	40	27	110	73	150	31	29	75	71	106
SASK	8	14	49	86	57	19	23	63	77	82
MAN	49	53	43	47	92	40	47	45	53	85
ONT	43	34	82	66	125	38	42	52	58	90
QUE	14	58	10	42	24	15	71	6	29	21
NB	1	25	3	75	4	4	80	1	20	5
NS	10	71	4	29	14	4	31	9	69	13
PEI	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
NWT	6	32	13	68	19	13	33	26	67	39
YT	-	-	5	100	5	3	43	4	57	7
TTL	189	35	353	65	542	191	36	344	64	535

I = Indian

NI = Non-Indian

TTL = Total

% = percent of total

Source: Indian and Inuit Affairs

Program, Membership Division

1985, 1986.

3. Interview Data

a) Foster Care

Informant 1. (21, Nov.2/89)

Randy Smith is a foster parent of Amanda, a teenager, who came into his care at the age of four. Randy is a grandfather who cares very deeply for the children of the reserve.

"I adopted.. not adopted.. I'm a foster parent and I've had her since oh she was four, she's sixteen now. I allow her to go see her parents' people. And when she gets old enough.. she wants to go back well it's.. her prerogative, you know. I think I feel more secure (that she knows about her family). You know that at least they know they've got somewhere else to go, you know. She asked where she was born, you know. She's registered in Spences Bridge. That's where her reservation is. Her dad is there. Just the mother.. phones her once in awhile.. Meets her sister and brother at some dances. I had some problems with them, you know.. they wanted her back but the law said no. We went through the courts, and everything. And I told the judge at that time, 'I.. don't want no interference from them..' He said, 'If they do, all you got to do is call the police.' I had a few.. squabbles with them, not particularly the mother but, ah, the grandparent and one of the aunts. And they don't.. don't say nothing till they got a few under the belt and they start talking. But they are sober they don't. They want their child back and I ask her, 'Do you want to go..?' and she says, 'No.' Makes it bad for the kids. Well this child had some bad treatment and.. that was the reason.. Human Resources took her away. ...She has to wear a wig all her life 'cause I don't know what happened, but.. there's a lot of stories.. They said that the father held her on top of a.. hot plate and burnt -- it's just around about that long.. It wouldn't have been bad if it was a boy, but it's a girl, you know, and she is stuck with that wig and they tease her about it. I've been expecting her to walk out of school anytime. I've told her to just ignore them or tell them it's catchy."

Randy Smith recounts the band's attempts to have a group home on Seabird Island for the band children who required this type of foster care:

"(Human Resources says) well.. nobody wants (this child). (I would) find a home, right here.. that would take them. It's been done here. We tried. We went through Human Resources, anyway to build a home for children. We had it all set up. We went through C.M.H.C. (Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation). We got the money for the house. We got the okay from Human Resources but we couldn't find house

parents. It was so strict at that time. Human Resources' rules. (All their rules were not important to us.) Well, the standard of living on the reserve is important. Should have house parents that they know because it takes half a year just to know a person and if they have a family that is already situated here, they can.. blend right in. And if its children right from the reserve, here, well.. you know.., nothing to it. It takes so long.. to try to be the same as the rest. I think there was only one Indian family was allowed to run a group home (to Human Resources' standards). I guess they went through the training, the (Human Resources) course, six months. We had other families who were qualified but who hadn't done the courses. Even towards food, you know. They give you a menu that you had to feed the kids. We have our traditional foods, eh. We have our salmon, smoked salmon, dry salmon, salted salmon, deer meat, duck, oh everything, but it's not in their menu, you know. They got hamburger, oh, junk food. But, ah.. at that time, I think, ah, Human Resources had too much power or they figured they had. I think we lost three or four children that time. Maybe you heard about this guy from the Similkameen. He put a stop to Human Resources taking children, anyway. (Now we have more say in the welfare of the children, which is better,) but they still.. come in and try and tell you.. what not to do and what to do and.. I haven't a clue (as to what we are doing wrong). I mean, there's parents here, you know, brought up oodles of children and.. even bringing up their grandchildren. They (Human Resources) come in and tell you how to do it, you know. I think that is wrong. You bring up that many children, you should know what, what you're doing. What you're doing is right. (It's difficult for us to open a group home because) it's hard to find house parents.. There's so much to do these days, you know. Everyone's got cars these days and they don't want to be tied down with.. (Custom adoption) could be done, yeah. We have a hard time doing it.. because ah.. their families were so large that they couldn't add another one. We haven't had.. that many trials on it, but I think it could be done. I imagine that they (Human Resources) will inspect a family that's going to adopt a child very thoroughly. Like when I got that child, I had to have a bank account and the credit was good and all that, you know. That's the way you had to pass. I mean that, you know, I may be broke to-day but maybe tomorrow I hit the jackpot, or something. But they don't believe in that. They want everything so perfect, that's.. and nobody's that perfect. I don't care who it is, you know, you're bound to forget something. (I would use other criteria for choosing parents.) Well, first of all, like I say, the way they proved they raised so many kids, the way they act, or the example they set. There are a lot of ways of watching. You don't want to give a kid away to a booze artist. (We would know) because we know who frequents the beer parlours and the bingo halls. (We have some say in what happens to a child, but) not very much. The only

thing.. we make recommendations, that's about all we do.. We can recommend a family on the reserve. They may find something wrong with the parent. They'll say no we can't put him there or we can't put her there. That's why I say they have too much power. They can even override us, you know, even council. (The only thing we can insist on is the report from the foster parent.) I guess they get a copy of what the lady, what the parent sends to us, and goes to them too. (We have lost) five or six anyways in the last five years. (We know where they are), pretty well, yeah. This recommendation we made is only three years old, eh, so the first bunch was.. I think that Human Resources should put in their criteria (that) a child knows where he comes from. Of course we had a case here, oh just happened when Bill C-31 came through. There was a young boy, he just turned sixteen, and they put him out in the street and all he knew he was born on an island. He didn't know where, you know. The first one he hit was Seabird Island, then Vancouver Island. It ended up he was from Queen Charlotte Island, you know. Things like that makes a person think back, you know. There is something wrong with a system when a kid don't know where the hell he comes from. Boy, there's cases like that all over and they're young boys and oh, my God! The reputation of the band I think goes with the child, you know. If you lose a child you lose.. that's what a reservation is all about, you know. It is for the Indian people. Until this thing changes, I don't know. They got to have a place to call their own."

Randy Smith describes some of the concerns he has with the fostering of band children:

"Like we got some children fostered out now but we tell the people we want to hear from you.. a report on the children every month to every two months.. how he's doing in school, you know. It's important. And I want you to tell the child where he comes from and.. he's got property here.. and all that, you know, so he'll know where to come back. They come back, ah, in the summer time, during the summer. I drove them around the Island and I said well.. you own part of this. And that's right. I guess they want to come home. It's hard to lose the kids."

Randy indicates that foster parents now make reports and that he knows that the children fostered out recently from the band do know where they come from and that they plan to return to the band.

Informant 2. (Z2, Nov. 2/89)

Mildred Roberts, in her late middle years, has had a lot of experience with band child welfare issues. She loves children; she expressed great concern for the loss of apprehended children from the band. She has experienced the foster care of her second cousins, who became her brother and sister, as well as the temporary foster care of the children of a family friend from another reserve. Later, after Mildred married, she had her own foster children, Tony, her nephew and Meggan.

"Well, my brother and sister, they were relatives, but not relatives to my mother but to my dad's side. And she took them as foster children and she raised them as her own and ah.. we all called ah.. our brother and sister even though they are quite a bit younger than I. My adopted sister still lives on Seabird, here and we're in close contact with them. Not so with the boy, well he's.. he's not a boy any more, he's (in his) thirties. But he comes out. We still take him as a brother, you know. We're still family. (They were) my dad's niece's children. They were supposed to stay for a little while, but they just automatically stayed on when the mother found they were in a good home. Like they were apprehended by Human Resources. But the mother asked if my parents could take them in as foster children. So my mother and dad agreed to that. In fact there was a big family.. The little girl went to a home in Sardis or Vedder, one of those places. So we never had contact with her at all. (The brother and sister had contact with the others from their family.) They did. They're good friends. I mean.. I don't think they think of them as family, like, you know, me and my brothers. (My parents ended up adopting these two children) because the mother never did settle down and she died and the father died first. So they just stayed right on. My mother had four foster children at the time. She had another brother and sister from Spuzzum. (They were not apprehended.) The mother went into the hospital with T.B. and she was going to be there for, well in those days, years. She was in there a couple of years so she asked if my mother could take her youngest two. So they grew up, too. We still have family pictures of them with all the family. (My parents) were their official foster parents. (These children) were not related at all. (These two children) were back to their mother as soon as she was able. They just moved in and we just kept them, you know. Everybody thought well that's Riches' children and they were classified as Riches. (My parents didn't sign any papers.) Even though my mother and dad received allowances for them

for being foster children.. and it didn't matter to them, you know, because they raised them. And anything she wanted to buy for them, my mom and dad bought, you know. Just like you would look after your own child. Children didn't inherit nothing but they were still registered in their own band. Like the band was Castle Bar near Lytton. So they were on the band list, up there. I think they (will inherit from there.) They're still on there, if there is anything there."

"I adopted a boy and my daughter. My son is my husband's sister's child and (he had an illness.) We had to take him to Vancouver twice a month and he just couldn't cope with it. So we took him in and at the time, we had our name in for adoption so we said well, we can't have him and adopt, you know. So they put him under Human Resources, too. He was my foster child and we still had our name in for a child. Then they want a family that could give all your attention to a child if you adopt it. So that's okay. After a long while maybe we can adopt (our foster son). Social worker said yeah, we could do it if his mother said okay, but she took a long time to make up her mind. So we just kept on looking after him until she made up her mind. He was already twelve when we adopted him. She had two children. She never tried to get him back. We took him in and he just stayed and stayed. (The children started off as foster children.) Like Meggan, (my daughter), was just a baby, she was only two months old. But that was hard because the mother of (my daughter) wanted me to take all her children and that was another boy and a girl and they gave the children back to the mother. It was.. terrible what they went through, so finally I just broke down and went down to see the mother and took them for the weekend. A couple of weekends, she said you might as well have my children, I can't look after them. She had a drinking problem real bad, so.. she talked to the Human Resources and they said I went in there and threatened the mother. I said no we didn't. She herself said I want Mildred to have my three children. They want to adopt them.. So I took (my daughter). They said I could adopt (her) but I couldn't adopt the other two older ones. They split the family up. I had the little boy and the girl is still around here yet and she still calls me Mom. But they had to go through heck, too.. really cause her drink was so bad and yet they would not let me adopt them and I don't know why. They said I could have one, the baby, but I can't have three. I was very bitter, very bitter, because the boy, he is only eleven months older than my daughter. To split the family like that while they could be together. So all my daughter has now, is me and my husband and her and my son are not close. Well my son was quite a bit jealous over her.. To me, I don't see them as brother and sister, you know. She tries, she misses him around but he doesn't show it. They're both adopted. (My daughter's older brother) is in Lillooet. He

grew up to be a real nice kid. I saw him last year for the first time. He is eighteen now. (Her older sister), she's around here, but she's got a problem. She gets very bitter and thinks nobody cares for her and that. But I told her that the reason I didn't adopt (her) was because they wouldn't let me. I think she kind of thinks that I preferred (her younger sister) and just took her. (I wanted to foster a child because) well, I got the habit of getting a child and falling in love with them. This way, I raised them as my own. If they got no place to go, eh, then they get placed in a home and they're sent here and there and they don't know.. Nobody can find them and if they're here with me I can do a little bit of things.. They can get to know their aunts and their uncles, whoever is around. I don't mind what they call me, but they get to know their own people.. their own families. I think now, (they should get to know their roots), yes, more and more, since I started working with the membership registry. Besides, so many phone in that have been adopted out or in foster homes asking me if I can help them find so and so. So there's a certain person there by this name on Seabird, you know and they're always looking and I've tried to find foster children. I hunted high and low and couldn't find this one little girl and her father died here and he left some land. Just by accident, a year ago, I went down to Mission and there was a foster child in there I was supposed to see. This lady, she said, "Oh, maybe you know this little girl. I think she is one of your band members." She was eleven years old. Here was this little girl I had spent so much time looking for and she was right there. It's frustrating. (Children can go to other bands because) we're all related one way or another. No matter what band you go to, we have a relative there and I don't know, we were brought up once your relative, it's your relative. So someone would find room. Like I can go from here to, in fact I've done it, Mount Currie. I've lived all my life here. My mother said, 'When you go up there mention that you're Charlie Riches' daughter.' Fine, I talk to these old people, that's when I was taking my training, eh. So I said, 'By the way did you know my father?' These people were really old, in their eighties. 'My father's name is Charlie Riches.' Oh my goodness and they got all, you know.. 'Your relatives. You wait here.' They'd run over, got over next door. then, they brought some people over. 'This is your relative,' you know. Mount Currie! I'd never been there. My Mom said, 'You've got Douglas Lake relatives there. You mention your Dad's name, eh.' But I've never gone there, so I don't know. As soon as they find out who your father was (they treat you like family.) And that happens not just with me, but with different families. So I think if anything, you know, like they went there and said this child has no place to go, and she belongs to so and so, does she have any relatives that will take her in? Yeah, I think they will. (The child may end up in a neighbouring band, but they will be with relatives.)"

Informant 11. (Z14, Dec. 6/89)

Gladys Little, now of middle years, was placed in a non-native foster home when she was in her early teens.

"Myself, I was in a foster home when I was about thirteen. I.. was in the hospital with T.B... twice, before I was thirteen. I had just got out of the hospital and the.. nurse in the hospital.. I think she had a hand in having me put in to a foster home because this had been my second time within, well, altogether a total of three years I spent in the hospital. So she must have contacted Welfare and.. they were the ones that put me in a foster home. Well, I missed my mother and dad but I think that was the hardest part, being away from my mother but she was.. an alcoholic. So I think I.. adjusted after awhile. I wasn't on the reserve, I lived in Vancouver. My uncle used to go down to Vancouver to visit me. I was (there) about four years before my older sister took me away. I guess I must have been about sixteen when she took me to live with her. It was good except that I missed my family. There were about four other children there, but, you know, they didn't take the place of my own family and they were.. you know, Irish people. They.. didn't treat me any different than the other children. I missed my mother a lot and I worried about her because she was an alcoholic, that was the hardest part, being away from my mother. Well, if there were good native homes to go into, you know, I would.. I would have been happier to go to somebody of my own race. To me, at the time, (my grandparents) weren't given a chance. It just seemed like that.. somebody said I had to be taken away from my mother and that Human Resources have to take me over and that's it. I can remember years ago, when with my mother being the way that she is, my aunt took me over and looked after me for awhile. (I called her 'aunt'.) Nowadays, (the kids) get apprehended. With me, it didn't hurt me, like, you know, I was in a Catholic school and then I went into a business school. And they taught me how to cook and clean up and iron. But, you know, the feelings.. the loneliness, I guess, you know, wanting to be with your family. That was the hardest part to deal with. I think I cried a lot.. when I was in my teens because I missed my family. And more likely that's what happens when they do apprehend children and put them into a white home."

Informant 18 (Z11, Dec. 4/89)

Nora Tom's son, Tony was taken from her at birth; she has just recently found him, after eighteen years of searching. Nora, a

middle-aged woman, also has experienced the fostering out of her sisters and brother. Their attempts to reconnect with their birth family have been difficult because of the trauma they have suffered.

"I have a son, he's in Mission and we just met each other this year. He was.. taken away from me since he was a small little baby, very small baby. They wouldn't even let him come home with me from the hospital because they said there were too many of us in our home.. That.. lady got in trouble anyways, now, but it's already too late, you know. We're just getting to know one another again, so we can.. Living with.. with.. we call you guys 'wuleetas,' it means white person. So he was apprehended right from the hospital because all they told us is that we had too many in our family, in our house, cause I was living with my grandparents. I was twenty. (I felt that) I was robbed and I was degraded, you know, because I'm native.. but they didn't just do that to me. They did that to three others.. the same person.. she was.. working for D.I.A., a social worker. She got in trouble, anyways, but it was already too late before they.. My son was old already. He was sixteen years old. He's eighteen (now) and we just met each other during the summer time. And he's had a hard time, you know. He looks at us like.. he was raised in an all white society and then looking at us, as you know.. as native people, you know. He was lucky. He had a good foster mom. I like her. She's a very nice woman, but she's stingy of him. She's scared to lose him. That's what she's afraid of. She's scared to lose him. Now that he knows that he has two sisters and two brothers. She's scared now. She's very stingy of him. My kids say they phone him and.. they go to visit him.. she will not let him come this way. Cause she's so scared. That's the first thing she said to me when I met her. 'Don't take him away. Don't take him away. He's my son. He's my son.' I said, 'He's our son.' I said, 'I was robbed of this and I think I have the right to know my son, get to know him.' I want to win him. And she keeps telling me, 'I'm getting old. I'm real old.' I'm taking it slowly. I'm going to get his trust, you know. Because the way he looks at me.. as if.. you know.. he thinks that I gave him away but he was taken away from me. We were on the reserve and.. I don't know.. The first time I talked to him, I said, 'This is a bad mistake that happened. It scarred both of us, you know. We've been searching for you.' We've been searching for him.. like we'd go to Human Resources in Mission.. and they been just giving us the run-around. Like he told him last year that we were living way in Ontario, so he wouldn't make contact with each other. He believed them that we were way back there. Then he started looking into the reserves. 'Where's your mom from? Where's you mom registered? Dad registered?' You know, and he's the one that phoned here. From here, that's when we started

looking around. When we couldn't.. We were lost, you know. Because they wouldn't help us. 'Can we have our son's address, he's almost eighteen years old now' and they said, 'Sorry, no.' They just opened and closed the books right away. They didn't (tell him what band he was from.) No.. they just told the registrar on Chehalis reserve and that's it. No, they never said any more to him. And where they told him as we were staying in Ontario.. and then they told us he was in Vancouver but they moved him from there to another place and they wouldn't tell us where. (He was) a foster child. Well, (his foster mother) saying that (they adopted him but he does not use their last name.) So he's still registered on the reserve. All his papers and all his identities all have the same last name. I asked her, too, "If he has to use his (own name), then you guys didn't really adopt him, then." She just changed the subject right away. (When they took him away from me in the hospital) I was going crazy. At that time, too, my husband and I were fighting. I was emotionally disturbed. I was angry. At that time, too, our nurse.. that one that visits the reserves..? She was saying, too, that I wasn't.. qualified to take care of my son. It was a big home and she's there with her parents so she's an independent (sic) person, you know, but, ah, nobody knows how we lived.. in our own ways of life with native people. (They use) a different set of criteria for what is good parenting and bad parenting. A good parent (would be) a lot of love.. patience.. a good secure.. home environment, a good provider or providers. Our upbringing is different.. like you see this is how I remember all these names here (referring to genealogy) as being taught to me over and over again. Because, to me and to other people on the reserve we're kind of royalty families cause we have sacred things that.. that no other families have on the reserves. See, we're kind of different from everybody in our culture, like we're high society. So we have our own sacred things and.. like sxwayxwey and the rattle. So we're different from other people on the reserves cause we come from this family, where it began. We go through different teaching than just an ordinary home. I'm the dictionary. I have to remember these things. We're just getting to know one another. I told him we come from a royalty native family and that we are very proud people because people treat us like that. We're treated special. I told him that, 'Be proud of who you are.' But we're just making friends. I don't think (his foster mother would have told him about his background.) She feels very threatened. I just hope nobody talks to him to turn against us.

My three sisters and my brother were apprehended from my mom when her and dad broke up, my mom drank. And that was her very first time drinking and she was like that for two to three weekends. I was gone. I left.. I went to berry-picking in the States. And my sisters and my brother were apprehended and we couldn't find each other for ten years. And my brother and my sisters lost trust. My second

youngest sister was sexually abused in Cloverdale. She was sexually abused in Castlegar in foster homes. And they were fed mouldy food.. because they were native children and they said that. 'You're only native children, you're just little savages. This is what you deserve.' They were horse-whipped. Three of them were horse-whipped. And if the foster dad was ah.. in a ugly mood, they were pulled outside and that's when they started getting horse-whipped, putting them in the barn or just right out in the yard, there and they'd horse-whip them. My brother and sisters.. lost their identity like 'you're just an Indian.. you're nothing, you're a nobody, you're just a dark coloured skin.' I mean, that's all they thought of themselves. They had no.. feelings. When we found each other they had no feelings, they had a cold heart. And after we started to get to know one another, like ah.. they.. they thought we were insulting because we'd eat bread, you know, like you know, we'd have our own bannock and we'd eat it like that. 'You guys are savages.' Because they were told this, you know and they.. they don't like wild meat and when we had deer meat.. The other ones will not get close to us because they are.. are so mad. They think that we were.. they were put in foster homes and us older ones weren't. We had a choice. We had a choice because I was already getting old and I was about fifteen years old. We had a choice either go into foster homes or live with your grandparents. So us four were lucky. We didn't have to be the way our younger brother and sisters were raised. We were being loved all the time. We were respected and ah.. we learned our backgrounds of.. the history of our families, a cultural bringing up. This is where my younger brother, youngest brother and sister have a hard time understanding and they can both.. both of them can really turn off. Just like that, just like you turn a faucet off. They can just easily turn off feelings towards anyone. They lost.. and they get mad when we talk about our great-great-grandparents, the way that our grandparents would tell us about our great-great-great-grandparents. It's just like we were there, you know. Because they give us every little detail, you know, about oh this is how great-grandma got up early in the morning and this is what she did. We can vision it in our minds, you know. Like we were actually there. And that's what my brother and my sisters.. they were robbed of this and their behaviours.. like they didn't trust us, they hated us. They hated us. They knew we were their brothers and sisters. Some parents on this reserve, here, let's say for instance, if the family was sixth or seventh cousin down.. They still had the rights to go and say those are my relatives, I'd gladly bring them up in my home. This is one thing I like about this reserve, here, is that it's so peaceful here. People.. are always willing to help, they always are there when you need them. This is one really caring reserve, here. (The band) would greet (returning adoptees) with open arms. I think it's important for a native child to be raised on their own reserve, in their own communities,

because there's a lot they miss out. They're very lonesome. That's the feedback I get from my own sisters and my brother. They were always treated differently, you know, because they were native children from anybody else and there was actually no love for them like they were just ah.. the way my sister said, we were just like cats and dogs.. You're all right for the first couple of months, then they get sick and tired of you and then they phone and say take these kids away from here and then you're put into another home. There was no relationship of a foster dad and a foster mother, you know. Like my sister was sexually abused twice in two separate homes. When they came back to us, they didn't want to trust us. They didn't want to.. like we'd go up to them and hug them. They'd tense and they'd make a lot of space between us because they were treated that way. There was no love there. So they never learned it. (Now) sometimes it shows. My youngest brother, he just gave his whole self to us. Take me the way that I am. Like when he first got with us, he was breaking and entering homes and buildings. He set a car on fire.. you know, to get attention. That was his way of getting attention from us. We sat him down and told him we don't have to do things like that. If you need to talk, talk to us. If you want us to love you, we show you love all the time, you know. We always take of one another. I know our people like to adopt and they don't care where the child comes from. But.. I think it's because they have to be checked up on to say it's okay, so that's why a lot of our native people won't do that because what if they find something, you know, in my history, I don't know. (When they come to check our homes,) it's degrading. What's wrong with me, I'm an okay person? I'd like to see all the native children in their own communities so they won't lose their identity and to be amongst their own coloured.. native people instead of being raised off of it because they lose their identity and then they.. even if they're in a home and being loved and cared for and all that, they're still lonely children because they're not raised with their natural skin-coloured children."

Informant 15. (Z7, Nov. 21/89)

Being the foster parent to five children has given Terry Hardy a broad experience with fostering. Currently, she is fostering her sixth child, a Fetal Alcohol Syndrome (FAS) child who is about five years old. Terry, in her late thirties, lived in a foster home as a child. Her husband was moved to a foster home after a "custom" adoption.

"My daughter is adopted. She's legally mine now. She was somewhere between fifth and eighth cousin, my husband's side. See, he wanted to get her back on the reserve. As far as I know, Social Department was looking for homes for about six months for.. She's got a sister and a baby brother. And they were looking for homes for them for about six months or so and they couldn't.. they were travelling back and forth. So one day, (the social worker) came up to me, 'Are you interested in fostering?' and I said, 'I don't know, ask me in a week. I'll think about it.' Then I went back and I said, 'Yeah okay, if I can get her on reserve and then we can place her from there.' I've fostered before and I've been able to get along with them. We had to go into Chilliwack and filled out the papers and then we went to court the next week and they remanded so they can do a home study with me. And then they wanted me to visit her, have a visit back and forth. She's only five. I've only had her for two months. This was the end of July, beginning of August, and we went to court the first week in August. They remanded it for six weeks, so it was the fourteenth of September and the progress was really slow for the first three weeks. They were supposed to do a home study and we didn't know who was going to do it. And we were getting anxious because we still didn't do the home visit with her. And so I came down and asked the social worker, you know, what's going on. I said, 'Hey, listen, you know, we've only got three weeks.' Then her social worker in Vancouver wanted to extend it. I said, 'No, I don't want it to go too long.' I said, 'It's interfering with my job.' So finally we got the home study done and we got a good report from the social worker. And so we went down to see her. And she had so much like my daughter, same interests, same personality. My daughter liked her and then we came home and discussed it with my son. I asked him how he felt and he said, 'Yeah, okay.' So we brought her home and she came to visit and she came and spent a night with us. She blended very well, actually. We were expecting her to cry and cry. Right now, she's afraid of rejection, you know, like I'm going to .. leave her somewhere? Insecure. She's adapted very well. She's really a.. hyper and everything, you know. The other.. children I had were hard or very hard to handle and working isn't easy, too. I would prefer to stay home with them and look after them. The last one I gave up because I.. didn't have very much time for him. Susan.. she's playing well in the day care. She goes to day care in the mornings and she goes to kindergarten in the afternoon. She's.. once in awhile she thinks of (her foster mother.) She asks to go see her grandmother. I keep in touch with them. I want her to know them so that she'll know who her grandparents, and sisters and brothers and cousins are. She's from Seabird. She has Seabird status. That's why she was placed on Seabird. They tried to place her.. because of the reserve, they try to place the children where their status is. She's got three brothers and a sister. Like the grandmother has five kids now. One is Susan's older

brother. Because Susan is a (FAS) child, it was getting too hard on the grandmother. Like she wanted to go back to school. She had to go to the hospital and day care. The second oldest brother is with the dad and her little sister is in a foster home and they're looking for a permanent home for her and she had a brother just born a few months ago.. and he's in a foster home and they're looking to place him too. (They asked me to look after the other kids but) I said no, I don't think so. I believe they're still going through withdrawals too because the mother's an A and D (Alcohol and Drug abuser) and Susan is blending in so well, that we have to watch for her little problem spots that she does have and learning disabilities. I don't see any now. She was going to Children's Hospital every so often for development checks to see how she's developing. She's like any child now.. but I would like them to keep an eye on her, you know, so she doesn't fall back. Cause I've got my kids both in Christian school and I wanted her to be put in Christian school but we can't get the funding for her. She seems to be happy. (She sees her older brother and her cousins at her grandmother's.) I try to bring them down once a month for a visit and it's really hard.. sitting there. I didn't know the mother was there last time.. It's really hard. It sort of made me nervous. But I want her to know them, so.. She enjoys playing with the kids, you know. She can't understand why she has to leave yet. That's the sad part. Right now she calls my son 'brother' and daughter 'sister'. She calls me (by my first name.) She's my sixth kid in the last twelve years. It's really hard when you work. It wouldn't be so hard if they were school-aged children. (I foster) because the kids really need a home, you know. I lived with a relative growing up and I've seen other people with kids that need a home. It was just something that I felt I had to do. It was something I could do for these guys. I enjoy them. I like watching them grow. It's sad watching them leave. You only have them a short while. Most of them.. you can't (adopt); they go back to their family. But somehow, in a way, again I feel that what we've given them, what we've had together, they'll remember it and it'll help them.. because I grew up in a foster home. (My husband was in a foster home for thirteen years.) We've been trying to get the kids back to be able to know their culture, to be able to know their people, their relatives. Something we're really working on. But it's really hard to find homes. It's really hard for kids to find out where they come from, you know, where they belong. I'm glad that Susan will be able to know where she comes from, where her people are. That's part of the reason I want Susan as part of our family. We know where she comes from and that they'll be there. She will be able to visit them and get to know them better. And I think that's what she needs. (A long time ago, kids from Seabird were sent to the United States for adoption. We don't know where they are. My niece) was adopted out and she was a registered band member, but I don't know where she is, you know. When

I first came here, I wasn't really happy about (the system) because where I come from, they had more control.. they could go and get the kids. in some ways they were stricter.. at least they're letting us know, you know, if a band member is involved they have to let us know, if they're placing a child they have to contact the reserve. At least we have our foot in the door, we have some access to them. (That's an improvement) because when my husband was in a foster home, he was eighteen before he found out where he came from, who his parents were, who his mother was. He was over nineteen years old before he met his mother.. He always wanted to know who his mother was. And, you know, he met his father. His aunt, she adopted him and then she got sick and then they put him in a foster home. His adoption was a "custom" adoption. His grandmother had him (and his aunt) was at the same berry patch camp and she took him and she just didn't give him back. She changed his name. When we got married, they didn't know whether we were married or not (because they didn't know what my husband's last name was.) He's had his foster mother for thirteen years. He's got three mothers and I married and I got four mothers-in-law. a great-great aunt, a real mother, a step-mother, and a foster mother and he's close to all of them. I feel that (if a child is adopted from another reserve, he should have equal rights here. When he is eighteen, he should be able to choose which reserve they want to stay on.) They have to give more lee-way to the children to find out where they come from and where they're going. To let them be happy about themselves. The other thing about fostering too, to be able to put a child on reserve and have them grow there, to know their culture, know their people, know their relatives. And I didn't think of this until after I got (my daughter), and she was home. What happens if I decide to leave? Am I going to lose her? (In fostering) some kids are lost. They have no sense of belonging. (In order to have more kids returned to the band, more families will have to open up their homes.) It's hard to foster. You're exposing your own kids to hard kids and your kids don't understand why these kids use bad language and know more than they should. You protect your kids from this and then they got exposed through foster kids."

Informant 17. (Z16, Dec. 10/89)

Yvonne Duncan is twenty- nine. She has never had any of her own children. She was responsible for the care of her siblings within the family home until she left. She attended residential school after she ran away from home; residential school was an alternative placement to a foster home. When her sister's daugh-

ters were taken by the Ministry of Social Services, Yvonne tried to get custody of them. That attempt failed. She is now a foster parent for two of her sister's sons, Michael and Charles and her younger, teenaged sister, Linda. She briefly cared for her younger brother, Steve, as well.

"All through my childhood (my parents' called me) dumb, stupid, good for nothing.. you know, and why are you going to school if you're too stupid, you know.. What they wanted me to do was stay home and look after the kids, So.. I was just more or less going to school just to get away from home, sometimes. Sometimes.. I couldn't take it and I started running away from home.. and then one time.. one time I came home and.. one time I ran away from home and.. the police took me home.. and they knocked on the door. And they said, "We brought your daughter back." And then my dad yelled, "Which daughter?" (The police told him my name) and he said, "That's not my daughter, we don't want her here." When we got back in the car, I was crying away, you know. I said I don't even know why they even bothered calling the police, if they didn't want me home. The police, you know, they were going to bring me to a foster home or to.. you know, an emergency home type of thing and I said no. And they go, "Well, where do you want to go?" And they were naming off aunts and uncles and I said. "No. Just take me back where you picked me up." So they brought me back (to my dad's uncle's place.) I stayed there about a month, I guess. And then mom and dad trying to get me home. Cause the police said if mom and dad phoned again, they were not going to bother picking me up. And then I was there about a month, when my (two brothers and sister) ran away and they came to stay where I was. But then my.. my dad's uncle said we all couldn't stay. But they let us stay there. We were all on a little.. on a little foldaway cot, all three of us, eh. Because they had five girls already and they only had a two bedroom place and all the kids were crammed in one room, eh. So that's when we got transferred to Kamloops. And I was there for three months. (I was) in a residential school. I was there for three months and then mom and dad came and picked me up again and took me home cause mom was pregnant. (My brother and sister) still stayed in Kamloops though and they were there for the remainder of the year. And then mom got pregnant (again) but then it was either that we went to a residential school or we were going to get taken away by the Welfare. So we went to St. Mary's residential school in Mission. (I saw my family) on holidays, not very often. (It made me feel) pretty good, actually. That way, I didn't have to come home and look after the kids. I got into too much mischief when I got there. I ran into.. I ran into kids that did drugs and you know, where

they were, you know, similar backgrounds as me, but I was just into alcohol at the time. And then I ran into kids that did drugs, glue, you know.. and alcohol.. you know and so when I was there I got heavily into it, you know.. heavily into drinking and doing.. you know, pot and doing glue and bad stuff. Stealing from the corner store, you know, got into stealing really bad.. You know, there was a lot of bitterness between my parents and I and.. you know.. because after I moved out of the house, that's when they started losing the children, eh. Because I wasn't there any more (to look after them.) Like there was a lot of bitterness between me and my parents plus there was a lot of regret.. If I had stayed home instead of leaving home at seventeen, you know, our family would've stayed together, but then you never know, you know.. but I left home at seventeen because I couldn't take it any more, you know, being saddled with the kids, not getting to school, missing eighty-six days out of the school year, you know, staying home babysitting. I stayed in grade eight for about three years. But once.. I got out of my mom and dad's home, I was.. I got up to grade eleven in public school.

(My sister's) got five kids. She had lost the older two, Sadie and Lily, they're adopted out now. (I don't know where the girls are.) As far as I know they are still in the Chilliwack area. Well, we tried to go for a custody take over. We did an application up.. but it didn't even make it to court, you know, because we approached it the wrong way. I think it was through the Ministry that time we went through for the custody takeover and we got turned down. There was no band support and there was.. no experience. Looking after your brothers and sisters, you know, isn't experience enough, you know, because.. when I was at home.. when I was living at home.. I pretty well had, you know, like the care of my younger brothers and sisters, you know, while mom and dad went fishing or wherever. We were going to try for.. an appeal. And.. that didn't make it to court actually, you know, and how to go about it. This is five years, six years ago that I tried because (the one girl) was just a baby. But not being a natural mother myself, they wouldn't even consider it. And then I tried to get to see them the night before they were moved into their adopted home or into the foster home that they were going to be waiting at until they were adopted. But I wasn't allowed to see them. (It was) in Chilliwack, (not on the reserve). They were a non-native home. I think it's a native family that adopted them, I'm not too sure. They stayed together. (I've had no contact with them), none at all. It kind of makes you feel like you're not.. good enough either. Like your parents and your sisters.. you know, like my parents lost the younger ones and then my sister loses hers and, you know, and then you try, but the courts saw a pattern, eh with my mother and my sister, so.. they kind of ruled that out.. that I'd be.. not good enough for the children. And, you know, like it's.. it was kind of one big struggle, eh.

There was a lot of pain in it because, you know, like, you know, losing your family little by little to the Ministry. And your not able to see them, you know, after they're adopted out, you know, unless you know the family that has adopted them.

See because we got my brother (Steve) who was seventeen at the time, that's where (my partner) got the reputation of having a bad temper see because we had my brother through the Ministry.. for not more than three months and he kind of was hard to handle, eh.. because people were telling him he didn't have to listen to us, and he didn't have to be home on time and he didn't have to do what we told him to .. and.. you know.. and he'd be out all hours of the night and you know, we'd track him down and he'd been drinking. (My partner) blew his temper and struck him, eh and then Steve went around and saying that (my partner) beat him up. But even though it was a one time thing, it sticks with the Ministry. (I was my brother's foster parent) That was only supposed to be a one month thing, too and that went on to three months. I was inexperienced, you know, because I had to keep calling the Ministry up because Steve kept running away from home We'd try to track him down and you know, we'd always find him, but.. then it got where he was one step ahead of us all the time. So we called the Ministry and that's when they.. make it look bad for me, that I.. couldn't handle Steve and I wouldn't be able to handle my youngest brother and sister. He went back to mom and dad's.. (It was not really a good thing) because he went like from bad to worse in his drinking and doing weird stuff eh, you know.. you know, just doing weird stuff.. like gas and glue and you know, really.. and you know, you try to talk to him.. but.. and you know, mom and dad.. they just kind of shut their ear out. And, you know, They didn't see nothing and they didn't hear nothing and stuff like that, you know.. and.. you know.

I do have my sister's two boys, anyways. She had lost those two to the Ministry. She lost them twice to the Ministry.. and then she got them back the third time. We intervened in the apprehension the third time. I was only supposed to have them three to six months and I've had them for a year and a half now. Charles and Michael call me 'mom', they don't call her 'mom' no more. They call her (by her first name.) I ended up with Charles and Michael because (my sister) started neglecting them again, beating them up, not feeding them. and they were not talking. When I first got them, they're three and five now, but I had them for three months before that.. I just got them into the point where they would ask for water or a sandwich but when I got them back, they would just point. She still has access to them.. because I don't have legal custody, she can come and pick them up at any time she feels like it.. you know, just take them back home.. she was made aware of that at the beginning. Sometimes, you know, I don't want to let them go but

then in a way, like I want the children to see their mom. But, you know, if they come back and tell me something, you know, I'll get right after her. Sometimes she has them for one day and sometimes she has them for the whole weekend. Sometimes she says she going to take them for the whole weekend so I give them to her Friday night, she's phoning me up Saturday morning telling me to pick them up. It's kind of maddening but I don't want to, you know, cut the access off because the children do need to see their mom. You know, sometimes if she doesn't see them for.. like three weeks, or something like that, you know, I phone her up and say well do you want to visit with her kids? Sometimes she says, "No, I'm too busy," or "No, I'm not feeling well." (When I leave the boys at her house, she doesn't feed them properly.) She doesn't eat during the day, you know. And that's how she lost her children in the first place because they were malnourished. But I told her, I said, "When you have the kids I want them to eat...three times a day." She griped and.. bitched and she was really mad, eh. Cause the boys were used to eating three times a day. It's kind of tough, but, you know, like cause like I've had the kids.. at that time I had them for a year and three months.

(I got Linda because) she ran away from her foster home in Hope and she was adamant that she wasn't going to leave. So we had to either go.. you know.. two ways.. either have her stay there.. without the Ministry and then she wouldn't get her allowances or I can do the home-study. I thought that was going to be really rough. (It wasn't.) It was pretty easy, you know. What happens is they come in, they sit down and talk with you and how would you handle situations and plus they, you know, took a tour of her room, where she was going to be sleeping and things, you know, like plans for the future. And how you are coping with discipline.. Like last year, you know, she was in a foster home, you know, last year, eh. All through her school year, she was getting D's and E's and C-'s and most of her work was unsatisfactory. And then she came to stay with me and she got her first report card. She got an A in Math. You know, cause, looking at her track record and her school work.. (I expected a poor result.) And then I saw her first report card and I said, "Whoa! You got brains, after all, eh!" She goes, "Pretty good, eh." And I gave her a hug.

At first, (I looked after the kids) because I felt they needed me. Because if I'm not here, who else is going to be. And then I guess in a way.. because I wasn't there, that my brother got adopted out. So I don't want that happening with my nephews, you know because losing contact with my nieces was kind of hard, you know because I don't even know what they looked like, any more. Because we don't have, recent pictures of them. I only have little girl pictures of them. Ever since I was fourteen, I was referred to as Momma-Ann up until I moved out. I was Momma-Ann to (the four youngest in our family.) I would like to change (the

adoption policies to) where everybody in the family has an easier chance of getting the children. Whereas, especially.. with someone (who might not be able to have children.) Especially when.. when you go to court and they say, you know, not enough parenting experience and you know.. (Parenting the boys twenty-four hours a day is hard.) Especially when in my mind, you know, I kept thinking I'm not good enough to be a parent, you know. Am I going to be like my mom and sister, you know? And after awhile, after I had them for nine or ten months, I think, hey I'm good enough. I've had them this long. (A home should have) a lot of stability and a lot of loving and you know, where there's going to be a lot of discipline and understanding. You know, if you're going to be a foster parent, you got to understand that the children you get are not going to be all the same. Because there's going to be abused children, neglected children and.. you know, abused..you know, physically, sexually and mentally."

b) Closed Legal Adoption

Informant 4. (Z4, Nov. 9/89)

Eve Ames, an Elder of Seabird Island, is in her seventies, She experienced the adoption of her sister.

"When my mother and my dad got married. My sister, I always called her my sister, Elizabeth, was adopted to my mother. We were both babies. My mother and my dad had two babies. I was a little older than my sister. A few months older. Elizabeth was my adopted sister. Her mother died and her father had no sisters or no other relatives. There was just his mother and she died too, not very long after that, so my mother and dad adopted Elizabeth through a lawyer. They only paid 250 dollars for a lawyer. Them days see it was not very.. it's a lot for, you know. She went to St. Mary's school and she got married from St. Mary's, but she was always with us on holidays then she got married. (My parents) bought her things. That's all I know. They went to see her all the time when she was in St. Mary's."

Eve Ames also related her knowledge of a closed legal adoption in her husband's family. This closed legal adoption was mentioned by a number of band members; this adoption sticks in the memory of informants because it was the legal adoption of a white adult who, as an infant, had been "custom" adopted by his Indian grandfather.

"There was another one that was adopted. My husband's side of the family. Bob Howard adopted his grandson. His daughter's child. She married a Scotchman and she moved to Vancouver and she took sick. She contacted (sic) tuberculosis. She came home to have her baby and her baby was two months old and she died and so Bob Howard adopted little Bob. They called him Bob after him, after her dad and he was a White. He was adopted. Bob Howard got a lawyer and that's all I know. There was no Human Resources in those days, not like to-day, eh."

Informant 5. (Z3, Nov. 9/89)

Leo Howard, a band member in his fifties, remembers the closed legal adoption of his cousin, Bob White.

"(I know about) my Grandpa adopting Bob White. His mother was.. I believe she was a Howard, eh, and the Scotchman was the White, eh. And they both died, oh White, the Scotchman, he took off and went back to Vancouver and the mother died. My grandfather raised him. When he was about 23, the band members here were saying, 'Well he's a white man, what is he doing here?' So my granddad goes and brings him to Victoria and adopts him, eh. That's how he became a White-Howard. From there on they got all these children. Some go by White and some go by Howard, eh. He was like my uncle, eh. We were real close. He had the same obligations as the rest of us, eh. By that time he was well accepted. He had the same rights as everybody else. He inherited property. (He inherited it) from my grandfather, they still have it over there. It's in his wife's name, now. The land is very important, traditionally handed down from generation to generation. It is known as the Howard land. It's all cleared, mostly it's leased out, eh. The property is split three ways like, you know. It's leased to a white farmer. The property is in my mother's name, like, you know. I could have the option if I wanted to, if I wanted to do something with it, but I have my own land. I never knew him as anything else but my uncle. We were quite close because I used to go and visit my Grandfather and help him with the hay and he was there, like, you know, he was working on the farm. I got to know him quite good. I called him Bob because he wasn't that old. I'd go and visit him like, you know, just kin, talk and tell stories and joke. When he was adopted in, there was some friction, eh. That's the reason why there were questions, you know. So my grandfather went to Victoria and you know, got all the papers signed and he became a Howard. (That made some of the band members happy.) Some of them were saying, "Oh my God, I didn't know you could do that." (My Grandfather) was one of the sort of respected leaders, eh, so you know he.. if he said something it was pretty well accepted, eh. And he was one of the more richer ones, like he had a farm, eh, a dairy farm and he used to help a lot of people out, you know. He used to go

around with his wagon and bring vegetables to a bunch of people."

Informant 11. (Z14, Dec. 6/89)

Gladys Little's son's child was apprehended by Ministry of Social Services workers and adopted by her daughter.

"He was apprehended by the Welfare in Hope because (his mother).. drinks a lot, she did drink a lot, so they apprehended her. And he was .. about nine months old or two months old, somewhere in the area. My son has had to go to court maybe every.. three to six months to.. give, you know, (my daughter) permission to keep (the baby) as custody. And finally she did get total custody and was allowed to adopt him. I was happy because he's still in the family and (my daughter's) a good mother. I go to visit. (The father) knows where (his son) is and I think it's good for him. And he knows he can see him any time he wants."

Informant 6. (Z15, Dec. 6/89)

Sally Jenkins' parents adopted her cousin, a six year old boy from another reserve. Sally is in her early thirties.

"My mom and dad adopted him when he was six years old and he was originally from Boothroyd. His mother.. got killed by a transport and the same thing happened with his grandmother.. his grandfather was an alcoholic and so he was put in foster homes. In and out of foster homes, and so his uncle asked my mom and dad if they would take care of him. They said (they) would prefer it to be an adoption. (He was in) some of the foster homes in the Boston Bar area, and lived with some of the relatives up there. They had to go through the Ministry because he was a foster child at the time. He wasn't (a foster child in our house). Right from that time, they put papers in for adoption and then the Ministry got involved, you know. We had to go through a family thing, like we had to sign papers. And they had to come to our house and do sort of like interviews with our family. And they asked questions like why we thought our parents would be a good placement for adoption. I thought it was good because it probably made my mom and dad feel good to know what we really thought of them. (After the interview) we had to wait six months.. to see if my mom and dad were able to adopt him. During those six months (my brother) stayed with us. Then the adoption came through. Now he's legally under my mom and dad's last name He was my dad's aunt's grandson. (He was a cousin, now he is my brother). It was

(a different change) at first but even now we have difficulty remembering it. He's still part of the family. (He calls my parents 'mom and dad'). (My dad) taught him to chop wood. He goes up with my dad every summer to the fish camp and we do the wind drying and he knows how to set a net and I don't think we have taught him to butcher a fish yet. (The adoption has worked out.) I don't know if (he) would want to leave our place. He is happy there. He doesn't remember (the foster homes he was in.) I think he is a bit of an alcohol fetal syndrome baby. So he is, thinking isn't.. his memory isn't really good. Like you can tell him one thing one day and the next day he'll forget."

c) Open Adoption

Informant 16. (Z9, Nov. 30/89)

Ida Duncan is the birth mother of Scott. She is in her late forties. She is an alcoholic and Scott, her youngest child, suffers from FAS (Fetal Alcohol Syndrome). Of her nine children, only one teenager now lives with her. The older children have left home and the two younger ones, Scott and Linda, are adopted and in foster care, respectively.

"I'm just getting to know my family. My family in Chehalis. I left there in 1951 when my dad passed away. They put me in a residential school. Last year was the first time I ever got to know them. I didn't remember them. Well, a lot of things are blocked off from my past, too painful to.. remember (from when I was a child.) A lot of them I guess, I don't want to remember, cause some people would bring it up and I'd say I don't remember. The first time my memories start coming back about my childhood, I didn't like it. I got so.. angry. I cried hard. I said I'll never go to that kind of workshop again cause, I always thought of my dad as being not perfect, but I always thought he was a real nice person. What I blocked out about my dad, was that he used to .. he was physically abused my brother and sister. I know he drank a lot but the times I remembered were the good times. I blocked out all the bad. I lost Scott about six years ago. We went to court for three years, trying to get him and Linda back. Welfare (took him away because) I was drinking a lot and then I quit.. I quit but I still wasn't looking after them.. so.. It came pretty close to a mental breakdown on account of my relationship with my husband and trying to cope without drinking. They took them.. two weeks after I quit drinking. I was hurt. Well, they told me they were taking them for three months, till I straightened up, providing I went for help. So I went for help from mental

health in Chilliwack. After three months was over they said I wasn't getting them back. Three of them.. because.. (my husband) quit two weeks after I quit.. but I still wasn't capable of looking after everyone. First I (agreed with them) because I knew I wasn't capable but after awhile, you know, I could handle them again and we start going through court. I don't know how many times we went to court and they kept changing our lawyer. Well, we'd just get used to one and we'd have to get used to another one. I told my husband I'm just going to give up. I said that. They want my kids, they can have them. They were on Seabird and we were allowed to see them till our last court and then they moved them.. because I lost them.. I couldn't get them back. (They took them off the Island) cause we weren't allowed to see them. That hurt. I was mostly angry. I haven't seen Scott for two or three years. He was twenty-one months old then. Scott, Linda, and Steve. I see Linda now, she lives right on Seabird. (I get to talk to her.) It's real good. She's staying with our oldest daughter. I got Steve back because he kept running away from his foster homes. (My oldest daughter) had him for awhile, and they weren't getting along. I got him back, finally about three or four years ago. He's running from the law right now. (I haven't seen Scott) since they took him. He doesn't know about his dad.. I don't think he knows about his dad passing away. He knows he has a mom and dad. He tells Linda that. Linda gets to see him. He knows he's got a mom and dad, but I don't think he knows about his dad passing away. (He knows that he comes from this band.) Linda (tells him. I know he's okay.) I've begun to understand him a lot more from Linda when Linda goes to see him. (I saw a picture of him) from last year, I think. I've got one of him when he was four, I think, just before they took him off the reserve. We used to have weekly visits with him. Hopefully, (I'll have him back.) No.. I would have to go through courts and I don't want to face that yet. Well, it brings back memories about court.. of going through court for him. In a way.. I guess I just.. don't like the thought of losing again. Some look for their parents. I've heard of some going back to their real parents. Scott doesn't know my name. Linda wants to tell him but she can't. I wish it was right now so I could see him. I wish they'd start letting the parents see their children, even not really tell the children who these other people are that are coming to see them if they don't remember them. In a way, I wish I could see Scott and be introduced to him as 'aunt' or something. (I would want to be introduced to him as aunt because) I wouldn't want to upset him because if these people are real nice people and he's happy.. as long as I saw him happy. I'd like to see him. I'd like to see them.. try to give the parents a chance to prove.. that they can look after.. Like, I don't think they gave us a chance to prove it. They just kept the three children. I'd like to see them give the parents a chance -- a second chance. Well it was painful.. I told my husband that I'm not having any more children. I

always thought it meant that I wasn't a good parent. I wish they'd let them stay on the reserve. I know that it's natives that are adopting Scott. (I feel better about that.) At least I know he's growing up knowing his culture. Cause a lot of them lose their culture if they are adopted by a different race. Even non-natives are going through the same thing. I want them to know where they're from. Cause it's pretty hard after they grow up to find out where they're originally from. They don't know anything about it. I'd like them to learn both ways not just one, cause it is hard on the children -- especially those that get adopted by different cultures. That's why, in a way, I'm glad it's natives that are adopting Scott. That way, he'll know where he's from. Cause I didn't know where I was.. really from. Where I came from.. Now I'm learning. I never got to know (my relatives) before they passed away."

Informant 12. (Z6, Nov.14/89)

Linda Duncan is the youngest sister of Scott. She is in her teens; during the time she was at home, she had to assume adult responsibilities in the care of her young brother. She has just returned to the reserve after an eight year period of serial foster care.

"I don't know my sister that well, I just got back five months ago. I don't know my grandparents or grandpa. I wanted (my brother) to be adopted. I did not want my mom.. that mom I was talking to now. I don't want him to know his mom or his family. (The reason is) just the way I've been treated. Plus, I wanted to know if he's been feeded all right and I don't want him to grow up wild, like my (older) brother. (When my brother was adopted, I felt) scared at first. I thought I would never get to see him again. I don't know. Just thinking the last names.. what he would be.. or would I ever find him again. (I found out I could talk to him) a couple of months after he was adopted. I was happy cause I could talk to him. I missed him a lot because, looking after a little one for five years, you'll miss him a lot. He told me that he was glad to see me cause he smiled and he don't cry no more when I'm going cause he knows I'm going to come right back. He knows whenever we want to see each other, we can, as long it's on the weekend. (He knows that he's Indian.) He's living with a couple of whites. It's a mixed home, adopted people. There's a child there that's handicapped, another one.. she's white but she had just a bit of Indian in her. And there's (my brother), fully Indian with a bit of Chinese in him on mom's side. (My brother knows about our band because I've told the adoptive parents) what kind of a band I'm in and what is my

mom like and how many people are in my family.. They ask me questions like.. they don't know anything about (my brother), so they come to me and ask me .. I come to them with what I know about him, because he gets into trouble what things he don't like. So I have to tell them that he don't like all this and that.. his likes and dislikes.. cause I know him by now. I don't know what I'd do if I couldn't see (my brother).. cause I've looked after him I.. pretty well like my little own because I used to change his diapers and I used to get him his bottle and when he was older, feed him or bath him then feed him and get him dressed, take off for school.. you know, day care. Make sure he's clean and everything. He used to call me 'mom' when I was little. Still does every now and then. (I'll be able to keep in touch with him forever.) As long as I got rides to go wherever he lives and back. So I might go see him this weekend or just for the day or the night. (He's not allowed to come to the reserve.) I have to go up there to see him. Once he starts understanding.. everything or if he could take it.. (He's turning eight.)"

Informant 17. (Z16, Dec.10/89)

Yvonne Duncan is Scott's oldest sister. She had not seen Scott since his apprehension as an infant.

"I got to see my brother Scott for the first time in five years! I got to see him for the first time. Oh, He's big! (That was just recently.) I tried again for a custody takeover on.. on my brother and my sister, but my sister was already made a permanent ward of the court. So I was just going to court.. for my brother but then.. if I won the case to get my brother, then the Ministry was going to look into making me a foster home.. for my sister.. but then again there was the pattern, plus there was.. closeness in between my house and my parents' home. You know, there wasn't much distance. But then I couldn't move off reserve, because they wanted them on reserve but then.. you know.. it was.. like going round and round in circles, you know. They didn't want them too close to mom and dad.. but I couldn't move off because they wanted to keep them on reserve. No matter how far of a distance, you know, I was on the reserve, I be still too close. It was an impossible situation. Plus, then again, was the fact that I wasn't experienced and both (my partner) and I were working, plus (he) had a reputation of having a bad temper, plus he had no dealings with children. The court (gave me all these reasons.) He got that information from the Ministry.. (Scott) is adopted in Chilliwack. I got to see him for the first time this Sunday. I wanted to hug him, eh. But I didn't know what I should do in front of his adoptive parents, you know. And I kind of.. I was standing there, you know, trying to hold back the tears. I was.. you know..

He's.. got buck teeth. Wow! you know, because we used to have him.. like when he was in a foster home, we used to have him for weekends and we used to go bike riding and everything. He remembers. He remembers the bike rides. He vaguely remembers me, but, you know, that's all he remembers. Mostly the bike rides. He saw Linda, too. (She had access to him all along. What I thought I wasn't to see him until May. Boy, I was surprised. Like I was sitting there and Linda goes, 'Hurry up, get your shoes on.' And I said, 'Why?' And she said, 'You're going to get to see someone!' I was off that couch, put my runners on and I was out the door. (I was having a hard time not to call him by his baby name. His adoptive parents don't want us to use that name.) He doesn't remember much of mom and dad and he just vaguely remembers me. His adoptive parents didn't change his last name. I just got to see him for like ten or fifteen minutes. His adoptive mom is the same age as me. They seem really nice, you know. Linda says he's got good parents because she's spent weekends with him. They just kind of kept quiet in the background and let me visit with Scott for a little while. It was really something. They will tell Scott who his parents are. I think when the girls (Sadie and Lily) get older, they have a thing on all of us, our background situation, like who I was with, and where we lived, what our phone numbers are, what our mailing addresses are and I guess it will be kept up to date, you know, by the Ministry. They will have access to that when they get older. Because they're starting to find children's natural parents when they turn nineteen."

d) "Custom" Adoption

Informant 5. (Z3, Nov.9/89)

Leo Howard defined "custom" adoption the following way:

"Just if somebody died, they moved in with the uncle or grandparent. There was nothing formal. It would be agreed on who should take the child in, whether an uncle or a grandparent or who ever they were closest to. Just a verbal agreement. (Sometimes the child went back to their biological parents), other times they just grew up. They knew they were adopted. (The child knew who their biological parents were.) A lot of time (the parents) were dead, eh. The other band members knew. A lot of the old timers, they keep on reminding you of who you're relatives are, eh, because they don't want you to sort of go around with your.. one of your first, second or third cousins. The third was sort of acceptable sometimes to marry them. Other than that, you weren't allowed, eh. That's why it was sort of important to know who were your cousins. (It's important now to know who the kids are and where they are.) The parents are really strict. They really frown upon it if they go with a close relative, eh. Sometimes like ---- is married with his third or fourth cousin. That was frowned

upon, but they got permission. Sometimes they say third is too close. Preferably fourth. Now, for custom adoption, they usually sign papers, eh. Get custody, family allowance, transfers, and some of them are now adopting them legally. (The biological parents) would help out financially and they'd visit or the kids would visit them. (They would know where they came from.) It's important to know who's who and who all your relatives are. Just kin, eh. It's, you know, good to know kinship. Somebody you can sort of go and visit and relate to. Say this is my cousin. Some are close. (People adopt because) they are kin, eh. They say, well he's my responsibility and you know, I've got this document, you know, and I don't want any more interference from you. If they had a tense relationship or something like that or they have foster children and they don't want them sort of taken away again by another relative, so they adopted them. Here's the papers, we have legal custody. So they get peace of mind. He's ours, you know. (Adopted children) can participate in name-giving ceremonies. They usually research their ancestors, eh. Even if they're Thompson. They research the Thompson names and it could be a Thompson name even if they live here. I'd like to ensure sort of like protection, eh, for the kid and the parents, have everything written out (so they get what they are entitled to) for their rights, so they can get every entitlement that I can get, you know, and to make sure the codes are compatible. We should have some sort of option here, a tribal adoption. The band could adopt them and we could look after them as a member of our community, eh, as opposed to the child going away and being lost, losing culture, identity. Losing a member, eh. We quite (sic) protective saying he's ours and he's our responsibility. We want to know sort of who's out there. A lot of times we don't really get a membership list. We don't really know any of these people, eh. So we can't do anything about that. So it's mostly the things we know here. We sort of don't want to lose them. The other ones out there, we don't have too much of clue. Who they are, where they are. If we knew we would like to take responsibility. (In tribal adoption the extended family, a group home, or a family would take them.) The most important thing is the protection of the children. With children, some how or other, when the child is adopted out, you know, they should make every effort to maintain its sort of identity, language and culture so that they don't become sort of totally alienated and having conflict, you know, of identity, clash of white values and Indian values. I know that happen just by the schools they attend. (Do it) by ensuring that the foster parents, adoptive parents sort of know all the history of that child. A child should have its rights. Also a parent should have its rights. For the betterment of the child. There's been recommendations made to MHR. It's difficult, you know, you're brown not white. Maybe we could put some recommendations into the band membership code."

Informant 2. (Z2, Nov.2/89)

Mildred Roberts defined "custom" adoption and discussed her knowledge of a band member who had been "custom" adopted.

"('Custom' adoption is..) Well, they take them in whether they can pay for it or not, you know. Just to give them a home and bring them up as their own and everybody just says don't even notice the difference. You know that they come from a different band.. they know but they don't.. My parents were ----'s father and mother and when they talk to me, oh your daughter or your father or your sister or whatever. We're not one big family, we don't stick together like that. But it's nice to know that you can go over here and that's your family. Lot of support. It was always there. Mostly it's health or death or births. You get all excited about the new baby in the family. We get together. We do get together and we go to a certain house and talk. We can reminisce. (Fred Masters).. his great uncle. They just took him in when he had no place to go. Raised him as their own and when they passed away, he got the land. (Custom adoption means) knowing that you are wanted. No money involved, nothing, no reason for a person to take you in. They just take you in because they want you. Love you and raise you, just like their own. There are a lot of these kids around here, that parents died with big families and there was nobody to take them in. We have two families all around my age that had.. to be brought up in foster homes, boarding schools and all that. Someone should have taken part of them 'cause then there was no social assistance. I think that's the reason I like custom, too, because you just go and take them in. Nobody telling you gotta do this and check your home and make sure and.. because that's a little scary too when Human Resources checks your home. So I was pretty lucky (because I was a foster parent, they knew my whole life.) Legal adoption seems to mean people want a child, and the child is not related to them. I don't think it really matters to them, but they don't know the background of that child. Say their great uncle might have been a big chief or a councillor, really looked up to. Things like that. They don't know those things so they can't tell the child. Like, your uncle is one of the strong councillors, you know, spoke up at meetings. Just little things like that. Makes you proud of being who you are. (Custom adoption means) everybody knows the background of the child. You can tell the child, you know, different things about his family. So it makes him proud, and you know who he's related to and everything. You can always say, well, this is your great aunt. I think the band looks more towards custom adoption. That child is a member of that band and from that reserve. My husband applied for adoption for a little boy and fine, we were going to get him, but we already had (our foster son) , so we said no but we didn't know where he was from or who his dad was. You don't know a

thing about this child you have. You can't help them. Any member of the family (can adopt.) A blood relation or a good friend. Cause you could live right next to somebody, call them auntie and this lady could take you in even though you're not related. That's what happened to this Fred Masters up here. He called this man uncle and he called the lady auntie. When his mother died, they just took him right in. (Children need to be adopted because) probably, like I say, the father's left and the mother has a bunch of little children and she remarries again and her family's a little too big for him. Things like that. Mostly it's death."

Informant 6. (Z15, Dec.6/89)

Sally Jenkins responded to interview questions about "custom" adoption based on her understanding of the term.

"I know the grandparents.. were the main people that.. like if anything ever happened they were the ones taking the child.. if anything happened to the parents. But they were more or less the guardians anyway. Cause they were the ones that taught our children the ways of the past and our culture. (That doesn't happen very often now) because people expect to get money to look after their own families. (Not necessarily the grandparents, aunts and uncles could, too.) There's a couple of grandparents have taken their kids. Now the grandparents don't do as much now. They go to bingo. They used to visit. I think it probably is to do with residential schools. A lot of our parents and aunts and uncles went to residential. Well, when they went to residential schools, they were only allowed home on special, you know, weekends, Christmas breaks, during the two months of summer holidays. The rest of the time they had to stay at the residential school. Being corrected at the residential schools if they did things the Indian way. The times they couldn't even speak their own language, they were slapped on their hands or something for talking. (If the grandparents can't look after the kids, now, they should be cared for) by another family that wants them, like maybe the extended family like aunt or uncle or cousin. (There would be enough people to look after the kids) if the Ministry probably wasn't involved. I think so. (The Ministry is a problem because) you have to go through like the questionnaire and, you know, you can't have a criminal record or anything like that. It is kind of difficult, I think, (to find parents.) Especially with us, with some of the problems some of the families are having abuses -- either physical or sexual. I think maybe if Chief and Council wrote a by-law for the families. Like if they were having difficulties or something with their families, they should give a by-law. Then it wouldn't be so hard on the families, you know, just going in there and demanding to see their child or whatever."

Informant 7. (Z8, Nov.21/89)

Frances John, a band member in her forties, recalls her knowledge of "custom" adoption.

"They used to take the oldest child from their oldest child, the grandparents would take their first child's first baby and raise it as their own and they would just naturally keep the grandparent's name. It was just amongst the family and themselves, just verbal. (It was the oldest baby because) the native people have different gifts that they pass on to the next generation. So that they would keep.. this child would be kept to be the one to learn what the grandparents had to pass down. The grandparents usually took the children if something happened to the parents. They would just automatically go to them. If they are not wards of Human Resources, then the family within will raise those children. (They do not inherit from the grandparents as much as they) used to years ago, cause most grandparents nowadays don't.. not too many raise them like they did many years ago. (I adopted) because I like children and I always wanted my own and I watched children that are being abused and not really cared for, you know. Some people have children that they don't plan on having and I got.. a soft heart for that sort. And it really hurts when I see them being mistreated and pushed aside. It really means a lot (to the band) to be able to keep them. But now they're having problems with trying to find somebody to look after them without it always falling on the same family. Maybe in a few years, if they have better housing, I think they will be able to do it. I don't know how they managed years ago with one little cabin and all these little ones living in there. Now we all have to have separate rooms. Now they want big mansions for.. like people who want to foster kids. You have to go by Human Resources capacity. Nowadays the kids usually go and find their birth parents. I would like to get Human Resources off your case when its your original family. Cause if it's your blood relative and you're willing to look after them, I don't see why they should have to come in and check up on you to see whether you're a fit parent. We do have our kids baptized and we do have god-parents and we usually pick somebody we think will carry out their duties when we are gone."

Informant 8. (Z18, Dec.11/89)

Fred Masters was "custom" adopted by his uncle and aunt when he was an infant. He is now in his late sixties and takes great pride in his work history in the logging industry, both in the United States and in Canada.

"I guess the welfare system came out, you know. They were trying to put me in a orphanage and I wouldn't go. I wouldn't accept it and I waited till I got old enough where I could go logging. So I waited till then so I was twelve years old. Well, in fact I started when I was eleven. I worked out here at the lake. In them days they used to take Indian kids from any home, you know, so that's what they tried to do to me. My mother lived in Vancouver, I don't know what a hand (the Welfare) had in it because.. They didn't know the relationship between us, combined, you know, generations, like my great-grandma. (My uncle and aunt) looked after me after I was born. That's where I learned logging. (My uncle) adopted me. I was adopted to the tribe, you know. It was done.. most people never had the opportunity that I had, I was voted in. It was legally. I was four or five. (I took my uncle's name. I called them) Mom and Dad. My grandmother died of pneumonia, then my mother probably couldn't take care of me at that time, that was during .. because of the Depression and it was really tough. (I inherited from my uncle.) There was documents (one of the councillors) told me he'd seen a will that was made out to me. There's land. It was ownership. (In the old days, grandparents looked after the kids.) All my kids are Master's.. The thing that makes it is, you know, the feeling you had is because of the family tree. It's just there. there's more (Master's) in Langley, you know. (The Master's are my family.) I was a branch to them. Well, from my experience, I believe we should screen the person. Look at his background; if he's an alcoholic, never put one in a alcoholic home, because I know what alcoholics are and I believe they should really screen the person. Look at their records, see what they are. Get into the background. I've seen so many cases of abuse, even their own kids."

Informant 3. (Z12, Dec.4/89)

Ethel Gladue is an Elder in the Seabird Island band. Her experience with adoption has been as a grandmother, taking responsibility for her grandchildren. This type of care is another kind of care-giving that is part of the inclusive term "custom" adoption. She does not use this term for her role in the life of these children, rather she says she just "takes care of them".

"Well anyway, a long time ago they used to visit.. people would visit. They'd sit down, sit you across the room, there, and they'd tell you.. give you advice on what to do. They don't any more. Not like that any more. (The grand-

parents would look after the children if there were family problems.) The next relative would take and look after them if they had to. Just looking after them and they never got paid for it, either. (It didn't have to be a blood relative.) No, I've never heard (the word 'adoption' used to describe any child welfare action.) They just take them in and look after them. Help out with whatever. Just part of the family. Most of the bands are.. they have respect for people. If it's their people, well then they look after them. I think the band would like to see their people stay on the reserve and not move away. It's because we belong here. There are some reserves where they want all their band members but nobody else. I think this band would like to have their own people. All the time, all the time, I have my grandchildren with me, most of the time. Oh, yeah, you know, they're always around. They come and take turns, come and stay with me. Well, there's lots of them have problems, too, eh. So they come and stay until they get everything all ironed out and they go and stay in their own place. There's all kinds of problems every which way. Family problems. I tell them how I was brought up when I was young and how hard we had to work to survive, not like to-day. People just sit around and don't do nothing. They don't know how to work. I tell them they got to learn how to cook, got to learn how to clean, got to learn how to do everything if you want a family when you grow up. There's certain way to talk to children that have problems. It's hard you know. You sit down, you got to have a real open mind, you know what you're going to talk about, when you talk to problem children. It's hard. I know, all my children I stayed home with them. I also worked but I tried to stay home most of the time. I didn't leave them. But there was no such thing as baby sitters when we were young mothers. We stayed home all the time. We didn't went no where. We didn't go to parties, I guess when we got older we did.. but, it was even more important to stay home with the children when you had started to got grandchildren. Those grandchildren of mine mean more to me than my children. Why? I'm closer to them. It makes you feel like you're important. It really is."

Informant 16. (Z9, Nov.30/89)

Ida Duncan experienced "custom" adoption herself. She was adopted at the age of three months. Similar to Ethel Gladue's experience, Ida's experience was short term care by a number of extended family members. She stayed with a number of relatives while her father worked. When her father died, the "custom" care ended and she was sent to residential school.

"A relative.. would take over like they did to me when my mother passed away. I was only three months old. I.. went from one.. relative to the other cause my dad couldn't look after me. He was always working, if he wasn't working, he was out fishing. So.. my aunts and uncles took over on this, my father's (side). I moved all the time. Well they took turns looking after me.. and when my dad was home, I'd back and stay with him and as soon as it was time for him to go back out.. He was gone a lot of the time, he was hardly ever home. He had a trapline, he had.. fishing out on the coast and then if he wasn't fishing, he was logging. My two oldest brothers were in.. Sechelt residential school and my sister and younger brother were in Kuper Island residential school. I went to residential school when I wasn't quite nine yet.. that's when my dad passed away. (A relative put me there.) The first two years, I stayed right over there with my aunt in Sechelt (and went to the residential school there.) Well, (my brother) got married, and then I was allowed to.. come home with him.. back to the Island. I stayed with (him) and his wife. I stayed with him till I met my husband in '57 (then I got married.) I was only fifteen. At least it lasted thirty years before he passed away. (I didn't call my aunts and uncles 'mom and dad'.) I used to call them by their name like my dad; I didn't call him 'dad'. (I called my grandparents by their first name.) I didn't know my.. my mother's name. I didn't know her."

Informant 13. (Z13, Dec.5/89)

Robert Smiley was "custom" adopted as a child by his grandfather. At the age of eleven, Robert began work in the logging industry. His personal experience and his concern for the large Indian population in Canadian prisons has led him to formulate very strong ideas on the use of spirituality to bring natives back to their own way of doing things.

"The grandparents or some other relation would look after them. They would look after them forever. (They would know who their own parents were) because you can not hide and disturb their mind, cause you're playing with their minds once you say.. then you're teaching them hate by not telling them who their parents are if they're in the spiritual world, you have to tell them they're no longer here. You can't lie to them because you're teaching them how to lie and that is something that has to be eliminated. You can not take an Indian child and put it in a white home or a Chinese home because you are taking away the culture. This

will start a child to rebel... It will, if you don't bring them to Indian people and teach them Indian ways, they are going to rebel. They will start hating their foster parents. (They will begin by committing small transgressions which they will get away with.) Then they will try for something bigger. Then the law comes in or the priest and the social worker. Now that child hates the foster parent, he hates the priest, he hates the law (and he hates himself.) He's going to rebel, so therefore he's going to try something even more drastic so he'll end up in jail or, you know, a youth home. So therefore there's other people, like the judge, he's going to hate the judge. The judge may be a white person so therefore he's going to hate all white people. And then there's the warden and the guards. He hates everyone. (He loses self-respect.) There's many many in the prisons to-day. The population of the prisons across Canada is one third of the population of our Indian people, you know. And when (our population is only one percent of the population of Canada.. Many of the inmates went through a time of separation from their family.) They are very bitter. (White families who have adopted a native child) should bring them to Indian gatherings, whatever kind, from whatever their area they come from. They would be welcomed. It's important to the child (to keep him on the reserve.) (I was adopted by my grandfather.) It was just their word. I was registered (under his name.) My great-grandmother gave him some land up here and I still have that land. That's the reason I was adopted to (him.) He didn't have any sons to will the land to. (The land is important) because it is Mother Earth. It provides for us. It provides everything, everything that we need, the clothing, the wood, the shelter, the warmth, everything is here that we need. All we have to remember is how to inherit it and look after it. To my grandfather, I called him 'dad'. He taught me how to hunt, he taught me how to fish, taught me how to fall a tree by myself with a cross-cut saw, taught me how to take care of the garden, how to take care of the soil, taught me how to take care of the fruit, to put it in the cellar for the winter months, vegetables, how to take care of the horses, how to take care of the cows, how to smoke meat, how to smoke fish, how to salt salmon. That was the teaching of how not to be lazy, okay. (My great-grandfather taught me spiritual things.) I got my (Indian name) from my great-grandmother. (To adopt) you can not be.. practising.. bad ways. You see, it's up to the elders to come together to.. say.. that person is right. That's the way it was years ago. To us the elders are very important if they are not practising alcohol. I'd like to see (the children) adopted on the reserve. It would be a lot different if we were self-governed our own selves. The decisions would be a lot easier. The Social Services are so much red tape. There's so much duplication of papers. I was told that you have to go and stay with your grandfather so he can raise you. My great-grandmother said, 'That land is going to be yours.' Well, that's something to work for."

Informant 14. (Z19, Dec.12/89)

John White's father was custom adopted. This adoption experience was atypical, in that his grandfather was white, which concerned some band members. John White, in his thirties, is a professional, working on the reserve. He has invested a lot of time researching the Sto'lo ways and incorporating those values into his life.

"My dad's mother, who was my (great-)grandfather's daughter.. passed away giving birth to my father and Pap brought him up, like Pap was my (great-)grandfather and (my father) was considered.. Pap's son. (My dad called him 'dad'.) My dad's was a "custom" adoption and it was tried some years later.. from different people on reserve to get, like my father and us, you know, kicked off the reserve because it wasn't legal. It wasn't on paper from a court, but it stood up as a "custom" adoption (with both the court and the Band Council.) It was important in the sense that it happened. It was like almost a replacement of parents, where one is taken away and another is inserted. It was generally accepted. The reason why they wanted us kicked off is because my dad's father was white and they were getting a little sticky about that. (My father inherited as a son. My grandfather's estate was divided into four and my dad was one recipient.) He was brought up as a son and looked at Pap as a father. (People adopt because) it's usually a need. I'm thinking of one.. one particular case now where.. a member.. of Seabird..like a niece or, you know, distant cousin and who was murdered and she left..a daughter and this particular person, because he was the oldest, you know, the oldest responsible one, he took her in and brought her up as his own and that was like a traditional adoption thing, but I believe, two or three years ago, he got papers saying that she was legally adopted. So.. before that it was accepted in the community that that was the process, but I guess the legal status with D.I.A. they needed that stuff on paper. (If a child's parents could not look after the child, the child) would automatically be assumed by another member of the family; if not, the grandparents would. Everybody in the family would know, and then everybody in the band would accept. That was the general practice. In my knowledge, ('custom' adoption) is possible, I know it's happened and it's happening. On a legal sense, where.. in the ones that I know of that have happened and have taken place, you know, custom.. It's just that, you know, there's

no broadcast over the radio, nothing in the newspapers where the outsiders, you know, we call outsiders the ones outside of the tradition, would find out about and say hey that's not right.. you should go through all these legal bits. (The child) is made aware of who they are, who their parents are. I think the one thing that stands in the way of the legal part, papers, lawyers, court, judge, I'm thinking of a case where a car crash left two children who were related to members on the reserve and who wanted the children but couldn't get them. Then the child was placed in a foster home outside of the community. That's one of the things that kind of got people a little more, you know, more vocalized on adoption matters and taking families in. One of the problems with (the welfare) system is there's no knowledge or there may be knowledge but there is no understanding for extended family. Their thinking (that) extended family is someone you know, way over there but in reality, it's a bond. Everybody is like webbed, webbed together through family and when a crisis situation comes up, then it's the family's responsibility to, you know.. It's like a cut on your hand, you know, and your body heals it. The extended family is like your body if there are any cuts or bruises or anything, they all pull together. They're there for support and comfort and love. (The non-native community) is more segregated or separated. That's one of the fears I see now. A long time ago the extended family was much much closer than it is now. Like here, my brother's children, you know, would be my sons and daughters, as well. But what D.I.A. has done and C.M.H.C. (Canada Mortgaging and Housing Corporation), saying that you can't live in one house. Each head of the household has to have their own house and its kind of, you know, pulling that bondage, the natural bondage away. C.M.H.C. is saying only nuclear families in a household. That's what's really.. It's degrading to us. We can't do anything.. If we want a house, that's what you got to do to get it. I think the difference is that for example the East Indian or Oriental communities have that and the only understanding that I have is that it's permitted is that they've come from a.. another place and we come from here and, you know, are treated totally different, although it's supposed to be the same and the new constitution is supposed to be equality and it's not. It looks good on paper but in reality it's much much more diverged from the thing, and you know, I think if it keeps on then it may be a choice of doing more damage than what it's done. On Seabird, I know there are like four different families, you know, clusters who are really close. I've seen it on the other reserves where brother hates brother and brother hates sister. Whereas if they are under the one roof, there is never any chance of that. Those kinds of strifes, it was always taken care of right away. (If we went back to custom adoption), there would have to be a lot of education process going on. (If the grandparents don't feel that custom adoption is part of their role), (the children would) be let go. The band wouldn't be there. The band would be like

severed and what I mean by 'let go' is being given up for adoption outside or taken. The immediate family, extended family.. It would (be) by family, like the process is the immediate family first, then the extended family second and then the community is third. It would be like aunts, uncles or grandparents first, then it would be cousins second and then the community, you know, not necessarily related, but the community I feel has an obligation for, you know, its members. For example, (my cousin) asked a fourth cousin to take care of him (when his mother met with an accident. They called each other 'brother') and that's the strength of the bond and it's accepted, you know, within the family. (The kids have to be kept here) for cultural survival. Without.. without people there's no culture, human culture. And without children, there can't be any children because, you know, we come back, but we come back as something.. something different than what we are now. But.. for a culture or tradition to survive, they need young people -- seeds -- and children are seeds. (I would like) to do away with the red tape, so the process of getting from one door to the next door wouldn't be so long and sometimes a lot more, you know, dragged on than it should be. For example, if a court deals with adoptions once every other month, you know, if your's happens at the end of one time, you have such a long time to go. That's one thing that kind of puts a needle in everything is when you're dealing with papers, you know. You see it written down and it's always there, you know, you can go to it in a month or whatever but in reality, where living lives are concerned, it has to be, you know, done now and not messing with their minds or their bodies. (My criteria for a good place for a child would begin with) trust. I'm saying this from, you know, the native and the non-native perspective. There's a lot of what's termed paternalism on the D.I.A.'s part. We can't take care of ourselves. We can't do anything ourselves and yet, if they look back.. far enough, they'd find out that.. you know, that we're.. the roles were reversed, you know, two or three hundred years ago in this part of the continent. It's so easy to block things out. The thinking is really hard to tag on.. the thinking process where in my upbringing, everything is ours, you know, it's.. mine, it's yours if you want it. But when I went to Agassiz school.. things changed. It wasn't 'ours' any more, it was mine and you can't have it. And that's the way government is. D.I.A., instead of.. I guess they understand the process otherwise they wouldn't be doing it.. to hinder our development is, you know.. give us the reins or give us the wheel and the gas pedal and you know, let us.. let us go.. I'm sure that we can, you know, show people things that everybody can learn by. Because, you know, the thinking process isn't mine, it's ours and if I can do something that would benefit somebody else and if I don't do it then, you know, I'm not a good person.. And, whereas, the other side is if I can do something, then, you know, I want the money for it first. That's a constant struggle and you know, we are

recognizing, you know, that, you know, even in our own communities now where I wouldn't do anything unless you pay me for it, you know. That thinking attitude. It's been done to them so they're doing it to others. They've been taught that in, you know, residential schools. An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth. All that, you know, is going to change with education. Hopefully, my grandchildren will have a little better life than we have now. All that with the understanding that you can't go back. That's got to be on both sides."

Informant 19. (Z10, Nov.30/89)

Sarah White, in her thirties, has a professional job on the reserve. She has experienced many foster care and adoption cases and is concerned for the welfare of the children and the band. Like her brother, John White, Sarah's own personal experience of adoption concerns the "custom" adoption of her father.

"Dad was approximately two months old when his mother died so his grandfather took him in and his father left because of his job to go down to Seattle. He couldn't care for him on the ship and Pap took him in and amongst his.. immediate family.. he adopted dad into that family.. to the extent of.. willing property down to dad and his five sons. My mom says (my dad was not adopted legally.) Mom said that Pap paid \$200 to the lawyer to.. declare dad an Indian and then Pap gave.. dad \$170 to get our names legally changed from Howard's to White's. Dad never did that so we are Howard's, legally. I never realized that till I started to come working here. It was about three or four or five years ago. It was quite a shock. I always used White, I went to school as White. I never knew the grandparents. Dad passed away when I was nine years old. (I found out he was "custom" adopted) probably when I started working here. Cause the subject never came up. I didn't know dad well enough.. who he was, but my older brother knew who he was. It never bothered me. I didn't have any grandparents or father so it didn't have no impact. But I want to find who dad's side of the family is. (In "custom" adoption) mostly it's grandchildren. Grandparents taking in grandchildren. (They don't go through Social Services.) It was just a natural occurrence that grandparents stepped in when the parents were unable. With fostering, you're restricted to custody, then you had to get the Ministry's permission for education, religion, etc. But the grandparents took them and raised them as their own so religion and education.. and took on the financial burden of this child, so they didn't have to get permission. They were classed as their children until the parents came back. (Property) was passed down to them. They treated (the children) a little more special than their own children. It's a little joke.. that you know, that when

a child comes in, it has limited time with you. It's given more time because you know it's going to go very soon. It was treated more special because the parents were always coming back. (The child knew that it had birth parents.) Most of the time, they had every day contact and they could stay with the mother. There was no threat of this person coming back and scooping the child away. It was always done out of courtesy and politeness. That being our system from way back when. The elders raised the children until they were a certain age, and then they were passed on to the parents.. And then the parents became elders and raised their children and it kept on going. And now it's gone. That's the reason we need support on Seabird. The parents nowadays don't have the support of grandparents. And that's why the Ministry comes in and takes the kids away. There's a lot of reasons (why this happened.) Residential schools -- the kids coming back, not knowing their families, raised in a different system. Nowadays, it had a lot to do with the housing situation. Whereas, it used to be multi-dwellings, now there's only single family. Now if there's more than two people in that home, then it's not allowed under social housing policy. So that person has to leave. (So a grandparent can't live with the family) unless they are paying rent. It's very difficult. When they went to the residential school, most of the grandparents spoke only Indian and partial English. They felt sort of embarrassed and ashamed. (The residential school system took away the job of the grandparents.) They can't (reclaim that role.) Well, the school is trying to get it's a new project, where the children are taught from the cradle by the elders, all the way through the school system. But to get back the protection that existed back then.. I don't see how it can be because most of the grandparents that we have now went to residential schools. They were separated from that system. Most of them have their own lives and they don't want to stay home and look after their kids' children any more. They don't want to do it any more. Or else they want to get paid for it. Adoption, basically, never happened before the Ministry came in. Our chief and council, they used to play a big role in dealing with social issues on Seabird. If there was a family fight or somebody wasn't taking care of the children, either the chief and council went or one member of them would visit the family and sit down and talk to them to try to see what's best for the situation. It seemed so perfect -- the ideal behind it was perfect. They weren't paid to do it. They never got no money. The Department (decided that the chief and council should have a social worker do their job.) I don't think chief and council realized what they were getting into when they started.. setting up all the (Department of Indian Affairs) programs on reserve. Took away a lot of their personal contact between the people. And even the housing -- changing the housing from.. sometimes three or four families in one home, changing it to individual families. It destroyed.. a lot of teachings that happened and a lot of

the support.. I'd say all of the support and it took away so much when they switched. I don't think they realized that cause they don't write it down. The old people, they're so.. they don't know what's happening. And it's sad for them to see so many of our young kids going astray.. going with second cousins, going with anybody they want for the short term, rather than the long term that they went through. There used to be (social sanctions for people who married closer than fourth cousins,) but there are so many.. so many of our ancestors had so many flings that you don't really know who your cousins are. It's supposed to be third. Third is really scary. Second is really, really, really scary. Fourth is safe. If.. in mom's generation.. she was third cousins to dad and Pap wanted mom to be married to dad. It was all arranged. It wasn't.. attraction, love. And mom (grandmother) wanted mom to marry dad. So it was all arranged. Third cousins and they were cutting it really close and they didn't have any say in it, it was all arranged. Mom was fifteen when she got together with dad and she is fifty-nine now. That wasn't very far away and they were still arranging marriages. (Arranging marriages) goes with self-esteem. Like you can't go with her because she is not of your class. There is a major class system here. Like, these are the ones that you should go with and the next line is you stay with this and you can't go any lower and you can't go any higher. The ones that originally came here. There was seven major families that first moved up to Seabird and then you have the.. You had the ones that first came here and used the land and then you have the ones that came here and settled here without doing anything.. and then you have the ones that came last. It's hard to know names. 'First-comers' (a term for) the ones that came here first. (For the other levels,) it's just an understanding.. It's nothing like we talk every day about.. it's just ingrained in us. You know who you can play with, as children. That's where it started for me.. as a child. Who you could play with and who you couldn't play with. (For dating), mom was very strict and that goes along with the social problems at Seabird. But she made you aware of who your cousins were and who you could go out with cause there was this class down here that you're not supposed to be with. She always told me, 'If you're going to marry, marry a white guy. You know who your cousins are then.' (In 'custom' adoption,) the grandparents took responsibility of the.. children when their parents were out trapping or fishing. And then after.. when the new employment started working eight hours a day at a certain place, it was natural that the grandparents stayed home and looked after the kids and the adults who were healthy, went out and worked. (For social problems,) it was expected that the grandparents would look after the children. Nowadays, you would say aunts and uncles instead of grandparents. It's not necessarily a relative too. It can be a person taking on the responsibility of raising and educating a child that is yours through family ties or.. friends. 'Mommy' is for

mommy (meaning biological mother), 'mom' is for grandma or nana, 'tian' was for mom. Everybody was mom or auntie or uncle, even if they weren't your natural aunt or uncle. There are a lot of kids who went through the Ministry, their foster moms are always 'moms'. I knew a girl who has seven moms. But mommy was mommy. That was never taken away from the natural mother. (The participation of the Ministry in child welfare) changes a lot. Where it used to be child-centred, it is care-giver centred. The needs of the child used to be the focal point. Like the child needed you. Nowadays, its.. the care-giver needs this child so she can get money to do this and this and this. It's changed the whole focus of the way it was. I don't think anything's going to change it because it's here now. The kids know and they act out quite a lot because of it. And then you have others that don't get paid for it and their child's fitting in. Once you start getting money for something.. it changes your whole focus from what you hope to be the outcome, to the person's income. (If the band returned to 'custom' adoption,) we wouldn't pay them. If they allow 'custom' adoption, we'd get most of our children back. We wouldn't have to pay so much to the Ministry to take care of them and the band knows which homes are the most appropriate. We have a vast number of appropriate homes for specific children. Most of the families around here, if you ask them.. if one of their families were having a problem and asked them to take their child in for awhile, I would say seventy-five percent of them would take the child in willingly with no payment. There's lots of homes. There's a little cautious homes, that if you say the Ministry's going to be involved, they're out of there. You'll never see them again. But if the band goes in there and does the required paperwork for the Department, then there isn't really that much hassle. The child comes in and everybody is happy. I think if the Ministry recognized ('custom' adoption,) and recognized our ability for x number of years of practising this, it'll make us that much stronger when we go into court. Our members wouldn't have to fill out their ten page article because we know them already and we've been doing it for so long. It'll help out lots in court and even before court cases, if they would recognize it. Band members shouldn't have to go through that process. Everybody in the band knows them and they should have the child. In previous years, the band council were the social workers, policemen, judge, jury. They were everything. I don't think they're ready to deal with sexual abuse cases. (But they can enforce recommendations made by probation, crown council or the Ministry.) Right now when we go through a court case, it's either (the social worker,) the parents and the child. If we got back to 'custom' adoption, its more or less the community that's involved in the child and the child becomes a community responsibility. In Susan's case, there was mass support for this lady to get this child. The child was becoming a permanent ward of the Ministry for adoption and even the Ministry when they came out to do the

home-study, they wanted the child to come back, which was unusual. Everybody got behind her. She worked with the grandmother. They sat down and talked when the child can go to visit and when she can visit when they can see each other. You never see that in any case where it's so.. it was handled nicely. Both parties agreed to it. (If she had been adopted off reserve,) she would never have seen her grandmother, she would never have known this community. She'd have been lost to us. It would have been a complete separation. You got to have that family tie. The Chilliwack court system is awful. They're very prejudiced. They have their own biases about.. well most of the people who go through the court system are drunks. Down in Vancouver, they're more compassionate and open to suggestions. We have no choice of the court venue. It's wherever the parent and the child are. I don't think I've ever gone through a case where it was child-centred. (Care on the reserve) has always been that way. In 'custom' adoption, back in the old days, it was assumed that the children, if anything happened to the parents, they went to the grandparents. If the grandparents weren't around, then it's who the parent wanted the children to go to. So it's aunts, uncles, whoever will benefit the child. Now, we're forced into a situation where we have to work with the Ministry and the Ministry's standards have to be young enough to care for the children and financially able to care for the child. So that takes the grandparents out of the picture and probably about seventy-five percent of the extended family out of the picture. You're looking at further away into the extended family. The grandparents feel left out; they feel they don't have anything to offer anyone because that part of their life is taken away. They don't have that much contact with the children any more, because.. they get really depressed and.. they don't want to have anything to do with the child because the Ministry or whoever said they're not capable of looking after the child. It's a major insult for them. I was really surprised in these past years on how personal they take it if you don't go and ask them first. Once the grandparents approve or acknowledge what you are doing for the child, then the rest of the family comes around. They're very important, even though they're not treated with the same respect and acknowledged for their position the way they were a long time ago. They still have that.. underlying power. I don't think none of us have forgotten, we just don't use it all the time. I would say.. probably sixty or seventy percent of the grandparents would (take on the role of care-giver, now.) It would help us out a lot (if the Ministry of Social Services' criteria for age was removed.) I find that the best homes are the ones where they're older. They've been through it, they've reached whatever goal they wanted to and they're not in a rush to do things. They're more slowed down, paced with the children. Cause the children aren't into this big hype that us middle-aged people are still trying for. But they're right-paced for our kids and they're.. they don't have all the work as

the centerpoint.. More understanding. It's a better situation, I think when the grandparent or extended family takes in this child. The child benefits more out of that situation. They're treated special because of where they come from and why they're there. The child is given space to be its own. Whereas, if it's our child, I want it to be in a certain role, certain model and we expect so much out of them. In 'custom' adoption, they're not placed in that high risk position. Nobody wants to acknowledge that the band did anything around child welfare or protection concerns or 'custom' adoption. They don't want to acknowledge.. I don't know if it's because it's not written or what, but they keep implying that we should take over our own child welfare. We should get involved in this program or that program. We've always been doing that. Just acknowledge that the bands are doing what nobody else is willing to do because of jurisdiction. I don't want to be political and say that we should be our own government.. that's for the politicians. But just to be acknowledged.. that we are experienced in child welfare matters and that we shouldn't have B.A.'s and M.A.'s. Because (we have) equal practical experience to social workers, we're just not familiar with Ministry of Social Services forms and paper work. Chief and council have vast knowledge so they could be the superintendent. It's an underlying assumption that they're supposed to be because that's what they did. (Even if a band member was to get the credentials required, I don't think it would make any difference. We still wouldn't have as much credibility as a non-native.) I've never felt out-right prejudice (with the D.I.A.,) but its.. they know better than I do, maybe? I'd like to see the old way it was done. Like now, we're so secretive and everything is so.. so structured like the non-Indians. It's a family problem and the family is supposed to deal with it. I'd like to bring it back to where it was a community problem and it was our responsibility as adults to see that the children were cared for and the role of the elders were to teach the children and we're supposed to work and provide the shelter and the food. That role where the community got back together to work out the problems out rather than the family working it out. Because when they keep it as a secret, you can't really do anything, but everybody knows about it but it's supposed to be the family's problem. It takes years to solve anything. Where a community got together and started working with them and they all had the same ideas and those families knew where everybody stood.. it would solve a lot of problems. Banishment would be great. I would love to bring that one back. Chilliwack had a Council of Elders; if they run into any problems, it's brought to the council. They've more of a people attitude and if they need advice from the legal system, then they call.. like politicians and they explain the situation legally or politically and then the council makes the decision, not the band council but the elders. I'd like to bring that back. Before they used.. each council member was assigned like policeman, justice, another one

was family problems and another one employment, and the chief did all of them. If there was any problems, then the chief plus a councillor went out to the family, sat down and talked to them and then it went away. And if it was a big community issue, they had a community meeting and talked it over (until a consensus was reached.) It makes me envious now because they had all this support. Now, it's just (separate workers in social work, health, employment, and education.) It's not working because they are separating all the parts of the body. Of course, that's policy and that's the only way you can get the positions funded on the reserve. They (Department of Indian Affairs) have had two hundred years of experience, they should know something. The open adoption is working so far. There are a lot of grandparents that didn't go through the (residential school) system, or fought the system if they went through it. (They are really learning from the other elders.) (Knowing how to be an Indian) is in us. We all have it in us. It's just (a matter of) awakening it and remembering."

4. Request For Ethical Review



The University of British Columbia Behavioural Sciences Screening Committee
For Research and Other Studies Involving Human Subjects.

REQUEST FOR ETHICAL REVIEW

1 Principal Investigator (or faculty advisor) Dr. Michael Kew	3 UBC Department Anthropology	4 Phone Number 228-2878
2 Student or Co-Investigator(s) Elizabeth Nordlund	5 Granting Agency N/A	6 Project Period Sept./89 - April/90
7 Title of Project Traditional Adoption in the Seabird Island Indian Band.		

ALL INFORMATION REQUESTED IN THIS FORM MUST BE TYPEWRITTEN IN THE SPACE PROVIDED.

*** NOTE : IF THE PROJECT IS LIMITED TO ONE OF THE FOLLOWING, PLEASE CHECK THE APPROPRIATE BOX AND COMPLETE AND SUBMIT ONLY PAGES 1 AND 2 OF THIS FORM:

- ☐ observation without intervention. (i.e. no tests, interviews or questionnaires)
- ☐ interviews of professional colleagues in the fields of law or business (not Education) in which no invasion of an individual's personal privacy or possible jeopardy of employment status is involved. (Summarize interview/questionnaire content in item #12 or attach a copy)
- ☐ UBC course or programme evaluation
- ☐ modification of existing approved protocol # : indicate changes only and submit copies of any revised attachments.

8 Summary of purpose and objectives of project (Must be typewritten in this space)

The Ministry of Social Services and Housing has placed native children in permanent placement or adoption as a result of apprehension. The Band would prefer to see these children placed within the Band through 'custom adoption'. In apprehension and placement court cases the Band has needed documented information defining 'custom adoption' and data regarding the benefits of this traditional process. This study will investigate and document the process and results of adoption. The following social issues will provide a theoretical framework: the nature of kinship and adoption, the constitution of families, the relationship between biological and adoptive families, biological vs sociological reproduction, and the definition of kin as biological vs sociological. Objectives: to discover the meaning of and document the process and results of the various kinds of adoption that the Band has experienced; to discover what the Band's experience has been with these kinds of adoption; to identify and describe cases of adoption that exist; to discover the framework of adoption policy in Canada and B.C. as it relates to Indian adoption.

SIGNATURES

9 Principal Investigator (or faculty advisor) S.M. 25/89 Date	10 Student or Co-Investigator(s) (if applicable) September 20, 1989 Date	11 UBC Department Head or Dean S.M. 25/89 Date
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5. Letter of Permission to Conduct Interviews With Band Members

Seabird Island Band
Box 650
Agassiz, B.C.
VOM 1A0 •
September 18, 1989.

Dr. Michael Kew
Dept. of Anthropology & Sociology
University of British Columbia
6303 Northwest Marine Drive
Vancouver, B.C.
V6T 2B2

Dear Dr. Kew:

I give Elizabeth Nordlund, a graduate student in the M.A.
program in Anthropology at the University of British Columbia,
permission to conduct her research project entitled
Traditional Adoption in the Seabird Island Band. I give her
permission to interview Band Members for this project.

Sincerely,

Archie Charles, Chief
Seabird Island Band

6. Informed Consent Form

Project Title:

Traditional Adoption in the Seabird Island Indian Band

Researcher: Elizabeth Nordlund (604) 228-2878 (message)
c/o Dr. Michael Kew
Department of Anthropology and Sociology
University of British Columbia
Vancouver, B.C.

Informed Consent Form

I agree to be interviewed by Elizabeth Nordlund, who is doing a research project on adoption in the Seabird Island Band.

I understand that the material will be confidential, that my name will not be identified and that a pseudonym will be used to affect this confidentiality.

I understand that I may withdraw from the interview at any time, without prejudice.

I understand that the interview will be less than two hours.

I understand that Elizabeth Nordlund will be available to answer any question I might have with regard to the interview procedures.

I understand that a copy of the research results will be made available to me on application when the project is completed.

I acknowledge receipt of a copy of this consent form.

Date: _____ Signature _____

7. Interview Questions

- a) Who are the members of your family?
- b) Are any of these people adopted?
- c) What are their relationships to you?
- d) What did you call your child before you adopted her?
- e) What was your relationship to the child prior to adoption?
- f) Can you identify the people in these photographs?
- g) What relation are they to you?
- h) What has been your experience with adoption?
- i) How do you feel about this experience?
- j) How did this adoption work out?
- k) What does this kind of adoption mean to you? to the Band?
- l) If a member of the family or a close friend takes on the responsibility of looking after a child, what is that called?
- m) What was 'custom' adoption?
- n) What is 'custom' adoption?
- o) What does it mean to you? to the Band?
- p) How does Indian adoption take place?
- q) Why do people adopt?
- r) Who is allowed to adopt a person?
- s) Who can be adopted? For what reasons?
- t) What are the rights and obligations of a parent who adopts?
- u) Are these different from a parent who only raises their own children?
- v) Why is land important?
- w) What position in the Band would an adopted person have?
- x) Can an adopted person receive Indian names?
- y) Does adoption last forever?
- z) Does a person who is adopted know who their birth parents are?
- aa) Would Band members know this information?
- bb) Are there any changes you would like to see in adoption procedures?
- cc) Have you anything else you would like to add?