

IV. Identity in Diversity

My friend, I am going to tell you the story of my life, as you wish; and if it were only the story of my life I think I would not tell it; for what is one man that he should make much of his winters, even when they bend him like a heavy snow?... But now I can see it all as from a lonely hilltop, I know it was the story of a mighty vision given to a man too weak to use it; of a holy tree that should have flourished in a people's heart with flowers and singing birds, and now is withered; and of a people's dream that died in bloody snow (Black Elk and Neihardt 1972: 1-2).

Your identity, how you view yourself and your life, is a rich complexity of images, ideas, and associations. It includes your own judgements about where you fit in the scheme of things, as well as your impressions of how others judge you. Your identity is formed in part by the various societies you belong to — the concentric and overlapping circles that represent the various groups of friends, family, and associates that you interact with.

A. How Identity Develops

Social psychologists study the way society shapes individual identity. Some researchers suggest that we develop our identities partly in response to the *expectations* that others have of us. These expectations vary depending on a person's age, family status, religion, sex, education, job, and a host of other factors. For example, a two-year-old child is expected to behave in certain ways; for older children, there is a different set of expectations.

What is it that causes a person to take an expectation seriously and make it part of his or her identity? According to some social psychologists, for this to happen a person must first develop a *commitment* to someone or something — to another person, to a group or even to a system of ideas such as a political system or a religion. When this commitment takes hold, the person's identity changes to accommodate it. In social science terms, the person "internalizes" the commitment.

In the case of a young child, this process might involve a commitment to a parent or a teacher — someone the child loves or respects. The parent's or the teacher's expectations of the child will then have a profound influence on the child's sense of identity as well as on the child's behavior. If for example, a teacher repeatedly tells a child that he is bad, the child may begin to view himself as incorrigible and behave accordingly. The child will perform the role expected of him and will allocate time and attention to this aspect of his identity (Stryker 1987: 94-5). Furthermore, when the child exhibits "bad" behavior, other

will begin to expect him to misbehave regularly, and this expectation may further reinforce that aspect of his identity. An Indian man recalls:

Even to this day sometimes I hear different people telling stories about me when I was young. I know it wasn't me who did it, but I take the blame all the time.... Wilfred did this and Wilfred did that. That's a funny thing and I still think about it a lot, that whole blame thing. Maybe it had something to do with identity.... I just thought of myself as the "bad boy," I guess, the one who gets blamed (Pelletier and Poole 1973: 35-36).

It is just as important that, as we grow, we feel that someone has made a commitment to us. A profound sense of loss may result if this commitment, or sense of belonging, fails. One might "belong" to a family, a community, a cultural group, or a political group; all of these are important in moulding identity. As we go through life and join new groups, and make new commitments, identity will change. It is common for people to speak of "losing" one's identity. A bad self-image and low self-esteem may form part of identity in these situations, but often the cause is not a loss of identity itself so much as a loss of "belonging." Children alienated from their families and cultural groups at an early age may feel little positive sense of belonging, and thus do not have a chance to make the commitments which might improve their self-esteem.

Social psychologists suggest that the same process of identity formation and development continues through adulthood, although adults, of course, are susceptible to quite different expectations and the behavior they exhibit may be much more complex than that of a child. Your identity may change as you move into different societies or simply into a new neighborhood, take on a new job, get married or divorced, encounter an ideology or new idea.

B. A Native Perspective

Identity is thus closely related to culture, as people internalize cultural assumptions and expectations. In the past century, as Native people have increasingly faced a non-Native world, generations have struggled with defining identity. As we have seen, the major categories of Native people in Canada — Indian, Métis, and Inuit — include a number of subclassifications according to heritage, location, and legal status. A Native person's identity develops within this legal, cultural, and geographical framework. To lose or to gain your Indian status, for example, may have profound effect on how you see yourself; whether you are classified as a treaty or as a non-treaty Indian can also make quite a difference in your concept of yourself — as can whether you see yourself as belonging to a specific tribal group or to an undifferentiated Native society. In this section we can only comment on the kinds of factors which have been identified as affecting identity. The only way to really approach Native identity is through the Native voice directly: myth, oral history, literature, and autobiography.

While some cultural values affecting identity, such as language, have been changed and substituted through acculturation and assimilation, many people have blended Native and non-Native values and customs. A person who becomes "70 percent White" does not have to be only "30 percent Native," but can be 150 percent of a person in relation to culture and identity. This kind of reconciliation is more likely to occur when a person's expectations about identity are fulfilled in a positive way. However, this does not always

happen: as Sid Fiddler of the Waterhen band of Saskatchewan has written, often Native youth find themselves caught between two sets of expectations:

The identity conflict increases especially in Indian youth who attain a higher academic education without knowledge and experience of their culture.... These Indian people may see being an Indian in negative terms such as the poverty, low socio-economic lifestyle, powerlessness... and other manifestations of a weak and inferior subculture.... The traditional Indian knowledge, worldview, wisdom, experience and the way of life which could foster positive identity eludes them (Fiddler 1988: 5A-6A).

Native children, like non-Native ones, grow up in an environment that includes many factors that can influence the formation of identity, including family, education, religion, and economics. Members of the family may shape how the children feel about themselves and their families, as may people outside the family. A minister may convey impressions of how Native people are expected to behave. These impressions may be internalized by the individual, particularly if religion is important to the family.

Circumstances such as relative poverty or wealth, the attitudes of family members, or location on a reserve or in a city will also affect the way Native people regard themselves, or how others regard them. As the people encounters new environments, their identity may change. They may become more interested in their culture and political future. Or they may become depressed about the chances of breaking loose from restrictive labels. For example, an Inuit inmate has his hair cut in an Oriental style to protect himself from labels:

... I felt ashamed when, after taking on my new look, a newly arrived inmate came up to me and asked what I was.

"Chinese? Japanese...?" he asked.

"Yes, yes," I said quietly, without looking up.

I am a proud Eskimo and I didn't even have the courage to admit it. That night I cried softly in my cell and prayed that my people would forgive me (Thrasher, Deagle, and Metrick 1976: 138).

There are in fact widely varying expectations relating to "Indianness" and "Nativity" within both the Native and the non-Native worlds. Some Native people develop an identity that they and other people can accept; they somehow succeed in integrating the different expectations into a stable identity of their own. Others may have great trouble accepting themselves in an environment where non-Natives or even Natives may degrade them. This can lead to problems with self-esteem and accompanying behavioral difficulties. A Métis woman from Saskatchewan writes about her conversations with her great-grandmother, her Cheechum:

She used to say that all our people wore blankets, each in his own way. She said that other people wore them, too, not just Halbreeds and Indians, and as I grew up I would see them and understand. Someday though, people would throw them away and the whole world would change. I understood about the blanket now — I wore one too. I didn't know when I started to wear it, but it was there and I didn't know how to throw it away (Campbell 1973: 159).

There has been little written which directly explores the issue of Native identity, but there are many lessons to learn from the growing number of works of autobiography, Native

fiction and poetry, biography, folklore, and religion. Indian, Métis, and Inuit cultural and mythic beliefs are clues to values which may play a central role in identity. Biographies and autobiographies of Native persons, increasingly written by Native people themselves, show the gradual construction of lifetimes of identity changes and reconciliations (see Krupat 1985). Bataille and Sands (1984: 24) write of the power of autobiographies by Native women:

They are women who have considered their lives and made difficult decisions, sometimes struggling to survive great hardships or identity disorientation, who have recalled their experiences in order to communicate them without bitterness or sentimentality, and with considerable spirit..... Their lives convey the drama of the conflict of cultures.

Throughout the preceding discussion, there has been implicit reference to the harm done by degrading cultural images. Although we will return to this in later chapters, the critical issue of "racism" should be raised here because of its importance in identity.

Nearly every society in the world is *ethnocentric* to some degree. This means that we tend to believe that our culture is a little better than that of our neighbors. The people over the mountains, or in the next province, or even in the next neighborhood may be thought to be a little poorer, a little less enlightened, or a bit more shabby than one's own people. Part of the way societies maintain themselves is by drawing invisible boundaries, and ethnocentrism helps strengthen these boundaries and reinforce the self-image of the society, although often in a negative rather than a positive way.

Racism is different in two very important ways: 1) Racism links this kind of denigration to biological characteristics; and 2) it provides the means for active discriminatory behavior. In the 19th century (and in the era of the Greeks and Romans), it was acceptable to believe that one's intelligence, one's sensibilities, and one's behavior were products of one's racial or biological characteristics. Research has since shown that these factors make very little difference in cultural behavior, and it is no longer socially acceptable to hold the belief that they do. Nonetheless, some people (including some scientists) still believe that people of different races have different abilities and behaviors and use this as an explanation of cultural differences.

The most dangerous part of racism is when this kind of explanation is used as the basis of a behavior toward someone of another race or culture which discriminates against them or degrades them. This can be as subtle as a facial expression, or as dramatic as discrimination in hiring procedures or renting apartments. It can be expressed in writing, in textbooks and editorials, and it can be expressed in oral (and non-verbal) communication between two people.

Anyone can be guilty of racism, Native or non-Native, but when one group holds more power than the other the effects of combining racism with power can be damaging. Rejection from society, the rejection of "not belonging," can affect identity and self-esteem. The "problem" of racism is that of the person who is blaming or discriminating, not that of the victim. In addition, the "problem" is one of consequence, not just of motive. We may not be aware that we are projecting negative stereotypes or rejecting someone by our actions, but if that is how the receiver interprets it, the effect is the same as if the action were motivated by racism.

At the same time, however, it is not helpful to simply call interpersonal behavior "racist" without identifying the images or specific behaviors causing the problem. Both ethnocentrism and racism make use of "images." Selected characteristics of one cultural group are picked out and magnified by another group as stereotypes and used to represent the group in speaking and writing. One has only to think of Indians in western movies to evoke a series of visual images associated with the Indian characters in these movies. In our society, these images tend to be "generic" or "no-name" because they are used to portray a whole group of people regardless of the individuality of real people in that group. When one person discriminates against another by reacting to these supposed characteristics, he or she fails to see the real person or the real behavior, and identifies only the image. The victim sees that he is being judged on what he is thought to be, not what he is actually like or how he actually acts.

The only way out of these damaging situations is to identify the actual belief or act which is causing a problem between two people. For example, if a non-Native person judges a Native person's job performance on the belief that "all Native people are irresponsible in meeting deadlines," he or she fails to identify for that Native person just what action is causing the problem, and fails to find out what the reason for the action is. Sometimes the explanation does lie in cultural beliefs, but these need to be discussed and understood for what they are.

Since racism is usually associated with power, the solution does not lie in just changing the attitudes of one group or another. If a group in power is racist, the result can be "structural racism," in which the discrimination is rooted in the socio-economic classes of society and how they function to keep certain cultural groups in designated classes. Racial and cultural explanations are used to justify lack of mobility between classes. The problem is vested in the very nature of the social and economic order of North America, and fundamental reforms may be the only long-term answer to dealing with attitudes, prejudice, and racism. This will be addressed in later chapters.

Some of the writing by Native authors today deals with racism and how they have dealt with it in their personal lives. The stories, diaries, and autobiographies in print inform the general public how it feels to be discriminated against and how an examination of one's own behavior can help one recognize both intentional and unintentional acts of racism and as well as instances of institutionalized racism.

Emma Laroque, a Native educator, has written extensively on racism and images in the classroom:

Racism is discrimination based on the belief that one, or a group, is innately superior to another. Racism may be expressed individually or institutionally. It is especially important to understand that racism against Native (Indian, Inuit, and Métis) peoples is embedded in Canadian institutions.... Historically, Europeans categorized themselves as the "civilized" and Indians as the "savages." The underlying assumption was that, as "savages," Indians were at the bottom of human development and from this has come a complex of images, terminology, and policies that has set Indians apart and as inferior. Such an unscientific belief was and is racist because it sets up whites as superior and nonwhites as inferior.... Racism, in this sense, is not personal or "intentional." An individual teacher may like a Native child but to the degree that he/she transmits the above material (embedded in the curriculum), he/she is passing on racism. In other words, institutionalized racism conditions students to have racist views toward Indians. The effect on non-Native students is ignorance, fear, and possible hatred of Native

people. The effect on Native children is self-rejection. The net effect on society is the stereotyping, mistrust, and mistreatment of Native peoples (Laroque 1991: 73-4).

James Tyman, an Indian man in Saskatchewan who was raised in a non-Indian family, has written a book about his quest for understanding who he is and what racism is. He writes about going to school in Fort Qu'Appelle, Saskatchewan:

More and more Indian kids were coming to public schools at that time, and Lebret was getting its share. Some of these kids had been living on the reserve all their lives, and they hated honkies as much as honkies hated them.... Here was a dilemma, though: the reserve Indians hated me because my friends were "white trash," as they put it, and most of the white kids hated me because I was a "scummy Indian." So I'd find my few friends and we'd avoid both the racists and the warriors. Is this what life is all about, I wondered? (Tyman 1989: 19).

M. Scott Momaday, a renowned Kiowa writer, comments on the 500th anniversary of the discovery of the Americas by Columbus:

It's very hard to be specific about how to change the future. The major issues we face now are survival — how to live in the modern world. Part of that is how to remain Indian, how to assimilate without ceasing to be an Indian.... It's a matter of identity. It's thinking about who I am. I grew up on Indian reservations, and then I went away from the Indian world and entered a different context. But I continue to think of myself as Indian, I write out of that conviction.... I have been asked, how do you define an Indian, is it a matter of blood content? I say no, an Indian is someone who thinks of themselves as an Indian. But that's not so easy to do and one has to earn the entitlement somehow. You have to have a certain experience of the world in order to formulate this idea. I know how my father saw the world, and his father before him. That's how I see the world (Momaday 1991: 438-39).

This book will not help the reader see the world as an Indian person would. It is intended only as an introduction to some of the contemporary and historical issues of Native/non-Native relationships. Since identity is the starting point of all relationships, however, it is hoped that readers will go on to explore the literature by Aboriginal authors about culture, identity, and racism.

Appendix 4

CIRCLE OF LIFE

NORTH - WINTER

PURITY

HARMONY

DEATH/OLD AGE

FOUR LEGGED

TREES

STARS

WIND

CREATOR

ROCK

EARTH

GRASSES

WINGED ONES

YOUTH

CHILDHOOD

ORDER

HONESTY

SOUTH - SUMMER

EAST
SPRING

LOVE

CONTROL

BIRTH/INFANCY

TWO LEGGED

FLOWERS

SUN

FIRE

WATER

MOON

VEGETABLES

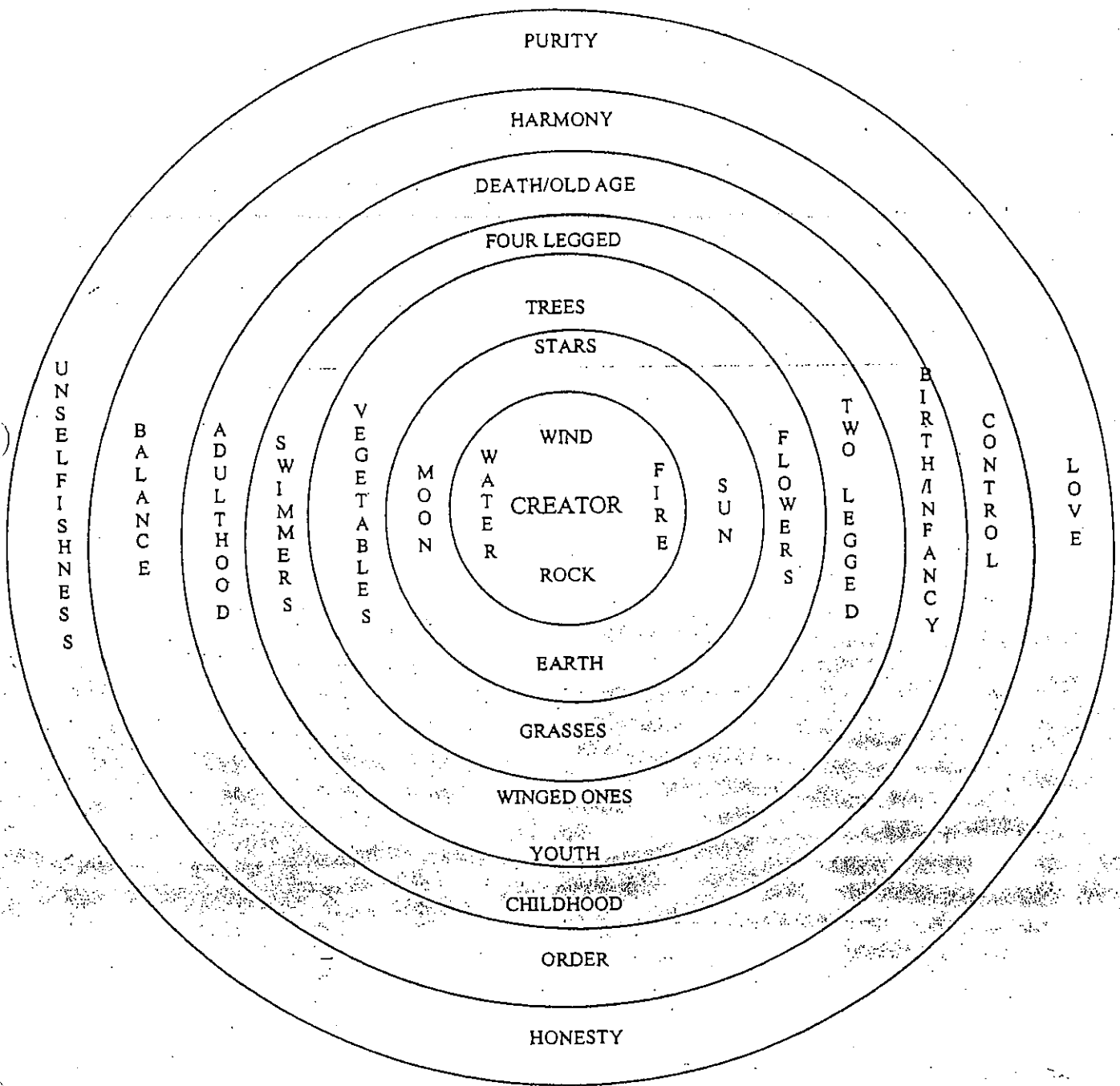
SWIMMERS

ADULTHOOD

BALANCE

UNSELFISHNESS

WEST
AUTUMN



Worldview

AS YOU READ

How do you know what is right or wrong, or how to behave or react in a particular situation? All of your thoughts and behaviour arise from your worldview, even if you cannot state or explain what your worldview is. Your worldview is shaped by your culture and experiences, and it affects every aspect of your life. Your worldview, or perspective, is so ingrained in your way of thinking that it can be hard to understand any other way of thinking. In many ways, another culture's worldview cannot be fully understood or appreciated unless it is experienced.

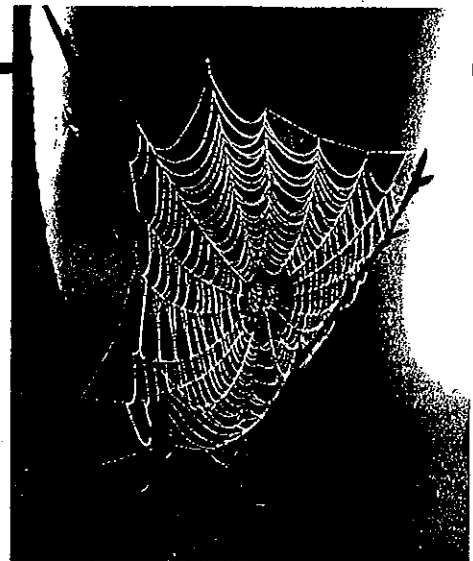
Pages 66–70 will help you understand what a worldview is and some of the general principles common among many First Nations, Métis, and Inuit worldviews. Keep in mind that these general principles are generic rather than specific. Individual cultures and people have unique ways of describing, celebrating, and expressing their worldview. As you read, think about which aspects of the worldviews under discussion strike a chord of truth with you — they are likely part of your own worldview. In your journal, begin a list of ideas that might help you articulate it.

IN THE LANGUAGE OF THE WAPISIANA PEOPLE OF GUYANA, SOUTH AMERICA, THERE IS NO WORD FOR SORRY. FOR EXAMPLE, IF A PERSON LEAVES A BOOK LYING ON THE FLOOR AND ANOTHER PERSON STEPS ON IT AND DAMAGES IT,

that individual might say something like “What a silly place to leave a book.” Neither person would see the need for apology because in their culture, the concept does not exist.

People from different cultures have different ways of seeing, explaining, and living within the world. They have different ideas

All things are connected. We are all part of the same web. When the web is broken, we are all affected. We are all part of the same web. When the web is broken, we are all affected. We are all part of the same web. When the web is broken, we are all affected.



In the statement on this page, Chief Seattle uses the metaphor of a spider's web to explain First Nations beliefs in the interconnectedness of all parts of the world. Create your own metaphor that reflects this worldview.

about what things are most important, which behaviours are desirable or unacceptable, and how all parts of the world relate to each other. Together these opinions and beliefs form a **worldview**, the perspective from which people perceive, understand, and respond to the world around them.

People from the same culture tend to have similar worldviews. A culture's worldview evolves from its history, which is the collective experiences of the people within that culture over all the years of its existence. It also includes their beliefs about origin and spirituality.

The traditional worldviews of First Nations and Inuit peoples in Canada differ from the worldviews of people with a non-Aboriginal ancestry. You might compare a First Nations or Inuit worldview to a Euro-Canadian worldview, for example, by drawing a circle and

line. The circular First Nations worldview focuses on connections between all things, including the visible physical world and the invisible spiritual world. It sees time as always in a cycle of renewal that links past and present and future. In contrast, a linear Euro-Canadian worldview lays out separations between elements of existence (spiritual and material, life and death, animal and human, living and non-living) and sees time as a progression from point to point.

There is no single worldview common to all First Nations, Métis, and Inuit individuals any more than there is a single worldview common

all European or African individuals. Differences in viewpoints exist between individuals within a single culture or community. In learning about traditional First Nations and Inuit worldviews, however, it is possible to identify several similarities between many first peoples' cultures.

SPIRITUALITY

For traditional First Nations and Inuit cultures, worldview is rooted in spiritual beliefs. Spirituality incorporates a culture's highest ideals, values, morals, and ethics. It defines the behaviour that makes a society survive and thrive. It involves honouring and respecting things that are unseen — the Creator, souls, spirits, the wind, the air — as well as those that are visible. It is an


individual's understanding of their place and purpose in the world and

their relationship to the seen and unseen forces.

According to western European thinking, the world is clearly divided into animate things — human beings, animals, plants — and inanimate things — rocks, hills, mountains, land, sky, rivers, water, the wind, and the sun. In contrast, according to traditional First Nations and Inuit spirituality, everything in the universe has spirit and is animate. The entire universe is alive with a constant dialogue or energy between all things that exist. For humans to live in balance with the universe, they must be aware of this dialogue and be careful not to insult or disrupt the spirits of animals, plants, wind, or earth.

In a universe in which everything is alive and has a spirit, certain sites, land formations, and types of matter have great spiritual power. Particular rocks, hills, mountaintops, and sites in a forest are honoured in key rituals and rites of passage. At these sacred places, initiation ceremonies take place, people fast and pray, and visions are revealed. These sacred places strengthen the link that binds humans to the natural world and the Creator.

Within traditional spirituality, creation is an ongoing process. The



Móókoanssin (Belly Buttes) on the Kainai Reserve, is a sacred site with spiritual significance for the nations of the Blackfoot Confederacy.



Even a task such as picking berries has a spiritual component. Berry-pickers traditionally pray and scatter a few berries in thanks to the earth. (Names of those pictured are not available.)

cycle of life is unending, as can be seen in the migration of birds, the rising sun, and the changing seasons. People walk in the footsteps of their ancestors, as will the generations yet unborn. The presence of the Creator is everywhere.

For traditional First Nations and Inuit peoples, spirituality is part of being alive, and part of everyday life. For example, to honour the corn or squash that they raised, traditional Pueblo people eat gently, reflecting on the plant that is becoming a part of their bodies and minds. Traditionally, respectful Inuit hunters speak to a caribou's *shua* — its “living essence” — before letting their arrows fly. Afterward, they thank the animal for giving its life and place something in its mouth to aid it on its journey.

Most cultures have some version of this ritual of thanking prey and their spirits. Prey are

viewed as willing participants in a relationship with hunters. Hunters do not take; prey give themselves. In return for the animal's gift, hunters thank and honour its spirit and continue the cycle of giving by sharing the animal with their extended family.

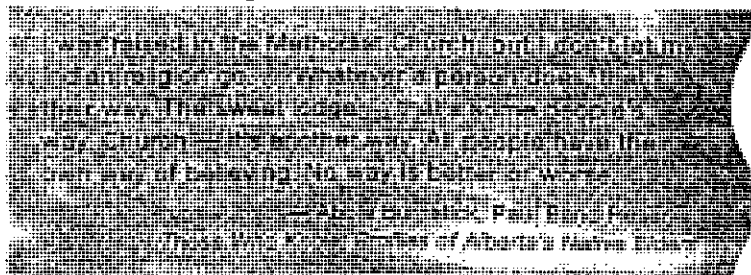
Spiritual advisors are people who have powerful visions and are thought to have special insight into the spirit world. However, all individuals can receive communication from and can communicate with spirits and the Creator.

RELIGION

Spirituality is not religion. Religions are systems of attitudes, beliefs, and practices that focus on groups, while spirituality centres on an individual's understanding of his or her place in the world. However, both spirituality and religion can coexist in an individual's life.

One of the main goals for the first Europeans travelling to North America was **evangelism**, which is the act of converting others to their own religious beliefs. The French, in particular, saw the conversion of First Nations people to Roman Catholicism as an important part of their work in North America. In their worldview, evangelism was one of the best ways one could serve God. You will learn more about this history in Chapter Five.

Roman Catholicism is just one denomination of the Christian religion. Christianity incorporates many different denominations —



Roman Catholic, Lutheran, Anglican, and others. Basic Christian beliefs are the same, although their practices and interpretations differ, much in the way that First Nations spiritual practices differ from culture to culture.

Since the seventeenth century, when efforts to convert them began, First Nations and Inuit peoples responded in various ways. Some completely rejected European religions; others completely rejected traditional spirituality. Still others adopted aspects of both.

Many First Nations and Inuit peoples were curious about Christianity and understood it by fitting its teachings within the worldview provided by their traditional belief systems. For example, the idea of the Christian God, the creator of all things, was not new to First Nations, who already believed in a Creator or Great Spirit. The Christian creation story, Genesis, as told in the Holy Bible, could be seen as a new version of the creation stories they knew from their oral tradition.

The use of symbols to demonstrate faith was also familiar to First Nations, who had always used symbols to reinforce their spiritual beliefs. A symbol is one thing that stands for another. A cultural symbol is often a simple cue that, when used, causes members of the culture to think about a much more complex meaning. The most widely recognized symbol of Christianity is the cross.

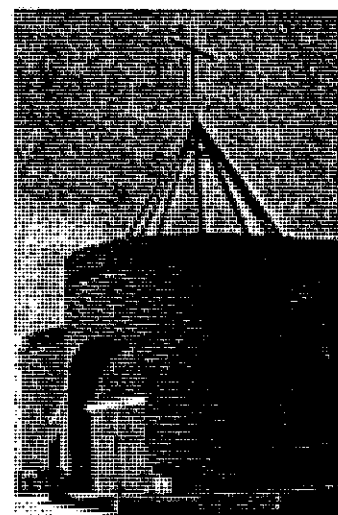


The use of celebrations to affirm faith and give thanks was also a part of traditional spiritual practices. The Christian celebrations of Christmas and Easter are holy festivals centred around the birth and death of Jesus. One of the most important Christian beliefs is that Jesus was the son of God and that he spent time on Earth, sharing God's wisdom with the people before returning to heaven.

Pilgrimages are another kind of religious activity. Worldwide, people travel long distances to sacred places and shrines, hoping to receive a blessing from God. The concept of sacred sites with special significance was long a part of traditional First Nations spirituality.

Despite these similarities, it is incorrect to classify spirituality as a religion. Spirituality is an individual's lifelong journey — it is a way to live within the world that each person must explore and learn for himself or herself. Religion presents a way to live within the world — the challenge there is to learn and live the religion's teachings.

In general, Métis people tend to have a close relationship with Christian religions. Métis people descended from French-speaking Métis families are frequently Roman Catholic. However, some Métis



Today many First Nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples practise some form of the Christian religion. The Roman Catholic faith is important to many Métis and First Nations people and the Anglican religion is common among Inuit peoples. This church at Enoch, Alberta, modifies traditional Christian symbolism to incorporate Aboriginal symbolism. This church includes curved walls, a tipi spire, and a stained glass window with First Nations figures.

Every year, thousands of Roman Catholic First Nations and Métis people from across North America flock to the shores of Lac Ste Anne, Alberta. The lake is believed to be a holy site with healing powers.

Another significant site for Roman Catholics is the grave of Kateri Tekakwitha at Caughnawaga, Ontario.

In 1980, 300 years after her death, the Lily of the Mohawks became the only First Nations person to be beatified by the Roman Catholic church. This is often a first step toward sainthood.



Many processions and ceremonies are held during the annual pilgrimage. At night, a candlelight procession is held.

Thousands of pilgrims walk from the shrine to the lakeshore and back carrying lighted candles. (Names of those pictured are not available.)

people also maintain the spiritual beliefs of their First Nations ancestors.

Lac Ste Anne, Alberta

Lac Ste Anne was known by local First Nations as *manito sâkâhikan*, Cree for "Lake of the Spirit," long before it became an important site for Roman Catholics. *Manito sâkâhikan* was a traditional First Nations gathering place for the summer buffalo hunt.

Oblate priest Jean-Baptiste Thibault started a mission in 1844 at the lake because of the large numbers of Métis and French-speaking Roman Catholic settlers in the area. He renamed the lake Lac Ste Anne, after Ste Anne de Beaupré, the mother of Mary. The Lac Ste Anne mission was taken over by Father Albert Lacombe in 1852. He and the other priests at the site gained a reputation for their special holiness. They cared for the sick and worked to prevent armed conflict among the cultural groups in the region. Many First Nations and Métis people in the area converted to Christianity.

The first pilgrimage to Lac Ste Anne was held in 1889. Several hundred people attended, and it

soon became an annual event. Today, the pilgrimage to Lac Ste Anne has become the largest annual gathering of First Nations and Métis people in Canada.

Catholic priests at the Lac Ste Anne shrine offer many services during the annual pilgrimage. Mass is held three times a day, in Cree, Dene Sûkiné, Blackfoot, *Dease Tha'*, and English. Christian beliefs also include baptism as a symbol of spiritual cleansing and rebirth. In a special ceremony, a bishop blesses the water of the lake, asking God to make it a source of renewal and healing for all people. Hundreds of people then wade into the water to receive this blessing.

LOOKING BACK

Before moving on to the next section, be sure you can answer the following questions: How is religion different from spirituality? How do traditional spiritual beliefs held by First Nations and Inuit peoples demonstrate a part of their worldview? Based on what you know of Métis history, how might some Métis worldviews differ from First Nations and Inuit worldviews?

Appendix 6

SASKATOON ELDERS & TRADITIONAL TEACHERS
--

Roland Duquette	683-7650
Rick Favel, Spiritual Advisor	975-3941
Simon & Elma Kytwayhat	668-7490
Mary Lee	668-7490
Walter & Maria Linklater	382-0630
Danny Muskwa	931-1800
Harriet Oaks	668-7400
Ernie Poundmaker	978-5878
Katy Poundmaker	978-7258
Bowser & Margaret Poochay	651-3345
Fred Olaf Nulamaloak, Inuvialuit Spiritual Elder, Counsellor, Facilitator	664-3651
Ralph Poochay	651-2685
Nora Ritchie (Metis Elder)	934-4932
Lawrence & Mary Roy	384-0448
Fred Spyglass	115 Montreal Avenue, Saskatoon
Agnus Woods	382-0346

POW WOW DRUM GROUPS

All Tribes Drum Group	
Donny Speidel	931-6767
Fly in Eagle Singers	
Allan Bonaise	978-7998
Sage Hill Singers	
David LaRouque	467-2377
Sweetgrass Drum Groups	
Ross Paskiman	683-3687
Wild Horse Singers	
Ross Gardippi, Donny Speidel (Manger)	931-6767
White Horse, The Morgan Awasis Project	http://morganawasis.com
.....	http://mp3.com/whitehorse
Gary Awasis	gary@morganawasis.com
Morgan Awasis	morgan@morganawasis.com

ABORIGINAL DANCE: POW WOW DANCE TROUPES
--

Wanuskewin Dancers/Troupe	931-6767 (w)
Donny Speidel	382-9791 (h)
St. Mary's Oskiyak Dancers	668-7400
Delvin Kennedy	
Princess Alexandra Hoop and Pow Wow Dancers	683-7410
Brenda Gilcrist	
Pleasant Hill Awasis Dancers	683-7390
Theresa Fiddler	
Joe Duquette Dance Troupe	683-0396
Jennifer Nicotine	

POW WOW DANCE INSTRUCTORS AND PERFORMERS

Men's Traditional			
Waylon Badger	683-0261	Jason Daniels	261-4822
Sternly Kay	249-2314	Mort VanDuzee	653-4831
Men's Grass Dance			
Paul Roy	384-0448	Lawrence Roy Jr.	384-0448

HEALING CIRCLES

Family Healing Circle Lodge	653-3900
Edi Wapass, Youth Programs 128 Avenue Q S	
Healing Circles done at your home	384-0499
Contacts: Helen Quewezance	
Ketehyayahk Aboriginal Seniors Program	664-4239
Strengthening the Circle, Contact: Louise Dafour	
424-First Avenue N.	
Building a Nation	651-2000
121 - 20th Street South	

TREATMENT CENTRES

Calder Centre	655-4500
Debra Holden, Aboriginal Support Worker	
email: holdend@sdh.sk.ca	
Community Outpatient Services, SDH	655-4100
Larson House Inc., 201 Avenue O South, Saskatoon, SK S7M 2R6	655-4195
Native Addictions Centre (NAC), 419 Avenue E South, Saskatoon, SK	652-8951
New Dawn Valley Centre, Fort Qu'Appelle, SK	332-5637
Pine Lodge, Indian Head, SK	695-2251
White Spruce, Yorkton, SK	786-6225

PRESENTERS/SPEAKERS

ABORIGINAL	
Aboriginal Awareness Training Workshops	477-3117
Contact: Dorothy Myo Thomas	
Aboriginal Fitness Instructor	653-2144
Contact: Julia Durocher, Lifeskills coach, Personal Development	
Aboriginal Cree Games/Tapes	1-888-344-8011
Language Program - Workshops	
Contact: Brian MacDonald	
Cross Cultural Awareness	(306) 236-5654
Contact: Joseph Naytowhow, Songs, Storytelling, Traditional Teachings	
Cross Cultural Education & Traditional Teachings	(306) 522-9313
Contact: Jean Dabray Byrd	
Cross Cultural Education	668-7400
Contact: Delvin Kennedy	
Cultural Awareness and Traditional Teachings	(306)953-7544
Contact: Darrel Greyeyes	
Anger Management, Drug & Alcohol Abuse, using the Medicine Wheel	
Julia Durocher	244-0174
SIMFC, Family Violence Workshops	
Herbal, Nutrition & Medicine Making	254-2798
Contact: Yvone Morin-Fehr	
Workshops/Cree Instruction, Arts & Crafts	
Inspirational Speaker	382-8092
Contact: Gerty Braun	
Inner Child Syndrome, Abusive and Personal Experiences	
Yvette Arcand	966-2473
I.T.E.P. Advisor & Guest Speaker	
Fax: 966-7630	
OTHER	
Kearney F. Healy, B.S., L.L.,B., Lawyer	933-7840
Saskatchewan Legal Aid Commission, Topics on Children & Youth	



Rita Joe started writing in her thirties to try to balance the negative images of Aboriginal peoples her children were learning in school.

IDENTITY

Perhaps the most common issue that Aboriginal writers explore is that of identity — what it means to be a First Nations, Métis, or Inuit person. Some write about how to maintain traditions and culture in the modern world. Others write about searching for self-identity after suffering family or community breakdown.

Mi'kmaq poet Rita Joe illustrates some of these points in "I lost my talk."

I lost my talk

The talk you took away.
When I was a little girl
At Schubencadie school.

You snatched it away:
I speak like you
I think like you
I create like you
The scrambled ballad, about my
word.

Two ways I talk
Both ways I say,
Your way is more powerful.

So gently I offer my hand and ask,
Let me find my talk
So I can teach you about me.

Her poem recounts her experience at the Schubencadie residential school. She describes losing her First Nations language, but not being taught English very well, either. She, like many others of her generation, were left on the margins of two cultures, belonging fully to neither. Her sense of identity is a "scrambled ballad."

Richard Wagamese is an award-winning author of Anishinabé

ancestry. In his autobiographical writings, he describes his early life of alcoholism and years spent on the streets and in prison. His fictional work reflects his personal experiences.

In *Keeper 'n Me*, Wagamese writes about Garnet Raven, a twenty-year-old man who returns to the First Nation he never knew. Garnet is disconnected from his culture and ashamed of his cultural heritage. He often poses as Hawaiian, African American, or Mexican — anything as long as he does not have to admit he is First Nations. Many Aboriginal people who grew up in homes or communities outside their culture share the same experience.

Since he cannot face who he is, Garnet wanders and, like Wagamese himself, ends up on the streets of a big city. In search of answers, he travels to the First Nation where he was born and meets Keeper, an old man from the community, who possesses much cultural knowledge.

In one passage, Keeper explains the significance of the hand drum "In our way we believe that the drum holds the heartbeat of the people. The songs you sing with it are very sacred. Nothin' to be played around with. When you sing you're joinin' the heartbeat of the people with the heartbeat of the universe. It's a blessing. You're blessing the land and the water and the air with the pure, clear spirit of the people."

Through his relationship with Keeper, Garnet finds some of the beauty and strength in his culture's traditions. At last Garnet begins to come to terms with his cultural heritage and identity.

Garnet's ability to pretend to be someone of many different cultures alludes to the difficulty many non-Aboriginal people have in seeing and understanding the diversity of Aboriginal cultures and peoples. Nipissing writer Wayne Keon's poem "Heritage" squishes the names of First Nations together into one uniform, tidy box. All distinctions are lost. As seen in the following excerpt from his poem, names are broken to suit the shape of the box and ordered alphabetically to suit the order of the English language.

heritage

Algonkin Assiniboine Athapaskan
Beaver Bella Coola Beothuk Blackfoot
Carrier Caughnawaga Cayuga Chilkat
Chilcotin Chipewyan Cree Crow
De la Ware Dogrib Eskimo Flathead Fox
Gros Ventre Haida Hare Huron Illinois
Iroquois Kickapoo Kitwano Koo
tney Koskimo Kutchin Kwakiutl Lake
Lilloet Malecite Malouin Menominee
Métis Miami Micmac Mississauga
Mohawk Mohican Montagnais Muskogean
Nahani Naskapi Neutral Nicola Nipis
sing Nootka Ojibway Okanagan Oneida
Onondago Ottawa Pequot Petun Pieg
an Potawatomie Salish Sarcee Sauk
Saulteaux Sekani Seneca Shawnee Sho
shoni Shushwap Sioux Slave Stoney
Susquehanna Tagish Tahltan Thompson
Tlinkit Tsetsaut Tsimshian Tuscarora
Winnebago Wyandot Yellowknife

Some writers express a heightened difficulty establishing a Métis identity. For many years, Métis peoples were not recognized as distinct from Euro-Canadian and First Nations peoples. Many Métis found that they did not fit with either group.

Drew Hayden Taylor explores stereotypes about how a First Nations person should look in his essay "Pretty Like a White Boy: the Adventures of a Blue-Eyed Ojibway" and his book *Funny, You Don't Look Like One*. His work, like the works of many other Aboriginal writers, deals with stereotypes about Aboriginal peoples and their cultures. He reports being turned down for many acting jobs to play First Nations people because he doesn't look like mainstream expectations of a First Nations person.

Other authors wrestle with issues of how First Nations or Métis they are. After a lifetime of searching, Métis poet Gregory Scofield writes that he did not feel he was truly Métis until he visited Batoche — a place with historical significance for the Métis Nation. He writes "The importance that I had once placed



Drew Hayden Taylor is a prolific writer, journalist, playwright, actor, and humourist. He also directed a documentary about Aboriginal humour for the National Film Board of Canada called Redskins, Tricksters, and Puppy Stew. Read a story, play, or article by Taylor and write your response in a two-page review.

Indigenous Knowledge

Most contemporary literature stresses strength and renewal rather than loss and victimization. Look through collections of poetry or anthologies of literature by Aboriginal people to find a poem, short story, or other writing that stresses renewal and strength. How does the author convey this message? Write an essay describing your ideas and the evidence you find in support of your interpretation.

WRITING WHAT YOU KNOW

How do authors' life experiences and backgrounds affect their work?

WHAT TO DO

1. Select a First Nations, Métis, or Inuit author from Canada that you would like to learn more about. Choose any of the authors mentioned in this chapter or consider one of the following:

Jeannette Armstrong, Shirley Bear, Joan Crate, Pauline Johnson, Lenore Keeshig-Tobias, Verna Kirkness, Brian Maracle, Lee Maracle, Teresa Marshall, Rita Mestokosho, Daniel David Moses, Eden Robinson, Armand Ruffo, Lorne Simon, Ruby Slipperjack, Richard van Camp.

2. Using the Internet and other sources, find biographical information about the author.
3. Read a minimum of two works or story excerpts by the writer. The more you read, the better your project will be.
4. Create a profile of your author. Include the biographical information you researched and answer the following questions:
 - How has the author been influenced by his or her life experiences or those of family or community members?
 - What literary techniques and symbols does the author use?
 - How is the human experience portrayed in the author's writing?
 - How is a specifically Aboriginal experience portrayed in the author's work?
 - What beliefs and values are evident in the author's work?
 - What purpose or message does the author's work have?



- In your opinion, what is the contribution of the author to Aboriginal writing and Canadian writing?

Your profile can be the form of a poster, written report, oral presentation, Web site, PowerPoint™ presentation, or another format that you clear with your teacher.

Thinking About Your Project

As a class, discuss any works or authors that your classmates liked the most.

LOOKING BACK

Before finishing this section, be sure you can answer the following questions: How do Aboriginal writers express their life experiences in their work? Are there qualities of Aboriginal writing that are unique and different from the work of writers who have other cultural backgrounds? Do you think written literature builds community and preserves cultural history (as oral literatures once did)? Explain your answer with specific examples.

CHAPTER FOUR

Lesson Plan 4 – 12

CREE FAMILIES

Description

The following lesson plan consists of a reading on the importance and structure of families in Cree culture, and questions for the students to complete.

Outcomes

1. The students will gain a greater understanding of Cree culture by reading about Cree families.
2. The questions provided with the readings will ensure that the students understand what they have read and force them to think about what they have read.

Materials

The students will require a copy of Blackline Master 4-12.

Procedure

1. Provide the students with a copy of Blackline Master 4-12. Go over the instructions with the students to ensure they understand the assignment.
2. Provide the students with class time, or assign the lesson as homework.
3. When the students have completed the assignment, have them pass their work in for evaluation. Correct the answers the students have come up with providing feedback.
4. After you have corrected and recorded the marks, pass the assignment back to the students and go over the answers with the class.

Lesson Plan 4 – 13

LEARNING TO TAKE NOTES:

A CO-OPERATIVE ACTIVITY

Description

The following lesson plan is intended to teach the students why working together is important to the Cree, while teaching them how to take notes at the same time.

Outcomes

1. The students will learn how to make notes from an assigned reading. They will also be responsible for teaching those notes to the rest of the class in a way that they understand the information.
2. Working as a group will show the students why the Cree people believe in working together.

Materials

The students require a copy of Blackline Master 4-13 and a transparency with markers for every group.

Procedure

1. Play a little trick on the class. Tell the class that each one of them will have to make notes on the chapter and present them to the class, and that they have to do it in one period. They will probably moan and say that they can not do it. At this point go to the next step.
2. Provide each student in the class with a copy of Blackline Master 4-13. Review the instructions with the class. Ask them if they think that this is a better way to complete the assignment.
3. Allow the students class time to complete the reading, put together the notes, put them on overheads, and come up with a way to teach them to the class.
4. When the students are done, have them present to their classmates. You could evaluate the presentations. Give some points for originality in the way that the notes are presented.

Name _____

CREE FAMILIES

Directions:

Read the following short notes, written by Carol Stuart, in 1984. Stuart is writing about Cree family systems. After reading what she says, do the activities that follow.

Carol Stuart says that Cree families are extended families centred on children. The Cree words for brother and sister can also be used for cousins. If you think of family structure as a series of concentric circles, children are at the centre (cousins), with grandparents in the next circle (anyone from the third generation, including great uncles and aunts), and parents in the outer circle (anyone from the second generation, including uncles and aunts).

Stuart says that Grandparents surround the children and are significant to their lives. Stuart seems to believe that Cree family systems are very stable. They are also very big. Family groups have strong intergenerational ties and the family group does not break down with the loss of particular members. If you are a child who loses your mother, you can then call your aunt "mother."

Stuart says that all the grandparents in the community are the spiritual and cultural foundations of Cree society. She describes them as "caregivers" and the providers of "training and discipline." They are highly respected because old age is considered a gift, a sign that one has pleased the Creator.

Activities

1. There are three paragraphs in this short reading. In paragraph 1, Stuart suggests that Cree families can be thought of in concentric circles (circles within circles). Reread the paragraph. Draw the circles that Carol Stuart suggests.

Name _____

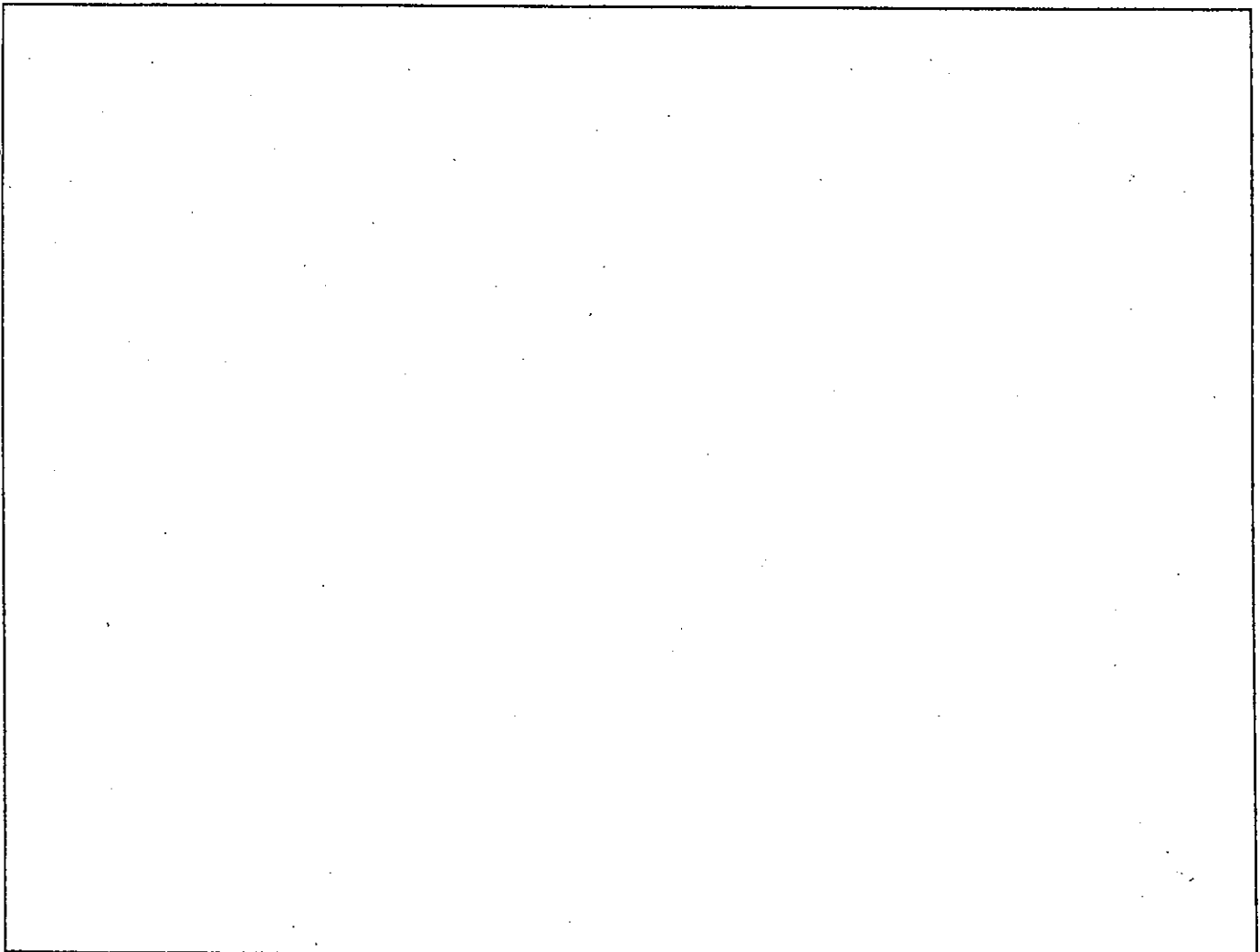
YOUR FAMILY'S TRADITIONS

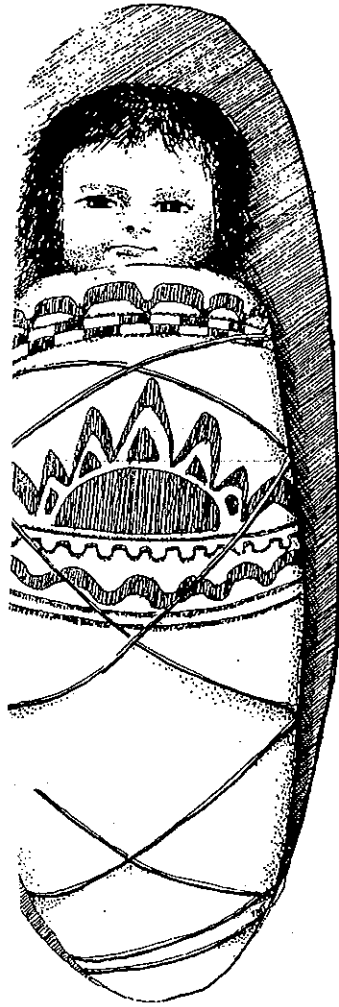
Directions:

Most families have traditions that they keep alive. These traditions are special ways of doing things that are unique and important to the family and highlight the important values that the family holds. For example, a family might have special meals to celebrate important family events. Or a family might have special friends they get together with on a regular basis.

These traditions are more than simple ways of doing things. They are very meaningful ways through which culture continues to live. Page 67 asks you to think about your family and the traditions it keeps alive. The purpose of this lesson is to help you see your family as part of a culture whose traditions help the culture grow.

Choose one of the traditions your family keeps alive. In the space below, find a family photograph or draw a picture of what happens during this tradition. Then, give your picture a caption — just like a photograph in your textbook. Your caption should explain the importance of the tradition your family keeps alive.





PACKBOARD

The Family

Families were strong and closeknit, and old people were always treated with great respect. When they became very tired and ready to leave the world, they went away to die. No one tried to stop them, for the choice was theirs to make. But they remained important to the family as long as they lived.

Children were taught from birth by the old people to respect all living things, and probably because gentleness breeds gentleness, they were rarely punished or criticized severely. The old people also taught them how to use tools and how to hunt, so that by the time they reached puberty they had learned to be adults.

Brothers and sisters were taught to protect each other. Aunts and uncles were like second parents and were important, because a child could confide in them as adult friends. If a parent died, an aunt or uncle took over the responsibility of the dead parent. Cousins were as brothers and sisters, and all great aunts and great uncles were regarded as grandparents.

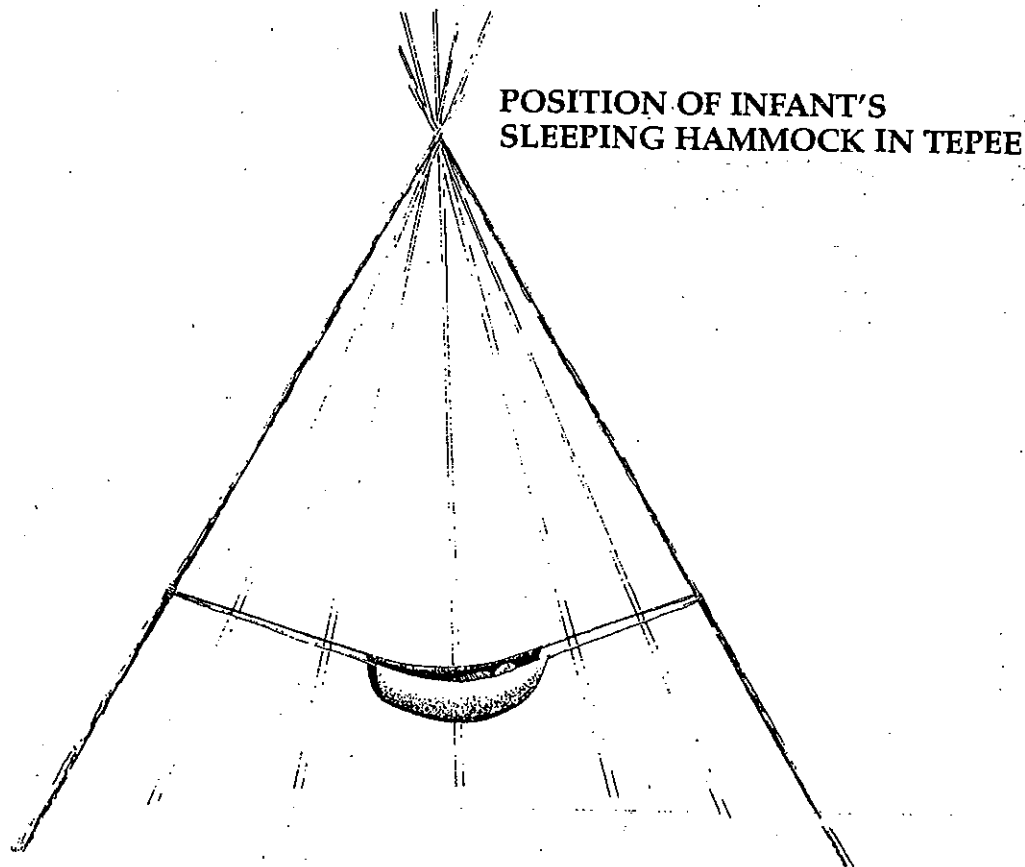
Marriages between blood relatives, even distant ones, were taboo. However, marriages between relatives by marriage were not frowned upon; in fact, such marriages were common, for if a man married his brother's widow the children gained a familiar father and the widow was not left to fend for herself. A man might marry his wife's sister and have two wives, but it was his wife who first made the proposal and then only if the husband agreed.

In a first marriage, the bride was usually chosen by the man, whose family then offered gifts and

made arrangements with the girl's parents. If the girl's family did not approve, or if the girl was opposed to the match, the gifts were returned. It was not often that a girl refused to marry her parents' choice, but her refusal was respected.

If after marriage the couple had problems that they could not overcome, they separated. Although separation was not encouraged, it was not considered as bad as continuing an unsuccessful marriage.

Great respect was shown to in-laws, especially to mothers and fathers. After marriage a man had to show how important and powerful his wife's



mother was: he could not speak directly to her, look at her, or use her name. The same rigid rules applied to his wife in regard to her father-in-law. The rules were not as rigid towards other members of the family. Usually the man lived with his wife's people, but in the Blackfoot tribes the woman went to live with her in-laws.

A newborn baby was cleaned and put into a bag full of soft moss that acted as a diaper and provided warmth. The bag was slung from the mother's back; when she was busy she hung it from a peg in the tepee or from a special post outside. During the night the child slept in a hammock that was slung over the mother's bed and was rocked when the infant cried.

Soon after birth a feast was held, and the baby given a name by a relative, who would from then on be a second mother or father. A boy's adult name was decided after he had had his vision at puberty; a medicine man interpreted the vision and then named the boy.

To see a vision and a spirit guardian, the boy went away from the camp and the people, cleansed his body in a sweat lodge and fasted and meditated. He did this until he found what he was seeking. If unsuccessful, and too weak to continue, he would go home and try again later. This was not considered a failure but only meant that he was not yet ready.

Plains Indian girls did not have to seek a vision at puberty. The menstrual cycle brought power to communicate freely with the spirits, whereas a boy had to seek them.

The young girl was lodged in a tepee away from the camp, where she was guarded for four days by an old medicine woman who could communicate with and control the spirits. The girl could not go near sacred objects such as medicine pipes or bundles during this time, because of the uncontrolled spirits around her.

During these four days the girl was taught the ritual she must follow each month, and the meaning and purpose of it. Her training under the old medicine woman also taught her how to control the spirits so that they could not take over her mind.

When the four days were over, she was brought back to camp and a feast was held in her honour, at which time gifts were given to all the guests. In some tribes, she was then given an adult name. This name was given to her by the old woman who taught her, and usually the name was of significance; "Red Stone Woman" could mean that her power and guardian was a red stone.

A woman was seen to be like nature with its seasons, the strongest time in her life being during puberty and after middle age. The time in between was for the giving of new life. Some people think that in the Indian way of life the boy was glorified; on the contrary, the girl was considered spiritually stronger, because like the earth she gives life. Boys and girls were treated equally, and were not criticized if they chose work that was unusual for their sex: some women hunted and rode in battle, and some men cooked and tanned hides.

Appendix 10



FAMILY LIFE

Indian tribes were divided into bands, or smaller groups. There might be twenty families—a hundred or so people—in one band. The band members were often related, as cousins, uncles, or aunts. They traveled, worked, fought together, and shared food.

It was usual for a girl to marry between twelve and fourteen. Men might be a little older—unless they were rich, they would need to prove their strength and bravery first, to attract a bride. Some couples married for love. But often marriages between families were arranged by the parents. New husbands were expected to give presents—like a horse, blankets, or buffalo skins—to their bride's father. Rich men had several wives, but women were not allowed to have more than one husband.

Small families

Most Plains Indian families were quite small. Each mother might have two or three children. Indian life was hard, and babies who were sick or handicapped often did not survive long.

Within the family, men and women had different jobs to do. They were all essential for survival.

The Plains Indians lived close to the natural world,

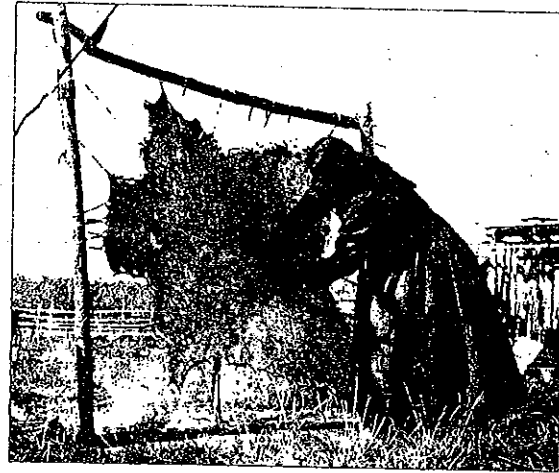
Men's work

Within the family, men and women had different jobs to do. Boys and girls were trained for their adult tasks from an early age. Men fought and hunted, and went on raids.



▼ Women's work

Women did not fight, and rarely went hunting. One woman is reported to have gone on a dangerous raid, but she was exceptional. She explained her behavior by saying she was so much in love with her husband that she wanted to die fighting alongside him. More usually, women cooked, cleaned, cared for children and sick people, dug in the fields and grew crops.

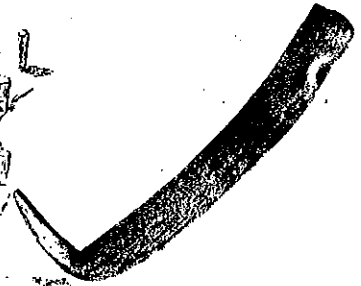


CLOTHING AND SHELTER

Women prepared the hides of buffalo skins used to make clothing and tepees. First the skin was pegged to the ground (below) or pulled on a frame (above). Then it was scraped clean of fat and hair using a bone scraper (right).

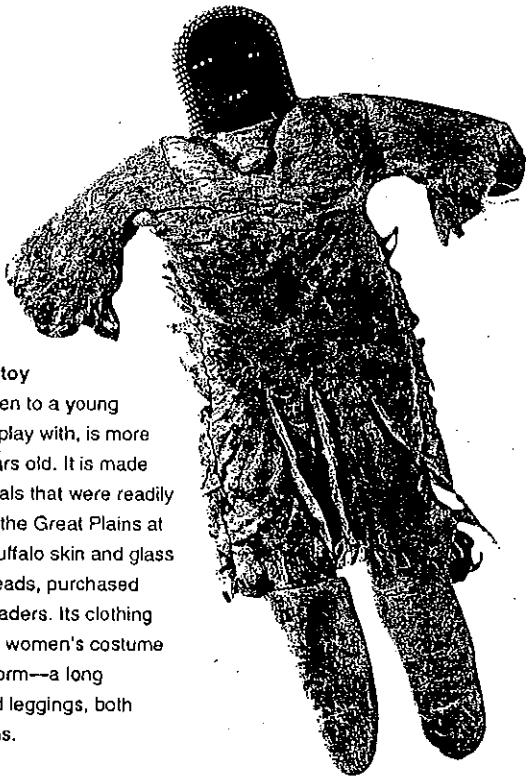
Although women worked hard, they did not play much part in public life. Only men joined in most religious ceremonies; women and children stood by and watched, or sometimes sang. The men drew strength from the women's emotional support:

Look at that young man
He is feeling good
Because his sweetheart
Is watching him.



and their lives changed with the seasons. In the spring, they planted crops and caught young birds and animals. In the summer, they harvested corn, and gathered all kinds of wild fruits. There were extra buffalo hunts in the autumn, to stock up on food. In the winter, when snow covered the windswept Plains, everyone concentrated on trying to survive.

All these seasons were marked by special ceremonies. These were held to celebrate harvests and hunts, but they had another purpose, too. They encouraged the "good order" of sun and rain, birth and rebirth, to continue forever. At some ceremonies, like the Sun Dance, men endured painful ordeals. They offered their suffering to the gods, and asked them to keep on providing for the



► A child's toy

This doll, given to a young Sioux girl to play with, is more than 100 years old. It is made out of materials that were readily available on the Great Plains at that time—buffalo skin and glass and metal beads, purchased from white traders. Its clothing shows Sioux women's costume in a simple form—a long overshirt and leggings, both made of skins.

NAMED BY THE SPIRIT

In some tribes, children—especially boys—were not named at birth. Instead, when they were about twelve, they went to a quiet lonely place, and asked the Great Spirit for

guidance. They hoped to receive a vision of an animal or bird. For the rest of their life, that would be their own special creature, and they took its name.



KIOWA DAUGHTERS

Two young girls from the Kiowa tribe, dressed in their best clothes. Their long deerskin shirts are elaborately decorated with (right) elk teeth and (left) bead embroidery. Fine

clothes like this were only worn by children from wealthy families. Children were taught to be proud of their hair. They combed and oiled it to keep it smooth and glossy.



▲ Indian fashion

This wealthy young woman from the Dakota people is dressed in Indian clothes influenced by European fashions. Instead of a skin overshirt, she wears a long skin robe, trimmed with bones, ribbons, beads, and coins. She also wears embroidered moccasin boots. Her hair is plaited, in reservation style. This suggests that her people were moved from their homeland by the U.S. government and settled in camps, known as reservations.

world and its people. Ceremonies were also held to mark important stages in a person's life, from birth through adolescence to death and burial.

Fun and games

Other seasonal festivals were less serious and more like holidays. At various times of the year, Plains Indians made time for sports and games. They skated and played shinny (ice hockey) during the winter, and raced, played lacrosse, and a game with hoops and spears in the summer. They also held shooting competitions and gambled in a game that involved throwing seeds and stones marked somewhat like dice. By the eighteenth century, the Indians played ball game just for fun.

When times were hard, the Plains Indians relied on their family band. Indian men also belonged to ritual societies, with names like "the Bulls" or "the Stone Hammers." Members of these societies promised to help one another at all times. They also acted like policemen in the camp, and arranged hunting or raiding parties. They took part in dances, wearing magnificent skins and masks.

FAMILY BURIAL

In many tribes, dead people were placed on wooden platforms until their flesh rotted away. Then their bones were buried. As one Sioux explained, "All my relatives are lying here in the ground, and when I fall to pieces, I am going to fall to pieces here."



Family Life

Each Iroquoian longhouse was home to many families. These families were related to each other through their female members, since all children born to the women of a longhouse became members of a kin group called a clan. A clan was made up of people who could trace their descent through their mothers and grandmothers back to a common female ancestor. Male and female clan members of the same age group thought of themselves as being like brothers and sisters.

Every tribe had a number of clans, named for animals that were important to the people, such as the bear, wolf, turtle or hawk. A large clan might fill several houses in a village. The clan was headed by the clan matron, the oldest, most respected woman in it. She controlled the food supply, selected chiefs and arranged marriages for clan members.

In some tribes, a man's mother suggested a possible wife to him. If he liked her choice, she would speak to the woman's mother, who would then decide whether or not the man was a skilled enough hunter and warrior to marry her daughter.

Even after marriage, a woman's bonds to her clan were more important than her tie to her husband. Her world was centred on the longhouse and fields where she lived and worked with her mother and sisters. Any children born to her would belong to her clan. Children were always



The clan matron had a strong influence over life in the longhouse. She controlled the food supply, selected chiefs and arranged marriages. Since a clan was thought of as a large family, marriage partners had to come from a different clan.

raised by their mother and her sisters and brothers, not by their father. Although a man moved into the longhouse of his wife's clan after marriage, he still spent a great deal of his time with his own clan, helping to raise the children of his sisters. Because a man's world was centred on the woods and waterways, he was often away from the village.

Childbirth proved a woman's competence and courage, just as success in battle proved a man's. She gave birth alone or with the help of an experienced older woman. If she cried or made noise during labour, she was considered cowardly and was scolded for setting a bad example.

The birth of a girl was greeted with joy, because she could give birth to more clan members and so ensure its strength. When a boy was born he was dipped into a stream right away; this was supposed to make him strong and fearless. Every baby was given a taste of animal oil right after birth to clean out his or her system. It also fed the child's guardian spirit which was believed to live in the soul from birth on.

Children had special names that identified them as belonging to a particular clan. The mother chose the name from a list of those owned by her clan and not being used by any living person. The child's name was confirmed at the next major festival.

As children grew up, they learned how to do things by watching and imitating the work of adults. When they were strong enough, toddlers helped to fetch wood and water. They carried the water in small pots that held about 500 mL. The pots looked like vases and were made of clay mixed with pounded stone or shells for strength.

Girls learned to make pots by forming very little ones which they used as toys. They rolled the wet clay mixture into a ball, then made a dent in this with a fist. To shape the pot, they slapped the outside with a wooden paddle, while turning the pot on their fist. The pots were dried in the sun, then baked in a hot fire. Iroquoians did not glaze their pots, but they did press patterns into the rims with corncobs, fingernails and other objects.

Girls were also taught how to pound dried corn into corn meal. They moved stout wooden pestles up and down in a mortar made from a hollowed-out tree trunk which was filled with dried corn.

Boys practised archery and other skills that would help develop their coordination, sharp sight and good aim to make them useful in the woods and warfare. They also learned to fish and snare animals by copying the men. At puberty, most boys went on a vision quest. They spent about two weeks in the forest, alone and without food, waiting for their guardian spirit to show itself. The spirit would foretell their future and give them a special song. Singing the song would give them courage and protect them in times of danger.

When girls reached puberty they cooked and ate their food alone, using special pots. Throughout their childbearing years, women observed these practices at each menstrual period.

Not all members of a clan were born into it. Adoption of both children and adults was common. In wartime, when many men were killed, clan matrons could adopt enemy captives so that their groups remained strong.

For the first year, a baby spent its waking hours in a cradleboard and was taken everywhere in it. The board could be propped against the wall of a house or hung from a tree near the women as they worked, or carried on the back of the baby's mother, sister or aunt. Cattail fluff served as diapers. At night the baby slept with its parents or in a hammock made of animal skins.

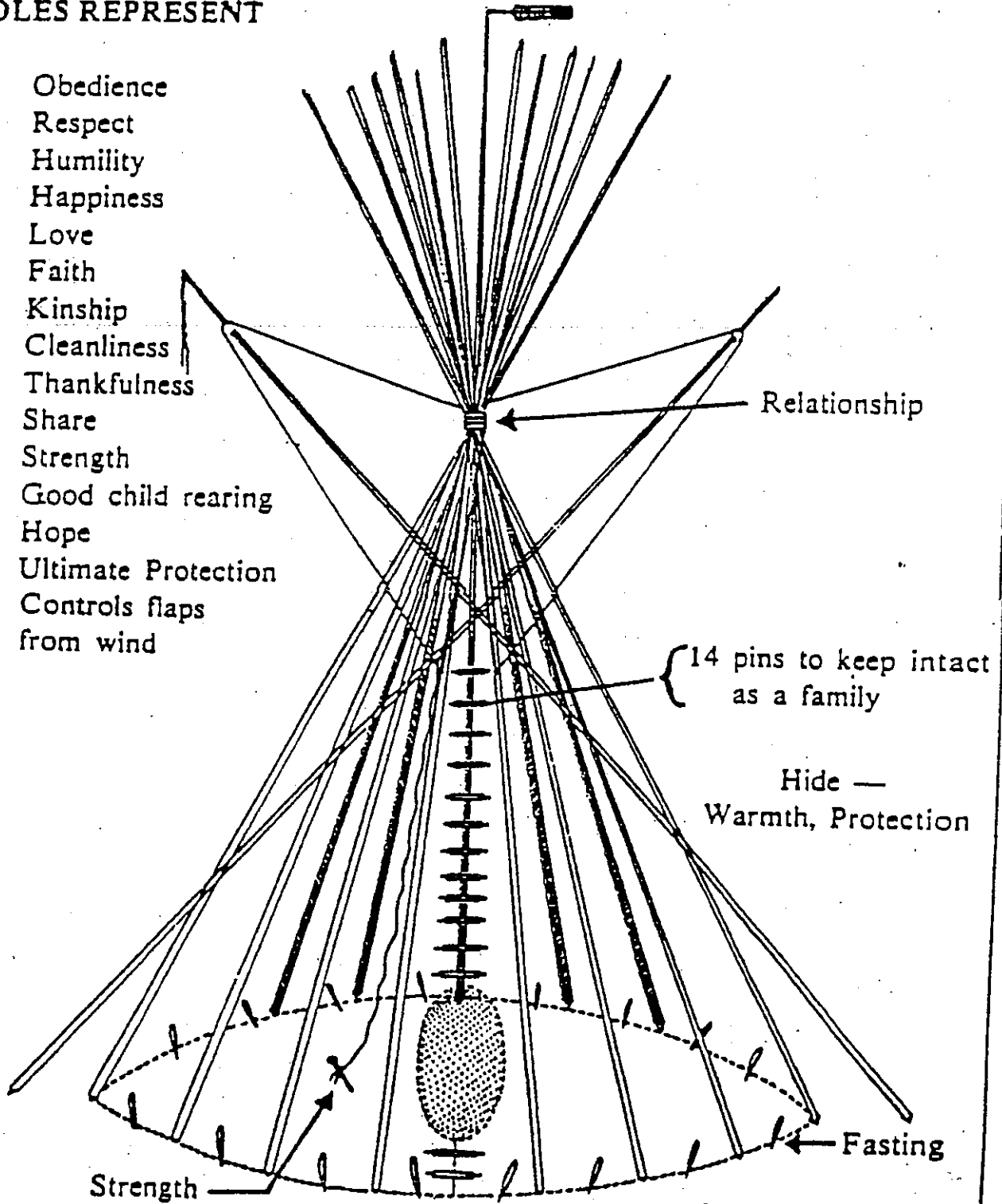


Appendix 12

The Tipi 1:1

POLES REPRESENT

- 1 Obedience
- 2 Respect
- 3 Humility
- 4 Happiness
- 5 Love
- 6 Faith
- 7 Kinship
- 8 Cleanliness
- 9 Thankfulness
- 10 Share
- 11 Strength
- 12 Good child rearing
- 13 Hope
- 14 Ultimate Protection
- 15 Controls flaps from wind



Saskatchewan Indian Cultural College
 Curriculum Studies and Research
 Federation of Saskatchewan Indians
 November 1981

INDIAN CULTURALISM

The Tipi Concept

Long ago, the Indians had their own type of education before the coming of the white man. The Indian education system was a learning process; how to cope and to live in the Indian environment capacity. Their system of Indian education was practical. Their medical research scientists worked with the mother nature plants, roots, etc. to produce medicine for the sick. The Great Chiefs had to show good leadership qualities, etc. The Indian educational system was a practised activity, ie: setting up a "TIPI" with fifteen (15) poles. Each pole represents a meaningful and quality which is included in the Indian educational system.

The fifteen poles are as follows:

1. OBEDIENCE

I must learn to listen and obey my parents, guardians, mainly the ELDERS since they have the great knowledge and wisdom of the Indian way of life.

2. RESPECT

I must live with self respect. I must respect the world and the people around me. I must also learn to live in harmony with nature.

3. HUMILITY

I must be humble, but not to think that I am higher and more important than others. But at the same token, I am proud to be an Indian.

4. HAPPINESS

I must be happy to have my family and friends around me. Making other people happy makes me feel happy.

5. LOVE

I must love the non Indian and Indian people. Love is something that grows and can not be measured nor be paid for. We are taught to love one another for we are one.

6. FAITH

I must have faith in the Creator. The Creator has provided everything beautiful. I must have faith in myself, other people and be true at heart.

7. **KINSHIP**

Kinship to Indian people means the mother, father, brothers and sisters, grandparents and extended to other families like aunts and uncles. Kinship is a very strong element in the Indian society.

8. **CLEANLINESS**

I must be clean and live clean both physically and spiritually. The cleanliness of both the body and soul is regarded to the importance of good health.

9. **THANKFULNESS**

I must thank the Creator for my life's day-to-day functions. I must pray in my own Indian way each morning to ask for help and each evening to give thanks to the Creator for what he has given that day.

10. **SHARING**

I must share my Indian values and whatever I have to my fellow Indian people. Sharing is the most important value in the Indian society.

11. **STRENGTH**

I must be strong and be brave since our ancestors stressed the strength of character. Bravery, honesty and kindness are the important qualities for the Indian people.

12. **GOOD CHILD REARING**

I must be self determined to express and to encourage my children to have self respect and the good behaviour. The children should be taught how to respect their parents, guardians and elders also to take pride of our Indian ancestry.

13. **HOPE**

I must indulge hope to have self confidence and trust for the best and better things of my Indian life at the present moment and in the future.

14. **ULTIMATE PROTECTION**

The assembled tipi hide gives the Indian families a warmth shelter to live in. The tipi elements also give the ultimate protection and guidance to the Indian people.

15. **CONTROL FLAPS**

The rope and/or cord that ties the poles together shows a good Indian nation for we are one. The Indian nation that is working together provides a good strong and everlasting relationship.

Appendix 13

"I grew up in a world of stories. They were told in winter. Small boys showed their respect to sit and listen to the stories and learn them and remember them for the future. The stories were very elaborate with lots of descriptive detail."

CLIFFORD CRANE BEAR,
SIKSIKA



We Raised Our Children Together

The birth of a child is a wonderful event. In the days when we camped together in clans, newborns were cared for by all the women. Often, grandparents would adopt and raise a grandchild. From the first day of life we offered songs and prayers for a long and healthy life. After a few months we approached a respected adult to

In the old days, everybody in the camp helped raise the children. Grandparents spent many hours telling stories to the young ones; this was how Blackfoot values were instilled in children. Older children watched over younger ones, keeping them from danger. Aunts and uncles were responsible for disciplining those who broke protocol. Parents showed their offspring basic life skills and were pillars of support. Left, two Pikani girls; right, Siksika woman and child.



name the child. This name reflected achievements of the adult and brought blessings and success to the child. We still name our children in this way.

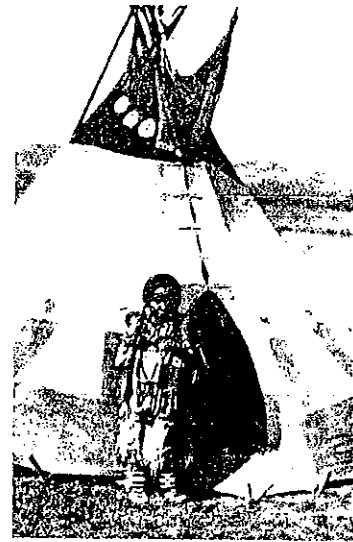
Our people watched with care and patience as their children grew. A child's natural abilities were allowed to blossom without interference. We had no grades or achievement tests. People developed according to their own abilities. Those with developmental problems were fully integrated in our society, participating with everyone else.

When children misbehaved, they were disciplined by their aunts and uncles. Usually, the child was spoken to privately and the importance of good behavior was explained.

Teaching Our Values

Putting our values into practice was essential to survival. They were our principles for living together and for existing with all of Creation. Although all adults taught these values by example in everyday life, our ancient stories gave explicit expression to these messages. Usually, our old people were the ones who told these stories. While the nighttime was an important time for storytelling, grandparents might tell these stories any time. They constantly reinforced good behavior and provided advice through storytelling.

These stories are important throughout our lives, and their lessons change as we grow older. Often, when we ask older people for advice, they will tell us one of our ancient stories to put the issue in a bigger context. This offers us direction without giving specific instructions. Each person



Often, one child would emerge as the favorite child or grandchild. This individual was spared from doing chores and shielded from the give-and-take of normal childhood interaction. If the family was wealthy, this *minipoka* received lavish gifts of elaborate buckskin clothing, horses and other material goods. Sometimes sacred bundles were transferred to them at a very young age. Miniature tipis were made and painted with sacred designs. Although some of these individuals grew to be successful leaders, others never acquired the proper acumen.

"Respect is what links all the ideas together. Thankfulness to the Creator each morning and evening - to all the animals, birds, clans, earth, human life, nature."

JENNY BRUISED HEAD, KAINAI

must find his or her path; an adviser can only offer general suggestions by means of stories.

Learning through Play

Our children's toys were made from the materials at hand. The games children played helped them acquire skills needed in adult life. Toys were often made with the help of grandparents and were another link between the generations.

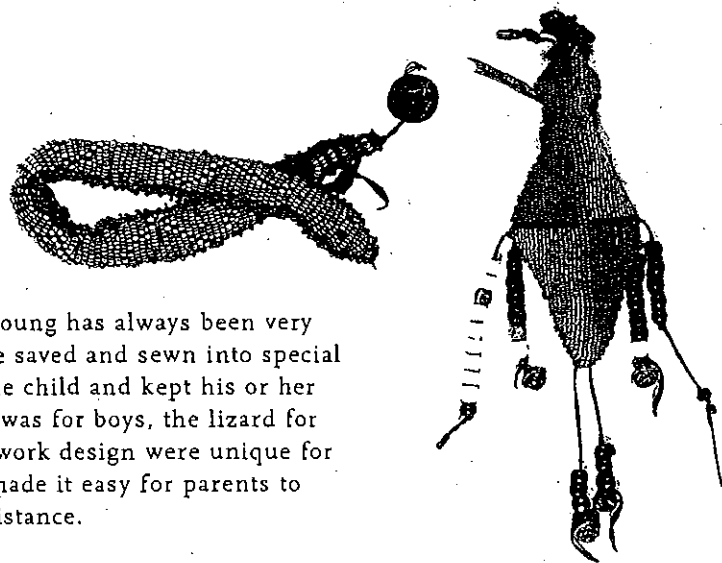
Twigs and sticks became horses and riders. A bent wire could be a race-horse and jockey, with colored yarn for the rider's silks. Knuckle and wrist bones from buffalo became horses. Boiled hoofs and scraps of hide, stuffed with grass or animal hair, were dolls. Flowered cotton scraps were used for



Toys were generally made from whatever material was at hand. Sometimes, however, more effort was put into creating playthings. Tipis were cut from scraps of hide, as were dolls that were stuffed with grass, buffalo wool or anything that was nearby. The beading on these dolls' clothes may have been a girl's early effort at learning this skill.

doll pillows and mattresses.

Favored children sometimes had entire miniature camps made for them. Everything was to scale, including painted tipis, furniture and clothes.



The spiritual protection of the young has always been very important. Umbilical cords were saved and sewn into special pouches. These were worn by the child and kept his or her spirit nearby. The snake design was for boys, the lizard for girls. Since the colors and beadwork design were unique for each child, these amulets also made it easy for parents to identify their children from a distance.

We call these children *minipoka*, or favored children. Their parents were usually wealthy, and toys were lavished on the children as a display of this wealth.

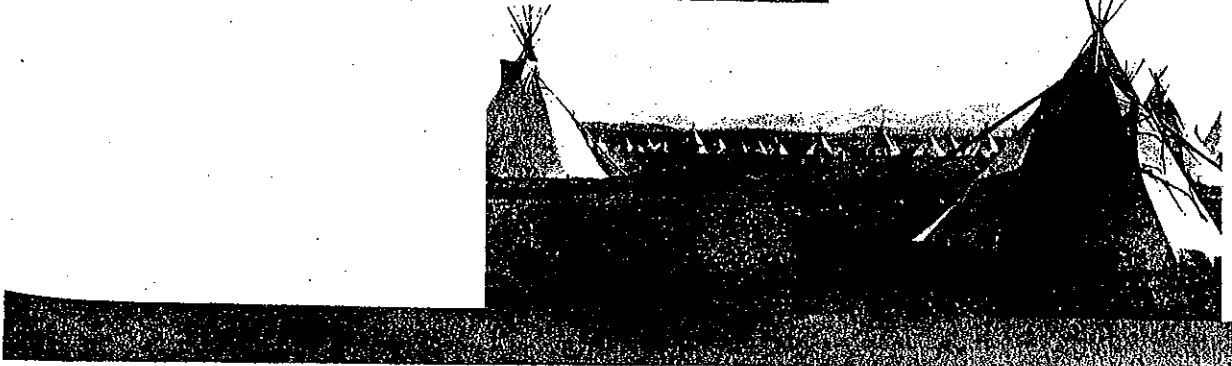
As children grew up, adult responsibilities replaced play. Boys and girls stopped playing together and began working with the older people.

Ookaan

Everything in our world is sacred. Each day we acknowledge *Ihtsi-pai-tapi-yopa* and all the *Naa-to-yi-ta-piiksi* in our world. Each year all of our clans come together to renew our connections with our universe. We call this the *ako-katssinn*, "the time of all people camping together."

At the center of an *ako-katssinn* is the ceremony we call *ookaan*. This focuses on a virtuous woman who has vowed to be the Holy Woman. For four days and nights she and her partner fast and pray in their tipi, which is set up in the center of the camp circle. They cut and dry one hundred buffalo tongues as an offering to bring a bountiful life to the people. When the couple break their fast, we erect a large, circular arbor near their tipi and

Once each year the Piikani, Amsskaapikani, Apatohsipikani, Kainai and Siksika gather for their *ookaan*. This ceremony renews the people's connection to *Natosi*, the sun and giver of life. As the people all camp together, this is also a time when the sacred societies undertake their ceremonies. Over the course of two or three weeks, ceremonies are performed that re-establish the Blackfoot people's relationship with all of Creation and reassert their right to live here. Bringing in willows for the sweat lodge (left); Pikani encampment (right).



Appendix 14

CHAPTER SIX

Education and Cultural Change

AS YOU READ

For years, Canada's government tried to disrupt First Nations' cultural continuity. It used education as a means of reaching this goal. Under pressure from policies designed to assimilate them, First Nations lost control of their children's education. Métis and Inuit peoples had different experiences, however, they too had little control over their children's education.

This is no longer the situation today, and this chapter describes how that change took place.

First Nations education has evolved in three phases. The phases mirror changes in the way non-Aboriginal society has viewed First Nations. At first, government treated First Nations as people who needed civilization. Then, it treated First Nations as people who needed equality. Now more and more — and at the insistence of First Nations — government treats them as people who can speak for themselves.

A return to traditional knowledge is a key part of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples taking control of their children's education. The reading on pages 170–171 describes the nature of traditional education.

As you read this chapter, think about the importance of education in transmitting culture. How have education policies — old and new — affected your life and the life of your community?

FOCUS QUESTIONS

As you read this chapter, consider these questions:

- ▲ What role does formal education play in transmitting culture?
- ▲ What is informal education? How is it important to cultural continuity?
- ▲ How can Aboriginal cultures overcome major disruptions, such as an education system once designed to eradicate their cultures?

Traditional Knowledge

Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples

ELDERS HAVE ALWAYS PLAYED A CENTRAL ROLE IN ABORIGINAL EDUCATION, WHICH IS FUNDAMENTALLY AN INTER-GENERATIONAL PROCESS. ELDERS ARE KEEPERS OF TRADITION,

guardians of culture, the wise people, the teachers. In Aboriginal societies, Elders are known to safeguard knowledge that constitutes the unique inheritance of the nation. They are revered and respected. While most of those who are wise in traditional ways are old, not all old people are Elders, and not all Elders are old.

Traditional knowledge is a discrete system of knowledge with its own philosophical and value base. Aboriginal peoples hold the belief that traditional knowledge derives from the Creator and is spiritual in essence. It includes ecological teachings, medical knowledge, common attitudes toward Mother Earth and the Circle of Life, and a sense of kinship with all creatures.

Each nation also has its own body of knowledge that encompasses language, belief systems, ways of thinking and behaving, ceremonies, stories, dances and history. Through thousands of years in the Americas, nations have evolved intricate relationships with their lands and resources. While Western academics and intellectuals have begun to give some credence to Aboriginal understandings of the universe, including ecological



Elders' stories are an important part of Aboriginal traditions. In this photo, Elder Pauline Ominayak, of the Sucker Creek First Nation, speaks to a group of children. How is this form of education different from a more formal classroom experience?

knowledge in particular, the gatekeepers of Western intellectual traditions have repeatedly dismissed traditional knowledge as inconsequential and unfounded. They have failed to recognize that their approach to knowledge building is also defined by culture and that Aboriginal intellectual traditions operate from a different but equally valid way of construing the world. Aboriginal people have particular difficulty with the Western notion that knowledge can be secular or objective, divorced from spiritual understanding and deeply imbedded values and ethics.

Traditional knowledge also has its own forms of transmission. Rooted in an oral tradition, knowledge is frequently passed on in the form of

stories, which are rendered in accurate detail to preserve their authenticity. These stories, often simple on the surface, are multi-layered and address complex moral and ethical issues. Traditional knowledge is also transmitted through one-to-one instruction and by modelling correct behaviours. Often, traditional knowledge is intended to be conveyed only at particular times or locations and in specific contexts.

REFLECTION

Are you familiar with some kinds of traditional knowledge? Have you had the experience of learning from Elders? If so, share your experiences with your classmates.

Assimilation

AS YOU READ

In the nineteenth century, First Nations realized they needed some European-style education to adapt to non-Aboriginal settlement. In some treaty negotiations, they required the federal government to provide their communities with education. First Nations expected this education to add to their cultural framework, not replace it.

The Canadian government, however, sought to assimilate them. This perspective mirrored the perspective of some missionaries. Since contact, missionaries had worked to convert First Nations, Inuit, and later Métis peoples to Christianity. They had established schools in many First Nations, Métis, and Inuit communities.

During the 1870s, Canada began to reinforce and extend the established network of mission schools as a way to fulfill its treaty obligation to provide education to First Nations.

As you read this section, think about how education became a tool for assimilation, and the effect this had on cultural change for First Nations.

EDUCATION MAKES A HUGE IMPACT ON OUR LIVES. IT SHAPES HOW WE VIEW AND UNDERSTAND THE WORLD AROUND US. IT HELPS PREPARE US FOR OUR ADULT LIVES. IN A LOT OF WAYS, IT DETERMINES WHO WE BECOME.

For thousands of years, of course, First Nations and Inuit peoples educated their own children. They taught them the skills they needed to live and contribute to the community. They taught children

Among the Dene, it is said the child is born with a drum in its hand.

The child is born with integrity.

The child has worth.

It is the birthright of the Dene child to be acknowledged and respected for this.

The child who is not respected cannot become what it is meant to be.

— *Dene Kede Education: A Dene Perspective*, Northwest Territories, Department of Education, Culture and Employment (Yellowknife, August 1993)



These two Siksika school children, the daughters of Mary Running Rabbit (back row, right), visited a First Nations spiritual leader. She drew a black circle on their faces to indicate the cycle of the sun from sunrise to sunset. Missionaries thought traditional First Nations spiritual practises were sinful, and wanted to protect Aboriginal people from the harm they believed would come from participating in them. What do you think missionaries would have thought about Maggie Black Kettle's (back row, left) and Mary Running Rabbit's visit?

how to behave, how to work together, and how to treat each other well. They taught them the oral history, songs, dances, and spiritual beliefs of their ancestors. In time, those children grew up to raise and educate children of their own.

Like many aspects of First Nations and Inuit life, the process of education changed drastically after Europeans arrived in Canada. Over the course of a few decades, governments and churches took control of First Nations and Inuit education.

TRADITIONAL EDUCATION

In traditional Aboriginal education systems, learning is seen as an individual's life-long responsibility. Traditional teachings stress personal responsibility and relationships. Teachers model competent and respectful behavior. A specific product or grade is not as important as the process of learning and living.

The holistic nature of traditional education shapes the teaching styles and methods. This educational philosophy nurtures learners, showing them how to achieve their individual goals while at the same time meeting the collective needs of the community. Education passes on the values central to Aboriginal communities and families.

Traditional Aboriginal education prepares students for total living. It focuses on a four dimensional approach balanced to meet the emotional, mental, physical, and spiritual needs of the learner.

Teachers concentrate on what learners can do rather than what they cannot. This reinforces each learner's unique abilities.

Traditional teaching strategies involve:

- Strong visual components or tools.
- Learning in real life, rather than by practice in artificial settings.
- A focus on people and relationships rather than on information.

We had ... our own teachings, our own education system teaching children that way of life, and how children were taught from the grandparents. They were taught how to view, to respect the land, and everything in Creation.

Through that, the young people were [educated about] what were the Creator's laws, what were these natural laws. What were these First Nations' laws. And talk revolved around a way of life, based on their values. For example: ...to share, to care, to be respectful of people, how to help oneself. How to help others. How to work together.

— Cree Elder Peter Waskahat, Frog Lake First Nation, *Treaty Elders of Saskatchewan*

Language is essential to learning and identity.

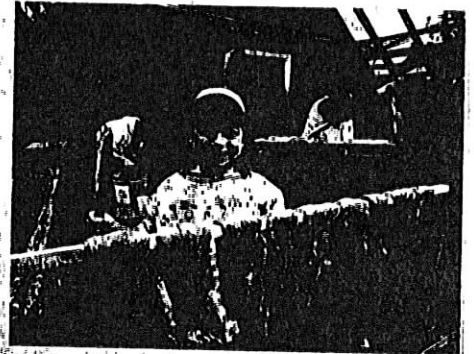
At the core of traditional education lies Aboriginal spirituality and traditional knowledge. Elders play a vital role passing on traditional knowledge to students. Holistic teachings and counselling from Elders brings continuity to students' lives —

they learn from Elders both in and out of school. By conducting and providing instruction in ceremonies such as Sweat Lodges and pipe ceremonies, Elders teach learners to honour what is sacred in the universe as well as what is sacred in themselves. These ceremonies are powerful esteem-building tools used to show learners that they are integral, respected members of their community.

Like all peoples, Aboriginal peoples rely on education to continue their culture. Using extensive parental and community participation, Aboriginal educators work toward developing qualities and values in their students that include respect for Elders, cultural tradition, leadership, generosity, integrity, wisdom, compassion for others, and living in harmony with the environment.

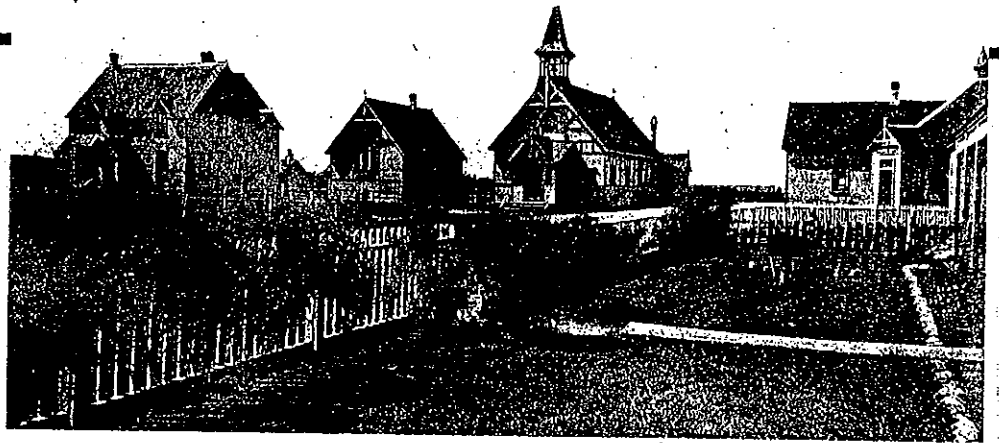
Traditionally, Aboriginal cultural knowledge is transmitted and documented primarily through the oral tradition, but also through such things as dramatic productions, dance performances, and they are documented on such artifacts as wampum belts, birch bark scrolls, totem poles, petroglyphs and masks. This is the Aboriginal way of transmitting knowledge and of recording information and history.

— Greg Young-Ing, Vancouver, British Columbia, June 4, 1993, *Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples*



Ella Stevens and her mother Lilly, with Nikita Stevens, are preparing salmon for the smokehouse. How is this a form of traditional holistic education?

Missionaries quickly established themselves and their missions in North America. They built churches and schools, like this mission house and school for the Siksika nation in the Gleichen area of Alberta. Why were missionaries so anxious to convert First Nations people to Christianity?



MISSION SCHOOLS

When European explorers and traders arrived in North America and then spread across the continent, missionaries followed close behind them. Governments and churches saw education as an important tool in building successful relationships with First Nations people.

To them, education was a tool for bringing the benefits of European culture, knowledge, and religious beliefs into a land that they saw as uncivilized. They thought of First Nations cultures as being far less developed than European cultures. They saw people with non-European cultures as less fortunate. In their view, it was their duty to share their cultures.

For more than a century, formal First Nations education was designed around the goal of assimilation. It operated under the false assumption that First Nations people would gladly abandon their ways of life once they had been taught European ways. The colonial government and Christian missionaries believed the best way to achieve this transformation was to educate the young.

As settlement began spreading across Canada, government officials saw assimilation as a key to First Nations security. They did not

believe that First Nations people had the capacity to adapt to a rapidly changing world without help. According to their reasoning, First Nations people might stand a better chance of thriving in the new Canadian society if they could be taught to live and behave like Europeans.

Missionaries, on the other hand, saw assimilation as a matter of spiritual survival. They were in the business of saving First Nations souls. They sincerely believed that First Nations peoples' beliefs and lifestyles needed to be changed to avoid suffering.

From the beginning, governments and churches worked together. They shared many of the same goals when it came to educating First Nations people. The British and French governments both saw Christianity as an important part of their culture. Churches viewed the European way of life as superior to the migratory lifestyles of many First Nations peoples. In other words, assimilation and Christianity went hand in hand.

First Nations leaders, of course, did not see their people as uncivilized, or in need of Christian conversion. However, many recognized that their people would not be able to continue living exactly as

MAJOR EVENTS IN THE EVOLUTION OF FIRST NATIONS AND INUIT EDUCATION

they had. As leaders, they had to begin to plan for their people's physical and cultural security. They saw education not as a tool of assimilation, but as a way to help their people to adapt. Tsuu T'ina language reflected this, calling schools *ich'i di t'ish di*, "a place where you learn to write" or *i ts'i zi di*, "a place where you read."

By the 1840s, Catholics, Anglicans, and Methodists were all operating mission schools in eastern Canada. As settlement spread to the west coast, and then onto the prairies, mission schools began to appear there as well.

In 1847, the British government commissioned a study on First Nations education led by Egerson Ryerson, a prominent Methodist minister and educator. Ryerson recommended setting up a system run by churches, centred on agricultural training and religious instruction. He recommended the government build, fund, and inspect First Nations schools, and that the churches staff and operate them.

Although some Inuit people in Labrador attended mission schools as early as the 1790s, non-Aboriginal settlement had not yet moved into Canada's north. This made the Arctic a lower priority to the British and Canadian governments. The government did not attempt to control the education of Inuit people until the mid-1900s. Nor did the government develop an education system for Métis people. They did not yet recognize Métis people as Aboriginal people.

	First Nations face erosion of their rights and cultures under systems of education designed to assimilate them.	
1600s-1850s	Missionaries establish day schools for First Nations and Labrador Inuit.	1850
1871-1899	First Nations make education a priority in the numbered treaties.	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The government becomes responsible for First Nations education. The government funds existing missionary schools. 	1860
1879	The Davin Report advocates establishing residential schools to accelerate assimilation.	1870
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Missionaries and government endorse the report's recommendations. 	
1880s-1970s	Residential schools proliferate in Canada.	1880
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> They reach peak numbers during the 1930s. They damage many First Nations and Inuit people and communities. 	1890
	The government revises its First Nations education policy.	
1951	The government overhauls the Indian Act.	1900
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The treatment of First Nations war veterans sparks the overhaul. 	
1960s	The government begins to phase out residential schools.	1910
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> It also phases out control of First Nations and Inuit education by religious orders. 	
	First Nations assert control over education in their communities.	1920
1969	The federal government issues the White Paper.	1930
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Without consulting First Nations, the paper proposes major changes to education policy. First Nations oppose continuing unilateral federal decisions regarding their future. 	
1970	The Indian Chiefs of Alberta issue the Red Paper.	1940
1970	First Nations at Saddle Lake stage a sit-in and take control of their school, Blue Quills.	1950
1972	The National Indian Brotherhood drafts an education policy.	1960
1973 to present	First Nations-run schools proliferate in Canada.	
1974	Kehewin First Nation-run school opens, the first in Alberta.	1970
1990s	First Nations and Inuit people begin to take legal action against abuse suffered at residential schools.	1980
1996	Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP) endorses First Nations rights.	1990
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> RCAP recommends a new education policy supporting self-government for First Nations and Inuit peoples. It recommends a public inquiry into neglect and abuse at residential schools. 	
2000	7000 cases of abuse in residential schools await resolution in courts.	2000

DAY SCHOOLS

When Canada became a country in 1867, the British North America Act gave the federal government responsibility for "Indians and Indian lands." This included responsibility for First Nations education. Education for the rest of the population, however, became a provincial responsibility.

In the years that followed Confederation, the government wanted to move quickly to sign treaties with First Nations peoples throughout western Canada. Settlement was pushing farther and farther into the West. At the same time, the government was aggressively pursuing its promised coast-to-coast railway.

Most of the treaties included the right to education. First Nations leaders were deeply worried about the recent, sudden disappearance of the buffalo herds. They also knew that the settlers had only begun to arrive, and that many more would follow. They wanted assurance from the federal government that their children would get the education they needed to get through this time of transition.

First Nations leaders did not, of course, ask for an educational system designed to transform their culture. Nor did they ask for teachers and administrators who would try to convert First Nations children to Christianity. First Nations leaders believed in the treaty promises to preserve their ways of life, values, and government authority.

The federal government had a choice between two ways of

fulfilling its treaty obligations to educate First Nations children: to design and run a brand-new educational system or to continue with the system already being developed by the churches. The second choice was less expensive and easier. After all, the government supported the churches' missionary goals. It saw Christianity as a significant part of assimilation.

Most of the early schools on reserves were day schools. First Nations children, like most students, attended school during the day and went home at night. Before long, it became obvious that the day schools were not educating children or assimilating them. Many First Nations children did not attend school at all, or attended sporadically. Families continued to move from place to place throughout the year and their children went along with them.

First Nations began to protest that the system of education the government provided did not suit their needs. Politicians complained that the government was not getting good value for its education spending. The missionaries, for their part, were finding it much more difficult than they expected to convert the students to Christianity. Despite their efforts, First Nations children continued to dress and behave as they always had. The churches argued that they needed more control over the children, in order to convert them to Christian European ways.