

# CANADIAN ISSUES THÈMES CANADIENS

Summer 2012

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Chief Robert Joseph

Jessie Sutherland

Lucía Madariaga-Vignudo

Baldwin Wong

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Wade Grant

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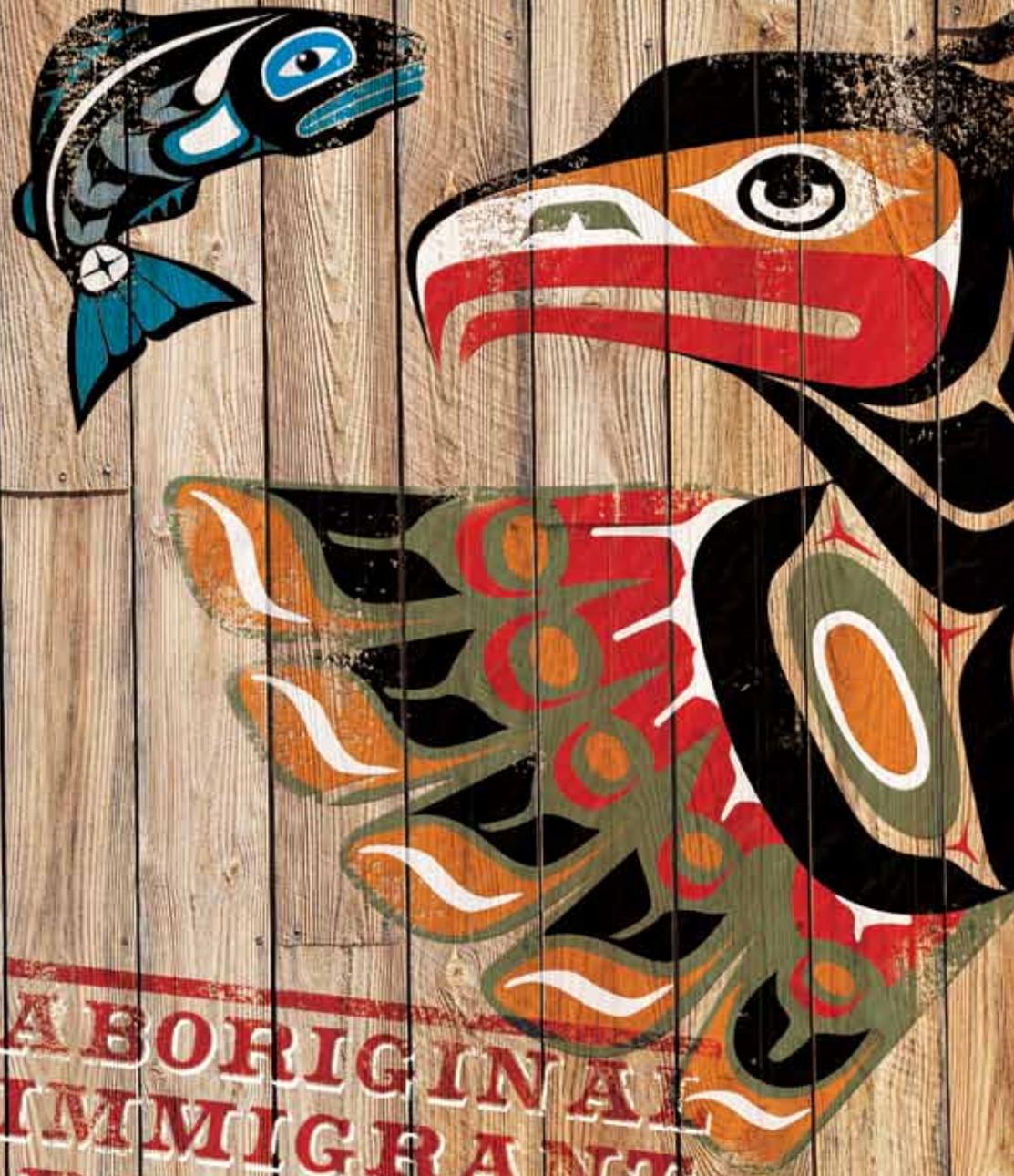
Christophe Traisnel

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ABORIGINAL  
IMMIGRANT  
RELATIONS  
TODAY



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Guest Editor: **Sylvia Kasparian**, Université de Moncton, Atlantic Metropolis Center



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Canadian Issues / Thèmes canadiens is a quarterly publication of the Association for Canadian Studies (ACS). It is distributed free of charge to individual and institutional members of the ACS. Canadian Issues is a bilingual publication. All material prepared by the ACS is published in both French and English. All other articles are published in the language in which they are written. Opinions expressed in articles are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the opinion of the ACS. The Association for Canadian Studies is a voluntary non-profit organization. It seeks to expand and disseminate knowledge about Canada through teaching, research and publications. The ACS is a scholarly society and a member of the Humanities and Social Science Federation of Canada.

Canadian Issues / Thèmes canadiens est une publication trimestrielle de l'Association d'études canadiennes (AEC). Elle est distribuée gratuitement aux membres de l'AEC. CIRC est une publication bilingue. Tous les textes émanant de l'AEC sont publiés en français et en anglais. Tous les autres textes sont publiés dans la langue d'origine. Les collaborateurs et collaboratrices de Thèmes canadiens sont entièrement responsables des idées et opinions exprimées dans leurs articles. L'Association d'études canadiennes est un organisme pancanadien à but non lucratif dont l'objet est de promouvoir l'enseignement, la recherche et les publications sur le Canada. L'AEC est une société savante et membre de la Fédération canadienne des sciences humaines et sociales.

Canadian Issues / Thèmes canadiens acknowledges the financial support of the Government of Canada through the Canadian Studies Program of the Department of Canadian Heritage for this project.

Canadian Issues / Thèmes canadiens bénéficie de l'appui financier du Gouvernement du Canada par le biais du Programme d'études canadiennes du ministère du Patrimoine canadien pour ce projet.

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# INTRODUCTION

## *Aboriginal Peoples: Canada's First Welcoming Community Where do Aboriginal-Immigrant Relations Stand Today?*

**Sylvia Kasparian** has been a professor of language sciences at the Université de Moncton since 1992. She is also the co-leader of the Welcoming Communities Research Domain of the Atlantic Metropolis Centre. She has a Ph.D. in sociolinguistics from the Université Sorbonne Nouvelle – Paris III. A specialist on bilingualism–multilingualism issues and comparative languages and cultures, she has coordinated research projects and supervised theses on languages and cultures in contact, as well as on Aboriginal languages and cultures (Malecite and Mi'kmaq) and their representations in the media. She is a founding member of various immigrant reception and integration organizations and has planned several multicultural events in the Greater Moncton region of New Brunswick, Canada.

*A contemporary reality to have a Canada that works for all of us [...] requires a fundamental change in how we phrase the conversation around who are the immigrants and First Nations People and then the interpretation and understanding of treaties, which bind all the people of this land.<sup>1</sup>*

This special edition of *Canadian Issues* looks at immigration from an innovative point of view. Although immigration has been at the heart of Canada's development for a long time, this has become increasingly apparent in the last 20 years. It has been the concern not only of politicians, but also of those in the economic sector, researchers, social workers, provinces and municipalities, and NGOs. Various aspects of immigration have been examined and reconsidered with a view to improving immigrant recruitment, reception, integration, and retention. The Metropolis Centre has played an important role in the development and advancement of more equitable immigration policies by bringing together all levels of immigration stakeholders to contribute their thoughts from the perspectives of citizenship and social integration; welcoming communities; families (women, children, and youth); housing and neighbourhoods; economic integration; as well as justice and security.

However, this in-depth reflection on immigration and integration in Canada has almost exclusively focused on the relationship between immigrants and the dominant group. There is little to no mention of the relationship between immigrants and Aboriginal people in the writings and discussions on immigrants.

And yet Aboriginals represented Canada's first welcoming community. In reflecting on welcoming communities and immigration to Canada, we surely

have a great deal to learn from these communities. If multiculturalism is a fundamental value—one that is central to Canadian identity—it is thanks to First Nations Peoples. Their vision of one land—an abundance belonging to all—their tremendous sense of hospitality and sharing, their respect for all and for every living thing, have instilled their values in us and shaped the fundamental beliefs of our society. As Chief Robert Joseph said, “Every race, every colour, every creed belongs here. They have a right to be here. They have value. We all have purpose.” Generosity, hospitality and multiculturalism—the core values of Canadian society—come from the fundamental beliefs of the First Nations Peoples. Canada is recognized as the first country to have developed a policy on multiculturalism (1971).

Unfortunately, the First Nations values of generosity and hospitality were misinterpreted by settlers. As Seema Ahluwalia explains in this issue, their generosity and role as a welcoming community were stolen from them. They are considered a distinct, second-class group and are therefore often highly undervalued. In addition, First Nations communities are not involved in discussions and decisions regarding the direction of immigration policies. Yet, the testimonies of First Nations Peoples on this issue show their desire to become involved and their conviction that the experience of having been the first welcoming community would significantly contribute to improving immigration policies and not repeating past mistakes. First Nations Peoples do have other concerns and priorities. They face serious psycho sociological challenges, which include redefining their identity and social integration challenges following the serious injuries and losses they have suffered. Nonetheless, according to Chief Robert Joseph (in this issue), immigration could be a cornerstone for building a better Canada for everyone.

First Nations communities are an integral part of the image of the Canadian dream; this is how immigrants imagine Canada will be when they arrive. Most immigrants do not know the real history of the First Nations, but rather their popular history—the myths and stereotypes that Hollywood largely contributed to cultivating by means of its immense body of American westerns. Although a tepee symbol is most often used to designate reserves on maps, immigrants who arrive on First Nations reserves are surprised to find themselves amidst small, poorly maintained houses that do not in any way represent the Aboriginal spirit and character they were seeking. Most immigrants and Canadians in general are unfamiliar with the richness and particularities of the various cultures and languages of First Nations Peoples in Canada. Instead, they see them as a homogenous group collectively referred to as Aboriginals.

On a day of dialogue and activities with the Mi'kmaq community organized by CAIIMM,<sup>2</sup> whose purpose was to introduce a local First Nations community to immigrants and to strengthen ties between them, about 60 immigrants, established immigrants, and Canadians (representing 17 nationalities in all), spent the day with Aboriginal people at Metepenagiag Heritage Park in New Brunswick. This first-hand experience revealed how surprised Aboriginal people were—given their very negative self-image—that immigrants were taking an interest in them. Immigrants, on the other hand, were amazed that Canadians have little to no interest in these Aboriginal communities with whom they have been cohabitating for centuries, aside from stigmatized or folklorized representations. Mr. Ba, an immigrant from Senegal, made the following remark:

[Translation]

*I first asked myself why these people do not figure more prominently in Canada. Is the system to blame for their not integrating? Or does their way of life result in their feeling uncomfortable? I asked myself many questions. Secondly, I was surprised that, in the group, even those who were born here or have been here for a long time had never been on a reserve. I don't understand!*

Although they have different characteristics, these two groups acknowledge that they have a number of similarities. The Peoples of Africa, for instance, find similarities between their way of life in African villages and the way of life of Aboriginal Peoples. This link between Aboriginal cultures in Canada and certain African cultures was developed and well documented by Hyacinthe Combarry in his film *Histoire de sable*, produced by the NFB in 2004. The film links the traditions and values of a young immigrant from

the Gourmantche ethnic group of Burkina Faso with the animist traditions of the Attikamek First Nations of Canada. As Lucia Madariaga discusses in her article, Aboriginal people are more likely to feel like friends and colleagues of African immigrants and refugees because, in addition to having similar traditions and values, they find themselves in a similar situation in Canada, often having the same disadvantaged and marginalized status.

Pascal Pelletier, a Cree artist and community leader living in Moncton, added (mainly in reference to Aboriginal people in New Brunswick) that Aboriginal people who decide to leave their reserve have similar experiences to immigrants with regard to integration. He affirms that Aboriginal people feel just as disoriented as new immigrants and that they need the same amount of assistance and the same support services during their integration process. In his view, it is often this distrust of external society that is instilled in Aboriginal people that limits them to the reserves, where, most often, they lack resources and goals. He suggests establishing settlement services in order to facilitate the integration of Aboriginal people who leave their reserve.

As Lucia Madariaga-Vignudo<sup>3</sup> also discusses in this issue, little is known about the interactions between immigrants and Aboriginal people, and even less is known about how these two groups perceive one another. In a 2010 article on multiculturalism in Canada, Banting and Kymlicka already discussed the need to examine more closely interactions between immigrants and urban Aboriginal people. They found that, in several western Canadian cities, immigrants were living in close proximity to Aboriginal people and that, while they were subject to different laws and regulations, they often shared the same services and public spaces. Undoubtedly, these relationships need to be studied because they bring a new perspective and understanding of immigrants' integration problems and shed an interesting light on the dynamics of welcoming communities.

The movement of interest in such relationships is gaining many levels of actors in different regions: marginal initiatives were launched in various cities, and two round tables were organized as part of the 2009 National Metropolis Conference held in Calgary and the 2011 Conference held in Vancouver to address this shortcoming, ask questions, and consolidate a network of researchers and social stakeholders who are committed to this issue. In this edition of *Canadian Issues*, we highlight the key aspects of these round tables and give an account of various contacts between Aboriginal people, first welcoming communities, and immigrants in Canada. What are the different types of cohabitation relationships and the perceptions that develop between these two groups, given their different realities? What actions have been taken and why? What are

the similarities and particularities of each group? To what extent can the study of this aspect of immigration serve to build a truly multicultural and integrated society? What can we propose to politicians?

This issue is a modest first attempt to answer such questions. Through the various points of view of municipal and social stakeholders, researchers, Aboriginals, immigrants, and NGOs, the 10 articles in this special issue present the initial discussions of researchers, highlighting the relationships and perceptions developing between these two groups in different Canadian provinces. The new initiatives established in these provinces to improve these relationships are also presented in this issue.

The types of relationships that exist between these two groups can be placed on a continuum that situates them between two polar extremes, ranging from a “zero contact” or “two solitudes” situation to mixed marriages: from indifference and tension to harmonious relationships between immigrants and Aboriginal people.<sup>4</sup> In certain provinces, namely New Brunswick, Aboriginal people live mainly on reserves, isolated from Anglophone and Francophone communities; those who live off the reserves—urban Aboriginal people—are fully integrated, not identifiable, and have little contact with immigrants. However, this is not the case in Saskatoon or Winnipeg, where Aboriginal people and immigrants share the same spaces. As will be seen in the following articles, the provinces that have made the greatest strides in creating dialogue with Aboriginal people are those with the strongest Aboriginal presence and those where immigrants share spaces with Aboriginal people, such as British Columbia, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba.

The contributions in this issue will give us a picture of the situations in Alberta, British Columbia, Saskatchewan, New Brunswick, and Canada’s three territories: Yukon, Nunavut, and the Northwest Territories. Several organizations that are aware of the need for dialogue have led projects or taken action in various provinces. Guided by the conviction that it is through dialogue that we come to know and understand each other and solve issues of cohabitation and perception, these initiatives attempt to create forums for dialogue between the two communities, Aboriginal and immigrant. Organizations including the NGO CAIIMM (now known as CAFI, mentioned earlier in this introduction) in Moncton, New Brunswick; *Actions interculturelles de développement et d’éducation* (AIDE) in Sherbrooke, Quebec, which started a dialogue between the African Canadian, Aboriginal, Colombian and Serbian Canadian communities by, among other activities, sharing the traditions of each culture through expressive dance and initiatives undertaken by the Finding Home™: How to Belong in a Changing World NGO; the Dialogues Project

carried out by the city of Vancouver with the Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh communities; Welcome Home program initiated by the race relations committee in the city of Saskatoon, as well as those introduced by teachers, social workers, and Aboriginal leaders such as Chief Robert Joseph in Vancouver and Pascal Pelletier in Moncton who work to educate and develop harmonious relationships and a positive perception of the various communities that make up Canada. Some of these initiatives are discussed to varying degrees in this issue.

This edition of *Canadian Issues* offers a sampling of articles that clearly illustrate the diversity and complexity of the relationships between Aboriginal people and immigrants in Canada today—relationships that are set against the backdrop of dismissal, ignorance, and a deliberate forgetting of historical events. That being said, this issue starts with a contribution from the Hereditary Chief of the Kwakwaka’wakw community, Robert Joseph, who provides some of his thoughts on immigration. Basing himself on the history of his people, and writing on behalf of the Aboriginal community that is still struggling to carve out a place for itself in the Canadian landscape, he argues that, in addition to being a strength, multiculturalism is a cornerstone of a better Canada. According to Joseph, immigrants can play an active role in defining a new and more inclusive Canadian identity. He feels that, by focusing essentially on the economy rather than on culture and the effects of immigration, current immigration policies pose a threat to multiculturalism. He advises immigrants to fight to stay themselves and all Canadians to initiate a meaningful dialogue that will result in a more inclusive Canada and a better society for all. He is convinced that Aboriginal people can greatly contribute with respect to immigration and to the dialogue on building a better, more tolerant society. In his view, it all starts with “You and I.”

The six contributions that follow describe research and initiatives undertaken in various Canadian provinces. First, focusing on basic theories and the approach taken by her program, Jessie Sutherland presents the work of the NGO Finding Home, which she founded. This program aims to engage communities through dialogue and cooperation on the meaning, creation, and preservation of a feeling of belonging. Based on past experiences of dialogue between immigrants and Aboriginal communities in British Columbia’s Lower Mainland region, she argues that dislocation from land and nature is experienced as an erosion of the feeling of belonging and that reestablishing this connection would strengthen that feeling. Furthermore, building on the theories of several authors, including Toynbee (1955), Wright (2005), Nahdi (2003), Marshall (2001), Diamond (2006), and Clarck (2002), she concludes that our capacity to create a feeling of belonging against the

backdrop of current local and global challenges may largely depend on our aptitude to form quality relationships with others, the environment, and ourselves.

Lucia Madariaga-Vignudo looks at how urban Aboriginal people and African refugees perceive one another. She draws from qualitative data collected in downtown Winnipeg for her exploratory study and presents the partial results of her research on the mixed picture of the way downtown Aboriginal residents perceive new African refugees. According to her study, some Aboriginal people have negative perceptions of refugees, primarily owing to an impression of competition between these groups for jobs and subsidized housing, while other Aboriginal people seem to have a positive view of refugees because they can relate to them as racial minorities.

The two articles that follow present two different viewpoints (Baldwin Wong and Karen Fong from the city of Vancouver and Aboriginal leader Wade Grant) on the Dialogues Project, a large scale initiative developed and implemented by the city of Vancouver in cooperation with Aboriginal communities. In their article, Baldwin Wong and Karen Fong, respectively the project director and coordinator of the Dialogues Project, give a useful overview of the project undertaken by the city of Vancouver, with the goal of increasing understanding and strengthening ties between the city's Aboriginal and immigrant communities. Established in 2010, this project includes five major initiatives: discussion circles, research, cultural visits, a program for youth and the elderly, and a neighbourhood stories project. Over two thousand people have participated in this project so far. A book entitled *Vancouver Dialogues* and a video about their process are among the project's major achievements. This description is followed by the testimony of Wade Grant, co-chair of the project and councillor for the Musqueam Indian Band, from the National Metropolis Conference in 2011. A Métis himself (Chinese-Musqueam), he led discussion sessions with Aboriginal people (urban and other) and immigrants. In his testimony, he described personal experiences that prompted him to join this initiative and the experience he gained from it. He saw the Dialogues Project as a unique opportunity to learn and to understand cultural differences, forge relationships, overcome prejudices, and acknowledge the similarities between different stories, personal journeys, and aspirations. For these reasons, he argues that the Dialogues Project should be expanded throughout Canada.

Becky Sasakamoose Kuffner and Smita Garg report on the actions taken by the city of Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, where various Aboriginal Peoples have always lived. They present the unique situation of Saskatoon, whose founding has preserved its historical and symbolic meaning: the

shared project of two nations—the Aboriginal people and the settlers—working and living together peacefully. However, this utopia did not last. Over time, the settler—Aboriginal relationship shifted in favour of the settlers. A number of treaties and acts were made that strained relations between the two groups. The municipality, aware of the social challenges and convinced that “the participation and contribution of all citizens in the development of our community is vital to meeting the challenges of the future,”<sup>5</sup> adopted a recommendation in 1989 to establish a race relations committee to collectively resolve the existing problems. Since then, this inclusive committee has participated in a host of innovative activities through recreation, culture, and the business sector, activities aimed at building stronger ties among Aboriginals, immigrants, and the general public. Their article begins with the moving account of an immigrant who took part in these activities.

Christophe Traisnel discusses the cultural diversity created by immigration and the demands of Francophone minority and First Nations communities. He addresses the very specific situation of Canada's three territories: Yukon, Nunavut, and the Northwest Territories. He provides considerable background information and then examines the relationships among the various communities. He says that over time these northern societies have, in fact, developed into a unique, “make society,” but one that still has its challenges.

The article by Harrison and Norris offers a new comparative perspective. Aware of the differences with respect to demographic, geographic, social, economic, and other characteristics, they state that Aboriginal peoples and immigrants are affected by similar factors having to do with the evolution of their languages. They present a comparative study of the evolution of the three most widely spoken Aboriginal languages (Cree, Inuktitut, and Ojibwa) and the three most widely spoken immigrant languages (Chinese languages, Italian, and German). Using data from the 1991 to 2006 censuses, they analyze the demographic, family, and community factors relating to the growth, continuity, and situations of these six languages in Canada. The results reveal the similarities and differences of the factors associated with the changes observed in the two population groups, and the implications for the future of their languages.

Seema Ahluwalia contributes an impassioned plea to return to Aboriginals the “generosity” that was stolen from them. Relying on historical facts and a detailed analysis of the ideologies, national myths, and prejudices that have led to Canadians' lack of knowledge about and denial of the true history of Aboriginals in Canada, she dissects the process that resulted in the types of relationships that

currently exist between Aboriginals and immigrants. According to Ahluwalia, relations between immigrants and First Nations Peoples must be examined in light of the fact that, whether we were born in the colonized territory or have immigrated to live on Aboriginal lands, we, as settlers, have benefited from the usurpation of lands from Aboriginals and the ongoing oppression of these peoples. Peaceful coexistence between Indigenous Peoples and Canadian settlers can commence once we begin to practice truth telling, the precursor to decolonization and respect for Indigenous land rights.

Finally, Wang Hongyan concludes this series of articles by proposing an inclusive curriculum for schools that includes cultural information and examines Aboriginal perspectives. This recommendation follows those made in several other articles in this issue. However, Wang Hongyan goes a step further by presenting models of inclusive programs that are already in place in some Canadian provinces and that have enhanced mutual understanding and improved relations between Aboriginals and immigrants. She then proposes interesting improvements to these programs so that they better meet the needs of both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students.

The articles in this issue illustrate the variety of actions that have been taken, as well as the various levels of awareness, with respect to the integration of Aboriginals in municipal and provincial dialogues in Canada. In Vancouver and Saskatoon, for instance, this issue has been given priority, and a considerable amount of money and effort has been invested, including by Aboriginals, in cities; while, in Moncton, New Brunswick, the city council is still considering requests from Aboriginals living off reserves to have the Mi'kmaq flag fly permanently in front of city hall (alongside the Canadian, British, New Brunswick, Moncton and Acadian flags) and to give an Aboriginal name to Riverfront Park (along the Petitcodiac River), which is a historic site for the Mi'kmaq and other Aboriginal Peoples in the area. This situation is not unique: in other cities, the question is not even being asked yet. In numerous parts of Canada, the “two solitudes” persists, and there is much work to be done to educate people in order to break down taboos and move forward.

As the authors show, this education is being done through dialogue. To improve relations between Aboriginals and immigrants, to create a better society for our youth, to develop a multicultural society that is better integrated, more and broader dialogue is needed in every province. It is through such dialogue that we will be able to forge ties, educate people, raise awareness, redefine the terms immigrant and Aboriginal, rehabilitate the past, come to terms with the country's history (as well as with

others, ourselves, and nature), and finally feel at home in Canada.

To achieve this, it is important that all levels of government and all citizens answer the call. Immigration offers an opportunity to create a more balanced society. As Chief Robert Joseph said, our hope resides in our mutual humanity and in the possibility of immigrants contributing to the remodelling of the Canadian human landscape with a view to becoming more receptive, kinder, and more inclusive—“Aboriginal people should be a part of this new reflection.”

This issue of *Canadian Issues* is a starting point. We hope it will open doors, encourage further discussion, and suggest possible actions for all of us—all different, but all Canadian.

#### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We would like to thank the participants of both round tables organized as part of the 2009 and 2011 National Metropolis Conferences. We would also like to express our gratitude to all of the First Nations people we met for their inspiration; the authors who agreed to be involved in this volume; Raymond Blanchard and Alicia Cleaver for reviewing the articles; and *Canadian Issues*, the National Metropolis Centre, the Atlantic Metropolis Centre, and the Welcoming Communities Research Domain of the Atlantic Metropolis Centre, for their assistance in organizing, translating, and producing this issue, as well as for their financial support.

#### NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> Testimony of an immigrant from Saskatoon, taken from the article by Sasakamoose-Kuffner and Garg.
- <sup>2</sup> CAIIMM is a reception and integration centre for Francophone immigrants that we founded in Moncton in 2005. It is now known as CAFI, the Centre d'accueil et d'accompagnement francophone des immigrants du Sud-Est du Nouveau-Brunswick (<http://caimm.org>).
- <sup>3</sup> In 2010, Lucia Madariaga (Vignudo) wrote the first Master's thesis on this topic, entitled “Refugee-Aboriginal relations: A case study of a Canadian inner city.”
- <sup>4</sup> This was the case for two authors in this issue. Wade Grant is the grandson of a Chinese immigrant who married an Aboriginal person from Vancouver's Musqueam community, while Seema Ahluwalia is an Indian immigrant from Punjab (India) who married an Aboriginal person from the Sicangu Lakota Oyate community in British Columbia.
- <sup>5</sup> [http://www.saskatoon.ca/DEPARTMENTS/Community%20Services/Communitydevelopment/Documents/CDRR\\_Policy.pdf](http://www.saskatoon.ca/DEPARTMENTS/Community%20Services/Communitydevelopment/Documents/CDRR_Policy.pdf)

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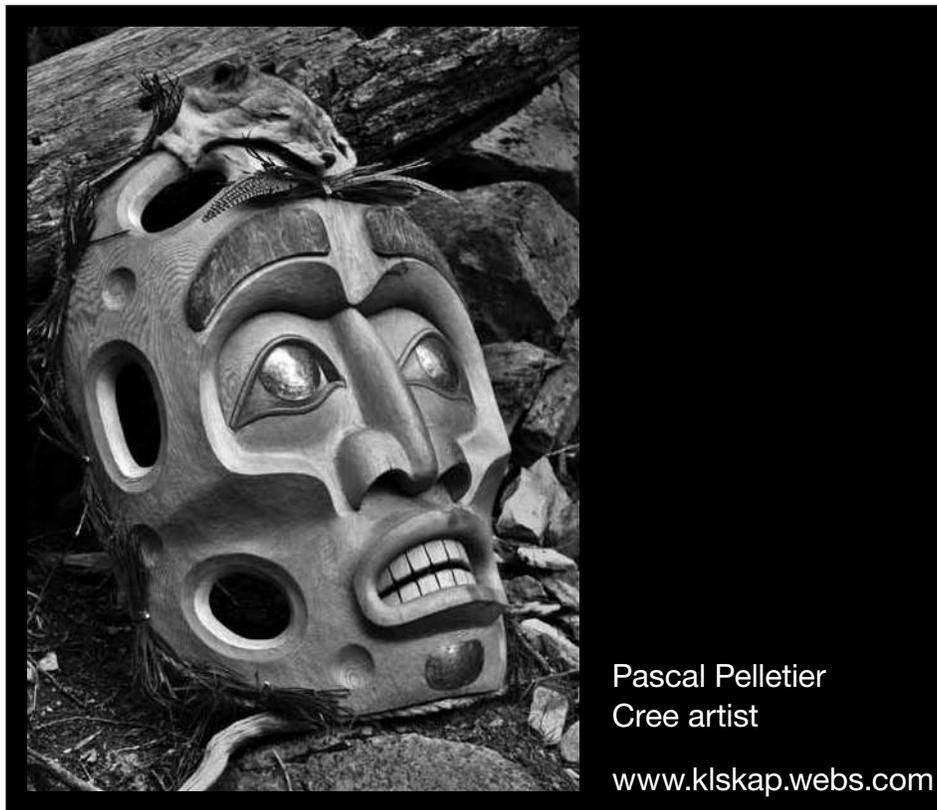
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# NEWCOMERS, BE TRUE TO YOURSELVES

**Chief Joseph** is the Executive Director for the Indian Residential School Survivors' Society in West Vancouver, B. C. He has been an advisor to Canada's Truth and Reconciliation Commission. He is the Chair of the Roundtable, a group consisting of representatives of National Churches, Government, Aboriginal, Indian Residential School Survivor organizations and communities. Chief Joseph had been a co-chair of the former Working Caucus that was largely responsible for creating consensus on responses to the legacy of the Indian Residential School experience. He served also as Chair of the Native Alliance for Peace and Reconciliation, a coalition of Canadian/American World Peace Leaders. Robert Joseph is a member of the Elders' Council of the Assembly of First Nations Canada. His life's work and service earned him an Honorary Doctor of Laws degree from the University of British Columbia.

## **ABSTRACT**

In the article, Chief Robert Joseph asserts that Multiculturalism is a strength and cornerstone for a greater Canada. Speaking on behalf of an Aboriginal community that still struggles with its own place within the Canadian tapestry, he wishes for immigrants to be true to themselves and believes they can play an active part in defining a new, more inclusive, Canadian identity. He feels that current immigration policies pose a threat to multiculturalism by mainly focusing on the economic, rather than cultural, impact of immigration. The many cultures that make up Canada deserve to be seen and heard, and deeper, more meaningful dialogue is needed: we must leave behind bigotry and racism. Aboriginal people have experienced this, and have much to contribute to this inclusive dialogue to create a true multiculturalism where divisions disappear, and diversity strengthens. It begins with you and I.

As an Aboriginal person I marvel at the changing face of our human landscape here in Canada.

There was a time in my earliest childhood where the only people living in our traditional territory were Kwakwaka'wakw. They spoke but one language, Kwakwawala, and practiced one culture.

Now the whole world is literally at our doorstep, as people flood into Canada from every region and corner of the globe. The cultural mosaic is breathtaking and boundless.

As a hereditary chief of the Gwa-wa-enuk tribe, I value the essence of this ethic and cultural diversity. It is a natural identity and has been a key to our survival as First Nations people.

When the first wave of newcomers came to our shore they attempted to assimilate us by destroying our languages and cultures. Thus we have a caution to make to our newcomers coming to our traditional home lands: "Be true to yourselves". Do not lose yourselves to assimilation in the name of Canadians.

Bring your foreign languages and your ancient rituals and practices with you. Your diversity strains to be acknowledged and respected.

As Aboriginal people we welcome you here. We are neither frightened nor challenged by your diversity and resourcefulness.

While Canada is preoccupied only with your economic worth and potential productivity, you must come with all that you are. The fullness of your true human worth must be acknowledged and respected.

Our experience with those who came to colonize our traditional territories was not good. They attempted to dismiss our history. We could not tell our stories for a very long time.

Now, we must provide our immigrants with time and space to tell their histories, their stories. As Aboriginal people we are interested in these matters, as should all Canadians.

We should all be curious and interested. Where do our newcomers come from? What languages do they bring? What beckoned them here? What values and principles do they bring that will enhance our own? How will these matters affect our quality of our life? How can we make our newcomers feel more welcome and embraced? How can we let them know that our interest in them goes far beyond their productivity, training or education? How can we convince them that they are more than modern day slaves to someone else's dreams?

My people, the Kwakwaka'wakw, have been here forever, millennia in fact. We strain to be included, but remain marginalized. Our hope lies in our common humanity and part of that nest with the potential that

newcomers can help to re-shape the Canadian human landscape to one that is tender, gentler and more inclusive.

There is one compelling desire that we share as Aboriginal people with all Canadians including those who have come from faraway lands and that is that we can create a better society for all of us.

It starts with you and I. A new and deeper dialogue must take place that begins to give face to a collective Canada that guides us on how we move forward *together*.

It is time to step back for a moment to reflect on our current immigration policy attitudes and practices.

While we invite and welcome our newcomers on our own terms (Canadian), we are both frightened and challenged by their diversity and resourcefulness. Our relationships fluctuate between fear and embrace as we gaze through restrictive lenses that limit us to seeing only their potential economic value.

Let us remind ourselves of what Vancouver Sun columnist, Douglas Todd, has told us, which is that Canada has the highest immigration rate per capita in the world. That four out of five Canadians either want immigration levels to stay the same or decrease. That these fears are always predicated by economic stress.

Foreign languages strain to be heard. Ancient rituals and practices ache to be seen. This thundering cacophony of ethnic diversity strains to be acknowledged and respected.

Every colour, every race, every creed has a right to be here. Every person or group of people has value, has purpose. In the absence of honoring all of that, we devalue the fullness of our immigrants' worth. We fail to see and lend importance to the natural world view of others. Because we do so, we limit our opportunity to see and experience the wonder of it all. In so doing we dismiss the very things that matter most to these brave adventurers—these matters that are the very essence of their soul. It is the spirit within that must be nurtured before all else. It is to start from the articulation of core values at the highest human level and then working through all the other levels.

Should there be additional investments made as we continue to attract new citizens? Absolutely! We must learn more about our new neighbours who come to Canada to be a part of us. This will lead to wholesome acceptance of each other and a better opportunity to create the just and equal society that we so desperately want. We must find new building blocks with immigrants to pave the way to human dignity and respect for one and all.

Failing to do so will harden the fraction growing in our communities. We must guard against old attitudes, bigotry and racism.

We should talk to young Canadians and newcomers because the language of divisive solitudes is beginning to creep into their jargon, and they are usually the most open minded.

Aboriginal people should be a part of this new reflection and dialogue because they have much to contribute. They have been subjected to genocidal intentions and attempts at total assimilation. They have survived and understand how they have made it to this time. In addition, aboriginal people have been multicultural since the beginning of time as they know it. Time and space does not warrant a full explanation of my last assertion. Instead, I quote anthropologist Irving Goldman:

“No part possesses a portion of the sum of all the powers and properties of the cosmos; each must share with all or the entire system of nature will die... Kwakwiltl religion represents the concerns of the people to occupy their proper place within the total system of life and to act responsibly within it so as to acquire and control the powers that sustain life.”

People want to belong. Immigrants are no different and should have value and purpose equal to all other Canadians. As we move away from the darker periods of our history we must do so with a certainty of conviction that old and prevailing attitudes of superiority are not a part of the equation.

We have a high number of immigrants here already and their interest and sense of well-being must be maintained and guarded to protect the integrity of our whole society. Meanwhile, as we contemplate additional newcomers let us build the cornerstones to a strong and viable society to which we invite them.

Let us have a deeper dialogue about this issue. Let us develop meaningful relationships that honor our past and our present. Let us as citizens in our own communities take responsibility for welcoming our newcomers. Let us encourage our children to walk together where they live. Let us celebrate our differences and diversity into a collective that gives us untold richness of fabric and spirit.

We are all responsible and as Aboriginal people, like myself, we can help with the unique experiences that we have. It begins with you and I.

# DOORWAYS TO HOME INDIGENOUS/NEWCOMER NEIGHBOURHOOD DIALOGUES

**Jessie Sutherland** holds a Master of Arts in Dispute Resolution from the University of Victoria. A specialist in Dialogue Design and Facilitation, she is the founder and innovator of the Finding Home™ neighbourhood dialogue program and author of the book *Worldview Skills: Transforming Conflict From the Inside Out*. Jessie would like thank **Nym Hughes** (M. Ed., Ed. D.), who is working with Finding Home™ on developing facilitator training strategies, for her help in editing this article and being instrumental for next steps in scaling out Finding Home™ successfully.

## **ABSTRACT**

Finding Home™: How to Belong in a Changing World is an initiative that engages communities through dialogue and collaboration about the meaning, making and sustaining of *home*. The theme of separation from the land and from nature as an erosion of *home* and reconnection as a means of strengthening *home* has surfaced in dialogues with newcomer and Indigenous communities. Although our disconnections may have happened for different reasons, we believe the Finding Home™ model for expanded Indigenous/newcomer dialogues would be valuable to the common goal and ambitious task of reconnecting to nature, each other and to ourselves.

People from across cultures and sectors are yearning for meaning, purpose and a sense of belonging or *home*. Finding Home™: How to Belong in a Changing World<sup>1</sup> is an initiative founded in 2006 in British Columbia that engages communities through dialogue and collaboration, at deeply personal and social levels, about the meaning, making and sustaining of *home*. Whether our sense of *home* is eroded by the loss of language or land, demographic changes through migration, immigration or displacement, community fragmentation through conflict or trauma, or fundamental institutional changes, Finding Home™ provides an opening for diverse cultures, individuals and sectors to examine together the concept of *home* and the value of belonging, connection and community.

Finding Home™ is based in a belief that *home*— a place where we thrive, remain stagnant or suffer—exists within our relationships. By developing quality relationships across differences, we can build resilient and healthy communities that are capable of responding creatively to change and to challenge. It offers support to communities and individuals while they explore the creation of inclusive communities, and increases effectiveness in addressing personal, local and global challenges. It is within this context of relationship and challenge that Finding Home™

dialogues have proven valuable both within and between Indigenous and newcomer communities.

There are three core aspects to the Finding Home™ initiative: 1) the Neighbourhood Dialogue Program; 2) NGO capacity building; 3) partnership development to support ongoing sustainability long after the dialogues are over. This paper will focus on the Finding Home™ Neighbourhood Dialogue Program, which has proven effective with respect to addressing everyday challenges like housing, elder financial abuse, and loneliness throughout the Lower Mainland in British Columbia. Our dialogue program uses an asset-based community development model that works to build neighbourhood capacity, strengthen civic engagement, and generate innovative resident-led projects.

This paper will provide a brief description of ideas and values underpinning this program, give an overview of some highlights and opportunities emerging from specific Finding Home™ dialogues, and end with some questions for consideration in taking the Finding Home™ dialogues further. Since much of the power of Finding Home™ comes from the voices and stories of people talking about their lives, accounts from actual dialogues will be woven into this paper with the permission of the speakers.

## IDEAS UNDERPINNING FINDING HOME™

A growing body of research contextualizes our current state of affairs within the cyclical nature of the patterns of humanity. For example, Arnold Toynbee (1955) demonstrates that prior to the rise of a new era, violence increases and people tend to respond with less creativity and more rigidity to stress, conflict and change. In addition, a pervasive disconnectedness from nature arises. In the past, the genesis of a new way forward has frequently started with re-examining the values and actions by a creative minority who became a catalyst for change.

Ronald Wright (2005:) explains that history shows that “if you do not live within nature’s means, then nature shuts you down.” For Wright, living within the means of nature is to move from short-term to long-term thinking and from excess to moderation; in his view, this is the solution to our global crisis. Likewise, Thomas Homer-Dixon (2006: F5) suggests that “the place where we have to start fixing our problems is our values [...] until we have that conversation properly, we’re not going to be able to deal with things like climate change”. Jared Diamond (2006) also asserts that we have two choices that will determine whether we succeed or fail as a society, that is, if we complete the transition from crisis-driven planning to long-term planning and if we are willing to reconsider our core values.

In addressing challenges facing today’s world, Fuad Nahdi (2003:24) also points to the critical role of values. He suggests that the current increase in global violence is not about a clash of civilizations but rather a mutual collapse of civilizations. He argues that we are “witness to the decay and failure of ingredients that made us ‘civilized’ in the first place” For Nahdi, we need to rediscover the essence of our humanity and relationship with the rest of creation, including identifying and putting into action core values such as generosity, integrity, honesty, loyalty, and (inter) dependency. In a similar vein, Lakota storyteller Joseph Marshall (2001) explains that the most effective way to regenerate culture, and hence prepare for a new era, is to live our values and share our stories of virtues and those of our ancestors, because they contain the core of cultural renewal for each new generation.

Biologist Mary Clark explains that our brains are hardwired for meaning and connection. In fact, prolonged stress, conflict or trauma influences both brain structure and function. The limbic system in our brain is more easily activated in the face of change or conflict and transmits an adrenal message to either fight, flight, or freeze. She explains that “when stress is prolonged and becomes widespread throughout society, causing more profound changes in the brains of many of its members, then violence combined with apathy permeates daily life and threatens the survival of all” (Clark, 2002: 222). Clark has discovered that storytelling, music and love reverse this change in

brain chemistry, making it easier to respond to conflict and change more creatively. From a biological perspective, the best way to heal the human brain, and hence our fight, flight, or freeze tendencies, is through addressing the human need for meaning and connection.

What Toynbee, Wright, Nahdi, Marshall, Diamond and Clark have in common is a conviction that the solution to our global crisis begins with a re-examination of our core values, including a commitment to live within the means of nature. It is in our relationships that we live out or neglect our values. Consequently, our ability to *create a sense of home* in the context of our current local and global challenges may very well depend on our capacity to develop quality relationships with others, the environment and even within ourselves.

## THE LAND AS A DOORWAY TO HOME

The theme of separation from the land and from nature as an erosion of *home* and reconnection as a means of strengthening *home* surfaced in dialogues with newcomer communities, as well as in dialogues where both Indigenous People and newcomers were present. During my work with a two-year national public conversations project about Indigenous and non-Indigenous relations in Canada, participants repeatedly explored the theme of each culture’s sense of belonging to the land.<sup>2</sup> If a particular culture did not have a sense of belonging to the land, there was a discussion about how that disconnection occurred. Understanding the roots of this displacement from the land was one of the key steps to reconnection. For example, Mark Weintraub, of the Canadian Jewish Congress, explained that after their exile from Israel, Jewish people were forbidden from being farmers in Europe, subsequently leading to the urbanization of many Jewish people. In a similar vein, Janisse Browning explained that descendants of enslaved Africans transported to North America experienced a loss of connection to their land and culture that for many may never be recovered. Likewise, Chief Robert Joseph explained that Indian residential schools and displacement from their traditional territories and cultures led many First Nations People to experience a profound sense of disconnection from the land. Further, in a broad sense, western cultures have undergone a separation from the land over the last centuries. This separation from nature deepened with the Industrial Revolution, colonial expansion and migration to other lands, and urbanization (Berry, 1999; Wolf, 1982). Our conversations about land and our connection to the land were very moving for many participants.

In another dialogue series with Iranian elders in North Vancouver, participants shared stories about the meaning of *home*, how to live well together, and tips for newcomer Iranians on how to create a sense of *home* in Canada. One dialogue participant broke into song about

the Karoun River in southern Iran and told us that all human beings should see this river; because once you see this river you will know the love of the world. Throughout the dialogues, participants expressed the importance of rivers in creating a sense of *home* for them. The post-dialogue success celebration was held at a local North Shore river where the seniors sang, read poetry, danced, gave speeches and shared food. Inspired and empowered by their Iranian River Party, these creative and resourceful seniors were interested in taking the river stories and connections much further. Dialogues, learning opportunities and celebrations with local First Nations and other newcomer groups focused on how the meaning and importance of rivers could provide a *doorway* for newcomer and First Nations elders living in North Vancouver to build relationships that create *home* across their differences.

Doorways can emerge out of dialogues in unexpected ways. During elder dialogues in a First Nations community in Vancouver, elders shared the challenge of constant waves of newcomer groups arriving in Canada with misunderstandings about First Nations history and contemporary reality. During that week, in a seniors' centre only a few kilometers away, newcomer Spanish-speaking seniors participants shared stories of how they found Canadians very polite, however no Spanish-speaking elder had ever been invited into a Canadian home. These two dialogues happened separately, but led to the Indigenous participants inviting the newcomer Spanish-speaking seniors to dinner and to learn about their history. Likewise, the newcomer Spanish-speaking seniors invited the Indigenous elders for tea and salsa dancing.

These examples illustrate some of the core values and principles guiding the Finding Home™ dialogues in fostering meaning, connection and action. The Iranian River Party illustrates how one group's exploration of the meaning of *home* (in this case rivers) provided a doorway to connect this group to one another and to the larger community. The dialogues with Indigenous elders and Spanish-speaking elders illustrate how the Finding Home™ Neighbourhood Dialogue Program can work to address needs through drawing on participants' strengths. When strengths are supported, pain is often transformed into purpose and "victims" into leaders. The public conversations project about Indigenous and non-Indigenous relations gave extensive support to the idea that understanding our disconnection from the land can work to deepen relationships with other cultures, and renew our relationship with nature. It became clear, through all our Finding Home™ dialogues, that though our disconnections may have happened for different reasons, we share the common goal and the ambitious task of reconnecting to nature, to each other and to ourselves.

## TAKING IT FURTHER

When individuals and groups explore the meaning of *home* for themselves, they want to bring this sense of *home* to the community. We have seen the powerful effects that engaging in Finding Home™ dialogues can have and believe we have enough concrete experience and evidence to argue that using the Finding Home model for Indigenous/newcomer dialogues can be valuable in many more communities. However, there are several challenges that are getting in the way.

### 1. Funding Structures:

The current funding structures make it very difficult to support First Nations/newcomer initiatives. Funding is available for Aboriginal initiatives OR immigrant initiatives, but rarely available for joint initiatives.

### 2. Supporting ongoing participant-led initiatives:

Community projects coming out of Finding Home™ dialogues require skilled support to reach and influence the broader community, and build and strengthen participant relationships across cultural and other differences. While every dialogue series generates many creative and innovative community projects, not all of them get off the ground due to a lack of adequate resources and support. The support usually comes from a program staff person working for the community agency, a First Nation or health region, or other organizations bringing Finding Home™ to their community. Staff can sometimes lack cross-cultural competencies to successfully support resident-led initiatives. For example, some may lack understanding of the importance of First Nations' protocols, gift giving and the role of elders. Staff can sometimes also lack skills in supporting participant leadership. A tendency in many agencies is to either be oriented to service delivery (and hence "lead" projects) or expect participants to be able to lead without giving them adequate support.

### 3. Finding Home™ Facilitator:

So far I am the only person who facilitates Finding Home™ dialogues. In order to make this process more available, more facilitators need to be trained, mentored and supported. Finding Home™ is in the process of creating a Facilitator training program and training materials. Once these are developed, we will invite partners to fund a pilot facilitators' training project.

### 4. Competition and Territoriality:

Many community-based programs are struggling for survival, which is leading some to compete over resources rather than collaborate and build on each others' successes.

The lesson I take from these opportunities and challenges is that successful Indigenous – newcomer initiatives require a collective effort. All of us (government, private funders, NGOs, residents and capacity-building dialogue programs like Finding Home™) need to work together, from a base of shared values and a common vision, to create and shape the conditions needed to build quality relationships across our differences that, when well tended, can lead to innovative ways of addressing everyday challenges.

## NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> To learn more about the Finding Home™ Initiative and Dialogue Program, visit [www.findinghome.ca](http://www.findinghome.ca). To read about Finding Home™ outcomes, visit our blog at [www.jessiesutherland.ca](http://www.jessiesutherland.ca).
- <sup>2</sup> Worldview Strategies hosted public conversations from 2004 to 2006 on the following themes: Residential School Reconciliation (2004); What is Reconciliation? (2005); Worldview Skills; and Weaving Webs of Community (2005, 2006). These conversations were held over the phone. Up to 100 people could listen to a guest speaker and be part of a dialogue with people from across Canada, the U.S., Europe, Australia, New Zealand and Japan. For more information see [www.worldviewstrategies.com](http://www.worldviewstrategies.com).

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# "URBAN ABORIGINALS' PERCEPTIONS OF AFRICAN REFUGEE NEIGHBOURS: A CASE STUDY OF WINNIPEG'S INNER CITY."

**Lucía Madariaga-Vignudo** has a Master of Arts degree from McGill University. Her research interests include refugee migration and settlement, inter-minority relations, and so-called honour-based violence.

## ABSTRACT

Drawing on qualitative data gathered in the inner city of Winnipeg, this paper seeks to answer the following questions: What do urban Aboriginals think of African refugees? Do Aboriginals feel threatened by the arrival of refugee migrants in their neighbourhoods? If so, why and if not, why not? Findings from this exploratory study reveal a mixed picture of how Native<sup>1</sup> inner-city residents perceive newcomer refugees. Some Aboriginals have negative perceptions of refugees, largely caused by feelings of inter-group competition over jobs and subsidized housing. Other Aboriginals appear to have a sympathetic view of refugees, since they can identify with them as racialized minorities.

## INTRODUCTION

In Canada, the topic of immigrant integration has been biased towards examining how newcomers interact with the dominant mainstream population, and vice versa. However, we know little about immigrants' interaction with Aboriginal Peoples and how Aboriginals perceive and interact with immigrants. In 2010, Banting and Kymlicka published an article about multiculturalism in Canada, where they identified the need to examine multiculturalism through the interaction among immigrants and urban Aboriginals:

*...[I]mportant issues are arising about the relationship between multiculturalism and urban Aboriginals in several Western [Canadian] cities. Immigrants and Aboriginals increasingly live in close proximity in various neighbourhoods, and while constitutionally speaking they may fall under different laws and regulations, the practical reality is that they often share public services and public space [...] More work needs to be done to explain how they interact (p. 64).*

The study presented in this article seeks to fill this knowledge gap by exploring how Aboriginals perceive African refugees who settle in the same inner-city neighbourhoods where they live. As the demographic make-up of urban Aboriginals and newcomers in

Winnipeg is expected to rise, this study has future policy and research implications.

## ABORIGINALS AND AFRICAN REFUGEES LIVING IN WINNIPEG'S INNER CITY

The city of Winnipeg is becoming increasingly multi-ethnic. In order to stabilize a declining baby boomer population and strengthen the labour force, the Manitoba provincial government aims to increase the annual numbers of immigrants to the province to 20,000 by 2016 (Human Resources and Skills Development Canada, 2008).

The inner city of Winnipeg can be thought of as one geographical entity, composed of 36 identifiable neighbourhoods; it covers 6.4 percent of the city's area at 30.5 km<sup>2</sup>. The 2006 Census data for Winnipeg's inner city documents 121,615 residents (City of Winnipeg, no date, p. 2). This part of the city, where poverty and dependence on welfare assistance are widespread, is being transformed by the social, cultural, religious and economic diversity of the growing population of immigrants and Aboriginals. Since the early 2000s, an increasing number of African refugees have been settling into inner-city neighbourhoods heavily populated by Aboriginals. Most refugees arriving in Winnipeg settle in its core area because rent there is cheaper and settlement services are located downtown. A similar pattern holds true for low-income Aboriginals, who were either born in Winnipeg or migrated to the city from rural communities or northern reserves.

## METHODOLOGY

Face-to-face interviews were carried out with 27 adult respondents in 2008. The sample included 18 service providers working with Aboriginals and/or refugees in the inner city of Winnipeg, as well as two ethno-cultural community leaders. To supplement these key informant interviews, four Aboriginal and three African inner-city residents were interviewed. To recruit inner city residents, the author relied on the help of two research assistants, one who was Aboriginal and the other an African newcomer.

Among the questions posed to service providers and ethno-cultural leaders were those that focused on Aboriginals' perceptions of African refugees and the reasons for these perceptions. The questions for inner-city residents had a very similar focus, although instead of being asked to speak about clients or community members, inner-city residents were asked about their *personal* perceptions and experiences.

This project received formal research ethics approval from the University of Winnipeg. The findings from this qualitative study are drawn from a small sample and are not intended to be generalized. Since the findings are largely based on the experiences of service providers and ethno-cultural leaders, they do not represent the *direct* views of Aboriginal inner-city residents.<sup>2</sup> The results of this study therefore offer a preliminary snapshot of Aboriginal-refugee relations in a Canadian inner city.

## FINDINGS FROM INTERVIEWS

### Perceptions of Competition

The inner city of Winnipeg is a resource-starved area, with a minimal supply of public housing, high unemployment rates and residents with low educational levels. According to the interview data, some Aboriginals have negative perceptions of refugee newcomers, largely caused by feelings of intergroup competition over jobs and subsidized housing. Some respondents talked about the perception among Aboriginal inner-city residents that refugees are using valuable and scarce resources. In this respect, refugees are seen as competitors. One Aboriginal inner-city resident, for instance, expressed his view that newcomers seemed to be getting better treatment from the government than Aboriginals:

*I feel they're getting better treated than we are... especially the Native people; we've been here a long time. One day I went to the welfare office; how come I don't see them at the welfare lines? So they must be getting extra funding or somebody's looking after them. That's the way I look at it, 'cause you*

*don't see them panhandling. You don't see them worried... they're being looked after... I get kind of... angry about that. I mean if I went to their country, I don't think I'd be treated like that... so I really can't say that if we all met at the airport [we'd say]: "OK, welcome!" [Laughs]*

A few participants noted that employment is one area where Aboriginals perceive they are competing with refugees. However, more important than the perception that newcomers are stealing jobs is the belief that refugees are taking away limited inner-city subsidized housing and, in doing so, displacing Aboriginal residents who have been residing in the area for decades. In Winnipeg, public subsidized housing, which is an affordable and stable option for low-income people, makes up a very small proportion of the overall housing stock. The comments of one service provider are illustrative:

*Many of these Manitoba Housing [buildings] in the inner city would have been almost fairly Aboriginal... not exclusively, but pretty close. But now we have in the last few years more Africans coming in. So when the African families are large, often single moms, husband killed or disappeared, where are they moving? Into Manitoba [subsidized] Housing, which has almost been completely Aboriginal... So, right away [Aboriginals say:] "These are our places... This is my space... I don't have anything to start with and now you're pushing me out of here?"*

Another service provider working in a family support centre articulated the same pattern:

*You know, feeling like they're [newcomers] taking their [Aboriginals'] spots and that sort of thing. And housing... and housing 'cause, you know, when the housing is not a lot of spots for people, people are on waiting lists and people [Aboriginals] want to stay in the inner city 'cause it's easier for them to live and this is where they've always lived.*

### Perceptions of Sympathy and Camaraderie

While perceptions of competition exist among Aboriginal inner-city residents, Aboriginals also see African refugees in a sympathetic light. Positive views of African refugees are not uncommon among Aboriginal inner-city residents. For example, one service provider

disclosed an incident in which an Aboriginal client who had led a difficult life in Manitoba compassionately acknowledged the hardship of Africans from war-affected countries. This Native client's words (as retold by a service provider) demonstrate sympathy and understanding:

*[O]ne of the moms [a client] who is just bright and lovely, and she was part of the Scoop of the 60's and went through a lot, and also realized that she was Fetal Alcohol [Syndrome], which challenged her chances... she said: "we [Natives] always feel we never fit in; imagine how they [refugees] feel."*

During interviews, African inner-city residents confirmed this finding by discussing how Natives identify with them; they suggested that there is a sense of camaraderie with newcomers, particularly towards refugees who are dark skinned. This stands in contrast to the Euro-Canadian population and the state, towards which Natives appear to hold anger and resentment for past and current injustices (e.g., residential schools, the 60's Scoop and present discrimination). An African inner-city resident had this to say on the subject:

*My impression [is] that they're very friendly to me, more so because I think they identify with... they understand that I'm a minority, and maybe that creates a level of: "OK, we're sort of one and the same. We're in the same box, type of thing."*

Another African resident of the inner city spoke about an encounter that he had with an Aboriginal person in a park. During this encounter the Aboriginal person communicated that, while he strongly disliked white people, he thought of Africans in a friendly and fraternal way:

*There was one time, I was sitting with some friends... and then [these] Aboriginal guys... came and gave me a fist [similar to a "high five" gesture]... and [one] asked me: "do you like white people?" I said: "I've got no problem with them." I did not want to choose yes or no. And he [the Aboriginal man] says: "I hate them. But you are my brother." And he does the fist again. So that one is a signal that... there is nothing between them and the immigrants... they have no room to think of immigrants: they are carrying this thing [resentment] against the mainstream.*

Another inner-city resident, this time of Aboriginal descent, said:

*I think the Aboriginals give the refugees and the immigrants a lot better chance than the mainstream. I think that in the meetings that I've had or sat in with different colours, I think that the Aboriginal has a tendency to feel for the newcomers and their racism. And I think they easily become friends with them faster than the mainstream.*

Repeatedly, study participants who were Aboriginal (i.e., service providers, community leaders and inner-city residents) showed frustration towards the dominant group in society regarding the unjust treatment they continue to receive from the Canadian public and its governing institutions. One Aboriginal community leader expressed how the white Canadian "settler population" was responsible for creating Aboriginal despair:

*They're [members of the mainstream society] always trying to help the Indian in terms of... it's everywhere, it's inherent in Western superiority, this kind of need, this kind of freaking need: can't help themselves, but they need to change other people, eh?... They get to do the programming on Indigenous peoples and on refugee populations. They get to do their mojo on us and they get to study us, examine us, probe us, that kind of stuff. They get to be our saviours: [sarcastically] they're wonderful!*

A couple of respondents noted that it was too soon to tell how Aboriginals felt about African refugees, given the latter's relatively recent arrival to (and noticeable concentration in) Winnipeg's inner city. However, what this exploratory study revealed, which is not reflected in the literature, is that instead of fostering negative attitudes towards refugee minorities, the process of immigration appears to fortify Aboriginals' negative feelings towards the mainstream. Aboriginals realize that the dominant group holds the policy-making power which determines how many and which kinds of people enter Canada as immigrants. An Aboriginal service provider mentioned that as the First Nations of Canada, Natives feel it is their right to be informed and involved in shaping public policies, including ones related to immigration:

*...Aboriginal People are not consulted... a lot of work has to be done... for Aboriginal People to understand Canada's immigration policy, and for Aboriginals to be a part of it cause... Aboriginal People are not a part of that process... Aboriginal People should be included in that process.*

In this respect, data from this study suggest that the Aboriginal community does not necessarily wish to halt immigration to the province. Rather, Aboriginals would wish to be better informed, consulted and included in policy-making processes.

## CONCLUSION

In general, interview data painted a mixed picture of how Aboriginals living in Winnipeg's inner city perceive African refugees. Some study respondents claimed that Aboriginals feel they are competing with refugee newcomers for scarce resources, particularly with respect to the limited supply of public housing. Other respondents revealed perceptions of camaraderie, empathy and compassion towards African newcomers. According to respondents, Aboriginals can identify with African refugees as racialized minorities *vis-a-vis* the mainstream population.

What is clear is that Native resentment is more directed towards the mainstream population and the state than towards newcomers. Because of socio-historical reasons, Natives in Canada have a tenuous relationship with the Euro-Canadian population and not with African refugees. The fact that Aboriginals have only recently come into contact with African newcomers and do not share a history of oppression with them may explain why they have fewer negative (and more mixed) feelings towards the newcomers.

As the numbers of Aboriginal and immigrant residents in Canadian cities grow, there is a need to broach the topic of Aboriginal-newcomer relations. How Aboriginals perceive and interact with immigrants to Canada is an important, yet understudied, aspect within the immigration integration field. An adequate examination of inter-minority relations lies not only in focusing on Aboriginals' perceptions and relations with newcomers, but perhaps, equally important, on Aboriginals' relations with members of the mainstream population.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This study forms part of a larger project called "Transforming Inner-City and Aboriginal Communities," which was conducted by the *Manitoba Research Alliance* and generously funded by the *Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada* (SSHRC). I am grateful to Dr. Parvin Ghorayshi for showing keen interest in (and supervising) my work. This study also forms part of my Master of Arts thesis. I thank Dr. Black, my thesis supervisor, for also supervising and supporting my work.

## NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> In order to avoid redundancy, I use the words "Aboriginal" and "Native" interchangeably.
- <sup>2</sup> Interviewing service providers may have proved more valuable than interviewing inner-city residents in one important respect. If one considers the sensitive topic of this project (that of negative and threatened attitudes) it may have been easier for people to talk about how *others* felt since admitting that they themselves espoused negative attitudes is nowadays socially unacceptable.

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# DIALOGUES BETWEEN FIRST NATIONS, URBAN ABORIGINALS AND IMMIGRANT COMMUNITIES IN VANCOUVER

**Baldwin Wong** is the multicultural social planner at the City of Vancouver. He has been working on issues related to diversity, multiculturalism and immigration since the 1980s. In 2001, he launched the City's *Newcomer's Guide*, available in 5 languages. Since 2005, he has been the lead staff supporting the Mayor's Working Group on Immigration, which advised City Council on issues regarding immigrants and refugees. In 2009, he initiated the Vancouver Dialogues Project that aims to strengthen relations between First Nations and newcomer communities in Vancouver.

**Karen Fong** is the Project Coordinator for the Vancouver Dialogues Project. Prior to this position, she was a project manager in Aboriginal Health for the Vancouver Coastal Health Authority. Karen holds a Master of Science in Planning from the University of Toronto, with a focus on immigrants' integration in the labour market.

## **ABSTRACT**

This article provides an overview of the Vancouver Dialogues Project, a collaborative project launched by the City of Vancouver to increase understanding and strengthen relations between the city's Aboriginal and immigrant communities. Initiated in 2010, the project undertook five key initiatives: dialogue circles, community research, cultural exchange visits, a program for youths and elders, and a neighborhood-based legacy project. Over two thousand people have participated in the project to date. Key legacies include a book and a video documenting the Dialogues process. Building on the momentum and success of Phase I, the project is currently in its second phase to implement ideas proposed by the participating communities.

## **INTRODUCTION**

Vancouver is one of the most culturally diverse cities in the world. First Nations People have been living here for thousands of years. The city is within the traditional territory of the Coast Salish people, including the Musqueam, Squamish and Tsleil-Waututh, who still live here today. They are thriving communities with unique, living cultures rich in heritage. Many Aboriginal People from other communities have also come here and now call Vancouver home, adding their experiences to the local cultural tapestry.

Vancouver continues to attract immigrants from diverse locations around the world. According to the 2006 Census data, close to half of Vancouver's population was born outside of Canada.

Over the years, First Nations, urban Aboriginal groups and immigrant organizations have acknowledged that there is limited intercultural interaction between Aboriginal and immigrant Canadians. Within Aboriginal communities, there is a sense that their history, culture and heritage

are not well understood by others living within their traditional territory. For newcomers, it seems there are few opportunities to learn about the Aboriginal community living in their midst. A key goal of the Vancouver Dialogues Project is to help bridge the information and communication gaps between these communities.

In an effort to promote increased understanding and strengthen relationships between Aboriginal and immigrant communities, the City of Vancouver initiated a project called Dialogues between First Nations, Urban Aboriginal and Immigrant Communities in Vancouver (otherwise known as the Vancouver Dialogues Project). The project was implemented by the City in collaboration with twenty-seven community partners. The project is supported by Vancouver City Council and received funding from the Province of British Columbia.

The Dialogues Project Phase I began in January 2010. A launch event attended by over two hundred guests was held at the First Nations Longhouse at UBC. Representatives from City Council, local First Nations, urban Aboriginal and

other stakeholders gave greetings. A special performance was commissioned for the occasion.

Phase II commenced in September 2011 and will conclude in August 2012. Over two thousand people have participated in the project to date.

The Project co-chairs are Wade Grant from the Musqueam Nation, Susan Tatoosh from the Vancouver Aboriginal Friendship Centre and Professor Henry Yu of UBC. They provide strong leadership and vision to the project with the support of the Project Steering Group.

## PHASE I – FIVE KEY INITIATIVES

Phase I of the project focused on five key initiatives: dialogue circles, community research, cultural exchange visits, a program for youths and elders, and a neighbourhood based storytelling project.

### 1. Dialogue Circles

As one of the key opportunities for community members to engage with each other, the dialogue circles became a fundamental part of the project. Dialogue circles are spaces created for ten to fifteen participants to share stories, experiences and perspectives in an intimate setting. Nine different dialogue circles were held at various locations throughout the city. Two of the circles were youth specific. Each group met a minimum of three times and the discussion, guided by a skilled facilitator, focused on remembering the past, sharing current issues and initiatives, and envisioning strategies for future collaborations.

Altogether, 123 individuals participated in the nine circles. All participants generously shared their perspectives and some shared deeply personal stories. While each person's story was unique, some common themes emerged. The desire to seek understanding resonated among many participants, particularly from the immigrant participants. Many noted that the complex colonization history of Aboriginal communities and their current realities are not well understood by society at large, and stereotypes about Aboriginal communities abound. Aboriginal participants lamented this lack of understanding and misrepresentation.

"Through the mass media, First Nations are always shown to have problems... the media projects an image that isn't very healthy." – Dialogue circle participant

Alongside the theme of seeking understanding was the related theme of learning. Many immigrant participants recounted stories of how, through their own efforts or through interactions with Aboriginal people, they discovered more about the histories, experiences and perspectives of Aboriginal Peoples in Canada. For many, there was a particular story around their "a-ha" moment when their understanding began to shift and deepen.

The experience of racism was another commonly shared story. For many, being the subject of racial stereotypes was due to a lack of understanding by others. For others, race-based inequality and discrimination was more of a systemic problem, rooted in historical processes of domination and unfair treatment.

Many Aboriginal participants talked about land and belonging; reconciliation and healing were significant aspects of their stories. Some Coast Salish elders told stories of their communities' historical presence on the land and how they had seen the city change over the years. Almost universally, their ties to their land and communities were altered through colonization. Many were of the opinion that the reconciliation and healing process not only affected them, but also future generations.

Other stories and themes came out of the dialogue circles. Identity, language and culture were all significant topics for many participants. Over time, a bond of trust and communication developed between circle participants.

At the end of the circles, participants from all nine groups gathered for a large closing circle to meet one another and discuss the issues that had been raised in individual circles. Participants shared their ideas for promoting stronger relationship building between Aboriginal and immigrant communities. Other ideas included the need for schools to incorporate more accurate and in-depth content on Aboriginal and immigrant communities into classrooms; the importance of investing in intercultural exchange opportunities; and the telling and preserving of stories and oral histories through artistic projects or creative media.

The closing dialogue circle attracted the attendance of former governor general Adrienne Clarkson and well-known author/philosopher John Ralston Saul. Madame Clarkson and Mr. Saul both reiterated the importance for newcomers to learn about Aboriginal history and culture and to build stronger relationships between newcomers and the original inhabitants of this land.

### 2. Community Research

In an effort to gather current information about issues of interest, the project undertook four research initiatives: a community survey, a literature review, interviews with key community members, and the commissioning of a report on Vancouver's urban Aboriginal communities:

- a) An online survey gathered opinions and experiences from Aboriginals and immigrants. The survey received 500 responses, of which about one-fifth were Aboriginal. Overall, respondents showed a very positive view of Vancouver as a welcoming city. There were some shared experiences between Aboriginal and immigrant

communities, such as discrimination, loss of tradition and language, and barriers to accessing social goods, such as housing and employment. Suggestions for further work included: anti-racism initiatives, jointly-hosted community celebratory events and youth engagement activities.

- b) A literature review uncovered what information regarding Aboriginal communities is available to newcomers. While some information exists, much of it does not target newcomers. Government information intended for newcomer orientation generally contains very limited information about Aboriginal Peoples. This is a gap that needs to be addressed if newcomers are to be better informed about First Nations in Canada.
- c) Ten individuals with varied and rich life experiences were interviewed about their experiences and perceptions of social inclusion and intercultural relations. All of the participants shared their unique stories, and many of them had common experiences of exclusion, racism, loss of language and culture, and efforts to reach out to other communities. They were also hopeful that positive change is possible. Their stories were collected and published in the Vancouver Dialogues book.
- d) The commissioned report, *Urban Aboriginal Peoples Study: Vancouver Report* presents findings based on interviews with local Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal residents of Vancouver. It was part of a nationwide research project on the urban Aboriginal population, conducted by the Environics Institute.

### 3. Cultural Exchange Visits

Twelve cultural exchange visits were held among First Nations, urban Aboriginal and immigrant communities. In face-to-face meetings at various venues or sites, community members had the opportunity to learn more about the host communities, hear their stories and engage in dialogue.

Diverse community partners co-hosted these visits with the Dialogues Project. The Musqueam and Tsleil-Waututh Nations hosted visits on their reserves, sharing stories of their history and visions of the future. For many participants, this was their first time in a First Nations community.

The Vancouver Aboriginal Friendship Centre and Native Education College, both urban Aboriginal organizations, opened their doors to welcome visitors and talk about their work and the communities they serve. The UBC First Nations Longhouse and Museum of Anthropology co-hosted a visit, underlining Aboriginal knowledge and culture.

From the immigrant communities, the Ismaili, Jewish and Chinese communities each hosted a visit, sharing aspects of their community history, culture and faith. Other visits, organized by the project's youth community developers included an exchange between Aboriginal and Mayan communities, a cooking exchange between Aboriginal and Afghan women, a traditional healing practice dialogue and a youth bus tour to visit with various youth-serving community organizations.

A great deal of learning took place during these cultural exchange visits. Host presenters were very open about their communities. Aboriginal hosts talked about their ancestors and legends, inviting participants to take part in their ceremonies and songs. Immigrant hosts invited guests to visit special places of worship and gathering. All of the hosts shared their wealth of knowledge and insights about their communities, and participants were welcome to engage in dialogues and share their perspectives.

Professor Linc Kesler of UBC First Nations House of Learning made the following comment after attending a number of cultural exchange visits: "People have had the chance to directly experience each other's circumstances and understand the complexity of the forces that have shaped them; and that is a very valuable foundation upon which to build further, lasting relationships."

### 4. Youth and Elders Program

Elders and seniors from Aboriginal and immigrant communities were invited to take part in discussions around issues of interest, particularly around intercultural and intergenerational relations. They talked about their desire to connect with and support the youth in their communities, as well as common issues of concern, such as access to health, housing and transportation services, and experiences with discrimination in their lives.

Youth were also invited to take part in workshops and discussions. They talked about issues of power and privilege and ways of bridging group divides.

Youth and elders were then brought together to take part in a photography workshop in preparation for PhotoVoice projects. PhotoVoice combines photography with narrative to convey a particular message. Small groups of youth and elders jointly came up with themes for their PhotoVoice projects. Their photos and accompanying narratives were unveiled at a special event in the summer of 2011.

An Elder who participated in the PhotoVoice project made the following comment: "It's so important to let the young people know that we love them. We want to share what we can to help them lead a good life. We need to listen to them."

## 5. Legacy Project

A neighbourhood-based legacy project called *Our Roots* was carried out in Vancouver's Grandview-Woodlands area. Its main goal was to collect stories from Aboriginal and immigrant residents. Interviews were conducted with seventeen community members who lived or worked in the neighbourhood. Poster boards were created and displayed at a Storytelling Festival, which commemorated the City's 125<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

One Aboriginal resident who participated in the story-gathering project said the following: "The [Aboriginal Friendship Centre] means a lot to me because I have so many different friends here now. I get really lonely sitting at home all by myself. People from all different places come here: Métis people, Cree people, and people from all up and down the coast. It just seemed like I fit right in and started doing everything that I'm doing right now."

## CELEBRATING AND SHARING STORIES

On July 5<sup>th</sup>, 2011, towards the end of Phase I of the Dialogues Project, a special event was held to bring together participants and partners to celebrate the initiatives and achievements of the project. Multimedia installations and a multi-artist performance were created specifically for the event to showcase the initiatives and spirit of the project.

Also included in the event was the launch of the project's book, *Vancouver Dialogues: First Nations, Urban Aboriginal and Immigrant Communities*, and the premiere screening of the project's video, *Sharing Our Stories: The Vancouver Dialogues Project*. The book and video highlight the initiatives and achievements of the project and are legacies intended to communicate the stories and connections that have taken place, encouraging broader public engagement in these issues.

## CONTINUING DIALOGUE

Key project learning so far can be gleaned from an evaluation completed by the Social Planning and Research Council of BC (SPARC BC). The evaluation identified that there was a demand for initiatives that provide different communities with meaningful opportunities to interact and learn from one another. Project participants appreciated the openness and respect in how participants shared their stories and the opportunity to visit diverse communities in their unique settings.

Many participants also spoke about the need for education about the historical and present day realities faced by First Nations and urban Aboriginal communities of Canada. Greater emphasis needs to be placed on educating newcomers, as well as society at large.

Project participants felt that intercultural exchange through arts and cultural activities were good avenues to engage communities and promote understanding.

The Vancouver Dialogues Project has demonstrated that many are eager to learn more about the diversity of communities in Vancouver. Given the opportunity to engage in meaningful dialogue, through on-site visits and face-to-face dialogue, many will deepen their understanding of Aboriginal and immigrant communities. The project was an invitation to begin this process of connection and relationship building.

## VANCOUVER DIALOGUES PROJECT - PHASE II

Building on the experiences from Phase I, Phase II of the project (Sept 2011-Aug 2012) will continue to engage First Nations, urban Aboriginal and immigrant communities through initiatives, such as: exploring ways of bringing accessible information about Aboriginal communities to newcomer communities; exploring strategies for the City to promote stronger relationship building between Aboriginal and newcomer communities; engaging youth through a series of dialogues and a citywide forum; and furthering cultural exchange visits.

For more information, please contact Baldwin Wong, Project Lead, at: [baldwin.wong@vancouver.ca](mailto:baldwin.wong@vancouver.ca) or visit the Project's website: [www.vancouver.ca/dialoguesproject](http://www.vancouver.ca/dialoguesproject)

## APPENDIX

### PROJECT PARTNERS

The Dialogues Project is guided by a Project Steering Group consisting of members from local First Nations, Aboriginal organizations, immigrant-serving organizations, neighbourhood houses, and other stakeholder groups.

#### Project co-chairs:

- Wade Grant, Musqueam Council member
- Susan Tatoosh, Vancouver Aboriginal Friendship Centre
- Professor Henry Yu, UBC Department of History

#### Project Steering Group:

- Affiliation of Multicultural Societies and Service Agencies of BC (AMSSA)
- City of Vancouver, Hastings Institute
- City of Vancouver, Mayor's Working Group on Immigration
- Civic Education Society
- Downtown Eastside Women's Centre
- Immigrant Services Society of BC

- Institute for Canadian Citizenship
- Kiwassa Neighbourhood House
- Laurier Institution
- MOSAIC
- Mount Pleasant Neighbourhood House
- Musqueam First Nation
- Native Education College
- Squamish First Nation
- S.U.C.C.E.S.S.
- Tsleil-Waututh First Nation
- UBC Department of History

- UBC First Nations House of Learning
- UBC Irving K. Barber Learning Centre
- UBC Museum of Anthropology
- UBC Office of Community Affairs
- UBC School of Social Work
- Urban Native Youth Association
- Vancouver Aboriginal Friendship Centre
- Vancouver Community College
- Vancouver Métis Community Association
- Vancouver Public Library

### Sharing Our Stories

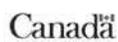
In 2010, a groundbreaking cross-cultural project was launched. The Vancouver Dialogues Project created many ways for Aboriginal and immigrant communities to gather together in dialogue and cultural sharing. Set amidst the stunning landscape of Vancouver Coast Salish traditional territory, *Sharing Our Stories* captures the personal reflections of some very thoughtful project participants, including Aboriginal elders and leaders Larry Grant, Leah George-Wilson and Marjorie White, as well as public figures John Ralston Saul and former Governor General Adrienne Clarkson. The video celebrates the achievements of the project, while showcasing some of the diverse events and collaborations that took place. It is an inspiring tool for those wishing to engage in cross-cultural work and dialogue.

Produced by the City of Vancouver and Indigenous City Productions  
 Written and directed by Kamala Todd  
 Camera by Mike McKinlay  
 Sound by Sandor Gyurkovics  
 Edited by Shirley Anne Claydon and Joah Lui

The Vancouver Dialogues Project is convened by the City of Vancouver, in collaboration with diverse community partners. Project coordination is provided by Social Policy, Community Services Group, City of Vancouver.

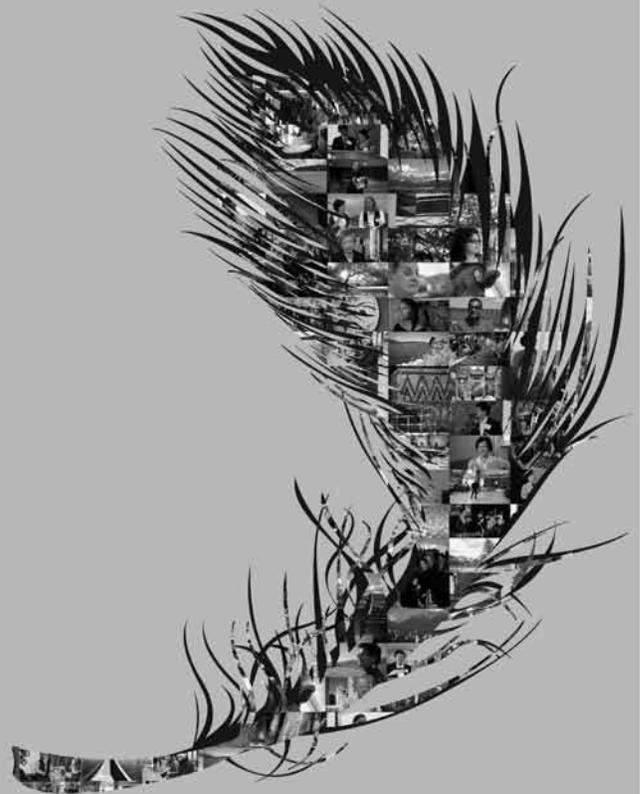
The Vancouver Dialogues Project is made possible by funding through the Government of Canada and the Province of British Columbia. We gratefully acknowledge the support of the Ministry of Jobs, Tourism and Innovation, through the Welcoming and Inclusive Communities and Workplaces Program. The project also received support from the City of Vancouver's 125<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Grants Program.

[vancouver.ca/dialoguesproject](http://vancouver.ca/dialoguesproject)



## Sharing Our Stories

### The Vancouver Dialogues Project



**DVD**  
26 minutes

# THE DIALOGUES PROJECT - AN ABORIGINAL POINT OF VIEW (INTERVENTION)

Wade Grant is co-chair of The *Dialogues Project* and Counsellor with the Musqueam Indian Band which is now located at the south end of Vancouver at the mouth of the Frazer River.

## **ABSTRACT**

Testimony of Wade Grant, co-chair of the project and councillor for the Musqueam Indian Band, from the National Metropolis Conference in 2011. A Métis himself (Chinese-Musqueam), he led discussion sessions with urban Aboriginal people, Aboriginal people and newcomers. In his testimony, he intimately sets out the reasons that prompted him to join this initiative and the experience he gained from it. He saw the *Dialogues Project* as a unique opportunity to learn and understand cultural differences, to forge relationships, to overcome prejudices and to acknowledge the similarities between different stories, personal journeys and aspirations.

"...Our traditional territory encompasses all of the city of Vancouver and much of Metro Vancouver and I was asked, as a part of the Musqueam chieftain council, to sit on the board of directors of the *Dialogues Project*, as a chair person for the dialogue sessions with the city of Vancouver. I have led the dialogue sessions between urban Aboriginals, Aboriginals and new immigrants. I'll speak a little bit about why I joined and my experience with this initiative."

As I stated, I was born in the Musqueam community, but I was very keen to join this dialogue session, because a lot of people say when they see me: "Well, you don't look native, what are you?" I'm actually part Chinese: my grandfather immigrated from China, and in our community, back in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, there were a number of gardens, market gardens in the Musqueam community. And my grandmother fell in love with my grandfather and had my father. So I have a connection with the interaction between first nations and immigrants. We've always had that welcoming feeling, but over time, the immigrant community sort of left our community and the connection was lost. But me, growing up in the city of Vancouver, one of the most multicultural cities in the world, I always wondered; why did we lose that, why did we lose that connection with the new immigrant population? And as I went off to university, I went away from Vancouver, and I realized a lot of people don't have the opportunity, or aren't able to find an education about Aboriginal people, and vice-versa with our community. We don't go out and learn about these new communities, these new members of society coming into our country, and I think that we are losing out a lot in that aspect. So, I joined because I have

that connection, but I also have another connection; my wife is an urban aboriginal, so I have a connection with the three. My wife is actually a Cree from Northern Ontario, but I met her here in the city of Vancouver. My son and my daughter are Cree, Musqueam and Chinese, so they have a very big mix. And I noticed last year during the 2010 Olympics, while I worked at the Aboriginal pavilion, that we had over 300,000 people walk through our doors, and a lot of those people were from outside Canada. And their representations of Aboriginal people are those images they see in the movies or on the television set with headdresses and drums on the prairies. What we wanted to do was address that and show that, like anyone else, Aboriginal people right across this country are very diverse; whether they are Blackfoot, Cree, Micmac, Maliseet, they have their own history and they have their own culture, and they have their own teachings. So that really piqued my interest in this project. What we wanted to do was bring together urban Aboriginals and the local First Nations: the Squamish, the Tsleil-Waututh and the Musqueam.

We wanted to bring together as many people from the new immigrant community as we could. The first part of the dialogue session was to get together and create these dialogue circles right across the city of Vancouver. We had different places where these circles would be held. One was Musqueam, one was in the downtown east side, and one was in south Vancouver. And we brought together urban Aboriginals who lived in that area, local First Nations, and the immigrant communities. They came together, told their stories, and they talked about them; and it was an opportunity for first nations to give these histories, the

histories that aren't told in the newspapers, the histories that aren't told on the television sets, the histories that aren't told in the books at the library. It's the personal histories, what these people have experienced. Not only what they've experienced, but their ancestors as well. These are the histories they wanted to share. And vice-versa: we wanted to hear from the immigrant communities about why they came to Canada, what brought them here, why they want to learn more about aboriginal people. We want to learn about their cultures. From my perspective, as a young Aboriginal person, I want to learn more about the people that live in this country, I want to be a part of the solution in bringing together all of our cultures. So when we completed that last July, I believe it was very successful: we had almost 500 people throughout these dialogue sessions come together and learn from one another. In the process of cultural exchange visits, we also wanted to go to different areas of the city, whether it be the Britannia center in east Vancouver or the Jewish community center (where we're going next week). We had one session in Musqueam, where we went on a tour of the community; we wanted to show them where we lived. We brought them to our longhouse and we shared with them some of our cultural practices. We shared with them where we gather for our winter ceremonies and wanted to show them that we are still strong culturally, but moving forward both economically and socially. We are also putting together some elders and youth initiatives, where we want to go to the elder's communities and have the elders share their stories and the youth share their stories as well. And we're creating a legacy project from this initiative, so that we can share with the rest of the people we weren't able to bring in. So we're creating a document, a book that chronicles this

whole initiative, and a DVD that will share interviews and different stories with people. The total project cost almost 600,000\$ over 19 months. So, like I said, we have a number of cultural exchange visits coming up, and then at the end, in July, we're looking to wrap up with a final celebration, but we want to continue this project because we feel that it's very successful. We've had a lot of great feedback, not only from the participants, but from the leaders in the aboriginal community. I'm good friend with the National Chief and I talked to him about it; he's very interested in it. Grand Chief Edward John, who's a very prominent person at the First Nation summit here, visited us once. He's actually my stepfather, so he's kept very up to date on this. We're hoping that we'll be able to generate enough interest from cities across the country, like the city of Winnipeg, where there's a tremendous aboriginal population. And we hope, too, that in the future, it grows and grows and that it's not just nine dialogue sessions, that it's hundreds of dialogue sessions across this country. It's been a great opportunity for me to learn, but it's also been an opportunity for some of the band members in my community, and some of the communities across the city, to learn about all the cultures and how much we share, how much we're not so different, we are quite alike, we have similar histories, similar pasts and similar aspirations. I want to thank Baldwin for allowing me to be a part of this, and I hope that we can spread this right across the country".

Intervention by Wade Grant

At *Aboriginal-Immigrant Relations* Round table, organized by S. Kasparian at the National Metropolis Conference in Vancouver, March 2011.

# WE ARE ALL TREATY PEOPLE

**Becky Sasakamoose Kuffner**, Cultural Diversity and Race Relations Coordinator, and **Smita Garg**<sup>1</sup>, Immigration Community Resource Coordinator, both work in the Community Development Branch of the City of Saskatoon.

## **ABSTRACT**

The Ancestors of the Aboriginal people of Saskatchewan, specifically Saskatoon and the surrounding area, have lived on what is now Treaty 6 territory since time began. Like other cultures around the world, each Aboriginal group has its own distinct culture, language, spiritual beliefs and practices. In a local and contemporary context, these are the times to actively reflect on the longevity of the treaties that are meant to last “as long as the grass grows, the sun shines and the rivers flow.” In the last two decades, the City of Saskatoon has been involved in many various facets of building bridges among Aboriginal People, recent newcomers and the mainstream population through different avenues such as recreation, culture and business.

## **INTRODUCTION**

*“21 years ago I immigrated to Canada – an intentional choice given the nice things I had heard about the land of milk and honey—my future home. I had the language skills and hence the settlement process was easier but still consisted of the usual: finding a job and home, getting engaged in activities, learning winter driving, making new friends, explaining ‘where I came from,’ etc. In the process, the notion of ‘Aboriginal’ never quite blipped on my radar screen – the ‘you don’t know what you don’t know’ syndrome. It wasn’t until a few months later and the timely release of *Dances with Wolves* that Lt. John Dunbar kindled a certain sense of curiosity about the cultures and customs of the original peoples of the Americas. Up until that point, I was only aware of the ‘cowboys and injuns’ version of the story, coupled with the colonial history that Christopher Columbus ‘discovered’ America. As the settlement and integration process continued, my source of information about Aboriginal People was what I read and saw in mainstream media – patriarchal at best and stereotypical at worst. Disney’s animated film *Pocahontas* (albeit controversial from a race theory perspective) affirmed the sleeping awareness within that there is a definitive clash in what I was hearing as the ‘popular’ versus the ‘true’ story of Aboriginal People. There have since been a couple of learning opportunities in the form of presentations and field trips. Presenters would ask the room how many of us considered ourselves as Treaty people, and in my unsophisticated naivety, I was one of many that would not raise our hand. After all, I had arrived as a ‘landed immigrant’ and had taken the Oath of Citizenship to Canada. I did not know that I too was a Treaty person. Moreover, the presentations hovered around the cultural aspects and perhaps the residential schools... never the land. Three major events in the last five years have provided me with the sum total of an ‘aha’ moment. Firstly, an innocently*

*made derogatory remark about Indigenous people by one of my immigrant students (this required a quick intervention of some historical research and facts); secondly, the 2008 Government of Canada apology to the Aboriginal People for the history of systemic racism and discrimination against them; and lastly, an internal debate on publicly releasing an information pamphlet with the heading of ‘We Are All Treaty People.’ These three situations led to a digging beyond culture, costume and custom – and the beginning of my understanding of the treaties and the sacred relationship between people and land in its many manifestations, from political to environmental. It was like seeing this invisible material that held all of this together, and will be the material that will bridge the gap between Aboriginal People and immigrants – whether they arrived recently or in the course of the last 400 years, whether they are ‘newcomers’ or ‘oldcomers.’ My story with regards to Aboriginal People unfolded because my radar screen was intercepted with these moments of query. But I wonder how many others would even have or avail themselves of these opportunities? Given our current situation, I don’t think many. My children completed high school in Canada with a minimal mention of the treaties – my older one heard about it in an ‘elective’ class, and the younger ones had a mention of it in social studies, with little information on what is outlined in it and what the implications are. I have often wondered of all the learning that has not happened with generations of immigrants, and all the unlearning that needs to happen. A contemporary reality to have a Canada that works for all of us (I think of my children and grandchildren and future generations) requires a fundamental change in how we phrase the conversation around who are the immigrants and First Nations People, and then the interpretation and understanding of the treaties which bind all the peoples of this land.”<sup>2</sup>*

Although Saskatoon may have many similarities in terms of historical experience with other settlements across the country, its founding has symbolic and historical significance. In the summer of 1882, an encounter between Dakota Chief Whitecap and Mr. John Lake, a Methodist church minister from Toronto, led to the birth of the city of Saskatoon. This meeting, albeit brief, was with the purpose of creating a new settlement for the Temperance Colonization Society. “At a time when newcomer-Aboriginal relations were strained, with one group wanting to find new land for themselves and the other trying to retain the land it could, this was an example of what newcomer-Aboriginal relations should have been: two nations working together with the goal of living side by side. It also reflected the original idea of Saskatoon as a kind of utopia, in this case, a place where newcomers and Aboriginals could live together peaceably.”<sup>3</sup> However, as time passed, this ideal never truly came to be. With a rapid increase in the number of settlers to the prairies and the declining buffalo herds, Aboriginal People risked losing their cultures and ways of life in the face of European settlements. Although Aboriginal People negotiated their land for very little in return in the signing of Treaty 6, the original spirit in which these treaties were signed was overshadowed by the Federal Government’s passing, in 1876, of the Indian Act, in which Aboriginal People were decreed legal wards of the state.

The outcome of this Act has undeniably contributed to ongoing negotiations and strained relations among various groups in the context of the Canadian cultural and historical landscape. With an eye to understanding that “the participation and contribution of all citizens in the development of a community is vital to meeting the challenges of the future,”<sup>4</sup> in 1989 The City Council adopted a recommendation for establishing a Race Relations Committee to deal with these existing and emerging issues.

Over the years, a comprehensive Cultural Diversity and Race Relations (CD&RR) Policy,<sup>5</sup> which includes four community outcome statements along with indicators of success, has made room for multiple initiatives to be undertaken, initiatives that have brought together Aboriginal People and newcomers to gain a mutual respect for and an understanding of one another and address common experiences.

## LIVING IN HARMONY

In efforts to achieve its vision of “work[ing] with community organizations, business and labour, all orders of government, and other stakeholders to create an inclusive community, where ethno-cultural diversity is welcomed and valued, and where everyone can live with dignity and to their full potential, without facing racism

or discrimination,”<sup>6</sup> the City of Saskatoon has created a variety of programs and initiatives.

These efforts span the spectrum, from annual events like the “Living in Harmony” Awards that commemorate the UN’s declaration of the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, to ongoing tools for monitoring progress. These tools include perception surveys, focus groups, and community involvement, as well as modeling leadership, in order to foster integrated and synergistic partnerships internal and external to the City of Saskatoon.

To facilitate the development of mutual awareness, understanding and appreciation among racial, religious and ethno-cultural groups, and to cooperate with other groups and organizations, in 1990 City Council proclaimed March as Cultural Diversity and Race Relations Month in Saskatoon. The City is striving to provide significant recognition for this important issue by providing an expanded opportunity for public awareness and community participation. During the month of March, the City of Saskatoon works with local school boards to host the “Living in Harmony” Awards. “Living in Harmony” is an annual program that encourages individuals to explore what intercultural harmony means to them and to share their ideas with the community through submissions of visual, literary or performing art. “Living in Harmony”<sup>7</sup> is an annual program that encourages individuals to explore what intercultural harmony means to them and to share their ideas with the community through submissions of visual, literary or performing art.

## UNITED WE STAND

In 2002, 2005 and 2007, the City of Saskatoon conducted surveys on race relations perceptions and, subsequently, organized both adult and youth focus group discussions with two main objectives: first, to gather recommendations on how the municipality and community partners could address race relations and racism, and guide future activities of the CD&RR office, and second, to provide a safe, open discussion forum to explore race relations issues.

Following the adult focus group, it was clear that it was important for these discussions to continue. From this, a series of Conversation Circles was organized. Conversation Circles was a series of four conversations with representatives from various disciplines and “community drivers.” The circles were of a round-table format, and the hope is to progressively challenge barriers to anti-racist public education and awareness in Saskatoon. These conversations were held from the immigrant, Aboriginal and mainstream perspectives.<sup>8</sup>

Correspondingly, to follow-up the youth focus group, “Unified Minds: Youth Action Network”<sup>9</sup> is being developed in partnership with Youth Launch, the western hub of the Students Commission and the Centre for Excellence in Youth Engagement. It is a network of young people in partnership with adult allies who aim to promote positive intercultural relations in our community. The main purpose of the Network is to provide an open forum for people ages 13 to 18 to come together and share their ideas on racism and discrimination, youth engagement and civic participation.

## SPREADING THE WORD

In the City’s efforts to promote education and awareness, the CD&RR Coordinator and the Immigration Community Resource Coordinator are often called upon to present at workshops and participate in sessions and conferences to cover such topics as “Who are the Aboriginal People?” “What is the true history of Canada?” “How do people get here?” “Differences between an immigrant and a refugee,” “What are the similarities/differences in experiences?” and “How does all this fit into the context of a multicultural Canada?” The Coordinators also contribute to a monthly Calendar of Events and Newsletter to share information on events and resources that increase and promote cross-cultural understanding and interaction. In partnership with internal departments, namely Human Resources, and external community-based agencies, the Coordinators also collaborate on such initiatives as offering intercultural competency training and hosting workshops on anti-racism.

In the last couple of years, a tour called “Discover Saskatoon” has been offered to newcomers in order to familiarize them with civic facilities and provide them with a short introduction to the city. Part of the tour includes a drive by the first Urban Reserve in Canada, created in Saskatoon in 1988.<sup>10</sup> The Muskeg Lake Cree Nation was designed specifically for urban economic development; it was unique because of a series of agreements between the City and First Nations regarding compatible land use, services and tax loss compensation. This provides us with an opportunity to talk about Aboriginal and newcomer relations from a historical and contemporary perspective.

## COLLABORATIONS: A NATURAL EVOLUTION

Saskatoon is experiencing an exponential increase in immigration. This can, in part, be attributed to the Saskatchewan Immigrant Nominee Program. Immigrants are arriving not only as skilled labourers, but also as entrepreneurs. In matching potential entrepreneurs to businesses (including businesses on reserves), one of the factors identified was an increasing need to foster mutual understanding and dispel myths between Aboriginal

People and newcomers. From this need came a collaborative project entitled Building New Relationships. The goal of the project is to raise awareness and ensure that newcomers and First Nations People are educated about one another. The primary partners are the Saskatchewan Ministry of Advanced Education, Employment and Immigration, and the Office of the Treaty Commissioner. Representatives from the City of Saskatoon and the Newcomer Information Centre were on the Joint Management Committee for the project to provide feedback on the curriculum. With the Office of the Treaty Commissioner, the curriculum is now complete and, in the late fall of 2011, the first round of “train-the-trainer” sessions was held to create “champions of understanding.” Some staff from various immigrant serving agencies and ethno-cultural groups participated in this to see how they could incorporate some of these concepts into English as an additional Language classes and/or Life Skills classes.<sup>11</sup>

The Community Development Branch of the City of Saskatoon strives to be a leader within the institution as it endeavours to serve as a catalyst in the community by bringing together a network of volunteers and agencies capable of addressing issues that affect the quality of life in the community. To meet these objectives, while fostering a welcoming environment through an integrated approach, the Community Development Branch works with community-based organizations to offer a Youth Leadership Summit for Aboriginal youth, open also to newcomer youth. This is an endeavour that fosters authentic community collaboration in support of youth involvement in the promotion of cultural diversity and positive intercultural interactions and relations in the community. The focus and goal is to increase the participation and leadership of youth in addressing the issues of racism and discrimination, youth involvement, and the promotion of civic participation, while creating an opportunity for youth to collectively identify and bring forward issues that are relevant to them. Recognizing the need among other target groups, leadership capacity development workshops were also given on International Women’s Day, during which women from Aboriginal organizations and the International Women of Saskatoon were brought together to talk about leadership and what it means to them.

## RENEWED BEGINNINGS

Throughout the last four centuries, migration has led to many waves of interactions of the varied cultural groups in Canada. The City of Saskatoon has been involved in many facets of building bridges among Aboriginal People, recent newcomers, and the mainstream population through different avenues such as recreation, culture, and business. Treaty 6 was signed 136 years ago, so this is a relatively new concept. Contemporary realities in the context of

environmental, political, economic, and social happenings further lend to the influence, interpretation and wisdom of the treaties. Consequently, there is a need to proceed with deliberate attention toward the principle of *mutual* benefit and to continually honour the intent under which the treaties were accepted. In providing a sense of vision for the future of Saskatoon as an inclusive and integrated city where people of all ages, genders, ethnicities, religions and socio-economic statuses are welcomed, valued and respected, it is time to actively reflect on the longevity of the treaties that are meant to last “as long as the grass grows, the sun shines and the rivers flow.”<sup>12</sup>

*“Whether they are newcomers or part of families that have been here for several generations, most people in Canada do not know a lot about Aboriginal People, our history and our cultures. From an Aboriginal perspective, the original spirit of the treaty agreements was to share the use of the lands our ancestors lived on. It was not understood that the land was being given away. The Canadian government and many Canadian people have started to realize the Aboriginal Peoples of Canada have been treated unfairly. With shifting demographics and a renewed spirit, we are now working hard to develop new relationships based on fairness and respect because indeed... We Are All Treaty People.”*<sup>13</sup>

## NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> The authors would like to acknowledge Lynne Lacroix, Manager of the Community Development Branch of the City of Saskatoon, for her constant encouragement in the work that we do and for her contribution to this article.
- <sup>2</sup> The lived experience of an immigrant, which perhaps parallels that of many others (This is a verbatim testimony from an immigrant who wishes to remain anonymous. It was recorded in October 2011.).
- <sup>3</sup> *The Founders, City of Saskatoon, 2008.*
- <sup>4</sup> [http://www.saskatoon.ca/DEPARTMENTS/Community%20Services/Communitydevelopment/Documents/CDRR\\_Policy.pdf](http://www.saskatoon.ca/DEPARTMENTS/Community%20Services/Communitydevelopment/Documents/CDRR_Policy.pdf)
- <sup>5</sup> [http://www.saskatoon.ca/DEPARTMENTS/Community%20Services/Communitydevelopment/Documents/CDRR\\_Policy.pdf](http://www.saskatoon.ca/DEPARTMENTS/Community%20Services/Communitydevelopment/Documents/CDRR_Policy.pdf)
- <sup>6</sup> [http://www.saskatoon.ca/DEPARTMENTS/Community%20Services/Communitydevelopment/Documents/CDRR\\_Policy.pdf](http://www.saskatoon.ca/DEPARTMENTS/Community%20Services/Communitydevelopment/Documents/CDRR_Policy.pdf)
- <sup>7</sup> <http://www.saskatoon.ca/DEPARTMENTS/Community%20Services/Communitydevelopment/Cultural%20Diversity%20and%20Race%20Relations/Pages/Cultural%20Diversity%20and%20Race%20Relations%20Month.aspx>
- <sup>8</sup> A comprehensive report on the “Conversation Circles” recommendations will be made available in 2012.
- <sup>9</sup> <http://www.saskatoon.ca/DEPARTMENTS/Community%20Services/Communitydevelopment/Cultural%20Diversity%20and%20Race%20Relations/Pages/UnifiedMindsYouthActionNetwork.aspx>
- <sup>10</sup> <http://www.saskatoon.ca/DEPARTMENTS/Community%20Services/PlanningDevelopment/FutureGrowth/UrbanReservesandTreatyLandEntitlement/Pages/UrbanReservesandTreatyLandEntitlement.aspx>
- <sup>11</sup> We are currently reviewing similar curricula with the Gabriel Dumont Institute to ensure that there is similar awareness and understanding about the Métis people.
- <sup>12</sup> — (2008). *Treaty Essential Learnings: We Are All Treaty People*. Saskatoon: Office of the Treaty Commissioner (ISBN 978-0-9782685-9-5).
- <sup>13</sup> The experience of an Aboriginal person, which perhaps parallels that of many past and present generation (This is a verbatim testimony from an Aboriginal person who wishes to remain anonymous. It was recorded in October 2011).

[Traduction]

# RECOGNIZING ONE OTHER: ABORIGINAL PEOPLE, MIGRANTS AND FRANCOPHONES IN THE (SMALL) NORTHERN SOCIETIES OF YUKON, THE NORTHWEST TERRITORIES AND NUNAVUT

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## **ABSTRACT**

Canada is often considered a pioneer or an “ideal type” society with respect to taking into account the multiple demands for recognition made by the groups that shape multiculturalism in this country. How do we correlate the cultural diversity that comes from immigration to the particular demands of Francophone minority and First Nations communities? This question is addressed through an account of the very particular situation faced by Canada’s three territories (Yukon, Nunavut and the Northwest Territories) and the relationships among the various communities that live there. Over time, these northern societies have in fact become a unique “makeshift society” in Canada, but not without their challenges.

## **BACKGROUND: RECOGNITION IN CANADA**

Canada is often considered a pioneer or an “ideal type” society with respect to taking into account the multiple demands for recognition made by the groups that shape multiculturalism in this country. How do the many demands correlate? The need to be recognized is not only directed at political authorities—from the bottom up—but across the entire Canadian political landscape; it therefore requires us to examine how to reconcile these “manifold diversities,” as was amply demonstrated in the debates on the issue of “reasonable accommodation” in Quebec.

However, this reflection should hardly be limited to Quebec. It is becoming crucial in a country like Canada, where people are not satisfied with merely enshrining multiculturalism, but also want to help (re)define it according to the transformations that Canadian society

in its entirety may experience. For example, all of Canada’s Francophone minority communities demand recognition of their linguistic distinctiveness, particularly through official bilingualism, which represents an institutionalized opportunity for them to succeed with this demand. This distinctiveness goes hand in hand with the higher levels of Francophone immigration to the provinces, and it forces Francophone minority communities (FMCs) to reflect on their socio historical foundations in light of this Francophonie that “came from abroad”. To what extent can this linguistic distinctiveness blend with the cultural diversity that came with the most recent waves of immigration? This question is pivotal to many FMCs (Traisnel and Violette, 2010) seeking, in partnership with the federal government, to ensure their linguistic vitality through the essential contributions made by these “new” Francophones.

This blending of distinctiveness and cultural diversity becomes even more complex in the unique context of Yukon, Nunavut and the Northwest Territories, for the following three reasons. Firstly, in these three Northern Canadian territories, bilingualism has led to official recognition of the equal status of French and English—a situation similar to the one in New Brunswick, and therefore somewhat unique in Canada. Secondly, official multiculturalism finds unique expression there, owing to a very high proportion of people in the three territories from migrant or immigrant backgrounds (and, therefore, born outside the territory). Thirdly, more than anywhere else in Canada, various Aboriginal communities are forcefully and visibly demanding recognition. This visibility has been strengthened by amending the status of the territories through the devolution process and enshrined by the official recognition of several Aboriginal languages, particularly in the Northwest Territories and in Nunavut. Given their lengthy presence and the rights that have been conferred on them, these communities enjoy a singular position within the three territories. The process of devolution tends to institutionalize this Aboriginal singularity a little further, specifically, by enabling these communities, through institutions and territorial governments, to command important leverage with respect to their political recognition.

## NORTHERN SOCIETIES: MULTIPLICITY OF SITUATIONS, MULTIPLICITY OF EXPECTATIONS

### Devolution and recognition of Aboriginal cultures in the face of migratory processes

First occupied exclusively by Aboriginal communities, these vast hunting and fishing lands immediately attracted the interest of trading companies, who later developed them: first, through the fur trade, and then later by mining the many resources that were found there. These companies consequently triggered the arrival of several waves of migrants who had essentially come from Canada's provinces, but also from abroad (United States, Europe, and Asia), to this vast land. The impressive and transitory history of the migrations surrounding the Gold Rush in the Dawson region of Yukon exemplifies the kind of migration that put the discovery and mining of resources above concern for sustainable development for the communities living there.

This process, of course, deeply disrupted the relationship between Aboriginal communities and European migrants. The migrants were no longer mere explorers or *coureurs des bois* traders, but communities that were settling more or less permanently, founding cities, developing infrastructures, and leaving their mark on the environment and the political and administrative organization of these territories. Land control thus became

a major issue for the Government of Canada, which was mindful of asserting the region's sovereignty, while ensuring its economic development.

For a long time, Canada's northern territories were managed directly by Parliament. However, the situation progressively changed: a series of laws made it possible to create and then strengthen the **autonomy** of the three territorial governments through the creation of a legislative assembly and an executive council in each territory. In a certain sense, Yukon's style of government is almost comparable to that of a typical province. This is not (yet?) the case for the NWT or Nunavut, as Nunavut only recently dissociated itself from the NWT, on April 1, 1999. The process of devolution allows for decisions to be made based on local needs and gets the populations of the territories involved. Therefore, it better takes into account the needs and development issues that particularly affect the Aboriginal communities across the territories, particularly those situated far from the larger urban centres of Whitehorse, Yellowknife and Iqaluit. That being said, the territories are still very dependent on special transfers from the federal government through *Territorial Formula Financing*, which allows Canadians in Nunavut, Yukon and the NWT to be taxed at rates that are roughly comparable to those of southern Canadians while benefiting from a number of similar services.

The context of devolution has made it possible to strengthen the cultural and political weight of the Aboriginal communities on many levels. First with regard to representation, because in the three territories several Aboriginal languages have been recognized, sometimes even together with English and French (in the NWT and in Nunavut). Genuine multilingualism is particularly visible in the three territories. The presence of Aboriginal communities is mainly evoked at places of remembrance (museums, monuments, community planning, commemorative sites) and in the various places where political power resides (assemblies, city halls, law courts). The substantial visibility of these languages in the territories reflects the demographic weight of Aboriginal populations, given that nearly 70% of Nunavummiuq claim Inuktitut as their first language (15% of Yukoners consider an Aboriginal language to be their first language) and that nearly half of the territories' residents claim an Aboriginal identity. With respect to services, Aboriginal communities are offered a range of cultural and economic development programs adapted to their realities and to the challenges they face (public health, education in schools across the Northern communities, forestry and fishery rights, human resources, housing). With respect to power and institutions, the various levels of government (territorial and municipal in particular) now allow Aboriginal people, through their representatives, to have a voice in each political entity.

### French: An official language in the three territories

The process of devolution has not challenged the federal government's legal obligations with respect to official languages. On the contrary, in the territories it has led to the enactment of language legislation seeking both to ensure linguistic duality throughout the territory and to ensure the promotion and linguistic and cultural vitality of Aboriginal communities: in the NWT, the *Northwest Territories Official Languages Act*, enacted in 1984 and amended in 1990, recognizes nine Aboriginal languages (Chipewyan, Cree, North Slavey, South Slavey, Gwich'in, Inuinnaqtun, Inuktitut, Inuvialuktun and Tâichô) in addition to French and English. The Act led to the creation of a position of Commissioner of Official Languages, responsible for monitoring compliance with the official multilingualism of this territory. Yukon enacted its *Languages Act* in 1988 and recognizes, apart from Canada's two official languages, "the significance of aboriginal languages," which has made it possible for several of those languages to achieve quasi recognition, which has resulted, among other things, in some of these languages becoming visible, particularly on public signage. In 2009, ten years after its creation, Nunavut enacted its own *Official Languages Act*, which recognizes French, English and Inuktitut on equal footing. Nunavut also created a Commissioner of Official Languages position at the same time.

In this context, the FMCs are small communities (for the territories on the whole, Francophones represent about 4% of the population) that offer, owing to their concentration around big cities (70% of Francophones live in Whitehorse, Yellowknife or Iqaluit), a wide variety of services in their language and a constellation of organizations structured around the *Association franco-yukonnaise*, the *Fédération franco-ténoise* and the *Association franco-nunavoise*—organizations that are closely linked to the implementation of language laws in the territories. Thus, as in the FMCs to the south, every community provides school boards, cultural services, early childhood services, guidance and counselling services, specialized health organizations and economic development organizations (RDÉEs). In addition to this associative network, some organizations are also involved in newcomer reception—an essential service for FMCs, given that most Francophones who live in the territories were not born there.

### Almost 9 out of 10 Francophones are from migrant backgrounds

Another characteristic of the territories is that, more than anywhere else in Canada, people who live in the territories come from somewhere else. A few statistics provide insight into the significance of migratory processes

in the social dynamics of the three territories. In the first place, these are very small communities (a little over 100,000 people in all three territories combined, or 0.3% of Canada's population) spread over an expanse that represents a third of Canada's total surface area. In total, nearly 7,000 residents of the territories were born abroad and nearly 12,500 of them are from Canada's provinces. Thus, the average mobility in the territories is 48%. In particular, 85% of Francophones were not born in the territories. Northern Francophone communities are therefore communities of migrants in which everyone faces the challenges of reception, settlement and integration, through a singular migration experience to a society that has harsh winters, is far from large urban centres, and is characterized by major differences from southern Canadian societies. In such settings, reception and retention are major challenges (separation from family, job scarcity, small host communities, high cost of living, limited interknowledge network, and so on) that result in rather short stays: on average, migrants settle only to move again a few years later (the average length of stay is about three years in Nunavut, four years in the NWT and five years in Yukon). Retention is therefore key to the vitality of these small communities which have developed a certain amount of know-how in this area. For several years, Yukon demonstrated this know-how through the Carrefour d'Immigration Crossroad, which provides reception services for all immigrants settling in Yukon. The Carrefour was managed directly by the Association franco-yukonnaise, which hosted the service on its own premises.

### Demands and expectations

The three territories are characterized by a threefold requirement in terms of recognition and cultural promotion:

1. Ensuring reception and settlement services for newcomers, while, at the same time, meeting the needs of the territories through adequate recruitment outside the territories, in particular to respond to retention challenges resulting from the shorter length of stays in the territories, compared with elsewhere.
2. Ensuring that Aboriginal communities have access to essential services that take into account the particularities of their culture, their language, and the challenges of living in a remote area; also, in connection with this requirement, making it possible for the communities to provide these services themselves by improving Aboriginal peoples' access to training and the labour market.

3. In a context characterized by the recognition of Aboriginal languages and cultures and the pervasiveness of English as the main language of communication, ensuring that Francophones receive the services they are entitled to.

**Toward “small northern societies” characterized by a diversity of cultural, linguistic and communal recognition**

Conflicts may have arisen between the various communities—be they Aboriginal peoples, Francophones or newcomers—as a result of the difficult balance between these demands and a social context characterized by the heterogeneity of expectations. Some of these tensions were sometimes expressed during the semi structured interviews conducted with Francophones in the three territories during our travels (Robineau, Traisnel *et al.*, 2010). While these tensions are not caused directly by community representatives themselves, who clearly want to strengthen the ties and dialogue among the various communities, several reasons linked to certain behaviours were mentioned by Francophones themselves during the interviews: newcomers’ lack of familiarity with the host society (at least initially); cultural biases; some Francophones’ indifference to the lifestyle and social attitudes of local populations; some migrants’ indifference to the cultural and linguistic demands of Aboriginal communities; at times, some Aboriginal peoples, like permanently settled Francophone migrants, grow tired of newcomers who leave too quickly, making it impossible to form strong and lasting bonds with them; the frustrations of certain Francophones who are willing to maintain lasting relationships with Aboriginal people but do not know “how to do it”; conversely, the overly practical approach of some migrants who have come “to make a quick dollar” and who are fairly indifferent about the host society in general and Aboriginal life in particular; some Aboriginal peoples’ resentment toward Francophone organizations’ access to a number of educational, healthcare and economic development services, while access to these same services sometimes remains very problematic for certain Aboriginal communities, particularly the most remote; and finally, irritation with Francophone representatives, who do not hesitate to put forward their language demands and petition the courts to assert their rights. There are a huge number of these clashes in these small northern societies.

These groups, whose expectations and points of reference vary greatly, are nonetheless in constant contact: the smallness of the societies and their relative isolation are added incentive to maintain relationships and cooperation, particularly in files that share a common problem (language, economic development, recruitment). Be that as it may,

misunderstandings and sometimes diverging agendas are preserving a new form of “double solitude” that dissociates Aboriginal peoples from other Canadians and immigrants.

However, even though there are sometimes tensions, multiple points of intersection make it possible for migrants, Francophones who are members of minority communities and Aboriginal peoples to engage in dialogue: under the devolution process and the relative centralization of services, the urban centres in the territorial capitals have become major hubs for meetings and discussions in the fields of politics and economics, as well as culture and art. In this regard, Francophone know-how with respect to recognition and promotion of minority languages could in fact help Aboriginal communities develop their own demands regarding recognition of their languages and cultures. Conversely, Aboriginal peoples recognizing the importance of the vitality of Francophone communities in the context of Canada’s North is essential to FMCs in their work to develop services in French. It then becomes necessary to think about the development of these services in terms of the cultural and economic issues within these territorial societies of atypical multiculturalism within Canada.

Moreover, this concern is reflected in the efforts made on all sides, and often with the help of the territorial and federal governments, to foster dialogue and hold discussions, particularly with regard to language issues. These discussions are organized through symposia on official languages and have been held in the three territories on subjects of official languages and language policies. These occasions provide important opportunities to foster a genuine inter-community dialogue on linguistic and cultural issues in the three territories. These efforts are also undertaken directly by the Francophone communities seeking to maintain closer relationships with the representatives of the various Aboriginal communities. This is also the concern of many Francophone migrants, who often state that one of their main reasons for settling in the territories is their willingness to discover Aboriginal cultures and traditions, and who are seeking, by various means (organizing parades, thematic meetings, festive and cultural events), to strengthen ties between Francophones and Aboriginal peoples. This willingness to better integrate into the territorial society and its various segments sometimes results in a more permanent settlement of these “Francophones from elsewhere.” These Francophones, who are more permanently settled and sometimes linked by filial or marital relationships with people of Aboriginal origin, become conveyors, acting as liaisons between Aboriginal communities and newcomers. One example of a

“conveyor” is anthropologist Stéphane Cloutier, who played a key role in the release of a CD of multilingual (English, French and Inuktituk) songs in Nunavut. The production of this CD, which required the cooperation of Francophone and Aboriginal organizations and the participation of children from the various schools of Iqaluit, reflects the active effort to (re)discover a shared history of Nunavut made up of cultural meetings and exchanges between “old-timers” and “newcomers”. The song “*ilititaa puuti naviri*” (*There was a little ship*, a distant legacy of French sailors in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, has become part of the heritage of Inuit songs), included on the album, illustrates this commitment to sharing a collective memory and the desire to consider it “together.”<sup>1</sup>

It seems that in Nunavut, the NWT and Yukon, there is a rather singular experience of “creating a small society.” The smallness, the remoteness from major urban centres, the archipelagic nature of the communities, the distance, the vastness of the land, and the very limited ecumene in effect make maintaining relationships of solidarity and mutual recognition essential, as they are to other small, remote communities.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> ilititaa puuti naviri  
 ilititaa puuti naviri  
 kinavi jaa-jaa-javinaviri  
 kinavi jaa-jaa-javinaviri  
 uvii uvii...

“Un petit navire,” Songs from the Children of Nunavut, CD. John Maurice, 2008.

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# INFLUENCES ON ABORIGINAL AND IMMIGRANT LANGUAGE GROUPS IN CANADA: SOME SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES

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## **ABSTRACT**

This study provides a census-based data analysis of the demographic, family, household and community factors in relation to the growth, continuity and situation of Aboriginal and immigrant languages in Canada, over the 15-year census period of 1991 to 2006. This research follows the evolution of the three major Aboriginal languages (Cree, Inuktitut, Ojibway) and three major immigrant languages (Chinese, Italian, German) over the period 1991-2006 and discusses the factors associated with observed changes in their populations and selected language indicators. Language data on mother tongue, home language and knowledge are provided for these major languages from the past four censuses (1991, 1996, 2001 and 2006).

## **INTRODUCTION**

Aboriginal and immigrant populations have very different characteristics in terms of their geographic location, demographic, social and economic characteristics, but both populations are affected by similar factors when we consider the growth and size of language groups. These factors can be broadly classified as demographic, family and household, community, and media factors.

Demographic factors are those that have an impact on the growth and size of a population. While Canada's Aboriginal and immigrant language groups are both subject to the influences of fertility and mortality, international migration is not a significant consideration in the Aboriginal case. However, international migration is particularly important for immigrant language groups, which can experience marked fluctuation over short periods of time, depending on immigration patterns.

The family and household factors directly influence the language situation and the possibility for maintenance and continuity of Aboriginal and immigrant languages. In two-parent families, the language knowledge of each person affects the home language and the parents' tendency to transmit a language to their children. For example, if one spouse speaks English and a non-official<sup>1</sup> language and the other speaks only English, then English generally becomes the language spoken at home. Even if one of the spouses has some knowledge of the non-official language, the couple generally chooses the language that facilitates and maximizes communication, and that is often an official language, be it English or French.

Children are likely to adopt the official language as their mother tongue when one of the parents' mother tongue is an official language and the other is not<sup>2</sup>. As Canada has

become more diverse, the tendency of people to choose marriage partners who differ from themselves across several social dimensions has increased and linguistic exogamy has increased in a similar fashion (Harrison, 1997). Internal migration, especially rural-urban (e.g., between Aboriginal communities or reserves and urban areas), can also increase the likelihood of linguistic exogamy, especially in urban areas where prospective partners whose mother tongue is an official language far outnumber those with a traditional language (Norris, 2009).

Patterns of intermarriage have significant implications for intergenerational transmission of Aboriginal and immigrant languages. People whose mother tongue is a non-official language and who choose a mate with the same mother tongue are much more likely to transmit that mother tongue to their children.

Community factors reflect the possibilities for speaking the language outside the home. The number and concentration of those speaking the language in a particular area will influence the tendency for that language to be maintained. Further, the number of people in the community who can only speak the Aboriginal or immigrant language will have an influence, since any communication with these individuals is limited to one of these languages. Finally, the presence of institutions that foster the use of the language in the community will have an influence. Such institutions as churches and multicultural and Aboriginal centres (e.g. Friendship Centres) can provide opportunities for the use and maintenance of non-official languages.

The availability of broadcast and print media in Aboriginal or immigrant languages can also help to promote the maintenance of these languages. Television and radio broadcasts in Aboriginal languages<sup>3</sup> have been recognized as playing an important role in helping to maintain language and culture. Similarly, many immigrant languages are used by radio and television providers across Canada. Books, magazines and newspapers are also available in Aboriginal and immigrant languages.

## **EVOLUTION OF SELECTED ABORIGINAL AND IMMIGRANT LANGUAGES: DATA AND APPROACH**

This study provides a census-based data analysis of the demographic, family, household and community factors in relation to the growth, continuity and situation of Aboriginal and immigrant languages in Canada, over the 15-year census period of 1991 to 2006. The study examines the evolution of selected languages, representing each of the three most frequently reported Aboriginal and immigrant languages in 2006. Census data on language - mother tongue, home language and knowledge - are provided from the past four censuses, (1991, 1996, 2001 and 2006), for the

three major Aboriginal languages groups (Cree, Inuktitut, Ojibway) and the three major immigrant languages (Chinese, Italian, German). For immigrant languages, data on place of birth and period of immigration are also provided. The analysis also considers the comparability of language data across censuses.

## **ABORIGINAL LANGUAGE GROUPS**

A multiplicity of factors - historical, societal, cultural, economic, geographic, and demographic - have contributed to the current states of close to ninety Aboriginal languages in Canada today (Norris, 2010). For example, historical factors include events associated with the forces of colonization and the legacy of the residential school system, which saw the prohibition of Indigenous language use among Aboriginal children. Today, the forces of larger mainstream languages, globalization, urban environments outside of Aboriginal communities, as well as the demand and need for mainstream language use in daily life in school, work, and the marketplace can present challenges for language maintenance and survival. As with other minority languages, individuals' continual exposure to more dominant languages, along with the need to use them in everyday life, can be a powerful catalyst in the decline of Aboriginal languages.

### **Demographic Factors and Language Learning Considerations: Population Size, Language Continuity, Second Language Acquisition and Age of Speakers**

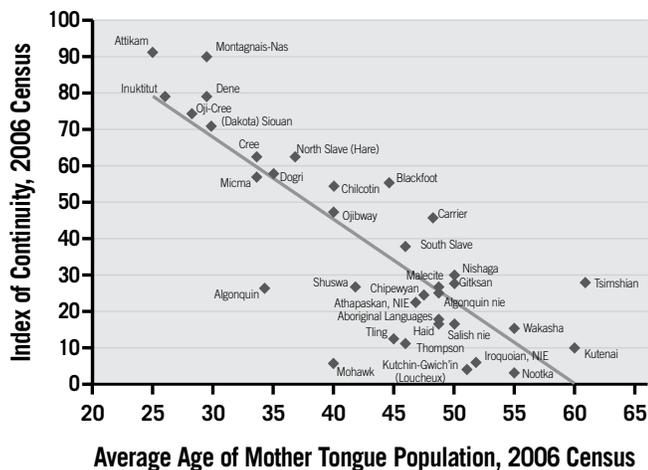
There are a number of demographic factors to consider in relation to the state of Aboriginal languages. First and foremost is the size of the population with an Aboriginal mother tongue or home language. Since a large base of speakers is essential to ensure long-term viability, the more speakers of a language, the better its chance of survival. In 2006, some 222,000 people reported having an Aboriginal language as a mother tongue. However, languages vary significantly in the size of their mother tongue populations. Each of the three largest groups of Aboriginal languages, have mother tongue populations of over 25,000 people; Cree at 85,000; Ojibway at 25,600; and Inuktitut at some 33,000. In contrast, endangered languages rarely have more than a few thousand speakers; often only a few hundred. For instance, the smallest mother tongue population recorded by the 2006 Census is Kutenai with just 100 speakers (Norris, 2011b).

Language continuity generally refers to the natural transmission of a mother tongue from generation to generation, parent to child, through language use in the home. Language use at home enables children to acquire an Aboriginal mother tongue, thereby contributing to

language’s maintenance. Use of the language at home is vital to an assessment of a language’s viability and can be established using a continuity index.<sup>4</sup> Generally, languages with high continuity are the large-population languages, such as Inuktitut and Cree, and some smaller, but still sizable languages (e.g. Attikamek and Dene); although some large population languages, such as Ojibway, have relatively low continuity. Endangered languages with populations under 1,000 (e.g. Nishga and Haida) tend to have the lowest continuity.

The average age of those who have an Aboriginal mother tongue or speak the language at home is also an important consideration, indicating the extent to which the language has been transmitted to the younger generation. Age is an important indicator of the state and viability or endangerment of any language; the younger the first-language speakers, the healthier the language. Figure 1 illustrates the strong inverse linear association between language continuity and average age of the mother tongue population. Viable languages, such as Inuktitut and Attikamek, are characterized by relatively young mother tongue populations (average age about 25) and corresponding high continuity. In contrast, endangered languages, such as Haida and Wakashan, typically have older mother tongue populations (average age around 50 or older) combined with very low continuity indexes (Norris, 2011 b).

Figure 1: Aboriginal Languages in Canada: Index of Continuity by Average Age of Mother Tongue Population, Canada, 2006



Source: 2006 Census, unadjusted data (Norris, 2011 b, Table 1, p.24)

Age and continuity factors do not tell the whole story however, since second language acquisition is especially prevalent among younger generations of endangered language speakers. The ability to speak, or knowledge of, a language provides some clues as to how speakers of different generations have learned their language, either at home as a mother tongue or later in life as a second language. For example, the Kutenai language family has one of the oldest mother tongue populations, with an average age of 60 years, and lowest continuity indexes, with 11 persons speaking Kutenai as a major language at home, for 100 persons with a Kutenai mother tongue. However, the index of ability<sup>5</sup> in 2006 indicates that there are almost two people (usually younger at an average age of 45) who speak the language to every one individual with the Kutenai mother-tongue, suggesting that younger generations are more likely to learn Kutenai as a second language (Norris, 2011b, Table 1, p. 24). Second language acquisition patterns are also more highly pronounced off-reserve, especially in urban areas and among youth (Norris & Jantzen, 2003).<sup>6</sup>

**Passing on language to the next generation: critical for survival**

Language transmission from one generation to another is the major factor in Aboriginal language survival and maintenance. The growth in Aboriginal mother tongue populations is attributable to the relatively high fertility rates of the Aboriginal population in combination with intergenerational transmission.<sup>7</sup>

Unlike other non-official or heritage<sup>8</sup> languages in Canada, Aboriginal languages are generally indigenous to the country and cannot rely on immigration to maintain or increase their populations of speakers, as observed in the growth of the Chinese mother tongue group. Thus, passing on the language from parents to children is critical for all Indigenous languages since Aboriginal children are their future speakers.

Many of the factors affecting the intergenerational transmission of an Aboriginal mother tongue are associated with its continued use as a major home language, especially on a daily basis —ideally, as one spoken most often in the home, as stressed in the recommendations by the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP, 1996). Yet there are various dynamics that can affect the use of traditional languages in the home:—for example, the life cycle and the transition from youth into adulthood; residence within or outside Aboriginal communities, on reserves, or in urban areas; migration to and from communities and urban areas; family formation and linguistic out-marriage (exogamy) or parenting; and entry into the labour force.

The low prospects of home language use of endangered languages are associated with a number of factors. Compared to speakers of viable languages, endangered language speakers are more likely to marry or parent with people who do not speak an Aboriginal language; to be more urbanized and to live outside Aboriginal communities; to be older first-language speakers; and, among younger generations, more likely to have learned their traditional language as a second language (Norris, 2003).

Research demonstrates that a home language “spoken most often” is most likely to become the mother tongue of the next generation. However, regular use of an Aboriginal language at home, even if not the major home language, may help first-language speakers maintain their mother tongue, and others to learn it as a second language. This could be particularly relevant to learning endangered languages, which, if spoken at home, tend not to be spoken “most often” but are at least spoken “regularly” (Norris & Jantzen, 2003; Norris, 2008, 2011). Within urban areas, especially in large cities, home language users are considerably more likely to speak their traditional languages on a regular basis, rather than on a most often basis, a pattern that contrasts most sharply with the situation on reserves (Norris, 2011b, 2011c, 2012).

### **Families and Communities: Language Continuity, Transmission and Exogamy**

Both family and community are significant factors in the transmission from parent to child, affecting whether the child learns the Aboriginal language as a mother tongue or as a second language, or speaks it at home. The best conditions for a child to learn an Aboriginal language as a mother tongue and to speak it at home are found within families in which the language has a strong presence in the home, where the Aboriginal language is the mother tongue of both parents in two-parent families, or of the lone parent located in Aboriginal communities. However, many Aboriginal children do not live in such ideal learning conditions, let alone have one or both parents with an Aboriginal mother tongue. This is shown by the long-term declines in continuity, with children comprising a shrinking share of the population with an Aboriginal mother tongue and increasingly more likely to learn an Aboriginal language as a second language, especially for endangered languages and in urban areas (Norris, 2003; 2007; 2008).

In a two-parent family, the tendency to pass a language to the children is significantly lower when an Aboriginal language is the mother tongue of only one, as opposed to both parents (Norris, 2003). Exogamy generally reflects both the impacts of population size and integration. A high

degree of linguistic out-marriage/parenting (exogamy) is associated with the diminished continuity of languages.

An analysis of 1996 Census data (Norris, 2003; Norris & MacCon, 2003) reveals a strong inverse linear association between language continuity and exogamy (% of children in mixed marriages) as they relate to the transmission of the different Aboriginal languages. These patterns are consistent with Harrison’s (1997) 1991 Census-based study on immigrant languages. Viable languages are characterized by extremely high language continuity indexes (80 or more persons speaking a given Aboriginal language most often at home for every 100 persons with that Aboriginal language as a mother tongue) and low exogamy rates (<20% of children in mixed marriages). Inuktitut is such an example, with a continuity index of 86, and an exogamy rate of 19%. Conversely, endangered languages such as Kutenai tend to have extremely low continuity indexes, of 20 or less home language speakers per 100 persons with the given language as a mother tongue, and exogamy rates averaging some 90%. Corresponding continuity indexes and exogamy rates for the two largest First Nation language groups are: for Cree, 70 major home language speakers per 100 mother tongue population and 30% of children in mixed marriages; and for Ojibway, 55 and 47% respectively.

Aboriginal communities, including the First Nation reserves of Registered Indians and the northern communities of the Inuit, clearly support the maintenance and transmission of Aboriginal languages, as evidenced by sizable mother tongue populations and high continuity. First Nations, Métis, and Inuit differ significantly in their degree of urbanization (Norris & Clatworthy 2011) and language situations. In 2006, relatively high proportions of Inuit (63%) and Registered Indians residing on-reserve (46%) reported having an Aboriginal mother tongue, compared to the more urbanized non-Status Indian (2.4%) and Métis (2.6%) populations (Norris, 2011b). The same patterns were also observed in previous censuses (Norris 1998, 2003, 2007).

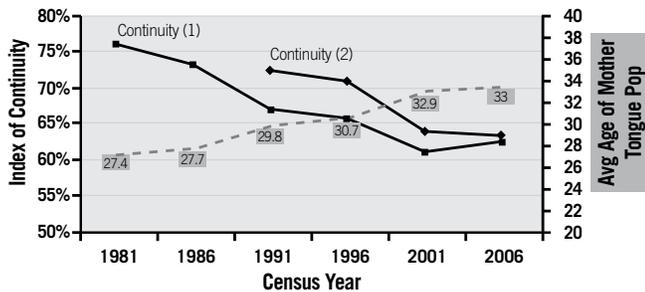
Major home use and transmission of a mother tongue or first language, which ideally yield the best prospects for Aboriginal languages, tend to be difficult within a city environment. The effect of the larger mainstream languages of English or French in daily life are evident in the patterns of Aboriginal language use in urban homes, where they are rarely spoken as a major language, and where prospects of intergenerational transmission of a mother tongue are consequently low. However there are signs that urban Aboriginal residents are finding other strategies for speaking and learning their traditional languages, in ways that are perhaps more feasible within urban environments. Instead of being achieved through major home use and

intergenerational mother tongue transmission, traditional languages are being learned with some regular home use as second languages (Norris, 2011b, 2011c, 2012).

**Aboriginal Languages Trends in Population Growth, Continuity and Ageing**

Long-term declines in major use of Aboriginal languages in the home effectively lower the chances of children acquiring their parent(s)’ traditional language as a mother tongue, and thereby contributes to an ageing mother-tongue population. Over the 20 year period, from 1981 to 2001, for many Aboriginal languages, especially endangered ones, home language use shifted from traditional to non-Aboriginal. Overall, the continuous decline in the continuity index, from about 76 to 61 home language speakers per 100 mother tongue population, corresponded to an ageing mother tongue population, whose average age rose by five and a half years to 33 years in 2001. However, analysis of recent trends suggests some stabilization of these trends over the 2001-2006 period (Figure 2) (Norris and Snider, 2008, p.226).

**Figure 2: Aboriginal Languages: Index of Continuity and Average Age of Mother Tongue Population, Canada, 1981 to 2006**



Home language / Mother tongue Continuity:  
 (1) Single responses; (2) Single & Multiple  
 Source: 1991-2006 Census, data (Norris and Snider, 2008, Figure 1, p. 226)

The impact of the long-term erosion of Aboriginal languages in the home and declining intergenerational transmission is evident today. In 2006, out of Canada’s 1.2 million people identified as Aboriginal (First Nation, Métis, or Inuit), 220,000, or about one in five (19 per cent), reported an Aboriginal language as their mother tongue. A greater number – 252,000, or 21 per cent of Aboriginal people – said they could converse in an Aboriginal language, implying that other speakers had learned their traditional language as a second language. However, fewer – just 17 per cent – reported speaking an Aboriginal language at home: 12 per cent said it was the language they used most often at home, and 5 per cent said it was a language they used on a regular basis at home.

Table 1 shows changes in the Cree, Ojibway and Inuktitut groups, as well as for Aboriginal languages overall, from 1991 to 2006<sup>9</sup>, for the total population. Caution in interpreting these patterns and trends are stressed since data have not been adjusted for comparability across all three censuses.<sup>10</sup>

Overall, the total population reporting an Aboriginal mother tongue in Canada showed an increase of about 17%, from 190,200 in 1991 to 222,200 in 2006. Adjusted intercensal data (except 2001-2006) suggest some variations in growth patterns over the three census periods (though not directly comparable). Over the 1991-1996 period, the total Aboriginal mother tongue population grew by about 10%; then decreased some 3% between 1996 and 2001; and then increased again by 9% over 2001-2006 (Table 1).

Among the three Aboriginal languages, the Inuit language of Inuktitut experienced the greatest growth over the past 15 years, with an increase in its mother tongue population of almost 33%, from 25,000 in 1991 to 33,000 by 2006. All three intercensal periods show consistently positive and steady growth: 12% and 8% (adjusted) over the 1991-1996 and 1996-2001 periods, and 11% over 2001-2006.

In contrast to Inuktitut, the Cree and Ojibway language groups experienced considerably less growth over the same periods. The population with a Cree mother tongue increased overall by 3.5% (unadjusted) from 82,000 in 1991 to 85,000 in 2006. Adjusted data yield variations in intercensal growth patterns of the Cree mother tongue population, with an increase of 10.5% over the 1991-1996 period, then a decrease of 6% between 1996 and 2001, followed by an increase of 10% over 2001-2006.

Ojibway experienced the least growth of the three Aboriginal languages, with its mother tongue population increasing by only 1% over the past 15 years (unadjusted), from 25,300 in 1991 to 25,600 by 2006 (to some extent this growth reflects the effect of changes in reporting patterns of Oji-Cree and Ojibway). Adjusted intercensal data show an increase of 5% in the Ojibway mother tongue population over 1991-1996, followed by decreases over both 1996-2001 and 2001-2006 of 10% and 2%, respectively.

Even among the largest language groups of Cree, Ojibway and Inuktitut there are significant variations in their state and trends. In terms of continuity and aging, the Inuktitut language is clearly the most viable and youngest of the three, followed by Cree and then Ojibway. In addition to the high rates of intergenerational transmission of Inuktitut, Inuit fertility rates are among the highest of all Aboriginal groups.

Over the past 15 years, unadjusted census data show that the average age of the Inuktitut mother tongue population has increased relatively slightly from 23.8 in 1991 to 26 by 2006. Compared to Inuktitut, Cree speakers

**Table 1: Mother Tongue, Home Language, Language Knowledge, and Selected Indices<sup>(1)</sup> for Cree, Ojibway and Inuktitut Languages, 1991 - 2006, Total (Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal) Population, Canada**

LANGUAGES VARIABLES AND INDICES	MOTHER TONGUE	HOME LANGUAGE A	HOME LANGUAGE B	NO. OF SPEAKERS (KNOWLEDGE)	CONTINUITY INDEX	KNOWLEDGE / SECOND LANG INDEX	INTERCENSAL PERCENTAGE IN M.T. POPULATION	CHANGE	INTERCENSAL PERCENTAGE IN N. SPEAKERS OR KN POPULATION	CHANGE
Aboriginal Languages	(M.T.)	Major - Most Frequent <sup>(2)</sup> (H.L.)	Regular <sup>(2)</sup> (H.L.)	Knowledge (N.S.)	H.L. / M.T. X 100	N.S. / M.T. X 100	Unadjusted Census data	Adjusted for incomplete enumeration <sup>(3)</sup>	Unadjusted Census data	Adjusted for incomplete enumeration <sup>(3)</sup>
<i>Unadjusted Census Data</i>							%	%	%	%
<b>1991</b>										
Cree	82,070	60,855	n/a	93,825	74	114	1986-1991 Not applicable here			
Ojibway	25,260	15,680	n/a	30,430	62	120				
Inuktitut	25,000	21,905	n/a	26,805	88	107				
Total Aboriginal Languages	190,165	138,110	n/a	217,885	73	115				
							1991-1996 MT		1991-1996 KN	
<b>1996</b>							<b>Unadjusted</b>	<b>Adjusted</b>	<b>Unadjusted</b>	<b>Adjusted</b>
Cree <sup>(4)</sup>	87,555	62,605	n/a	102,215	72	117	6.7	10.5	8.9	<i>Adjusted Data not available</i>
Ojibway <sup>(4)</sup>	25,885	14,300	n/a	31,630	55	122	2.5	5.5	3.9	
Inuktitut	27,780	23,875		30,405	86	109	11.1	11.1	13.4	
Total Aboriginal Languages	208,610	146,105	n/a	243,790	70	117	9.7	12.1	11.9	
							1996-2001 MT		1996-2001 KN	
<b>2001</b>							<b>Unadjusted</b>	<b>Adjusted</b>	<b>Unadjusted</b>	<b>Adjusted</b>
Cree <sup>(3)</sup>	80,070	49,755	22,200	97,230	62	121	-8.5	-6.2	-4.9	-3.1
Ojibway <sup>(3)</sup>	23,515	10,565	7,975	30,505	45	130	-9.2	-10.1	-3.6	-6.0
Inuktitut	29,690	24,350	5,255	32,775	82	110	6.9	7.5	7.8	8.7
Total Aboriginal Languages	203,285	129,340	52,055	239,620	64	118	-2.6	-3.3	-1.7	<i>Not available</i>
Sum of responses	203,290	129,340	52,055	244,400	64	120				
							2001-2006 MT		2001-2006 KN	
<b>2006</b>							<b>Unadjusted</b>	<b>Adjusted</b>	<b>Unadjusted</b>	<b>Adjusted</b>
Cree	84,910	52,650	21,360	99,945	62	118	6.0	10	2.8	7
Ojibway	25,575	11,905	9,260	32,465	47	127	8.8	-2	6.4	-2
Inuktitut	32,970	25,985	6,550	36,265	79	110	11.0	n/a	10.6	n/a
Total Aboriginal Languages	222,210	139,795	55,050	258,290	63	116	9.3	<i>Not available</i>	7.8	<i>Not available</i>
Sum of responses	222,235	139,805	55,045	261,925	63	118				
<b>1991-2006</b>	<b>1991-2006 % change</b>									
Cree	3.5	-13.5	n/a	6.5						
Ojibway	1.2	-24.1	n/a	6.7						
Inuktitut	31.9	18.6	n/a	35.3						
Total	16.9	1.2	n/a	18.5						

- (1) Based on single and multiple responses of Aboriginal mother tongue, home language or language knowledge.
- (2) Home language spoken on 'a regular basis' was first introduced in the 2001 Census; continuity index is calculated with home language spoken 'most often'.
- (3) Data have been adjusted to account for adjusted differences in incompletely enumerated Indian reserves between Censuses.
- (4) Four reserves in Manitoba had changes in reporting patterns for Cree, Ojibway and Oji-Cree between 1996 and 2001, that saw increases in Oji-Cree and corresponding decreases in Cree and Ojibway. Consequently, data for these reserves have been excluded in the adjusted percentage changes between 1996 and 2001. In addition, Oji-Cree was shown as a separate language from the 1996 Census on; it was not separately available in 1991, but instead was included in the language category of 'Algonquin, n.i.e.'

Sources: a) Unadjusted Census Counts: 1991 Census: Norris (1998), Statistics Canada, Catalogue n° 11-008 Aboriginal, Table, p. 13; 1996 Census: Norris and Jantzen (2003), Not Strangers in these Parts: Urban Aboriginal Peoples; Table 1, p. 96-97; 2001 Census: Norris (2007), Statistics Canada, Catalogue. n° 11-008 ; Table 2, p. 23; 2006 Census: Norris (2011b), Aboriginal Policy Studies Journal, Table 1, p. 24. \*b) Intercensal percentage changes: 1991-1996 adjusted based on earlier (1998) calculations by Norris (available only for MT data, not KN); 1996-2001 adjusted from: Statistics Canada –Catalogue n° 96F0030XIE2001007: *Aboriginal Peoples in Canada, A Demographic Profile*, Table 4, p. 21; and 2001-2006 adjusted from Statistics Canada – Catalogue n° 97-558: *Aboriginal Peoples in Canada in 2006: Inuit, Métis and First Nations, 2006 Census*, Table 24, p. 50; and Norris 2007, Statistics Canada – Catalogue n° 11-008, Table 2, p. 23.

are older, with average ages increasing from 28.6 in 1991 to 33 by 2001, and remaining unchanged in 2006. In the case of Ojibway, its mother tongue population is oldest, rising from an average age of 35 in 1991 to aging by 2006; however, its population of all speakers, though aging, has consistently remained younger than that of its mother tongue, reaching on average the age of 39 in 2006, which is likely a reflection of the effects of younger second language learners (Table 2).

Trends in their aging speaker populations reflect the long-term decline in major home language use of Cree and Ojibway languages and consequently in their intergenerational transmission. While Cree continuity indexes declined from 74 in 1991 to 62 by 2001, with no change in 2006, Ojibway indexes saw sharper declines from 62 to 45 by 2001, increasing slightly to 47 in 2006. In contrast, the continuity of Inuktitut appears to be fairly strong and stable, with a relatively smaller decline, from 88 in 1991 to 79 by 2006.

These different trends in the growth and aging of the mother tongue populations of Inuktitut, Cree and Ojibway reflect the differing impacts of family, community and urbanization. An analysis of 2006 Census data (Norris, 2011b, 2012) shows that Inuktitut is the least urbanized of the three languages, with just 4% of the Inuktitut mother tongue population residing in cities, followed by 14.5% of Cree speakers, and 22% for Ojibway (the most urbanized). Furthermore, in terms of home language use, among those reporting Inuktitut as their home language, 80% use Inuktitut as their major home language, with the remaining 20% speaking it on a “regular basis”. In sharp contrast, 44% of Ojibway home language users speak their traditional language on a “regular” rather than a “most frequent” basis. In the case of Cree, about 30% of home language speakers are “regular” rather than “most frequent” users. These three languages also differ with respect to family and exogamy characteristics. The 1996 exogamy rates were lowest among

Inuktitut, with 19% of children with Inuktitut mother tongue parents in mixed marriages, compared to 31% and 47% of children of Cree and Ojibway linguistic parentage respectively (Norris, 2003; Norris & McCon, 2003).

Finally, for all three languages, as well as Aboriginal languages in general, the population with the ability to speak an Aboriginal language experienced the greatest growth, while the population speaking a major home language posted the least growth. Overall, between 1991 and 2006, the number of Aboriginal language speakers increased by 18.5% compared to 17% for the mother tongue population, while the numbers of major home language speakers increased minimally, by only 1%. Rates and patterns vary across the three languages. Ojibway saw relatively greater increases in its population able to speak the language, compared to its mother tongue population, so that by 2006 there were 32,500 people able to speak Ojibway, compared with 25,600 who have an Ojibway mother tongue. This yields a “knowledge” or second language index of 127, implying that for every 100 people with an Ojibway mother tongue there are an additional 27 who have learned it as a second language. The fact that Ojibway has the highest knowledge or second language index of all three languages is consistent with the fact that it is the most urbanized one, and points to the pattern of second language learning in urban areas.

## IMMIGRANT LANGUAGE GROUPS

Table 3 shows changes in the Chinese, Italian and German language groups. These three language groups were chosen because they are the three most frequently occurring non-official languages reported in the 2006 Census.

There was a remarkable change in the Chinese mother tongue group as their numbers almost doubled from just over one half million in 1991 to more than a million in 2006.

**Table 2: Average Age of Population with an Aboriginal Mother Tongue or Language Knowledge, for Cree, Ojibway and Inuktitut Languages, Total (Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal) Population, Canada, 1991 – 2006**

ABORIGINAL LANGUAGES	AVERAGE AGE OF POPULATION WITH							
	AN ABORIGINAL MOTHER TONGUE <sup>(1)</sup>				KNOWLEDGE OF / ABILITY TO SPEAK ABORIGINAL LANGUAGE <sup>(1)</sup>			
	Average Age in Years – Unadjusted Census Data <sup>(2)</sup>							
Census Years	1991	1996	2001	2006	1991	1996	2001	2006
Cree	28.6	30.2	33.0	33.0	28.7	29.9	32.4	33.0
Ojibway	35.2	36.2	40.1	40.0	33.8	34.9	38.0	39.0
Inuktitut	23.8	23.9	25.1	26.0	23.6	23.9	25.0	26.0
All Aboriginal Languages	29.8	31.0	32.9	34.0	29.7	30.4	32.1	33.0

Notes: (1) Average ages are derived for populations based on single and multiple responses of an Aboriginal mother tongue or Aboriginal language knowledge. (2) Some caution is required in intercensal comparisons of unadjusted Census data of Aboriginal language data, given intercensal differences in coverage, that is, incomplete enumeration of reserves, reporting, content, and questions.

Sources: Unadjusted Census Data on Average Age: 1991 Census: Norris (1998), Statistics Canada, Catalogue. n° 11–008 Aboriginal, Table, p. 13; 1996 Census: Norris & Jantzen (2003), Not Strangers in these Parts: Urban Aboriginal Peoples; Table 1, p. 96-97; 2001 Census: Norris (2008), Hope or Heartbreak: Aboriginal Youth and Canada's Future, special issue, Horizons 10 (1), Table 1, p. 65; 2006 Census: Norris (2011), Aboriginal Policy Studies Journal, Table 1, p. 24.

This increase was largely fuelled by immigration. The 2006 Census collected information on place of birth and period of immigration. These data show that in 2006 there were 441,000 immigrants from the People's Republic of China or from Hong Kong (administrative region) who came to Canada between 1991 and 2006. A further 53,000 people coming to Canada during this period were born in Taiwan.

The number of people with Chinese home language grew at a somewhat slower pace than the mother tongue population. Approximately 800,000 people reported Chinese as their home language in 2006. The population able to speak Chinese more than doubled over the fifteen-year period between 1991 and 2006, while the index of continuity for Chinese was much higher (77%) than either Italian or German language groups.

One factor that fosters the maintenance and growth of the Chinese language group in Canada is the large number of speakers that are found in particular Census Metropolitan Areas (CMA). In 2006, there were 411,000 people in the Toronto CMA with Chinese mother tongue, and 325,000 in the Vancouver CMA.

The other two major non-official language groups shown in Table 3 experienced a decline in their mother tongue numbers between 1991 and 2006. The number of people with Italian as a mother tongue declined in each census over the fifteen year period, with an overall decline from 539,000 to 477,000. While those with Italian as a home language declined markedly from 288,000 to 170,000, the number of speakers showed a moderate decline, from

702,000 to 661,000. The substantial difference between the mother tongue and home language numbers meant that the continuity index was only 36 in 2006, declining from 54 fifteen years earlier. The knowledge index is quite high (139), indicating that many people are still able to speak the language even though it is not the one that they use most often at home.

Italy was the source country of many immigrants to Canada during the post-war period prior to 1971, but relatively few immigrants from Italy came between 1991 and 2006. In fact, the 2006 Census counts only about 7,000 people who were born in Italy that came to Canada during the fifteen years under review here. Consequently, unlike the Chinese language group, immigration did not have much effect on the Italian group. However, like the Chinese group, there are concentrations that foster maintenance and use of the language. Approximately 186,000 people with Italian as a mother tongue were living in the Toronto CMA in 2006, while 120,000 were living in the Montreal CMA.

The decline in the number of people reporting German as a mother tongue was less substantial than those with Italian. The German mother tongue group declined from 491,000 in 1991 to 467,000 in 2006. While those reporting German home language declined slightly from 134,000 to 128,000, the index of language continuity was the lowest of all three groups for each of the census years. However, a fairly significant number of people were still able to speak German (623,000).

**Table 3: Mother Tongue, Home Language, Language Knowledge and Selected Indices for Chinese, Italian and German Languages, 1991-2006**

	MOTHER TONGUE	HOME LANGUAGE	NO. OF SPEAKERS	CONTINUITY INDEX	KNOWLEDGE INDEX
	(M.T.)	(H.L.)	(N.S.)	H.L. / M.T. X 100	N.S. / M.T. X 100
<b>1991</b>					
Chinese languages	516,870	430,090	557,300	83	108
Italian	538,685	288,290	701,910	54	130
German	490,635	134,460	684,950	27	140
Total Non-official	4,099,890	2,463,435	4,981,600	60	122
<b>1996</b>					
Chinese languages	736,015	630,520	791,160	86	107
Italian	514,410	258,050	694,125	50	135
German	470,505	134,615	654,260	29	139
Total Non-official	4,598,290	2,556,830	6,564,305	56	143
<b>2001</b>					
Chinese languages	872,400	724,105	1,028,440	83	118
Italian	493,985	217,065	680,970	44	138
German	455,540	122,435	635,520	27	140
Total Non-official	5,202,240	3,308,980	7,508,840	64	144
<b>2006</b>					
Chinese languages	1,034,090	796,145	1,202,705	77	116
Italian	476,905	170,330	660,945	36	139
German	466,650	128,345	622,650	28	133
Total Non-official	6,147,840	3,472,130	8,570,785	56	139

Note: Chinese, Italian and German were the three most frequently occurring non-official languages reported in the 2006 Census. Chinese includes Mandarin, Cantonese, Hakka, Taiwanese, Chaochow (Teochow), Fukian and Shanghainese, as well as a residual category (Chinese languages not otherwise specified). All of the mother tongue and home language data include both single and multiple responses.

Sources: Statistics Canada, Censuses of 1991, 1996, 2001 and 2006

In 2006, unlike the Chinese and Italian groups, large proportions of the German mother tongue population were not living in specific CMAs. However, the number of people born in Germany who immigrated during the 1991-2006 period, (22,000), was more than three times the population from Italy.

While we do not have the most recent data to analyse the tendency of people with Chinese, Italian or German mother tongues to marry outside their language groups, earlier studies (Harrison, 1997) clearly demonstrated that those with Chinese as a mother tongue were much more likely to have a spouse with the same mother tongue. When both spouses have the same non-official language as a mother tongue, they are much more likely to transmit that language to their children as a mother tongue than couples whose mother tongue differs.

## CONCLUSION

The main purpose of this research was to follow the evolution of the three major Aboriginal languages (Cree, Inuktitut, Ojibway) and three major immigrant languages (Chinese, Italian, German) from 1991 to 2006 and to discuss the factors associated with the changes observed. All three Aboriginal language groups experienced an increase over this period, with the largest increase taking place for Inuktitut (approximately 33%). Among immigrant languages, the Chinese mother tongue group increased considerably, by just over 100%, doubling from a population of some 517,000 in 1991, to more than a million, while the Italian and German groups declined.

Size is one factor that differs considerably between Aboriginal and immigrant language groups. While German, the smallest of the immigrant language groups studied, had

a mother tongue population of 467,000 in 2006, Cree, the largest Aboriginal language group, had a mother tongue population of 85,000.

Concentration of the language group is another factor that differs considerably when we compare the Aboriginal and immigrant languages. There are large concentrations of immigrant language groups (Chinese, Italian) in some Census Metropolitan Areas (CMA), which fosters continuity and knowledge of these languages. In contrast, concentrations of Aboriginal language groups tend to occur in smaller Aboriginal communities, reserves or settlements, where the majority of people speak Aboriginal languages, thus contributing to the maintenance of these languages.

Obviously, the role of immigration has been more significant in the evolution of Chinese, Italian and German language groups, than for Aboriginal languages. Immigration was a very large contributor to the exceptional growth of the Chinese mother tongue group between 1991 and 2006, in a manner similar to other non-official languages in earlier decades.

Our index of continuity, which shows the relationship between mother tongue and home language, showed a high level of continuity for Inuktitut, Cree and Chinese language groups, and much lower levels for Ojibway, Italian and German. Studies have shown that linguistic exogamy is a major factor that can lead to the decline of use of both Aboriginal and immigrant languages at home.

In all cases, the knowledge index, which is the relationship between the population able to speak a language and the mother tongue population, showed that the languages studied are learned as second languages. The language groups that experienced the greatest growth, for both Aboriginal and immigrant languages during the fifteen-year period, had the lowest indices of knowledge. Thus, the Chinese language group had a knowledge index of 116 in 2006, while Inuktitut had a knowledge index of 110. These high-continuity languages have a greater tendency to be learned as a first language (mother tongue), than the other languages studied.

Finally, the fact that Aboriginal languages, unlike immigrant languages, are indigenous to Canada, and cannot rely on immigration to maintain their numbers has important implications for the role of second language learning in their survival. Learning to speak endangered languages as a second language among new generations of Aboriginal people "... could have a significant impact in helping to keep their Aboriginal languages alive, even as the few remaining elderly first language speakers die off. [...] Current trends in revitalization and second language learning suggest that they may not necessarily become 'extinct' since younger generations of second language speakers could ensure their continuation as 'secondarily surviving' languages" (Norris, 2011a; Moseley, 2007).

## NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> In both Nunavut and Northwest Territories, Aboriginal languages have 'official' status. However, in the context of this article, official languages refer to English and French.
- <sup>2</sup> In the more specific case of husband-wife families, gender differences exist, such that the tendency for parents to pass a non-official language to children is greater if it is the mother, rather than the father, with the non-official language (Norris, 2009).
- <sup>3</sup> Broadcast media expand the awareness and learning of Aboriginal languages across Canada, including northern communities. The Aboriginal Peoples Television Network (APTN) is broadcast nationally with programming by, for and about Aboriginal peoples, with almost 30% of the programming in Aboriginal languages (Norris, 2010).
- <sup>4</sup> Index of Continuity (HL/MT) measures language continuity, or vitality, by comparing the number of those who speak a given language at home to the number of those who learned that language as their mother tongue. A ratio less than 100 indicates some decline in the strength of the language (i.e., for every 100 people with an Aboriginal mother tongue, there are fewer than 100 in the overall population who use it at home). The lower the score, the greater is the decline.
- <sup>5</sup> Index of Ability (KN/MT) compares the number of people who report being able to speak the language with the number who have that Aboriginal language as a mother tongue. If for every 100 people with a specific Aboriginal mother tongue, more than 100 persons in the overall population are able to speak that language, then some learned it as a second language either in school or later in life. This may suggest some degree of language revival.
- <sup>6</sup> It should be noted, though, that with respect to second-language acquisition, varying degrees of fluency could be represented among census respondents reporting knowledge of the language, suggesting some caution in considering the implications of second language acquisition for transmission and continuity.
- <sup>7</sup> To a lesser extent, adults relearning their mother tongue and more people reporting their Aboriginal mother tongue may also have contributed to the growth.
- <sup>8</sup> "[A] heritage language [is] a language other than English or French. ... Except for Aboriginal languages, the heritage languages are an imported phenomenon. Immigrants and their countries of origin changed considerably throughout the last century, contributing to a major transformation in the language composition of the nation." (Harrison, 2000, p. 14-15).
- <sup>9</sup> Comparability between the 1996 and 2006 Censuses is limited to some extent given that data in this study have not been adjusted for intercensal differentials in under-coverage of the Aboriginal population, including incomplete enumeration of reserves, which can result in under/overestimates of residential distributions of Aboriginal populations by on and off-reserve, in rural and urban areas (Norris and Clatworthy 2011). See Norris, 2011b for further details. Despite their limitations, unadjusted census data nevertheless provide an overall picture of Aboriginal language trends.

<sup>10</sup> Data have not been adjusted for complete intercensal comparability between the 2001 and 2006 Censuses, or for comparability across all three of the 1996, 2001 and 2006 Censuses. However, where feasible, data have been adjusted for five-year intercensal periods with respect to differences in incomplete enumeration of reserves between two censuses, and changes in reporting patterns. In the case of the latter, four reserves in Manitoba had changes in reporting patterns for Cree, Ojibway and Oji-Cree between 1996 and 2001, that saw increases in Oji-Cree and corresponding decreases in Cree and Ojibway. Consequently, data for these reserves have been excluded in the adjusted percentage changes between 1996 and 2001.

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# STOLEN GENEROSITY AND NURTURANCE OF IGNORANCE: OH CANADA, OUR “HOME” /S NATIVE LAND

**Seema Ahluwalia** is a Punjabi Canadian settler who has spent the past twenty years teaching at Kwantlen Polytechnic University, located in the territories of the Kwantlen, Katzie, Semiahmoo and Tsawwassen First Nations. She is married to Carl Boneshirt who is an enrolled member of the Sicangu Lakota Oyate and one of the most important teachers in her life. They reside with their son in the territories of the Tseil Waututh. Their lifework is about building bridges of understanding across the diverse networks of people who now occupy Turtle Island by advocating for Indigenous peoples' land rights, decolonization, restitution, and the return of Indigenous models of peaceful co-existence.

## **ABSTRACT**

The relations between immigrants and First Nations people must be examined in light of the fact that, regardless of whether we are born into settler states or we are immigrants who choose to occupy Indigenous territories, as settlers we benefit from the usurpation of Indigenous territories and the continuing oppression of Indigenous peoples. Settler entitlement to Native land is advanced on the basis of misinformation and colonial ideology which denies the inherent and collective land rights of Indigenous nations in order to claim Canada as "our home and native land." An ongoing commitment to peaceful coexistence between Indigenous people and Canadian settlers requires decolonization, truth telling, and restitution.

## **INTRODUCTION**

As a nation built by immigrants, Canada has to pay attention to settlement issues because of ongoing influxes of newcomers, yet very rarely is consideration given to the impact of immigrant settlement on Aboriginal Peoples.<sup>1</sup> It is important to locate the idea of “newcomers” in a broader historical context of Canada as a nation of settlers who have been coming into the territories of Indigenous Peoples in a steady flow for several hundred years. From this vantage point, we can explore the unwillingness and inability of most Canadians to understand the impact of colonial goals and interests on Indigenous Peoples, not just as individuals, but also as nations of distinct peoples. Memmi (1965) asserts that, regardless of whether we are born into settler states or we are immigrants who choose to occupy Indigenous territories, settlers benefit from the ongoing usurpation of Indigenous territories and the continuing oppression of Indigenous Peoples.<sup>2</sup> Canadian socialization inculcates ideologies that present European imperial pursuits and colonization as inevitable, evolutionary, and necessary, whereas Indigenous Peoples’ perspectives on Canadian settlement in their territories have been suppressed and ignored. Canadians are woefully uninformed about the treaties our governments have signed with Indian nations

and the abrogation of the promises that were made to Native nations through treaties in exchange for the right to live in their territories forever. Today, Canadian settlers claim the Indigenous territories of over half this continent as “our home and native land.” We do this by appropriating the indigeneity of Indigenous Peoples (Barman, 2007) and bestowing it upon the descendants of settlers, while simultaneously denying the existence of the inherent and collective land rights of Indigenous Peoples whose history in these territories can be traced back thousands of years.

Canadian settlers, old and new, do not learn about the diverse identities and cultures of the Indigenous Peoples of this continent, instead referring to all these nations collectively as “Indians,” “Aboriginals,” or “Natives.” Canadians claim a lack of awareness about the treachery, duplicity, and savagery used to divest Indigenous Peoples of their lands and resources, and the genocidal consequences of past and present policy and legislation that has contributed to the destruction of languages, lifeways, and cultures that have existed here for thousands of years. Instead, we are more likely to have learned to explain the dire conditions of everyday life that Native Peoples are subjected to in Canada by regurgitating the steady diet of lies and stereotypes that we have been fed, including the usual blaming-the-victim

stereotypes that conjure the backwardness, lack of industry, atavism, and inferiority of Indigenous peoples. Settlers deny our roles as architects, builders, and maintenance workers in Canada’s nation-building project, which has resulted in the social construction of the isolation, impoverishment, and attempted annihilation of Indigenous peoples.

## NATIONAL MYTHS AND FOUNDING PREJUDICES

The idea of Canada as a multicultural nation—founded on democratic principles and the rule of law—is contradicted by historical records which reveal that the roots of our nation lie in Christian nationalism,<sup>3</sup> industrial capitalism, and racialized assumptions about the intellectual and social supremacy of European peoples. Assimilation into capitalist ideology, Eurocentric education, and anglo-conformity (Fleras, 2010) is the price paid by subsequent streams of immigrants who want to partake in the patterns of privilege that accrue from displacing and dispossessing First Peoples of their lands and resources. Across the generations and irrespective of the diverse trajectories that have necessitated our migrations to this continent, what binds us together as settlers is the tripartite basis of our settler privilege: the processes of usurpation, dispossession, and oppression. The freedom and privilege of Canadian settlers is granted and structured by the same ongoing colonial force and power that has simultaneously dispossessed, displaced, and destroyed Indigenous nations.

What factors can explain the callous disregard and steadfast indifference of Canadian settlers towards the Indigenous nations we continue to displace? Given Indigenous Peoples’ well-documented acceptance, respect, and generosity afforded to early settlers (Wright, 2003; Weatherford, 1989), Indigenous Peoples cannot be held accountable for the hostile and aggressive actions against them by Canadians. Alfred (1999) identifies common principles shared by Indigenous Peoples that are evident in his people’s *Kaienerekowa* (the great law of peace), which includes “commitment to a profoundly respectful way of governing, based on a worldview that balances respect for autonomy with recognition of a universal interdependency, and promotes peaceful coexistence among all elements of creation” (p. xvi). Indigenous Peoples accepted early settlers, forged covenants of friendship, and courageously proposed arrangements of sharing and coexisting that most Canadian settlers have yet to comprehend, experience, or support. Hundreds of distinct peoples with diverse languages, sociocultural traditions, governance systems, and economic bases existed on this continent prior to the arrival of European settlers, necessitating the development of numerous social and political strategies to prevent war and maintain a peaceful coexistence. Borrows (2005) notes:

*Aboriginal Peoples pursued, inter alia, treaties, feasting, trade, negotiations, marriages, friendship, conferences, games, contests, dances, ceremonial events, and demarcations of land [...]. Early Aboriginal–non-Aboriginal relationships followed many of the same protocols and values that Aboriginal Peoples used to create peace (p. 1).*

It is important to distinguish the actual relationship most Canadians have created with Native Peoples from the one we have enshrined in our collective imagination (Francis, 2011; Monture-Okanee, 1994). Our cultural mythology, perpetuated through Canadian education and media stereotypes, holds that Canada was forged by noble and civilized men acting out of fairness, justice, and the rule of law. This myth serves as an important tool in supporting our assertion that Canada is a duly constituted nation-state with clear and unchallenged domain over the territories that it occupies. Canadians want to believe that we are a nation of “benevolent peacemakers” (Regan, 2010) whose relationship with Aboriginal Peoples developed through practices of nonviolence and negotiated settlement. However, as Barker (2006) notes, “the concepts of benevolent administration, peaceful coexistence, and fair treaty making have all been shown to be completely false; yet they endure in the Canadian settler consciousness as powerful sources of national identity” (p. 120).

Paradoxically, another myth embedded in Canadian consciousness celebrates “how the West was won” through the exploits of brave cowboys who vanquished hostile Indians standing in the way of progress and civilization. The Hollywood myth-making machine has left a strong impression on the general public about the relationship between settlers and Indigenous Peoples. Such American media concoctions are internalized by many Canadians, who then dismiss the existence of Indigenous Peoples’ land rights by claiming that these were lost through conquest. In conflating American history with our own, Canadians fail to acknowledge crucial differences: while the United-States opted for war and conquest, the British claimed the path of peaceful negotiation and relied heavily on Indian nations as allies in their colonial wars with the French and Americans, including the War of 1812 (Allen, 1992). The myth of British and subsequent Canadian military conquest resulting in our ownership of Indigenous lands as the spoils of war reveals a willful ignorance perpetuated through the denial and re-writing of history and the decisions of our legal institutions such as the Supreme Court of Canada that has repeatedly ruled that the inherent and collective rights of Aboriginal Peoples can never be extinguished by Canada.

Canada's highest court recognizes that Aboriginal title<sup>4</sup> and rights to lands they have inhabited from time immemorial existed long before any European settlers arrived, and as such, are not dependent on our pretensions of largesse or benevolence.

Borrows (2005) reminds us that the original relationship agreed to between settlers and Indigenous Peoples was based on the idea of intermingling British and Indigenous law. While Indigenous Peoples stressed peaceful co-existence, non-interference, and sustainable co-relations, our Canadian forefathers deemed that treaties would spell out the historical ongoing relationship between settlers and Indigenous Peoples. In his opening comments at Fort Carlton in 1876, during the negotiation of Treaty 6, Canadian Lieutenant Alex Morris<sup>5</sup> made the following statement: "[W]hat I will promise, and what I believe and hope you will take, is to last as long as that sun shines and yonder river flow" (Stonechild & Waiser, 1997). The Canadian government's promises, made on the Canadian people's behalf and codified in treaties, are binding and exist in perpetuity. Yet, we have continuously failed to honor these legal instruments that are the backbone of the Canadian nation.

Our legacy as 21<sup>st</sup> century Canadians is compliance and willful silence in the face of generations of policy and legislation designed to prevent Indigenous People from maintaining and practicing their languages and cultures, forming and maintaining families, deriving economic benefit and sustenance from their lands and resources, and escaping the gaze of criminalization. In order to ensure our liberty and prosperity, Canadian settlers have offered little or no resistance to the legalized form of apartheid developed and maintained by the government, which guarantees, through the *Indian Act* and reserve system, the oppression, impoverishment, and isolation of Indigenous nations. On a daily basis, provincial education systems and national media perpetuate this Eurocentric version of Canadian history that is largely silent with reference to the colonial and racialized basis of Canadian and settler privilege. Even in this digital age, instant access to vast stores of knowledge at our fingertips has brought little change to the state of willful ignorance needed to remain indifferent to our atrocities against Aboriginal Peoples. We have demonstrated tenacity and perseverance in our willingness to nurture delusions of national identity, even in the face of the punishing truth of historical record.

## NURTURING DENIAL AND IGNORANCE

Despite our best efforts, there is no way of denying that we have taken far more than what was offered to us by Indigenous Peoples and tried to prevent their continuing

existence as nations of distinct peoples. Canadians experience an uncomfortable dissonance between our democratic, liberal values and the racism and colonization that is foundational to our society (Henry and Tator, 1992). Nurturing ignorance is one of the ways that we cope with our desire to assert a positive national identity without having to engage with the overwhelming evidence of our greed, theft, and callous disregard for Indigenous Peoples. The construction and maintenance of this willful ignorance depends on several inter-related mechanisms that uphold the spatial Native and racialized boundaries (Razack, 2002) that separate Native from settlers:

1. **Psychic distancing:** Here I am referring to the degree of emotional detachment that Canadians must maintain in order to deny the real and intimate history we share with Indigenous Peoples and our roles as enactors of colonial brutality (Breuster, 2006). This distance is supported by a racialized binaries that marks the "settler" and "native" as distinct categories, in which the former always represents what is desirable (e.g., modern versus primitive, civilized versus savage, educated versus illiterate, evolved versus atavistic).
2. **Cognitive imperialism:** Mi'kmaw scholar Marie Battiste (2000) defines this as "a form of cognitive manipulation used to disclaim other knowledge bases and values" (p. 198). In Canada, Eurocentrism is naturalized, advanced, and empowered through public education and media as the singular path to rational enquiry (Graveline, 1998) and, therefore, as the only reasonable framework for interpreting Canadian history. Eurocentric education is framed as secular and inclusive of information imported from other societies and cultures, but non-European contributions to human development are denied, disguised or reconfigured so as to attribute this knowledge to European societies (Ahluwalia, 2009). This solidifies settler ignorance and arrogance, teaches us to interpret and maintain hierarchies of difference, and results in the internalization of ideologies that justify oppression and deny Indigenous Peoples their rights to maintain their languages, knowledge systems, and epistemologies.
3. **Collective denial:** This is a common response from societies accused of genocide and unearned privileges (Balmain & Drawmer, 2009). This term is useful for considering the ways that Canadians are taught to forget, repress, or dissociate from colonial oppression and destruction carried out through official state policy, deliberate cover-ups, and the re-writing of history from the colonizer's perspective (Cohen, 2001).<sup>6</sup>

**4. Historical amnesia:** This cultural process undergirds capitalist accumulation by destroying local and Indigenous system of law and economy and replacing them with the monolithic presence of an outside perspective that values and naturalizes imperial conquest as it reconstructs, interprets, and obliterates the past. Jameson (1984) explains that advanced capitalist societies (such as Canada) have experienced “the disappearance of a sense of history in our lives” (p. 125) resulting in an inability to comprehend and reflect on our true history. Morgenthau (1964), being acutely aware of the way American governments play with the historical record to advance their political goals, notes that “[w]e must not confound the abuse of reality with reality itself.” If historical record is to be free of political interference, then we must accept Canadian classroom texts as an abuse of reality. History will surely mock our declarations of benevolence towards Indigenous Peoples.

### STOLEN GENEROSITY: AN INDIGENOUS PERSPECTIVE ON SETTLER CONSCIOUSNESS

Carl Boneshirt, a member of the Sicangu Lakota Oyate<sup>7</sup>, offers another interpretation of the actions of Canadian settlers against their Indigenous hosts that requires us to consider the culturally specific meanings of generosity. Through my experiences of being married into a Lakota family, I have learned that Lakota people regard generosity as a foundational cultural practice. Practicing generosity is fundamental to a Lakota way of being, as my husband has explained to me (Boneshirt, 2011). My late mother-in-law would often remind me that generosity is manifested in one’s actions. A Lakota way of life teaches that practicing generosity is a way of manifesting one’s humanity. *Stolen generosity* (Boneshirt, 2011) is a term my husband uses to describe the behavior of settlers towards Indigenous Peoples. He explains that the generosity offered to settlers was not accepted; instead, it was seized and far more than what was ever offered was taken. The very generosity of Indigenous peoples was stolen and their ability to continue to practice generosity in sharing their territories was disrupted, thereby disrupting entire ways of life. When the American people stole Lakota lands and resources, they stole the very basis of Lakota generosity. Canadians, through our usurpation of Indigenous territories and resources, have stolen the generosity that Indigenous nations offered to us.

The generosity of being offered a home was not enough for the settlers. Governments used the pretext of a friendship to enter treaty negotiations and agreements that have yet to be honoured. They have seized land that was never offered in the treaties, moved settlers into vast tracts of land that have never been ceded by treaty, and

created borders and boundaries through Crown and privatized land arrangements that have made it impossible for Native nations to sustain themselves by accessing their resources and ceremonial sites. Another way to observe our willingness to steal generosity is the assertion of “non-Indigenous indigeneity” (Barman, 2011), that is, the re-constitution of Canadian settlers as the Native sons and daughters on this “our home and native land.” Our attempts to steal the very identities of Native Peoples may explain why we continue to struggle to assert our own identity as Canadians (Mackey, 1999). Indigenous Peoples’ rights to self-determination have been stolen, as have their rights to exist, not as a mass of atomized and assimilated individuals, but as members of nations with long cultural histories, lands, resources, languages, and futures. My husband describes it this way:

*In some treaties, they say that we can continue to go anywhere we want but, in fact, there are all kinds of borders that keep us from going wherever it is that we need to get to. They have reneged on their treaties where they say that they will let Lakota people do what we need to do in our own territorial grounds. Today we cannot move about freely to do the things we need to do and we can’t get anywhere. That’s stolen generosity. They reneged on their treaties that said that our people would continue to do what we have done for eons, since time immemorial. And that’s stolen generosity. They took our rights away and made their rights higher than our rights. They bring in a military that is armed with weapons, another form of stolen generosity, and they violate our human rights, civil rights, and land rights [...] and our voices are never heard in public. We, the natives of this continent, do not have to say “land claim” because we are a part of the land and the land is part of us. We already know we are a part of this land, we do not have to claim it. (Boneshirt, 2012)*

### CONCLUSION: TRUTH-TELLING FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE, RESTITUTION, AND RECONCILIATION

Recently, Canada has joined other settler nations around the world in establishing processes of truth telling and reconciliation. In 2008, Prime Minister Harper apologized to Aboriginal Peoples for the residential school system that tortured and scarred generations of Native children and caused irreparable damage to Indigenous nations and languages. Harper noted that Indigenous

Peoples have born the burden of this brutal chapter of our history for too long when, in fact, “the burden is properly ours as a government and country” (Harper, 2008). And yet, the government has done nothing to lead Canadian settlers in examining our responsibilities in the truth-telling process. Our government has offered no strategies to help Canadians move past denial and our desire to not know. Most of the testimonies gathered to date by the Canadian Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada have been given by survivors of residential schools, who, in some cases, have repeatedly bared their souls and scars, reliving the horrors and tortures they experienced, while a seemingly indifferent Canadian settler population ignores the testimonies or pretends that such institutions were there to help Aboriginal Peoples. Why is the truth-telling process not expanding beyond the memories of starvation, torture, abuse, linguicide, and spiritual destruction? Where is the government leadership, resources and encouragement for gathering Canadian settler testimonies of domination, violence, racism, and indifference to human suffering? When will Canadians admit our crimes against humanity so that we can begin the process of healing ourselves from the oppressive behaviour that we continue to enact against Native Peoples? When will we begin the work of gathering and documenting the statements of Canadian settlers who will admit “I did this,” “I was indifferent to the abuse and murder,” “I stood idly by and waited for someone else to end the horror,” or “my taxes and the taxes of my forefathers paid for these systems of torture and abuse”?

The exclusion of Indigenous voices in mainstream Canadian institutions impoverishes our national memory and increases our historical amnesia. Furthermore, our collective denial inhibits the process of truth telling, which is the first step to justice, restitution, and reconciliation. We must listen to the voices and knowledge of Indigenous Peoples, for only they can help us identify and deconstruct the skewed perceptions of one-sided scholarship replete with what many Indigenous People believe to be the hallmarks of Western thought and education: “manipulations, misunderstandings, misinterpretations and mistranslations” (Boneshirt, 2012). We need education that promotes decolonized thought in order to access multiple perspectives in our collective histories, not only for new immigrants to Canada, but also for Canadians whose families have been here for many generations. We must engage in meaningful social action that brings a diversity of community members together and makes Indigenous knowledge and experience central to understanding who we are as Canadians.

It is time to reset the frame, move beyond overt and veiled attempts to maintain our policy of “extermination by assimilation,” and abandon the questions currently fueling jobs for Canadian academics, such as how well

Indigenous Peoples are assimilating to our norms, how we can speed up the process of dispossession, and what we can do to make Indian People more compliant with our goals for taking what is left of Indian lands. We must work to destroy the harmful myths that prevent us from accepting responsibility for our crimes against Indigenous nations and repair the damage caused by the severing of law from justice in Canadian culture so that we may return the resources and jurisdictional control that Native nations need to address the problems in their communities (Monture-Okanee, 1994). Canadian settlers need to restore all that we have stolen from Native Peoples: their land rights, their languages and cultures, and their rights to education, health, welfare, security, and economic well-being, as guaranteed in treaties. Indigenous Peoples should never have to reconcile themselves to a continued relationship of stolen generosity. Canadians need to develop the courage to face the truth of our colonial motivations, goals, and exploits. Truth telling, justice, and restitution lead the way to reconciliation that supports peaceful coexistence (Alfred, 2005) and there is an urgent need to move forward with this work. The urgency stems from the need to stop the genocidal policies and practices that continue to affect the lives of Indigenous People every day. As my husband says:

*Native kids [...] face mental, spiritual, and ideological genocide every day. Our children need to know that there is still a nation that is still together, that people still practice their way of life and die for it, too [...]. Despite the myth of the vanishing Indian, there are many Indians who do know their roots, and many Indian ways are not lost. [...] kids in urban centers don't feel a link because many were taken from the reservation and adopted into white families [...] they are imposing a way of life on our children that was never meant for them [...] they tried to commit spiritual genocide on us, but when that didn't work, they turned to mental, physical, sexual abuse [...] but this abuse of our people has also had the effect of deteriorating the thoughts, feelings, and emotions of the dominant race. If there is no genocide, then why do Indian people have to live with dehumanization every day, in so many ways? We just want foreigners to understand that we are human beings and want to live the way that was meant for us [...] our ceremonial ways bring peace and justice, and are there so that the people may live (Boneshirt, 2007).*

It is time to move beyond stolen generosity. Settlers, old and new, must come to terms with our truth, that “what we choose to deny is our complicity in perpetuating a colonial system that is rooted in violence and social injustice” (Regan, 2006, p. 22). The ideological power of the myth of Canadians as ‘benevolent peacemakers’ cannot erase the truth of our malevolent peace breaking, nor can it help heal us of our oppressive ways. (Regan, 2010) The job of re-humanizing ourselves, and those who have been victimized by our colonial pursuits, requires the moral strength of those brave enough to face the truth. To paraphrase the words of the great Lakota Chief Sitting Bull, let us join our hearts and minds together and see what kind of a world we can make for our children.

#### NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> Because there is no one single term that is universally acceptable to all Indigenous People, in this paper I use a variety of different terms that Indigenous People use to talk about themselves in the English language, including Indigenous, Indian, Aboriginal, and First Peoples. I variously refer to both Indigenous People and Indigenous Peoples, the former term referring to a person of Indigenous descent, the latter referring to Indigenous nations. Despite the colonial stereotype of “Aboriginals” or “Indians,” this continent has been continuously occupied by many geographically specific and culturally dynamic Indigenous nations who have resided in the same territories for thousands of years.
- <sup>2</sup> Philosopher Iris Young (1990) notes that oppression is constituted from the “structural phenomena that immobilize or diminish a group” (p. 42) including exploitation, marginalization, powerlessness, cultural imperialism, and violence.
- <sup>3</sup> Castanha (1999) observes that an assumption of universalism is evident in 15th century Papal bulls that played a central role in the subjugation of Indigenous Peoples. This was done by presenting them as pagans who were enemies of Christendom and, therefore, unworthy of keeping their territories, thus paving the way for the Christian usurpation of their lands. The papal bulls—known as *Dum Diversas* (1452), *Romanus Pontifex* (1455), and *Inter Caetera* (1493)—form the basis of the Doctrine of Discovery, which remains a significant legal tool for claiming eminent domain and plenary powers for Indigenous Peoples and territories. For more information see Newcomb’s (2008) *Pagans in the Promised Land. Decoding the Doctrine of Christian Discovery*.
- <sup>4</sup> Aboriginal land rights are *sui generis* (i.e., unique), inherent, and collective. Aboriginal title confers jurisdiction over and access to an Indigenous People’s ancestral territories. Canada does not grant these rights because these rights pre-exist Canada and result from Indigenous Peoples’ “occupation of and relationship with their home territories as well as their ongoing social structures and political and legal systems. [...] Aboriginal title and rights are separate from rights afforded to non-Aboriginal Canadian citizens under Canadian common law.” (Hanson, 2010).
- <sup>5</sup> Lieutenant Governor Alexander Morris represented the Canadian government in negotiations for Treaties 3, 4, 5, and 6. Talbot (2009) notes that, subsequently, Morris endured many conflicts with the government as a result of their failure to implement the treaties in good faith and with due process.
- <sup>6</sup> For a full discussion of state-organized collective denial, see Cohen’s (2001) *States of Denial. Knowing About Atrocities and Suffering*: 132–33.
- <sup>7</sup> In English, the Sicangu Lakota Oyate are referred to as the Rosebud Sioux Indian Tribe and their territories centre on the Rosebud reservation in South Dakota.

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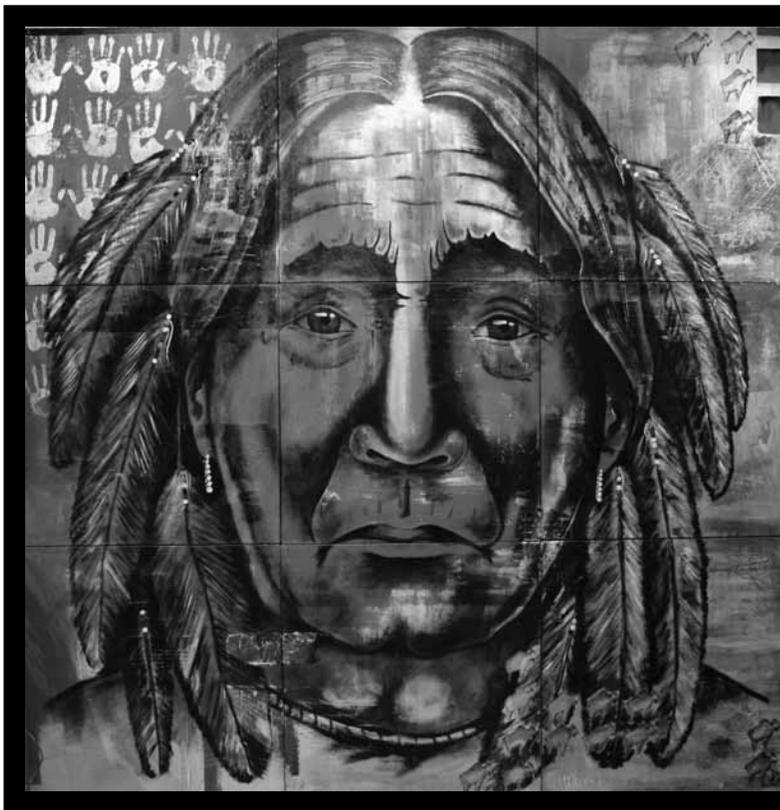
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# INCORPORATING ABORIGINAL CONTENT INTO PUBLIC EDUCATION: ONE WAY TO IMPROVE RELATIONS BETWEEN ABORIGINALS AND SETTLERS, OLD AND NEW, IN CANADA

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## **ABSTRACT**

In the past decades, a number of inclusive educational programs aimed at incorporating Aboriginal cultural content and perspectives have been established in some provinces in Canada. This inclusive model has proved beneficial for mutual understanding and better relations between Aboriginals and settlers, old and new. This paper will first define and describe some of these programs and make a comment on what considerations should be taken into account to ensure that these inclusive programs best serve the needs of Aboriginal students as well as non-Aboriginal students. It is hoped that this inclusive model of education can be applied by other ethnic groups to help them address their own educational, cultural, and diversity issues.

## **INTRODUCTION**

As one of the biggest immigrant countries in the world, Canada has used models of assimilation, genocide, integration, and cultural pluralism to control or manipulate Indigenous People. Currently, Canada uses multiculturalism to treat its diverse ethnic groups including Aboriginals and settlers, old and new, which sets a precedent for other countries in addressing the protection of cultural diversity. Canadian provinces continue to struggle with and initiate policies to protect their Indigenous Peoples and honor their traditional ways. Old and new settlers as well as other ethnic groups certainly have a lot to learn from Aboriginals and about their existence, history, and culture.

Unfortunately, Aboriginals have traditionally only been studied, rather than consulted, considered or respected, and have even been seen as a disadvantaged class. They are still facing serious psychological, identity, and identity-redefinition problems because of the injuries and losses they have suffered. These are complex issues that cannot be solved easily and they are further related with how Aboriginals and settlers look at their own history and

culture and how they can establish harmonious relations with each other.

Therefore, this paper will introduce some educational models (initiatives taken by different provinces) that aim at incorporating Aboriginal cultural content and perspectives into the public school system. These inclusive models not only help Aboriginals feel better about themselves and regain confidence, they also make it possible for non-Aboriginals to learn about First Nations Peoples and their history. By revealing what settlers did to Aboriginals, these models set the stage for all involved to think about ways of achieving reconciliation. I believe that knowledge of the history and culture of the Aboriginal groups can lead to mutual understanding, a better life for Aboriginals, and better relations between Aboriginals and settlers, old and new.

First, I will define and describe some of these educational programs and then comment on what should be taken into account to ensure that these models best serve the needs of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students alike. I hope that other countries where minority ethnic

groups are experiencing similar situations will draw upon the Aboriginal experience in Canada to address their own educational, multicultural, and diversity issues.

## **INCLUSIVE CURRICULUM AND ABORIGINAL EDUCATION**

Generally speaking, inclusive curriculum is a broad concept of providing opportunities for full participation and equal chances for all students. The issue of the importance of Aboriginal culture in the education of both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students was promoted during the 1970s. In the past years, a variety of initiatives have been taken by different provinces to incorporate Aboriginal cultural materials into the existing curriculum, which already includes cultural material from other cultures. The purpose of this kind of inclusive education is to strengthen Aboriginal worldview and perspectives, and to increase educational opportunities for all Aboriginal students, thereby strengthening Aboriginal cultural knowledge and improving the coexistence of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal knowledge.

In Canada, as in the United States, the idea of incorporating Aboriginal cultural perspectives, content, and knowledge into the school curriculum is not a new one, but it is one that has taken time to be acknowledged. The issue of Aboriginal culture in Aboriginal students' education is a subset of multicultural education, which is being applied across Canada, and has different meanings from province to province and from school to school. Some choose to focus on human relations and the activities that promote cultural and racial understanding among different groups, while others study groups individually, such as Black Studies and Women Studies.

Incorporating Aboriginal cultural content and perspectives, in this regard, does not mean making a teepee or an igloo in Art class, an Aboriginal dance in Physical Education class, or reading a book written by an Aboriginal writer in Language Arts class. Instead, entrenching Aboriginal heritage into a significant portion of the curriculum should help young Aboriginal students emerge as confident individuals who recognize that they are valued within Canadian society and begin to believe that they are fully capable of making a contribution (Repo *et al.*, p. 45).

Aboriginal educators have addressed the need to develop curricula that deal more conscientiously with the cultures and beliefs of Canada's growing Aboriginal community. This need has come up particularly in recent years, since an increase in the Aboriginal population has resulted in the large number of Aboriginal students currently enrolled in public schools. This increase has affected the public educational system, so that schools now require teachers to integrate Aboriginal content into

their regular classroom instruction. Accordingly, various inclusion initiatives have been implemented in different schools to facilitate changes to the curricula, including Aboriginal cultural content and perspectives as a part of public school core curriculum.

In this paper, I begin by presenting some of the inclusive programs that seek to incorporate some of those Aboriginal cultural contents and perspectives into public educational systems. More particularly, I will explore the implementation of these programs in four Canadian provinces that have a relatively higher percentage of Aboriginal students. Then, I will describe the related problems and concerns based on current literature. Finally, I will discuss what should be taken into account to ensure that these inclusive programs best serve the needs of Aboriginal students. I am hopeful that this paper will shed light on educational issues for Aboriginal Peoples in Canada and other ethnic groups who find themselves in similar situations.

## **IMPLEMENTATION OF SPECIFIC INCLUSIVE PROGRAMS**

In this section I describe some of the inclusive programs implemented by different schools across four Canadian provinces: Saskatchewan, Ontario, Alberta, and British Columbia.

With the highest proportion of Aboriginal youth of any province, Saskatchewan continues to lead the way. Saskatchewan has introduced many diverse and innovative initiatives that call for Aboriginal content and perspectives to be integrated across the curriculum to give all students the opportunity to learn about Native Peoples and how they live.

Sakewew High School opened its doors in the fall of 2002, providing Aboriginal students in North Battlefords with a place where they can learn about Aboriginal culture as well as reading, writing, and arithmetic. The school was created through a unique partnership between the Battlefords Tribal Council and the local public and Catholic school divisions as a way to provide students with a high quality academic program, while incorporating First Nations and Metis culture wherever possible. The three partners formed the Battlefords' Board of Education, the first of such partnerships in Canada.

As part of its mandate, the school incorporated Aboriginal content throughout the curriculum while still meeting Saskatchewan Learning Guidelines. It has even taken further steps to help students with personal problems that may arise during the school year. A full-time community liaison from Social Services meets with students when a personal crisis emerges. Sakewew's principal, Colin Sutherland, firmly believes the school

can be a success because it understands the social environment within which many of the students find themselves (Ross, 2002).

At Mary's Community School, hoop dance resource kits and other projects include material devoted to the construction and significance of the teepee, Metis history and culture, and the Aboriginal's unique relationship with the environment. This school has worked hard to make Aboriginal content a part of their everyday lives in the classroom. These resources are regarded as complementary rather than supplementary (supporting what is already being taught). What's more, these resources are useful and teacher-friendly. All students, not just those of Aboriginal descent, feel the benefits of this increased attention to Native themes, activities, and beliefs. Just as Ross Kimble (2003), a writer, explains:

*We do it so Aboriginal students can see a glimpse of themselves, their families and their communities reflected in their school experience. It's about Aboriginal students finding identity and belonging within our schools [...]. It will be about leading the way toward the change, and demonstrating to educators across the country that there is no need or reason for a separation of Aboriginal and non-aboriginal topics. (p. 12)*

In Ontario, provincial curricula have long recognized the need to include aspects of the Aboriginal experience into public schools, and efforts have been invested to compensate for the gap. In 2001, the Coalition for the Advancement of Aboriginal Studies (CAAS) published a report entitled "Learning about Walking in Beauty: Placing Aboriginal Perspectives in Canadian Classrooms." This report raises the concern of how today's students will eventually make informed decisions on major issues between Canada and Aboriginal Peoples, when they did not benefit from an inclusive curriculum (CAAS, p. 172). Concerns also came from teaching and administrative bodies: "the lack of knowledge about the Aboriginal experience is astonishing, yet not surprising. It is critical that this ignorance be reserved to enable a stronger unified nation" (Fife, 2004).

Change is and has been possible through inclusive programs. In the Niagara Region, teachers have developed Native support circles in five urban schools designed to assist Aboriginal students who have difficulty making the cultural transition from their home to their school. Support circles emphasize Native cultural values and procedures, allowing students to express personal concerns or raise questions about school programs. Teachers in the

Lakehead School Division have experimented with a grade nine Aboriginal transition program designed to meet the needs of students who have not achieved the intended outcomes in grade eight. Coordinated by a Native teacher who delivers an all morning and all year program to the students in a homeroom setting, this program helps students from small and remote communities to ease into an urban school setting (Friesen & Friesen, 2002).

The Toronto District School Board, the largest school board in Canada, has taken a number of steps to reach out to and support its Aboriginal students since the board was created in January 1998. These efforts include offering tradition-based curriculum through the First Nations School of Toronto and including Aboriginal history and perspectives across the curriculum. Based on the statistics gathered from Aboriginal organizations (i.e., the Native Canadian Centre and Native Child and Family Services), the Board recognizes from the outset the need for programs such as mentoring, academic tutors, language program, and addiction counseling.

In Alberta's public schools, Aboriginal content and perspectives used to be limited to the Aboriginal 10, 20, and 30 courses offered to high-school students. Starting in 2005, Alberta Learning (a provincial commission on secondary education) introduced a newly revised social studies curriculum that reflects Aboriginal perspectives and other similar areas of the curriculum as well. Edmonton Public Schools have completed a report ("Infusion of Aboriginal Perspectives into Alberta Core Curriculum") that Alberta Learning will use to develop a curriculum to represent Aboriginal students more suitably (Petten, 2004).

Lastly, in British Columbia, although improving Aboriginal education in the province is a priority for the government, efforts to provide Aboriginal students with a culturally relevant school curriculum are only in the early stages. Currently, 14 of the province's 60 school districts have Aboriginal Education Enhancement Agreements in place, with another 30 close to being finalized. The First Nations communities with agreements in place are pleased to have input into what goes on in the schools that their children attend. The provincial government also provides funding to schools and school districts so they can make such improvements on their own. For example, for each Aboriginal student enrolled, a school district gets \$950 in additional funding from the province, specifically for providing programs to its Aboriginal students (Petten, 2004). Such initiatives that involve significant cultural elements help tailor programs to Aboriginal students, which in turn encourage the students to stay in school and do as well as non-Aboriginal students.

In short, the above-mentioned examples reveal that Aboriginal content has become an integral part of regular

classroom instruction. Introducing culturally relevant material, perspectives, and approaches could provide a means by which Aboriginal students can learn about their historical backgrounds, cultural perspectives, and identities within the school context, thus reducing the cultural gap that exists between school and community and also benefiting non-Aboriginal students by broadening their horizons.

The incorporation and accommodation of Aboriginal content and perspectives will offer a further potential benefit to public school education. This different approach to learning could enhance the sense of connection and purpose among Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal youth, motivating them to understand each other better and further their studies. Although it is a long way to go to change negative attitudes towards the significance of traditional Aboriginal knowledge, a more understanding and generous society could be created with collective efforts made by student, teaching, and administrative bodies.

### **EFFORTS NEEDED TO IMPROVE INCLUSIVE CURRICULUM**

A number of considerations need to be taken into account to improve inclusive curriculum so that these programs best serve the needs of Aboriginal students and non-Aboriginal students as well. First, achieving an inclusive curriculum requires conditions in which Aboriginal children, youth, and their parents feel comfortable with becoming fully engaged participants rather than being perceived as outsiders. The extent to which they are socially included depends upon the opportunities they are offered to connect with their heritage and communities and gain a sense of independence. In this respect, a broader understanding of culture is necessary so that the daily lives and concerns of students become a central element in what is taught, how it is taught, and how school is organized (Wotherspoon, p. 20).

At the same time, curriculum designers must be well aware that the content of inclusive programs should not in any way deprive students of the opportunity to develop usable skills for today's job market. Generally speaking, present local curriculum changes in Aboriginal communities have successfully bolstered students' confidence and enhanced their market skills. Thus, it is true that such a culturally imbedded inclusive curriculum has become vital for Aboriginal People to achieve and apply the citizenship and social rights they have been and are still being denied by the colonization process.

More importantly, the successful implementation of an inclusive curriculum needs a coordination of efforts from all sides. The most successful schools demonstrate their ability to provide a caring and supportive environment,

a commitment to high standards, and a mutually open relationship with the communities they serve. Schools need to acknowledge and incorporate elements of the students' cultures and knowledge systems, and to ensure that teachers and other personnel, including those of Aboriginal ancestry, are present as role models, mentors, and agents who can respond to students' needs. Internally, these schools should equip themselves by prioritizing and devoting resources that offer physical, social, cultural, material, and moral supports which complement the basic learning and intellectual challenges they are expected to provide for all students. Schools are more inclusive when they are arranged as "spaces" that create safe, supportive environments which allow participants to express and develop themselves (Wotherspoon, p.15). They are also spaces in which children and youth, as well as their families, are assured a voice that can help shape their educational experiences. Such schools, of course, cannot function successfully without sufficient integration in other policy domains and agencies that provide services to Aboriginal children, youth, and their families.

According to Erica Neegan's recommendation (2005), "schools need to collaborate and consult with Elders and the community so that Aboriginal worldviews and epistemology can be integrated in the producing and transmitting of knowledge" (Neegan, p. 9). Agbo (2004) also emphasizes that the school should play a vital part in integrating Aboriginal culture and traditional ways to teaching. According to Agbo, "The school should invite Elders to tell stories about the past and about the community in which they live. Schools should organize spiritual events in which elders would teach the youth" (Agbo, p. 31). In her master degree thesis, Sarah Longman (2003) further contends that:

*[S]uch inclusion enhances and builds communication between the school and the Aboriginal community that, in turn, promotes increased awareness and understanding of the traditions, languages, values, and the spirituality of Aboriginal peoples (p. 53).*

It is important to remain sensitive to the roles that teachers are expected to play in fostering inclusion. While policy-makers continue to address the issue of integrating Aboriginal content into the core curriculum, teachers remain the key link between policy development and actualization of the curriculum in the classroom. Studies have shown that next to parents, teachers play the most important role in forming a student's attitude and predisposition (Longman, p. 7). In this respect, teachers' qualities and degrees of commitment and intervention

are important variables in how education is experienced by diverse groups of students. Teachers are also centrally situated to play the crucial role of advocates for children and youth and present students with opportunities to voice their concerns and interests. While efforts are currently being made to create curricula with Aboriginal content, particularly by Aboriginal organizations, not enough of that content is making its way into the core curriculum. Part of the problem lies in resistance from teachers who see Aboriginal curriculum content as being cultural curriculum rather than academic, and from others who think that they don't need this type of content because the number of Aboriginal students within their classes is not big. Yet others don't understand that Aboriginal knowledge is as valid as Western knowledge.

Thus one way to help support efforts that include more Aboriginal perspectives and content into what is being taught in the classroom is to get more Aboriginal teachers into those classrooms, something that many of the provinces are actively working on. In British Columbia, for example, the provincial government put \$80,000 into a plan by the Kamloops/Thompson School District to add two new Aboriginal teachers to its teaching personnel over the next five years (Petten, 2004).

Efforts to improve inclusive curriculum will need to come both from the top down and from the bottom up. In this regard, teacher-training programs must be designed to equip teachers to deliver a culturally relevant education that builds and enhances the educational experience for Aboriginal students as well as develops a sense of respect from non-Aboriginal students. To encourage higher levels of Aboriginal content in instruction, training programs need to focus on how to incorporate Aboriginal content and to form teachers who have high levels of cross-cultural competencies. Non-Aboriginal teachers, in particular, should receive additional training to prepare them for cross-cultural situations. They should be taught how to make the curriculum for Aboriginal students more meaningful and relevant, and also how to fill them with pride and cultural awareness.

## CONCLUSION

Aboriginal education is at the heart of Aboriginal Peoples' struggle to regain control over their lives and their communities. After suffering and having a negative perception of themselves for so many years, Aboriginals feel that it is imperative to put their culture and knowledge at the center of school education. From the inclusive

models introduced in this paper, we see an increased sense of participation and an innovative, culturally sensitive programming happening in various regions or provinces, which should be reproduced in schools across Canada.

Of course, incorporating Aboriginal cultural content and perspectives into school curriculum is only one way that leads to better relations between Aboriginals and settlers, old and new. The restoration of pride and self-worth of Canada's Aboriginals may also be a role model for other minority ethnic groups, in Canada and in other countries, to help them address their own educational, multicultural, and diversity issues.

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