

**TRADITIONAL FIRST NATIONS EDUCATION AND
SOCIO-CULTURAL THEORY.
VYGOTSKY'S CONTRIBUTION.
*Singing a song to honour my Mother***

by

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PROJECT SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE
REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF

MASTER OF EDUCATION

In the Faculty of Education

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SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY

August 2004

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Abstract

This is a complex study looking at a number of aspects of historic, cultural and education life of the Tahltan people. Its sources range from personal narrative, records, education documents and learning theory. It seeks to show the possible vital importance of interpreting and shaping a mutually beneficial educational relationship between the Tahltan and the Canadian State.

In presenting two worldviews, concepts; First Nations “ways of making meaning” and the pedagogy and implementation of the socio-cultural historic theory of Russian Education Psychologist Lev Vygotsky, I demonstrate substantive commonalities exist between the two.

When northern First Nations Elders say *teach those kids who they are and where they come from...*, they were saying that a student’s knowledge of themselves should be a foundation for their own learning and development. Vygotsky substantiates and articulates that socio-cultural knowledge and self understanding are the foundation to all scientific concept development.

Dedication

This work is dedicated to my many *teachers*; especially the First Nations Elders of the north, in particular my mother, Tahl-tah-ma, Thelma D. Norby. It is also dedicated to my other *teachers*; my brothers and sisters, and naturally their families, all my nieces and nephews, my children: Vernon Asp, Rosemary Asp, Reg McGinty, Rueben McGinty and Julio and I's grandchildren, those already born and those yet to come.

Acknowledgements

Meduh! I "raise my hands" to you all, Thank you, as we say in Tahltan, to those who have supported and encouraged me. Your support, helped "share" the load, and I will never forget that.

A special thanks to my family. Meduh for ALWAYS being there. Especially my beloved husband, Julio Amaya-Espana. Meduh! Julio, for your love, kindness, gentle editing, and for reading, and studying Vygotsky right along with me. You are a great friend. To my children for their "visits" to the south, the thousand, at least, phone calls in the last three years, for being the best 'cheerleaders", Meduh! You're the best. To my brothers and sisters, Meduh! For being the best supporters a person could ever want accompanying them on a "life's" journey. To my many beloved life-long friends in the North, I raise my hands to you, life-long friendship is the best.

I am grateful for the support I have received, I am blessed.

Meduh for the phone and the internet, tools to keep one grounded and connected to "home" while away. Thank You for all the calls of cheer from "up north", especially the almost daily, at times, calls from Marge Fraser and Betsy Jackson. Marge and our sister Nancy sent loving "care" packages, complete with jarred salmon, enacoga (dried sockeye salmon), dried moose, moss berry jam and other things to "keep me going", I couldn't have made it without that. Meduh to my niece, Geraldine Dennis, and her husband, Gary, for their much appreciated "supply" of dry meat. And to my brother Jerry for always making sure I had meat in my freezer. Meduh! To my Swedish Elder, Cathleen Smith, who was the first to introduce me to Vygotsky, years before I came to

SFU. And lastly I would like to say a big Meduh and a hug to ALL of you I forced to study Vygotsky right all with me, true friends, especially Theresa Neel, Beverly 'Sembsmoen, Betsy Jackson, Marcia Guno, Janice Juarez-Molina, Erma Robinson, all my sisters, my daughter and nieces.

Meduh! To the Simon Fraser University community. Thank You to the professors, including undergraduate studies and graduate school. I have appreciated your “mediated” and “guided”, to quote Vygotsky, education leadership. Meduh to the Simon Fraser University First Nations “community” for being there, thankfully there is support, friendship, and dialogue between us all. Many humble thanks go out to the SFU First Nations Student Association, past and present. It is this community that has developed over the years, that assists each and every one of us in our efforts. We are a good team. I especially want to say a special Meduh! To a few colleagues, friends, fellow “mature” students who I have had studied with over the years, Erma Robinson, Del Delaney, George Kaufmann, Rick Oulette. To the Simon Fraser University First Nations Student Centre, for being there in support of First Nations students. You have made my experience at SFU better, from my first call of inquiry, in spring of 2000 to my arrival August 2001, to today, the people and the place have been a “god-sent”. I am especially grateful for the love and respect, supportive attitudes, research assistance, and sometimes just an opportunity for a coffee and to take a rest at the First Nations Student Centre. Sasha Hobbs, Janice Juarez-Molina, Marcia Guno, Margaret Genier, Marilyn Vassell and others have all been great support. Meduh! I also wish to say Meduh to Derek Steel and Gerald Bent for their computer technical expertise, the hours of assistance and care that you gave are more than appreciated.

Meduh! For all the help and support: past, present and future.

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1. I Come by It Honestly

Cultural autobiography

My Nation is Tahltan and I am of the wolf clan. Chaudaquock is my Tahltan name (TN) and Vera Asp is my European name (EN). As is customary where I come from, I will provide you with the names of my parents and their parents. My Mother is Tahl-tah-ma, (TN), Thelma Diane Norby (EN), Wolf (1928-2003) and my Father is Phillip Henry Asp (Tahltan/Swedish), Crow (1925-1960). My maternal grandparents are George Agouta Edzerza, Crow and Neth-dei-ye, Grace Edzerza (Nee Creyke), Wolf. My paternal grandparents are Edward Asp (From Stockholm, Sweden) and Dorothy Asp (Nee Jackson), Crow. I am the eighth of twelve children and my mother is the oldest of 22. (See appendix 2, genealogy chart). We share a “lived” history. We come from a powerful land in northern British Columbia, of canyons, rivers, lakes, and tall majestic mountains, all with an abundance of resources which continue to sustain our people as it has from time immemorial. Our strength as a Nation both past and present is a reflection of that land and the multiple generations of connection to it. My ancestors are (are because Tahltans are of the worldview that our ancestors continue to “live” in those of us in today’s world) proud, self-sufficient, and culturally enriched. It is my great privilege to be a descendent of them. I have been taught, one could say “trained”, “educated” my place, who I am and where I

come from. I know my name, the history of it and the responsibility it carries. My Elders have told me.

It is my belief that as a Nation we are strong in ourselves today, because of the past cultural preservation practises and conscious, deliberate efforts of our Ancestors. Our true strength lays in our past, present and future ontology, *way of being* and epistemology, *way of knowing*, as a whole; “shared”, “imparted” in a complex “system” of Tahltan traditional knowledge. We are the children of many great Tahltan leaders whose “education”, training of their ancestors, and ultimately my ancestors, our ancestors, stands the test of time. Together we are the descendents of a highly sophisticated, holistic and abstract “education” system of transmission and transference of traditional Tahltan knowledge, values and culture. Our collective tradition is sophisticated, complex and of great value.

Our ancestors, pre-European contact, were leaders in the trade of obsidian, or volcanic glass, because located in our traditional territory is Ah deeth Tha, (Mt. Edziza), a volcanic cone mountain. Obsidian was a most “tradable” commodity because of the sharpness of the edge for making micro-blade tools; cutting tools, atlatl darts, arrow heads, all essential tools for survival of the people. The extensive utilization evidence for Edziza obsidian is demonstrated by renowned retired Simon Fraser University, Archaeologist Roy Carlson (1994). He reports Edziza quarried obsidian being located at archaeological finds from *the Queen Charlotte Islands on the west, north to Ground Hog Bay in Alaska and to the upper Yukon drainage, east across the Rocky Mountains to Western Alberta, and south to Kwatna Inlet on Burke Channel on the central coast of British Columbia.*

Edziza obsidian has demonstrably been traded beyond its source area for the last 9,500 years (Carlson, 1994, p. 352).

The premise of Tahltan nationhood has been the control of this, and all other resources of our rich land; this gave our ancestors a position of dominance and economic power in that time. Tahltans have always controlled and protected their traditional territory *from encroachments of other tribes, from time immemorial, at the cost of our own blood*, says the Tahltan Declaration of 1910 (Appendix 3) The Declaration, as it is commonly known to this day in our territory, was a Nation to Nation declaration, submitted by the leadership of the Tahltan Nation to Canadian “governing” powers, *the Dominion* as stated in the Declaration, the Government of Canada, *and B.C. Government*. To this day this document stands as our means of announcing, informing and declaring Tahltan sovereignty.

It is with honour that I am able to say I am blood related to a number of the great leaders, and therefore, have been influenced by their leadership, values, standards and traditional means of cultural and oral history impartment. Of the four leadership signatories of the declaration, I am blood related to three. The “head man”, Nanok, Chief of the Tahltans, my maternal grandfather, George Agouta Edzerza, used to call him “Uncle Nanok”, as well as George Assadza, also related on my mother’s side and Kenetl, alias, Big Jackson, was my paternal Grandmother, Dorothy Asp’s (nee Jackson) father, my Great-Grandfather.

Tahltans are a matrilineal society, following the mother’s bloodline. My Mother, Tahl-tah-ma, Thelma D. Norby (1928-2004) ran our family with an iron-

first. She was traditionally “educated” or as the Elders say, “trained” as the oldest of a strong traditional bloodline leader of our nation. She shared by role modelling, living her life and through stories. She “shared” her knowledge of our past and in so doing, the roles and responsibilities we had to her, as our mother, our clan and to our Grandfather. The expectations have always been high, and as high as they were for her children, they were even higher for her. (See Appendix 1, Thelma Norby Biography and Appendix 2, her family’s genealogy chart) For example, I remember one time, as a child, I might have been 4, of a “big” man visiting at Grandma and Grandpa’s house, and we were to dress-up and go and listen. That’s all, sit very still and listen. I remember that my Grandmother, Grace Edzerza (1909-2001), and others served a meal fit for “royalty” that we would all enjoy together at one big long table. I would later come to realise that the man was the famous Nisga’a (Tahltan’s southern neighbour) leader, Frank Calder.

My Grandfather, George Agouta Edzerza (1907-1986), was a strong influence on me, throughout my entire life. He commanded respect, as did my mother, respect for him, myself and my nation. When I was 17, returning at Christmas from Trent University (December 1975), my mother picked me up at the airport in Whitehorse, Yukon, our home, and informed me that Grandpa wanted to see me, right now, from the airport. Shortly after exchanging loving hugs with both my grandparents and receiving gifts from my Grandpa, he sort of shuffled my mother and grandmother out of the kitchen. Once alone, he said to me,

Chaudaquoock, do you know what it means to be in our family [because of our bloodline]? And sit up straight girl and look me in the eye when I am talking to you... I replied quietly that I thought I knew a bit. His answer was *It means you will work for the people for the rest of your life.... any questions?*

None. This man of high principles believed strongly in making an honest living, walking in both the Tahltan world and “whiteman” ways, bi-cultural, and being strong by knowing who you are and where you come from. He enfranchised in the 1940’s so his children and grandchildren would not have to go to residential school. Enfranchisement (Enfranchisement was referred to explicitly in the *Indian Act* as a privilege. See, for example, the *Indian Act*, R.S.C. 1906, chapter 81, section 108), meant loss of Indian status, and ironically also meant he and his family were now Canadian citizens. Canadian citizenship came with the right to work off reserve, drink in the bars, vote, AND of utmost importance, the children were permitted to attend public school in the little village of Telegraph Creek. Although we all grew up non-status, I am most grateful to him for the foresight and sacrifice he made for all of us. I have witnessed the devastation to the spirit of people who have survived the residential school experience and I am grateful that my mother or I did not attend. School and education are obviously held in high value to our entire family. Many have continued their education and we certainly have taught all our offspring the same values.

We moved from our Tahltan traditional territory to the land of the midnight sun, the Yukon, when I was very young. It was a natural transition for us; the culture, values and lifestyle are similar and after all, there are many stories of

connection between our people and our relations in the north. Historically Tahltans were the middlemen trading with the Tlingits in Alaska (a main “river” highway inland is the Stikine, the mouth of the river enters the Pacific at the town of Wrangell, Alaska) and the native people of the interior. Further there are stories of people who originated from Tahltan territory migrating through the Yukon and settling in Tagish, the home of the Tagish Nation today. (Cruikshank, 1990, pp. 39-40) We fit into the northern culture without much adaptation. Our family was accepted there and it became our new home away from home.

My life in the north was lived on the land, sustained and maintained by the land; the same land that has offered life and lifestyle to my four young adult children. They too have experienced life in a cabin on the trapline, hunting parties for moose in the fall and fish camps on the shores of the rivers. They know how to gather traditional foods and “hozeeclona”, Tahltan traditional medicine, and the many ways to prepare it and use it to heal the body. We all have offered tobacco to give thanks to the land; its animals, fish and plants that give us life. And although they, like their mother before them, are not fluent in their traditional languages of Tahltan and Northern Tutchone, they are well versed in the culture of their ancestors. They know the values; they know who they are and where they come from. They too know their Tahltan names and the stories and history of them. They know their clan and the responsibilities they have to their clan and ultimately their families. I am assured in knowing that my grandchildren will also know. They may not experience all the ways of living on the land but they will know who they are and where they come from. As their ancestors before them,

they will be connected with the spirit world, the land and the community and nation they belong, no matter where in this great world they chose to live.

Because not unlike their maternal Great-Grandfather, George Agouta Edzerza, they are bi-cultural, they are strong as people, with the ability to walk in both worlds.

I am not unique, in fact, in spite of past “life altering” experiences, such as the Yukon Gold Rush, the building of the Alaska Highway and residential schools all northern First Nations people, I know, no matter what walk of life, know at least some of this information of themselves too. It is inherent to being Tahltan, Tagish, Tlingit, Northern or Southern Tutchone, Kaska, Tanana or Gwitchen. The people know this because of similar, if not near exact experiences. We were “educated” by stories; stories of life, our own and our ancestors and the spirit world.

Through my whole life's journey I have gained strength from the lives, shared by stories and shared experiences of the people. Today I live far from my land and people and yet I remain totally connected. This connection, this bond, is with the people; my relatives, my ancestors and the land and spirit. Through life experiences, and stories of others' experiences I have gained much; life skills, faith, strength and ceremony. It is the means to the ceremony of living, of celebrating life. It is a lifestyle. It is mine and many others' “way” of being, with our strength being the teachings, of which we regularly draw from for direction. Within the stories lays our strength, our past, our present and our future.

And I am confident in the tools I have gained from my [our] way of life and am comfortable knowing that we can continue to be supported by the experiences and strength of our ancestors and the precious land and its people. As we say in Tahltan, Meduh, Thank-You.

2. It's a Process AND an Event

There are numerous perspectives to First Nations education. In this chapter I will briefly reflect upon the multitude of reports and recommendations over the years in regards to First Nations education in Canada. Over the years the reports have called for change that was systematic and holistic, and in true and equal partnership, e.g. with equal access to resources for program and curricula development, student supports, research, language and cultural development and much more, as a means to reversing and therefore, rejuvenating, the process of educating First Nations students throughout the entire education system. I believe, that in spite of the most recent FN education report, *Our Children –Keepers of the Sacred Knowledge Final Report of the Minister's (Department of Indian Affairs, Government of Canada) National Working Group on Education*, December 2002, once again, repeating similar, if not same, recommendations of the past 25 years, "we" have made major progress. In fairness to "ourselves", the collective "us", I think we should "celebrate", "Potlatch", share the stories of accomplishments. "Sharing" our stories, "sharing" knowledge is "our way", and in so sharing, we will see no reason to *reinvent the whole wheel*. I believe "we" have made massive progress, and I would suggest, that all would also agree that "we" have only just begun. I will "share a few stories", examples of "teams" of people, succeeding, one project at a time, in addressing the diverse and holistic recommendations of reports past.

Implementation and creating balance in a very unbalanced system is where the real challenge and work begins, the task list is endless. I do believe change is a process and not an event. We are evolving, changing, even if at a *snail's pace* (Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, 1996, http://www.aicn-inac.gc.ca/ch/rcap/rpt/lst_e.html)

It is useful and productive to reflect on our past. In renewed reflection I sought out, the famous, "in my time", *Indian Control of Indian Education*, National Indian Brotherhood (NIB) education position paper, presented to the Minister of Indian and Northern Affairs, Government of Canada, in Yellowknife, NWT on May, 1972. I saw it as a sign of our times, when the only place I was able to locate a copy of this historic document was "online".

<http://www.afn.ca/Programs/Education/Indian%20Control%20of%20Indian%20Education.pdf> . The document acknowledgements are an indication of the structure, scope of perspective, inclusively and magnitude of researching, writing, accomplishing a National Native education position paper. *Thanks are also due to the National Indian Brotherhood's Education Committee which worked to find a common denominators in all of the provincial statements, says George Manuel, President, NIB. It is the national common denominator, and exclusivity, that gave the position paper its strength in 1972, as it does today. The famous document's beginnings are humble, respectful and speak of values and the need to "impart" them, "share" with the younger generation. The Statement of Indian Philosophy of Education, (p1) clearly states a shared premise of goals and aspirations, it says,*

In Indian tradition each adult is personally responsible for each child, to see that he learns all he needs to know in order to live a good life.

We want education to give our children the knowledge to understand and be proud of themselves and the knowledge to understand the world around them. (p. 1)

The position paper does not simply demand that traditional skills and cultural competence become apart of the existing “system, but goes on to provide a process, a vehicle for parental involvement, and inclusion, with equal access and resources, at all “levels” of “the system”, as a means to “change”.

Curriculum and Indian Values: Unless a child learns about the forces which shape him: the history of his people, their values and customs, their language, he will never really know himself or his potential as a human being. ...Courses in Indian history and culture should promote pride in the Indian child, and respect in the non-Indian student...Using curriculum as a means to achieve their educational goals, Indian parents want to develop a program which will maintain balance and relevancy between academic/skill subjects and Indian cultural subjects. (p. 9)

The Indian Control of Indian Education of 1972 addressed the overwhelmingly evident lack of success of the present day, education system to “educate” First Nations citizens, nationwide. My understanding of the “essence” of this report is that it is not only a call for “subjective”, everyday, traditional knowledge, cultural inclusion in the education “system”, but it also said “inclusion” of such knowledge and processes would be the “solution”, to the problem of lack of success. What stood out for me in this report was the willingness of First Nations people to contribute to the solutions. *Indian parents want to develop a program which will maintain balance and relevancy between academic/skill subjects and Indian cultural subjects. (p. 9) says the report.* Sadly the report also speaks of inequities as well. Lack of local supports, inadequate means to address the problems and

or solutions also was clear. It was also a report about frustration in “wanting” to contribute via traditional knowledge inclusion, in “teams” of community and the public education system in the development of programs and content and not having resources to act on dreams and goals. The lack of equality for First Nations in comparison with other governments in Canada was very evident. The report clearly addressed areas of jurisdiction, local control, the role of parents, responsibility, curriculum and Indian values, language instruction, cultural education centres and more. In essence, the position paper is also about consciously creating “bi-culturalism” in a balanced way, in an evidently totally imbalanced system.

In 1996, the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (http://www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/ch/rcap/rpt/lst_e.html) reported that they *examined 22 reports on Aboriginal education written between 1966 and 1992*. What the commission found *most disturbing is that the issues raised at our hearings and in interveners’ briefs are the same concerns that Aboriginal people have been bring forward since the first studies were done*. Not surprisingly the issues included; Aboriginal control of education, course/research development of relevant courses pertaining to history, language and culture, training First Nations teachers, better holistic support services to FN students and FN language instruction at all levels of education and not just public schools. There is progress being made said the RCAP, however *it has unfolded at a snail’s pace and falls short of the goals*. (Chapter 5, RCAP) Once again, as in the 1972 position paper, there is a renewed call for subjective knowledge inclusion in the education of Aboriginal children,

and true and balanced “bi-culturalism”, as a means to addressing the still outstanding FN education goals and needs.

Once again the *Final Report of the Minister's National Working Group on Education - December 2002* (http://www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/ps/edu/finre/bac_e.html) assessed the present First Nations education situation and in the opening statements, the introduction the committee felt the need to call for the same.

Too often in the past, children from First Nations communities endured an education that deliberately or unintentionally attempted to assimilate them. Today, little has changed. Children from First Nations communities have been educated without any respect or regard for their cultures, languages and diverse histories. The enormous gap between who First Nations are and the education they receive has been expanding now for more than two centuries.

We (the Minister's National Working Group on Education) believe that strong cultural identity and equally strong individual academic performance will create First Nations citizens who walk with ease and confidence in two worlds."

What is most significant for me about all of the above mentioned FN position papers is how there is a common call for subjective knowledge, traditional knowledge, *spontaneous and everyday concepts development*, as Lev Vygotsky would say it. Consistently the papers also say that this inclusion of *ways of knowing* would in fact be the solution to the long standing “problems” and lack of success for FN learners in the existing system.

These position papers were not wrong, how they could have been; after all they were generated by the people of the “communities”, First Nations from “coast-to-coast-to coast”, a national perspective. The answers, the solutions, the “way” to resolve these education “issues”, as described in all the documents is

accomplished with equal opportunity and participation by the “people”, all the adults have a *responsibility*, says *Indian Control of Indian Education*. I am aware of many, many projects, nationwide, and I think “sharing them” with one another is could also be “a way” to address the issues of reports past.

No Need to Reinvent the Whole Wheel

The *change* that these reports speak of is massive and will not happen suddenly, or according to the reports, not even in a couple of generations. It is difficult to have real benchmarks or other measures to quantify “our” progress. In my experience it is a process and not an event. However, one way that provides the hope and encouragement, ideas and above all support to persevere, is found in the “stories” of numerous, diverse and various programs and/or curricula that are being developed by teams of people nationwide, in fact, worldwide. There are many stories to share. In my work and life experiences of the north, world travels, and reading, I am personally aware of many. I will “share”, and celebrate a very few of the success “stories”. I will share mostly “northern” stories, as this is my perspective.

Reading Voices, Dan Dha Ts’edeninth’e. Oral and Written Interpretations of the Yukon’s Past (Cruikshank, 1991), is a story to be celebrated. *Reading Voices*, is a spectacular, beautiful hard covered book with a “wealth” of “knowledge”. It is a Yukon Grade 10 required social studies text book, which was envisioned, lead and published by a great team of Yukoners. In the words of Julie Cruikshank, in the introduction, she writes that the book

originated from a growing concern among Yukon educators that many voices have been left out of written Yukon history. It reflects a conviction that high school students need to hear these voices – particularly the voices of the Yukon First Nations – when they read about the Yukon’s past.

It is important to outline briefly how this book came to be written. Sharon Jacobs and Clara Schinkel from the Council for Yukon Indians, Bob Sharp at the Department of Education, and Ken Taylor with the Yukon Teacher’s Association developed a way to include these missing voices. All four have long-term experience working in Yukon schools. They established a working committee representing each of their organizations. They asked me to write the book because I brought to the process the expertise of my own teachers – Mrs. Angela Sidney, Mrs. Kitty Smith, Mrs. Annie Ned, Mrs. Rachel Dawson, Johnny Johns, John Joe, George Dawson and others who have taught me during the last twenty years. As each chapter was written, the committee met with me to review and discuss the result and their discussions were woven into the manuscript. (p. 7)

As a lifelong Yukoner, I must tell you that that list of people is amazing. The expertise of each one is immense. Cruikshank modestly does not mention that her *teachers*, now all in the spirit world, were the real, high up teachers, Indian “way”, the equivalent to the highest ranking senior university professor.

Cruikshank continues in the introduction to describe how the committee organized a weekend workshop of six Elders from across the Yukon, *who agreed to discuss the manuscript*. She graciously introduces each Elder, including the land they are from, and their life experiences. When she speaks of her *teachers Mrs. Annie Ned and Mrs. Angela Sidney*, she says, *both major contributors to this book, also attended the workshop. Their voices are among those frequently heard on the following pages. (p. 7).*

I have read and re-read this “collection”, this “sharing” and “team” production. The result of their work is to be commended. As a Yukoner, an educator and

Tahltan mother and grandmother, I am most grateful to them all for their accomplishment. *Reading Voices*, is a reflection of not only your vision, but also your team work.

Another northern example is the *Dene Kede Curriculum*, is the result of a three year, all inclusive, “team” project, lead by Fibbie Tatti (Dene), Curriculum/Program Coordinator, Department of Education, Government of the Northwest Territories. The primary source of guidance, direction and knowledge were Dene Elders.

The elders presented us with the knowledge, skills and attitudes that Dene should strive toward in order to become "capable". The kind of Dene that we were being asked to help create with this curriculum were capable people, ones who had integrity in their relationships with the spiritual world, the land, other people, and themselves.

The Dene Kede Curriculum works for survival through our children. The children are viewed as our pathway into the future. It is hoped that if our children are given Dene perspectives to guide them in establishing good relationships with the land, the spiritual world, other people, and themselves, not only will our identity be maintained, but we will all be closer to survival.

<http://siksik.learnnet.nt.ca/a-z/index.html>

They lead a team of Dene and Non-Dene educators to research, write, and implement, deliver approximately 50 thematic units into all public schools, k-7. The project was definitely a challenge, one that required commitment, and the changing of attitudes and “normal” education curriculum development processes. Final approval of the curriculum was the decision of the Elders.

We were fortunate to have the elders with us to guide us on this journey. They had come out of a commitment to see the

development of a Dene curriculum, but they did not commit themselves to the working group immediately. As elders tend to do, they let us struggle through the conflicts which arose as we worked with the question, "what is a Dene perspective". Their commitment to the group came only after there was evidence that we teachers could agree upon the task at hand and were serious about our own commitment to it. Once agreement was obtained, the elders became fully committed to guiding us in the complete development of the Dene Kede Curriculum.

The purpose of the curriculum is to share and teach the students traditional Dene knowledge, epistemology and worldview and not only was the content of utmost importance, but the *means and way* it was delivered was equally important.

These principles are best written by Tatti on the GNWT web page; the following are some direct quotes from through out the site:

This Dene Kede Curriculum represents for the Dene a very important step in the evolution of Dene culture and language use in the classrooms of the N.W.T. Many attempts have been made in the past to incorporate our culture and language into schools. We Dene teachers have participated in activities such as taking students onto the land for a few days each year, teaching Dene language classes, and making bannock in schools. Over the past fifteen years, there has been an unspoken unease on our part with what has been projected to our children and the world as "us" through these isolated activities. Was this to be the sum total of our culture and identity?

I would also submit the story of how while working at Yukon College for 13 years I came to witness on many occasions, Elder Roddy Blackjack (Northern Tutchone), member of both the Yukon College Elder's Advisory Committee and the President's Committee on Programming (PCOP), Bachelor of Social Work Advisory Committee, when he would guide us, ever reminding "us" of our responsibility

To learn both cultures in Yukon College “side by side”. Two cultures travelling side by side. White and First Nations. Side by side. Work together. Learn from each other. Sharing. (Founding meeting minutes, Yukon College Elder’s Council, 1994) See Appendix 6.

“*Side by Side, Two Cultures*” would become the motto of the Northern Human Service Worker Program, Bachelor of Social Work (BSW). It is a 4-year university degree program, administered and delivered at Yukon College in partnership with the University of Regina. Following the direction of the Elders, and at the firm and clear direction from the President’s Committee on Programming (PCOP), BSW 352 was to become a required course for completion of the Northern Human Service Worker, BSW. A team of FN people, consisting of Elder Roddy Blackjack, (Northern Tutchone), Anne Turner, (Tlingit) FN faculty of the Northern Human Service Worker (BSW), Sharon Jacobs (Southern Tutchone), FN Curriculum Developer, Yukon Government, Department of Education, Barb Hume (Southern Tutchone) BSW student representative on PCOP and myself, Vera Asp, (Tahltan), Vice-president First Nations Programs and Services researched and developed *Social Work 352. – Culture Camp*. (Course syllabi, Appendix 7). The following task was the approval process. The approval process was skilfully navigated by Dean of Arts and Science, Aron Senkpiel (deceased), and the academic division team. First receiving approval from the Yukon College Elder’s Council, followed by the Yukon College and University of Regina course approval processes. Final course approval was granted to *BSW 352, Culture Camp*, a 9-university credit-course, offered bi-annually, in various FN traditional territories and lead by an Elder, whose lands the camp is located upon, is a two-week residential camp; entirely lead by Elders, on the land. It is pioneering,

attitude changing, difficult and fun. Student and Staff evaluations of the course attest to *changes* made by all participants as a result of the profound nature of the experience, by both native and non-native students/participants alike.

The above three “stories” are stories of “shared and equal” participation in successfully “addressing”, making change, as “a team”, all guided and directed by Elders. A primary “teaching”, from the Elders, of all the projects, was that of “commitment”, personal and government/institutional. These are only three, there are many more. In my specific experiences, I believe the Yukon is a creative and innovative place. There are numerous strategies, past, present and future, in our “collective” quest to “find solutions”. Perhaps it is time to take a moment of reflection, a broad and holistic look at the present situation of education in the Yukon. Do we know what our accomplishments are? Do we celebrate them? “Potlatch them”, share the “wealth” of them? I personally am aware of many examples of curricula, teaching styles and strategies in many different classrooms, programs etc... and I am only one educator with a history in the Yukon. I wonder, have “we” ever researched, and compiled a “complete”, and through anthology of the wealth of knowledge, and experience of all Yukon educators, young and old? What an invaluable resource this could be. It could be a complete and open sharing of solutions by sharing ideas, curricula and programs, amongst Yukon Educators (FN and non-FN, young and old, parents, students and teachers). Such an anthology will become a resource that would not only provide support to “us”, the ones facing the challenge today, but into the future.

If there was an opportunity to share in this “magic”, the “magic” of the Yukon and our collective and shared experiences and knowledge, by a call for submissions to such a Yukon relevant anthology, I am certain that there would be many examples to share from all communities of Yukon, at all levels of education. My guess would be that we could produce volumes of examples. I believe we just need to “share” them more, “Potlatch” them, “celebrate” them.

Anthologies of First Nations people and education in Canada and around the world are a form of “celebration”. They also provide an opportunity to share ideas, solutions and processes. They are invaluable in offering support and encouragement to each other, a vehicle to not have to reinvent the wheel.

Aboriginal Education: Fulfilling the Promise, edited by Brant Castellano et al (2000) is one such anthology, presenting the finds of both FN and non-FN says, known First Nations author and scholar, Marie Battiste, in the forward the book's forward,

researchers in case studies, literature reviews, interpretations and analyses. The collection focuses particularly on empowering models of education that seek to address the needs and dreams of Aboriginal peoples. It also offers analyses of remaining obstacles,

She continues by saying

This book makes a valuable contribution to Aboriginal education by offering fresh insights and examples of projects that stretch our imagination as well as celebrate some milestones reached in three decades of striving for First Nations control of First Nations education.

Another FN education anthology is edited by Maenette Kape'ahiokalani Padeken Ah Nee-Benham with Cooper, Joanne, Indigenous Educational Models

for Contemporary Practice, In Our Mother's Voice, 2000, this the result of a week long gathering in Santa Fe, New Mexico in July 1997, of innovative and expert FN educators from around the world, from many First Nations. Valorie Johnson (Cayuga-Seneca) says in the forward

It was an incredible gathering that is only partially recounted in this book. No team of individuals could have fully planned the sacred, natural events that occurred, nor could any foundation, even with every resource in the world, have purchased the outcomes. In numerous and magical ways, we were reminded of an attribute that has sustained indigenous peoples for years – a deep sense of spirituality. (p. xvii)

A complete read of this anthology provides the reader with tremendous hope and encouragement. Each chapter provides detailed accounts of programs, curriculum and processes, of different successful FN education initiatives. The gift of sharing experience and knowledge is, I think, the “magic” that Johnson is referring to in the forward.

In this “magic”, this “evolution”, this developing of change, in all the above mentioned “projects”, and their processes, I see a common thread. What they all have in common is what Vygotsky and other education theorists refer to as, *subjective* knowledge; culture, language, symbols, and ways of making meaning of your own environment. As I conclude in the Chapter 5, *the absence of the subjective knowledge, whole human being development, in school systems will always render them to be irrelevant and lacking*. The success of the afore ‘shared’ stories have “answered” and followed the recommendations of “the people” of the First Nations of Canada, whose voices are heard in the multitude

of FN education position papers. They also demonstrate that *change* is both a process and an event.

3. Gone but Not Forgotten: Tahltan Puberty Rites Ceremonies

A case study of a Tahltan learning system.

Colonization of First Nations people has played a major role in the deterioration and disappearance of vital ceremonies and celebrations of life in traditional society. With the rebirth of First Nations pride there has been a rejuvenation of many ceremonies; however, one that has not made resurgence is the Puberty Rites ceremony of the Tahltan people. For Tahltans, like most other aboriginal peoples, women were the carriers and teachers of the culture. It is my belief that as a Nation we are strong in ourselves today, because of the past cultural preservation practices and conscious, deliberate effort of our Ancestors. Our real strength is in our past, present and future ontology, way of *being* and epistemology, way of *knowing* as a whole; “shared”, “imparted” in a complex “system” of Tahltan traditional knowledge. We are the children of many great Tahltan traditional leaders, whose “education”, training of from their ancestors, my ancestors, our ancestors. As a Tahltan myself, I believe the absence of any form of this sacred ceremony leaves us in a great deficit, its absence has detrimental affects our Nation. Any form of resurgence of our Puberty Rites Ceremony can only fulfill the original purpose: to strengthen the people and to ensure a good future, by way of prayer and conscious effort by Individual, Family, Community and Nation.

This chapter is presented as an historic case study of a Tahltan method of “educating” and “imparting” of knowledge. I will describe the events of the one-year ceremony of our past, the reasons and benefits of the “education” and development, the involvement of the community and the holistic nature of the ceremony. I will include examples of other such ceremonies of our distant relatives, other Athapaskan speakers. Using Field notes of Boas-trained anthropologist James Teit, recorded in 1912-15, and confirming his interpretations with two Tahltan Elder women, one from the Crow clan and one from the opposite clan, the Wolf. I will bring to light a ceremony that maybe is gone but is not forgotten. I will reflect and make suggestions of ways to revive this crucial ceremony in today’s modern world.

Tahltans are Athapaskan speaking Dene (Tahltan and other Athapaskan languages, meaning, *people*) of the Stikine River, north-western British Columbia. Estimated population: 5000, 2003. In the early 1800’s there were 9 Tahltan villages and today there are three: Telegraph Creek, Iskut and Dease Lake. Today Tahltans’ claimed traditional territory spans 11.4% of the entire landmass of British Columbia. (Tahltan Tribal Council submission to BC Treaty Commission) Tahltans are a matrilineal society with two exogamous phratries. These phratries are known as *Cheskea da, one family raven*, and *Cheona da, “one family wolf”* (Emmons, 1911, p.13). Tahltans to this day remain hunter-gatherers, living of the fruits of our land. Wild big game is plentiful: moose, sheep, mountain goat and caribou. Four species of salmon (sockeye, steelhead, chinook and coho) also have a strong annual (from May thru August) run up the

Stikine River from the Pacific Ocean. All Tahltans thrive on the custom of gathering and living off traditional foods. Most who live away from Tahltan territory return annually for the salmon run, fall hunt and connection with the land and the people.

Our strengths are demonstrated in traditional values and worldview; connection to the land and people, a solid spiritual faith, being a “good” human being, by showing respect for the land, self and all others, human or otherwise. Of utmost importance was a strong personal work ethic. “Life” skills such as hunting, sewing, “taking care” of oneself, *self-regulation*, as Vygotsky (1978, 1986) would identify it, self-motivated ethic. These are all examples of the values that have been passed down from generation to generation. Tahltan Ancestors, the Elders, and our parents left us with a legacy to be proud of and have “educated” us, deliberately, consciously, and whole in system, to who we are today. This method of transference of heritage and culture has served us well; however, in the past there was a far more formal method of “training” and transference of traditional knowledge and ways of knowing and being. The “training” was so focused and intense that it was desired that the person would take these learnt virtues and skills into their adult life as “habits”. This was the role of the Tahltan Puberty Rites Ceremonies.

Tahltan Puberty Rites Ceremonies in historic times were performed with both men and woman. Little is written about the male ceremony. Women’s ceremonies have not been performed fully since perhaps the 1940’s. Both my mother Thelma Norby, age 74, at time of writing, (1928-2003), wolf clan and my

Great Aunt Liz Edzerza (age 83), crow clan, participated in parts of the women's ceremony but never were not secluded for the full year as occurred in the past. In spite of this, both women were extremely knowledgeable about past ceremonies and agreed with the writings and research of James Teit. In my estimation it has been three generations since this full year of training in Tahltan life skills and worldview has occurred.

In Tahltan worldview, pubescent girls were given great power from the Creator and this was the time to receive training in the "right way" to use it. The most important focus of the ceremony was to ensure continuance and quality of life; this was accomplished in an inclusive, holistic, family and community "way". It included all, for the girl who was in ceremony for "the people"; herself, her family, community and nation, and ALL of creation; this was spiritual process, one that was accomplished through prayer and connection with Creation. Their prayers were thought to have power; power to protect, game and therefore, life. Tahltan Elder Liz Edzerza says,

This time was very strict. The reason was to pray for the game. We didn't have grocery stores like now-a-days. The girls had strong power and could pray for the game then. (Personal conversation, 2002)

In the field notes of James Teit he reiterates this when he states:

At this first budding out of womanhood girls were believed to be endowed with certain supernatural powers over persons and things the misuse of which might do very great harm to themselves and people in general...For these reasons, her powers had to be directed and controlled. (Teit, 1915, pgs 115-116)

At a pubescent girl's first menses she was isolated from her community to begin the "directed and controlled", deliberate training. Isolation was in the form of a special lodge, initially the lodge was located 500 yards, a far enough distance to not hear the goings from the main camp. Gradually it was moved closer, till near the end of the year it was right beside her parents' camp. The lodges were usually small brush covered shelters, large enough for the girl to sleep in, and also room to sit and sew. *Lodges used by rich people's daughters were of the ordinary lean-to-types and covered with skin instead of brush.* (Teit, 1915:, p. 116) Another method of isolation was in the "hood" that the women wore. Teit describes the dress as a *full-length robe made of tanned caribou skin; with its most distinctive feature being the hood.* The hoods extended approximately two feet beyond the girls' face to ensure she could not look at the men of the village, particularly her father, brothers or men of her clan, for this would bring bad luck to all of them. She was also not to look at game of any kind, as this would mean misfortune or bad luck hunting game for the community. Because just her glance was thought to be harmful to men and game she was only visited by woman of her camp. Respected Crow clan Elder Liz Edzerza also recalls the use of the hoods. She states *they wore that hood for one year; they couldn't look at their fathers or their brothers. When the year was over they got to take it off and it was cut up and given away at her party to people of the opposite clan.*

Isolation held its reasoning in areas of traditional “taboos”, but also provided opportunity for highly focused training in Tahltan ontology and epistemology and therefore ones’ future; including oral history, traditional skills and the duties and roles of transformation into a mature, contributing member of society. The role of women in First Nations society was held in high esteem; women were able to bring new life and as mothers of the nation they also were responsible for the training, and “education” of the children, thus the future.

The foundation in of Tahltan value was spiritual and therefore a foremost skill and assurance of goodness in the future was the girls’ ability to communication with the Creator through prayer. Girls were taught to pray; with prayer seen as a way to focus energy upon people, animals, the land and other things, and to have faith that the Creator would be kind by hearing and answering your prayers. They were expected to pray throughout the day but special emphasis placed on the morning ceremonies. The girl would rise at dawn, usually before anyone in the camp; this was a time for first prayer. She would pray for a good future for all. “A good future ultimately”, included asking for an abundance and survival of the game.

The young woman would also take responsibility for her role in working towards this future by asking for help to obtain the virtues, skills and knowledge she was striving for at this time in her life. For example, *she blew water out of her mouth, catching it in her hands and rubbing it over her body. At the same time she prayed and said, May I obtain good things as easily and quickly as I do this.* (Teit, 1915, p. 122). Another critical virtue to be prayed for and demonstrated by

actions was the desire to always have enough to share with her fellows. Teit describes how the girls' mother would bring her dried fish or meat and when little girls visited her she would share with them and also would send them with pieces to share with other people in the camp. *When the last had been given away she prayed, May I always have food to give away, and may I always think of giving to others. May I always be liberal and never stingy.* (Teit, 1915. p.123)

Equally as important as virtues were physical "work" life skills, necessary for survival while living on this harsh land and therefore much pride and emphasis was placed upon this. Survival involved an equal work distribution between women and men. With pride women manufactured efficient clothing and tools. Through out this year of transition between childhood and pubescence, a girl was taught and supported by the older women of the community. She was trained, educated, taught, and obtained "work" ethics in sewing; making clothing; including robes, tunics, firebags, dance regalia, moccasins, mitts, gloves, doing quill work, beadwork and embroidery, as well as, hide tanning, snowshoe filling, dog packs and other essential tools. In order to *ensure sufficient practice, many women brought moccasins for her to make or to mend, and sewing to do for them.* (Teit, 1915, p. 118) The girl would diligently complete the work without receiving or expecting pay, although she would receive instruction, encouragement and support from the women. It was also at this time that women visited, sharing stories, laughter and company. Being an oral society these stories played a valuable role for they held the traditional knowledge and worldview. High regard for both how they were told, and of utmost importance

was your commitment to re-tell, “impart” them to others, particularly future generations.

Also embedded in worldview were the numerous “rituals” performed by and to the girls to support and ensure their transformation into womanhood.

Expectations of the girls were high and their behaviour was strict and controlled.

The wearing of a “drinking tube” is an example. The women wore a “tube” hung around her neck in a decorated moose hide case. This tube was made from the long wing bone of a swan or goose. It was used for drinking water; not using the tube was thought to cause stomach problems in adult life. The use of the tube is similar to the Tagish, Tutchone, Tlingit, Tsimshian and Nishg’a, all neighbours to the Tahltan. *This practice*, says SFU Archaeologist, Knut Fladmark, *is a widespread notion across aboriginal people North America, and as a result is probably very old.* (Personal conversation, 2003).

The late Mrs. Kitty Smith, born 1890, a Crow woman of Tagish (Athapaskan) and Tlingit descent says this of her life experience of puberty rites ceremonies.

Well you're a woman, so you want to learn everything. They fix that hat. Then you've got to learn everything. My Grandma teaches me. She know everything. (Cruikshank, 1990, p. 214)

She goes on to describe the seclusion, which she says, *lasting 1 month or 2 if you're high-toned ... mine lasted four months.* She continues by describing a similar necklace with “two sticks”, one for scratching your head, as you're not supposed to touch your hair and one for drinking water, *some kind of geese or*

swan's bone, like a straw, she says. You can't put your mouth [on a cup] or you won't talk good. (Cruikshank, 1990, p. 214)

Teit describes other examples of ritual. For example the girls would paint their faces with pitch (gum from trees) and smear it black with charcoal. This was done to keep the face white in future years. She would also tie string around the back three fingers for three days; this was so that she would have small hands and "inconspicuous" joints. Also, girls were not to touch their own hair and a woman, from the opposite clan, did their hair. It was done up in a special way at this time. The hair was divided into two, and brought together at the back of the neck and tied tightly to the "main part of the opposite lock." She would also have a "scratcher" for scratching her head. She would also regularly drop a small, well rounded stone down the front of her clothing, this she did to ensure easy child delivery. There are strict rules of the kinds of meat eaten and when the girl was allowed to consume it.

At the end of the rigorous "education", at the completion of the year, a girl was now transformed into womanhood and considered "ready for marriage". Teit describes the conclusion of the ceremony by saying, *the woman would be given a sweat bath for cleansing, both spiritually and physically, and a woman from the opposite clan would wash and comb her hair. She would now wear it down, with many ornaments attached to it.* A common ornament as made of tanned caribou or moose hide, completely covered in porcupine quill work and fringes decorated with dentalia shell. She would also paint her face red instead of black. She now wore an elaborate collar, to symbolize the completion of her "training" and that

she was now of “marrying age”, crafted by her, and worn at her “coming out” party and other public functions. See page 45, Photo 1, (© Canadian Museum of Civilization, catalogue no. VI-O-56, image no. S94-5863) it is a puberty rites collar, collected in Telegraph Creek, B.C. by Teit, presently housed in the Museum of Civilization in Ottawa, Ontario. There are a variety of ways to make puberty collars and as well as the simple, yet highly crafted one displayed, they also were decorated with *dentalia shell, quills, claws, stones, fringe and beads; they were often a display of family wealth* (Emmons, 1911 and Teit, 1915). The girl’s father would then be responsible for hosting a feast in her honour, giving gifts to members of his clan because his daughter would be a member of the opposite clan. A highly regarded gift was a piece of the robe and hood that she used for the year.

Little is known or written about the male counterpart of the puberty rites ceremony. However, Teit describes this time for men, as *less definite than that of girls.... the only object in the training of boys was to obtain manitous*. (Teit, 1915, pp. 134-135) I understand his portrayal of “manitous” to mean one or more, 4-10 day fasts in solitude on a mountain, seeking a vision and/or spirit guide or helper; they could be an ancestral spirit or an animal spirit. He indicates that there could be a number of fasts or attempts to achieve this end, some with sweat baths and others not, some with cold water immersion and others not. The vision would come to the male in a dream or semi-dream state. The ultimate request from the males to the Creator was *to assist them to become good and successful hunters*. (Teit, 1915, p. 136) *The males also sought “charms” or good luck pieces while on*

the mountain, a symbol of the connection made with the spirit world on this occasion or something that would lend them power and help them win [in warfare]...Eagle feathers gave the winning power to many and therefore a number of men when going to battle wore eagle feathers (Teit, 1915, p. 138).

Seeking a vision while fasting is a common male puberty ritual among many Native people of North America, however, however, this is not so with all northern Athapaskan people. *Unlike the Tahltan and some of the more eastern Athapaskan groups, the Tagish apparently did not regard the boy's puberty period as a time especially suitable for gaining spirit helpers. (McClellan, 1975 p. 359)*

Distant relatives to the northern Athapaskan peoples, the Navajo and Apache of the American southwest, exhibit similarly principles in their puberty rite ceremonies although there are major differences in ritual and ceremony. Their ceremony also was primarily focused on spiritual beliefs, ensuring continuance, the future, and personal power and the power of prayer. The Navajo, also believe that young women must *learn of the great power she will possess and of the restrictions she must obey during her periods to avoid harming others.*

(Frisbie, 1967: 6-7) The teachings were provided to the young woman in a public four-day ceremony, a part of the Blessing Way, "Kinaalda". Included in their ceremony and rituals were special clothing, having their hair done for her by an older woman, in a specific way, running daily, preparation of corn and sharing with the people, song, story and above all prayer. The Apache believed these same principles as well, with the addition that *during this period, the pubescent*

girl personifies Changing Woman and is said to be able to cure the sick and bring rain. (www.webwinds.com/yupanqui/apachesunrise.htm). Today both the Navajo and Apache have modernized their ceremonies. They have adapted them by making them an annual event, celebrating numerous girls at one time, at a central location. The girls are not isolated at the first sign of their menstrual period but are more likely to attend the ceremony at an early teenage age. Honouring their powers, the power of their prayers as a pubescent girl and recognition of the Blessing Way and Changing Woman mythology still remain the focus. They now have “weekend” camps, perhaps four annually, shared between a number of girls and families and they jointly host the “coming out” party. These adaptations are to accommodate the present day lifestyle changes and economic realities, as the cost of hosting the celebration/party is too high for an individual family to bear.

The adaptations made by the Navajo and Apache are encouraging and provide examples for others to consider. The challenge to make a conscious effort to resurrect such a valuable process in today’s modern world, in our northern community, is ours. We know that the principles of the past ceremonies reflect ideology that could assist our people in many ways today. The primary principle of spirituality has remained the cornerstone of our survival through many generations of adversity and oppression. The lessons available in traditional worldview via oral history remain as relevant today as demonstrated in the past. As anthropologist Julie Cruikshank writes of her experiences with the Yukon Elders,

One of the things these women taught me is that their narratives do far more than entertain. If one has optimistic stories about the past, they show, one can draw on internal resources to survive and make sense of arbitrary forces that might otherwise seem overwhelming. (Cruikshank 1998, xii)

Perhaps the days of a yearlong seclusion, with rigorous rituals have left us. The knowledge, the lessons, the “tools” of self-regulation, *consciousness*, and other *higher psychological tools*, as Vygotsky would describe this concept. (1978,1986). Or, *maana*, as the Maori of New Zealand describe it, the way you see yourself, ontology, way of being and epistemology, way of knowing, as others still, may “call” it. And further, the means or the *pedagogy*, the process utilized to “impart” this knowledge; these needs have not left us. There remains the need for the information, knowledge and original purpose of the ceremony, its “essence” still remain. As long as there are people, there remains a need for self-awareness, knowledge, life skills. Tahltan puberty rites and the “story” of them are only “a part” of a process, a holistic “system” of cultural transmission, which “imparted” the lessons, knowledge and understanding of “ourselves”, the people, the Tahltan.

There are a number of ways to integrate and utilize the teachings and principles of the Tahltan Puberty rites ceremonies in today’s world. I shared with a few Tahltan professionals, including a Public Health Nurse and a Justice Worker, addictions workers and community development workers, educators, and others, my research, they immediately thought of ways they could include these principles in their work. Providing opportunity for people to learn and investigate valuable lessons of the majestic past can only strengthen individual

growth and change. We must take a risk of not “doing it right” and proceed because the benefits far outweigh the risk. I was delighted and encouraged once when I heard respected scholar and now Elder of the Kwakwaka'wakw Nation, Gloria Cranmer-Webster, eloquently say in a speech:

If my ancestors from two hundred years ago were able to be with us today, I often wonder what they would think of a contemporary potlatch. Would they pity us for having lost so much, or be proud that we are still here? I think that after recovering from the shock of seeing so many changes, not only in the potlatch but in all aspects of our lives, they would tell us that under the circumstances, we are not doing too badly. They would also urge us to keep on strengthening what we have, if we are to survive and continue having good times.

Today, I can appreciate the many ways the Tahltan Puberty Rites Ceremonies have influenced and shaped our people, past and present. It has not been that long ago, some three generations, at most, since the days of one-year seclusion for woman. Our Great-Great Grandmothers most definitely would have experienced the whole process. They in turn raised our Great-Grandmothers, who raised our Grandmothers. I believe we have all been blessed to have felt the “least bit of influence” from such a whole system. I see the need to try to find ways to continue to impart, transmit and integrate traditional Tahltan principles and teachings into our lives. We must take the risk of “not doing *it* right”, the benefits of “survival and future good times” far outweigh the risk.

Photo 1



4. Dare to Imagine.... Always Trying to Find Solutions

Lev Semenovich Vygotsky (1896-1934, Russia Psychologist) has become famous in the scientific world as the creator of the cultural-historical theory of psychology, begins Natalia Gajdamaschko (1999) in her short biography of Vygotsky and through summary of his theory and how it relates to the development of creativity. It is difficult to measure the affects Vygotsky's theories have had worldwide. The Vygotskian "influence" is a massive paradigm shift from past western education practises and pedagogy, of individualists, progressivism, behaviourists and finally "free" school pedagogy in public school institutions. Vygotsky's theory has already impacted and influenced change in many areas of education in the world; however, in the western world its influence is just beginning. Direct Vygotsky "influence" is seen the following areas of education: pedagogy, teaching and learning theory, teacher training or retraining, curriculum development, education leadership and much more. In this paper I will provide a summary of the Vygotsky theory and ask the following questions: If learning is a socio-cultural phenomena, and I believe it is, and pedagogy, programming and approach is best when it assists the learner to draw from both forms of learning, spontaneous, *everyday* concepts and non-spontaneous *scientific* concepts, by "mediation" of higher psychological and cultural tools, **then** what impact has the past education experience had on First Nations learners

(and any learner) who's "culture" was never considered, validated or honoured in the education system? And further, is the Vygotsky theory a means to solution to some of the issues First Nations learners and their families face in future, considering the obvious need for developments and changes in the system? Finally, are there "ways" First Nations teachers, students, parents, communities can benefit from a Vygotskian "influential" change in their local public school systems?

Many of today's schools are dominantly built and created with the philosophy and thus, pedagogy, of objectivists, established primarily from the belief that what was important or what was relevant, in this education/school system, was qualitative and quantitative, and anything else was not. The binary opposite to objectivity is subjectivity; the other half of the equation of a "whole" person, language, customs, everyday life, culture. I believe this is precisely why well-known author, educator Kieran Egan (1997) says, *finding anyone inside or outside the education system who is content with its performance is difficult.* (Egan, 1997, p. 9) Vygotsky's theory pivots on not only the recognition of this same grave error in judgement but says, *says all specifically human mental processes (so-called higher mental processes) are mediated by psychological tools such as language, signs, and symbols, texts, formulae, graphic organizers – that when internalized help individuals master their own natural psychological function of perception, memory, attention and so on.* (Kozulin et al, 2003, p. 65) Vygotsky says that in fact, spontaneous, everyday concepts are the foundation for the development of scientific concepts, and as scientific concepts are

developed they in turn integrate with the spontaneous, everyday concepts. This occurs when the learner internalizes the “new” knowledge, by it becoming part of, integrated into, the child’s inner speech and problem solving abilities, the impact of which is felt throughout learner’s whole life. *Vygotsky’s attempts to unite the contradictory objective and subjective fields resulted in the creation of the cultural-historical theory.* (Gajdamaschko, 1999, p 693). Cognitive tools or *tools to aid in thinking* (Egan, 2004, p.3) are the mediators of the process and maturation of higher psychological tools. *Literacy in its different forms constitutes one of the most powerful of psychological tools.* (Kozulin, 2003, p. 17) For example Egan and Gajdamaschko (2003, p.87) say that *the complex nature of the cognitive tools of literacy, if introduced properly in teaching, encourages not only development of logical operations but development of imagination, self-reflection, emotions and awareness of the child’s own thinking.* [end quote] *Cultural tools thus become cognitive tools for each of us,* says Egan.

(<http://www.ierg.net/cogthoughts.html>) It is in the “introduction or mediation (two styles/types of mediation, human and symbol) or “leading” by a more learned “peer”. This is another major concept of Vygotskian theory, Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). *ZPD is a very influential Vygotskian idea* (Gajdamaschko, 1999, 695), it is also the most complex and *well known [and utilized worldwide in education today] ideas...* (Kozulin, 2003, p.40). Vygotsky defined ZPD as *the distance between the actual development level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable*

peers. (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 86) or *what a child can do in cooperation today he can do alone tomorrow* (Vygotsky, 1986, p. 187). Vygotsky place emphasis on *symbolic tools- mediators appropriated by children in the context of particular sociocultural activities, the most important of which he considered formal education.* (Kozulin, 2003, p. 17) Vygotsky placed extremely high importance upon school and particularly the chosen mediation and teaching process, pedagogy of schools. He said *instruction is one of the principal sources of the schoolchild's concepts and is also a power force in directing their evolution; it determines the fate of his total mental development.* (Vygotsky, 1986, p. 157).

The above summary of Vygotsky's theory outlines principles of education that provide not only philosophic paradigm shift in education but also provides pedagogy, process theory for implementation at the "essence" of learning and teaching (individual and collective, socio-cultural). I see Vygotsky's theory as exemplifying the principle of holistic education, the "development of the whole".

What does the theory of Vygotsky look like in practise? How does the translation/interpretation/implementation of Vygotsky theory look like at the classroom and lesson plan level? In my search for examples of program implementation, my results were limited, limited by two factors, a) implementation of Vygotsky's theory was stifled by the government of his era and students/scholars' (such as the ones mentioned in following paragraph) work occurred in Russia and had little to no exposure in the western world. And b) I realise the "examples" of implementation in the west are even further limited, and in fact rare.

Galina Zuckerman writes of two students and scholars of Vygotsky, whose works *influenced several generations of education*. Elkonin (1904-1984) began his research and program implementation (based on the premise of Vygotsky's principles) in the late 1950's and together with his immediate associate Vassuky Davydov (1930-1998) implemented the theory by developing an education system that influences *10% of schools in Russian and by many educators around the world*. In *practise* of the theory, their education system *both embodied and exemplified the theory*. Their experience with implementation of the theory was that *this system of education helps the child to become the agent of self-change aimed at transcending the limits of ones own experience, knowledge, skills, and abilities and at acquiring methods for self-learning* (Davydov, 1988, Elkonin, 1988)(Zuckerman chapter, Kozulin, 2003, pp. 177-178)

Carol Lee (Kozulin, 2003, Ch. 18) writes about Cultural-Historical Activity Theory (CHAT). Lee describes a program of *cultural modelling*, which she participated in as an English teacher in a lower income, low achievement, African American community public school. She writes that as the teacher/mediator she needed to come to an *understanding [of] what dispositions, competencies, and belief systems they [the students/learners] construct across their experiences with their families, with their peer social networks, in their community lives, and in school*. (p. 407) She goes on to say that *understanding this multiple activity setting.... contexts- home, school, within various social networks...that is the fundamental challenge that Vygotsky and colleagues posed*. Lee concludes by saying *Vygotsky's wish to contribute to the development of society... and those*

that work to try to build culturally responsive school environments aim is to help youngsters become both culturally competent members of their home communities and effective participants in a civil democratic society. (Kozulin, 2003, p. 408).

Closer to today and closer to home are a number of examples of Vygotskian “influence” in practise at Simon Fraser University. I will focus on two: Imaginative Education Research Group (ierg), and Learning for Understanding through Culturally Inclusive Imaginative Development (LUCID).

ierg, in the Faculty of Education was established in 2001, with a deliberate aim to contribute towards *educational effectiveness*, with ideas *helped by the Russian Psychologist, Lev Vygotsky* (Egan, ierg, 2004, p. 3). The goal of ierg is *to increase understanding of how the imagination of learners, from young children to adults, can be enhanced through the process of education. The second is to explore and try to define approaches through which educators can be imaginative in designing programs, planning teaching, and engaging students in richer learning.* Additional goals of ierg are; research—both theoretical and empirical—on imaginative teaching & learning; website, (information sharing, curriculum development and training/resource for teachers) other forms of teacher training, including masters degree programs with an imaginative education focus, workshops & seminars; and organizing annual conferences on Imagination and Education. (<http://www.ierg.net/aims.html>) Egan, founder of ierg, writes in a most recent work, *A Guide to Imaginative Education*, (2004) *that a first contribution to improving education has to be to show that many of the tools that*

give oral and literate ways of thinking their power and flexibility are often neglected in schools. You will recall the discussion of previous paragraphs about the paradigm shift when using Vygotsky's theories, the shift that acknowledges, and utilises the whole; contributing to spontaneous and non- spontaneous concept development, objective and subjective balance in content and pedagogy. The shift is not in the scientific concept development, per say, but in the balanced, inclusion and utilization of subjective knowledge, culture. In fact Egan says *education becomes the process in which we maximize the tool-kit we individually take from the external storehouse of culture. Cultural tools thus become cognitive tools for each of us.* <http://www.ierg.net/cogthoughts.html>

Imaginative education presents an alternative vision of what education could and should be. It suggests that almost any topic can be made meaningful for children at almost any age and stage of development, but that this requires a deep rethinking of teaching and learning. In order for teachers to be able to use the model, they have to develop the ability to construct and reconstruct meaning along with their students. Teachers who have taught in this way have observed that the model changes the whole learning environment. It changes what they teach, and how they teach it, but it also changes how they think about the very process of education. <http://www.ierg.net/>

Learning for Understanding through Culturally Inclusive Imaginative Development (LUCID), is a tri-partite research and program implementation partnership, between the Faculty of Education, SFU; ierg and three First Nations; Haida, Sto:lo and Tsimshian and School Districts 33, 50 and 52, each with Project Leaders (local coordinators) from Chilliwack, Prince Rupert and the Queen Charlotte Islands. This 5-year project will explore *the potential of imaginative education to improve the academic and other educational outcomes*

in B.C. public school districts with high numbers of Aboriginal Students. LUCID is interested in furthering connections, both theoretical and practical, between critical thinking and imaginative thinking and in examining the nature of imaginative development within and across disciplines and cultures. *We are collectively needed to make this work,* said Mark Fettes, Associate professor, and leader of the LUCID program, when speaking with the representatives of the partnership, January 12, 2004, Harbour Centre, SFU. He went on to say *the potential for change is great ...with partnership...and longevity.* The five-year plan for LUCID describes a holistic process of inclusively, supports, bi-cultural “training” (First Nations and academic), and holistic community development. One of the project’s goals is not only the development of the local community/schools/etc..., but also the development of community between Simon Fraser University academics and the local community.

I believe that projects such as LUCID has the potential to prove to be highly effective, any programming that supports the development of “the whole”, including learners, citizens, community, while honouring the culture of the same, has to reap strong and sustaining benefits. LUCID is a rare and innovative opportunity to “marry” the two concepts, First Nations systems of “knowing” and academic/ theory and practises. It is the opportunity for the implementation of both “ways of making meaning of the world”, First Nations and academia, in balance. It will have substantive implications in both worlds. LUCID is an exciting, innovative project. It is community driven, and directed, with implementation at the community level, involving community experts, and the project leaders with

the opportunity to have access to local culture, the people, the Elders, lifestyle, in partnership with theory and university professors. The role of the Project Leaders will prove to be pivotal in the success of the program. The role of mediating between First Nations and academia; people, culture, interpretation of both sides, FN and academia, will be a challenge. What a multi-faceted team, its “wide” perspective, can become a great vehicle for education change. The perspective of the whole, has potential to make a large additional contribution in addressing the goals and recommendations of the numerous First Nations Education reports (1972, Indian Control of Indian Education, National Indian Brotherhood, 1996, Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, 2002 Our Children –Keepers of the Sacred Knowledge Final Report of the Minister’s (Department of Indian Affairs, Government of Canada) National Working Group on Education).

In my own experiences of teaching and learning in today’s society as a Tahltan First Nations person, I wholeheartedly agree with Fettes, leader of the LUCID program, when he says *culturally sensitive curricula are not improving the number of aboriginal students graduating from high school because they are based on conventional teaching strategies*. There are literally generations of teachers who are trained in the “old” education pedagogy, demonstrate ably inadequate system, and as a result, there are literally generations of learners affected by this. This is the impact. Studies show that just 42 per cent of 18-year-old B.C. aboriginals complete high school compared to 79 per cent of their non-aboriginal counterparts. (Demographics and Performance of Aboriginal Students

in BC Public Schools – 2002-2003. <http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/abed/perf2003.pdf>
) . In my traditional territory the present graduation rate is 19%.

The Royal Commission on Aboriginal People's (1996) reports of *more than 25 years* ...of reports, recommendation, government policy, talks and now a commission, about Canada's *Aboriginal peoples*, it also reported that Aboriginal voices are still articulating the same issues, with "change" *falling short* of all the voices, and what "change" did occur was a slow, hit and miss, with minimal or inadequate support (financial/and expertise/ access etc...). Today, with ALL the developments of Aboriginal peoples in Canada, in general, and the rising numbers of First Nations implementing self-government agreements, communities are changing, and experience tells us [me] that "we" will make this massive change [in the public education system] will only happen if "we" individually contribute to that change, play "our" parts, and that it is a process and not event. It is a steep learning curve for us all, but required if we are going to address the 25 year call for *...significant change to present system needs to take place to meet the articulated goals.* (Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, 1996, http://www.aincinac.gc.ca/ps/edu/index_e.html) The statistics speak for themselves.

Without human imagination, no culture would look the way it does today, and no learner would be able to participate in and contribute to that culture. (http://www.ierg.net/ideas_what_is.html#intro) says Egan. I believe Egan's quote best describes the impact of past education experiences for native people. Yes the impact is grand however, we acknowledge and "theoretically" we collectively

are coming up with the same or similar conclusions about both situation at hand and “solutions”, therefore, “we” can make change; it is a most hopeful situation.

Of all the reading and studying I have done on Vygotsky’s theory, its implementation and thus interpretation, and the impacts on classrooms, learners, “instructors”/teachers/mediators and “community”, the most common feedback, or what stands out for me, is that this process does (or has potential to) develop the volition, the will, the inner strength and self value of ALL participants alike, in a balance, in a process and with a shared “culture”, community supporting and assisting each other, holistic. I believe Vygotsky would agree that a First Nations adaptation of *his* theories and implementation of them has the potential to provide solutions and a paradigm shift that would radically improve the present education system. The change would not only be beneficial to First Nations peoples but all peoples. Inclusion of First Nations knowledge, ontology, ways of being and epistemology, was of knowing, in the process of “educating” FN learners will provide relevance and a “foundation” that will be of benefit to the learners. Cultural diversity and inclusion, in program content and pedagogy in any classroom/education system has the potential to assist, mediate and increase the development, education of the whole child, thus, providing the vehicle for true bi-culturalism. As in the case of the African American students previously written of in this chapter, “we” must strive *to help youngsters become both culturally competent members of their home communities and effective participants in a civil democratic society.* (Kozulin, 2003, p. 408). Humanizing the present system will be beneficial to all.

I certainly believe in the spirit and educational philosophy, of a famous Vygotsky quote, *what a child can do in cooperation today he can do alone tomorrow* (1986, p. 187) and I also agree that it is a process and not an event. "We" can and we must *dare to imagine.... always trying to find solutions.*

5. Conclusion

Vygotsky and First Nations commonalities:

Singing a song, to honour my Mother.

In principle Vygotskian theory and First Nations ways of learning and teaching have much in common. Based on my own truth, my experiences, and the “ways” in which I was taught Tahltan traditional knowledge, and have therefore, taught my children and grandchildren, I am able to identify substantive commonalities, between the primary concepts and principles of Vygotskian theory and First Nations “ways”. Vygotsky’s cultural-historic theory is not all that “new” to me, I recognize his true principles, his worldview, because this are the ways of learning and ultimately teaching in which I am most accustomed. As I begin my awareness and knowledge of Vygotskian theory, I am struck by the fact that there are points when I realize this is blatantly self-evident, in my way of knowing. I have studied Vygotsky and associates, with excitement and encouragement because; in one way I feel I have found articulation, validation and sadly, “a quantity of credibility” in relation to First Nations people and our collective way of knowing and doing. Upon sharing my “new” found Vygotskian theory with my peers, especially Yukon First Nations Elders, associates and my family, I am excited to think of “our collective zone of proximal development” potential. I am able to recognize our collective past, including our means of “education”, impartment of traditional

knowledge, including stories of survival, advancement and accomplishments, and coupled with this “new found” knowledge of Vygotskian theory, can only look forward to future possibilities in “educating” First Nations people.

Lev Vygotsky (1896-1934), Russian Education Psychologist, is a visionary scholar, whose theory and pedagogy has identified and articulated a much more holistic [in comparison to western education philosophy/pedagogy] and a complete philosophy of education and educational institutions. In true Vygotskian pedagogy and style, his writings *guide you, mediating*, assisting your learning, and in learning of his *whole* complex theory, thus, enabling you to identify a obvious and clear understanding of large areas lacking in western educational philosophy, thus, pedagogy and style. (In chapter 4, I identify the philosophic differences and write of solutions.)

Vygotsky *leads or guides* one to the *essence* of the scientific processes of such concepts as: thinking and speech, educational pedagogy, child stages of development, Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), implicit, explicit knowledge, role of play, double stimulus/dialogue, cultural development, role of mediators, teachers, more learned peer, objective/subjective/inter-subjective knowledge, community, holism, consciousness development, self regulation, inclusion, power balance, student/teacher equity, a pedagogy that focuses on what the learner can do – not can’t do. All of which he says is based on the premise that all learning is social and cultural, and not an individual phenomena. In further contrast, between Vygotsky and the dominating premise of objectivism in western educational institutions, as I describe in detail in chapter 5, the absence

of the subjective knowledge, whole human being development, in school systems will always render them to be irrelevant and lacking. *Vygotsky's attempts to unite the contradictory objective and subjective fields resulted in the creation of the cultural-historical theory.* (Gajdamaschko, 1999, p. 693).

In my search to internalize, to make a part of my everyday life, the cultural-historical theory of Vygotsky, I have engaged in a self directed, self motivated, steep learning curve. In my study of Vygotsky's theories, I have read many of Vygotsky's works, attended graduate classes, researched and written, and have had opportunity to fulfill my personal learning style, that of "sharing" knowledge, predominately through dialogue. In the process of my "sharing" the story of Vygotsky, I have had many discussions and much dialogue with my peers/colleagues; fellow First Nations people, including Elders, other more learned FN educators, parents, fellow students, professors, and anyone else I could share with. Finally I am here trying to write what I have *internalized* and am now *integrating* in my everyday life. Integration into my *everyday life* means integration into my individual and communal Tahltan First Nation epistemology, ways of knowing and ontology, way of *being*. Including my "ways" of making meaning, respect, spirituality, justice and other abstract traditional concepts, family values, learning styles, personality, history; oral and print, and much more. My initial contact with Vygotsky was in early summer 2003, pre-grad school and classes and I found him impossible to understand. My personal learning process and thus, understanding of Vygotsky became "easier", nearly natural as time went on. The more I learned and came to internalize his theory and pedagogy,

the more I could draw comparisons and primary principled similarity between my understanding of First Nations ways of learning and teaching and his cultural-historic theory, his “way” of making meaning.

I began my studies and comparison at an advantage, in that my own *zone of proximal development (ZPD)* regarding subjective; cultural, language, spontaneous and everyday concepts, were high. I am *educated*, as the Elders in the Yukon refer to education; *I know who I am and where I come from*. Coupled with my FN upbringing, subjective knowledge, and many active years of multi-faceted living experiences within the western public school system. My personal experiences include being a student, a parent, school council politician, substitute teacher (K- college prep), and an administrator/manager. I share from a holistic perspective, one that is *bi-cultural*. I have knowledge and a view from both perspectives and worldviews; Traditional First Nations knowledge *systems* and western educational institutions/systems.

Specific commonalities between Vygotsky’s theory and First Nations ways of teaching and learning:

I have always been aware that all learning has a cultural and social base. This is obvious and self-evident to me and my worldview. Upon discussion of this point with my peers, as mentioned previously, I must say that this is *self-evident* to us all. I shared with an Elder in the Yukon recently a brief discussion of Vygotskian theory. I told her of this famous man, Vygotsky, a psychologist, from Russia, who in the 1920’s and ‘30s, wrote of learning, and the theory of

learning, and that he concluded,” all learning had a cultural and social base...”

After a small pause and noticeably, some thought, her reply to me was *Really?*, as she raised her eyebrow, *and you went to school to learn this?* I went on to share with her the concept of zone of proximal development. And once again, based on her own knowledge and experiences of traditional ways, she was aware of learning and how one would always learn more with social and knowledge assisted support. This too was an obvious point with her, as with my peers and me. I then explained to her that this was a very simplified view of his concepts and that it was not only that but also that we teach or share information with children at certain ages, at certain times in their lives. Again she was amazed at the thought of this being a “new” idea. *Well that is how we have taught our children forever, that’s how we all were taught*, she said.

The Elder would agree with Vygotsky in his belief that children watch other people speak, think, or behave in certain ways and thus can learn how to speak, think, or behave this way themselves (Gajdamaschko, 1999, p. 695) In my family, there is great respect for this concept. We hold in high regard both the children and our responsibility to teach even train them to fulfill their role in society. Our family leaders; my Grandparents on both sides of my family, and my Mother, now all deceased, left legacies, based on their role modelled lifestyle, the expectations were high and remain high. While attending our maternal Grandfather’s Potlatch in 1986, Whitehorse, Yukon at the “old” Yukon Indian Centre, I heard my oldest brother, George Asp speak, as he always does, as the oldest Grandchild of the family. It was with pride and a strong confirmation for the

future of our culture and thus our family, that he spoke of our Grandfather, and said, paraphrasing, *I remember when we were kids, and working with Grandpa, if you started horsing around, playing, then your punishment was to go and play.* I am sure George spoke for us all, especially those of us who were “privileged” to have had the opportunity provided, to learn from and “educated by”, such a brilliant and intellectual man. I still today appreciate having had the opportunity. See ¹ for Potlatch explanation.

Vygotsky spoke of a child’s learning process and said *the origin of “higher psychological functions (e.g. creativity, etc...) begin in the social environment and then through the process of internalization moves from the “outside” into the “inside”* (Gajdamaschko, 1999, p. 695). Gajdamaschko describes the process according to Vygotsky, and concludes by saying, *a child can learn how to think creatively only by first trying to do it together with other people. After that, the child can internalize and model what has been done socially at first.* (Gajdamaschko, 1999, p. 695) Vygotsky called this concept the *general genetic law of cultural development*. In the north, in my experiences, the Elders refer to this as transferring the knowledge and understanding of “Indian law”.

¹ In the north, following a person’s funeral, a Potlatch is held. It is a supper for all the people, hosted by the clan of the deceased person. (This is my most condensed version of what a Potlatch is ever) This celebration, last supper, is a vital part of our culture and social life.

I recall when I was four years old, living in remote northern British Columbia, the youngest of 8 children at the time, being dressed by my older sister. I remember that there was a “big” (big meaning important) man at my Grandpa’s; we were to dress in our good clothes, lace dress and shiny black leather dress shoes in my case, and we were to go there and listen. Yes, listen, sit quiet and wait for dinner. We all did as we were told, a row of about 15, including me, my brothers and sisters and aunts and uncles and cousins of many ages. We all sat and listened. We were expected, by our older relatives, to not make a sound or a move. Still. After a long talk between my Grandpa, George Agouta Edzerza, Traditional Leader of the Tahltan Nation and his “friend”, the table was set and we all enjoyed a meal prepared by my Grandmother and her daughters, fit for the king. I would later, much later, come to realise that that “big” man was Frank Calder, president of Nisga'a Tribal Council from 1955 to 1974. The Nisga'a and Tahltan share a traditional territory boundary and are our southern neighbours. Calder was also a Member of the Legislative Assembly in B.C. for 26 years, and first Canadian Native Indian to be elected to any Canadian parliament, in 1949. What Calder is most famous for is the Supreme Court action known as the Calder Case, in which a landmark decision of the Supreme Court of Canada was handed down in 1973, dealing with the Nisga'a land question, a decision by that court upon which current Indian land settlements are today being considered in Canada. This story establishes that my relatives’ deliberate and “guided” teaching style honoured the whole child by honouring self and others. It also confirmed a high respect and expectation, for the child to learn, and demonstrate

self-regulation, and gained or imparting knowledge at any age. This system of traditional teaching and learning also respected the need for children to have “life” experiences that would role model and exhibit standards of behaviour.

Another major concept of Vygotskian theory is Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). ZPD “is a very influential Vygotskian idea.” (Gajdamaschko, 1999, p. 695), it is also the most complex and *well known [and utilized worldwide in education today] ideas...* (Chaiklin, Ch. 2, Kozulin et al, 2003, p. 40). Vygotsky defined ZPD as *the distance between the actual development level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers.* (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 86) or *what a child can do in cooperation today he can do alone tomorrow* (Vygotsky, 1986, p. 187). For Native people this “way” of teaching and learning has been a strong contributing factor to our very existence and perhaps, is the foundation of our cultural endurance and survival. In my large family and extended family this concept remains strong. In my childhood I was provided and reciprocated love, support, nurturing/caring and guidance. And certainly times are changing. Like all cultures ours too is fluid, flexible, and ever changing, however, the values and the principles can remain in spite of massive changes in circumstances.

A powerful example of this process of teaching and learning standing the test of time is the story of my mother Thelma’s Grandchildren as they served her relatives and friends at her recent Potlatch. Thelma was Wolf and being from a matrilineal society, so are her direct decedents. It was there, sitting at the “head”

table as one her direct descendents that I observed this “next” generation. The “team”, ranged in age from people in their 40’s to babies, and numbered about 50, including foster grandchildren. The task of serving plates of hot food to 600 sitting guests, in less than 45 minutes, was accomplished by direct and deliberate “teamwork”, self-regulation, mediated assisted learning and above all “shared” knowledge, and “shared” experience. A confirmation of ZPD, *what a child can do in cooperation today he can do alone tomorrow* (Vygotsky, 1986, p. 187). This is my favourite Vygotsky quote; it gives me hope and encouragement for the future of education.

In spite of all my previous experiences and knowledge, for the first time I was able to see the *essence* and thus am able to articulate and understand for myself, some of the “why” in the question of *why* is it that education systems seem to be failing in many ways to educate the masses. (*Our Children –Keepers of the Sacred Knowledge* Final Report of the Minister’s (Department of Indian Affairs, Government of Canada) National Working Group on Education, December 2002 and Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples - Gathering Strength. 1996. Ottawa: Minister of Supply and Services. http://www.aincinac.gc.ca/ch/rcap/sg/sgmm_e.html, Gatto (1992) and Egan (2004)). I can agree with the constant recommendation of “the reports” that a primary factor in this lack of success is the historic lack of First Nations worldview and cultural inclusion, subjective knowledge, in the existing system. Yes, it is a fact that “the system” has failed. Tragically the system has failed in honouring aboriginal learners and their foundational knowledge, everyday,

spontaneous knowledge. I am seeing that the methodology of past reports may be the reason why they continue to say the same things. What I believe we need to start asking ourselves is HOW and WHAT we need to do to address the fact that we, the collective “we”, have not had the success so much desired. The answer to the real question is answered by the Elders when they say *teach those kids who they are, and where they come from* (Yukon College Elder’s Council minutes, 1994, Appendix 6). Vygotsky substantiates and articulates that this subjective knowledge, the whole development of the child, as the foundation to all scientific concept development. As recommended for the past 25 years of FN education position papers, this more inclusive, respectful and holistic pedagogy will become the solution to the existing problems.

We have the knowledge, we have the will and now we must move forward in the implementation of change.

If I were to *translate* for the Elders, I would say, they are saying there is need to become a more balanced ‘system’. One that is not based on the simpler or most comfortable pedagogy of the western model, based upon objectivism but, a more holistic “system” that does progress in creating a balance with subjective knowledge as well. I hear the Elders when they have repeated said *Knowing who you are and where you come from*, is the foundation to ones success. This would definitely concur with the writings, research and conclusion of Lev Vygotsky’s theory. Vygotsky says, that not only does subjectivity (culture, language, customs, “ways of knowing”) and inter-subjectivity play a crucial role in the

development of the child/human being, but in fact, are the very foundation in the development of scientific and higher psychological maturation.

I believe the two concepts: Vygotsky and First Nations ways of teaching and learning are a means to an end. I believe the melding of their true principles, the *essence*, as Vygotsky, would say, will result in true bi-culturalism in classrooms, learning and teaching environments, cultural and community development. I share the dream and direction and belief of the Elders, that as in the past, “our” means of educating, imparting, transmission or sharing of traditional knowledge is crucial in providing a vehicle, a method, “a way”. The urgency to excel in the “work” that needs to be done is upon “us, the collective “us” because with each passing of an Elder it is likened to a library burning down. We have a responsibility to dream and imagine, and move forward, two cultures side by side.

Not unlike all other First Nations education “projects”, mine too, *Singing a song to honour my Mother*, is also a work in progress, the undertaking will never be completely finished.

Appendix One - Tahl-tah-ma, Thelma Norby Biography

Tahl-tah-ma *Thelma Diane Norby*

"Everybody's friend", is the best description of our dear beloved Thelma Diane Norby, Tahl-ta-ma. Loved, respected, and especially cherished by the members of her large family. She exemplified strength, spirit and perseverance throughout her life. Thelma was known across the North to be loving, caring, giving, wise and truly respectful to everyone. The principles, values and virtues that she modelled in her lifetime is the legacy she leaves for her children. Thelma's love, support, blatant honesty, prayers, hard work and encouragement taught us that we could accomplish anything. She effortlessly provided love, care and respect to all people but above all, to children. "Mom", "Grandma", "Auntie", Thelma, is especially appreciated and equally respected, by her children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren, brothers and sisters, nieces, nephews and her foster family.

If a person is a reflection of their ancestors, then Thelma provided us with a bird's eye view of the values, standards, and principles of our great ancestors. She lived with such honour and respect, because that was what she was taught. In turn, she taught that to her family.

She was our leader and we know how to live by what she taught us. She worked hard, she prayed hard, she loved hard, yet she was so very soft.

Thelma Diane was born August 28, 1928 in Telegraph Creek, B.C., she was the eldest child of George and Grace Edzerza. Thelma was raised with her many brothers and sisters at 10 mile. Life was good, plentiful and required strength and perseverance, to which Thelma was always there as a helping hand to everyone. She once told of her and her brothers planting 1000 cabbage seedlings in the spring.

In 1943, she married Phillip Asp and began her own family. Phil passed to the spirit world in a motor vehicle accident in January, 1960, leaving Thelma a widow with 8 children. Thelma persevered to provide for her children. When she met her loving husband and life partner of 42 years, Vern Norby, she was running a laundry business, doing washing and dry cleaning for the army, which she and her children packed water for, and she was working

at the local hotel in Lower Post . Together they were blessed with 4 beautiful daughters. "She worked hard everyday to give her children what they needed" said Vern, "she was a very strong and powerful person."

In 1965 she and Vern moved their family to Whitehorse, where they lived in Porter Creek in both sides of a duplex. In 1966 they bought "the farm", Wishbone Ranch at mile 10.5 on the Mayo Road to "get the kids out of town". Together, at the farm, Thelma and Vern provided a loving, strong home to many, including their children, foster children and many people who had no where to go. Thelma's home was always open to people, she never turned anyone away, the table was always set. She never thought anything about this, she just did it, it was not a big deal to her.

At the age of 54, Thelma fulfilled her lifelong dream by opening Thelma's Sewing Centre. She owned and operated her sewing business in Whitehorse for many years, serving the Yukon's many varied sewing needs. She had the gift and ability to sew anything; moccasins, parkas, gloves, mitts, and all types of sports and business clothing; but her joy was in making formal evening gowns. She has been awarded first prize a number of times in the gown category at the Yukon Sourdough Rendezvous.

Thelma's greatest conviction was her belief in the future. She gladly gave of herself to all young people. She was our greatest teacher. She taught us to believe in life. She taught us that with hard work and spirit the Creator would always provide for us. She taught us about the traditional values and ways of our people and that the spirit world was as much a part of us as our breath.

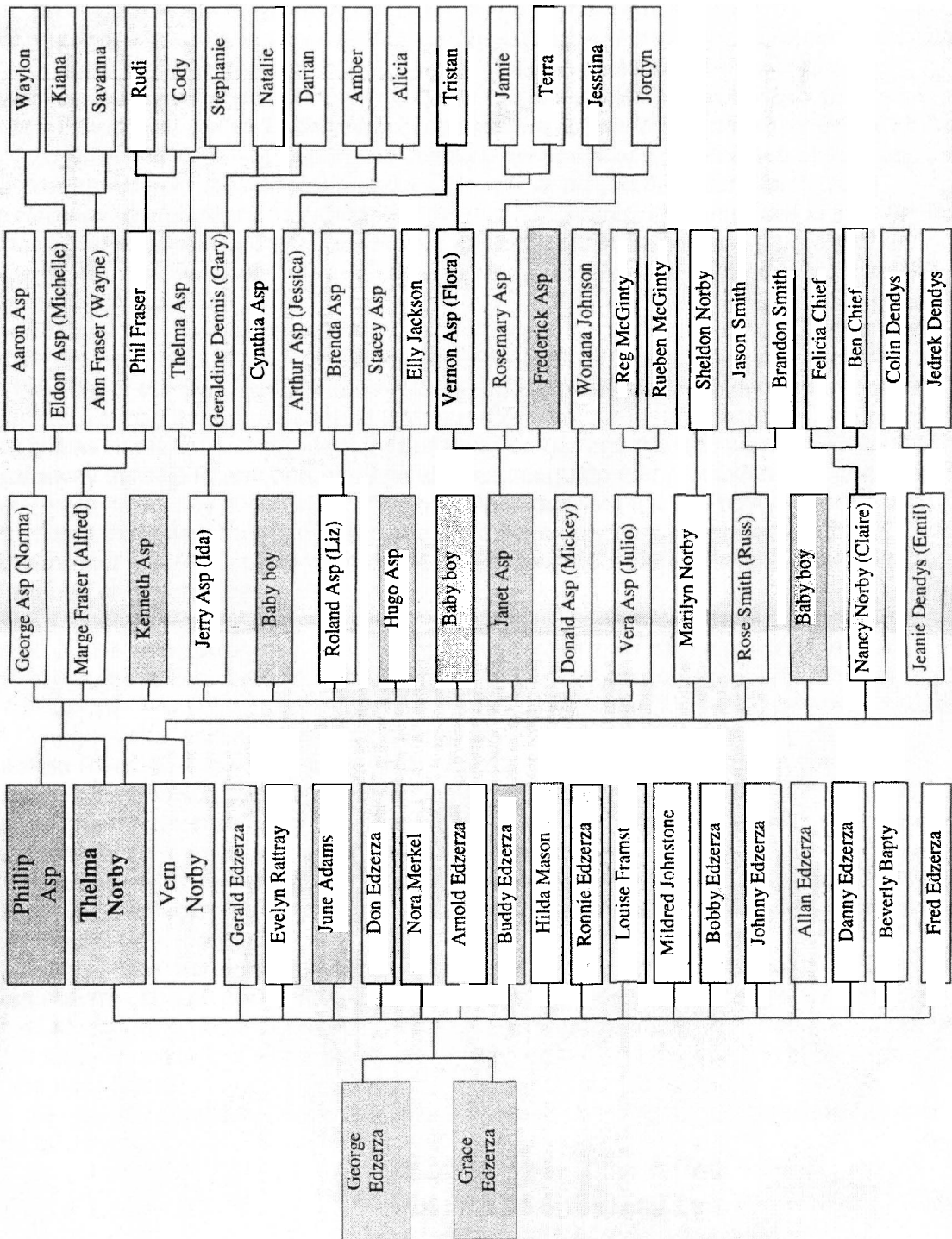
"She believed in education and would take on the education system to make sure that the children received quality education." Said her husband, Vern. Thelma knew that education was the key to ensuring a better future.

Thelma was most appreciated for her frank and honest approach. You always knew exactly where you stood with her. She made sure that you clearly understood her position. She will be remembered for her regal ways, honesty, sense of humour, strength and steadfast perseverance. She was our rock.

(The background flower sketching
was done by Thelma Norby)

[Note: This brief biography was written by Vera Asp with input and assistance from many people, especially her siblings. The biography and the following genealogy chart were distributed at her recent funeral in her pamphlet. Published with the permission of the family.]

Appendix Two - Genealogy Chart - Thelma Norby



Appendix Three - Declaration Of The Tahltan Tribe

DECLARATION OF THE TAHLTAN TRIBE

We, the undersigned members of the Tahltan Tribe, speaking for ourselves, and our entire tribe, hereby make known to all whom it may concern, that we have heard of the Indian Rights movement among the Indian Tribes of the Coast, and of the southern interior BC. Also, we have read the Declaration made by the chiefs of the southern interior tribes at Spences Bridge on the 16th July last, and we hereby declare our complete agreement with the demands of the same, and the position taken by the said chiefs, and their people on all questions stated in the said Declaration, and we furthermore make known, that it is our desire and intention to join with them in the fight for our mutual rights, and that we will assist in the furtherance of this object in every way we can, until such time as all these matters of movement to us are finally settled. We further declare as follows:

Firstly – We claim sovereign right to all the country our tribe – this country of ours which we have held intact from encroachments of other tribes, from time in immemorial, at the cost of our own blood. We have done this because our lives depended on our country. To lose it meant we would lose our means of living, and therefore our lives. We are still as heretofore, dependent for our living on our country and we do not intend to give away the title to any part of same without adequate compensation. We deny the BC government has any title or right of ownership in our country. We have never treated with them, nor given them any such title. (We have only very lately learned the BC government make this claim, and that it has for long considered as its property all the territories of Indian tribes in BC)

Secondly – We desire that a part of our country, consisting of one or more large areas (to be selected by us), be retained by us for our own use, said lands, and all thereon to be acknowledged by the government as our absolute property. The rest of our tribal land we are willing to relinquish to the BC government for adequate compensation.

Thirdly – We wish it known that a small portion of our lands at the mouth of the Tahltan River, was set apart a few years ago by Mr. Vowell as an Indian reservation. These few acres are the only reservation made for our tribe. We may state we never applied for the reservation of this piece of land, and we had no knowledge of why the government set it apart for us nor do we know exactly yet.

Fourthly – We desire that all questions, regarding our lands, hunting, fishing etc., and every matter concerning our welfare, be settled by treaty between us and the Dominion and the BC government.

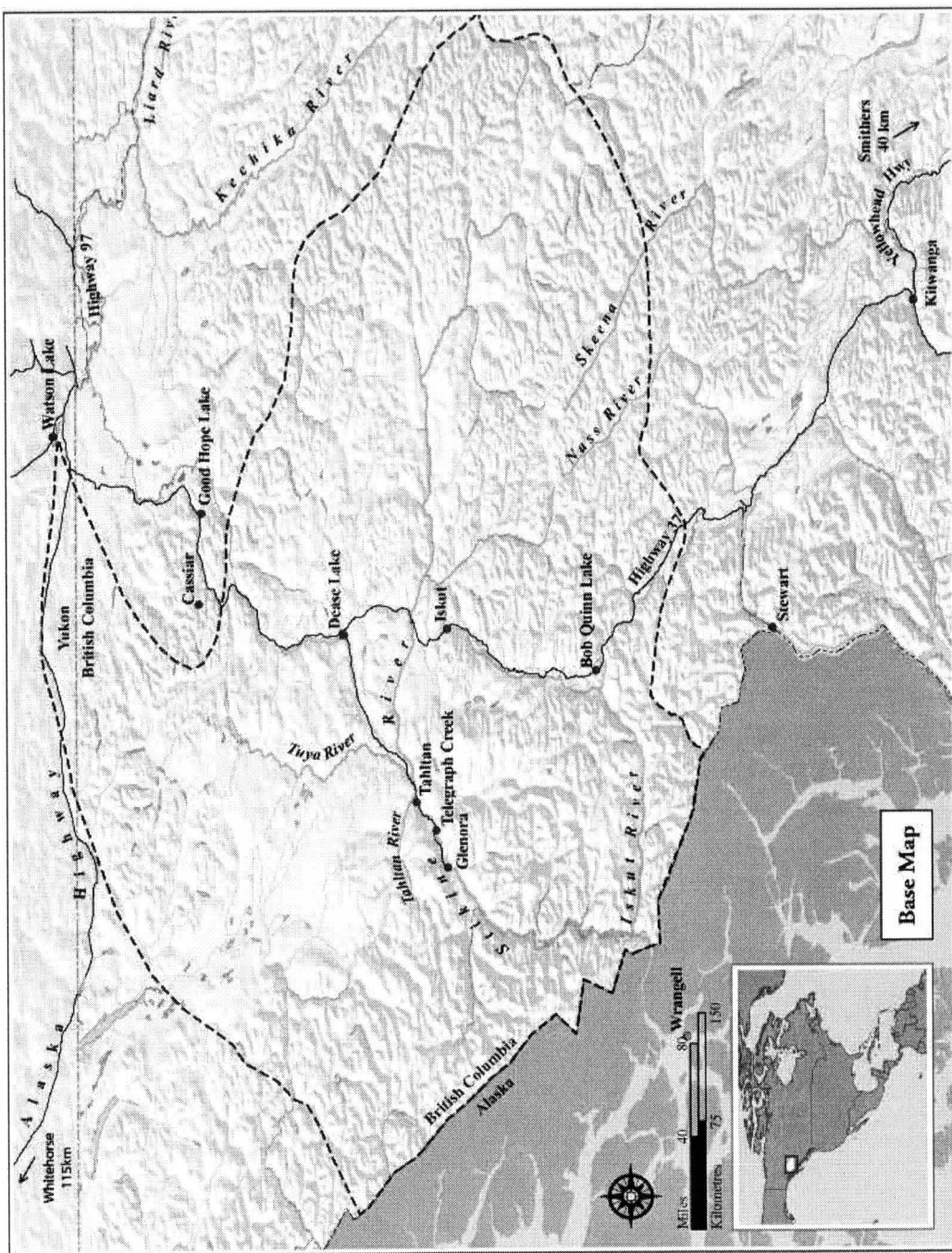
Fifthly – We are of the opinion it will be better for our selves, also better for the governments and all concerned, if these treaties are made with us at a very early date, so all friction, and misunderstanding between us and the whites may be avoided, for we hear lately much talk of white settlement in this region, and the building of railways, etc., in the near future.

Signed at Telegraph Creek, BC, this eighteenth day of October, Nineteen hundred and ten, by

NANOK, Chief of the Tahltan Tribe
NASTULTA, alias Little Jackson
GEORGE ASSADZA
KENETI, alias Big Jackson
And eighty other members of the tribe.

Appendix Four – Map – Tahltan Traditional Territory²

Tahltan Traditional Territory

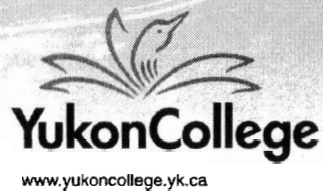


Source: Tahltan Central Council

² Published as part of Tahltan common knowledge

Appendix Five – Letter of Permission – Yukon College

Office of the President
500 College Drive
Box 2799
Whitehorse, Yukon Y1A 5K4
phone: (867) 668-8704
fax: (867) 668-8896
email: swebber@yukoncollege.yk.ca



April 30, 2004

To Whom It May Concern:

This letter authorizes Vera Asp to publish the following documents of Yukon College.

1. Course syllabi for SW352, Bachelor of Social Work Program.
2. Minutes of the Yukon College Elders' Advisory Council, March 3, 1994.

Sincerely,



Sally Webber
President

**Appendix Six –
Yukon College Elder's Advisory Council Founding
Meeting Minutes, 1994.**

**YUKON COLLEGE
ELDERS ADVISORY COUNCIL
To the Vice-President, First Nations**

March 3, 1994

***Not to be reproduced without the written permission of
the Yukon College Elders Advisory Council to Vice-President, First Nations**

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**Yukon College Elders Advisory Council
to the
Vice-President, First Nations**

The Establishment of a Yukon College Elders Advisory Council to the Vice-President First Nations:

A Personal Foreword by Vera ^{ASP}McGinty, Vice-President First Nations

It was an honour and a pleasure to participate and observe our Elders at this meeting. Their enthusiasm and excitement to fulfil their role as teachers of the young in this 1994 forum (Yukon College) was truly an affirmation for me that this was the appropriate process.

I have worked in the field of First Nations education for approximately 20 years. Like other educators, I have had the opportunity of writing, presenting and reviewing numerous reports, as well as listening to the oral reports of our Elders. It has been stated and restated, that in order to have cultural relevance there needs to be active guidance and input from the Elders. Ours is an oral historic society and the transmission of our history and knowledge is the role of the Elders. Our oral history contains all of our values, principles, and laws, and when the elders speak in unity, their word is law.

Traditional education and western-style education (Yukon College) are two entirely different ways, reflective of the cultural differences between an oral literature society and written literature. It is an enormous challenge to create a balance. The formation of this council is just a beginning to try and bring about that balance within the College.

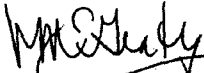
I began consultations with the elders in October, 1993, with the goal of forming a process which would meet the needs as the elders saw them, in a way that the elders saw most fitting. After much discussion with many Elders and others, the direction was set. It was at the Elders recommendation that I called a meeting on March 3, 1994, and subsequently formed the Elders Advisory Council.

The Yukon College Elders Advisory Council is not inconsistent with the present system at Yukon College, for example, President's Committees On Programming (PCOPs) and other advisory bodies. My advisory committee consists of Elders.

The minutes of the founding meeting are a compilation of the notes taken by all four of the staff members present. The terms of reference reflect the agreements and decisions reached by the Elders, as well as the principles they emphasized. The minutes and terms of reference were reviewed orally with each of the Elders and given their approval.

In conclusion, I would like to thank the Elders, and all the people who helped and encouraged me. These are the members of the Yukon College Curriculum Development Team - Sharon Jacobs and Ingrid Johnson, our cultural leaders, Yukon College staff and Board of Governors. Especially, we thank the ancestors who have gone before us and who continue to guide us, thanks to each one of them.

Respectfully submitted,



~~Vera McGinty~~ Ret'd to maiden name
Vera Asp.

Terms of Reference

**Yukon College Elders Advisory Council
to the
Vice-President, First Nations**

"Once a council has decided something in unity, respect demands that no one speak secretly against what has been decided. If the council has made an error, that error will become apparent to everyone in its own time."

The Sacred Tree.

Our Yukon First Nations elders are the repositories of traditional culture, language, and knowledge, and are the traditional teachers whose role is the transmission of these values and principles to youth. In an effort to reflect the mission and values of Yukon College as determined by the Board of Governors, a Yukon College Elders Advisory Council to the Vice-President, First Nations, has been established at their founding meeting on March 3, 1994.

The Yukon College Elders Advisory Council will be composed of five Yukon First Nations Elders who have shown an interest in the revitalization of Yukon First Nations culture and language, and who are willing to provide support to Yukon College through the Vice-President, First Nations. Thereafter, appointments to the Council will be made by the membership of the Council. Members of the Council will serve for a term whose length will be decided and agreed to among themselves.

The Council will meet on a quarterly basis to coincide with a time prior to the commencement of school terms. Traditional Yukon First Nations values will be reflected in the conduct of Council meetings: primary focus will be on oral reporting; there will be no chairperson; decisions will be reached by consensus; and meetings will begin and end in prayer.

The Council will provide support, advice, and guidance for the Vice-President, First Nations, who in turn will work toward implementation of their decisions on matters of First Nations interest in Yukon College. The role of the Council will be to set direction for the program. The Council will always be the final reviewing body for Yukon First Nations curriculum developed and/or delivered at the College.

The long-range goal of the Council will be to ensure the delivery of bi-cultural and bilingual education to students of the College. To this end, the Council encourages stronger involvement of Yukon First Nations in the College. This will be accomplished through the activities of the Council and the Vice-President, First Nations, who has been placed there to represent First Nations people of the Yukon Territory.

The Council will abide by First Nations principles. These principles were discussed and agreed to by the Council at the founding meeting, March 3, 1994. They will include but not be limited to:

Respect in teaching:

- There must be a balance between First Nations and non-First Nations teachings. Language courses and courses in traditional languages are to be offered.
- Oral tradition is important as it is difficult to put our culture on paper. Oral tradition tells me who I am and where I come from. The meaning of oral tradition is important. The key to our culture is the stories. Stories must be recorded in the language so that meaning is not changed, and the whole context is there.
- Our own Yukon First Nations people are to be used in curriculum development and course delivery.

Respect for the students:

- Students must be first and foremost.
- In the preparation for Self-Government, Yukon College has a responsibility. Preparation for leadership roles is to be encouraged in all areas.
- Students must be given the big picture, encouraged to "think big." Every avenue for encouraging students must be used, for example, elders in classrooms and on campus.

Respect for our culture:

- Spirituality is our roots; the ancestors put it in our hearts before they left us.
- We pray before telling stories, and we use prayer at all times. We respect each other and we make decisions by consensus.
- Culture is more than just feathers and beads. Traditional skills must be taught: sewing, learning how to be a woman; and men need to know how to hunt. Environmental protection is to be taught by First Nations people.
- The protection of our future generations is to be considered at all times.

* Not to be reproduced without written permission of the Yukon College Elders Advisory Council to the Vice-President, First Nations Programs and Services.

**Yukon College Elders Advisory Council
Yukon College Board Room
Minutes of
March 3, 1994**

Present:

Elders:

Roddy Blackjack, Northern Tutchone First Nation
Mida Donnessey, Kaska First Nation
Marge Jackson, Champagne and Aishihik First Nation
Pearl Keenan, Tlingit First Nation, Chancellor to Yukon College
Clara Schinkel, Tagish First Nation

Carlene Hajash, grand-daughter to Pearl Keenan

Staff:

^{ASP}
Vera McGinty, Chaudaquock, Vice-President, First Nations, Yukon College
Sharon Jacobs, Member, Yukon First Nations Curriculum Development Team
Anne Turner, Program Advisor, NHSW, Yukon College
Ingrid Johnson, Researcher, Yukon First Nations Curriculum Development Team

Opening Prayer
started by Pearl Keenan,
and continued by each person
in the circle.

Vera:

What do we need at Yukon College?
What do we need for our students?

Roddy:

To learn both cultures in Yukon College "side by side."
Two cultures travelling side by side.
White and First Nations.
Side by side.
Work together.
Learn from each other.
Sharing.
Education has been one-sided.
It's got to have balance.
We never were involved with College before.
But now we are.
We elders should get involved a little stronger.
Support Vera from the elders.

Clara:

We should go a little farther.
There's a gap between younger - older.
We need to look at the gaps.
To fill them in.
There are kids who don't know who they are.
They need to learn their history and who they are.
They need to know who they are based on natural, traditional ways.
They have a right to be here.
Traditional ways need to be side by side with the college.
We have to implement more First Nations curriculum, history.
Besides YNTEP and BSW, include Developmental Studies.
Include cross-cultural courses for Upgrading.
Upgrading students need this too.
To enhance their identity.

Mida:

Long-time people, they learned without school.
People learned from each other.
Mom and Dad, they don't know how to read.
No doctor - Indian medicine.
We teach kids how to live.
We learned from our parents.
Bring teachings into high school.
Keep up with this.
Keep up with our language.

We were raised with our language, sewing, making snowshoes.
We need to keep up with long time ago.
Hard times now.
No work now (so) young people (have to) learn again.
Kids don't know the language.
School spoils people.
They don't know language, culture.
Before, everything was taught by the parents at home.
We need to bring this back.
Traditional lifestyle.
Old people need to talk to young people.

Roddy:

We need to be reminded.
They almost got away with our culture before.
1950's, (they) just about put laws through.
They try to stop us from doing things our way.
Just like we got no culture.
Residential school - they don't talk the language.
Day school - try to come back with our language.
They try to do away with our culture.
Like we got no culture.
They try to make us a nobody.
Now they know they did wrong to us.
But we're starting to come back.
They must also learn our way.
We have to teach our way - can't just learn one way.
I know they did wrong to us.
They try to put us in trouble for hitting drum:
Stop that, too much noise.
Nowadays big truck roll down village day and night.
Nobody complain about that.
They tried to stop potlatch.
We survived.
We have to teach them our culture, too.
Two cultures teaching each other.
Bi-cultural equally.
If we listen to them, we will lose our culture.
More white people are coming.
We need environment rules so they can behave.
We can help in this.
Manage things right for Yukon.

Pearl:

This is the one our grandparents used to tell us about.

The elders predicted this cultural loss.

They used to say:

"Sit down and listen, and learn!"

It's like coming up against a brick wall.

Are you tough enough?

This is the one, the brick wall.

This is the one they were talking about.

Are we smart enough to overcome it?

Culture is the foundation for success.

We must be fair to all people.

I feel for you Vera, you are in a tough spot.

Are you going to be smart enough?

Can you take it without getting mad?

Our students are our biggest concern.

We can't make it easy for the students.

They need the knowledge to live off the land.

So we can be happy and healthy people.

We didn't keep our ways alive.

We need to look at ourselves.

We are at fault.

We need to be patient.

Cultural revival is slow.

Be patient with the young.

Plant seeds.

Have them think big.

We need education because of self-government.

To reflect our pride.

We were here first.

We have to prepare our children to move forward.

This is self-government.

We need the Elder's Advisory Council to direct the College programs.

By consensus.

Have elders talk to the College classes, encouraging them.

We need to have our own people in government as MLA's, leaders.

Marge:

Listen to old people.
Namesake.
My auntie told me something one time.
Stayed in my mind.
What I'm going to say to you is going to stick in your head.
Take your time, everything takes time.
Patience.
We spent a lot of time training you.
We don't want to teach someone else.
Don't leave.
We don't want to start over with someone new.
We have to move ahead.

Clara:

Use our own elders to ensure our own background.
Nobody from south.
Our kids are getting confused.
Use our own resources.
Our own elders.
But at the same time, respect other cultures.

Pearl:

Agree with Clara.
We have our own culture.
The Elders Council is against other people coming in.
It's time for us to use our own.
Spirituality is our roots.
Respect for others.
The Creator is in our hearts.
Our ancestors put it in our hearts before they left.

Just like Deputy Minister, DIA.
Dan Goodleaf.
Mohawk.
You, too, you are here.
I feel good.
You are right behind the President.
You aren't Vera here.
You are Yukon First Nations' representative.
I want you to do a good job.

I want to help you.
Call the Elders, ask them for ideas, opinions.
Never make split decisions.
Talk it over with your people and elders first.
Stop and think about it.
Vera, you represent all First Nations.
To look out for the people.
We have our foot in the door.
Don't be alone.

Mida:

Liquor, fighting, wreck people.
People are being killed with liquor.

Nets'emma.
Grandma's name.
Old Smiley.
Daddy from Teslin.
Grandma raise me from Cree.
Grande Prairie.
Three winters to travel up by horse.
My Grandpa was Kaska.
He don't know (prairie) land, grow potatoes, etc.

White people take our people away.
My kids get taken away to school.
That school take my sister away because Mama die.
She lost her language.
Me, I prayed to God.
I don't want to go to school.

We've got to keep up with our language.
If the language is lost, I don't know what our children are going to do.
Use our own people.

Pearl:

It's hard to put our culture onto paper.
Teaching the culture began at birth.
Even before birth.
There are five clans in Teslin:
Eagle, Crow, Frog, Beaver, Wolf.
People know who they are and where they belong.

Roddy:

I was raised by my grandparents.
Taught by them.
They taught me everything about culture.
They taught me everything they know.
Grandparents are very important for grandchildren.
They told stories every night.
They would tell me stories.
Tell it over and over.
All different stories.
That's how you learn your culture.
By story.
Over and over.
Stays in your mind.
Like ABC's.
Something you'll never forget.
Tells you about culture.
Who you are.
Where you come from.
Medicines.
Everything.
I know what I'm doing out in the bush.

Change.
Involvement through Lands Claims agreement.
Land claims was good for First Nations.
It brought more money into the bands.
Self-government is the reason to work together.
Because we get involved, we do it.
Vera, you bring this up to Yukon College for the protection of future generations.
Protection of future generations.
Protection of our natural environment.
We need to protect land and water for the future.
Two cultures working side by side.
At the College.

Clara:

What we're saying is:
Take what is good from both cultures.
We not only want our way but on non-native side.
WE have to bring them together using tools from both sides.
Our job is to do this.

Pearl:

Vera, you are our spokesperson here.
Listen and take our message forward.
How clans work together.
We need to be patient.
Cultural revival is slow.

Vera:

First Nations Curriculum Development.
We have a team in place.
The elders are needed to provide input.
Two courses are being considered.
Family and kinship systems.
The story about the woman who married the bear.

Pearl:

Make sure the stories are gospel truth.
Check.
You can't leave anything out.
Tell it exactly the way it is.
Too many people add their own little version to it.
Be careful when you do it.

(To Ingrid)

Think of your Grandfather Fox.
Let him be your guide.
Is he going to be proud of you?
Or is he going to be mad at you?

Bear story.
Our version.
Not going to be mouthy or say anything to animals.
Really do it the best way.
Record it in the language.
Then translate it word for word.
Include the teachings and morals.
We believe in it.
There's meaning to it.
Always go to two or three elders.
Get different versions of it from books and stuff.
And then get your Mom's (Mabel Johnson).

Marge:

The Bear.
That's why if he kill man he go away and never come back.

Roddy:

That Bear story.
Everywhere across Canada.
Learned from grandparents.
Everyone got just little different version.
Don't know which one is right.

Marge:

Ask everybody.
Old people.
See which way they're different.
Find out.
We are careful about all animals.
Dog story, too.

Mida:

Can't talk about bear.
Even when they are denned up.
Dog story.
Must pray before telling the bear story.
Moose, can't call it any way.
Spring is close.
Can't talk about animals.
They are ready to mate.

Pearl:

Glad to see the rest of the elders here.
It's for the future generations.
How can we better our kids?
Can't go back.
Got to go ahead.
That's with everything.

Closing prayer. Meeting adjourned. Next meeting, May, 1994. Terms of Reference paper to be drafted and sent to members.

YUKON COLLEGE

OUR VISION

Satisfaction of the educational needs of adult learners in a northern context.

OUR MISSION

Relevant, excellent, affordable adult education.

OUR VALUES

In fulfilling its mission, Yukon College will

- Respect all people;
- Respect the environment;
- Utilize the knowledge of First Nations;
- Be fair, open, trusting, sharing and caring; and
- Pursue excellence.

OUR GOALS

We will strive to achieve the following goals to the best of our ability:

- Meet the needs and expectations of our students.
- Create a collaborative environment with our staff.
- Be highly responsive to the adult learning needs of our community.
- Provide open access and the means to success for all our students.
- Continuously improve the quality of our programs and services.
- Work in partnership with the community.
- Incorporate First Nations' knowledge in our programs and services.
- Enhance functional literacy among Yukoners.
- Be sensitive to the environment and minimize our negative impact on the environment.
- Be a leader in the development of the Yukon.

PROGRAMMING PRIORITIES

1. Programs have to be linked to demonstrated needs of the community and the outcomes evaluated.
2. Skill development appropriate to the achievement of students' chosen career paths or individual goals.
3. Specific programs and services in response to the self-determination needs of First Nations people.
4. Decentralized programming.
5. Distance education.

August 1993

Appendix Seven – Yukon College Course Syllabi, SW 352



ACADEMIC STUDIES DIVISION
SOCIAL WORK 352
SPRING/SUMMER 1995
COURSE OUTLINE

CULTURAL CAMP

Coordinators: Anne Turner, Sam Johnston	Date: August 7-11, 1995
Phone: 668-8746	Location: Ayamdigut Campus - Rm 1440
Office: Trades Wing Office C	Time: 9-4 p.m.
Credit Hours: 9	Date: August 14-24, 1995
	Location: Brook's Brook, Teslin, YT
	Time: Continuous

COURSE OUTLINE

This course is intended to provide students with an opportunity to learn about traditional First Nation values, philosophy, spirituality and ceremonies. Included is a ten day experiential camp under the direction of Yukon First Nation elders.

COURSE PREREQUISITES

- * Admission to N.H.S. W/B.S.W. program
- * SW 389

COURSE TRANSFER

For information about the transferability for this and other courses, please contact the Academic Studies Office.

COURSE SUMMARY

This class is intended to educate and promote awareness and appreciation for First Nation cultures and lifestyles. The learning process will take place in a natural environmental setting with the elders and other resource people as teachers. First Nation world view and lifestyles will be introduced. Some of the topics that will be covered are: First Nation history, philosophy, social and political systems.

The instructor reserves the right
to change the course outline.
Reviewed by: Curriculum Subcte. Y.C. April, 1994
Approved by: U.G.S. cte. Fac. of SW, University of Regina March 8, 1995
Effective: 19.12.94

SIFC Course Summary

The primary purpose for the social work cultural camp is to educate and heighten awareness about Indian cultures and lifestyles. This is accomplished through a natural environment setting of the cultural camp and experiential learning, utilizing Indian indigenous resource people. The cultural camp class will introduce Indian worldview and its living expression through culture. It will also facilitate the promotion of positive Indian image, identity and coping with contemporary conflicts, stress and confusion.

CLASS OBJECTIVES

1. To gain an awareness, appreciation for community living as an individual, a social worker in a community, and how each individual has impact on the community and its development. Students will learn this through the planning, organization and implementation of Culture Camp.
2. To actively participate and experience a traditional First Nation lifestyle in a natural environmental setting. The success of the camp will depend upon how involved each individual participates in the decision-making process, in the growth of and the maintaining of a strong, healthy and balanced community.
3. To learn and understand the traditional First Nation education process through the oral tradition utilizing elders and other resource people. Issues such as First Nation history, philosophy, social, political and psychological factors will be explored. Some solutions to some problems may also be discussed.

Note: course objectives differ and are less than SIFC

CLASS FORMAT

The class format and teaching hour requirements will adhere to the following schedule:

- A) Pre-camp Preparation
Monday - Friday, August 7-11, 1995
9-4 p.m.
Ayamdigut Campus
- 30 hours
- * Introduction to community and its government
 - * Lectures in cultural awareness
 - spirituality
 - clan systems
 - social issues

The instructor reserves the right
to change the course outline.
Reviewed by: Curriculum Subcte. Y.C. April, 1994
Approved by: U.G.S. cte. Fac. of SW. University of Regina March 8, 1995
Effective: 19.12.94

- contemporary Yukon First Nation issues, etc.

CLASS FORMAT - continued

- * Focus on teamwork
- * Decision making on activities
- * Camp preparation and responsibilities

B) Actual Culture Camp Experience
10 day on site camp activity @ 10 hours per days
August 14-24, 1995
Students will be expected to be on site throughout the camp experience.

100 hours

C) Evaluation, Assessment, and Debriefing
August 25, 1995 at Ayamdigut
9-4 p.m.
7 hours

D) Final paper due date:
August 31, 1995

CLASS EVALUATION

The class format will be evaluated on a Pass/Fail basis. The following criteria will be used to evaluate student performance.

- 1) Experiential learning 60%
 - a) Students will be involved in the planning, organizing and implementation of the culture camp. Attendance and participation in decision-making, work assignments and orientation phase will be evaluated by instructor(s). (10%)
 - b) Students will be evaluated on experiential learning as set out in class objectives. Involvement, co-operation, attitudes and behaviour, relationship and camp lifestyle will be evaluated by instructor(s), elders and other teachers. (50%)

Students will be graded by coordinators/elders on a day by day basis for evidence of understanding of cultural content, participation in activities, overall cooperation and leadership within the camp. Up to 10 points could be assigned for each day in camp. Students will be advised for their marks at their request and at the end of c.c.

2) Oral Presentation 15%

Each student will do an oral presentation near the end of the culture camp experience. The presentation will focus on personal learning and gained knowledge from the experience. The presentation should be a minimum of 10 minutes to a maximum of a half hour.

The content - quality and quantity (10%).

Communication style (5%).

The oral presentation will be evaluated by the instructor(s).

3. Written Report 25% Due Date: August 31, 1995

a) A paper will be required from each student. The paper should examine expectations, activities participated in, feelings and learning experiences of the culture camp. The application of the learning experiences and practices to social work, personal growth and development and cultural awareness should also be explored.

b) A log book or personal journal to cover daily learning experiences, activities, feelings and awareness is recommended to assist in both the oral presentation and written report.

COURSE COMPLETION REQUIREMENTS

ALL EVALUATIVE REQUIREMENTS FOR SW 352 - WRITTEN OR OTHERWISE, ARE MANDATORY and must be complete and submitted to the instructor. FAILURE TO COMPLETE ANY OF THE COURSE EVALUATIVE REQUIREMENTS FOR SW 352 WILL AUTOMATICALLY RESULT IN A COURSE GRADE ASSESSMENT OF FAIL.

IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE SPIRIT AND INTENT OF THE CULTURE CAMP, STUDENTS ARE REQUIRED TO TOTALLY ABSTAIN FROM ALCOHOL AND DRUGS FOR THE DURATION OF THE CULTURE CAMP EXPERIENCE. ANY STUDENT(S) WHO DO NOT ADHERE TO THIS PRACTICE WILL AUTOMATICALLY FAIL THE CLASS AND BE REQUIRED TO LEAVE THE CULTURE CAMP SITE.

The instructor reserves the right
to change the course outline.
Reviewed by: Curriculum Subcte. Y.C. April, 1994
Approved by: U.G.S. cte. Fac. of SW. University of Regina March 4, 1995
Effective: 19.12.94

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Personal Conversations

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