

Long Term Strategies for Institutional Change in Universities and Colleges: Facilitating Native People Negotiating a Middle Ground

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In the epistemological sense there is no question that the tribal method of gathering information is more sophisticated and certainly more comprehensive than western science. In most tribal traditions, no data is discarded as unimportant or irrelevant. Indians consider their own individual experiences, the accumulated wisdom of the community that has been gathered by previous generations, their dreams, visions and prophecies, and any information received from birds, animals and plants as data which must be arranged, evaluated and understood as a unified body of knowledge...tribal knowledge systematically mixes facts and experiences which western science would separate by artificial categories.

The question being asked by Vine Deloria in the article referred to above is quite simply "Why do we think that western science is the criterion of truth and accuracy? Why is tribal knowledge described as striving on an ad hoc basis to rival the information obtained by western science?" Consideration of this question must precede planning for any scholarship or incentive program, curriculum development, or access program we can design to entice Native people into the science or mathematics. The approach that is often taken in recruitment of Native people into, for example engineering programs, can often be referred to as the Field of Dreams approach - build it and they will come. Hang a cedar shingle on the ivy with Native engineering program on it and you will get Native students. Perhaps even give it a catchy Indian name or design some brochures with feathers and medicine wheels and you will double the numbers. It is true that this approach will get some students but the truth is that you would probably get these students anyhow. Institutions are often caught on the horns of a self-perpetuating dilemma - raise the admission hurdles too high and you attract only the brightest and the best while denying access to many who might succeed. Set the admission hurdles too low and you set students up for failure who lack the requisite academic, organizational, and life skills to cope with the demands of the program. The solution lies not in designing better access programs (although cognate support services are greatly needed) but in empowering students to take responsibility for their own academic progress; empowering the discipline to embrace new approaches and ideas; and, empowering institutions to embrace the change resulting from the interaction between the former two. One of the better known young Native engineers in Canada is Karen Decontie from the community of Kitigan Zibi (Maniwaki) near Ottawa. When asked what she attributes her interest in engineering and science, and her success in the program, she says "Children need positive role models to enhance their development and self-esteem. My role models were my mother and father. My mother is Director of the Algonquin Immersion Program and a teacher at Kitigan Zibi Kikinamadinan in Maniwaki. She was also the first principal of this First Nations controlled school. My mother is responsible for ensuring that our language and culture are an integral part of the education received by our students. My father was a fisherman and worked in construction for thirty years in the United States and returned home to start his own excavating business" It should be noted that in addition to being an engineer Ms.

Decontie is also a traditional Native dancer and dance instructor. What is important about her statement is not her reference to role models. We all recognize and acknowledge the importance of role models in determining the range of attractive life choices available to young people. The significant part of the statement above is the reference to culture particularly as it relates to her mother. While her father is an extremely important part of her life it is the example of her mother, as a woman who has chosen to actively work towards the maintenance and promotion of her culture in a contemporary context, that seems to allow Ms. Decontie the freedom to be Indian in a very non-Indian world and profession. While choosing to work in a non-traditional (for an Indian woman) profession she has maintained a strong sense of herself as an Indian woman. This is exhibited in her role as a traditional dancer and dance instructor, in her social and cultural life, in her frequent trips home, in her stated values and in her strong commitment as an Indian role model. Ironically enough her dream as an engineer (which she has realized) was to build bridges. Perhaps the most important bridge she has built is the one between her culture and experience as an Indian woman and the non-Indian world she has chosen to build her profession in.

Coming to the University

When Indian students come to university they may be coming from any number of situations and be located anywhere along the scale of acculturation. Some speak their Native languages fluently some not at all. Some may be active participants in the traditional religions - the Midewiwin Lodge, the Sun Dance Society, the Longhouse religion for example, others may be staunch Roman Catholic, Anglican or even Pentecostal or Southern Baptist. Some might come from very remote isolated communities where trapping and hunting are still the main economic activities, others from the core of Canada's biggest cities. Most come from somewhere between these extremes. It needs to be stated here that extreme caution should be exercised in attempting to make any determination about the extent of inculturation that has occurred in any individual. A person might exhibit many of the outward signs of inculturation yet hold deep foundational values which are Native. An Ojibway man I know in Toronto left his reserve in Northern Ontario early in life to find work and has lived in the cities of Chicago and Toronto for over three decades. He fits no stereotypes of "the INDIAN". He wears his hair short. He holds a responsible managerial position with an industrial firm. He enjoys the Blue Jays. He has held several responsible positions on the Boards of Directors of non-profit agencies. He is well educated. He speaks English impeccably and some French. On the surface he seems inculturated. He also is a skilled hunter who not only gets his moose and deer each year but shares it out in the community in a traditional manner. Although a practicing Roman Catholic he also follows the traditional Pipe religion and is a Pipe Carrier. He speaks seven Native languages fluently. This example illustrates that the shift from critical and informed cultural analysis to stereotype and racist assumptions is a very easy process. Despite the variation of their backgrounds one thing that Native students have in common when they come to campus is that they come to inhabit the "middle ground." I am borrowing this historical term which refers to the ever-shifting frontier inhabited by Native people and non-Native people in the early stages of colonization where a society developed which was neither Indian nor white and whose parameters were defined on a continually shifting yet more or less equitable base by both groups. When Native people come to university they are not passive victims of an unfamiliar, opaque and omnipotent other-culture (*uber kultur*) but they are determinants of culture - their own personal cultures, the culture of the Native community within the institution, and hopefully the wider culture of the institution. They carry with them their own understandings, values, beliefs and behaviours consistent with these. They also usually have a much better understanding of the dynamics of the dominant culture than it has of theirs. If we fail to apprehend this as an active truth then we fail to deal with the student in a productive manner which facilitates their success at university.

While there has been much discussion of cultural hegemony and the resultant *ethnostress* experienced by Native students the discussion has taken place in an intellectual framework which views disempowerment and disenfranchisement of Native people as inevitable. A more reasonable and useful model sees opportunity for cultural interaction within institutions posited on the inevitability of cultural persistence and the inability of all but the most fascistic cultural constructs to resist change.

Women and Middle Ground

One group that has begun the process of establishing middle ground in the university is women. The degree to which this has signaled real institutional change varies widely across departments, disciplines and faculties. Having said that women have entered into the process of negotiating the middle ground I am not suggesting that the process is anywhere near complete. The example I will use to illustrate this point is the area of engineering. In the early 1960's protest singer Peggy Seeger was lyricizing , An Engineer could never be a lady Dainty as a dishrag Faithful as a chow An engineer could never have a baby You'll grow up to be a gal... Not a woman... This song about a young girls dream of becoming an engineer and all of the reasons her mother (and society) could think of for her not becoming one epitomized the struggles women had for equitable access to programs like engineering. The final lyric of the song deals with becoming an engineer and the fight for equal pay. Debates over the behaviour of students and initiation rites in engineering schools at the beginning of each school year are commonplace across the country. Student newspapers invariably uncover some new atrocity committed by the student body. Most engineering faculties have worked hard to curb the worst excesses and many universities have imposed strong disciplinary codes and sanctions against sexist, harassing or intimidating behaviour. Much of this was done in the wake of the Montreal Massacre as a result of women realizing that as a matter of survival they needed to demand the terms whereby they would participate in university programs. Much work had been done prior to this and as women slowly start to occupy faculty positions the discipline will change. The change in the discipline itself is reflected in the growing body of literature that is now being produced by women which addresses the very question of how women's ontology differs from that of men (who have almost exclusively defined the parameters of the discipline in the past). Books like Discovering Reality, Feminist Perspectives on Epistemology, Metaphysics, Methodology, and Philosophy of Science edited by Sandra Harding and Merill B. Hintikka represent a redefining of the scientific enterprise within an alternative cultural framework, and thus the carving out (or negotiation) of middle ground by women. Twenty years ago at the University of Toronto only five percent of engineering students were women. Today the number is up to twenty-one percent. The presence of women as an active voice in organizations like the Professional Engineers Association of Ontario is reflected in the Women In Engineering Advisory Committee to the PEO and other organizations like the Women In Engineering Association and Women In Science. When asked what was the single most important factor in the increase of the numbers of women studying engineering Diedre Stanton, at the Office of the Registrar of the Faculty of Applied Science and Engineering at the University of Toronto, identifies the creation of a "critical mass" of women. When a significant enough number of women are enrolled in the same cohort they are able to provide support for each other. Perhaps more importantly however they can assert themselves, identify positions and leaders, and speak their voice -- in other words they them have the capacity to change the culture they live in. In doing so they make it better for all not just for themselves -- they humanize a culture in which inhumanity is often lionized.

Balance and the "Seven Grandfathers"

One of the most important cultural understandings that all Native North American peoples hold to is the necessity and the rightness of "living a good life." In Ojibway (Anishnaabe) this is expressed in the phrase *mino bimaadziwin* - to live a good life. Living a good life can mean many things but it can essentially be reduced to the sense of balance and beauty that is the result of the taking up of one's responsibilities. This is not an easy concept to translate for non-Indian people who tend to view obligation as onerous. In the causal world of the Indian all beings are caught up in an intricate web of obligation and mutual reciprocity. To fail to fulfill one's responsibilities is to cause imbalance which can have minor or major effects ranging from a sense of things not being right (dissatisfaction with self) to bad luck and may even result in injury or death. Among some Indian groups like the Navajo (Dineh) when an offense is committed either deliberately (rejection of responsibility) or through omission (neglect of responsibility) elaborate healing ceremonies are required to restore this balance. In universities and colleges there has been a tendency within student culture to embrace irresponsible behaviour. This is epitomized in such staples of popular culture as the movie *Animal House*. This is slowly changing as harsher economic realities force students to worry about graduating with higher grades for access to a restricted job market; the fear of AIDS and STD's place some constraints on sexual behaviour; and universities, increasingly caught up on the horns of liability, are encouraging more responsible behaviour in alcohol consumption. Nevertheless the rowdy undergraduate still remains a potent symbol for students and nowhere more so than in faculties of Engineering and Medicine. The exploration of identity and the requisite socialization of undergraduate student life are important and positive parts of the student experience but they remain posited upon the notion that student life is a rite of passage. As such it is the final opportunity for adolescent exploration prior to taking up a job, a family, a mortgage and other symbols of adulthood in Euro-Canadian society. A rite of passage which emphasizes that it is the "last gasp of freedom" prior to assuming responsibility. This is a cultural construct directly in opposition to Indian values which emphasize that the only good life is one in which a person lives out their responsibilities in a conscious and deliberate manner. In the Ojibway (Anishnaabe) cosmology there are seven values (teachings) which are paramount. Though other Indian people may express these in different ways there is consensus that these values are basic to most Indian peoples. These Teachings are referred to among the Ojibway as the Seven Grandfathers and these are: Nbwaakin - Wisdom; Zaagidwin - Love; Mnaaddendmowin - Respect; Aakdehewin - Bravery; Gwekwaadziwin - Honesty; Dbaadenizwin - Humility; Debwiwin - Truth.

The Seven Grandfathers are teachings which are understood in the context of a relational world; a world in which the self is understood as it stands in relation to the Creator, the Pawaagan (Spirit masters), non-human beings, animals and plants and other people; a world in which all things are potentially animate and therefore worthy of respect and care. As one Native scientist has put it "Mother Earth has rules and regulations. If we don't understand it, it is our problem and we must learn to understand. We must take responsibility as to what happens to Mother Earth as everything is connected." This alter-Native understanding is light years away from the rationalist view of the universe which posits that all knowledge is knowable and that individual verifiable observation (the scientific method) is the path to understanding. One Native artist and educator has said that if he were designing a drawing course for Native people he would not begin with the traditional exercises taught in Canadian art schools. These courses focus on drawing models, the human form. Rather as a Native person he would teach his students to draw the land first. Take them to the bush, to the lakes, to the hills and teach them to draw the land and the sky -- to go outside themselves, to *decentre* the sense of self. An approach at odds with art teachers from the Renaissance onwards, yet one which is perfectly sensible to Native people.

When the Mohawks of Akwesasne approached the problem of designing

culturally relevant and appropriate math/science curriculum in their community they started with the question.

What is the Mohawk way of schooling? Bring in the resources of the earth: frogs, landscape, rivers and other parts of the natural world. Earth is the basis of the curriculum. Since Science equals Nature Native students can learn a lot about their culture. Students must understand the relationship between the Creation story of the land - themselves - the Creator - relationship to others and how these things relate to science.

Tobias, in her research on the effects of pedagogical method on effective learning in American universities, has shown that in many cases it is not a lack of requisite ability that deters many students from successful completion of science and math-based programs but rather a series of other pedagogical factors around learning styles which result in lack of success. As she puts it

Some students who could do well in science chose not to...What they experience, painfully and without adequate explanation from professionals, is that their preferred learning styles do not serve them well when they cross certain disciplinary boundaries.

The problems that native students face in the classroom go far beyond the requirement to step outside of one's comfort zone of learning. That problem is increased exponentially by the ethnostress experienced by Native students who find that what they are being taught (not just how they are being taught) is somehow inimical to their identity as Indian people. To address a problem of this magnitude requires strategies that go far beyond four-colored brochures with Native art or programs with Native names. These strategies require real institutional change where Native students coming into the programs in conjunction with program administrators are encouraged to negotiate a "middle ground" which affirms Native values, strengthens identity, allows for the full expression of an Indian world view within the course of study, and provides the skills and knowledge necessary for successful completion of the program.

Openness and Respect

What then are the prerequisites necessary to provide students with the facility to negotiate a middle ground within an institution? I do not say to ensure success as I believe that to be a joint responsibility of the student and the institution and the conditions necessary for success are to be worked out between the those parties. I think we need to step back from that point and say what are the prerequisite steps and approaches the institution must embrace to ensure dialogue. In the traditional Council lodge of the Anishnaabe it was the given responsibility of the leaders of the Bear Clan people to ensure that all who spoke were heard fairly and equitably. In the Ojibway construction of social reality equality of voice was a spiritual responsibility and competition to be heard mitigated by a profound sense of egalitarianism. In universities the voice of students generally is heard in a number of ways, and with varying weights:

- Student Councils (Representative bodies);
- Student representation on university committees and Boards of Governance;
- Student media;
- Student organizations and associations;
- Complaints offices ie. Ombudsman office;
- and, student organized protest events

In the adherence to the dialectic which universities have embraced as a primary ontological construct the voice of students is usually expressed in an adversarial fashion and in competition with a number of other interest groups

within the university community. The response of non-western peoples then is often to withdraw and establish alternate representative bodies or to become marginalized and not participate in any fashion.

Native students have tended not to be too formally organized although most college and universities do have some form of Native Student's Association. In many cases the links between these associations and other student bodies are tenuous. Among the indices that need to be measured to indicate whether or not Indian students have established themselves in a successful manner in the institution is the degree to which they participate in the polity of the institution. Other indices I would suggest which are important are:

1. Whether culturally-safe space has been established within the institution;
2. Whether the number of new and current students will sustain a critical mass of peer support and encouragement;
3. Whether Native specific student representative bodies (NSAs) have been established;
4. The extent of integration with the larger Native community in the *centre* in which the institution is located;
5. The equitable representation of Native students across faculties and disciplines;
6. The number of tenured Native faculty within an institution;
7. The amount of Native specific academic programming within an institution;
8. The amount of core funds expended by the institution on Native student support services;
9. The extent to which Native student services and Native-specific academic programming are integrated;
10. Native access to the institution's decision making bodies;
11. Faculty involvement with Native community-based research projects.

All of these indices are measurable over a period of years and while there may be time-sensitive issues that influence particular institutions I believe that taken together, measuring a period of say ten or twenty years, they reveal a true picture of institutional commitment -- or lack of commitment.

Where Native students have had a physical space (ie., the TUNA Lounge at Trent University or First Nations House at the University of Toronto) they have had the capacity to develop much stronger Native associations, but have maintained an isolationist position *vis-a-vis* the rest of the student population. This is significant as it suggests that there is no middle ground being developed, although there is "indigenous space" or "Indian country", which is almost analogous to reservation land, within the confines of the institution. I do not believe this is a negative -- indeed the development of culturally-safe space for Native students is I believe one of the prerequisites to the negotiation for middle-ground for Native students. While there are many examples of where this has been done, and in Ontario the Ministry of Education and Training Aboriginal Education and Training Strategy funded several colleges and universities to establish such *centres*, there are three that deserve mention either for the amount of time they have been established or for the amount of institutional commitment they signify; these are the TUNA (Trent University Native Association) Lounge at Trent University, First Nations House at the University of Toronto, and First Nations House of Learning at the University of British Columbia (the UBC Longhouse). The other that also bears mention is the Native Student's Lounge at the University of Windsor. This is primarily notable as it represents a partnership between the local Native community, through the Windsor Can-AM Friendship Centre and the University of Windsor.

These facilities have come about through various means. In some cases the demands of a significant and growing Native student population; in others

the vision of determined faculty; in other cases they are the result of reports done regarding the need of Aboriginal people in the institution, or the need to attract more Native students. What they have come to represent for Native people, within and outside of the institution, is a place where Native people can define their own experience within the institution. These places working at their ideal best fulfill the following functions:

1. A focusing point for Native students to gather;
2. A sense of institutional commitment;
3. The opportunity for the Native community at large to interact with the campus Native community;
4. A focal point for the delivery of Native-specific programming within the institution;
5. A point of consultation for the institution with the Native community.

In order to ensure the above the institution must commit to doing more than merely providing a physical space and calling it a Native Students Lounge. It must commit staff, resources which shore up a sense of the importance of indigenous knowledge, resources to *indigenize* the space, and must review its other policies and procedures to ensure that Native cultural practices are welcomed. To illustrate this last point one of the most widespread and important Native cultural ceremonies is the practice of smudging. This is done prior to most gatherings of any importance and is always accompanied by prayer. To describe it briefly and simply the ceremony consists of the burning of sacred herbs (usually sweet grass, sage, cedar or tobacco) and the ritual washing of oneself in the smoke as a process of purification. Almost all institutions in Canada have implemented non-smoking policies. Although the ritual use of tobacco is exempt in Ontario under the Tobacco Control Act, and in other provinces under similar legislation, there have been instances where smudging has not been allowed by overzealous security guards, or fire trucks have been called, or people smudging have been accused of smoking illegal substances by ignorant people, where other staff members in adjoining offices have complained to the university safety officer about the smoke from the smudge or even in one case that I know of where an Elder with a particularly thick and smoky smudge pot inadvertently set off the water sprinkler system. While the latter example is somewhat humorous the former ones caused much hurt, humiliation and embarrassment for both the Native people involved and the institutions involved. At First Nations House at the University of Toronto a minor dispute over smudging resulted in the entire space being declared a ceremonial ground for the purposes of exemption under the Tobacco Control Act. If anything the lesson to be learned is that these initiatives must go ahead with a high degree of consultation and partnership between the institution and the local Native community.

If the construction or implementation of Native cultural space, whether this be a Native Student's Lounge/Centre or a full-fledged Native college within the institution, is the first prerequisite to facilitating the negotiating of a middle ground for Native people within an institution what are the other prerequisites? I would suggest that there are five:

1. Equality/Equity in curriculum;
2. Respect for cultural difference;
3. Learning styles;
4. Critical mass;
5. Basic skills base.

One of the myths that Native people, particularly in professional programs, still have to deal with is that they have gained admission to the program merely because they are Native. Accusation from other students that they have not worked as hard, have not jumped as many hurdles, and an expressed sense of grievance that somebody else (usually expressed as "one of my friends") was denied entrance because a Native person was granted

entry are everyday occurrences in universities across Canada. In some cases this leads to failure or incompleteness due to stress, in other cases psychological problems brought on by racial harassment and intimidation, and most usually to the creation of a defensive and isolated group of Native students trying to "keep their heads down" and get through the program. While it cannot be overstated that it is the responsibility of the Deans and Principals who run these faculties to respond immediately and with appropriate sanctions to racial incidents this response will only serve to limit more extreme expressions and will not deal with the underlying misunderstandings that contribute to the formation of racial and stereotyped attitudes which result in bigoted and prejudicial behaviours. This can only ultimately be accomplished by a radical shift in the epistemological approaches current within our universities. There should not be a curriculum in any subject taught in a Canadian university or college (with perhaps the exception of some pure sciences, mathematics and pre-Columbian European philosophy and history) that fails to incorporate First Nations perspectives, history and philosophy and ontology. While I realize that this statement may seem radical it is rooted in the realization that if we accept the rightness of the doctrine of discovery, exploration and conquest of the Americas then we may well accept the curriculum as it is now taught. If we comprehend the doctrine of discovery, exploration and conquest as primarily historical fiction, rationalization and justification for the genocide of the people's of the America's, as an arcane artifact best discarded to the dustbin of history, then we have little choice but to rewrite the curriculum we teach as the first step in the building of a new social order in which Aboriginal people take an equitable place in the learning of our young.

Respecting Cultural Difference

Educational institutions must do far more though than just change their curriculum to embrace new epistemological approaches, they must also make a commitment to embrace cultural difference. This must occur at the level of student interaction, faculty-student interaction, and student-administration interaction. Although universities are places where students are supposed to be allowed to explore identity there is often an immense amount of intolerance and pressure to conform. Ultimately however this pressure might be easily dealt with were there a climate in the institution which allowed real difference rather than diversity within narrow established parameters situated within hegemonic paradigms. Universities and colleges are far more than places in which we impart the knowledge necessary to produce members of society who are functional economic units. They are also places in which we replicate and reinforce the values and beliefs by which our (Euronorthamerican) society functions. Having said that we realize that base, or foundational, values and beliefs are inculcated at a much earlier stage in the education of the individual, but the values and belief systems taught at the post-secondary level are refined and explicated interpretations which are very much tied to the place mature adults are expected to occupy within the socio-economic structure -- if we learn the catechism of culture in Grade school then we learn the theology of it in university. This is the crux of the problem for many Native students then: they do not see a place for themselves in the dominant society, or at least a place they can occupy without violation of their fundamental or base values and thus their very identity as Indians (ie., without renouncing their faith). The values which are taught in universities are not only often opposite to their own (and we remember that this teaching mostly goes on informally) but are even inimical to their own. I do not mean here to take a simplistic good/bad cultural paradigm and suggest that all *Euronorthamerican* values are necessarily bad and that all indigenous values are necessarily good. Quite often the underlying values of the former are portrayed as rapaciousness, greed, selfishness, exploitation and uncaring consumption. The values of the latter in contrast are seen as sharing, generosity, compassion, caring and ecological understanding. There may be, and certainly there were at various points in history, certain

values shared by both. However, to look at it through the lenses of post-modern analysis, when we begin the task of deconstruction of the historical experience of our peoples (of each alone and of the interaction between them) those values held in common have undergone immense change over the historical epoch in which our peoples have interacted. Simply put, they have been put into the machine of history and have come out with significantly altered meanings at the end of the process. These meanings, or understandings, are no longer understandable to the other. An example of this is the word *bravery-aakdehewin*. This word may only be understandable to Ojibway people in Ojibway as the term has none of the heroism associated with it that it does in its English meaning. Another example is the word *love-zaagidwin*: in English it has come to mean primarily romantic love (a feeling). In Ojibway it entails a whole body of relationships and responsibility which signify a belief. Is this a problem of translation? I do not think so. I do not believe it is possible to translate culture - the act of translation in itself so alters meaning that key concepts will be lost. This is the reason that when the Aboriginal Studies Major Program Committee at the University of Toronto was meeting to plan the program the Aboriginal participants insisted that a prerequisite to gaining a degree in Aboriginal Studies at the University of Toronto would be the successful completion of a Native language course. Where then does this leave us if culture is not communicated across linguistic barriers. One of the places it leaves us (and perhaps the most important) is the role of the cultural broker. It is not the role of the cultural broker to translate culture as much as it is to make it understandable to either party in terms that are understandable to each. I believe that there is only one way at this time we have devised which does this successfully and this is through the use of Visiting Elders and Elder-In-Residence programs. Of the two types of elder's programs I would recommend the latter because it allows an individual to not only become familiar with the student body over a course of years but also to become familiar with the culture of the university. Most elders programs work on an ad hoc basis, or even an itinerant basis, but institutions need to consider ways in which elders can become institutionalized in the same manner that the elders of the dominant society are already institutionalized in universities and colleges (ie., Chaplains offices, integration with counseling services, and recruitment of elders as faculty). While Trent University used to have two elders (Jake Thomas and Fred Wheatley) employed as tenured faculty they no longer have and unfortunately seem to have regressed and put their elders on now as quasi-counselors.

Learning Style

One of the questions that students should be encouraged to ask is "How do I know what I know?" Earlier in this article I cited the work of Tobias in examining learning styles and the negative impact of a dominant pedagogical style on the teaching of math and science to otherwise capable students. Universities generally inhabit a narrow range of teaching styles loosely classified as either "American style" or "British style" meaning more or less reliance on lectures and tutorial/seminars. There is a grave error made in hiring people to teach whose primary emphasis has been on individual research for several years. This is not to say that there are not brilliant teachers among the staff of universities in Canada but the fact that they tend to stand out on any campus must tell us something about the overall quality of the classroom experience of the average undergraduate. This problem is made worse (and occasionally better) in larger research institutions where a significant amount of the undergraduate teaching load is taken up by teaching assistants. For Native students the problem is further compounded by a lack of cultural familiarity with teaching styles. We all learn how to learn in the same fashion - in early childhood we watch and we mimic the actions of those we identify as having something to teach us. In a home where the parents read, older children do their homework, important things are written down,

discussed, deliberated over a child will have a definite advantage. That child learns that knowledge comes from books, that discussion is a way of problem solving, that study is necessary. In many Indian communities functional illiteracy remains high, books and paper can be almost non-existent, older children take an active part in raising younger children and often have no place or time to study, and important questions may be deliberated in forums other than the home. This creates an obvious disadvantage for the child coming into the western school system that will remain with them all of their lives. How do these children learn? In many Ojibway communities children learn by watching and doing. They are encouraged to play, to explore, and left with little adult supervision, thereby facilitating independence. When they are with their fathers, or more likely their uncles in more traditional communities, they are expected to learn by watching what their uncles do. In this way they learn to use an ax or run a chain saw to cut wood; where, when and how to set a beaver trap; how to track, hunt, kill and skin a moose, and other skills necessary to live on the land. They are rarely admonished, but often given a teaching. As one speaker at the University of Toronto Visiting Lectureship in Native Health Series described her experience When I was a little girl I was visiting my Grandmother and I saw a great big spider walking across the floor of her house. I walked over to it and I stomped on it with all of my might squashing it flat. My Grandmother who was watching me called me over, but she didn't scold me. All she said to me was "Granddaughter, who is going to feed her little one's now?" What this means for those who teach Native students in the university is that there needs to be some flexibility in approaching pedagogy. The obvious conclusions are already bolstered by some well established practices within some disciplines; the use of practicum, the encouragement of independent thinking and problem solving exercises, etc. Some years back I submitted a proposal to a university I had formerly taught at to develop and teach a course on urban Indian people. This course would be taught in situ at various social service agencies in Toronto. The reasoning being that the Toronto Native community is organized around the Native social service agencies. The idea was rejected with no explanation other than that it would cause logistical problems - this from a university (and department) that sends students to Thailand to study but decided that the one-and-one-half hour trip to Toronto every fortnight was too complicated. The implementation of new approaches to pedagogy requires institutional change which will surely meet with significant opposition from faculty members but which would benefit universities as a whole - perhaps a pedagogical institute for professors is not out of line. With many older faculty retiring soon across Canada perhaps the time is ripe to consider this as new faculty are recruited into institutions. As many merit points for teaching should be available as for research. The recruiting of a significant number of students within the same cohort, course of study etc., may be one of the most important components not only of student success in university and college but also of the ability for those students to influence and change the institutional culture and determine the conditions of their participation. In programs like the Transitional Year Program at the University of Toronto (an upgrading access program for pre-entrance to the University) we have discovered that one or two students trying to make it through the program alone were almost guaranteed failure. Those that made it through successfully reported an immense amount of loneliness and isolation and were often reluctant to continue on in university, choosing college or other situations over continuing at the University of Toronto. When the cohort was increased to four or five students the completion rate rose exponentially and the majority of students chose to go on to the University, and the cohort remained a strong group until they graduated. For students like this the provision of Native specific space and support services is credited as a key factor in their success, particularly as it allowed the continuation of the sense of community begun with the cohort in their first year. The creation of the "critical mass" of students, as has been shown, provides valuable peer support for students but more importantly provides opportunities for leadership development and expression of the voice of the students in a collective fashion. In so doing the

students become empowered and the process of empowerment leads to a realization that they can change not only the small corner of the institution they inhabit but also the institution as a whole. Finally I believe that universities and colleges will never be successful in their attempts to educate Native people without a complete overhaul of the primary and secondary school system. There has been some demand for the creation of Native-controlled post-secondary institutions in Canada. This has been put forth as one of the essential prerequisites to Native self-government. While this is commendable position it is not one which I am entirely sure of. I do believe that a Native-controlled post-secondary institution will be extremely beneficial for Native people but I believe that if Native people controlled their own elementary and secondary schools it would be far more beneficial in the long run. When we first approached the idea of running a Native science camp at the University of Toronto we decided that it would be far more economical and have far greater consequences to reach the teachers who taught Native children. The recruiting model we were working on was not based on the short-term but rather had a ten and twenty year trajectory and was fully informed by the realization that if students were not provided with basic skills in the mathematics and sciences (as well as in grammar, English, etc.) that they were being given false expectations and being set up for failure. We need to work with schools to educate teachers, develop Native culturally based and local specific curriculums, develop policies which create empowered students, and give them the tools necessary not for success as an Indian, or as a white person, but for self-realization within the paradigms of community need. I believe that we need to begin setting out the prerequisites for Native students to be empowered to negotiate a middle ground for themselves within our post-secondary institutions. I do not believe that there will be a reluctance on the part of Native students or Native people to participate in the process if they are shown real institutional commitment; if their culture and values are respected and honoured; if honest and honourable consultative mechanisms are developed; and, if change is effected at the institutional level not just at the end of the process but as a result of beginning the process. Universities and colleges have changed much and in some cases made heroic gains in recent years. This is evidenced by the growing numbers of Native students in our universities and colleges. It is useful at this time to stop and look at where we have come from, where we are, and to dream a little about where we want to be. Many years ago there was a great chief on the North Shore of Lake Huron named Shingwauk. Shingwauk had a dream-vision of a great learning tipi where the Indian children would gather and learn - be educated in the skills and knowledge necessary to walk alongside the non-Indian people who had come to inhabit their lands and participate with them on an equal basis. The vision of Shingwauk of a great tipi of learning is one which we, as Indian people, and we as workers within the centres of learning given responsibility for the education of the young, would do well to share.

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