

Editorial

Honor-Song Leadership

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Verna Kirkness became an editor of *Canadian Journal of Native Education* in 1986 and since then has edited one theme issue each year. She worked with themes that are not easy to deal with but that are at the center of First Nations consciousness. In June she stepped down as editor, Director of the First Nations House of Learning, professor of educational administration, and Director of Native Education at the University of British Columbia.

With this issue the editorial board welcomes Jo-ann Archibald as co-editor. We introduce two new members of the editorial board. Floy C. Pepper of Portland, Oregon, has worked in First Nations education since 1939 and her contributions in counseling, curriculum development, and research are legendary. Sheena Selkirk Bowman, is co-managing editor. She is a research methodologist who teaches in the psychology department at Kwantlen College in Surrey, BC. They are not newcomers to the journal. Elder Pepper has published some of her work on self-esteem in this journal, and Professor Archibald and Dr. Bowman were guest editors of the last issue.

The editorial board joins me in a tribute to Dr. Kirkness. She has been a leader in First Nations education for more than 20 years. By her example she has taught me important things about leadership. I cannot separate Dr. Kirkness's style of leadership from a picture I have in my mind of her leading an honor dance. Honor songs are ancient. In my mind the honor dance she leads is, as always, recreated and new, and the air resonates not only with the drumming but with the collective attention of the participants. There are not many watching because most have joined the dance. In the circle are many who are a little self-conscious and a little awkward because, not having been raised in the culture, they are not sure if they are doing it right, but Dr. Kirkness is leading.

In the past, as I understand it, leaders were recognized as leaders because of their power. When I have watched First Nations leaders I admire, I see that there is another characteristic they share: compassion, along with the knowledge that whenever people connect in caring for each other the tradition revitalizes us and the Ancestors are honored. Leaders serve when they see their own place in maintaining that connection between people. There is a way that leaders carry that connection among people as a concern in their heart. Leadership becomes an example of service, not to gain individual recognition, but because their vision makes their service inevitable. I am describing Dr. Kirkness's style of leadership and I think of it as honor-dance leadership. Just as she would lead at the head of an honor dance, her style of leadership is not imposing; just as in an honor dance, she

does not attempt to set the direction or the rhythm. The direction is inevitable and has been set by tradition; it is forward, balanced, and harmonious. The rhythm is one that is established by the drum, the living song itself. It speaks to the minds and hearts of all who participate.

We honor our colleague and friend for the honor-song leadership she has provided this journal. That song will be heard in new places now as Dr. Kirkness moves on to new roles in leadership.