

# Issues of Respect: Reflections of First Nations Students' Experiences in Postsecondary Anthropology Classrooms

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*First Nations students discuss negative responses to participation in anthropology classes. After contextualizing anthropology courses in the undergraduate curriculum of the Native Indian Teacher Education Program at the University of British Columbia, in connection with Indian control of Indian education, this article explores those negative reactions. A first analytic procedure is the application of Agar's (1986) discussion of perspective and voice. The issue is identified as one of unreconciled claims to authority to describe and define First Nations issues. The position is adopted in this article that the students speak with authority about their reactions, and speak with authority as well about First Nations issues. Some of the students' discussion is categorized and presented in a request to people in the discipline to engage in reflexive examination of underlying premises about authority in anthropological discourse in the broader context of respect. Respect is an issue both in the way research about First Nations peoples is conducted and in the way those issues are presented to students.*

## The Development of a Research Question

Many anthropologists study Indians. Some First Nations students attending university take courses offered by anthropologists about Indians. The purpose of this article, in collaboration with a group of First Nations university students, is to examine and then to represent how those students experience anthropologists' representations of First Nations and how the students represent those experiences. The study is restricted to students at the University of British Columbia (UBC). It is not meant to characterize the Department of Anthropology at UBC nor to define a modal response among First Nations students, but to articulate and examine a common negative response to anthropology.

It is motivated first by these observations. For 12 years it has been my privilege to work as counselor, teacher, and learner in the Native Indian Teacher Education Program (NITEP) at UBC. Among the complex and varied responses of First Nations students to the anthropological study of First Nations peoples, one negative response is common. I will not describe it here except to say that it comes about when anthropologists assume authority to articulate a more coherent, more academically "legitimate" definition of First Nations issues and perspectives than is warranted in their own academic constructs, and when that assumption disregards First Nations' authority. The effects of such presumption on many First Nations students are profoundly and personally negative.

There is a problem here. I must maintain that it is not a problem only for First Nations students but for all of us. I engage that problem with a cautiousness born of respect for the First Nations people with whom I work and live, for the several traditions they represent, and for anthropologists who work to define their own academic traditions in terms that do not discredit persons.

The research question meets Verna Kirkness' criterion for being a "burning question." From the Cree Nation, Dr. Kirkness was Director of the First Nations House of Learning when I began this study. She advised beginning researchers and graduate students to choose "burning questions" for their theses: *What do you care about in your practice that is causing you to want to know more?* I have listened to many stories about anthropology classes; I have witnessed grief, anger, and confusion as a response to many of those classes. I have felt the frustration of participating in a system that causes such pain. So what burning questions are motivated by that observation? I want to know:

- Why are those anthropology classes problematic for so many First Nations students?
- Is there a way we can tackle this problem to ensure that the academic lives of the people in this growing community will be less problematic in the future?

This setting for the study is a specific program at a specific university. These contextual factors are important for an understanding of the discussion that follows.

*The Research Context: First Nations Control of First Nations Education,  
A Practice and a Discourse*

Two main contextual factors within NITEP influence the nature of the present research. The first is the historical background of NITEP and in particular the influence that the National Indian Brotherhood's (NIB) *Indian Control of Indian education* (1972) document has within the operation of the program. A second contextual factor is the First Nations discourse within the program. It is described as a multidimensional and dynamic conversation about First Nations education that influenced both the research conversations and the production of this work.

*Historical Overview of NITEP: Influences of **Indian Control of Indian Education***

NITEP is a program in the Faculty of Education at the University of British Columbia for people of First Nations ancestry who choose to pursue a Bachelor of Education degree with an emphasis on First Nations education. The program was established in 1974 as a result of the collaborative efforts of First Nations educators who were members of the British Columbia Native Indian Teachers' Association (BCNITA) and three Education Faculty members at UBC. Of the 26,000 teachers in BC in 1974, 26 were of

Native ancestry (Archibald, 1986, p. 34). The fundamental objective of the proposal that was presented by BCNITA and accepted by the UBC Senate in 1974 was to

increase the number of Native Indian teachers certified to teach in B.C. schools by developing an alternative program which was more appropriate to the educational background, heritage, needs and desires of people of Indian ancestry. (Faculty of Education, 1974, p. 1)

At the time this research was completed, two of the original BCNITA representatives chaired the Native Indian Education Advisory Committee. Their presence helps to ensure that the original objective has remained central to the integrity of the program. The fact that the program was initiated by First Nations educators rather than institutions, agencies, the federal government, or UBC itself may be a significant factor influencing the credibility NITEP has within the First Nations communities.

NITEP has provided access to postsecondary education to over 600 people since 1974. As of 1993, 165 people have graduated with a Bachelor of Education degree and approximately 18 others have Standard Teaching Certificates. Each year approximately 100 students register in years one to five of the program. Students also continue to the postgraduate level. There were 33 students registered in master's and doctoral studies in 1990-1991 (Kirkness, 1991, p. 1).

The enrollment statistics when compared with the graduation statistics can be interpreted in many ways. Each completed year of a university education is valued within the program and within most First Nations communities. It is said that a student has completed one, two, three, four, or five years of university. The dropout terminology used in many statistical accounts of First Nations education is purposely avoided, considered to be selective labeling devoid of context. Each year of the program has a Native Studies component, an education seminar, and an educational placement in the community, in addition to the required arts, science, and education courses. This program design creates possible exit points at the end of each year. For a variety of personal, academic, and financial reasons not all students choose to complete five years. The withdrawal rate is decreasing dramatically, however, and the number of people returning to complete the program is increasing: in 1974-1975 the withdrawal rate was 21% and in 1990-1991 the rate was less than 2%. In 1989-1990 19% of entrants to the program were readmissions (NITEP, 1991). Research is now being conducted to determine how former students apply their education in consequent career choices. NITEP staff and students maintain connections with many of the people who are working in community administration and education-related positions in the larger First Nations community.

A significant historical feature of the establishment of NITEP is that it coincided with the federal government's acceptance in 1972 of the policy

paper *Indian Control of Indian Education*. This paper was prepared by the National Indian Brotherhood (now known as the Assembly of First Nations) as a result of consultation with and contributions by chiefs, band councils, and education directors of provincial and territorial First Nations organizations. One of the directives in the paper states "The Federal Government must take the initiative in providing opportunities in every part of the country for Indian people to train as teachers. The need for Native teachers is critical" (p. 29).

As a result of the acceptance of this document, operating funds were made available to establish programs such as NITEP at UBC. A 1990 survey of First Nations teacher education programs showed there were 24 programs in Canada.

At the time of this survey 1,628 students were enrolled in these programs, and 1,672 people have completed the programs (Nyce, 1990, p. 31).

The Assembly's document became a reference for the philosophical principles that underlie some of the directions taken as NITEP was implemented and operationalized. Four of these guiding principles and their realization at NITEP are relevant here:

1. These training programs must be developed in collaboration with the Indian people and their representatives in the national and provincial and territorial organizations. The organizations have a major role to play in evolving and implementing the training programs and in encouraging Native young people to enter the education field. (National Indian Brotherhood, 1972, p. 18)

The Native Indian Education Advisory Committee oversees NITEP. It is composed of First Nations educators from each of the areas where field centers are established. For example, in 1991 there were education representatives from the Gitksan, Sto:lo, Carrier, Cowichan, Nishga, and Shuswap Nations. There are also student representatives from the field and campus centers. This committee advises the Faculty of Education on such matters as the hiring of NITEP coordinators, the location of new centers, the closing of operating centers, and the adoption of course changes within the program. The committee is consulted for advice in particularly difficult student cases. Committee members also act as liaison between the local communities and NITEP.

A field center was established in Hazelton in 1991 as a result of a proposal submitted to NITEP by the Gitksan Wet'suwet'en Education Society. The NITEP Advisory Board member from the area facilitated the initial communication in the community. NITEP staff members were invited to attend key community meetings and a network of local people was established. The Advisory Board member and a coordinator with the Gitksan Wet'suwet'en Education Society and a NITEP staff member handled the logistics of setting up the center, selected a local committee to hire the coordinator, and recruited students to the program.



The Native Indian Education Advisory Committee, then, has a leadership role in collaboration and implementation both in the local and the university communities.

2. Unless a child learns about the forces which shape him [sic]: the history of his people, their values and customs, their language, he will never really know himself or his potential as a human being. Indian culture and values have a unique place in the history of mankind.... The lessons he learns in school, his whole school experience, should reinforce and contribute to the image he has of himself as an Indian. The present school system is culturally alien to Native students. Courses in Indian history and culture should promote pride in the Indian child and respect in the non-Indian student. (NIB, 1972, p. 9)

Although this statement is directed to the education of children both male and female in NITEP, it has been taken to apply to the education of adults and especially to those adults who will become teachers. Native studies courses are core requirements in the NITEP student's degree. These courses are designed and taught by First Nations instructors. The courses deal directly with contemporary and historical matters from a First Nations perspective. Students are encouraged to explore their own national heritage within this framework.

3. Native teachers and counselors who have an intimate understanding of Indian traditions, psychology, way of life and language, are best able to create the learning environment suited to the habits and interests of the Indian child. (NIB, 1972, p. 18)

Since the mid 1980s, the majority of the NITEP faculty is of First Nations ancestry and all have been teachers and administrators in band and/or public school systems. Although NITEP students spend many hours in classrooms taught by non-Native instructors in arts, science, and education courses, First Nations educators are in instructional, counseling, and administrative positions within the program itself. For example in the 1991-1992 academic year there were seven First Nations faculty members and two non-Native faculty members in NITEP. All support staff in the program are First Nations.

4. The fundamental assumptions behind much of the work in NITEP are that First Nations teachers will make a difference to the success of First Nations children in the school systems and that First Nations people must have control and influence in the educational systems in which their children participate. The Assembly's paper states this assumption:  
Those educators who have had authority in all that pertained to Indian education have, over the years, tried various ways of providing education for Indian people. The answer to providing a successful educational experience has not been found. There is one alternative which has not been tried before: in the future, let Indian people control Indian education. (NIB, 1972, p. 28)

Haig-Brown (1991) states in her review of the literature on First Nations control that First Nations educators, researchers, and writers only cursorily articulate the assumptions behind this belief (Indian control) and rarely debate their validity. Indian Control of Indian Education is not under

debate within NITEP or within the other First Nations programs at UBC; it is an operational belief.

Issues of control in school settings where students will be teachers and administrators are discussed and analyzed in seminars and Native studies classes. Nathan Matthews, a recent graduate of Ts'kel, a master's in educational administration program within the First Nations House of Learning at UBC, has written several papers on school-based evaluation. In his article "Jurisdiction and Control in First Nations Schools Evaluation" Matthews (1990) proposes five criteria for school evaluators to use as guidelines in school assessment in relation to jurisdiction and control. These guidelines are meant to be used to understand the degree of control the community presently exercises and its capacity to expand on it.

Kirkness (1986), former Director of the First Nations House of Learning at UBC, states that most First Nations teachers recognize their responsibility to provide quality education for First Nations children. They realize the challenge that confronts them, which is to be role models for their students, "change agents" in Indian education, and culture brokers in society (p. 52).

In her thesis, Haig-Brown (1991), who is a former NITEP coordinator, discusses some of the issues involved with the concept of control as it applies to First Nations education. She reminds her readers that although the Brotherhood's policy paper articulates the will of First Nations people to control the education of their children, this is not the first time in the history of the educational encounter between First Nations people and others that this will has been exercised. The power struggle emerged around education, described in documents since at least 1916, emerged as governments and missionaries increased their presence and their demands in First Nations territories.

Hampton (1988) asserts that local control is a defining characteristic of Indian education, not just a philosophical or political good. There can be no true Indian education without Indian control. Anything else is white education applied to Indians.

Papers such as these by Hampton, Matthews, Kirkness, and Haig-Brown are used in Native studies classes to address issues of control.

The four principles outlined in the Indian Control of Indian Education document illustrate how these principles of First Nations control are manifested in NITEP:

1. The Native Indian Education Advisory Committee provides educational leadership and community collaboration within the program.
2. First Nations education courses and seminars are program requirements.
3. First Nations faculty instruct and administer the program.
4. Indian Control of Indian Education is an underlying assumption that influences the program directions.

In both the mandate of NITEP and in NIB's policy paper there is an emphasis on increasing the numbers of First Nations people in the teaching force. Although increasing these numbers is paramount, the *quality* of the educational experiences of First Nations students during their entire five years of academic and professional studies within NITEP is of equal importance.

As an alternate program within the Faculty of Education at UBC, the aspects of First Nations control that can be exercised are outlined above. Much of the First Nations student's experience at university, however, is completely outside the bounds of the measures that have been taken to ensure First Nations control and accountability to First Nations people. Thus, even though there are significant elements of First Nations control in the Native Indian Teacher Education Program, there are at least equally significant areas of students' experiences that are not under First Nations control. This paper addresses one such area, the teaching of anthropology.

In the years I have worked with NITEP students I have heard many First Nations students report encounters in anthropology classes and readings that produce frustration, humiliation, confusion, and rage. It seemed obvious to me from the outset of this research—and it had always been obvious in the students' conversations with me—that a major issue involved non-Native instructors' and anthropologists' assumption of authority in subject matter about First Nations. Therefore, in this work the research issue at the stage of formulating a research question could be conceived as one of First Nations control. Who has control or authority to characterize the nature of knowledge transmitted at the university level about First Nations? In NITEP courses First Nations students, relatives, ancestors, instructors, and educators are the primary authorities concerning First Nations matters. This is not so in the anthropology classes that are reported as problematic.

*The Influence of First Nations Education Discourse on Our Conversations and on the Production of This Text*

In most academic papers the author develops a discourse from a position of authority on the subject discussed. The thesis question is addressed directly, supported or refuted by research, and implications for further study are articulated. The thesis is normally directed to the academic audience within the faculty of study. In this case, the more I began to understand the research issue, the less appropriate this model of textual construction became. My recognition of the inappropriateness of this model is a direct result of the influence of the First Nations discourse in which I have participated for 12 years.

The first issue is that of audience. Most texts written by non-Native writers about Native people are directed to a non-Native audience. I address here those who are most affected by the subject: students and

educators in First Nations communities at university, and in particular First Nations students of anthropology.

The second issue is what I have termed the *voice of authority*. The research participants in this study identified conflicts that arise in anthropology classes when people speak with authority on matters that First Nations people see as outside the area of expertise of the anthropologist. Research participants stated that if people would take the stance of a learner in cross-cultural matters, these conflicts would probably be less problematic. As the author of this article I am assuming authority only over the text I create. The stance I take as an author, however, is that I am writing about what I have learned from what the research participants, and my experience in the First Nations community, have taught me. I am asking the research participants to reflect on the text and to consider if it might become useful in our work in this First Nations university community.

It became critical to me that the voices of the research participants speak in the text as clearly as possible on the matters we discussed. I did not want to use quotations to support my own assumptions about what was said or to summarize and categorize the discussions. The research participants were to be heard not only as authorities on their own experiences, feelings, and observations, but also as authorities on procedures involved in analytic address to their accounts and the reporting of the results.

The third issue is: what is the thesis question and whose question is it? I work as a counselor and coordinator in the First Nations community at UBC. There are approximately 200 First Nations students in a student population of around 30,000. This is the highest enrollment of First Nations people in the history of the institution. I have talked to many people in our community over the last 12 years about the challenges and joys they experience as university students. Anthropology has been a constant issue in the conversation.

Students and colleagues supported the pursuit of those questions. Such support was a necessity in order for the questions to be studied in this community. Many of the participant researchers were of the opinion that many researchers studied First Nations communities but had no intention of pursuing research that would benefit the community. Researchers are usually outsiders. In this case I am outside the First Nations experience of anthropology, but I am a member of the educational community in which the students participate.

LaFramboise and Plake (1983) highlight the criticisms that First Nations people have of most research "on" them and suggest guidelines for researchers. Guidelines such as these and the First Nations community guidelines that I work within, and impose upon myself, require that I make every effort to produce useful and respectful research.

I have asked myself where I stand in relation to the questions I am asking community members to consider. How is this stance influencing my work? How can the research participants benefit from this work? Out of these questions further questions have evolved. Who is the learner in this study? What is the nature of the knowledge that is being exchanged? Who is the audience for this work?

A fourth issue that permeates the discussion in this article is the nature of the discipline of anthropology. Apple's (1982) questions guide my thinking here. He asks, What knowledge is taught? Who selected it? Why is it taught and organized in this way? To this particular group? (p. 3).

The fifth issue is the relationship between the author, text, and reader. I echo Hampton (1988), member of the Chickasaw Nation and President of Saskatchewan Indian Federated College, who says of his own work, "My hope is that the reader will think along with me and will take what is useful and leave the rest" (p. 2). I hope readers will help me make sense of the text I have created based on what I have heard. It is in the relationship between the reader and the writer that the meaning of the text is recreated. I am acknowledging that the reader is engaging in a negotiation with me as writer that will result in meaning for the reader that may be quite different from the meaning I have made for myself.

My understanding of the relationship between the reader, text, and author is informed by what I have learned about the practice of traditional storytelling. The storyteller expects the listener to participate in the tale wherever it makes sense for him or her to do so. The storyteller enters the legend of the Raven or the Coyote or Mink somewhere along the path and relates a part of the picture that is found there. Listeners see it in their own way and take away what they have created for themselves at this moment, and that is the way it is.

### *The Place from Which to Write*

Recently I was visiting the Saskatchewan Indian Federated College to collaborate with my colleagues there. A colleague who is an instructor at the College told me he had organized a workshop for his students in order to help them cope with their fears about going into the school practicum. He had asked a non-Native consultant to work with him in this session, and said she gave his students some good advice about stress management but that it was from a non-Native perspective. His contribution to the seminar was to encourage students to ask for dreams that would help them with their work.

I was reminded of two dreams that have influenced my thinking about this research project. One of them is mine. The second was related to me by a student when I asked her what she thought was the essence of the research in which we were engaged in this project.

As a non-Native person I have been immersed in First Nations education in NITEP and have been greatly influenced by First Nations people



and their ways. To discuss prayer and dreams in the context that this man introduced, and in the context of research, is not exotic to me. However unorthodox it may seem to non-Native readers, such elements are used throughout this work to explain, expand, question, and challenge its ideas, its goals, and its findings.

In the introduction to his paper McShane (1984) discusses how traditional Ojibwa conceptions of obtaining knowledge differ from “Western” conceptions.

In Western thought, objective ideas or observations carry a higher value than subjective ones; they are more real, they are better, and they are more acceptable socially ... In the Ojibwa way of thinking the whole world is alive with power and spirit; it is like a whole organism, we are only parts of it. What we feel without seeing—in dreams, visions, intuitive perceptions, emotional responses—may be as real, or more real, than what is seen with the eyes only. Thus the Ojibwa attitudes and methods of healing are based upon feelings and perceptions which are not objective, for they draw upon this real world, which as with all living being, is approached with respect. (p. 82)

Although my colleague is a Woodlands Cree, not an Ojibwa, his acceptance of dreams as gifts from the real world seemed to be a matter of fact. Bett’s dream, “dream research” as she called it, I believe comes from the same spirit, and I have learned to listen to my own dreams too.

My dream seemed to inform me of the immense task in which I had engaged—research about the perceptions of First Nations students about their study in anthropology—and it also placed my role in this task in perspective. In the dream I enter a place where groups of people are standing about. Some are crying softly and some are talking. I seem to know all the people here and I move over to join one of the groups. They are looking at a translucent orange stone that is protruding from the ground. I bend down and brush it off and jump back startled as I realize I have been looking at the toenail on the foot of a huge Shadow Being that towers above us. I realize the people in the group were able to see it all along. The people in the group let me stand with them, let me dust off the stone and also let me know that they knew the Shadow Being. I am aware that what is a Shadow Being to me may not be a shadow to the people in the group. I am aware that the Being is large, but the people are not moving away or showing discomfort in the presence of this Being other than some sadness. I can’t hear the words of the intermittent discussion. I am afraid in the Being’s presence. I don’t know what it is. I feel the stability of the people as we stand in its shadow.

This dream has come to symbolize to me the immensity of the issues in which we are engaged in First Nations education and it also clearly informs me of my naïveté in this research encounter. When I began the research I thought I knew what I was going to uncover. We had been looking at this stone (the students’ problematic encounter in anthropology and other courses) for years and had been spending time in our many discussions working to understand it. When I decided to have a closer



look at the stone I discovered how foolish I had been to think I knew what was buried underneath.

A second dream, told to me by Bett Tsa-me-gahl, has come to symbolize for me how the phenomenon First Nations students describe in anthropology classes fits into the larger context of the historical struggle (since contact) in First Nations education, how difficult matters of textual representation are in this context, and how the questions researchers ask are most often questions about themselves.

I will relate part of the story.

Bett told me about a dream she had. It is a complex journey that might be thought of as a metaphor for her life as a First Nations person in a hostile education system. It is about her struggle for herself and her children. The first time she told me about her dream the interaction may have taken about 10 minutes. The dream was very moving and left me with much to think about. The next day Eber Hampton asked me to write to him and tell him what my research project was about. He had visited our community to talk about his own work, "What is Native About Native education?" He spoke of Native education being a "creation, sui generis, a thing of its own kind." I went for a walk and was thinking about how to answer his question in a line or two on the computer message system. As I was trying to remember the last part of Bett's dream she appeared from behind a building. I told her I was trying to think about an efficient way to describe what my thesis is about, and in that context was thinking about her dream. In the last part of her dream a two-headed woman says, "From now on you will know the words to the questions." Bett said, "Why don't I send him my dream." We agreed that the dream in its entirety was about the larger issues behind the research.

Bett and I worked on the telling of her dream for about six hours. We acted it out. We struggled over just the right words. We laughed. We cried. I felt her fear at times. She typed it into the computer and I recorded it on paper so we would have a copy. At one point when she was typing furiously I was reminded of the picture on the cover of Clifford and Marcus' (1986) *Writing Culture*. Stephen Tyler is shown making field notes and the people he is writing about are watching him. I laughed at the thought because in this case Bett was creating the image on the computer screen and I was sitting behind her trying to write it down. We were creating what she named "dream research" together and she was in charge. I gave a transcript of the dream to Bett the next day. She looked at it briefly and said, "This isn't it." She was right of course. It isn't it; the dream is a complete vision. We worked with all of our domains. It was most certainly an emotional, spiritual, intellectual, and physical experience for both of us. This translation had crudely reduced the dream and its recreation to lifeless symbols on a page. This difference that she recognized at that moment is central to the thesis I am trying to create and, I

believe, central to the stories the First Nations students have told me. Bett's initial reaction to the text she herself produced dramatized for both of us the difference between translation and transformation, between the text and the experience.

Bett said she began to understand her dream in the context of her experiences as a university student when one of her professors in anthropology said, "The problem with research is that often we ask the wrong questions." Perhaps this article will help to clarify for other First Nations students of anthropology what questions have been asked, which ones should be asked, and whose questions are being answered.

Urion (1990), a First Nations educator at the University of Alberta, also talks about these misguided questions that have distorted observations about First Nations people. One research example he cites is Egerton Ryerson Young's: "The framework that Young was constrained to use alienates him from all of us because the burning question of his day was this: which must come first, the 'Christianization' of the 'Indian' or 'his' adoption of 'civilization'" (p. 1). Urion recognizes that questions such as these are embedded within the cultures from which they originate. He also states that although the questions have changed over time, the written discourse has "yet to get the questions right."

#### *Overview of the Present Study*

Having contextualized the articulation of the research question, and having characterized the nature of the multidimensional and dynamic conversation about First Nations education within the program, as highlighted in "dream research," I sought a methodology by which I could create a respectful text and discuss it in the second section of this article.

In his book *Shattered Images: Dialogues and Meditations on Tsimshian Narratives*, anthropologist Cove's (1987) first sentence is "This book presents a lie" (p. 1). It is a perceptive beginning and perhaps one that some of the anthropologist instructors described herein might consider. This sentence and other personal revelations that Cove makes during his research encounters certainly reflect some of the feelings I experienced as I tried to write. Although this article does not present a lie, the truths it presents are partial. It is an ethnographic fiction in Clifford's (1986) sense.

Cove continues (1987):

Although the results are as honest as I can make them, how they were reached bears virtually no relationship to the process of inquiry to be described. The research was motivated by reasons which are not a necessary part of the analysis. Similarly, the question and approach taken were not worked out prior to the investigation: rather, they were by-products of it. What actually occurred was more like a series of accidents, with few if any connections among them worthy of the label logical.

In a sense, the lie is unavoidable. Communication, even within science, does not require honesty. That quality would more likely inhibit the process if the objective is to present a set of conclusions. Anyone who has done exploratory research has almost certainly faced the same dilemma. What is amazing is how seldom it is recognized. (p. 1)

The third section of this article presents the analysis of one example of a problematic situation that arose in an anthropology classroom. The analysis is an attempt to “do anthropology on an anthropologist.” Reductionism and levels of abstraction in textualization are discussed by featuring an anthropologist instructor who used the instructional conceit of role-playing as a shaman.

A conversation among the research participants is constructed in the fourth section of this article. The intention here is for the participants to speak as voices of authority about the incidents in the anthropology classes that caused conflict. The theme, voices of authority / issues of respect, is used to focus the discussion. I address this section most directly to the First Nations education audience. The text is written as if it were an account of a First Nations gathering; readers are asked to witness the discussion that takes place. The students raise the issues as they see them. They are articulated as a place to begin. Authority vested in the veracity of the participants is an attempt to avoid what Urion (1990) describes as placing the primacy of validity for oral discourse on analytic heuristics such as ethnohistorical cross-validation. He states of the First Nations people who recount their experiences of residential schools:

The interviews themselves are a small part of First Nations discourse; they do not form simply a “data corpus” for academic exposition as ethnohistory. The validity of the generalizations in the articles does not emanate from ethnohistorical cross-validation, buttressed by archival sources.... The validity of the discourse is the moral authority of the interactants to the interviews, who know that the earth witnessed the things about which they spoke. (p. 8)

I conclude that anthropology classrooms are political sites. The historical relationship between First Nations and others is not neutral, and students who participated in this study are telling me when the pretense of neutrality, “academic objectivity,” breaks down for them. Stories are being told about First Nations to First Nations people and to others. Some of these stories are objectionable and all of these stories are anthropologists’ stories. This could be conceived as an area in the university curriculum where First Nations people could assume more control.

Who is in control of the stories told now? If the stories are told by anthropologists, to what extent will they always be imaginary? If First Nations people were to be in control of the stories told, how would the stories be different and how would all of the students’ (First Nations and others) experiences of the storytelling situations be different?

In an attempt to make my results as honest as I can, in each section I write about what I have learned from the different perspectives of each section’s focus. I am telling the story over and over but in different ways. I am describing the Shadow Being, but I know that the First Nations conversation about this Shadow Being has been going on for more than 100 years and there is much more that could be said—and that it would be told differently if it were told by a First Nations person. The story is multi-

dimensional and dynamic. The experiences we are all seeking to describe in this research encounter are real.

### Research Methods and the Issue of Respect

As the research progressed I became aware of many limitations embedded in the task. I believe the dilemmas I face as a researcher are similar to those faced by all researchers as they grapple with their questions, their encounters with their subjects, and the stories they tell as a result of these encounters. I realize that many of the areas that First Nations students found problematic in their study of anthropology arose because they took issue with some aspect of the way the researcher's story was told. It was important for me to create a text that demonstrated I had heard and I had learned what the First Nations students had told me. "You tell me what you heard and what it meant to you and then I will give back what I heard and what it meant to me. I will tell the researcher's story" (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990, p. 9).

I accept Clifford's (1986) notion that ethnography is fiction.

To call ethnographies fictions may raise empiricists' hackles. But the word as commonly used in recent textual theory has lost its connotation of falsehood, of defining fiction only by its contrast with truth. It suggests the partiality of cultural and historical truths, the ways they are systematic and contestable, exclusions, economies of truth. (p. 7)

In addition ethnographies, by the fact that they are written, must be thought of as symbolic, figurative representations of "the truth" as the reader is expected to retrieve meaning from the author's script. Bett's conviction that the dream script "wasn't it" is a dramatic example of this recognition.

I have come to think of this research exercise in three discrete phases. These phases are distinct in the processes followed, in the knowledge they revealed, and in the limitations that were encountered.

Phase One:	We Participate in Conversations.
Phase Two:	I Analyze What We Said.
Phase Three:	I Create a Text to Represent What I Learned.

All phases of the research encounter, then, are governed by economies of truth. Each is a creation in its own right that only partially reflects what was encountered in the lived experiences of the student, our discussions about encounters in the anthropology classroom, my subsequent examination of the transcriptions, and my writing of a text based on my interpretation of the first two phases. The premise that I am working from is that the economies are produced within specific contexts, and it is unlikely that these contexts could be replicated or validated by another researcher and other participants. "The validity of the discourse is the moral authority of the interactants to the interviews, who know that the earth witnessed the things about which they spoke" (Urion, 1990, p. 8).

*Phase One: We Participate in the Conversations*

*The People*

Twelve people participated directly in this study. The national heritages represented are Nle'kepmx, Cree, Haisla, Heilsuk, Chilcotin, Carrier, and my Scottish-English. Four of the participants are bilingual. The average age is mid-30s. At the time of the study all of the people were attending UBC. Ten were students in the third or fourth year of NITEP, one was a law student and former NITEP student, and one was a NITEP graduate and a graduate student in the educational administration master's program, Ts'kel.

All the student participants had taken anthropology courses at UBC, and some had also taken anthropology courses at community colleges. All the people except the law student had taken at least four courses in Native studies. The law student had spent one year in NITEP and had taken two Native studies courses. Native studies courses, taught by First Nations instructors, are taken in the field center or college sites where NITEP students do the first two years of their university course work.

Nine women and three men participated. This is typical of the female-male ratio of First Nations students at UBC; for example, in the 1990-1991 academic year, 81 women and 17 men were enrolled in NITEP.

The participants were the first 12 people asked to be involved in this study. They were contacted one at a time over a two-month period. The only criterion for participation was that the student had taken at least one upper-level anthropology course.

As a faculty member in NITEP I have been educated by First Nations educators, supervisors, and students who are in turn being educated by non-Natives in a university system designed for non-Natives. The educative power of this experience should not be underestimated. Years of deep engagement with the professional, personal, and political concerns of First Nations friends, colleagues, and students have influenced what I think, say, and do. My recognition of the legitimacy of First Nations perspectives in an academic setting inevitably requires that I address this work to, and judge it by, what I know of First Nations standards as well as those of academia. It is from this environment and from this perspective that I initiated this study. I have been immersed in the narratives of daily life in this First Nations educational environment, and I have internalized some of the form and content of these narratives.

*Reflections on the Discourse*

Connelly and Clandinin (1990) make a distinction between story and narrative that clarifies the levels of translation of story conversation that have contributed to the creation of this article: "People by nature lead storied lives and tell stories of those lives, whereas narrative researchers describe such lives, collect and tell stories of them, and write narratives of experience" (p. 2).



All the people who participated in the research that led to the writing of this article both tell stories from their life experience and analyze them at the level of narrative.

The First Nations anthropology students who participated in the conversations are simultaneously involved in storied lives, telling stories of these lives, and listening to narrative researchers tell stories of First Nations peoples' lives. In the research encounter that contributed to this paper, these First Nations people have listened to the anthropologists tell the stories, and the students then engage in narrative research as they describe and analyze what they have witnessed.

The participants decided to label this narrative research as "doing anthropology on the anthropologist." As the "do anthropology" students are describing the anthropologist instructors operating in their natural setting, the classroom, they are observing the behavior there and offering a critical analysis of it. They are marking incidents of discontinuity in the stories told by the anthropologists. The discontinuity is recognized because the First Nations students are observing the anthropologist with "two pairs of eyes" (Archibald, 1990, 1991). These two pairs of eyes, two views, are the cross-cultural perspectives the students bring to the situation.

The anthropologists in question are performing from their own cultural, political contexts. It would seem from the students' reports that these anthropologists are most often unaware of the conflict that the First Nations student is feeling and observing through two pairs of eyes. Students are not just saying the anthropologists concerned describe the First Nations experience in a way that is different from the way that they themselves would describe it, although this is often said. The important factor is that the manner in which the First Nations experience is described by the instructor is seen as disrespectful and hurtful to the student witness or to his or her people.

In the problematic classroom encounters the anthropologist instructor, as the person in control of the academic discourse and the narrative research, assumes the voice of authority. In the academic world the more removed from the microcosm of lived experience, the more objective the view is presumed to be; the voices that are presumed to be the more experienced in analysis are more often heard. A hierarchy of conversations is implied in this view of discourse.

The First Nations students, however, recognize the partiality of the stories being told and that the academic discourse is limited. When students engage in this level of analysis, whether or not they articulate this in class, they are engaging in academic analysis. Although the anthropologist instructor's voice is most often heard in the classroom, within the First Nations academic community the voices of the First Nations students on these issues have been heard since First Nations people first encountered



anthropology classrooms. First Nations students are not silent or silenced, but my experience is that students are selective about when and where discussions about these issues take place.

This research encounter is an effort to enter some of this First Nations analysis into an academic record. All of us who participated in the conversations hope this formal recording will assist the First Nations academic community and the larger academic community at the university to develop strategies to recognize, understand, and take action when faced with these problematic encounters. We are challenged to demand honorable practices.

Bahktin (von Goethe, 1982) discusses outsiderness as a most powerful factor in understanding culture:

It is only in the eyes of another culture that foreign culture reveals itself fully and profoundly.... A meaning only reveals its depths once it has encountered and come into contact with another, foreign meaning: they engage in a kind of dialogue, which surmounts the closedness and one-sidedness of these particular meanings, these cultures. We raise new questions for a foreign culture, ones that it did not raise itself; we seek answers to our own questions in it; and the foreign culture responds to us by revealing to us its new aspects and new semantic depths. Without one's own questions one cannot creatively understand anything foreign. Such a dialogic encounter of two cultures does not result in merging or mixing. Each retains its own unity and open totality, but they are mutually enriched. (p. iv)

This paper reports the "foreign" as the anthropologists' rendition of the information presented in the classroom encounters under discussion here. The First Nations students can be thought of from Bahktin's perspective as viewing the actions of the anthropologist instructor through the eyes of an outsider: the students are witnessing the cultural practices of a western academic. They are seeing their own cultural practices through the cultural practices of the academic. The students are raising "new questions"—at least they seem to be new to these instructors—about the practice of anthropology.

Others are raising similar questions although none of the people I have found in the literature are First Nations writers: for example, Agar (1986), Apple (1982), Brodkey (1987a, 1987b), Clifford (1988), Clifford and Marcus (1986), Lather (1990), Rabinow (1986), Said (1979), Tyler (1986), and Van Maanen (1988) raise these issues.

The students' insider knowledge of the culture described in class allows them to hear and see discrepancies in the stories being told. The narratives we have shared are not limited by the person's subjective involvement in their culture. The discussion is an expanded understanding of the research encounter as the anthropologist has interpreted it.

There is a dialogue envisioned in Bahktin's (von Goethe, 1982) cross-cultural encounter. He imagines participants are mutually enriched as they either stand outside their own culture and look inside another in order to ask questions of the newly encountered, or as they stand outside

their own culture and look back at it through the eyes, the questions, of the foreigner. In Bakhtin's discussion there is an assumption that all participants agree to the encounter. In the classroom situations the students describe as problematic, this tradition of dialogic encounter is not occurring. These students would have difficulty accepting that the manner in which their cultural ways are being described is "mutually enriching." The original anthropologist researchers must have had questions of their own that they asked in the field, but the translation into the classroom is seen to be partial in at least two senses of that word. The professor is described as taking the authority and as the master of the language used to describe "the other." The First Nations student's experience as one of "the others" is either not acknowledged in the legitimizing of the discourse, or if it is the language used by the student is criticized as not being the appropriate academic language. Opportunities for creative understanding might exist in anthropology classrooms, but if the instructor frames discourse in a way the students perceive as disrespectful, such opportunities are unlikely to occur.

Narrative inquiry is based on discourse. In this project First Nations students are witnessing narrative discourse in the classroom and are participating in narrative inquiry in this research encounter through our conversations. By examining some of the factors that influence narrative inquiry, the presuppositions that influenced the conversations that occurred in this research encounter are clarified. It is at once an explanation of why this research encounter proceeded as it did, and a process engaged in to "creatively understand the foreign." It also represents an attempt to raise questions about the practices that students have witnessed in some anthropology classrooms.

Mishler (1986) delineates four propositions that are essential to understanding narrative inquiry and that are therefore essential to recognizing the process followed in this research:

1. Interviews are speech events.
2. Discourse is constructed jointly by interviewers and respondents.
3. Analysis and interpretation are based on a theory of discourse and meaning.
4. Meanings of questions and answers are contextually grounded. (p. ix)

The stories, the speech events, that were created in the "conversations" that contributed to this article are both reductions of the reality that the students encountered in the anthropology classrooms and expansions of this reality in the form of a new conversation. The students and I engaged in a conversation that isolated an aspect of their encounter and then embellished it within the new lived experience that was the shared conversation. The conversation that took place was specific to our personal relationship within this specific community context.

Much of traditional research is based on what Katz (Mishler, 1986) calls the four R's that haunt participant observers in sociology. They are Repre-

sentativeness, Reactivity, Reliability, and Replicability. Could another researcher asking the same questions of these student participants expect to get the same answers? Would students with the same demographic descriptors asked the same questions give the same answers? These questions imply that the conversations that took place are a result of questions being asked and answers being given. Mishler terms this the stimulus-response paradigm. If the stimulus, the question, can be standardized, the response can be replicated. Mishler reviews the literature on this point and concludes that there is inconclusive evidence that when these controls are in place in the standard approach to interviewing the research can be replicated. He concludes

The question-answer format guides and organizes the discourse of the interviewers and respondents, but they are talking together, not behaving as stimulus-senders and response emitters. It is their general competence as language users and not simply interviewing "skills" or techniques that underlies their abilities to engage in this type of talk. (p. 22)

When Mishler uses the term *language users* he is referring to the larger context within which the conversation takes place. How conversant in the metaphors, stories, values, opinions, attitudes, knowledge base, daily reality of the participants is the researcher? He would argue that a grounding in these things creates a contextualized encounter that is specific to the particular participants. I would argue that this familiarity encourages the narrative encounter to be robust and individual. There is no reason to believe that it could or should be replicated by another group of strangers. The narrative inquiry is a mutual exploration of discovery and understanding. In this case it is for me an attempt to learn about the perspectives of the students and at the same time an opportunity for the students to teach me about that perspective. As the students teach me about their perspectives their own thoughts about these encounters are clarified. The purpose is to discover the meaning of these encounters, to learn from them, and not to verify or validate previous notions.

My life as a participant engaged in listening to stories told by First Nations students had to be translated into my work as a researcher retelling stories, creating a form of discourse that would be addressed to an academic audience that was not exclusively a First Nations audience. In order to engage in this level of translation it was necessary to recognize and be conversant with the different discourse forms that were encountered in this listening and writing experience. The form that I had listened to was not in the form of academic discourse, but rather narrative inquiry.

The stories were told in the familiar story form that is used in our lives together in this community at UBC. Sometimes legends are told, sometimes dreams are related, and sometimes metaphors are used. Often all of these intertwine. I have come to think of this form as a spiderweb glistening in the warmth of the morning sun. I recognize in this form the meta-

phoric signals of contextualized discourse. These stories of First Nations people contain a level of analysis and reflection that characterizes the struggle to come to terms with the foreignness of anthropological discourse.

*The Conversations: We Discuss What You Heard and What It Meant to You*

The four questions that I asked the people who participated in the conversations were

1. Why did you choose to take anthropology courses?
2. Were these courses the kind of study that you anticipated?
3. Can you think of specific instances where you felt discomfort of any sort in anthropology classes?
4. If you could give advice to future NITEP students about taking anthropology courses, what would you say to them?

Questions 1 and 2 were asked so that the student would think about the anticipatory set they had when they began the courses. From my experience as a course counselor I knew that students chose to study anthropology for a number of quite varied reasons. Some students, for example, simply sought courses where they thought other First Nations students would be. Others thought that as First Nations people they would know something about the study of First Nations people and would therefore be somewhat better prepared for senior course work in anthropology than in, for example, history or mathematics. On the other hand, some students felt that as First Nations teachers they were unrealistically expected to know about the First Nations of Canada and felt that anthropology courses would help to increase their knowledge. The reasons for choosing the courses, then, would influence to some degree how students felt about the academic study that they actually encountered.

Question 3 was asked in order to focus the stories that were going to be told on problematic areas, to isolate incidents for examination. Some of the stories I had been told before and others I would hear for the first time.

Question 4 was asked because students continued to choose anthropology courses despite the fact that so many seemed to encounter difficulties. I knew that students often make choices based on the advice of others, so I was curious to find out what advice was given.

The questions were asked one at a time at the beginning of conversation sessions. They were intended as prompts that would elicit a conversation we had had before in one form or another. If I were to introduce a new interaction style, that is, a formal question-answer format, I would be introducing an artificial and unfamiliar discourse style into our relationship and this, I believed, would make the discussion artificial. I did not expect "answers" to "questions." I expected a conversation to occur, and it did.

The time allotted each session differed depending on whether we met at the First Nations Community Centre at UBC or at my home. At the

Community Centre we adhered to an hour or hour and a half time frame because most of the participants met for discussion between scheduled classes. If the conversations took place at my home they would stretch over the day.

All but one of the sessions were tape-recorded. At first I tried to take notes as well but this practice soon collapsed because of my involvement in the conversations. One of the people did not want to be taped, so in that case I took notes as we talked.

The students were asked to isolate instances in their experiences in anthropology classes that were problematic for them. I expected they would choose to highlight and discuss instances of what I, as the researcher, from my previous encounters with students stories considered to be examples of hegemonic practices. Brodkey (1987a) states that scholarship is normally defined as unbiased or objective. Negative critique on the other hand is

at once a story of cultural hegemony and an argument for social change. Critical narrators then, are narrators whose self consciousness about ideology makes it necessary for them to point out that all stories including their own, are told from a vantage point and to call attention to the voice in which the story is being told. (p. 71)

In the sense that Brodkey describes, our conversations could be considered negative critique and the participants in this research encounter critical narrators. The story I am telling of my experience as a participant in the negative critique is told from my understanding of the vantage point of the First Nations students.

In our conversations I predicted that we would discuss the university, and these anthropology classrooms in particular, as sites of cultural hegemony. The predominant cultural, religious, political context within which anthropology falls is the Western European, Christian, academic tradition. Oakeshott (1962) describes the vantage point and the mandate of the university teacher to

impart ... a familiarity with the modes of thought, the languages which, from one point of view, compose the whole intellectual capital of a civilization. What undergraduates may get at a university ... is some understanding of what it is to think historically, mathematically, scientifically or philosophically, and some understanding of these not as subjects, but as living languages. (p. 313)

When the Western living languages are not seen to respect or reflect the living languages of the First Nations experience, students report conflicts. Historically, anthropology has been practiced at the university level in the absence of First Nations people. The practice of anthropology is in some ways an attempt to enter the First Nations' language, voice, into the academic conversation. The anthropologists' stories, however, are their own stories about First Nations people and the stories are told through their Western vantage points.

Said (1979) describes a similar phenomenon that has occurred in the creation of a discourse about the Orient: "the Orient is an idea that has a history and a tradition of thought, imagery, and vocabulary that have given it reality and presence in and for the West" (p. 5). He acknowledges the difference between the Orient as an idea created in the discourse of Westerners and the corresponding reality of the "cultures and nations whose locations is in the East, and their lives, histories, and customs that have a brute reality obviously greater than anything that can be said about them in the West" (p. 5).

First Nations students identify a discourse about First Nations created by Westerners that does not correspond to the First Nations experience or to the discourse that they themselves would relate.

It is important to note here that as a researcher I could be accused of imposing my own meaning into this situation and getting the students to agree or support a biased presupposition that the university is a site of cultural hegemony. The students did not use the term hegemony but they do, independently and without "eliciting" such statements, describe a state of affairs that, in my opinion, reflects hegemonic practices. The conflict was not my own construction. I was not imposing my understanding on the students' experiences. This project comes about because of my decision to spend time listening to and learning about a perspective that I had heard enunciated during all the years I have worked in NITEP.

By pointing to an acknowledgment of hegemonic practice in my own work, I am identifying the conversations as displaying evidence of participatory values. Lather (1989b) discusses Harding's position that participatory values enhance objectivity. Harding argues that all knowledge springs from a perspective and should be legitimated on that basis. "Objectivity" means being aware and honest about how one's own beliefs, values, and biases affect the research process. She asks us to identify these participatory values and acknowledge that they influence our work (p. 7). Throughout this article this practice of identifying values is modeled. It is meant to stand in contrast to work in which participatory values are not identified.

#### *Phase Two: I Analyze What We Said*

The recorded data consist of interview tapes, notes, and transcriptions of the tapes. Unfortunately, two of the tapes could not be transcribed because of poor audio quality and we could not arrange a time to redo the work. I have included them in the discussion of the method, but the conversations are not referred to in the analysis. The dream transcripts are not directly referred to in the analysis because this student did not want the content of the dream to be published in this article.



### *Transcriptions*

The first phase of the analysis began during the transcription process. As I was transcribing the 150 single-spaced pages of the conversations, I became aware of the profound differences between our speech on tape as I remembered it and the text that was being produced. I experienced a sense of loss as the laughter and pauses and intonations disappeared. The meaning of these moments was not captured in the words that remained and notations did not retrieve the texture. Only in a limited way did the words represent the experiences that I had shared in the storytelling phase of the work. In retrospect, it was at this point that my work became especially problematic for me. How could I do justice to the people who had agreed to work with me when the words I was left with in these transcriptions seemed so flat? This revelation about the profound difference between the transcriptions and the experience of the conversations stayed with me as I studied the transcripts for themes and patterns that might be found across the conversations.

The next phase of the work took about two months. During this time the transcripts seemed to develop a life of their own. That is, I felt as if I was living inside the words and stories of the people who talked to me. The stories stimulated memories of other stories I had heard. The room where I worked seemed to be permeated with the mood of this larger conversation. During this period many of the people who had participated in the work came by or called to see how I was progressing. We discussed the themes that I was beginning to see and the text that I was beginning to write. I remember one person telling me that she had never read anything like the introduction I had written. She said that she could see me walking around inside the paper talking about all of the things I saw there. She was not sure that my mentors were going to like the work. She had recognized my deliberate illusory style, the purpose of which was to foreshadow what was to come and to dislocate my own voice as one of authority; yet at the same time I was attempting to be explicit about the process I was following. This introduction was an attempt to evoke the context and mood from which the topic of the conversations about anthropology had emerged.

It was addressed to a First Nations audience. It moved from the introduction of my dream to Bett's dream research. When Bett read this introduction she drew a diagram on a table napkin that showed the anthropologists on one side and the First Nations students on the other. She said that I was standing with the students describing the anthropologists and she had never read of anyone doing that before. She didn't think that university professors would accept this position.

### *Coding the Transcripts*

I conceptualized the first general categories that emerged from the transcripts as topics of conversation in the stories I had been told. As they came up in each conversation I inserted a boldface heading and later color-

coded the headings. This meant that when I spread the printouts of the transcripts across the floor I could see how many times a topic appeared across the transcripts. These first topics, in no particular order, were

1. Anthropology as a discipline;
2. The meaning of learning and teaching;
3. The nature of science;
4. The role of theories in anthropology;
5. Translation: issues of translation from First Nations languages to English;
6. Transformation;
7. Authority;
8. Legends;
9. Totems;
10. Witnessing—in the traditional sense that is understood in some West Coast cultures, for example, where people attend ceremonies and rituals as witnesses with very particular responsibilities to their children and their ancestors in terms of remembering what occurred there;
11. Texts or books;
12. Lived experience;
13. “Frozen in Time”: a term that one of the students used to explain the phenomenon that is the opposite understanding from transformation, that is, that culture, cultural practices, or cultural creations are described as objects as if they were not in a process of change, adaptation, and transition;
14. Responsibility;
15. Respect;
16. Collaboration;
17. Resistance strategies in uncomfortable situations.

The theme most evident across the transcriptions was *Authority*. When I looked at these sections of the transcripts, I saw that people were using this idea in a number of ways. I then recoded the transcripts looking for ways that notions of authority were introduced.

From this coding attempt I developed some questions from a central theme: Conflicts in the Voices of Authority—Who Speaks for Whom and Under What Conditions?

1. Do anthropologist instructors have the authority to speak for First Nations people and for elders in particular?
2. Does one First Nations person have the authority to speak for all First Nations people?
3. Do linguists have the authority to speak for First Nations language speakers?
4. Does the anthropologist author have the authority to speak for First Nations people?

5. Does the discipline of Western science have the authority to speak about the lived experience of First Nations people?
6. Do anthropology texts carry more authority than traditional stories told orally?
7. Do anthropologists have the authority to speak about spirituality?

After further deliberation I abandoned my label *Conflicts in the Voices of Authority* and began instead to hear instances where issues of respect were in contention. The questions better reflected the spirit of the conversations if they read:

1. Are anthropologist instructors respectful when they speak about First Nations and elders in particular?
2. Are First Nations people respectful when they speak about First Nations other than their own?
3. Does the language and practice of the linguist respect the integrity of First Nations languages?
4. Do anthropologist authors respect the fact that they are speaking about others?
5. Does Western science give respectful consideration to other cosmologies?
6. Does information in text books about First Nations deserve to have more respect than the stories First Nations people themselves tell or write?
7. Are anthropologists respectful when they speak about spirituality?

The other underlying theme that ran through all the transcripts was the notion of responsibility. Students seemed to be asking themselves what their responsibility was, given the particular situations they were witnessing as representatives of First Nations in anthropology classes. For example, given the questions above students may ask themselves *If an anthropologist instructor is being disrespectful of my ancestors by speaking of spirituality in inappropriate ways, what is my responsibility in this classroom setting?*

At this level of reflection students resolved and/or resisted these conflicts in different ways. The transcripts themselves and the recreated conversation in this article reflect such strategies. I did try to categorize some of these but I have decided not to publish them in detail.

The strategies of resistance and/or resolution were labeled: (a) Humour, (b) Positive, (c) Manipulation, (d) Intervention, (e) Compromise, (f) Compliance, (g) Anger, (h) Withdrawal, (i) Denial, (j) Grief, (k) Out-of-body experiences, and (l) Spiritual interpretations.

The severity of some of the strategies point to how abusive some of the students felt the situations to be. This is an area that I believe requires further deliberation within the First Nations community at UBC.

*Two Limitations in Analysis*

I mention two limitations in this analysis phase of the research. One pertains to transcriptions and one to coding.

The issue of the loss of the texture of the conversations in the transcriptions from the tapes to script has been mentioned. The typed script is the beginning of the research participants' loss of control over their words and over the ways their words will be manipulated. Some might say that the speaking of the words was the beginning of this loss. During the conversation phase there is an opportunity to clarify and develop what is said. Once I began working with printed words, with the manuscript, I became the author, the authority. Lather (1989a) asks the question that I continually ask myself, "How can we position ourselves as less masters of truth and justice and more as creators of a space where those directly involved can act and speak on their own behalf?" (p. 26).

The second major limitation in the analysis phase came to my attention when I began coding the transcripts. I was following the research practice described in detail by Miles and Huberman (1984). Codes are "retrieval and organizing devices that allow the analyst to spot quickly, pull out, then cluster all the segments relating to the particular question, hypothesis, concept or theme. Clustering sets the stage for analysis" (p. 56). But what is being analyzed when the way individuals have conversed is deconstructed? Mishler (1986) asks what remains of the integrity of the interview when summary scores are aggregated across separate responses of individual responses.

Each response is a fragment removed from the psychological and social contexts of the respondent as well as from the full discourse of the interview. When these responses are assembled into different subgroups, by age, gender, and the like, the results are artificial aggregates that have no direct representation in the real world of communities, social institutions, families, or persons. (p. 26).

As a community participant I am conditioned to the themes of the discourse about the difficulties students encounter in anthropology, so the codes I developed are not totally those of an "outside" researcher. I am, however, outside the experience of a First Nations person in those classes, and only collaborative coding would be legitimately representational in that sense. As this was not done, my coding attempts are limited and, going further than Mishler, I found that the decontextualized segments of conversation were lacking the individuality that had given them meaning in context.

Blauner (1987) emphasizes this point:

Meanings are encapsulated in the way we say them. The nuances of language, the style of arranging words and putting them into the world is highly personal. Paradoxically, the very language which gives us a common membership in society at the same time expresses our individuality. (p. 49).

### *Expansive Discourse*

The paradox Blauner (1987) observes, which was evident to me in the difference between the actual conversations and the transcriptions, also became an issue in the search for a representative language in which to create the text of this article. Initially I thought my challenge was to engage in a conversation about anthropology with First Nations students, using the common language that we share, and to translate this into the academic language of a research report. As I began to work with this task, however, the challenge became one of expansion rather than translation. Each language had to expand in order to honor the other. Urion (1990) similarly explains the demands of cross-cultural discourse. He states, "It is not a 'translation' of one world view to another that is required, but access to the multidimensionality provided by two pairs of eyes" (p. 7).

Asad (1986) discusses the inequality of languages in many cross-cultural translations. He is referring to the process of translating, for example, Chilcotin into academic English. He suggests that the task is to transform the English language in order to assume unaccustomed forms. He states that the translation is more likely where the tribal language is to submit to forcible transformation in the translation process rather than the other way around. He emphasizes that the matter is largely something the translator cannot determine by individual activity—that it is governed by institutionally defined power relations between the languages/modes of life concerned.

In this article the common language of concern is English, but the appropriateness of forms of English usage could be disputed. The academic discourse of the anthropologist, the academic discourse of the writing of research reports, the language of the rich conversations and First Nations discourse are all contributing registers.

The main critique in this article is of the language, texts, and behavior of a few anthropologists in academia. The hierarchical nature of academic discourse is discussed. The discourse of the First Nations students was not examined for disagreements, contradictions, and omissions. This strategy was not to elevate the First Nations discourse or to idealize it. This level of interrogation did not occur because the conversational style that is displayed has its own rules. Speakers were not being asked to defend their positions. They were exploring and developing their perspectives.

The text I have created as a consequence is an attempt to demonstrate some facility with several languages, and each is to be seen as having its own constraints, potential, integrity, and power. Ideally the flexibility of the English language is demonstrated as it transforms to accommodate this individuality.

### *Phase Three: I Create a Text to Reflect What I Learned*

After this rather intense period of working with the meanings of the transcripts as they revealed themselves to me, I returned to the literature. I

began to reread everything that I had read to that point in a search for information that might help me to create a meaningful text from the work I had done to date.

At this stage I was concerned about what I perceived as the double binds built into my efforts to produce a written text. The students were distressed about how the non-Native authority was so often "getting it wrong" and was so often disrespectful in the process. They were offended by witnessing their people and their cultural ways being objectified in texts and lectures. Just as the recognition that the transcripts were weak artifacts of the conversations that had taken place, this issue of objectifying people and their practices began to plague me.

Lather (1990) reflects my concern when she asks what right we have to intrude into the lives of others and points to the inequalities attendant upon relationships of researcher/researched and writer/written-about. She emphasizes what Foucault (1978) terms "the indignity of speaking for others." She talks about disciplinary powers that constitute the human as knowable object upon which the technologies of dominance are based.

Lakoff (1987) describes the integrity of the individual response, meaningful thought and reason, from the view of experiential realism, an interpretation that locates human understanding within the organism and as a composite of all that has come before in the person's environment and ancestral history.

Human reason is not an instantiation of transcendental reason; it grows out of the nature of the organism and all that contributes to its individual and collective experience: its genetic inheritance, the nature of the environment it lives in, the way it functions in that environment, the nature of its social functioning. (p. xv)

In a lecture at UBC in October 1991, First Nations author Gerald Visner recounted how this notion of decontextualization affected traditional storytelling events when the stories were told to non-Native people and how First Nations people experienced the stories in very different ways, perhaps as experiential realism. Visner explained that a First Nations person would grow up with stories of Raven, for example. The individual gets to know Raven and how he behaves, and also knows most of the other characters that appear. Stories of Raven are introduced into the conversation at particular points and the teller and listener understand that a story is about to be told that reflects in some way on the conversation in progress. Visner said that the mention of Raven would "trigger the tribal consciousness." The story is told and the conversation continues. To the person who does not know Raven, the characters are not defined enough, the story has no clear beginning and end, and the introduction of the story itself seems like a transgression in the conversation.

One of the student participants in the conversations described Raven's appearance this way: "Raven stories give me a feeling of ecstasy. It doesn't just explain history. There are some things that are closer to people's



hearts, ways of thinking, that are not talked about in anthropology." This feeling of ecstasy may be this person's way of acknowledging her "deep cell memories" of Raven. These memories cannot be captured in the anthropologist's understanding of Raven. The anthropologist and his or her ancestors did not live with Raven.

One of the authors who spoke strongly to me during this phase of the work was Van Maanen (1988). He surveys the conventions of textualization that are typically used by ethnographers. He describes realist tales, confessional tales, impressionist tales, critical tales, formal tales, literary tales, and jointly told tales. Van Maanen's impressionist tale seemed to suggest a solution.

The idea is to draw an audience into an unfamiliar story world and allow it, as far as possible, to see, hear, and feel as the fieldworker saw, heard, and felt. Such tales seek imaginatively to place the audience in the fieldwork situation—seated ringside as witness to a tribal ceremony of consequence ... The audience is asked to relive the tale with the fieldworker, not interpret or analyze it. The intention is not to tell readers what to think of an experience but to show them the experience from beginning to end and thus draw them immediately into the story to work out its problems and puzzles as they unfold. (p. 103)

Van Maanen states that participants in the impressionistic tale must have an individual voice.

The next phase of the work was to create a text that was stimulated by Van Maanen's words. The result could not be called an impressionist tale as Van Maanen (1988) conceived it. It is, however, a textual representation that attempts to display the participants' own words as distinct from my own. It is an attempt to have the participants retain some control over what they said as I tell the researcher's story. It also directly asks the audience, the readers, to listen to what is being said, unlike Van Maanen's notion, which is to work out the problems as they unfold. These readers are asked to reserve their opinions, if they can, until they have heard/read the whole conversation, and as Hampton (1988) says, to "think along with me."

I had written my first draft to the First Nations people who participated in the conversations. "You tell me what you heard and what it meant to you and then I will give back what I heard and what it meant to me. I will tell a researcher's story" (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990, p. 9). When I speak to this audience, the metaphors, dreams, and legends are a natural part of conversations. An outside reader interprets these as indirect or vague: "Why is this legend here?" "This metaphor is imprecise."

In the first draft of this writing exercise, the context I shared with the participants was left unstated. It became clear that in order to tell the "researcher's story" to a non-First Nations audience, the contexts would have to be made more explicit. In each section I expanded the discussion of the context in an attempt to satisfy all readers, all languages.

At this point I have attempted to contextualize the discourses to bring the audience, the readers, into the NITEP world, to provide a sense of where I as author found my story.

The following sections describe the analysis phase of the research. First is my attempt to be self-reflexive as I analyze what I am learning from the First Nations students' stories. Following this, I challenge the anthropologists to be self-reflexive. They are to imagine, from the First Nations point of view, the anthropologist as "foreign" and to search for explanations for the behavior of the "foreign." The student's story that is the foundation of that challenge is described at the end of this section because I did not want to put it at the beginning and then appear to wield an analytical knife on it. It is intact. I hope the story provides an experience for the reader, as it did for me, that is gripping and educative. It invites the reader to witness an aspect of First Nations discourse.

The story foreshadows the section it precedes, "That is What My People Say, You Learn it From the Story," in which the conversations that initiated the research are reconstructed. They stand alone there. I do not superimpose an analytical framework within the conversation. The First Nations students are to be read as authorities on their observations and feelings. My intention was for the reader to listen to these stories as I had done in the beginning. I hope the reader will consider these stories, not mine alone, as they reflect on what they have heard. Placing the conversations in this position at the end of the text is to signify a beginning.

Copies of the section that included the conversation were sent to all the participants, and they were asked what should be changed, clarified, or omitted. Their comments have been supportive of the text. One man said we should all get together and talk about this some more. He said that reading the text was a very emotional experience for him: "People are speaking from their hearts, not from the books."

The greatest limitations of writing this text were the limits I imposed on myself. As Lather (1990) expresses it, I experienced a crisis in representation: this theme has echoed in my discussion of method. How could I "tell the researcher's story" and maintain the integrity of the conversations and not objectify the people involved? I have come to the conclusion, as did Lather, that "all forms of knowledge and discourse that we have invented about ourselves; all define, categorize and classify us" (p. 14). Perhaps there was a way for me to avoid such pitfalls of representation, but unfortunately I have been unsuccessful in discovering the way. I live with the stories that I have been told. I constructed a text that has something to do with the difficulties of constructing a text and something to do with what I learned about First Nations students' experience of anthropology. I remind myself that it is an ethnographic fiction, an experiment in expansive discourse.

## Doing Anthropology on the Anthropologist: A Challenge in Self-Reflexivity

Shaman understands and respects the power of the universe, the interconnectedness of man, animals, plants and oceans. (Shuter, personal communication, 1990)

A particular incident that occurred in an anthropology class is presented here in order to examine the levels of abstraction and the process of reduction that might be manifest in an anthropology curriculum, processes that influence the stories that are told there. First I relate two stories about the construction and ethics of theory. In order to analyze the incident, I utilize the theoretical framework that Agar (1986) presents in *Speaking of Ethnography*. In a sense, Agar's anthropological theory is used here to "do anthropology on the anthropologist." I then describe limitations of this theoretical perspective, based on my understanding of what First Nations students have told me. The story of the classroom encounter as it was told to me is situated after that discussion.

### *Three Stories About Theory Construction*

Van Maanen (1988) explains how ethnographers usually cover themselves when the incidents they are about to relate might make the people described look bad in some way.

When actions that readers might regard as atrocious are presented in an ethnography, the writer is normally careful to provide a good-people-caught-in-a-bad-situation account of such conduct, or, perhaps more frequently, the writer quickly makes relative whatever standards the reader might be bringing to the text by arguing the logic of such conduct from the native's point of view. (p. 42)

The particular incidents related in this and the following sections may simply be examples of bad behavior or poor practice of people involved in the discipline of anthropology. They are, however, clear examples of common situations that cause discomfort and even rage for some of the First Nations students present in the classrooms. As a counselor I am told of many such individual incidents.

In the course of "doing anthropology on the anthropologist" it follows that I should be as charitable to the anthropologist as the anthropologist intends to be to the "native." My application of Agar's (1986) theory could be considered an argument for the logic of the conduct of the anthropologists, who I believe are, of course, what Van Maanen calls "good people."

The first story is about two voices that were heard at a lecture at Simon Fraser University in March 1990. Unlike the other stories about anthropologists related in this article, this is an event I witnessed. Derek Freeman discussed his book *Margaret Mead and Samoa* (1983), in which he refutes Margaret Mead's theory about Samoan adolescents articulated in her 1924 publication *Coming of Age in Samoa* (Mead, 1961).

Freeman described himself as an anthropologist who is “dedicated to using a scientific method in his research.” He is in the pursuit of “objective truth.” He said that because Margaret Mead’s theories are so clearly stated, they can be scientifically and systematically debated. He said he had taken several years to find evidence to disprove her theories. He showed the film *When Prophecy Failed: Reflections on the Seven Year Controversy Over Margaret Mead and Samoa*, in which Margaret Mead’s advocates discuss her work and Freeman attempts to discredit it. Freeman is interviewed and shown with Samoans; Freeman’s colleagues are interviewed; and Samoan people are interviewed. In a 40-minute film, Samoan people speak for approximately five minutes. During those five minutes a Samoan woman who was one of Margaret Mead’s respondents in the original study says that she did not answer Mead’s questions truthfully. She and her friends created stories that they thought the young Mead was entertained by and wanted to hear. They did not realize that their jokes would become the basis of a description of their society that North American academics would believe to be true from that time onward. A man, who was the governor of Samoa during the filming, said that when he attended the University of Hawaii in the 1940s he heard the theories about his people in an anthropology class. He told his professor that these ideas were incorrect. The professor discredited him, saying that they were developed by a famous and respected American anthropologist. The man said, “But I am a Samoan and I tell you that this description of Samoan youth is not true.” A Samoan academic talked about the damage that this theory has done to her people. Since 1924 the people have been saying this book does not describe them, but academics have been visiting and writing about their country and people from Mead’s perspective since that time. She asked about the ethics and responsibility of academics to the people they study. The remaining 35 minutes of the film was a discussion among Mead’s advocates and Freeman’s advocates about the theories they have generated and the reasons these theories have credibility within the discipline of anthropology. There is also some discussion of Mead’s personal life and her reaction to Freeman’s attack on her most famous work.

After the film Freeman discussed his position as a scientific anthropologist and described the meticulous work he had done in order to refute Mead’s study. He answered several questions from the audience. Jo-ann Archibald, who is a member of the Sto:lo Nation and currently the Director of the First Nations House of Learning at UBC, asked Freeman what he felt his obligation was to the Samoan people. What did he think about the fact that these theories had been affecting the Samoan people for 70 years? What about the fact that Samoan people had been saying that Mead was mistaken in her understanding of the people but the academic community did not give their statements credibility? Jo-ann told me that she felt a responsibility to speak for the people whose voices were absent and who

would have objected to Freeman, Mead, and their colleagues disregarding Samoan views.

Freeman, who had leaned forward to listen to what she was going to say, straightened up and raised his voice and said, "That is not what I am talking about! I am talking about scientific theories!"

Initially his response made me angry. How could he be so disrespectful in the face of these questions? Then I realized the difference between how he perceived his mandate as a scientific anthropologist and how Jo-ann Archibald perceived her mandate as a witness from a First Nation. Freeman might say his project was an example of "pure" research and Jo-ann was arguing from a paradigm of action research grounded in indigenous peoples' concerns. Freeman and Archibald were both speaking as voices of authority. Freeman's authority arises from his belief in his right and obligation as a researcher to gather the facts as he sees them and to construct meaning from them. Jo-ann's authority arises from her belief that she has some responsibility to remind the audience that the Samoan people are not present to speak about their concerns and their voice, in her opinion, has not been respected. She would also most likely support a research paradigm that, in this circumstance, would have been initiated by a Samoan's need to know about a particular issue, not originating in an outside researcher's academic curiosity.

To the positivist this is a debate about theory. That is, in Freeman's words, "the general principles drawn from a body of facts, as in science." The facts in Mead's theory had been scientifically refuted by the facts in Freeman's theory. To the First Nations witness this is a debate about a Samoan story, made up for entertainment purposes, that has been perpetuated by others in spite of protests from the people described. Freeman did not say that as a man he didn't care about the effect that the theory had on the people. He just said he wasn't talking about it.

I submit that this refusal to talk about, to acknowledge, or to remember the difference between theory and lived experience is at the heart of the some of the conflicts in anthropology classes. I submit that the theories used by the anthropologists I have heard about in students' stories are most often not made as explicit as Freeman made his. They are hidden in the curriculum of the course. Even though in this case Freeman made his mandate as a theorist explicit, Archibald felt a responsibility to acknowledge the primacy of the validity of the experience of the Samoan people who, according to Freeman, were not the subject of his lecture.

First Nations students in anthropology lectures are listening to stories about First Nations people. They often know that the stories could or should be told differently. The anthropologists are talking about theories—lenses—that have been constructed to isolate some aspect of the human condition, for implicitly comparative purposes. They are talking about their own experiences and views as researchers. Some students



report that these experiences are told as if they are the “truth.” The student’s truth differs from the anthropologist’s stories.

Geraldine Bob, a NITEP student at the time of this conversation, spoke to me about one of these incidents.

Sometimes the prof may say these are all theories we are going to discuss this year and this is usually done sometime in the first two weeks of class. Some profs don’t even say it is a theory and just jump right in and go ahead. Most things are presented as fact. Very rarely do you hear the word *theory* in anthro class. This one prof is talking about her pet theory but again she never speaks of it as a theory, it is her opinion. She presents it as a fact. What she says is anthropologists recreate Native culture and I really have to object to that because I don’t believe they are recreating Native culture. I think it is something that has been preserved since a long time ago. It is not being rediscovered or recreated. It has simply been going along on its own steam all this time. For instance, if you look at my mother or my grandmother or other people’s grandparents, these are people who don’t know how to read. Many of them won’t speak English or they speak very little English. Many of them rarely come off the reserves and many of them do not get involved with academic life. [laughter] So I don’t know how they got in touch with anthropologists in order to learn how to be Indian.

The second story I relate comes from a panellist’s admission made at a presentation entitled “The Role of Theory in Ethnographic Fieldwork” at the 1990 American Education Research Association Conference. It differs from Freeman’s story about the creation of theory. It is a story about how a theory created by one researcher can be borrowed and used by another researcher as a lens to view the world.

A graduate student, whose name unfortunately I did not record, was describing the method that he and his advisors used to construct his master’s thesis. The student said that he spent hours in the library trying to find a topic for his research. He could not find anything. His advisor suggested that he visit a school for a few days and try to look for something there that interested him. This strategy worked; he found something. He didn’t tell us what that was. He went to his advisor and he was told that he needed a theoretical perspective in order to write about this phenomenon that had been noticed. The advisor took a book from the shelf and said, “Have a look at this theory and see if it works in the situation you want to investigate.” The student said that he “went out and applied the theory in the classroom setting. It helped with much and it didn’t help with much.” He wrote his thesis from the theoretical perspective and he was aware that he had to exclude much of what he had observed. He didn’t tell us what the theory was or what he had observed. It did not appear that this man was trying to answer a “burning question” that emerged from his practice as an educator. He was not talking about the children or the theory he chose to look at them. Apparently, from the way he spoke, he was not concerned about the limitations of his work. He was talking about his own academic edict.

As I listened to this man, I wondered how often the academic agenda of the researcher is the main issue of the investigation and how often is the



lived experience of the investigated just a site for this exercise. How does this self-centered mandate influence what is observed and recorded? With respect, this man was again probably working from a "pure" research paradigm and my orientation is toward action research, but the orientations as I see them evolve from different ethical bases. For example, in action research the questions pursued should be the questions of the participant researchers.

#### *A Story About a Theory That I Found*

Like the graduate student in the second story, when I first encountered a topic for research I thought I needed a theory to apply to it. Agar's (1986) *Speaking of Ethnography* spoke to me. I will outline Agar's structural framework, as I understand it, and apply it to an encounter that was described to me by a First Nations student. This began as an attempt to use an anthropological theory to look at an anthropologist's practice in an anthropology class. The theoretical lens does serve to illustrate the process of translation and reduction that might influence the information eventually presented in university classrooms. The theoretical analysis collapses, however, as I attempt to use this same theory, from my understanding of a First Nations student's experience, of this particular classroom encounter, to analyze that moment in the cross-cultural encounter in the classroom when a breakdown occurs. This is a breakdown that Agar imagines as "a disjunction among traditions" (p. 20). The theory collapses because the anguish the students felt at that moment cannot be captured in theoretical analysis.

Agar (1986) presents a theoretical framework and a vocabulary for ethnographers to consider when encountering alien worlds and traditions and making sense of them. Ethnography is interpretive, mediating two worlds through a third. Clifford (1986) also identifies ethnography as being situated between two powerful systems of meaning. Van Maanen (1988) states that ethnographies sit between two worlds or systems of meaning—the world of the ethnographers (and readers) and the world of cultural members (also, increasingly, readers, although not the targeted ones).

Agar (1986) identifies the interplay between the ethnographer, the group, and the intended audience as being the key factors in creating ethnographies in this place between two worlds. I label this interplay *mediating frames of meaning* and attempt to identify the players each time they shift as the ethnography is created.

Agar (1986) developed a language to talk about the interplay in this third world. The five key terms that apply to my interpretation of his work are: (a) breakdown, (b) resolution, (c) strips, (d) levels of strips, and (e) coherence. In his language, the breakdown initiates the ethnographic encounter. That is, an event that has been observed from one world does not make sense from the other. The resolution is the process the ethnographer

uses to make meaning from what has been observed. The resolution process is a dialectic of questions and answers. Some of the experiences in the breakdown encounter are abstracted out for further study in the dialectic process. Agar calls these abstracted-out portions "strips." These strips may take the form of observation, conversation, interview, or archive and may be recorded by tape-recorder, field notes, or memory. In this article "level of strip" becomes important for resolving a breakdown.

Level One Strip: Informants' routine accomplishment of daily life

Level Two Strip: Discourse about level one strips

Level Three Strip: Discourse about level two strips

Agar (1986) states that although in principle the levels of strips could expand upward forever, ethnographic work in practice seldom goes beyond level three. Coherence is achieved when the ethnographer believes that the sense of what was observed is understood. It makes sense as part of a pattern from the observed world.

Having introduced this vocabulary, I will attempt to use it to resolve the breakdown that occurred in an anthropology class. Agar (1986) concludes his book with the statement "At worst the proposed language can be a useful mistake." The language has proven useful to my analysis but I admit that I may have constructed my own meaning for my own purposes, and that Agar may not have intended it to be used in quite this way.

The following incident is an outline of the third story in this section. In an anthropology class an anthropology instructor dressed up as a shaman. He wore a paper headband and a green shawl over his shoulders. The students in the class asked him questions about shaman practices. There were First Nations witnesses in this classroom.

A history to the classroom encounter can be imagined using the levels of abstraction that Agar (1986) suggests. The scenario probably began in a field study where an ethnographer encountered a shaman:

*Mediated Frames of Meaning*

Ethnographer: Original researcher

Group, person: Shaman and his people

Audience: Other anthropologists

When the ethnographer observes the shaman, a breakdown occurs and the ethnographer moves to resolve his understanding of shaman practice:

Level One Strip: Shaman living his life  
Ethnographer observes shaman

Level Two Strip: Ethnographer interviews shaman through a translator

Level Three Strip: Ethnographer interviews others about the shaman without a translator  
Ethnographer interviews others about shaman with a translator

- Level Four Strip: Ethnographer produces field notes based on his interviews and observations  
Ethnographer translates field notes into a formal text  
Ethnographer writes a journal article or textbook chapter about shaman

Next the anthropologist instructor enters the scene.

*Mediated Frames of Meaning*

- Ethnographer: Anthropologist instructor  
Person, object, group: Shaman as depicted in texts  
Audience: Anthropology class (but perhaps he is his own audience here as he teaches himself about shaman)
- Level Five Strip: Anthropologist instructor reads this article and others about shaman
- Level Six Strip: Anthropology instructor constructs a list of key points to be made about shaman
- Level Seven Strip: Anthropologist constructs a role-play to present to his class

*Mediated Frames of Meaning*

- Ethnographer: Anthropology instructor  
Group: Shaman recreated  
Audience: Class
- Level Eight Strip: Anthropologist presents himself to class as shaman
- Level Nine Strip: Students ask the shaman actor about the activities of the shaman

At this point we might assume that non-Native students think they have resolved their lack of understanding of Shaman (unless of course, they have some previous experience of Shaman). The instructor might think he has presented a shaman in a creative way that will help to mediate what he knows about shaman and what he wants the students to learn. Native witnesses, however, experience a breakdown and the "cycle continues upwards."

Agar's (1986) theory about these levels of abstraction serves to explain the distance between the two worlds being mediated. It demonstrates some of the complexities of the reductions that occur in this space. That is, in the first four levels of strips we are looking at the encounter from the point of view of the anthropologist-ethnographer, and then in the next five from the point of view of the anthropologist-instructor. The explanations from these viewpoints, the anthropologist-ethnographer's and the anthropologist-instructor's, may be considered as "arguing the logic of the observed conduct from the native's point of view" (Van Maanen, 1988, p. 29), the natives in this case being the anthropologists concerned. It might be appropriate here to think about the relationship between the anthropologist-fieldworker and the anthropologist-instructor. I wonder what the

fieldworker would think of this translation? Van Maanen talks about ethnographies as sometimes being treated as files to be ransacked, that is, that other social scientists take only the raw empirical material of an ethnography and ignore the arguments that surround and give meaning to the facts.

It is safe to assume that the anthropologist-ethnographer who gathered shaman information and documented it imagined some of his audience would be anthropologist-instructors. The anthropologist instructor imagined his class when he designed his role play. Did the anthropologist-ethnographer imagine First Nations academic readers? Did the anthropologist-instructor imagine the First Nations witnesses in his classroom?

In this classroom encounter, then, the instructor and non-Native students have some sense of coherence. Agar (1986) explains coherence in this way: "Ethnographic coherence, in brief, is achieved when an initial breakdown is resolved by changing the knowledge in the ethnographer's tradition so that the breakdown is now reinterpreted as an expression of some part of a plan" (p. 25). Simply put, the instructor thinks he understands the logic of shaman practices well enough (he sees the plan) to demonstrate this understanding to his students. Students who have not encountered Shaman before this explanation might think they have reached some understanding of shaman practices in this demonstration.

The First Nations witnesses, however, are facing a breakdown. Is it possible to imagine the First Nations witnesses at this point as ethnographers who have encountered an interaction that they do not understand (shaman role-play), hence facing a breakdown? Is it possible to imagine that resolution will begin through a dialectical process of questions and answers and that the traditions will be linked and the original departure from the expectations will be seen as coherent (Agar, 1986)? In other words, when the ethnographer encountered the shaman, he probably had some academic curiosity about shaman practice and through a dialectic process resolved what he had witnessed to his satisfaction; coherence was achieved. Are we to imagine intellectual curiosity when the First Nations witness encounters this breakdown?

I attempt to use Agar's (1986) theory to continue to explain the levels of abstraction that occurred in this situation, but I speculate about the perspective of the First Nations witness as ethnographer.

#### *Mediating Frames of Meaning*

Ethnographer:	First Nations witness
Group, person, object:	Professor role-playing shaman
Audience:	Self, ancestors, other First Nations witnesses, non-Native students

- Level One Strip: First Nations witness observes role-play and breakdown occurs
- Level Two Strip: First Nations witness has a discussion with self
- Level Three Strip: First Nations witness meets with another witness to reconstruct what they have observed in their place between two worlds of meaning
- Level Four Strip: First Nations witnesses discuss each other's coping strategies for moving to coherence

I want to stand up in my own text here and echo Jo-ann Archibald's sentiment, "What about the people?" The theory doesn't work from the perspective of the witness. You can see that it feels disrespectful to continue to analyze this situation in this way. Each level of strip removes the writer and the reader farther from the lived experience. The theoretical lens is a barrier. Its purpose is to provide a distinct view of the information, but holding the lens here is burning a hole in the paper. I hear Maxine Greene's challenge to educational researchers at the 1990 American Education Research Association Conference: "We have got to keep the pain alive." I hear Derek Freeman's assertion again, "I am not talking about that!" In this situation he might say, "I am talking about a scientific theory that looks at the levels of abstraction that transpose the facts from the field to the classroom. I am not talking about Shaman, the fieldworker, the role-playing instructor, the First Nations witness, the other students in the class, the readers, or their practices or their feelings."

So here we all stand in this place between two worlds.

Just as in a traditional story we could choose any character in this place and follow the story from his or her point of view. Each would have something to teach us. We could follow one character and then come back to the story again and follow someone else. I was following Agar, the academic theorist. We could have followed Shaman, or the fieldworker, or the role-playing instructor, or the Native witnesses, or the other students, or you the reader. We could examine the settings: a back porch, a hotel room, a classroom, a study. We could think about objects: an eagle feather, field notes, textbooks, lecture notes. We could find other theorists who write about institutional racism.

#### *A Story About Where I Stand*

I will describe the place that I found myself in between two worlds two years ago. I will speculate briefly about my relationship to the role-playing instructor, and finally I will recount the story that the First Nations witness told me.

I speak as a community member and educator. First I must say that although the analogy of being between two worlds worked rather well to help me think through the initial phases of analysis, it is not an image that I believe describes our existence or our work here together. Clifford's two

powerful systems of meaning, Agar's mediating two worlds through a third, Van Maanen's between two worlds, and Bakhtin's outside/inside cultural dialogue are all notions that suggest separate, intact worlds. A third world, usually situated between the two in contention, is a place outside, where, in Bakhtin's words, the most powerful factor in understanding culture is most likely to occur (von Goethe, 1982).

I prefer to consider Hampton's (1988) challenge to First Nations educators. He suggests we engage in a relentless reflexivity as we attempt to understand our battle for the lives of Indian children. The war is not between Indian and white, but between what honors life and what does not. It is fought within ourselves as well as within the world.

I think of the words Sharon Shuter (personal communication, 1990), a NITEP student, used to describe Shaman: "Shaman understands and respects the power of the universe, the interconnectedness of man, animals, plants and oceans."

What is my position in all this positioning? I know that the incident of the role-playing shaman is burned into my heart and mind. I still visit the memories with anger, although as a researcher I have been told to remove myself from the pain, to discuss this incident from a more objective stance, perhaps to examine the encounter, as Bakhtin suggests, as an outsider (von Goethe, 1982). The fact is that when my friend talked to me about her experience in this classroom I encountered a breakdown in Agar's (1986) terms.

We both knew that we were talking about "bad behavior" in Van Maanen's terms. We are biased in these situations. By the time NITEP students encounter anthropology courses they have taken at least two Native studies courses that deal directly with the historical knowledge of First Nations and the dynamic that developed between the people of these nations and the people from other lands. These courses are designed and taught by a team of educators who are First Nations people and are my colleagues in NITEP. Through course readings and discussions students have opportunities to examine topics from First Nations perspectives. As a result of the work and of their own personal histories and teachings, students are encouraged to recognize and articulate the inadequacies of the knowledge they have been presented with in the public school system. Students are asked to consider questions concerning the nature of power, ideology, domination, and culture, and are asked to consider how these factors impact on them personally and in turn on the children they will teach. In a concrete way the stuff of texts is seen to be biased, to suffer omissions.

Giroux's (1988) notion of what is considered to be the territory of educational practice reflects a stance that is discussed:

Education is that terrain where power and politics are given fundamental expression, since it is where meaning, desire, language and values engage and respond to the deeper beliefs



about the very nature of what it means to be human, to dream, to name and struggle for a particular future and way of life. (p. 4)

In the Native studies courses, students are challenged to think about a terrain that also reflects the power, politics, language, values, and aspirations of First Nations.

This ersatz shaman encounter happens within a political context. I cannot imagine that many First Nations people would see this as an apolitical act. It is difficult to imagine that academic study can be considered neutral for First Nations students at this point in history. To return to Clifford's (1986) metaphor, the place where the two systems of meaning meet is not neutral. Self-other relationships are not neutral. They relate to the politics of the situations being defined. The most obvious reason that the study itself cannot be neutral is that it must be pursued on occupied territory (e.g., UBC is located on Musqueam land) and taught by immigrants to this land. Another most obvious reason that education is not neutral is that the purpose of academic work at university is to engage in caring for and attending to the whole intellectual capital that composes a civilization (Oakeshott, 1962, p. 313). Does the intellectual capital to which Oakeshott refers include the intellectual capital of the First Nations? He is probably referring to the intellectual capital of European civilization, and this capital historically has not included the First Nations perspective.

When I consider this classroom encounter I am biased. I have read Deloria's (1969) "Anthropologists and Other Friends." It is a harsh, biased, uncharitable description of the anthropologists, "the most prominent members of the scholarly community that infest the land of the free, and in the summer time, the homes of the braves" (p. 83).

In this section of the discussion I have set up the anthropologist theorist as "other" and then have gone on to talk about the "otherness." I feel compelled to expose these members of the scholarly community not only for their insensitive behavior, but for their pretense of neutrality. Lather (1990), however, challenges us to come to grips with these issues of how to develop an oppositional culture that does not reproduce what it opposes. I have run the risk of being accused of recreating a model of oppression.

Friere (1985) insists that "theory or introspection in the absence of social action is escapist idealism or wishful thinking" (p. 5); in his view, genuine theory can only be derived from praxis rooted in historical struggles. This classroom encounter is rooted in an historical educational struggle. There is an obligation implied in Friere's words to develop some genuine educational theories rooted in this struggle. Hampton (1988) states that within a theory of First Nations education there must be an appreciation of the facts of Indian history including the loss of the continent and continuing racial and political oppression. First Nations students have encountered difficulties in mainstream education since contact,

and higher education is no exception. The historical struggle is genuine. What action is implied?

Action research is the systematic collection and analysis of a particular topic for the purpose of informing political action and social change. The research participants acknowledge their biases from the beginning of the study. They are not outside observers who will document the action from a stance that can be described as academically objective. The research they undertake is for their own benefit. The issue to be addressed arises from the community's interest to investigate it.

As we discussed and recorded the stories about the problems in anthropology classes, the challenge for me soon became how to translate praxis, reflection leading to action, into text, a thesis, and how to imagine the text in relation to future action within this community context. My challenge was also to create a story about this struggle that is respectful to the lives of all of the characters.

Lather (1990) would also warn that committing this shaman encounter to print, and more importantly the witnesses' strategy for coping with it, can be another kind of intrusive surveillance. Individuals' coping strategies will no longer be private affairs. Becoming the "voice over" (Van Maanen, 1988, p. 67) the voices in the community, as I become the author of the text, is a double bind. I ask myself, referring to both Van Maanen and Lather, "Why would a non-Native graduate student attempt to complete research about First Nations students' reported perceptions of anthropologist instructors' 'realist tales'?" My answer is that I want to document and to enter into a broader public forum certain kinds of stories that I have been told over and over and over.

Initially I labeled this section "Anthropology as Storytelling." It seemed to me that the title might help to demythologize the authority of the knowledge that is passed there. Certain anthropologists create or borrow stories to tell about a tradition they encounter. They acquire the knowledge somewhere along the levels of abstraction described in the Agar (1986) theory. They talk about facts and theories and academic audiences and lived experience and micro and macro views as positivists and as critical ethnographers, but ultimately they have a story to tell.

Mead tells a story about fun-loving and promiscuous adolescents. Freeman tells a story about violence and anger among this same group. Samoans tell stories about Mead's preoccupation with titillating stories. I tell a story about Freeman's defense of his scientific practice. Sometimes the storyteller has it wrong and sometimes the storyteller admits to telling a little bit of what he or she knows. Sometimes the storyteller is a trickster and sometimes storytellers don't think of themselves as storytellers.

I submit that we are all constructing tales based on our truth as we know it in order to relate what we have to say to others. In many cases we want to teach others something about the way we see the world.

So the title of this section became "Doing Anthropology on the Anthropologist: A Challenge in Self-Reflexivity," because anthropology is a discipline that aspires to inform a tradition of humanity studying humanity. I am asking these particular anthropologists to try to see themselves as they are seen, to study themselves.

*A Story Told to Me About an Anthropology Class*

I will attempt to relate the conversation that took place between us, Sarah. I hope it reveals how these matters are integrated into a more comprehensive conversation and relationship. Unlike the ethnographer and shaman we did not go directly to the breakdown. We had been doing a seminar with student teachers and you were asked if you would offer one piece of advice to your fellow teachers in training:

Just remember when you go to teach in a village like mine you will be the only stranger. Everyone there will speak with the dialect of our village. There are so many things that you can teach. Standard English doesn't have to be the most important thing. Why should all of us learn to speak like you do?

You later told me that you could not get accustomed to the view of monolingual people. You said that they don't seem to know that bilingual people have the ability to think in two languages and that because of their bilingualism they have more ways to see the world. "English doesn't even sound as good as my language. Our sounds are happy. We describe things differently. A snowflake is a blanket for a chickadee."

I asked you if you ever considered writing about the work you are doing to revitalize your language in your community. You had just returned from giving a three-day workshop for teachers. You said you did not feel like sharing your cultural self with most of your professors, and then you told me about your anthropology class:

My prof dressed up like a shaman and then the class was supposed to ask him questions. He had a paper headband with a paper feather in it on his head and a green shawl over his shoulders.

What did you think about that!

I just pretended that it wasn't happening. I tell myself that it isn't real. He is just doing something but it isn't real. There was another Native student in the class and she just kept looking at me. We went for coffee and she couldn't stop crying. She asked me why I was so calm and I told her that I pretended that it wasn't real, that it wasn't happening.

The other woman said, "How could they be doing this? How am I supposed to feel? Why do they think they could go up to him and just ask any question? They think that he would answer like that. He thinks that he can just be a shaman. How can he wear that paper headband in front of us? It makes me sick."

We talked about the violation of trust between the shaman and the ethnographer. You said you would never tell this professor anything about your people. You said that if you had to write about Natives you

would write about prairie people and you would get your information from textbooks. I can't remember what else we talked about that day.

**"That's What My People Say. You Learn it from the Story"**

*Seeking Symmetry*

In this section I have imagined a series of concentric circles. Everyone who participated in the conversations about the issues that arise in anthropology is sitting in the inside circle. The conversations that we had are represented in the text that follows. The readers sit in the next circle. I imagine them witnessing what is reported in the first circle. The third circle would be created when we sit together to talk about the meanings we made and the breakdowns that occurred for each of us as we read the text. My purpose in this first round of talk is to bring the issues that participants identify into a public and community forum. Until now these issues have been dealt with alone, in small groups, or with the particular professors concerned. As an educational community, I propose that we need to hear about the breakdowns and apply our best thinking to their resolution. I submit that they arise because historically the study of anthropology at university has been done in the absence of First Nations witnesses.

The heaviest criticism of this textual method of representation might be Tyler's (1986). He says that manipulating people's words is stealing their voices in order to create a pseudo-discourse that is an act of terrorist alienation more complete than the positivists'. Tyler's warning serves to emphasize that the integrity of the speaker's words can be lost as the textwriter creates a new telling of what was said. I have attempted to respect the participants' contributions by leaving their words largely intact. I have not altered the participants' words, but I have taken the liberty to select from and reorganize their contributions around themes that emerged for me in the conversations. As a participant in the original conversations I have not altered my questions and responses. In my recounting of participant narrative I have interspersed editorial and organizational comments and have italicized these in the text in order to delineate them from the other conversation. I have also returned this constructed conversation to the participants and have taken up their judgments and changes. Returning the text is to move the conversation into an outer circle and to ask the people there if, in their opinion, the reconstructed conversation has integrity.

In this section I direct my commentary to the people who participated in the conversations. My purpose is to speak to the people who spoke to me. I did not want to create a text in which the audience is anonymous. For the sake of clarity for all readers, I will explain some of the decisions I have made about the format of this section.

The concentric circles are introduced because the circle is a point of reference in much of our work in First Nations education. The circle

symbol is codified in the Medicine Wheel, which is utilized by many First Nations people in North and South America.

The Medicine Wheel was developed generations ago to teach young people to use structural strategies for dealing with and understanding the changes that occur as one journeys through life. The key to remember is that all have a choice in where to go in one's journey and that the path to learning and understanding is always there whether we travel or not. When things are placed on the wheel we can see many connections and begin to see how all things are interrelated (Bopp & Morris, 1984).

Recently I was traveling with a friend along a stretch of highway in Saskatchewan and the circle orientation was pointed out to me. I have always thought of the prairies as flat and somewhat linear like the map of Canada. We were, in my mind, traveling across the flat land from east to west. My friend said that he loved to drive out in the prairie because he was driving within the circle and he could feel its power. Suddenly the horizon surrounded us as we drove across a diameter.

In my experience it would be unusual for the participants in a NITEP seminar not to sit in a circle unless the physical space would not accommodate a circle. Many organizational models in First Nations education are circles. For example, the model that is used to focus counseling, program planning, and decision making in the Native Indian Teacher Education Program is a series of concentric circles. The concentric circles are introduced at the beginning of this section as a metaphor to locate the conversation in a First Nations context, to alert the imagination of the reader. The circles are an invitation to "see many connections and to see how all things are related."

There is also balance, tension, and rhythm within the circle. The First Nations discourse that is created is positioned there in response to the academic discourse of certain anthropologists. Notions that are placed within the circle are seeking symmetry. In my mind, this section is a discourse about one aspect of "Indian control of Indian education," seeking symmetry. All peoples are included in the Medicine Wheel, and this implies to me that all people's voices should be represented there.

Urion (1990) challenges writers to see the necessity for academic discourse to change, to expand, to include but not incorporate the discourse of First Nations people. He suggests that academic discourse as it has been generated is exclusive and hierarchical in nature and in the control of the people who can manipulate academic language. He challenges the assumption that academic discourse is the "real" discourse in First Nations education and also challenges that there should be a fundamental difference in "ethos or integrity" between the two. To my mind, Urion is reflecting what "Indian control of Indian education" might mean if academic dialogue could expand and change with a First Nations influence.

The nexus of interaction in First Nations discourse is not essentially dialectical; the first description is not of two or more juxtaposed entities, or two or more people, or cultures, involved in reciprocal processes. Its first assumption is the integrity of the person. It assumes a context in which there is unity and wholeness to be discovered or reaffirmed; people involved in the discourse may disagree in their statements, of course, but the discourse is one of discovering the properties of the unifying context, and finding out how the discoursing individuals fit within the context and thus come to unity. (p. 4)

Clifford (1988) refers to Bakhtin's notion of polyphony or heteroglossia or multiple discourses. Like Urion, Bakhtin and Clifford are imagining texts where all voices are represented. Bakhtin, refers, however to a disruption of unity, by acknowledging the complexity and diversity of non-homogeneous wholes.

For Bakhtin, preoccupied with the representation of non-homogeneous wholes, there are no integrated cultural worlds or languages. All attempts to posit such abstract unities are constructs of monological power. A "culture" is, concretely, an open-ended, creative dialogue of subcultures, of insiders and outsiders, of diverse factions. A "language" is the interplay and struggle of regional dialects, professional jargons, generic commonplaces, the speech of different age groups, individuals.... Bakhtin discovers a utopian textual space where discursive complexity, the dialogical interplay of voices can be accommodated. (pp. 46-47).

The unity that I believe is referred to by Urion (1990) in First Nations discourse must be imagined as expansive and as a space that also accommodates the interplay of all voices. It is a metaphysical, spiritual notion of life itself, manifested in one human being and also in all our relations in the universe. Striving for unity cannot be imagined as exclusive in this context. Perhaps unity in this expansive sense can never be fully captured in the human imagination, but it can be sought in the direction of inclusiveness and respect.

The concentric circles are also introduced here as a visual metaphor to illustrate my understanding of another aspect of First Nations discourse. The discourse is embedded in a context that has as much prominence for the witnesses to the discourse, and to the participants in the discourse, as the discourse itself. It is necessary to locate the discourse. To locate the discourse in this section, first a circle of speakers and then a circle of witnesses is to be imagined. The witnesses (readers) are asked to engage in my interpretation of what Lightning (1992) terms "mutual thinking." Although Lightning is referring to listening to elders, the assumption of mutual thinking is that active attention, humility of the hearer, and respect for the speaker will put one in the frame of mind where the minds can meet. A multileveled story is then told by Jo-ann. Urion (1990) describes these aspects of First Nations discourse:

Like academic discourse, it is thus essentially empirical, and rests on observation. The major difference is the requirement—not just the acknowledgement—that the observer be part of the observation. Statements are not disembodied, but are evaluated in terms of multiple contexts, and further evaluated according to where the statements originate. (p. 8)



The conversation presented here takes place in an historical moment. First Nations academics in anthropology classes are in a very particular situation. The discipline of anthropology has for the most part proceeded in the absence of the people and cultures studied. Most social science instructors do not have to consider that the subject of their study will show up in class. Shakespeare will not appear in English 100. Plato will not appear in philosophy. Caesar will not appear in history. There was a time when First Nations people did not attend anthropology lectures. This is no longer true.

We have been talking about breakdowns, as Agar (1986) uses the term in *Speaking of Ethnography*, that have occurred in these anthropology classes: "A breakdown signals a disjunction among traditions ... a moment of surprise or attention drawn to the unexpected ... attention to the exotic" (p. 20). The breakdowns we are discussing occur when the First Nations anthropology student witnesses something in the anthropology instructor's presentation or in the literature of anthropology that signals a disjunction among traditions.

For the sake of committing our discussions to print I have imagined us gathered together to look at the patterns that emerged for me as I revisited the words on tape and thought about our conversations. One of the themes that has been very strong from the beginning of my work in this area is the notion of witness. As most First Nations readers will know, in some of the coastal nations the role of witness is clearly defined at ceremonial functions. People come to witness an important event, and it is their responsibility to remember it and to pass on the occurrences there to people who did not attend, to their children, and in some cases to a particular person whose role it is to remember. This practice reflects the function of memory in oral tradition. At many of these gatherings the stories, ceremonies, rituals, and protocols of the culture are performed.

People gather in anthropology classes to learn about Native cultural practices as told by the anthropology instructors. As I listened to your stories I began to hear the responsibilities you felt as you witnessed anthropologists talking about your people, your relatives, your ancestors. We discussed these responsibilities, the conflicts you felt as you experienced them, the reasons you believed these conflicts were occurring, and in some cases the action that you felt was implied. We have been formulating our own theories about the nature of anthropology as a discipline in the face of this particular audience. I believe that we are involved in what Lather (1986) labels "research as praxis."

For researchers with emancipatory aspirations, doing empirical research offers a powerful opportunity for praxis to the extent that the research process enables people to change by encouraging self-reflection and a deeper understanding of their particular situations. (p. 263)

As you spoke to me as “witnesses” you seemed to ask yourselves some central questions:

- Who are the voices of authority that influence the experiences of First Nations students in anthropology classes?
- Who speaks for whom and under what circumstances?
- If these voices conflict who is responsible for clarifying or mediating the conflict?
- Do the voices respect each other?
- Is the historical context of the idea under discussion clearly articulated?

Seven guiding ideas subdivide the text of the conversations to provide a frame of reference for some of the themes that emerged for me as I participated in the conversations and listened to the transcripts. The seven themes are arbitrary in that I could have chosen others, and they are personal in that I created them as I sought to understand what I was hearing. It is my hope that they are not intrusive, but might be used by the observer-readers as signals that the conversation is about to change or shift. Your titles or themes would likely be different. The seven idea titles are composed of a theme statement and a short quote from our conversations that reflect the theme in some way. Although the following text is divided, the conversation is to be taken as interrelated and dynamic as it was for me as it was created with the participants and as it is for me as I continue to labor with the impact of the words. The actual interviews were an hour or more in duration so this reconstructed conversation is distilled from about 12 hours of tape.

The theme titles are:

1. Student as Witness: “I am a mother.”
2. Student as an Authority: “Someone asked me about Coyote and his similarity to Raven. I said, ‘I don’t know, I’m Chilcotin.’”
3. Anthropologist as Authority: “The statements are said as true rather than as a reflection of themselves (as anthropologists).”
4. On Whose Authority? “The Native perspective—not industries’, not governments’, not society or the majority—the Native perspective.”
5. Language of Authority: “So I have to turn off my Chilcotin thinking and think in Western culture.”
6. Textual versus Oral Authority: “I am sort of the book he has written.”
7. Respect: “That is what my people say. You learn it from the story.”

I begin reporting our reconstructed conversations with a story that Jo-ann Archibald told me one night as we were sitting on a log with the ocean and the mountains and the sunset, thinking about her travels to Navajo country and my travels through these words. The story is included here for a number of reasons. First it was a gift. Jo-ann gave me the telling of this story because she thought it reflected the work we were attempting to do as we discussed the practice of anthropology and First Nations students’ experiences with it. Second, most gatherings and many meetings

I attend that concern the welfare of First Nations people in education begin with a prayer. An elder would normally take this responsibility. In this case, no one participated as an elder, so the telling of the story takes this position in the text. Third, because one of the recurrent themes in the conversations is "whose knowledge is the most credible in the circumstance described?" it seemed appropriate to begin the transcript conversations with a story told to me by a First Nations person, a story she told because she thought it reflected some of the issues that I was encountering in my work. Also, in my own experience of being told this story, I was reminded of the temptation to take at face value the stories that we tell and hear. The participants in the conversations were selecting from their experiences in anthropology classes and I was selecting from the stories they told me. The story reminded me that we were engaging in a discussion based on this selected version of the participants' experiences. Perhaps if we interpret the created text too literally, we will miss the spirit from which the words have come.

*Jo-ann:* I'm thinking about a story that Barre Toelken (1981) tells of his experience with a Navajo Elder, Little Wagon, whose grandson asked him where snow came from. Little Wagon told a story about an ancestor who found some beautiful burning material which he kept burning until the owners, the spirits, asked for it. The spirits wanted to reward the finder, but because the material was so precious, they asked him to complete very difficult feats to test his endurance and worthiness. After he successfully completed them the spirits told him in return for his fine behaviour they would throw all the ashes from their own fireplace down into Montezuma Canyon each year when they cleaned house. "Sometimes they fail to keep their word; but in all, they turn their attention towards us, here in Montezuma Canyon." After a while the grandson asked why it snowed in another area. The Elder told the boy that he would have to make his own story to answer that question. Much later, Little Wagon told Toelken that it was too bad that his grandson did not understand that the story was about moral values, about the reciprocal relationship between himself and nature, a fact which Little Wagon attributed to the influence of white schooling. (Archibald, 1991, p. 95)

From the left we are:

Geraldine Bob	Nle'kepmx
Bev Kakakaway	Cree
Gary Lafferty	Nle'kepmx
Doreena Mason	Waglisla
Maria Myers	Chilcotin
Judy Peck	Nle'kepmx
Sharon Shuter	Nle'kepmx/Okanagon
Joe Starr	Haisla
Jim Sutherland	Carrier
Leona Williams	Chilcotin
Jean York	Nla'kapmx/Okanagon
Mary Smith	(a relation created to say some things that are best left anonymous.)
Sheila Te Hennepe	Scottish/Irish/English

Two of the participants voices will not be heard. Unfortunately the tapes of their conversations could not be transcribed. Their names are included because their conversations influenced the discussion.

### **Student as Witness**

#### ***I am a mother.***

*Maria and I talked about the notion of witness first some years ago. She said, "I am a mother." She explained that when she sits in an anthropology class she is there as a student but at the same time she is a representative of all of her people that have come before her. She expanded on this idea when I asked her about it for this article.*

*Maria:* Our approach to life is to look after our children so they won't have to face the pain that we face. Anthropology should be brought up to date. It should be different because Native people are there in anthropology classes. If the curriculum is not revamped, I have children who are going to grow up and are they going to complain about these same things? When my children are to the age when they are trying to find out about themselves this is not going to help them in any way.

*Sheila:* Are students going there to find out about themselves?

*Maria:* Yes, I went there to find out about Athapaskans and Chilcotins. I think it is the way whites function to find out about other cultures. It stimulates their imagination in other ways. But we as Native people, we don't prepare ourselves for that (study of others). Europeans go all over the place. It shows in colonization. They want to go to China to teach. Have Chilcotins done this? Europeans scientifically and logically study other cultures. I don't know how Indians do it. That is one thing we have to find out. How we analyze ourselves and other people.

We have been brought up to listen. What people say is of value. I have lived in my culture I have not studied it. When anthropologists say things I have to reflect to see what I know about this (topic). If I don't know about the subject I just take it the way it is given. I take the position of not knowing where others take the position of knowing.

*Maria's position as a representative of her people past, present and future was also reflected in Jean's statements.*

*Jean:* They talk about ancestors and the artifacts and things like that. Like it is a dead culture. They don't talk about it like it is alive, we are alive. We are sitting in the classroom looking at the professor and he is looking at us like we don't exist. Like the Native culture is dead and it is history. It is not. We are here in the present and this is what is painful that they do not acknowledge that.

*Sheila:* When you say "We are sitting here looking at him," to you, it is obvious that you are all of those people he is talking about.

*Jean:* Exactly. Yes.

*Sheila:* To him he sees Jean

*Jean:* That is right, and Jean only, as a separate entity removed from my whole tribe, my whole race and all of the Native people in the world ... we don't, I consider myself as part of the whole like a little drop.

**Sheila:** Wouldn't it be great if he could see you with all of your ancestors. If the room was full of thousands of people, not just Jean.

**Jean:** Especially grandfather. If you say anything bad about Jean you will turn into a frog ... [laughter]

*Sharon felt that her professor was misrepresenting some tribal practices and she felt a responsibility to influence the professor so he would change his statements.*

**Sharon:** I had to ask my prof questions even though I knew the answers. I felt that I had to ask these questions in order to ... get it to come from him and it made me feel angry and resentful to have to be in that position, the position of having to clarify on behalf of those people.

*Jim related hearing about early tribal practices of the Cherokee and he also suggested his ancestral connection with the people past and present.*

**Jim:** It is about them as a Native person. I think about myself and what I learn about, to me all Native people are Native people and they are all my brothers and sisters, so I'm really there to learn about me, at least an extension, even if it is a remote part of the United States or an Eskimo.

*I believe that Maria and Jean and Jim and Sharon are speaking as witnesses. As I looked through the transcripts of your words, you identified what I have labeled voices of authority from this position of witness. Who is speaking for whom and what is their authority to speak about this matter in this particular way to the people gathered here? Some voices are Native and some voices are non-Native. They are voices from different nations and traditions and disciplines.*

### **Student as an Authority**

**Someone asked me about Coyote and his similarity to raven. I said, "I don't know, I'm Chilcotin."**

*Perhaps the place to begin is with your own voices of authority. Many of you commented about your position as a Native person speaking in class as an authority on Native matters.*

**Jean:** The first time I got into this class, he wanted to say a Native word so he pointed me out and asked me to say it in Scekwem for him ... so that was the very first day in front of 200 students. The other part was after class I had about 15 students wanting to talk to me ... talking to a real Indian I guess, and my classmates as well because we were pointed out as Native students.

**Sheila:** So people in the class wanted to talk to you about the subject.

**Jean:** ... about the subjects and they wanted to see if we could help them with their assignments and all of this and it was nerve-racking. So I went to him and I told him, "You know I really don't want these people coming to me for expertise because I'm not an expert. I'm taking this course because I don't know a lot about Natives either. I am a Native and I know some of my own background and what my ancestors have done but I don't want to be considered an expert in anthro."

*Many of you talked about your interactions with non-Native students. In this particular instance Jean talks about being interviewed for an assignment and then being offended by the stance taken by the student who was interviewing her. She was caught by feeling responsible to set things straight.*

*Jean:* This chap came into the library and asked if anyone had been to residential school. I said that I had been and right there he started to interview me and without thinking I was so trustworthy. He didn't ask if he could interview. He didn't preplan. He just said, "Oh great, you are the person I want to talk to." Some of his questions were really off the wall and then he said, "You know Jean the reason you are here at UBC in the masters program is because you went to residential school."  
I said "Bullshit!"

*Sheila:* Is there a reason he gave for that?

*Jean:* No he just said it.

*Sheila:* He knew it.

*Jean:* He knew it, right.

He started talking about family and I broke down. He was so insensitive. I got up and started working. Everyone was looking at me with these red eyes. He comes back and he says, "What is so painful?" I was so annoyed. I said the whole fact was that I wasted 11 years of my life that I could have spent with my grandparents and my parents learning about my culture. That part is lost forever, the language [is lost]; that is what is painful. Serving my time in residential school was painful but this is what is painful now.

*Sheila:* What didn't happen.

*Jean:* Yes, exactly.

*Sheila:* He asked a real personal question as if he was asking you if you liked steak or potatoes. Did you decide why you do it, why you feel that you have to answer?

*Jean:* I feel like it is important for people to know about what happened in the residential school. I just want to set him straight.

*Bev also wanted to set things straight but in this situation she felt that she could not speak up.*

*Bev:* ... the prof classified all Native people into one group. I know that all UBC Natives do not come from the same customs, the same beliefs. They are similar but different. So when he is speaking for the Native people he is talking to mean all Native people and he can't do that. He can't speak for me because my beliefs and my people's customs and culture are way different than what he sees. For him to speak for me and to speak for all of us to the non-Native students is unfair.

*Sheila:* Does he say First Nation's people think this way?

*Bev:* We got asked a question. One lady had asked, "Well can I ask how Native students are thinking about this?" I was willing to give, more than willing to educate this person who knows nothing about Native people. And he interjected and said, "Well it is not a Native custom to express feelings about this. This is something that is kept within themselves." And I thought, "Why?" But I didn't know how to say anything after that. I thought if I say anything now, he is going to get angry with me. Those non-Native students are going to get confused and the Native students are going to think, "Why is she going against him? How can she go against him." I don't know how to make things more clear, just to



speak for myself. I think he heard it all wrong. I think it makes sense to try to help him. I didn't know how to go ahead and say that right away without hurting people in the first week. I don't know how to say that you're speaking for me and you shouldn't. It is causing conflict. I don't want him going on to non-Natives, getting them to think we all think the same way.

*Maria:* Someone asked me about Coyote and his similarity to Raven and I said "I don't know, I'm Chilcotin."

*Leona described the process that she used for reconstructing the events of the Chilcotin War for a paper. She interviewed a number of people and was aware that she had to make some assumptions about some of the events in order to tell the story. She was very aware of this responsibility because her chief wanted to read her paper when it was done. The Chilcotins are involved in land claims and the war factors into this. She was aware of the authority that her text might have.*

*Leona:* What I am afraid they (lawyers) might do is take it literally ... so I did in the introduction say something to the effect that this was from what I know of the Chilcotin language and the storyteller. This is what I interpret. This is what I see but I am not talking for the whole Chilcotin nation.

*What I hear is that although people are aware of being a representative of their nations, it cannot be assumed that you can speak for your nation or for Native people from other nations. It is possible, however, to speak as an individual. This distinction is important in this project also. We discussed whether or not your names should be used in this text. The reasons that you thought that they should appear were that it might be too easy for people to generalize from what anonymous "Indians" say to what all Native students might say. Some names have been changed for other reasons but this point still stands. We are asking our readers to learn from our words but not to generalize too liberally. Research normally does move from the specific incident to the generalized principle. If enough people say a similar thing, then it can be assumed that others in the same situation would also say this thing. I hear you saying that you do not speak for others. To put this point in perspective, there were 35 First Nations graduates at UBC this year and they represent at least 15 nations. The First Nations community at UBC is multicultural and multinational. On the other hand, your name gives authority to your words. Just as Clifford or Freire or Tyler is cited so is Bett Tsa-me-gahl.*

### ***Anthropology Instructors as Authorities***

***The statements are said as truths rather than as a reflection of themselves (as anthropologists).***

*Many of you identified professors speaking as voices of authority, as authorities, in Native matters and you felt that in these particular cases what was said was inappropriate or incomplete in some specific ways.*

*Maria:* Anthropologists have forgotten that they have come from another culture and that they are seeing through their own filter. The statements are said as truth rather than as a reflection of themselves. The prof could say, "This information is based on x person's view on x research and x ideas," not the prof as a person and his own ideas. Personal conflicts arise

because the context or the frame of reference of the information is not presented. Is this the prof's terminology or Tait's?

*Sharon:* Anthro is a science because they only accept their way and what is documented, what is written down. Nothing is validated unless it is written down, which goes against the Native culture.

*Sheila:* So by written down ...

*Sharon:* In books, and they believe in the Bering Strait theory, whereas some Native people don't believe it. But as far as they are concerned there is no other way. Every year it is taught that way. That this is the way it happened. They never really mention that Native people don't really accept ...

*Sheila:* Have a different view

*Sharon:* Yeh ... the Native culture as oral history is not validated in anthropology so it is almost like the Natives are seen as an inferior culture because they weren't literate.

*Geraldine:* One prof is talking about her pet theory but she never speaks of it as a theory. It is her opinion. She presents it as fact. What she says is that anthropologists recreate Native culture and I really have to object to that. I think it has been something that has been preserved since long time ago. It is not being rediscovered or recreated. It has simply been going along on its own steam all this time. If you look at my mother or my grandmother or other peoples' grandparents, these are people who don't know how to read, many of them won't speak English or they speak very little English. Many of them rarely come off the reserve and many of them do not get involved in academic life.

So I don't know how they got involved with anthropologists in order to learn how to be Indian. I think that her saying this is not really basing her ideas on logic or fact. My mother or grandmother have never read books. They don't read anthropological books. There has never been an anthropologist on the reserve as far as I know. Their culture is not something that has been recreated. It is something that is ongoing. You can't just recreate something. The culture is not superficial. It goes very deep.

*Sheila:* When she said that do you know what she is thinking about?

*Geraldine:* Yeh, things like the potlatch and ritual and house building, the door faces east, those kind of things. I don't think anthropologists have recreated it. Doing dances, singing songs, my family has been singing songs for a long time and they still do. I don't think they went to the Smithsonian Institute to find their songs.

*Doreena:* We went to the longhouse the other day and we were looking at the totem poles and he was talking about fillers. He said for some reason Native people don't like leaving spaces and so they have fillers in their designs.

*Sheila:* Ovoids?

*Doreena:* ... and that they exaggerate the proportions ... in looking at the size of the totem pole that he is describing and looking at the size of the beak and the size of the nose and looking at the size of the raven or the beaver or the bear; I look at it and I say it is not exaggerated. It is the right proportion for the size of the animal. So when we go outside we don't

see any fillers. There are hands or claws where there are supposed to be claws and there are feet and eyes and I was trying to look for the fillers he was talking about. He said you see them more on bentwood boxes than you do on totem poles.

Sheila: Do you see this as a disrespectful comment?

Doreena: It is unclear whether it is undermining, to say they are fillers. It is to say they just put them there because they didn't know what else to do.

Sheila: What is your reaction?

Doreena: ... objection within myself. I ask him questions.

*Geraldine and Maria and Sharon and Doreena are concerned that their professors speak accurately on behalf of the group they are discussing. It is important that the professor as the voice of authority in the classroom be fair and accurate. I hear Maria and Doreena feeling the responsibility of a witness and at the same time recognizing the institutional authority of the professor in this situation.*

Maria: The students believe the authority of the prof. If the prof was the first heard ... if the Native person was first heard there would be more credibility in the academic environment.

Doreena: There is this connotation, this implication, behind what he is saying [professor speaking about fishing rights without mentioning restrictions and regulations] and it is these implications that disturb me because it leaves a lasting impression on other people.

Sheila: So partly your concern is for other students in the class getting the right information. You said you didn't speak about it right away you speak to other people.

Doreena: I am wondering if my concerns are just my own or do other people see it this way. They always encourage me to ask questions... I am just trying to find a question that will help to clarify to me as well as to other people. I am concerned that other people get the right image about Native people and who they are.

*Bev and Maria question the confidence that anthropologists demonstrate in their knowledge of others given the amount of time that they spend participating in people's lives. Bev also speaks as a Cree, a First Nations representative.*

Bev: With a lot of professors you can't go and say, "Hey, you're wrong on this point," and present your own facts. They would just say, "I'm the doctor in anthropology and you can't tell me this, because I've researched it with written material." Well that's not including my elders. That's not including any of my people who they are writing about. It's like me talking about my next door neighbor. I know nothing about my next door neighbor. To start talking about that person and saying well, anything, is like a lie. There is nothing to back it up. It's untrue. So any professor who does the same thing, talks about people without facts and understanding, shouldn't be there.

Sheila: So you know that is happening sometimes.

Bev: Yes. I don't like the feeling you get in those classes. Even if there are other Native students, I don't like the feeling, because I feel I am being pushed back below other cultures, because I don't feel I'm there. I'm unequal.

*Sheila:* What does that mean?

*Bev:* My presence not being recognized. My people are not being recognized as a First Nations people. We were here first and we are First Nations. Here I am right now. I'm proof of that and you can't be talking about something that was written in a book from someone who knew nothing about it. Just because they can stand on the outskirts of the reserve, going in and out and saying that they live in tepees and they are dirty outside. They don't know what the inside is like. You can't say to me that by observing the people for an hour, or a day, or a week, or a month or a year, you can't tell me something was wrong with these people when they have their own lives and values and ways of expressing themselves.

*Maria:* I have lived 32 years in white structures. I still don't understand it. I don't know how their structures work. I still don't understand it. How can an anthropologist live with people for one year and think that he knows them? Also they come there with an agenda in mind to find out certain things. Who does it benefit? The local people? It doesn't seem to benefit. It only makes people confused or insulted. They can do that on any group. I don't think that Native people have done this to white cultures.

### ***On Whose Authority?***

***The Native perspective—not industries', not governments', not society or the majority—the Native perspective.***

*Jim:* I wanted to learn more about the history of Native people but from different perspectives. Now I realize the perspectives that each took in relation to Native people but the perspective that is always missing is the Native people.

*Doreena spoke about an instructor who introduced land claims to the class but he didn't talk about Native positions on claims. She said this led to stereotyping.*

*Sheila:* So if you could have 10 minutes after he said all of that and you were perfectly confident and had time to set it straight, what kind of things would you want this class to hear?

*Doreena:* The Native perspective, not industries', not governments', not society or the majority, the Native perspective ... as to what they believe land claims is. And for them (non-Native students) to feel comfortable with the idea of land claims and to feel comfortable with the idea that Native people will be able to live together with other societies rather than how it has been segregated on separate reserves and in poverty ... I debate within myself as to whether or not it is right to question him. Whether it is right to take him off the fence and say "You know you can't be sitting on the side of the other people. You have to thoroughly explain it so that the people will understand." I want them to understand.

*Maria:* When I think of this topic maybe it is that most of my approach is to take things in a negative light. It brings back traumas that I have been through ... things that I have undergone in pain are resurfacing.

*Sheila:* What sets off the pain?

*Maria:* Lectures where profs say that Native people have not pulled up their socks. One prof presented a paper about a Native community in the states. There was a band office, a medical clinic, their own school and a sawmill. Within a few years this had all collapsed and was in chaos. He said this had to do with how they approach life and how they interact with people and religion. People still believe that there is an outer force directing them. There is another world that they believe in directing them. It was because of that they couldn't work all the new systems. They disbanded everything there. He said this was reflected in all of the West Coast peoples. How they function psychologically or emotionally had to do with the way they associated with the powers ... "a lot of their functioning was based on that relationship ... it was a two-way communication, with them performing certain acts so they could gain powers. They may also deal with modern technology and whites in the same way. They could not deal with a white-introduced system, the whole West Coast is like that." I was upset by this, floored by this. I did not want to look at them [classmates]. I thought profs knew a lot, that they were knowledgeable people to understand the world and its people, but after that I saw him as an ordinary human being like me. His understanding was not beyond mine. There was no history of these people given. This was an essay from his perspective. There was nothing about colonialism and conflict. I did not like his perspective. How could he say that this one thing made the community not work? It was too limited a focus. He made Indian people seem not in tune with the contemporary world. Maybe they do want to be different. There is a lot of social breakdown because of colonialism because of history. He said that the paper had not been accepted by the faculty but he wanted to present it to the real people because it was his truth.

*My friend cried and cried. I couldn't believe how upset she was. She talked about residential school.*

*In the cases that Bev, Jim, Doreena, and Maria related, the instructors are speaking as authorities but the students recognize the authority as limited. It does not include the Native perspective.*

### **Language of Authority**

***So I have to turn off my Chilcotin thinking and think in Western culture.***

*The authority of language was mentioned. Geraldine sees edited language as undermining the authority of elders. The editors, on the other hand, may think that the standard form carries more authority.*

*Geraldine:* Something like the Lillooet Stories and probably the Wendy Wickwire book in the future are examples of literature that are not accepted in the language or literature classes because they are written in the language of the people who speak. That is, they are not edited into standard English and because they are written the same way the Native people told them, the stories, they are not accepted because the language is not up to par and I think that the stories, written down exactly as the elder would tell

them, would have more meaning than something that is rewritten or retold. There are a lot of rewritten or retold stories sitting on the shelf that nobody ever reads and I think they don't really portray a true picture of Native life. Where something like the Lilloett stories would be an accurate portrayal even without the voice and body language.

*Sheila:* The title of Wendy's book is powerful (*Write It On Your Heart*). I could hear a different language in the title.

*Geraldine:* Yes, that is it; you can hear the different language in the stories too ... when children are taught that this kind of language spoken by their elders is not acceptable it is not going to do good for their self esteem.

*Geraldine's concern for hearing the voice of authority from Native speakers in the literature led to a discussion of linguists' voices of authority influencing how Native languages should be spoken. I said that one of the students reported a linguist saying that if it had not been for the efforts of the linguists in this province many of the Native languages would not be alive.*

*Geraldine:* I have to disagree with that. If I look at the people on my reserve they never learned their language from a linguist. It has been going down and it is in the culture. It is being transmitted still. I am interested in speaking my language, so I approached some people from my home area who are in Vancouver, and they were not receptive to the idea and they are influenced by linguists. They thought that I would not pronounce the words properly and they thought the words could only be pronounced in a certain way in order for it to be true, but like a child they stumble before they can walk.

*Sheila:* So were they concerned that their understanding of the language would be influenced by your understanding?

*Geraldine:* They want me to say the words in a precise way the way it is meant to be said. But where did they get their ideas? From linguists. In order to preserve that purity we would all have to become academic scholars I guess... If you go to the reserve and if I asked an elder to teach me how to speak there would be no problem. They would simply switch to Indian and start to speak to me in Indian and if I didn't understand they might translate it—might.

*Leona speaks her language and feels its authority as it guides her thinking and sometimes conflicts with what is expected in assignments.*

*Leona:* In the first paper, what I was doing was exchanging information and I guess that is what I'm talking about. Talking in Chilcotin ... I am giving what I know and, well, our people, that is the way that we do it, accept it. But I am learning in institutions that it is challenged, but I keep forgetting that Chilcotin is my first language and that is the way I think. So I have to work at turning off my Chilcotin thinking and think in the Western culture.

*Sheila:* ... if you are listening to a Western person, if you were listening with your Chilcotin ear, if it was not about Chilcotin matters, would there be a tendency to accept it rather than have a critical listen to what they have to say?

*Leona:* ... I am operating in Chilcotin so you are sharing with me so you accept what they say. I guess that is why I never challenge professors because it



is not our way. There are lots of different ways of learning and you think they might ... there is more time to learn.

*Sheila:* Say that again?

*Leona:* OK, like I don't think my dad would say to me that is wrong, even though I am wrong. He would let my experience teach me.

*Sheila:* Right, this is where you are now and that is OK.

*Leona:* Yes, and I guess that is why it is so hard to turn on the other thinking and then be challenged. This is why they won't accept these papers. They are looking at it from Western culture and I am coming from the Native and they just don't mesh. It is not part of our culture to do that to somebody. For me it is showing disrespect. My dad would tell me a story but to ask a question ... that comes ... like if I think of a question then through the story it will come.

*Sheila:* You listen to the story to find your own answer in there.

*Leona:* Right, some people have some questions and they ask me if I have ever asked my dad and I say No. They say Why not?

*Sheila:* You knew this before. I may have known it too in a kind of a way.

*Leona:* I never, I don't think I ever ... I guess I am learning more too while I talk about it ... it is not like I talked about this before.

*Sheila:* It is like your idea of spirituality that we talked about. It is something that lives so you don't have to extract it from life. You just live it. Just life itself.

*Leona:* Yeh.

### ***Textual Versus Oral Authority***

#### ***I am sort of the book he has written.***

*The authority of the authors in the written texts in anthropology was mentioned. This was often described as a voice that did not respect the voice, the orality, of elders.*

*Jean:* When I think back on it now there was a bit of resistance, you know, having been a Native and being told to read x amount of books and to look at all of that background and history. There was a bit of resistance sort of saying "I know it and I don't need to read it." I sense that was what I was going through. Now reading Celia's book [*Resistance and Renewal*, Haig-Brown (1988)], I sense that there was resistance in coming from the academic and coming from the ancestors.

*Sheila:* I think it would be interesting to talk about that. Do you know what was at the heart of the resistance? You said the difference between what was in the books and what your ancestors said to you.

*Jean:* Right. It just seemed to me that what was presented in the books was saying "This is the truth. This is the right thing." Yet, in our minds, we sat in class and we knew different and we didn't have the courage at that time to stand up and say "I disagree." At the same time you wonder, "I know my grandparents told me this, and this is how they do this, and then the prof is saying this is what the anthropologists studied, and this is right and this is absolutely true." The other aspect is when you try to explain what your ancestors told you and you try to put it on paper, they won't accept it. They say, "I want you to refer to a book, this book." I say, "Well, who is he? What does he know?" You know?

*Sheila:* Yes.

*Jean:* ... I went to his office to talk to him and I told him that my grandfather was a medicine man. He said "What proof have you got?" That really annoyed me because he wanted proof and he said "Tell me what he did." That whole thing about trust, trust with the people that were working with us and going through the system; now I would have second thoughts.

*Sheila:* About telling him?

*Jean:* Yes, I did tell him and then he told me he must have had something in his hand, some chicken gizzard, and I was really annoyed. He said it is just like magic. When I told him about the rituals he said, "I don't believe you." I said, "Well, I was there and I attended these rituals all the time because my grandfather did it in his living room. We could watch and we could move out of the room and we knew what kind of behavior was acceptable and we watched and we listened and we heard." He just said there had to be some answer to that.

*Sheila:* Some scientific answer?

*Jean:* Some scientific answer to what he did [blood appeared in grandfather's hand]. He asked me right out, "Do you believe?" I was shocked that after I told him the story, and then asking me if I believe and I said, "Of course I believe in my grandfather." It is just like saying, "Do you believe in your grandfather? Do you believe in your ancestors?"

*Jim:* What brought it to a front for me was I was up in the library doing a research paper and I ran into a picture of my grandfather. Here is my grandfather ... He is about 25 years old and he is standing in front of the pool hall and I recognized him right away, being a relative of mine. Sitting right smack in the middle of all of them is this white lady. I see my grandfather there sitting in front of the pool hall and they have a wagon there and a horse. I looked at it and I sat there for about an hour looking at that picture and I realized ... here I am with these Indian people, that's the thing that I see with that lady in there.

*Sheila:* Tell me, I'm not quite sure what you mean.

*Jim:* It was sort of like the Native people in the picture were the props and the white lady was sitting there with my grandfather and all his buddies were around her, and that's all they were, props.

*Leona:* I went to my prof because a lot of this stuff, spirituality especially, is not written about and so the only resources I had were my elders. I went to ask her if I could use my elders. She said only if my elders know more than the books. So I was really upset because I thought that she understood, because she had lived with the Natives and the way she talked I didn't think she would say something like that.

*Sheila:* So what is your reaction to that? How do you feel?

*Leona:* I lost respect for her ... for the rest of the course I wasn't there to give her anything.

*Sheila:* When you say "give," you mean to give from your understanding of spirituality?

*Leona:* Yeh. I thought, She doesn't understand no matter what I do because my elders are ... they [anthropologists] refer to books. We refer to our elders and so she has disrespect for them.

*Sheila:* I see.

*Leona:* We are talking about my elders, my dad, who has left life, and then she says if he knows more than the books. I mean where do they get the stuff from in the books. My dad is a storyteller. He has taught me a lot and I feel like he, well, he doesn't read or write and what he does is through his stories. So, in a sense, I am sort of the book that he has written ... So there is nothing I can give her after that.

*Joe:* Yes, that whole issue, what about our stories? Why aren't they considered really valid in anthropology? If anthropologists aren't really interested in our versions, why are they studying us? That is what it boils down to. Are they always able to manipulate the variables to fit their hypothesis of their research? We screw up the wheels because we have this unexplained idea that cannot be explained with material evidence. I asked if for this paper I could use what the people have told me. They say you can use it for information but it is not really appropriate to put it in the paper. My argument was What is wrong with that? "How did you get your PhD? Did you incorporate what you picked up in the field through your interviews, and you incorporate that into your paper?" He said, Yes, but he had a methods course on how to do research ... printed stuff, it is all so linear. It is a nice little package. But when you are talking orally with someone they are able to divert into different directions and pick up other ideas. Where with the printed word you have to go with what is there. We are not going to get any more ideas.

*Sheila:* When you are talking your hands are going all over. You are taking the words out of your head and putting them down on the table ... So what would you do?

*Joe:* You mean in terms of research?

*Sheila:* Uhhum.

*Joe:* I would use that [tape recorder]. You would be able to get more clarification. Whereas when you are doing research with printed material you are limited. There are a lot of questions that you cannot find the answer to.

*Sheila:* It is frozen in time?

*Joe:* Yeh, it is frozen. It cannot be revived and you can't thaw it out, make it come back to life.

*Geraldine and Jim also speak about information in texts being "frozen in time" (Joe's term).*

*Geraldine:* There have been times when I thought personal experience would be more relevant, more true to what is really going on, than what is written in books. You know, you just can't write from personal experience unless you put it on tape like this. I guess for you to remember what your life is like is not really acceptable. It has to be documented. If we don't document it then it will never get down on paper. A master's student [Native] came into the library and he wanted a rationale for why he should write about Native education. I told him one reason is because it has never been written about before [by Native writers]. He said that isn't a good

enough reason, but he's going to continue referring back to people (non-Native) who have written about Native education; the same old things are going to be perpetuated over and over again. Somebody has to begin by putting things on paper; who better than us?

Another example is in the curriculum development I just did for PE. There, every anthropologist who has written about physical education about Native Indian arts, songs, dances, I think they all refer back to the same anthropologist, because every book is the same. My job is to come up with a fresh viewpoint. That's hard because I'm locked into the mentality by all these people who have written a book in the same way that the first person wrote about us. The same thing in anthropology with another author. She is the one who started the business that potlatches are given so you can prove your wealth. It is just a giveaway so you can earn status. She misunderstood what was written before her and everyone who came after her began saying it, so the meaning of potlatch just changed. It is no longer a political, economic system where reciprocity is the key thing. It becomes a thing of power because she said it.

*Jim:* I see anthropology as a whole as inadequate. It is like this, it is not going anywhere. Like now it is about Native people and it all balled up into one ball. They just can't go any further with this. They jumble it all up and make new perspectives and that is all it is, and that is all that I see it as.

*Sheila:* That ball you are making with your hands ...

*Jim:* It is a visionary ball and it is all the stuff that Native people have done and all the theories that have been written about them. They just continually jumble it around again and some guy writes a book and says it is this way now. This is a new theory on this perspective. It is like nobody ever thought at one time to put dollars and cents to hunting practices and relate it to subsistence levels. Now they did.

*Sheila:* Re-sort the information. Shake it up and see what comes out?

*Jim:* Yes, move it out try to do something with it [Jim opened up the ball in his hand].

*People have been discussing the importance of including the Native perspective, Native authorities, in the academic work that they are asked to do in anthropology. Many of you did talk about the difficulty of actually doing this, however.*

*Sharon:* I think quite a few students have quite a bit of trouble ... They sit in class and they listen to whatever is being said and do what they have to do and then when it comes time to an exam, then they write down their answers and because they are personally involved and culturally involved in what they write, then it is different from the instructor's point of view. He is looking at it like a science or something and he wants specific data. We write it down from our feelings, from our experience and so I guess in some ways we don't interpret what the instructor wants.

*Leona:* One topic that I wrote on was spirituality and I had a difficult time writing about it, because spirituality is not separate from life. I didn't realize what I was getting into. It was difficult writing the paper, because I had lived it, but had never talked about it.

Sheila: Yes.

Leona: My people we don't talk much about it. So I found it difficult to write down, difficult to plan the words to write it down, because I had to translate from Chilcotin to English.

Sheila: In your thoughts.

Leona: In my thoughts, because I think in Chilcotin. The topic was connected with all parts of life, so I found out when I started to write about one thing there was another connection to something else. It was really difficult to get it down right.

Sheila: Is it the written form, the essay or the actual bringing it out of experience and putting it in words?

Leona: I think it is both. You almost have to talk about everything so it is really hard to get down to the basic. It is how you look at the world.

Sheila: You talked about a tree ...

Leona: It is like a tree. There is a central theme but in order for that, it gets all the stuff from the rest of the branches.... It is all connected. I did the best that I could but I used one branch to talk about spirituality.

## Respect

### *That is what my people say. You learn it from a story.*

*In our conversation we have heard that cultural teachings and spiritual ways are strong forces in many peoples lives. Some of the breakdowns occur because the respect and authority that is expected in these matters is violated. One story that Geraldine told was, to me, a violation of basic human respect. Her solution seemed to rest in cultural teachings.*

Geraldine: I had three students come to me to do research on the question: "Are Native people human?" The first time someone came in I didn't really think anyone would ask that ... but the question was given to the whole class.

*Geraldine talked about how the students tried to cope with this question but I will not document that. Personally, I find the question abhorrent and the documentation of the discussion extends the abusiveness of the question. Geraldine did talk about one approach that was decided upon.*

Geraldine: Respect of life ... you have to take into account not only yourself but your neighbors and the world, your environment, the whole earth, everything.

Sheila: Did you ever figure out why the question was asked?

Geraldine: I did speak to a few people about it later on with some of the people who were researching the question and they suggested he might have asked it, because he was trying to prove to the class that indeed we were human. I guess he didn't take into account that there was a lot of literature out there that says we aren't human. It suggests we are savages, barbarians, less than human. I think for him the only answer was Yes.

*Maria talked about issues of respect.*

Maria: Native people believe that certain aspects of culture should only be discussed at certain times. Anthropologists do not know or respect the rules. Instead of anthropologists giving the information, someone else

could. The student could. They would know what to say. Native people from the larger community. Myth is not dead. It is real to people. They live by it. I don't like to treat them as dead museum pieces. There are some things that are closer to people's hearts. Ways of thinking that aren't talked about in anthropology. Raven stories give me a feeling of ecstasy. It doesn't just explain history. It is more than that. It is trying to figure out the meaning of life. What they call legend doesn't have any sacred qualities.

*Sheila:* Jim, this reminds me about the story you told in the lounge the other day about the lecture about the story about the woman and the dogs.

*Jim:* It is left that way as if you were talking about a woman giving birth to dogs and you leave it that way. [The professor selected only this portion of the story to tell.] Well, it is certainly different telling the legend in its entirety, the way it is supposed to be told. To me really what he did there, was, he is a showman. He wanted a laugh and that is what he got.

*Joe:* I ask the prof when we are going to the museum to start handling the artifacts, and this is obviously a taboo subject because they are specially treated and they are in a transparent box. There is a film, it is called *Box of Treasures*, which is the issue of the artifacts repatriated with the people around Alert Bay. One old woman that they interviewed said that it is like it has been locked up and now it has been let out of the box.

*Sheila:* So there is some live thing there?

*Joe:* Yeh, it is still alive yet. It has been locked up all this time. Everything has life, a life span, and I don't think that life ever ends because once it is disintegrated into dust it goes back into the soil, food for new life. I don't like going to the museum because of that.

*Sheila:* What does it feel like?

*Joe:* When I first went there I almost started crying. I looked at these masks and they looked really sad. Like it was locked there. The original purpose was being used and it was moving. It had life and whereas in the museum now it is still. It is not doing anything. It can't be touched. Why are these big monuments bolted to concrete? The cultural society in Alert Bay, the masks aren't treated as ... like, they are not in cases. They are on stands and people can go and touch them. They can take them off and they can use them as part of the teaching of the dance of the culture which is what the masks were for; they have a purpose. They were not made to be collected and put on a shelf and never used. The way the missionaries viewed the totem poles has stuck in everybody's mind.

*Sheila:* What is that?

*Joe:* They see the totem pole. Do they think about what the significance of the totem is, other than a carving? It is a living history. It is a living storybook. I don't think it can be really explained. It is there. You understand it. It is not just the thing that you see.

*Joe:* It is almost like they acknowledge myth but with a little chuckle.

*Sheila:* What does that mean?

*Joe:* Maybe that is just the way they present themselves, just a myth, but that is all that it is. It doesn't really have anything.

*Sheila:* You mean like a fantasy?



*Joe:* He compared everything to a fairy tale which, to me, I kept saying "How dare you?"

*Sheila:* Fairy tale?

*Joe:* In a lot of stories Native people have people of rank, and he says "When you look at a fairy tale it has a king and a princess ..." but I don't see legends and fairy tales side by side. A legend has a very strong human message; where you look at a fairy tale and it is for enjoyment. It is like only kids read fairy tales. Legends, it is kids, and goes into adulthood and old age. Like the whole thing of Raven being able to transform into Coyote. Raven takes on a different type of human form, and in the Western fairy tale they have talking animals but that is sort of done in a chuckle. It doesn't really happen. But with the Native people it is innate. It is just the way it is. It is accepted that is the way it is. You almost do not question what is being told to you and this has to do with respect.

*Leona:* A friend of mine went to a camp where a prof from here was teaching Athapaskan spirituality and teaching people how to dream. I was flabbergasted because you can't teach people how to dream ... I got real sarcastic and said if you want me to do that, I can do that to you too [teach fake dreaming], and you can get the same experience. I don't have any powers. I was real angry because they were playing with something.

*Sheila:* She doesn't understand if she is trying to teach dreams?

*Leona:* ... I said that playing with something like that about dreaming, while the spirits are around, it's not good to play around with because it is dangerous because something could happen ...

*Geraldine:* It is kind of funny here. All these experts teaching us about ourselves. But we already know about us but we are studying to be us.

*Throughout this conversation we have heard many of the strategies that students use to deal with the breakdowns that they face. Mary and Jim talked about this too.*

*Jim:* I see it the way Native people are perceived in society, it just bounces off me and I leave it like that. It is my shield and I am really overprotective. It is sort of like you fall in love and you get hurt and then you are tough. The next time, tougher, right? You don't get burned the next time. I think that is just the way it is.

*Mary:* When a Native student goes into a classroom, part of you is removed and sort of your Indian spirit is put apart from you, so you are separated so you can deal with the mainstream society values. When you try to talk about the Native matters that are in the text without using the eyes of your Indian spirit ... When you look at it with your wholeness all that emotional stuff wells up. You try to see it through their eyes. When you leave the room your spirit is back. This is how I deal with pain. Remove yourself from your body. Your spirit is up there waiting for you. You are up there and looking at yourself. You look back and you see compliance. You comply.

*Sheila:* One of you told me about working with a legend in a rather subtle way.

*Mary:* The prof did not agree with my interpretation of a legend from my culture. Maybe I didn't give her the answer she wanted. I don't know what they figure legends are used for but each one has a different story. So the next time my friend and I chose a particular legend and we

translated from our language. There was a lot of stuff in there. You have to translate the whole story. I remember my friend and I laughing our heads off because we thought it would bother them.

*Sheila:* I was thinking that what you said before and I wonder what the difference is in your mind between deciding not to talk about your cultural knowledge, and in this case you have decided to actually give them more than they have and you say you are doing that to bother them.

*Mary:* I guess where we get it from is from the legends themselves, because in some teaching in the legends what they do is instead of doing the right and proper thing they do the opposite. You can see it more clearly when the other person is doing it than when you do it yourself.

*Sheila:* Is it a little bit like Raven's character?

*Mary:* Yeh, I see that things a lot of times aren't the proper way to do it and he [Raven] is ... people laugh at him and see he is wrong, but it is not that he is dumb or anything. It is just that you see him do it and you know you're not supposed to, or people will laugh at you.

*Sheila:* This is kind of tricky here. I want to make sure. I feel what you are saying. I can sort of sense it. [Mary and I talked about this some more and one of the things that she meant was that Raven is acting through the prof. The prof is "doing it wrong" and people are laughing at the prof. The prof, of course, is unaware of Raven's manipulation.]

*Mary:* That is just the way it is. We gave them the stuff. We were laughing as we were doing it. It sounds like she was getting more than she asked for because she was supposed to learn something else too from the legend itself, not my interpretation.

*Well, That is What My People Say. You Learn it from the Story*

We have been throwing stones across the surface of a pond. As they skip, circles form and intersect with circles from other stones. Each stone will eventually sink below the surface. In my initially following Agar's (1986) analytic construct, we followed one story, one small stone as it sank. Each story in this section could be examined, but first the stories need to be told.

I think back to my dream about the Shadow Being and the orange stone. Maybe we can only get a sense of what the Being is if we examine each stone's path very closely. I think of Bett's dream. When we took time to talk about it, so much was revealed. I think of Lizbeth, the two-headed woman, and the message she had for Bett: "From now on you will understand the words to the questions." This message made sense to Bett when she heard an anthropologist in a lecture say, "The problem is that we ask the wrong questions." How do the questions change as we create First Nations control of First Nations education? I think of the Navajo grandfather's story. Maybe you have been describing the snowflakes in the hope that we will begin to understand the fire.

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