

Any Changes Since Residential School?

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The social situation Native people find themselves in on reserves is often blamed on a lack of education. The thought behind this suggestion is that "education" itself is neutral and automatically leads to a rise of the standard of living. I discuss that the situation we Native people are in is partly due to that very "education," which, as a continuation of residential schools, is still breaking down our cultures and societies. Education for Native people can be successful only when it has grown within the culture of the people.

The statement about Native people that "these people need education" is usually made when our situation in Canadian society is presented; and it is used as a suggestion as to how our problems should be solved. I heard this statement from the non-Native health director in my community of Attawapiskat when I was there to do research for my master's thesis. I also worked in the Safe House, which is the home to which solvent abusers were brought as an alternative to a jail cell. The form of solvent abuse in Attawapiskat is sniffing gasoline, and it has infested a large portion of our youths. With his statement, the health director set the stage of how to solve the problem, namely, by education of the youths. When you look at our community with almost 70% unemployment, this sounds logical. In western society a higher education is usually presented as the key to a better life. Life on the reserve, with the many social problems, is not seen as a good life, at least not by non-Native people and by those Native people who have left their traditions behind. The question is, however, whether the education the health director is talking about would actually help solve the problems in our community. We have had an elementary school since the early 1970s and a high school since 1991 in our community, yet the social situation has worsened, not improved. This fact attests to the failure of the education offered in our community, at least in terms of bettering the lives of the people. I also wish to recall the first attempt to "civilize the savage," the residential schools, which not only failed, but also left us with the legacy of the problems that prevail in our communities today. This kind of education, rather than helping us, is indeed responsible for many problems. During the research on solvent abuse and Treaty #9 interpretations that my husband and I conducted in the community in 1996 (Hookimaw-Witt, 1998; Witt, 1998), I interviewed a Native teacher of the local school who had gone through the residential school system himself. He saw a connection between residential school and the solvent abuse problem in our community: "A lot of problems that Native people have today came out of Residential School; psychological problems. And we passed our problems on to our children" (Hookimaw-Witt, 1998, p. 226).

Today this fact is widely agreed on, as well as the fact that our community now has its own school that, as in so many Native communities, is supposedly controlled by a local school board.

But what has really changed since residential school except that children do not have to leave their families any more in order to receive an "education"? In fact problems still prevail.

In this article I wish to discuss the legacy of the residential school in a different light. As well as physical and emotional abuse suffered by the Native children who were placed in these schools, there was also an onslaught on our culture and identity through the content taught in school and the way it was taught. I would even say that "education" is partly responsible for the destruction of our cultures and the loss of self-esteem and thus has contributed directly to the problems in our community today. The content and methods of teaching have not changed in modern schools that now "help" us to "catch up." I therefore try to examine how education itself not only has not helped to prevent the social problems we have today, but has actually created them, and that when we do not change the basis of the education for Native people, the process started by residential schools will still continue.

The basis for the following analysis of the problem can easily be summarized in the quote that refers to a researcher in the Arctic who was approached by an Elder:

An Elder approached me and asked what I was doing in the community. I explained that I was conducting research on dominant influences on Aboriginal student decision making, which might lead to reducing the Native student drop-out rate. He had an enigmatic response to my answer as he asked what the community would lose this time. I asked him to elaborate on his response and he said, every time the white man comes and offers us something, the Aboriginal people lose something. He said that at first the white man offered us Christianity, but he took our Native spirituality. Then he offered us his stores, his food, his goods, but lost our traditional way of life and our traditional diets. Then he offered us education, but we lost our language and culture. Now when I see a white man doing something for our good, I worry about what we will lose. (Common & Frost, 1994, p. 306)

Two major factors can be extracted from this statement. First, the help offered to so-called underdeveloped people never comes without a price. There is no real development in a scenario like this. It is, rather, that our own development is stopped and we have to adjust to something alien that is offered to us. The price is always that instead of developing our ways and adjusting them to the new environment, we have to give them up. Second, education per se is not neutral. Educational institutes have to follow curricula, and these curricula are used for "legitimation. Social groups are given legitimacy ... through which social and cultural ideologies are built, recreated and maintained" (Apple & Weis, 1983, p. 516).

It is self-evident that the social groups and cultural ideologies Apple and Weis (1983) are referring to are not based in the culture of the Native people, but in the culture of those who suggest this kind of education. What the people who "help" us usually ignore is that we did not grow up completely uneducated, that we do not need a new education system. The only need is an adjustment of the existing system to new realities, if there are any. The content to be taught in school would not necessarily qualify to fall under the categories of new "realities." because the determination of content to be taught is usually based on a political decision.

Referring to the content, Apple (1990) rephrases the question of “*what knowledge is most worth into whose knowledge is most worth*” (p. vii), expressing that curricula are not neutral and that the knowledge taught in schools is not neutral. And he refers directly to education not being a neutral activity when he reminds that “it should hardly have to be said, but perhaps it is worth remembering, that education is not a neutral activity. It is profoundly political” (Apple, 1995, p. ix).

The political nature of education is explained above where it is stated that curricula are used for legitimation of social groups (Apple & Weis, 1983). Non-Native people must remember that the social groups and cultural ideologies are theirs, not ours, and when they suggest *their* education as means of healing our past wounds, they are suggesting that we give up our identity, which reopens the wounds rather than healing them.

Why the education offered to Native people is ultimately destroying Native cultures is also explained by Apple (1995):

Our formal institutions of education—because they cannot escape their history and their social conditions in which they are situated—are intimately linked with the social conditions in which they are situated—are intimately linked with the social divisions of paid and unpaid labor in this society. (p. ix)

It should be understood that these conditions are not the original conditions in Native societies, and that it is western society that is duplicated by the education that is offered to us. This underlines my statement that our societies are destroyed by the education system that is offered to us. The destruction of culture is also mentioned by Apple (1995) when he says that

the curriculum itself is *always* a choice from a wider universe of knowledge and values. Thus schooling is deeply implicated in cultural politics, with some groups having the power to declare their knowledge, values, and histories (i.e., “official knowledge”), while others are marginalized. (p. ix)

This power is taken away from us, because it is not the Native people themselves who decide on the content of teaching. The content is already decided on in the curricula the schools must follow when they are to be recognized.

The effect of these school politics can immediately be seen in the high dropout rates of Native students. The immediate analysis for school dropout is again based on the economic conditions in western society, as most of the dropouts are found among the economically poor people of this society (for me mainstream society). Apple (1989) therefore concludes that

it would not be an overstatement to say that our kind of economy, with its growing inequalities, its structuring of what are more and more alienating, deskilled, and meaningless jobs, its emphasis on profit no matter what the social cost—“naturally” *produces* the conditions that lead to dropping out. The phenomenon of the dropout is not an odd aberration that randomly arises in our school system. It is structurally generated, created out of the real and unequal relations of economic, political, and cultural resources and power that organize this society. Solutions to it will require that we no longer hide ourselves from this reality. The first step is looking at our economy honestly and recognizing how the class, race, and gender relations that structure it operate. (p. 220)

Looking into our communities, this analysis based on economic conditions seems to fit in the case of Native youths dropping out of school. After all, the few

jobs available in our communities are hardly a motivation for the youths to put an effort into their education. However, Apple (1989) also mentions cultural resources, and I will use this as a bridge to what I think is the real problem in Native education: lack of exposure to our own culture.

One explanation for the failure of Native youths in the school system has been that Native youths simply could not compete with the other youths in school because of their "cultural deprivation," meaning that our culture is so inferior to mainstream culture that we simply cannot succeed in a necessary education as long as we hold onto our culture. This led to the evaluation of a consultant for our community who was writing a proposal for the establishment of a solvent abuse treatment center. Although he emphasized the importance of including Native content in the curriculum, he stated that "Native culture and spirituality alone are not enough" (Kells, 1995) to survive in the modern world.

This observation was based on his misinterpretation of the educational goal the National Indian Brotherhood set for Native people in 1973, namely, to reinforce Indian identity *and* to provide the training necessary for making a good living in modern society (National Indian Brotherhood, 1972). Kells (1995) interpreted this as "parallel teaching," concluding that education based on Native culture is not sufficient for survival in the so-called modern world. This is not what the National Indian Brotherhood (1972) intended to suggest. In their paper, they established the basis for Native education, stating that

unless the child learns the forces that shape him: the history of his people, their values and customs, their language, he will never really know himself or his potential as a human being ... The lessons he learns at school, his whole school experience should reinforce and contribute to the image he has of himself as an Indian. (p. 9)

I interpret the reference to *the whole school experience* as an indication of the importance of basing the school curriculum entirely in Native culture, no matter what content is taught. This means that "western" skills to be learned are still learned on the basis of the Native perspective, which would also include Native learning and teaching styles. The basis for education is here defined as being the culture of the Native people, from where they draw their identity. Only when this is understood by Native children can they develop their potential as human beings. The learning of skills for survival in the *other*, western reality are learned from a Native basis. The Native child, like any other child, needs a reference point to her or his own cultural environment when he or she wants to understand the meanings of the skills taught to him or her. Western skills and values are learned by comparing the *other* cultural reality with one's own. A parallel teaching that does not provide this point of reference, that in fact suggests that certain skills do not exist in our culture (rather than pointing out that they are different), will therefore fail.

In order to avoid being misunderstood, I have to state at this point that although I do agree to the National Indian Brotherhood's goal of education to provide the Native child with skills necessary to survive in both cultural environments, I disagree with Kells' (1995) conclusion that Native culture and spirituality are not enough. This would mean that, rather than just interpreting the *other* skills from our point of view, we would have to borrow from a different culture in order to survive. What I mean by this should be explained in the following example.

My husband learned English and French and the history and political systems of other countries in his home country, Germany. These subjects were included in the German curriculum perhaps because it was agreed that knowing about other peoples cultures would give the person a better chance to compete globally. Nobody has made a statement, however, that this inclusion of foreign content in the country's school curriculum proves that German culture alone is not enough. Yet this is said about our culture.

Kells' (1995) presumption is based on a racist view of our culture as being obsolete, and the hidden agenda is to base the education of Native youths on "western" culture and merely include some Native content. And this is a gross misunderstanding of the National Indian Brotherhood's (NIB, 1972) educational goal.

The Royal Commission on Aboriginal People (Government of Canada, 1996) confirms my understanding of the NIB's educational goal that although we do have to include knowledge of the *other* culture in our curriculum, it still has to be based in our own culture: "Education must develop children and youth as Aboriginal citizens, linguistically and culturally competent to assume responsibilities in their nations.... Youth that emerge from school must be grounded in a strong positive Aboriginal identity" (p. 5). Their recommendation is, therefore, to establish "a curriculum that instills a proud Aboriginal identity and competence as an Aboriginal person" (p. 5). This Aboriginal identity and competence as an Aboriginal person can be reached only when the curriculum is based on the culture from which the youths draw their identity. A parallel teaching as suggested by Kells (1995) lacks this basis.

I would interpret the cultural deprivation that was so often quoted as the major factor of school dropout by people from different cultures (Ogbu, 1989) as Native people being deprived of the security of their own culture (by being forced into an alien education system), and not as the lack of survival skills their own culture would offer.

Ogbu (1989) analyzes the reasons for school dropout on the basis of cultural differences. He counts Native people with those *involuntary minorities* who were "brought into" the country's society by "slavery, conquest or colonization" (p. 187). Native people can definitely be identified in this group, as they were colonized in their own country. The lack of motivation of children from involuntary minorities to succeed in the education system is explained as the children from this group having come "to realize or believe that it requires more than education, and more than individual effort and hard work, to overcome the barriers. Consequently, they develop a folk theory of getting ahead which differs from white Americans" (p. 188).

Although this statement might explain school dropout based on different behavior by the youths of involuntary minorities, Ogbu's (1989) conclusion of the development of a folk theory cannot be applied to Native youth. The means of coping with difficulties in school and the different behavior of Native youths cannot be identified as folk theory but as the culture in which the Native youths were raised. Although it may be true that the Native youths realized that getting on in society required more than education, they did not develop their attitude toward western education on this basis. Ogbu does not consider our culture here.

We had our culture long before the Europeans came to this country. Referring to our own interpretations of life, there also needs to be a definition of getting ahead, because a good life in Native culture always includes spirituality and is not merely based on economic aspirations. Dropping out of school by Native youths may certainly not be based only on the realization that the capitalist vision of life is only a dream, but also on the lack of Native culture and spirituality within the educational system.

However, Ogbu's (1989) conclusion that the problem of dropping out of school has to be analyzed on the cultural basis of the minorities can be used as explanation why the alien school system cannot be used to solve the problems of Native people:

At the moment, the definition and explanation of the school adjustment and academic performance problems of the minorities are based on a white middle-class cultural model, not the cultural model of the minorities which influence the latter's school orientations and behaviors. However, such definitions and explanations are incomplete until they incorporate the minorities' own notion of schooling which influences their school behavior. And until such an incorporation is made, social policies or remedial problems based on the definitions such as those embedded in the drop-out literature are not likely to be particularly effective. (p. 201)

This would explain why the school system offered to us Native people cannot be successful. It is not based on our own cultural values and traditions.

As mentioned above, spirituality is a major part of Native life, which is often judged as Native people being too emotional. However, intuition and emotions are included in our way of teaching and learning. Therefore, "learning and education must be an emotionally felt experience for the youth. We need to pay attention to the spiritual and psychological aspects of teaching" (Dei, 1995, p. 147)

The only emotions felt by Native people in the present educational system, which does not respect our cultural ways, is that of pain. The pain is about how we are still seen as savages, inferior to people from the dominant culture, and it is about the lack of cultural teaching in the schools. Our Elders warn that we will lose our children and with them our future if we do not teach our children our ways. The Elder Raphael Fireman told me in an interview that "Before residential school children were taught how to live a traditional life. They learned it, and they were interested in it. It always depends on the way brought up" (Hookimaw-Witt, 1998, p. 212), expressing that Native children need a Native education.

The Elder John Mattinas refers directly to the unfortunate change in our lives since contact with the other culture: "I have seen that life here has changed since contact with 'the other world' ... Now, youths are suffering because of that" (Hookimaw-Witt, 1998, p. 214).

All the Elders I interviewed agreed that the education presently offered to our children is part of the problem in our communities. They all emphasized that education would have to be based on our own culture and that the other content, that of western culture, can be included, rather than the reverse of just including some Native cultural teaching in an altogether non-Native educational system. The importance is the foundation on which the education system is based.

This realization led to the suggestion of Indian control of Indian education. I frequently found during my time in universities that even this concept would have to be defined. Many Native people do not realize any more that mere control of the

education system that was forced on us will not change the success rate of education in Native communities. Haig-Brown (1995) warns that "though it is generally asserted that Native control of Native education would be a positive move, educators, researchers, and writers only cursorily articulate the assumptions behind this belief and rarely debate their validity" (p. 21).

The way I read this statement is that Native control of Native education is only valuable for Native people when the whole education system changes and is based on Native culture. The control of an altogether alien—and for Native cultures destructive—education system cannot keep at bay the damage that this system is causing our cultures.

My evaluation is that the destruction of our culture during the residential school period has continued, because our children are still educated away from their culture. This is supported by the conclusion of the Ojibway artist Blake Debassige. He concludes that Native people who now control the education system in our communities do so without changing the system. They "are doing to Native people what was done to them, without them really realizing, thinking, that's how it is done. You see a lot of problems happening because of that" (Glaap, 1996, p. 11).

The reference to "thinking that's how it is done" shows the attitude that still prevails even among students in postsecondary educational studies programs. Education is still seen as culturally neutral, and education in the western way is seen as *the* education, as the only one there is. It is not recognized that Native people in fact come from different cultures, and that "despite evidence of domination and subordination, interactions between and among cultures are never one-way streets" (Haig-Brown, 1995, p. 18). This would mean that since contact, our culture has influenced mainstream culture as much as mainstream culture has influenced Native culture. To realize this, one would have to acknowledge that Native cultures are actually valuable, not only for Native peoples themselves, but also for those who have been in contact with us. The National Indian Brotherhood (1972), therefore, makes the following suggestion for interaction between cultural groups, particularly in the field of education.

In the past it has been the Indian student who was asked to integrate: to give up his identity, to adopt new values and a new way of life ... The success of integration is not the responsibility of Indians alone. Non-Indians must be ready to recognize the value of another way of life; to learn about Indian history, customs and language; and to modify, if necessary, some of their own ideas and practices. (pp. 25-26)

It will be up to the educational planners how much Native content they would find it necessary to include in the curriculum for non-Native Canadians. For Native people, however, basing the education system on their own culture is necessary in order to stop the destruction of our cultures by education, a process that was started by residential schools.

Having established the importance of a cultural basis for our education system, I now try to explain why a Native cultural basis for our education system was not popular in the past, why nowadays many non-Native people might still view our cultures as inferior, and, coupled with this thought, that we therefore need the help of an alien education system.

I heard much about racism and anti-racism while I attended universities. The anti-racism groups, although probably well-meaning, usually thought that they were opening a path for minorities to be accepted into *society*, basing this belief on the wrong assumption that there is actually only one society, and that the other groups are marginal or minority groups. They would certainly be shocked by the thoughts that go through my mind whenever they present their ideology. In my opinion, this assumption is as racist as the one that we as Native people are inferior to other people due to the color of our skin. The wrong assumption is that all minority groups strive toward being accepted into *society*. For me that would mean assimilation. Why would Native people want to be assimilated? The only reason for wanting to be assimilated into an alien society would be an acknowledgement that the other society is superior to ours. This would mean that our culture is inferior as well, and this view feeds directly into the attitude expressed in the help we supposedly receive from the education system that is forced on us.

The concept on which I base the following explanations is that of *cultural difference*, which is explained by Bhabha (1988):

The revision of history of critical theory rests on the notion of cultural difference, not cultural diversity. Cultural diversity is an epistemological object—culture as an object of empirical knowledge—whereas cultural difference is the process of the enunciation of culture as knowledgeable, authoritative, adequate to the construction of systems of cultural identification. (p. 206)

The suffix *able* in *knowledgeable* is interpreted by Witt (1998) as the ability of each culture to enable the people to survive; the ability to create one's own programs without having to borrow from other cultures. This would certainly include that Native people can develop their own education system.

However, this *ability* is unfortunately not attributed to our culture. The way our culture is interpreted can, in my opinion, be traced to the unfortunate hierarchy of cultures exemplified in the work of Habermas (1979), who identifies four distinct stages of cultural evolution: *neolithic societies*, *archaic civilizations*, *developed civilizations*, and *the modern age*. These stages are characterized by different principles of organization determining the kinds of institutions possible, the extent to which productive capacities will be utilized, and the capacity of societies to adapt to complex circumstances. The identification of stages of evolution necessarily also contains the notion that there is ultimately only one stage into which all cultures would develop. In fact this would defuse cultural difference altogether, because the differences would only be between stages of development, not between whole different cultures. Thus our Native cultures would ultimately develop the same way as any other culture, and the ultimate highest stage would be identified as the western culture of today. I consider an analysis like this racist and ethnocentric, as it is based on the opinion that one particular culture is superior to all others.

Our Native societies would be placed into the lowest group, the *neolithic* society where "actions are judged entirely in terms of consequences" (Wuthnow, Hunter, Beresen, & Kurzweil, 1984, p. 213)

Most Native societies would not even qualify for the category of *archaic* civilizations because these are, according to Habermas' (1979) definition, "organized in a

centralized regime or state, and the world views associated with this stage provide concepts legitimating the state's domination" (p. 213).

Our Cree society, for example, was never organized into a state. For me that would mean that the Cree organized their society in a different way. However, in the analysis by Habermas (1979), our society would be seen as primitive because we live with nature instead of against her. For Marx (1987),

the mode of production of material life conditions the social, political and intellectual life process in general. It is not the consciousness of men that determines their being, but, on the contrary, their social being that determines their consciousness. At a certain stage of their development, the material productive forces of society come in conflict with the existing relations of production, or—what is but a legal expression for the same thing—with the property relations within which they have been at work hitherto. (p. 263)

In the history of my people the "necessary" change of production modes never happened, and therefore our lives, in a Marxist analysis, did not improve. One particular explanation of history in a Marxist view might explain why Native people developed in a different way and not how Marx would explain it: "Marxism sees history as a protracted process of liberation from the scarcity imposed on humanity by nature" (Cohen, 1988, p. vii).

Our Elders still see nature as provider. Rather than scarcity they see plenty. Native people lived with nature, not against her. Now our relationship with nature is used against us, proving that our culture is obsolete, never having developed. The lack of change in our culture is evaluated as weakness of our people and as lack of ability to escape the limitations nature imposes on people, as can be read in the following statement.

Most Europeans and Americans, priding themselves on the complexity of their civilization, are predisposed to belittle the intellectual accomplishments of vast numbers of people in other parts of the world.... In their view, the savage's perceptive powers are keener than those of civilized man, but his ability to remember the past, to imagine the absent, to envisage future possibilities, and to think abstractly are definitively limited. He is often pictured as being naive and childlike in his emotional reactions, his lack of self-discipline, his simple tastes, and his gullibility. He is said to be impulsive and unreflective, lacking in the ability to free himself from the limitations of immediate and materialistic considerations. (Barnett, 1953, p. 21)

Although this was written in the 1950s, I can still feel the presence of this attitude today whenever educated people offer help to the poor, underdeveloped "savage." Particularly the last sentence shows similarities with the Marxist evaluation of culture. The lack of need for luxury (or for material goods produced in the capitalist world) of the traditional Native is interpreted as inability to free himself from the limitations that are put on him by nature and by his way of life of living with nature rather than against her.

Although Marxism is certainly helpful in explaining mechanisms of oppression and exploitation in western society, and by this suggests some origins of the situation in which Native peoples find themselves today, it is not helpful in building self-esteem and identity in a Native youth. Explanations of culture and cultural change like those offered by Marxists and Barnett (1953) above derive from a complete ignorance of Native culture and the inability to understand it. They do not help us to gain self-determination and self-respect. Such evaluations

make it necessary to expand somewhat on postcolonial critique in order to justify our own ability to solve our own problems rather than borrowing from supposedly more developed cultures.

As in the quote by Bhabha (1988) above, the emphasis today should be on cultural difference rather than on an analysis of which culture is inferior and which is superior. Western people should not fool themselves into believing that they are acting as good Samaritans. The fact that other cultures are destroyed has not changed, only the methods have changed or, as Minh-Ha (1989) puts it, "tactics have changed since the colonial times, and indigenous cultures are no longer (overtly) destroyed" (p. 265). The emphasis is on the term *overtly*, because cultures are still destroyed by actions like "removal-relocation-reeducation-redefinition, the humiliation of having to falsify your own reality, your own voice" (p. 265).

The humiliation of having to falsify one's own reality lies in the suggestion that our problems can be solved by leaving our own culture behind, which would be the ultimate goal of education based on western cultural values. That the different cultures are not expressions of different developments but expressions of different realities can be concluded from the following: "Culture is the only facet of the human condition and of life in which knowledge of the human reality and the human interest in self-perfection and fulfillment merge into one. Culture is ... the natural enemy of alienation. It constantly questions the self-appointed wisdom, serenity and authority of the Real" (Bauman, 1973, p. 176).

This tells me two things. One, *the Real* is different in any given culture, meaning that my reality is different from that of non-Native people; second, I will not accept any self-appointed wisdom from westerners just because they claim that this is the truth because it has been researched on a "scientific" basis. This so-called science is culture as well.

The different realities cannot be explained by different stages of development. Rather,

culture is unique to man in the sense that only man of all living creatures is able to challenge his reality and to ask for a deeper meaning, justice, freedom, and good—whether individual or collective. Thus norms and ideals are not the remnants of metaphysical pre-rational thinking which blind man to the realities of his condition. On the contrary, they offer the only perspective from which this condition is seen as the human reality and acquires human dimension. (Bauman, 1973, p. 177)

As mentioned above, reality can be challenged, and it can be explained by culture. The challenge does not, however, work only one way. As much as non-Natives can challenge my reality, I can challenge their reality. As a Native woman I consider myself as much *human* as anyone from a different culture, and thus claim the right to define my own reality. This reality is, of course, also formed by the environment that surrounds the people who developed that particular culture. Culture can also be seen as means of survival in a particular environment, and "if culture is looked at as a system, it must be accepted that each is a workable means of adaption to a given environment" (Arensberg & Niehoff, 1971, p. 67).

This means, compared with Bhabha's (1988) statement of the ability of cultures, that our culture is a workable means for our environment. Culture enables people to live where they live. This means also, of course, that the development of cultures cannot have happened as Habermas describes it. As the environment changes, the

culture of the people will change as well. Native people did not remain in an early stage of development while other cultures progressed.

Despite the conservatism existing in all cultures, a certain measure of which is certainly necessary, change is constant. The view that life is as it was hundreds or thousands of years anywhere in the world is based on superficial observation and the ethnocentrism of the viewers. (Arensberg & Niehoff, 1971, p. 67)

This means that an evaluation of our cultures as ancient or obsolete is complete nonsense, because our people and their cultures exist in the present. We got here by constantly adapting to changes in the environment and by adapting to changes caused by contact with other cultures. Further, we still define our reality ourselves as much as we are able to develop our own programs and survival skills.

If programs in Native communities, among them education, are to work out they should provide "the grounds for forms of self-representation and collective knowledge in which the subject *and* object of European culture are problematized" (Giroux, 1992, p. 27). This means that Native education should provide the grounds for finding oneself and the ability to assess critically any help that is offered to us from mainstream culture.

I conclude with the following. The negative social and economical situation Native people find themselves in today cannot be referred to as *cultural deprivation*, nor can it be improved by education that is based on a different, supposedly *superior* or *more developed* culture. The idea that this kind of education is the solution to problems in Native communities is based on an attitude toward Native culture that is, unfortunately, still widely prevalent among non-Native people. This attitude is detectable in the above-mentioned statement that "these people need education" and in a statement made during a presentation in one of my university courses that "these people do not know anything about science," which referred to a classroom situation with immigrant children. Statements like this show either ignorance about educational concepts from other cultures, or feelings of superiority of the speaker, or both. This attitude is probably based on the evaluation of different cultures as exemplified in Habermas' (1979) model of cultural development. However, this model cannot be applied to all the cultures of the world, because it would distort differences in cultures and would state that all human development will ultimately be the same. This would make Native people underdeveloped white people. The attitude of the residential schools, which destroyed much of Native cultures in Canada, does not differ at all from the attitude exhibited in Habermas' model. If, as it is agreed, the residential school system was detrimental to our people, then logically any educational system that is based on the same assumptions—those of the inferiority of Native cultures—would have the same detrimental effects. Although it is true that people need education, the basis of that education will have to be defined. Education cannot be seen as neutral. It is geared to replicate society. The question is, which society? Eager educators must get used to the idea that there is no single society, but many societies, and that people who are called minorities or marginal still have the right to determine their own fate.

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