

Educating About Aboriginal Involvement with Forestry: The Tsimshian Experience—Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow

Paul Orlowski

Charles R. Menzies

University of British Columbia

The development and piloting experience of the Social Studies unit designed for the project, Tsimshian Involvement in the Forest Sector is highlighted in this article. Extensive consultations with Tsimshian Tribal Council members and educators in Prince Rupert and Vancouver schools shaped the Indigenous knowledge and pedagogical components. The educational unit was piloted in two settings: one, within the Tsimshian Territories and the second, in a Vancouver school. Even though the student responses were different, the material was very relevant and highly motivational to students in both settings. The Forests for the Future project provided a unique opportunity to develop curricular materials that linked new research with the educational needs of both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students.

Many of the Social Studies and History text books read by British Columbia students remain locked in a colonialist discourse of European arrival and hard working settlers who, by dint of their hard work built the nation we now call Canada. Within the dominant narrative Indigenous peoples are rarely presented as actors in their own right: history acts upon them and they are usually represented as passive recipients, or occasionally, as reactors to what the dominant culture is doing. In this paper we present our experience designing social studies curriculum that counters the dominant narratives by prioritizing the agency of First Nations through the lens of Tsimshian involvement in the forest industry.

The original research that was deployed in the writing of the *Tsimshian Involvement in the Forest Sector* lesson plans emerged out of the *Forests for the Future* research project (Butler & Menzies, 2000; Menzies & Butler, 2001). This body of research, conducted in cooperation with members of the Tsimshian Nation in northern British Columbia, documents how the Tsimshian peoples have constantly adapted to changing conditions from within and outside of their communities. The unit plan itself highlights this agency and challenges the popular misconception that Indigenous peoples have been passive recipients of changes brought upon them by contact with Europeans.

As we describe in fuller detail below, our key motivation in designing these lesson plans, is linked to first, challenging and correcting the implicit biases in BC provincial social studies curriculum (Orlowski, 2001) and,

second to provide current curriculum material that can be effectively deployed in provincial schools. Underlying all of this is a clear understanding that by making curriculum more meaningful and culturally relevant for Indigenous students both they and their communities will benefit (Ignas and Thompson, this volume).

Extensive consultation with educators in both Prince Rupert and Vancouver and with members of the Tsimshian Tribal Council was done throughout the curriculum development process. The unit plan was then piloted in schools in both areas in May 2001. Both the consulting and the piloting led to revisions in the lesson plans themselves. This article describes the process that went into developing curriculum materials from recent research in the social sciences. In it we summarize the key lessons that were developed and discuss the implications of using local knowledge in curriculum development, especially as it relates to Indigenous students.

Educational Context: Representation of First Nations People in BC Social Studies Curricula Across Time

In British Columbia, the representation of First Nations people in social studies curricula has served to maintain the notions of white supremacy and racial hierarchies, notions that went virtually unchallenged during the nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth century. The first social studies curriculum in BC, published in 1941, used omission as a hegemonic device: there were absolutely no references of Aboriginal (or Asian or African) histories (Orlowski, 2002). The subsequent curriculum, published in 1949, was an even stronger indicator that the old racial hierarchies were still influential in the social studies classrooms of BC. Significantly, all representations of First Nations people were of a distant past, excluded from the notion of progress, a highly trumpeted concept during what has come to be known as Canada's nation-building period (Orlowski, 2002).

The most recent high school social studies curricula prescribed by the BC Ministry of Education, Skills and Training (1997), called Integrated Resource Packages in BC (IRPs), is a vast improvement over earlier versions, both in terms of the number of times First Nations people are represented and in the quality and fairness of those representations (Orlowski, 2001). For the most part, these representations are historically-based and meant for social studies classes, particularly in grades 10 and 11. The exception to this has been the curriculum developed for First Nations Studies 12 (FNS 12; Campbell, Menzies, & Peacock, 2003). FNS 12 is unique for both its focus on historical and contemporary issues for Aboriginal peoples and because of the controversies its very existence has created.

Despite the improved representation in the 1997 IRPs, a number of difficulties remain. First, almost all of the Prescribed Learning Outcomes (PLOs) continue to treat Indigenous peoples as one monolithic and reified

group and as part of the distant past rather than as contributors to the Canadian nation-building project (Orlowski, 2001). Secondly, the "noble savage" image portrayed in some of the PLOs gives way to the subsequent image of "Native as victim" in other PLOs. Drawing upon our personal experiences as educators and researchers we feel confident in asserting that this second image is at least as damaging to the self-esteem of the youth of First Nations ancestry as is the first. Moreover, the suggested instructional strategies indicate an historically incorrect perspective in which the existence of Canada has been accomplished by groups of hard-working Europeans whose task it was to forge a nation - the subsequent expropriation of First Nations lands is, in this perspective, relegated to the domain of an unfortunate by-product of the march of history.

Although the relatively new FNS 12 course is much better in its portrayal of Aboriginal peoples, few students actually have the opportunity to take the course. It is only offered in a small percentage of schools. This is partly due to the fact that there are very few Aboriginal teachers in BC's high schools and because there aren't very many non-Aboriginal teachers who feel they have the appropriate knowledge to teach FNS 12.

There are also obstacles unrelated to curricula that block the implementation of First Nations courses and course content, however, including a teaching force primarily who are themselves the products of this same system. Consider the recent controversy in British Columbia regarding the education of Aboriginal youth. The Task Force on Aboriginal Education sought to remedy the current situation in which only 38% of Aboriginal students graduate from high school compared to the provincial average of 78% (2000). One of their recommendations was to have the First Nations Studies 12 course gain equivalent status as Social Studies 11 for graduation requirement, a suggestion that the Ministry implemented in June 1999. This change prompted a lively debate in the media. The *Vancouver Sun* covered the issue by quoting several social studies teachers and university professors who were upset by these proposed changes. To these educators, students who opt for FNS 12 instead of SS 11 would miss out on "an intensive course on Canada in the 20th century" (*Vancouver Sun*, 2000, p. A2). The perspective of First Nations people was excluded from this debate, which is a clear demonstration of how they are habitually silenced and ignored. Another uproar occurred in the northern community of Hazelton when a small group of parents took their children out of any classes that mentioned local traditions of the Giktsan-Wetsuwe'ten peoples (*National Post*, 1999, p. A1).

These exchanges testify to the lasting effects of colonial attitudes among both journalists and educators. In fact, the Social Studies Provincial Specialists Association (SSPSA) was so strong in its condemnation of FNS 12 as a substitute for SS 11 that a committee was struck to revise the curriculum, a committee comprised of social studies teachers and

Aboriginal educators (2000). Apparently, the SSPSA thought that the PLOs of the original FNS 12 curriculum did not have enough overlap with the SS 11 curriculum. The revised FNS 12 curriculum is considered to be a reflection of the concerns raised by the SSPSA. In other words, it appears to be more in keeping with the colour-blind yet subtly Eurocentric revised curricula. It is our intention, however, to have developed a unit plan in opposition to the Eurocentrism of the social studies IRPs.

We decided to design the unit plan with the concerns of the SSPSA in mind. More specifically, we linked the desired objectives to PLOs in the SS 10, SS 11 and FNS 12 IRPs. In general, the PLOs in social studies are "designed to encourage in-depth study from multiple perspectives (e.g., time, place, culture, values)" (SS 11 IRP, 1997, p. 1). It is clear from the revised IRPs for social studies, students are required to make logical connections in terms of time (i.e., between historical and contemporary events and issues) and place (i.e., between different regions, environments, and cultures around the world). The four lesson plans were designed specifically to help students make these logical connections.

Furthermore, the BC social studies IRPs define social studies as a multidisciplinary subject that draws from the social sciences and humanities to study human interaction and natural and social environments (1997, p. 1). Because the unit plan was created mostly from the ethnographic research (Menzies & Butler, 2001; Butler & Menzies, 2000), it accommodates this Ministry-prescribed definition. Ultimately, it is our hope that the lesson plans we have designed will simultaneously meet and exceed the Ministry PLOs and work to undermine the tacit Eurocentrism of the provincial curriculum.

Curricular and Educational Philosophy

Epistemologically, we believe that knowledge is socially constructed and therefore political, open to deconstruction as well as reconstruction. In this sense, we view knowledge within a constructivist paradigm, eschewing a static, passive view consistent with the notion of objectivity and replacing it with an evolving dynamic view bounded by time, space and perspective. In other words, we agree with the constructivist claim that knowledge is not discovered and that the ideas teachers teach do not correspond to an objective reality (Von Glasersfeld, 1995).

In terms of curricular design, we ascribe to a similar philosophy as American educator Catherine Cornbleth (1990). Cornbleth emphasizes the need for curriculum to be designed by keeping in mind the setting and the local social conditions.

Curriculum is contextually shaped. The relevant context is both structural and sociocultural ... Sociocultural refers to the environment beyond the education system/structural context. The sociocultural context includes demographic, social, political, and economic conditions, traditions and ideologies ... that actually or potentially influence curriculum. (p. 6)

By emphasizing the sociocultural aspect, curriculum is indeed “contextually shaped” and “always mediated by students” (p. 53). We found this to be the case in designing the unit, as well as in piloting it in several classrooms.

Moreover, the design of this unit plan is informed by a curricular philosophy best described as “transactional” in the model developed by Miller and Seller (1990). The pragmatism of progressive American educator John Dewey is at the root of the transaction position. Thus, the individual student is seen as rational and, given the right intellectual environment, capable of intelligent problem solving. The end goal, designed to be realized by the time the student works through the fourth lesson, is in keeping with John Dewey’s understanding of public education’s main purpose, namely, to strengthen democracy by producing citizens capable of critical thought (1938).

The pedagogical model we used that describes the relationship between teacher and learner is sociocultural, meaning that both are active in the meaning-making that is taking place in the classroom. In *Strategic Reading: Guiding Students to Lifelong Literacy* (2001), a pedagogical model known as “scaffolding” is described. Based on the work of Vygotsky, this model assumes that most learning takes place just beyond what the student can do alone. The role of the teacher, according to the authors, is vital:

With enough assisted practice, the child internalises the strategies and language for completing the task, which then becomes part of the child’s psychology and personal problem-solving repertoire. When this is achieved ... [the student] is able to successfully complete the task alone and without help and to apply this knowledge to new situations she may encounter. (Wilhem, Baker, & Dube, 2001, p. 5).

Lesson #4 in particular requires an attempt at creating this intellectual problem solving environment. Moreover, this lesson exemplifies the constructivist assertion that the best learning takes place when the content is linked to the experience of the learner. Students are put in the roles of the various players who the Tsimshian communities may one day find themselves representing or involved with in a post-treaty environment. The Tsimshian are currently in Stage Five in the Six-Stage BC Treaty Process. They are one of fifty First Nations in the province engaged in the process (McKee, 1996) and, consequently, all British Columbians should have some understanding of the causes and effects of these treaties.

The success of the BC Treaty Process requires a knowledgeable citizenry that is able to grasp the importance of these negotiations in social, political, economic, ethical and legal terms. A historical understanding of the colonial experience is a prerequisite for this knowledgeable citizenry. Given the history of British Columbian and Canadian governments who either deny or attempt to diminish the existence of Aboriginal rights and title a knowledgeable citizenry is particularly relevant. The first three lessons in this unit have been designed as an acknowledgement of the

need for students to have some historical understanding of the relations between Aboriginal and European people since the time of first contact.

The transaction position within curriculum design requires that the student's intellectual abilities are further developed through problem solving. This rational intelligence is to be used to improve the social environment in real life. As a corollary, the political orientation of this position supports reform efforts that ensure that minority groups such as the Tsimshian have equal opportunity in Canadian society. The history of the Tsimshian people's involvement in forestry is little known but it is an important aspect of current and future race relations in the northwestern part of British Columbia. It is hoped that students who have the opportunity to do the four lessons in this unit plan develop an understanding of the tensions involved in improving the opportunities of the Tsimshian people, both from within and without their communities.

The unit plan consists of four separate lesson plans, the first three are historically based while the last one depicts a future scenario in a post-treaty environment. The first two lessons are essay-based and require at least a grade 10 reading level. Unfortunately, many students today have difficulty with literacy and the thoughtful teacher will have to strategize as to how to make the lessons work for as many students as possible. That said, both of us are adamant that the curriculum should not be pared down to make it palatable for the student who is at a low reading level. Rather, we see the unit plan as an opportunity for literacy-building. We have written a teacher's guide with a few suggestions about alternative teaching strategies, including scaffolding, as well as answers the teacher can expect for the assigned questions.

Discussion and Descriptions of the Unit Plan

Here is a brief description of the four separate lesson plans with some discussion for each of them.

Lesson #1: The History of Tsimshian Involvement in Forestry

As previously mentioned, much of the information used to construct the lesson plans was produced through the *Forests for the Future* research project (www.ecoknow.ca). As well, a school resource book entitled *Persistence and Change* prepared by Ken Campbell, the district curriculum specialist in School District #52 (Prince Rupert), provided some valuable information for this first lesson plan.

The main objective of this lesson plan is to help students understand First Nations involvement in the forest industry in the Tsimshian Territories from a historical perspective. In particular, this lesson focuses on the first Tsimshian experience of paid forest labour with the Hudson Bay Company and hand-logging to the effects of sawmill labour on Tsimshian lifestyle and work patterns that began in the latter half of the nineteenth century. The lesson also highlights Tsimshian responses to the industrial

logging model that rose to prominence in the late 1940s when large corporations gained control over much of the forest resources.

This lesson is designed to replace common stereotypes about Western expansion during Canada's nation-building phase, such as "pioneering" white loggers and "passive" Aboriginal people, replaced with the notion of Tsimshian agency in how the changes from Europeans actually played out. The role of Christian missionaries in laying the ground work for industrial capitalism is developed in both the essay and the assigned questions. As well, the focus on the effects of wage labour on a culture to which this was foreign is in response to postcolonial concerns about Marxist critiques of capitalism.

Lesson #2: Tsimshian Women and Forestry

The background information for the second lesson is published in an essay entitled *Out of the Woods* (Butler & Menzies, 1999). For this lesson to be successful the students will need to have at least read the essay for the first lesson. This second lesson focuses on the different roles Tsimshian women have played in their culture's involvement with forestry. As forestry changed, so did the role Tsimshian women played. The focus on retaining control of Tsimshian social organization, however, was always at the forefront of the concerns of the women. The lesson attempts to address concerns put forth by recent scholarship, including notions of patriarchy and wage labour. The work of Olive Dickason (1992), Himani Bannerji (1995) and Sherene Razack (1998) has been instrumental in helping us form this perspective. The dominant representation of Aboriginal women in social studies curricula is most often a reified portrayal of domestic servants. This lesson is intended to dispel that myth from an historical perspective, yet to demonstrate how European notions of family and divisions of labour impacted First Nations people, especially with the industrial model of logging that emerged in British Columbia during the 1920s.

Lesson #3: The Tsimshian and the Pros and Cons of Waged Labour: 1834 to the Present (Social Impact Matrix)

The third lesson plan builds on the points raised in the first two plans. The primary objective of this lesson is to help students understand the massive social impact that contact with Europeans, and in particular involvement with waged labour in the forest industry, has had on Tsimshian social relations. For every major shift in forestry, a tension is created within the Tsimshian communities, as advantages and disadvantages work to benefit some people often at the expense of others. In this lesson, students utilize a social impact matrix to help them better understand these past scenarios. Each student is asked to consider specific developments with which the Tsimshian have had to contend and evaluate their pros and cons.

After completing this lesson, students should become aware that each shift in forestry created a tension within the Tsimshian communities, a tension shaped by how they responded. (Once again, the notion of Tsimshian agency plays a major part.) By analyzing these dialectics students become aware of how some factions of a society benefit while others lose out as the culture adapts to changing conditions. Obviously, this is not very abstract, thereby making it translatable for students to apply to all societies.

Lesson #4: The Tsimshian and Forestry in a Post-Treaty Environment

The information for the fourth and final lesson plan came from a variety of sources: including interviews conducted with current Tsimshian forestry workers in Prince Rupert and Terrace to complement research completed earlier in the project, reports on recent Supreme Court of Canada decisions pertaining to Aboriginal rights and title, and the Nisga'a Treaty. This lesson is a role-playing exercise in a hypothetical but very possible scenario in a not too distant future. This lesson focuses on probable tensions within Tsimshian communities shortly after they have negotiated and signed a treaty with the federal and provincial governments.

The goal of this fourth lesson is to give students an opportunity to learn how the Tsimshian and other First Nations communities are unable to be totally independent from global concerns over the price of wood, etc. and how this will impact on their logging practices and natural resource strategies. Role-playing is the main pedagogical strategy in this lesson, which is by far the most complicated of the four. Here we give a more detailed outline of the complications that are involved with the content in this particular lesson.

As we enter the twenty-first century, the forest economy—both in Canada and, more specifically, the province of British Columbia—would be best described as in a state of transition. The industrial model of logging, whereby large transnational companies control huge tracts of crown land, has been in a state of decline since the 1980s, resulting in calls for a restructuring of the industry. A widely supported environmental movement has gained strength in the province, forcing forestry companies to pay a lot more attention to how and where logging is done.

At the same time, the Aboriginal rights movement has resulted in crucial law defining Supreme Court of Canada decisions such as *Calder* (1973), *Delgamu'ukw* (1997), and *Marshall* (1998) which have resulted in at least a legal understanding for non-Natives when it comes to settling Aboriginal treaties and recognizing Aboriginal title. The Nisga'a Treaty, which was finalized in 1998, became the first modern-day treaty in BC. It is significant that this province entered confederation in 1871 declaring that it did not have to negotiate treaties nor would it recognize Aboriginal title. The Nisga'a Lands border the Tsimshian Lands to the north.

The signing of the Nisga'a Treaty gave the Nisga'a increased control of harvestable timber on their land. The period leading up to the signing of the treaty saw a massive increase in logging on the land that was returned to the Nisga'a as forest companies acted to maximize profits before they lost timber rights. This situation will undoubtedly be the case for the Tsimshian, as well. (In mid-2001, the Tsimshian are at Stage Four of the Six-stage Treaty Process.)

As with the Nisga'a Treaty, the Tsimshian will also be affected by the global commodity price of pulp, paper and lumber. Depending on the response of the Tsimshian, this could result in either short-term gain or long-term security. For instance, if the world prices for pulp, paper and lumber remains at levels similar to 2000 (or even drop further), in order to create significant income for the communities, logging will have to be done with industrial methods (i.e., clear-cut) rather than with sustainable methods (i.e., selective). Lumber exports from the North Coast area are primarily exported into two separate markets: the American housing market and the Asia Pacific.

Another response the Tsimshian might take is to wait until the world prices rise so that logging practices that fit in with sustainable development models will be profitable and long-lasting. A third option is for the Tsimshian to consider utilizing the forest in other ways in order to bring in income or leave it as a source of foodstuffs for Tsimshian families. This would be more in keeping with traditional notions of subsistence activities, as well as fit in with a "stewardship" approach to managing the forests.

A massive complicating factor has to do with the huge amounts of financing initially required to make the logging economically viable. This is a result of the industrial logging model that began in the 1920s and reached its peak in the 1970s. Consequently, arrangements with non-Aboriginal firms, usually logging companies, have become necessary in order for the First Nations communities to gain access to capital and critical knowledge for local economic development. The Nisga'a have engaged in these partnerships, called joint ventures, since their treaty was completed and the Tsimshian will have to at least consider this option. A significant problem with the joint venture model is that employment opportunities for First Nations people are often restricted to non-management positions.

The roles that the students are expected to play include the Tsimshian Tribal Council, the eco-tourism industry, Tsimshian loggers, a global forest industry consultant, a joint venture partner, Tsimshian silviculture management, Tsimshian sawmill management, Tsimshian harvesters of non-timber items, and a large environmental group. All of these groups are likely to be involved in future decisions over forest management schemes on the Tsimshian Lands.

Piloting the Unit Plan in a Rural and an Urban Setting

This initial unit plan was sent to a group of educators in School District #52, which is in the heart of traditional Tsimshian territory: seven teachers at Prince Rupert Secondary School and two district curriculum specialists in the School Board Resource Centre. In February 2001, two weeks after mailing the unit plan, both of us flew up to Prince Rupert to meet with the two sets of educators to consult about the plan. These first meetings were particularly helpful in receiving some concrete suggestions about how to improve parts of the unit plan and in determining who was interested in having at least part of the unit modeled in their classroom. Three teachers agreed to use some of the lesson plans in their social studies courses. Upon our return to Vancouver, some of the changes suggested by our northern colleagues were implemented into the unit plan.

Once the revisions based on the early consultation meetings were made to the lesson plans, Orlowski flew back to Prince Rupert to pilot some of the lessons in May 2001. Two lessons, numbers one and four, were piloted in a First Nations Studies 12 classroom, a class in which sixteen of the seventeen students were Tsimshian (the other was Nisga'a). These lessons were also piloted in the local Friendship House, an alternative school adjacent to the main school, in a Social Studies 11 classroom in which all twelve of the students were Tsimshian. According to the teacher, the reading levels were low for some of the students in this program. To adapt to this situation, the main points were written down on the board as we went through the essay together and the students were asked questions to keep them involved as the lesson proceeded. This situation allowed for a demonstration of literacy-building rather than a paring-down of the content.

We were very pleased with the response and enthusiasm these young people exhibited. Perhaps one should have expected this response because, after all, these Tsimshian adolescents were learning about the history of their own communities. Yet, none of the students had any awareness whatsoever of their own people's agency in forestry, owing in large part to the colonial legacy that lingers on in current social studies curricula. Most students have had some courses that deal with aspects of Aboriginal/European historical relations, especially in recent decades. Yet, as previously mentioned, these courses treat Native people in a Pan-Indian paradigm, ignoring the incredible differences in terms of culture, history and contemporary situations.

According to Michael Marker: "without showing respect for the local history, language, and traditions of the place where they are studying, Native students can internalize a generic image of what it means to be an Aboriginal person. This can increase their sense of alienation and marginalization. It is the distinctiveness of the local sense of place that

animates meaning and ideology from an Indigenous perspective" (2000, p. 42).

Marker's point is well taken. It became apparent to us that the young Tsimshian students in the alternative program in Prince Rupert were quite engaged to learn about their local history. As Catherine Cornbleth (1990) points out, educators should take note of the importance of the local when creating lesson plans. Curriculum relevancy is a crucial component of successful pedagogy, especially for students who belong to social groups who have been traditionally marginalized.

These experiences and two more consultations with the teachers in Prince Rupert led to more vital feedback toward revising the unit plan. Six of the original seven teachers met for an hour to offer more suggestions with two more saying they were prepared to use the unit plan during the following school year. After giving the unit plan a close reading, the district curriculum specialist, Ken Campbell, provided particularly insightful feedback for improving the lesson plans and the teacher's guide.

The unit plan was revised to reflect both the experiences from piloting the lessons and the suggestions from the teachers. The next stage was to pilot the lessons in an urban context, far from Tsimshian territory. A teacher at Britannia Secondary School in east Vancouver, himself a member of the Cree Nation, agreed to have Orłowski pilot two of the lessons in his First Nations Studies 12 class. This class was comprised of twenty-two students, half of them having Aboriginal ancestry and only one of them being Tsimshian.

The same two lessons were piloted as in Prince Rupert, only this time using the revised versions to reflect the earlier event's shortcomings. Both the regular teacher and Orłowski were pleasantly surprised at how almost all of the students were engaged throughout both of the lessons. (We say we were pleasantly surprised because the history of the Tsimshian in forestry is a very remote and abstract concept to students in east Vancouver—yet both the verbal participation and the written assignments indicated serious engagement with the material.) Perhaps the success of the lessons had something to do with Orłowski's own enthusiasm in teaching them. Perhaps not. We will have more information around teacher passion as the lessons are deployed in additional classrooms.

Finally, the first three lessons of the unit plan were piloted in Orłowski's own First Nations Studies 12 classroom at Point Grey Secondary School on the west side of Vancouver. This is a small class of seven students, all of them being Musqueam who live on the nearby reserve. The lesson plans worked very well in this milieu, especially the third plan which incorporated group work rather than the lecture-and-read style of the first two lesson plans. Moreover, it appeared that the students were able to grasp the tensions that almost always arise when a society must grapple with huge decisions around economics and labour.

All three piloting experiences, in addition to our consultations with the teachers from Prince Rupert, led to several revisions that have greatly strengthened the pedagogical power of the unit plan. In particular, the students seemed to enjoy learning about First Nations people from very recent social science research. The whole experience fit in well with dozens of Prescribed Learning Outcomes from the IRPs for Social Studies 10 and 11, as well as First Nations Studies 12. As mentioned earlier, the unit plan was designed with this in mind.

Conclusions

The *Forests for the Future* project provided a unique opportunity to develop curricular materials that linked new research with the educational needs of Aboriginal students. As has been discussed in the other papers in this volume (Lewis, Menzies, Butler, Ignas, & Thompson) multiple benefits can accrue to all participants -community and researcher alike. Given the specific needs and experiences of First Nations communities, it is doubly important that knowledge stays in communities in ways that leave tangible results and benefits. It is our hope that the curricular materials that we have developed will have a lasting and positive impact.

In this paper we have outlined the processes and considerations we used in developing the lesson plans. The initial unit plan was designed from a constructivist perspective, assuming that all knowledge is socially constructed and therefore, not objective. Consultation with educators in both Prince Rupert and Vancouver and with members of the Tsimshian Tribal Council was a major part of the curriculum development process. As well, we linked our learning outcomes with Prescribed Learning Outcomes in SS 10, SS 11, and FNS 12 so as to not allow the unit plan to be open to attack as much as the entire original FNS 12 IRP was from the SS PSA a few years ago.

Two of the lesson plans were essay-based, relying on literacy-building strategies on the part of the teacher, and two others used a verbal/group teaching strategy. The first lesson was an examination of how the Tsimshian have been historically involved in forestry ever since the Europeans first appeared on their lands to stay in 1834 right up until the present. The second lesson was also essay-based as it analyzed the role of Tsimshian women in forestry throughout this same period. The third lesson used a social impact matrix to help the students understand the dialectics involved whenever a society has to adapt or change to new conditions, whether they come from within or outside the community. The fourth and final lesson was a role-play exercise in which the students simulated a Tsimshian Tribal Council meeting in a post-treaty environment. The last two lesson plans were designed from a sociocultural model.

The lesson plans were piloted in schools in Prince Rupert where most students were Tsimshian and in Vancouver where they were not. Although the vast majority of students in both settings demonstrated en-

thusiasm and successful learning, it was clear that the Tsimshian students in the Prince Rupert schools had a higher level of excitement, indicating the powerful effects of curriculum relevancy upon the student. Our experience demonstrated that if students could identify with the content, they became better learners.

The piloting experiences, together with the feedback from the teachers of those classes, were instrumental in helping us revise the unit plan. Most of the teachers who were part of the process were very positive with their feedback and many expressed interest in using the lesson plans in upcoming school years. It is our hope that the careful consideration we put into the design of the entire unit plan, from beginning to the end, will allow it to be used in many more BC classrooms without the negative backlash we have come to expect from some social studies teachers, journalists, and members of the public.

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