

Conclusion

Courageous Native people whose vision was far ahead of its time developed the Native Training Institute. The institute developed a holistic and healing approach to education based on traditional knowledge that has had a great effect on the Indigenous world. The NTI was able to create classrooms where invalidation was replaced by validation; negative educational emotional experiences were replaced with emotional competence; the painful negative teachings, messages, and countless put-downs of the residential and public schools were released and replaced with ceremonial and counseling methodologies. In the NTI classroom, Aboriginal identity was strengthened, learning increased, and healing was made possible. The energy once used to hold the pain in place was now released and used for the positive goals of learning and leadership. The now unblocked intelligence could be directed toward both personal and community vision that worked toward higher ideals and goals. The students felt a sense of rebirth in their Aboriginal knowledge, and this helped them to reconnect with their cultures. The classroom was and could be a safe place, and the realization that the long, hard night of Aboriginal suffering was at an end. The dawning of new morning light had come into the classroom.

There are four dimensions of "true learning." These four aspects of every person's nature are reflected in the four cardinal points of the Medicine Wheel ... It cannot be said that a person has totally learned in a whole and balanced manner unless all four dimensions of her being have been involved in the process. (Lane et al., 1984, *The Sacred Tree*)

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What can We Learn From Traditional Aboriginal Education? Transforming Social Work Education Delivered in First Nations Communities

Barbara Harris

University of British Columbia

Pertinent to the development of increased capacity to meet the goals of First Nations communities is the need to transform social work education to better meet their needs. Educators committed to transformative measures will benefit from knowledge about practices that will enhance their ability to make needed changes. Reliance on principles and practices such as those guiding an innovative off-campus First Nations Bachelor of Social Work program—community, context, care, and culture—and on traditional Aboriginal education and values, will facilitate that transformation. Communities' visions for self-determination are supported through recognition of their authority to engage in activities to further the attainment of culturally appropriate models of education, and students' need to be empowered to further their own and community goals. Achieving an appropriate context in social work education requires recognition of the holistic nature of First Nations societies and of the process of learning, as well as addressing racism both in and outside the classroom. Care is reflected through the creation of cooperative learning environments and the development of authentic relations between students and faculty and between schools and First Nations communities. Culture, and the ability to draw on their own traditional knowledge and expertise, is foundational to the success of such programs in meeting community needs.

Introduction

In 1999 the School of Social Work and Family (SSWFS) at the University of British Columbia was approached by a local First Nations community about delivery of social work education in their community, and in 2003, a satellite program was initiated as a pilot project. Underpinning the desire for social work education is recognition that the health and well-being of the community is dependent on their ability to obtain control over their own health and human services, as well as on development of the capacity to do so.

The preparatory steps in the implementation of the pilot program is elaborated elsewhere (Harris, 2003) and involved (not exclusively) a community needs assessment and a curriculum development workshop that led to specific recommendations, after which the SSWFS began delivery of prerequisite course work required to enter the First Nations BSW (FNBSW) program being delivered in the community. An adaptation of the Medicine Wheel provided a nonlinear approach for articulating the

essence of the curriculum recommendations, and four theme areas were identified: in the east, the community's own vision and goals served as a starting place from which to guide how the project could be developed; in the south, the context of the participants' lives would be relevant to both the educational process and the curriculum; in the west, care would assure the necessary supports are available to succeed in meeting the community's needs; in the north, culture would provide the foundation on which the program could evolve.

In spite of the comprehensive results of the needs assessment and curriculum recommendations, prominent was the awareness of the need to develop a culturally congruent model for teaching and learning. The words of Battiste (1995) are particularly relevant to the task.

First Nations peoples have begun to shift from control of the administration to implementation of a transforming education. However, this paradigmatic shift has caused confusion and incoherence ... but contradiction and incoherence are inevitable in and indispensable to a successful transformation. We need to be mindful of this fact, not allowing fear and doubt about confusion and incoherence to lead us to structures and systems that resemble the old assimilationist models. Aboriginal communities cannot rely on old models of Eurocentric education to transform themselves. We must search beyond. (p. xiv)

With the goal of transformation in mind, reflections arising through implementation of the pilot project are integrated with an analysis of literature on First Nations social work education and traditional Aboriginal education and lead to conclusions about how to improve social work education to meet community needs. That such transformative efforts are needed is evidenced by a number of challenges. Following on the heels of the sordid history of education of First Nations in residential schools, the intent of which was assimilation, was the detrimental approach to, and failure of, social services to meet the needs of First Nations communities adequately. Monture-Angus (1995), in speaking to the overrepresentation of First Nations in child welfare and in the justice system, calls for drastic reforms in legal and child welfare systems. In fact, such reforms need to extend to all institutions mandated to address the human service needs of First Nations.

Alternatively, First Nations are moving toward gaining control over their own services, which is epitomized by the evolution of processes aimed at controlling education and social services, as well as the ultimate goals of self-determination and/or self-government. In terms of current social work education, many Native groups have approached social work programs to provide an education that will facilitate the process of obtaining the expertise needed to assume control of these services. Although Castellano, Stalwick, and Wien (1986) raise concerns about perpetuating the ineffective policies and practices that have dominated the field, the impetus for change is prevalent, and the predominant trend among communities approaching social work education programs is to access train-

ing that is culturally appropriate (Albert, 1997). Significantly, an "historical examination of First Nations education reveals First Nations resistance to education systems that opposed cultural teaching and learning patterns" (Archibald, 1995, p. 301).

As well, a number of complex issues hinder the development of a more culturally congruent approach to First Nations social work education. Briefly, in classrooms and schools of social work, there is no generic model applicable to any indigenous community (Castellano et al., 1986); there are structural concerns regarding existing programs and coursework: individualism, dualism, compartmentalization of knowledge, and competition (Dickerson & Neary, 1999), Eurocentric versus experiential resources and models for learning, and an ideology that reinforces the status quo (Christensen, 1994); and there are tremendous challenges inherent in attempting to bridge mainstream and First Nations perspectives due to underlying contradictory values (Dickerson & Neary) and the lack of any structured workable approach to resolving this dilemma.

These challenges are compounded by additional issues at the mezzo and macro level in schools and universities. Prominent are the failure to recognize and respectfully acknowledge the legitimacy of Aboriginal knowledge and different ways of knowing (Bruyere, 1988); the lack of awareness or knowledge about First Nations, which "serves to perpetuate ignorance and racism" (Christensen, 1994, p. 27); and the rampant hostility in the general academic milieu (Monture-Angus, 1995; Hampton, 1995; Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, 1996), most specifically as it pertains to recognition of the legitimacy of Aboriginal world views.

Importantly, however, reliance on traditional Aboriginal education practices can facilitate how to rethink or reshape social work education, as well as on how to instigate change in schools and universities. Traditional Aboriginal education is congruent with current ideas of First Nations educators such as Kirkness and Barnhardt (1991), as well as the themes of community, context, care, and culture, which constitute the framework derived from the curriculum recommendations for the off-campus FNBSW program. Further, the application of practices indicative of, or implied by, these themes enhances the possibility of ensuring culturally appropriate social work education to First Nations.

After briefly considering the community's defined needs in the themes of community, context, care, and culture, these same themes frame an integrated discourse on traditional Aboriginal education and on educators' ideas about First Nations social work education, in addition to reflecting on experiences in coordinating the off-campus FNBSW program. It is important that recognition of the diversity of First Nations cultures and peoples means that there is no intent to generalize this conversation to all First Nations communities. The intent is to discuss innovations that may

provide helpful insights to any school that provides education in First Nations communities.

Four important areas to consider include acknowledging the authority of communities to engage in the development of culturally appropriate curriculum, and encouraging student responsibility; providing a contextually appropriate response to learning needs that is holistic in nature; ensuring a caring environment by creating a reciprocal process of teaching and learning and a cooperative milieu between the school, the students, and the community; and having a cultural foundation built on respect for the validity of First Nations epistemology, as well as integrating First Nations world views in the curriculum and engaging in dialogue and activities aimed at transforming social work education and meeting community needs.

Community Needs

A brief discussion of the specific results of the community needs assessment alludes to the need to transform social work education. The inherent connections between themes discussed means that things overlap with each other or are so intertwined that the use of discrete categories and a linear approach to representing the ideas have proved limiting at best.

First, in the east, the community's own vision and goals are pertinent: self-determination and self-government. The community involved is assuming control of all services, and many of the students came to the program with extensive work experience (an average of 10 years working in social service administration and practice). Accordingly, the proposed curriculum recommendations reflected a command for skills that will enhance students' extensive experience and will further community trends toward self-determination. For example, organizational, management, and administrative functions are priorities, as is the ability to work with three levels of government and in the political arena of the Band. Furthermore, the sense of community responsibility extends to interest in ensuring that there are concrete mechanisms for addressing any concerns about the program.

Moving to the south, a relevant cultural context would be achieved by incorporating a holistic framework that would take into account the past, present, and future of the community and by instituting an anti-racist approach to social work practice. Pertinent is the need to attend to students' learning needs: moving away from fragmentation in education, course work needs to be well integrated, in addition to ensuring that students have the opportunity to deal with affective responses to education indicative of what Todd (2003) refers to as the violence of education. The program would need to reflect understanding of both the historical context as it pertains to previous educational experiences, and to the deeds of their forebears in social work, as well as reflecting community goals. Also, the issues of racism in First Nations communities, between First

Nations communities, and between First Nations and mainstream communities are of particular concern; for example, reference was made to the divisive and negative effect of Bill C-31, which has generated conflict for Aboriginal women—whose legal status as Indian was reinstated—seeking to return to their home communities.

In the west, care involves an environment of cooperation and the development of genuine relations. Recognition of the wealth of experience of the students was also identified as important. In addition, the needs assessment participants requested a cooperative versus competitive environment. A genuine relationship would require a willingness to challenge the inaccuracy of presentations of history in mainstream literature and writing and to acknowledge the effect of colonization and all the relevant institutions, but would also involve ensuring adequate supports were in place for everyone involved: teachers, students, and community members.

In the northern realm, a culture foundation would be reflected by providing a holistic program that incorporates the culture and world views of the community and would require First Nations faculty and placements in Aboriginal agencies. The Elders are viewed as the key to providing the proper cultural context and the foundation on which the program could effectively meet community needs.

Linking Traditional Aboriginal Education with First Nations Social Work Education

It [traditional Aboriginal education] was an education in which the community and the natural environment were the classroom, and the land was seen as the mother of the people. Members of the community were the teachers ... [and] central to the teaching was the belief in the sacred, the Great Spirit... the development of the whole person was emphasized through teachings which were often shared in storytelling ... there was little segregation of family for events, whether social or work related [and] ... education was inextricably linked with economics. Learning was for living—for survival ... through observation and practice, young children learned the art of hunting, trapping, food gathering and preparation, child rearing, farming and building shelters ... [ultimately, this informal education would ensure] cultural continuity and survival of the mental, spiritual, emotional and physical well-being of the cultural unit and of its environment. (Kirkness, 1992, pp. 5-7)

Approaches to First Nations social work education must reflect the cultural diversity of First Nations; although "there [is] no monolithic system of [First Nations] education ... [there are many] values and assumptions ... [that are] similar" (Evans, 2001, p. 2). Garrett (1996) speaks to the commonality of fundamental values identified as characteristic of diverse tribal groups and highlights the interdependence between all living things and the importance of balance. As such, the following discourse is based on an understanding of shared First Nations values.

Many aspects of traditional education are relevant to efforts to institute change in classrooms, schools, and universities. In framing the discourse

on traditional Aboriginal education and First Nations social work education, four themes developed by Kirkness and Barnhardt (1991) are also relevant. Kirkness and Barnhardt point to the "need for a higher education system that respects them [First Nations] for who they are, that is relevant to their views of the world, that offers reciprocity in their relationships with others, and that helps them exercise responsibility over their own lives" (abstract). In fact, these themes can be easily integrated with the themes discussed above; as such, our frame of reference is transformed and blends community and responsibility, context and relevance, care and reciprocity, and culture and respect. This transference to a frame of reference that privileges First Nations' perspectives is indicative of the tenor of this article and is critical to the arguments therein.

Community/Responsibility

Traditionally, responsibility in the educational arena was exemplified by the emphasis on good character, by education "for the people," for the purposes of meeting community needs, and by fostering harmony. As regards character, "both students and teachers were expected to have good character, and character was emphasized throughout the educational process ... [with] stories and examples directed toward teaching courtesy and building character" (Evans, 2001, pp. 2-3). High standards were set for teachers, and the community's responsibility included setting and maintaining these standards, which included demonstrated mastery in one's profession and the ability to reflect on and incorporate their learning "along with their own spiritual insights and the knowledge of tribal elders, for twofold purpose: to achieve wisdom and to pursue a lifelong personal quest for spiritual truth" (p. 2). As well, the community was involved in linking students' needs and abilities with community needs and promoted specialized training that would attend to the needs of both students and community.

Furthermore, in contrast to Western education, Hampton (1995) accentuates the role of education and the responsibility inherent in the formation of one's identity, in tandem with the group identity, such that personal benefits were secondary to community needs:

The competitive success of the individual is an implicit value of Western schools and as such is in direct conflict with the Indian values of group success through individual achievement ... It is no light matter for an Indian graduate student to articulate a communal purpose in his or her education.... [as well] the freedom and strength of the individual is the strength of the group.... The individual does not form an identity in opposition to the group but recognizes the group as relatives included in his or her own identity. (p. 21)

Harmony was fostered through cooperation and the priority of communal aspirations versus individualistic success. As mentioned above, the community's vision and long-term goals—self-government and self-determination—indicate a congruent sense of responsibility; in the off-campus

program, community leaders and Elders have participated in every aspect of the development of the program and are continually involved in decision-making through membership on the advisory committee that guides the program. Furthermore, the community articulated high standards regarding both skills and knowledge that students are expected to attain, as well as the qualities these students would be expected to demonstrate. For example, these included being positive role models and leaders; being reliable, cooperative, committed, and flexible; being able to "walk the talk"; and having healthy boundaries, to name a few.

Of importance is the strong correlation between communal responsibility for everyone's well-being and students' control over learning. In reference to Hampton's (1995) comment about the freedom and strength of the individual as the strength of the group, it is important that education be empowering for students, encouraging and supporting them to draw on the communities' perceptions and approaches to health and healing, because "motivation and learning is enhanced when the student perceives personal control over the context and outcome of the learning task" (O'Brien & Pace, p. 5). Such perceptions foster the sense of responsibility as students, but also as community members. Empowerment can be realized through facilitation of a process in which students have the opportunity to learn or articulate the community's own concepts of health and healing and understanding of the helping role.

Pertinent to why educators need to incorporate First Nations ideas about healing and health is the fact that they reserve a more holistic conception of health, which extends beyond Western attitudes of mental health as

being of sound mind. Mental health and mental illness are seen to be attributes of the mind and outcomes of certain mental activities. In First Nations cultures, from traditional to present times, health means balance and harmony within and among each of the four aspects of human nature: physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual. Over focusing or under focusing on any one aspect upsets the balance of the four. (Mussell, Nicholls, & Adler, 1991, p. 19)

These perceptions have implications for ideas about health and healing as well as approaches to helping. Incorporating such ideas into the analysis of social work practice empowers learners to determine the benefits of both traditional and mainstream helping perspectives and practices. As well, facilitating the exploration and application of knowledge relevant to students also implies a retreat from the hegemonic dominance over what constitutes knowledge. Ultimately, the community's need for control over its own health, social, and other human services is easily juxtaposed with the need to provide education that is both empowering, and transforming.

Consistent with the concept of communal responsibility, the community provides services in kind such as the space in the community where the program is to be delivered and giving students the time and resources (funding for tuition and books) to participate in the program in

conjunction with their responsibilities as Band employees. As well, Elders are considered a fundamental resource, and community leaders and Elders are encouraged, and invited, to provide input on a number of levels. For example, during the first course offered, a panel of community leaders and Elders were invited to reflect on the history of social development services in their community and to discuss the challenges and successes of that process. As well, community leaders participate on the advisory committee and in decision-making about the program. In the classroom, harmony is achieved through collaborative processes such as group work and reliance on Elders' and other community members' expertise.

Communities have a responsibility to transmit (not exclusively) their language and culture and the wisdom and knowledge in their culture. The transmission of these cultural world views and ways of being must also occur from within that world view, because outsiders do not have the needed cultural frame of reference. It is important to recognize not only the communities' sense of responsibility, but also their authority to do so, which is one reason why programs or coursework delivered in the community must draw on the communities' expertise. In the sociopolitical arena as well, responsibility must be shared, empowering communities to participate in every realm of the educational arena, not as advisors, but as decision-makers. Thus educators can begin to alter the wider arena: that of the institutions themselves.

Context/Relevance

Providing an appropriate cultural context requires ensuring a relevant educational process and contextually appropriate curriculum. In terms of relevance, traditional education was community-based and an integral aspect of living, in which patience, being, and time were elemental to the process of learning. As well, learning is a holistic process that has an emotional effect, but also involves a reflective process of watching, listening, and doing. Racism must also be addressed both in classrooms and in educational institutions.

First, Evans (2001) points out that education was "consistently taught in the context of the community's religious philosophical beliefs, and were therefore fully integrated. Separation of subjects into discrete and unrelated domains was not a possibility" (p. 3). Second, Garrett (1996) describes three significant features of traditional education: patience, being, and time. Learning to watch and listen and to develop an awareness of one's internal experiences requires patience: when the time is right, the answer will come. Furthermore, as regards the understanding of time, First Nations are present-oriented, and have a nonlinear sense of time. Gunn Allen (1986) refers to Aboriginal time as achronological in that Indian time is characterized as being in tune with the harmonious rhythms of nature and the seasons. Graveline (1990) points out that "chronological

time contrasts sharply with the ceremonial time sense of our Ancestors" (p. 139) and also mentions the importance of taking the time to think before we speak.

Patience, being, and time are relevant to the spiritual life of the student in the context of the world around him or her, involving reverence for both the inner and outer world, for life's natural rhythms and cycles, and for the spiritual nature of the community. All these aspects of the traditional way of being in the world are important considerations in providing a relevant education; in other words, in order to be relevant, education must be amenable to these conceptual frameworks. Implied is a holistic approach to life and learning. This inference is supported by Cajete (1994): "indigenous teaching focuses as much on learning with the heart as on learning with the mind" (p. 224).

It is also important to recognize that traditional learning processes are holistic, that learning and healing go hand in hand, and that learning is based on watching, learning, and doing. In the first instance, there is "a need for healing around issues of loss of culture, tradition, language and abandonment" (Green, 1999, p. 8). Aboriginal students often struggle to deal with internalized racism (Christensen, 1994). Zapf (1999) provides a solid case example in sharing an experience co-teaching a social work methods course in High Level, Alberta. Having excluded himself from participating in a discussion about internalized colonization, which took place between students and the First Nations person co-teaching the course, Zapf elaborated on the effect of the session:

Many students had spent the night agonizing over the buried issues that had now been made conscious. It was not enough that I was the only non-Native in the room; I was now a white male authority figure, an easy target....

With Apella's support I moved past my initial defensive reactions. I could see that this was not a personal attack; the students needed a target for their new rage. How I would react would be crucial for the future of our work together ... This was a slow and very difficult sharing process, with hesitation and tears on both sides. I was involved with this class, with our process, with an immediacy that I had never experienced through prepared lectures, lab exercises or class discussion.... We came to a realization, probably the most powerful and crucial insight to come out of the entire course. *If their anger forced them to shut me out and dismiss me, or if my guilt sent me back to the city where I could comfortably ignore the issue, then we would waste a special opportunity to build a bridge that we both needed.* (pp. 333-334)

Evident is the need for schools to ensure that there is adequate support for students to resolve conflicts associated with learning about the effect of colonization. Students require an environment that fosters healing and addresses internalized racism, as well as ensuring that the curriculum is grounded in anti-racist practice.

This is contrary to the intellectualism of Western education, which does not make room for the emotional effect of education on First Nations. This attitude of intellectualism was addressed by the Dalai Lama during his recent visit to Vancouver. The theme of the visit was "balancing educating

the mind with educating the heart," and the program guide for his visit quotes him: "Too much energy in your country is developing the mind instead of the heart. Develop the heart" (University of British Columbia, 2004).

In terms of learning styles, the assumption is made that nothing needs to change; "'it works for us, so it must work for everyone,' is apparently the thought. This must be at least a very egocentric assumption" (Rhodes, 1988, p. 3). It is important that the oral tradition has a number of implications for the learning process and also implies a different approach to pedagogy. Essentially, the First Nations learning process involves seeing, listening, and doing, as "the most accessible, individual learning takes place haptically, through actually trying to do the process ... and cannot be rushed, since understanding and comfort are essential" (para. 5).

Expanding on the holistic nature of First Nations peoples' concepts of interdependence and ecology, healing and health are approached differently among First Nations. As family- and community-based societies, the importance of this orientation implies the need to expand the definition *client* to include a network of kin, but also alludes to the need to identify community networks, extended family ties, and strong role models (Castellano et al., 1986; Pace & Smith, 1990). In addition, because the structure of programs tends to focus on individualistic approaches, whereas First Nations students live in family- and community-oriented societies, there is a need for a holistic approach (Christensen, 1994) "rather than addressing segments of multiple problems" (Castellano et al., p. 171); for focusing on healing the whole person; and for increasing the focus on family systems theories and community development, all of which are vital to effective practice with First Nations (Castellano et al.; Christensen). These ideas were consistently expressed in both the needs assessment and in the curriculum workshop.

Thus relevance is ensured by paying attention to the holistic nature of Aboriginal societies. With this in mind, educators must realize that students learn holistically, which involves watching, listening, and doing, as well as reflecting on these activities; that learning involves healing; that anti-racist practices and policies are paramount in creating a relevant milieu for students; and that the curriculum must provide a context for working holistically with family and community.

Applying these practices in the off-campus program includes ensuring that students have ongoing support, so the Band provides funding for a community member to provide one-to-one support, and program coordination includes holding regular talking circles and meetings with the students and advisory committee members to address concerns. As well, the policies guiding the program seek to ameliorate the racist nature of mainstream institutions through a number of strategies that include increasing access to social work education for First Nations and including

Elders and leaders in setting the agenda in coursework. Curriculum is being developed incrementally and includes the accumulation of adequate reading materials and course packets for every course in the FNBSW program, as well as the development of new courses to fill gaps in the current program offerings. Efforts to encourage faculty to draw on community strengths, wisdom, and knowledge are ongoing. One of the challenges relates to a failure to recognize the legitimacy of such resources, although in cases where students and community members are given the opportunity to bring in that context, they are able to demonstrate poignantly the value of such inclusive measures. In the classroom, presentations by students and community members and talking circles are well received.

Care/Reciprocity

In the west, care involves providing an environment of reciprocity, most appropriately expressed in the classroom through recognition of the validity of students' knowledge and experience and through the development of authentic relationships exemplified by acknowledgement that everyone has something to learn. And authentic relations provide the opportunity to alter the postcolonial relationship between educational institutions and First Nations people, both inside and outside the classroom.

Reciprocity was traditionally exemplified by the relationship in family, clan, and community, and the emphasis on cooperation and sharing (Garrett, 1996); Kirkness & Barnhardt, 1991; Hampton, 1995; Evans, 2001; Cajete, 1994; Graveline, 1998; Gunn Allen, 1992; Zapf, 1999). Fundamental to reciprocal relationships is the virtue of humility. Garrett elaborates on the importance of humility in reference to maintaining harmony, whereas Cajete speaks to the humility embedded in traditional education that "presents something for everyone to learn, at every stage of life" (p. 8). As well, Cajete's characteristics of Indigenous education point out that "its processes adhere to the principle of mutual reciprocity between humans and all other things" (p. 29) and allude to the ecological world view of First Nations, which does not place people above nature, but sees people as part of nature.

Fostering reciprocity means sharing responsibility for the knowledge to be learned and appreciating what students bring to the learning process. Christensen (1994) acknowledges the importance of the knowledge and experience of students as a resource and suggests, "if the program does not encourage active student involvement, it fails to recognize the experience and maturity of the students" (Pace & Smith, 1990, p. 113). Reciprocity in the classroom also means acknowledging one's own lack of knowledge or expertise and being willing to trust the process. Zapf (1999) describes watching Dr. Colorado conduct an interview from a traditional

Native approach. As he watched, he realized how little he knew about this process.

I had learned and practiced the conventional simplistic list of "tips for interviewing Natives," such things as: limited eye contact, comfort with silence, non-intrusiveness, avoidance of direct questions. But I was seeing something more here. She was not just avoiding or delaying dialogue; she and her client were waiting for something. As she explained later, "she was waiting for spirit to show itself." (p. 335)

This example is helpful in reminding us that there is more than one way to do things, and that in making room for other ways of knowing, being, or doing, we have the opportunity to engage in a reciprocal process of learning and teaching. In fact,

faculty members must be especially flexible in their own role as educators.... they must learn to see themselves as being in partnership with community members and as being students as well as teachers.... These ideas may represent a radical shift in thought—perhaps too radical to accept. Nevertheless, this kind of humility and this willingness to use one's professional abilities in the service of others is at the heart of community-based programming. (Alcoze & Mawhinney, 1988, p. 37)

Educators must shift from the previously common, but predetermined outcomes for learning to an openness to community perspectives and approaches to helping; in other words, the arrogance of the Western mind must be abandoned.

Aside from the practical aspects of reciprocity in the classroom, the development of authentic relationships is pertinent to what Giroux (1992) refers to as the politics of postcolonialism. Whereas Zaltz (n.d.) describes Noddings' views of authenticity as relating to the ability to take responsibility for our actions, Barnsley (2000) contextualizes the point in referring to the medical field: "mainstream medical practitioners are realizing they're going to have to confront the painful realities of colonial history before they can effectively treat Indigenous people and communities" (p. 1). This idea correlates with the perceptions of focus group participants who stated that it is in telling the *real* history that reconciliation can occur (Harris, 2003). Hampton (1995) encourages readers to become authentic in their relationships with First Nations and points out, "cultural genocide is the open but acknowledged policy of every white educator who says, 'these people must learn what we have to teach.'... if educators realize that they are the agents of cultural brainwashing rather than altruistic helpers, much that is otherwise incomprehensible becomes self-evident" (p. 35).

Building on the above section, reconciliation occurs in a holistic learning environment that attends to the emotional effect of the content being addressed. In this sense, the talking circle has been an effective strategy in the classroom, as everyone shares his or her own knowledge and experience, but there is the added advantage of gaining understanding of the effect mentioned above. It also provides an opportunity to challenge the status quo on many levels, not the least of which includes approaches to

pedagogy, although educators must also be willing to congruently challenge the dominant ideology and structures outside the classroom.

Culture/Respect

Creating an environment of respect requires incorporation of the culture of the group, and Hampton (1995) includes respect among his standards of Indian education, stating that "Indian education demands relationships of personal respect" (p. 10); respect for community and for the world we live in are fundamental. In education, informal learning environments and the involvement of Elders are both relevant. In the context of the school and the larger academic arena, recognition of the legitimacy of First Nations epistemology is also critical, and can be achieved through dialogic action and praxis.

Garrett (1996) highlights the respect afforded both children and Elders. Children represent the future, and Elders have a crucial role in passing on cultural traditions, in addition to having the wisdom of age. Also relevant is how Cajete (1994) links respect with an ecological world view, as exemplified in his discussion of the "hunter of good heart":

Hunting is a path to a spiritual reality where each participant gains a set of universal understandings; deep relationship, abiding respect, fulfillment, and love for life meld into one. It becomes the spiritual foundation for teaching and learning ecological relationship. (p. 60)

An informal learning environment creates the ability to incorporate many cultural aspects of learning, most significantly by Elders, who may use "storytelling, songs, dance, music, ceremonies, or any number of vehicles to instruct students" (Stokes, 1997, p. 263). Sparks (2000) notes,

the inclusion of elders as instructors can prevent Native American traditions from being forgotten. Academic credentials are comparably matched by their knowledge of culture, tradition and language.... This promotes respect for their wisdom and provides positive role models for Native American students. (p. 262)

Such efforts constitute an important step toward acknowledging the legitimacy of First Nations epistemology, although dialogic action and praxis in schools and the wider institution are necessary to ensure that legitimacy will be reinforced. Freire (1970) describes a libertarian pedagogy that

occurs in two stages: in the first, the oppressed unveil the world of oppression and through praxis commit themselves to its transformation. In the second stage, in which the reality of the oppression has already been transformed, this pedagogy ceases to belong to the oppressed and becomes the pedagogy of all people in the process of permanent liberation. (p. 55)

This process allows for cultural synthesis whereby "leaders and people are somehow reborn in new knowledge and new action" (p. 181).

In the off-campus program, efforts to foster respectful relations and to provide a culturally appropriate program include maintaining com-

munity participation on the advisory committee, but a significant component is a two-week culture camp that constitutes an opportunity to engage in an informal learning experience designed and delivered by community Elders in conjunction with a more formal component of the program, the latter of which involves an integrative practice seminar using case studies based on students' own experiences. The culture camp is a result of recognition of the legitimacy of the community's knowledge and expertise, but is also intended to reinforce the ecological relationship with nature. In addition, practica will involve learning new roles and responsibilities in the Band, and the school is hiring and, as appropriate, mentoring First Nations MSWs to teach in the program. This is not to assume that these individuals have the specific community context, but that they at least have a First Nations cultural context. The SSWFS has also implemented a course on teaching in social work geared specifically to First Nations MSW students in order to increase the capacity of First Nations to participate in teaching.

Collaboration between the school and the community in the development and delivery of the FNBSW is an important step in moving toward a dialogical relationship that can facilitate transformation of the school itself, although there is still much to do in this regard. That such an opportunity has come about must be credited to the persistence of the community in its own efforts to realize its visions and goals.

Reclaiming Traditions: Creating Change

In terms of identification of features that are relevant to current pedagogy and practice in social work education for First Nations, experiences and learning associated with the delivery of an off-campus social work program in a First Nations community, and with First Nations views on education—traditionally and currently—provide a deeper understanding of how traditional education can guide pedagogy in teaching social work practice to First Nations and in facilitating long-term institutional change. Through a reflective process, further adaptation of the Medicine Wheel that evolved in the analysis of the curriculum recommendations (for the off-campus FN BSW) provides a framework for change, see Figure 1).

Although the reinterpretation here may not be reflected in a linear fashion, the framework is dynamic in its flexibility and illuminates an alternative approach to First Nations social work education. Certainly these ideas and the framework are not static, nor should they be. As well, this is not a comprehensive solution; rather, it serves as a starting place for rethinking pedagogy and for instituting change at micro, mezzo, and macro levels of educational institutions.

In contemplating the teachings about traditional education, the word *balance* is pertinent; failing to incorporate any part will significantly affect the benefits that might be derived from this approach, creating an imbalance that will be detrimental to the process overall. Also, the intercon-

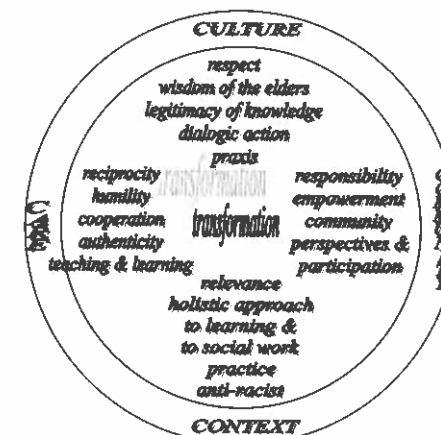


Figure 1. Medicine Wheel for the FN BSW Program.

nection of all of these ideas means that they are not separate categories of thought that can be compartmentalized: to the degree that they are really superficial, which is why the quadrants as presented here are not cut up in separate parts as one often sees. Ultimately, there is congruence between both historical and current attitudes among First Nations thoughts on education. Key to the process is the recognition of education as a transformational process; "Indian education recognizes the need for transformation in relations between Indian and white as well as in the individual and society" (Hampton, 1995, p. 41).

Summary and Conclusion

Understanding the question of how to develop a culturally congruent approach to First Nations social work education requires an understanding of the need to transform social work education. Fundamentally, traditional Aboriginal education, current views of First Nations educators, and innovative strategies currently underway can teach educators much about how to *do it differently* and about education as transformation. Acknowledging the connection between learning and transformation can provide a framework for creating change in classrooms and schools and in universities.

In the east, in the realm of community, the visions and goals of the community are reflected by providing an approach that is empowering and encourages responsibility, both of which are fostered through sharing responsibility in the functions of, and decision-making at, every level of the educational process.

In the south, in the realm of context, relevance is ensured by incorporating a pedagogy and practice that incorporates the holistic nature of

Aboriginal society, both in the sense of an ecological world view—as expressed in the focus on family and community—and in the sense that learning is a holistic experience that occurs physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually. Certainly relevance requires restructuring the approach to social work practice and to teaching practice courses, creating a more holistic model that recognizes, in the case of the former, the importance of kinship ties, and in the latter, that learning holistically involves healing as well as a process of seeing, listening, and doing. Furthermore, relevance is obtained by providing an anti-racist environment, as well as an anti-racist approach to teaching social work practice.

Moving to the west, the provision of a caring environment requires reciprocity, humility, cooperation, authenticity, and ultimately recognition that everyone has something to learn and to teach and that cooperative environments for learning need to be established. Far from being applicable only in the classroom, authentic relationships allow everyone to participate in the "Learning circle" (Zapf et al., 2003) and to take responsibility and ownership for their place in society.

Finally, in moving to the north, respect for First Nations cultures can be expressed through acceptance and inclusion of the wisdom of Elders, and through recognition of the legitimacy of Aboriginal epistemology and ways of being. As well, it is through inclusive dialogue and action that transformation of the entire academic institutions can occur.

Ultimately, however, through the provision of culturally appropriate social work education, communities can develop the capacity to assume control over the health and human service needs of their communities. It has long been recognized that current services do little to appease the challenges facing First Nations communities, and just as traditional Aboriginal education can guide the development of social work programs that can better meet community needs, the increased capacity to improve health, social, economic, and political conditions for Aboriginal people will be fostered by supporting the attainment of an education that honors the traditional practices that enabled Aboriginal people to survive for thousands of years before contact.

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Creating and Sustaining Positive Paths to Health by Restoring Traditional-Based Indigenous Health-Education Practices

Dawn Marsden

University of British Columbia

This article presents some textual and graphic reflections on the epistemological links between health and education and the potential egalitarian influence of applications on policy and practice in dominant institutions toward the well-being of all. The reflections arise from an intense examination of the stories and processes of a research project with a group of 22 people who are traditional-based Indigenous health practitioners or their facilitators, or clients. The focus of the project was to examine how the access and provision of traditional-based health services could be enhanced in Vancouver by and for Indigenous people. By an extension of Indigenous wholistic principles and with consideration of the role that traditional knowledge-holders play in the health of Indigenous peoples, it becomes apparent that traditional-based health and education practices are so intertwined that they can be considered inextricable. From this understanding, a responsibility arises to ensure the well-being of Indigenous (and other) people by promoting epistemological pluralism and by restoring traditional-based principles and practices in the mainstream.

Focus

Indigenous people have demonstrated a way of knowing and relating that must be regained and adapted to a contemporary setting—not only for the benefits of those cultures themselves, but for all humankind. Learning and becoming whole are, at every level of expression, intimately intertwined. (Cajete, 1994, pp. 79, 180)

Like many people, I like to pragmatize (make practical) my understanding of the world so that I can make decisions for action. In this article, I summarize and pragmatize some of my reflections on research with a group of traditional-based health-education practitioners (healers, medicine people, and traditional knowledge-holders), their facilitators and clients in Vancouver. The focus of the research was to create a collective story about how to enhance the access to, and provision of, traditional-based health services by and for Indigenous peoples in Vancouver (see Figure 1). For me the findings of this research provide deep insight into the inextricable intertwining of Indigenous health and education.

Semantics

Countless terms are used to identify Indigenous peoples as groups with commonalities, and many more by which we call ourselves. I like the term *Indigenous* when referring to myself and to others because of its association with place, and thereby its ability to connect people around fundamental