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"Home and Native Land . . ."

Healing Society

When I received the request from the Social Planning Council to submit an article on "Native Spirituality", many thoughts and feelings came to mind. I recalled the words of one of my first Elder teachers who said, "when someone shows you something, you can say 'I understand'; when someone tells you something, you can say 'I understand'; yet only when you actually experience and do something, can you truly say 'I understand'". Thus, I share with you only what I understand through my journey with Native spirituality.

My introduction occurred in 1977 when, at the age of 24 as a Native Communications student, I listened as two Elders shared traditional teachings. I remember hearing about the Sacred Wheel of Life and feeling my heart touched in a way that told me, "this feels so familiar." Tears came to my eyes and I felt like I was home.

I immediately became very impatient and wanted to learn everything there was to know - my formal education urged me to "get a list of Elders and work through it in a systematic manner." I'm thankful for an Indian friend who told me, (actually he laughed at me when I asked for a list!) "Keep it in your heart, the Elders will know and they'll find you." I voiced my fears aloud . . . "Well, how are they gonna' know . . . they don't even know me?"

In spite of myself, I took his advice and put out the call from my heart and went on with my life.

I began my work with Native people as a pho-

to-journalist and started to understand the realities of working *for* a Native organization. I moved to Hinton and started working as a community developer and was faced with more of the same realities in working *with* Native people. At first I was so busy trying "to *save* the Native people" that often the frustration would cause me to have doubts about saving myself. All the programs and proposals that I had a hand in developing were considered by government funding agencies as "not being finite" thus were seen as identifying an "on-going need." Needless to say, our programs did

not receive the on-going support required for full success. Through this experience, I learned to work from "the bottom level" up, based on community needs, not from some bureaucrat's idea of what "was best for our Native people." (I've always resented that term, "our Natives," because I have yet to hear a Native say, "our White people"). Nonetheless, I managed to contribute in a positive way to the world around me by allowing my

heart to lead me.

One day, in the midst of my work at the Native Referral Office, an old man came in for a visit with his interpreter. He said he "wanted to meet this woman who was helping Natives find work" and so he sought me out. This man was Chief Robert Smallboy who by that time was well-known internationally for taking a small group of his people to live in the mountains following the traditional way. I continued to visit him at



Native Spirituality

Smallboy's Camp when I needed his encouragement to keep on with the work of helping others. He seemed to understand my pain in learning this path of the heart, and he always let me know that I could count on him for support when I needed him. And I called on him many times . . . even after he passed away in 1985 . . . I still needed his encouragement.

He gave me advice when I requested his help in

"My heart tells me that healing is needed for all peoples and Creator gave each race of humans a place on the Great Wheel of Life, each with their own gifts, traditions and responsibility."

1981 to take to the Energy Resources Conservation Board (ERCB) when I was asked to present the Native people's view of seven proposed coal mines. I wanted some words of wisdom to take on his behalf to explain the aboriginal people's connection to the land. He said, "you must tell these people what they're doing to Mother Earth, they're tearing out her guts . . . all things are in her for a reason . . . the oil, gas, coal, are in Mother Earth to help her live." A part of me was embarrassed to present his words, but I did, because my heart knew he was right. Thus, began my journey in "speaking out for Mother Earth."

The reason I tell this story is because I understood that I needed to take Native spiritual beliefs into those places where decisions are made that affect us all. Being brought up Roman Catholic taught me to reserve my celebration of life for Sundays and to be wary of a punishing Creator. I began to learn more about Mother Earth, who, in bringing life to life, teaches us how to be human through her gifts of Creation. I continue to learn to understand the gift of the oldest teachers - the rock - teacher of faith and strength of spirit; the gift of the tree - teacher of honesty; the gift of the grasses - teacher of kindness; the gift of the animals - teachers of sharing.

One of the teachings of the tree tells us that for every human being in the world there is a tree that

is just like you. Just look around and you will find your tree . . . if you're a crooked person, there are crooked trees, you may see a tree that appears tall and handsome but when you cut it down, it's rotten on the inside . . . just like some people. There are trees which stand straight and tall yet have a very small root system - like the mighty oak. And then we have the willow tree with its flexibility and a very strong root system reaching out to many. Sometimes I wonder how long this teaching will hold true at the rate the multinationals are clear-cutting our forests.

To Native people, family has always been important and I'm thankful that I had the opportunity to learn, by observing my parents, the values of honesty, caring and sharing. We, in my family, were shown by example, not to accept the status quo when injustice and inequality were evident. I learned to speak out at a young age for others who were not as fortunate. Many Native people grow up with no family or community support yet learn to survive whether it be in the bush or on the streets.



In Edmonton I work through the Mother Earth Healing Society which is based on "the healing and preservation of Mother Earth through the teachings of Native cultural values." Some Native people don't share the teachings with our white brothers and sisters but I was not taught in that way. I feel empathy for many non-Native people who have to turn away from their own ancestors who taught them the strength of the almighty dollar - who are they to turn to if not the indigenous people of this land? My heart tells me that healing is needed for all peoples and Creator gave each race of humans a place on the Great Wheel of Life, each with their own gifts, tradi-

Native Spirituality

tions and responsibility. The colour of one's skin makes no difference in seeking spirituality -- simply, follow the heart.

We have women who come to our weekly healing circle who have been physically, sexually, emotionally abused by family and community members. The colour of their pain is the same. We might have a social worker, a psychologist, a teacher, a woman from the battered women's shelter, a welfare recipient, all sitting in the same circle, all needing to allow their hearts to speak. This is how we see the healing process occurring - me, family, community, Nation and Mother Earth. Each one of us living the values of faith, honest, caring and sharing.

Living in Edmonton for the past 5 years has taught me that I don't have to live in the bush to be in touch with Mother Earth. The sun still comes up in the east and sets in the west, the trees are still here in the parks (and even the malls if I *have* to be there!). The river which my ancestors lived beside is still here, the grass still grows and now and again I can even find a place to walk that's not covered in cement.

This Turtle Island (North America) has been the homeland of aboriginal people for the time immemorial and we are to be the caretakers of this land. Yet how can we, the red race, carry forward our gift of vision if white people, with their gift of movement don't slow down enough to listen? And how can we, the red race, carry our gift of vision if we don't understand communication, reasoning and movement? Those of us who are mixed blood are born between the north and the east places on the Great Wheel of Life so that we can be the bridge between cultures. And so it goes . . . the Great Wheel of Life cannot move in the good way until human beings understand vision, communication, reasoning and movement. And Mother Earth is our teacher yet we dump our garbage on her, clear-cut her trees, poison her waters and air . . .

Though, to some, these teachings may sound nice, some may feel they lack practicality with living in the "real" world. Well I think the real world is in need of more values and ethics for all people. I would like to share some of my thoughts and questions . . .

People who sit in positions of power and make decisions for us all need to learn to look at them-

selves with honesty before they will become true leaders. And they should learn from our people who, before a decision was made, considered the needs of the the next seven generations. And how

"Yet how can we, the red race, carry forward our gift of vision if white people, with their gift of movement, don't slow down enough to listen?"

can we, the people, learn by the example of the decision-makers, when they are more concerned with partisan politics than justice and equality? And why do politicians expect all Native people to speak with one voice when existing laws tell us that we are sub-divided into Métis, Indian, Inuit and Bill C-31 Indians? Besides, we don't hear all the white people speaking with one voice. Based on these few questions and ponderings (I have many more!) I would suggest that spirituality is perhaps needed as much in these places of government where decisions are made for those who can't speak out for themselves as it is needed on the family and community level. It is my eternal hope that someday we will all hear one another with our hearts as we allow our hearts to speak. ◊

Lorraine Sinclair is the Founder and Executive Director of the Mother Earth Healing Society based in Edmonton.

Mother Earth Healing Society

is dedicated to the preservation and healing of our Mother, the Earth, through the teaching of Native cultural values. The Sacred Circle meets every Wednesday. Associate membership (\$25.00) includes a quarterly newsletter and donations are welcomed.

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Opened Eyes

*By Jonathan Murphy, Executive Director
Edmonton Social Planning Council*

The images we have of our country and its people usually develop naturally and imperceptibly from early childhood. As an immigrant Canadian, many of my images seem to be sharper, vignettes seared in my mind from the first shock of recognition. Such are my pictures of aboriginal people and their status in Canada.

* * * *

The winter of 1981. My first experience of really vicious cold. Even worse, I couldn't afford to run a car, and I found myself shivering late at night in the bus shelter opposite the Hotel Macdonald. There were two guys, dressed in flimsy

sorry clients. During nine years in the inner city, I met hundreds of down-and-out people, and watched dozens die of diseases like tuberculosis, which today we expect to see only in the Third World. Three quarters of the street people were Native. After the Co-op moved out, the owners turned the Steambath back into a skid road rooming house.

* * * *

Back in the early eighties, the Kingsway Inn was the northside's entertainment hotspot. Its huge tavern was always packed, the walls vibrating with the sounds of country rock. The round tables were still covered with that traditional red towelling, and around each one sat a diverse and vibrant assortment of people. A couple of blond Mennonite roughnecks from Saskatchewan were holding hands with a pair of dark-skinned women from the Territories. A heavily accented Newfoundlander sat in animated discussion with two Métis guys down from St. Paul for a weekend conference, while we all took turns to kibitz with the tattooed and friendly Quebecoise waitress. The boom hadn't yet run its course, and most of us had plenty of cash to burn. Everyone was dressed-up, and even though the booze flowed pretty freely, arguments were few and far between. For the first time since I arrived in Canada, I felt at home.

* * * *

My friend Marcel and I got to know a group of Dene Indian people. There were about ten of them, mostly women, who all came from the same reservation about three hours north of Meadow Lake, Saskatchewan. I fell for Doreen, a short, pretty woman dressed in soft leather, denim and glittering earrings. One night she took me home. She lived in an apartment complex in the west end. Though she was by no means rich, Doreen's place was well furnished and spotlessly



and dirty clothes, lying huddled together on the bench in the corner, kept warm only by each other's bodies and the paltry heaters in the ceiling. I was curious as to what kind of people had to endure a night of this hell. Looking more closely, I realized they were Native men. So this was what the treaties were all about. We whites got North America. The original people got space in the bus shelters.

* * * *

I started working for the Boyle Street Co-op in 1982. At that time, we were still located in the old Steambath Hotel on 96th street. It was a vile building. My coffee would freeze if I left it on my desk overnight in the winter, and some of us staff wore woollen gloves as we counselled our

clean. As we walked in, she saw something on the counter, and shoved it embarrassedly into the cutlery drawer. When she went to the washroom, I opened the drawer. In it was a giant, fresh-baked bannock. Months later, I asked her why she was so ashamed of it. "White guys always laugh at me when they see bannock, or dried fish, or wild meat in my kitchen, so I hide it." I thought she was being paranoid.

* * * *

January 16th, 1988. Doreen stood with her head bowed amidst all the imposing ceremony of a Court of Queen's Bench Trial. Her crime was that her white boyfriend had beaten a bootlegger and stolen his money, while Doreen screamed frantically at him to stop. In her defence, this talkative jovial woman mumbled only monosyllables. Her lawyer, a Legal Aid appointee who hadn't been able to make ends meet working his family law specialty, had told her not to worry. She would either get off or get probation. The day of the trial he sat her down with me and told us that she had better plead guilty or she would be going to Kingston.

* * * *

Tears of rage rolled down my cheek as I heard the gruff old white judge sentence her to four years in the penitentiary. She is someone who won't even jaywalk. Doreen's boyfriend, whose previous crimes included manslaughter, and who regularly beat her, was sentenced to six years. That day I knew why Doreen hid the bannock.

* * * *

Three and a half years later. I'm not working in the inner city any more. I heard the Steambath Hotel burned down last week, and I won't miss it. The tavern at the Kingsway is a strip joint now, and I wouldn't be seen dead there these days. Doreen's sentence was reduced on appeal, and she's back living in her apartment in the west end, a little less jovial and a little more bitter. I got a new job at the Edmonton Social Planning Council - "fifty years of support for social justice."

There will never be social justice in this country while Native people sleep in bus shelters, while they die broken in the inner city, while they go to jail for crimes white men committed, while they're ashamed for us to see their bannock. ♦

Letters to the Editor:

Dear Editor,

*Once again, in reading the May/June '91 issue, I have thoroughly enjoyed and appreciated **First Reading**. Why do you feel it needs to be improved?*

What do you mean when you write "However due to the choice of style, content and title, the publication sets a certain tone that may not be the Council's original intention?"

I can appreciate that you want the publication to reach a wide audience. So do I! Do you know whom it reaches now? Whom else you would like it to reach? Would different cosmetics really affect distribution?

*I notice that **Saturday Night** was just advertised through an insert in the *Globe & Mail*. Have you considered piggy-backing an ad or sample on (in) such as the *Edmonton Journal* or the publication of a congenial provincial organization (e.g. AHSWA, ACA, AASW, Labor organizations)? (Isn't there an old adage about the most effective preaching being that done to the converted with exhortations they spread the gospel?)*

Briefly, from my point of view:

*-**First Reading** is a unique and catchy name. Why change it?*

*-**First Reading** looks great as it is. Who additionally would be attracted by more vibrant colours?*

-It's okay to generate more response through letters and articles. But consider how many of your readers already have constituencies and may want indepth analyses more than individual opinions . . .

Best wishes

Mildred Flanagan

Editor's note:

***First Reading** is primarily a membership publication.*

Media representatives and elected officials also receive copies of the newsletter.

***First Reading** is published 6 times a year by the Edmonton Social Planning Council.*

We invite your comments:

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Project Updates

Family Budgeting Guide

In conjunction with the Boyle Street Co-op and the Edmonton Board of Health, the Family Budgeting Guide is being updated by the Council. Bev Roche, a recent sociology graduate of the University of Alberta has been hired to calculate the 1991 costs of living in Edmonton.

CAMPAIGN 2000:

A policy sounding on child poverty was hosted by the Council on August 29th. Representatives from the Native Community, human service agencies and self-advocates who are living on low-incomes came together for a half-day session. This discussion is part of a nation-wide consultation and strategy being developed by the Canadian Council on Children and Youth, Child Poverty Action Group and the Canadian Child Welfare Association.

AFSS Review

The Council is working out an agreement with Alberta Family and Social Services to review policy and services in child welfare and income support for 16 & 17 year olds. We hope to have Celeste Grad working for the Council on this project.

Multiculturalizing the Workplace

The Council will begin work with Alberta Multiculturalism Commission to develop the workplace multiculturalizing initiative beginning this fall.

Board Development Workbook

The Council has received funding to update the ever popular Board/Staff Workbook. Matt Kuefler, a former Council researcher, has been contracted to produce the Board Development Workbook. The project will be completed by early 1992.

KARA

The Council was successful in its bid to conduct a program and organizational evaluation for KARA Family Support Centre in Northeast Edmonton.

DECCA

The report for the evaluation of the Development Education Coordinating Council of Alberta is in the final stages and will soon be presented to DECCA.

Life Choices

Work continues on the evaluation of the Life

Choices program offered by Big Sisters and Big Brothers. The longitudinal aspects of the program evaluation will naturally be completed at a later date.

Minimum Wage Symposium

The Council was invited to attend the July 29th Minimum Wage Symposium organized by the Hon. Elaine McCoy's office and hosted by Mike Cardinal, MLA. Approximately 70 people representing small business, anti-poverty groups, community agencies, labour organizations, and provincial government departments attended. An enviable degree of consensus was reached and movement towards increasing the minimum wage is anticipated.

An Invitation

The Edmonton Social Planning Council is pleased to host the upcoming

Mayor's Luncheon

Thursday, October 3, 1991

Reception: 11:30 a. m.

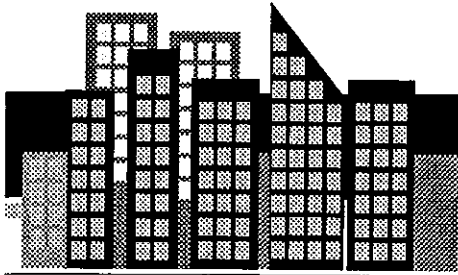
Luncheon: 12 noon

Hotel Macdonald*

Tickets: \$25.00 per person

Mayor Reimer will address social service agencies on social and environmental issues. If you are interested in attending please contact the Council office at 423-2031

** The Hotel Macdonald was the site of the first meeting of the Edmonton Council of Social Agencies which eventually became the Edmonton Social Planning Council. The meeting took place on June 27, 1939.*



EDMONTON FACTS

Published by the Edmonton Social Planning Council

Volume 1

September, 1991

EDMONTON'S NATIVE PEOPLE: SURVIVING IN A RACIST SOCIETY

Introduction

During 1990, the discontent of Canada's aboriginal people boiled over into violent confrontation at Oka and civil disobedience throughout the country. In order to understand and address the issues and demands which Native people have raised, it is necessary to have a clear picture of the economic and social circumstances which give rise to their sense that an injustice is being perpetrated against them. This fact sheet brings together the most up to date information available from various sources to create a profile of Edmonton's aboriginal people.

It is hoped that the information in this edition of *Edmonton Facts* can be used by Natives and non-Natives alike in planning for change.

Numbers

In the 1986 Census, 27,950 Edmontonians reported that they were wholly or partly of aboriginal origin (Indian, Métis, Inuit). Of Canada's large cities, Edmonton and Winnipeg have the biggest concentration of Native people: about five percent.

Most Natives live in north Edmonton, concentrated in the downtown core, the north-east, and the Jasper Place area. In those neighbourhoods the Native population ranges from six to eighteen percent of the total.

The relative youth of Edmonton's Natives, along with in-migration from rural communities, suggests that the population is likely to grow very rapidly over the next years. Statistics Canada reported only 12,000 Native people in Edmonton in 1981.

Background of Edmonton's Native People

Most Natives in Edmonton trace their roots to rural

Indian and Métis communities in Alberta and Saskatchewan. In 1986, three in ten had arrived from elsewhere in Canada over the last five years, twice as many as for the population as a whole.

Alberta Native Affairs reports that the primary motivator to move to the City is to seek employment. A brief comparison of social indicators on randomly selected reserves and Northern Alberta towns confirms that the economic circumstances of rural Natives are often desperate:

Average Family Income: Native and Non-Native Communities (1985)

Valleyview (non-Native)	\$35,528
Sturgeon Lake (Native - 8km east)	\$16,221
Slave Lake (non-Native)	\$40,678
Driftpile (Native - 65 km west)	\$17,202

Even when aboriginal people move from a reserve or settlement to the nearest regional trade centre, their economic and social circumstances do not necessarily improve. In Slave Lake, for example, Native people make up one-fifth of the total population, but account for almost one-half of people living in families below the poverty line. This pattern is the norm for the great majority of the communities from which Edmonton draws its Native migrants.

Age and Family Composition

Consistent with all Canadian aboriginal populations, Edmonton Natives are much younger than their non-

Native counterparts:

Age Breakdown - Edmonton:		
	<u>Total</u>	<u>Native</u>
Under 5	8.5%	14.3%
Under 15	23.8%	37.6%
15-44 years	52.2%	56.2%
45-64 years	16.7%	4.1%
65 and older	7.3%	2.1%

It's clear from the preceding chart that the number of aboriginal students will climb over the next few years, and that the natural growth in the city's aboriginal population overall is likely to continue. In contrast, fewer Natives are at or near retirement age, suggesting that demand for specialized Native seniors programs will not grow markedly in the near future.

Single parent families make up over one-third (34.5%) of all families headed by a Native person, compared with less than one-eighth of Edmonton families as a whole. There will be increasing need for day care and other family support services in comparison with the non-Native population.

Education

A 1985 survey of Edmonton Natives revealed that, after employment, upgrading or completing education was the most common reason for relocation to the city from elsewhere. Both the Edmonton Public and Separate Schools have established specialized programs for Native children, and post-secondary institutions have followed suit. Nevertheless, educational attainment remains considerably below that of the general population.

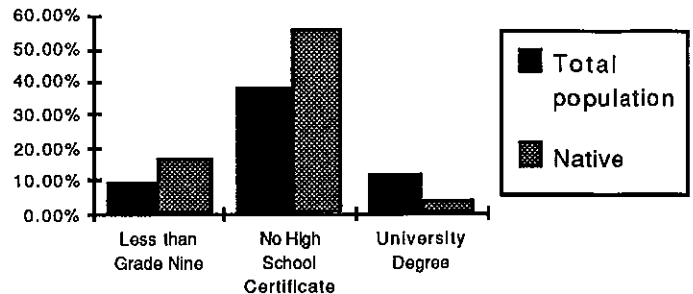
The Edmonton Public School Board does not maintain separate statistics for Native students. While the Catholic school system does keep a count, officials there emphasize that they believe these figures are serious underestimates because many Métis and non-Status Indians do not declare their ancestry. The Catholic School District's statistics show an average of 100 self-identified Native students per grade. This figure drops markedly in Grades 11 and 12, to 64 and 67 respectively, suggesting a high drop-out rate. No reliable figures are available on the numbers of graduating students.

There is a close relationship between level of education and both the quality and quantity of employment obtained. Relative educational underachievement places Native students at a considerable disadvantage in the em-

ployment field.

Employment

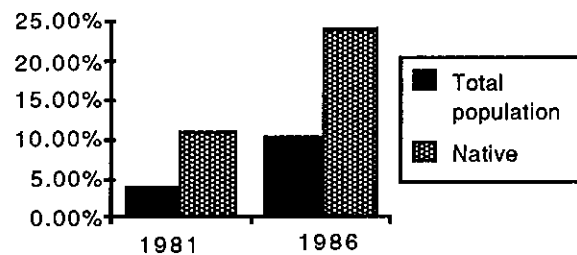
Educational level attained, Edmonton, 1986
(Statistics Canada, 1988, 1990)



Waged work in an urban environment provides an income, self-esteem, and social connections. This contrasts with most rural Native communities, where extended family ties, band and settlement political structures, and religious organizations provide corresponding social and economic opportunities. Failure to successfully transfer to the urban workforce effectively excludes many Native migrants to Edmonton not just from work, but from all aspects of mainstream society. Edmonton Native unemployment rates are more than double those of the general population.

High unemployment rates do not demonstrate fully the exclusion of Native people from equal participation in Edmonton's workforce. Only half of the aboriginal workforce worked full-time for the whole year, compared

Edmonton Unemployment Rates
Native and Total Rates
1981 and 1986



Source: Statistics Canada

with two-thirds of non-Native workers. Further, only two-thirds of aboriginal Edmontonians 15 years of age and older considered themselves part of the workforce, compared with about three-quarters of the non-Native population. Within the workplace, Native people are

overrepresented in the construction and service trades, and underrepresented in professional and managerial occupations.

Income levels

Several factors combine in maintaining aboriginal income levels well below those of the general population. As noted above, Natives have much higher rates of unemployment. Single parents head a third of families, compared with only an eighth of non-Native Edmonton families. Fewer aboriginal people are in management and professional positions, the more highly paid sectors of the workforce. Government transfer payments account for nearly twenty percent of Native family income, compared with less than ten percent for Edmonton families as a whole.

**Average Individual Income
Edmonton, 1985**



Source Statistics Canada,
1986 & 1990

The income gap between Native and non-Native people is smaller among women. However, it is important to remember that there is a disproportionate number of aboriginal single parents in Edmonton, over 90% of whom are women. Usually, their families must rely upon the mother's income alone. This factor is reflected in an analysis of families considered low-income (below the "poverty line"). Just under half (48.4%) of all members of a Native-led family were in poverty, while only one-sixth (17.3%) of the total population lived in a low-income family.

The majority of Native people, both males and females, were reliant in 1985 upon an income of less than fifteen thousand dollars:

**Individual income below \$15,000
persons over 15 years of age:**

	<u>Native</u>	<u>Total</u>
Male	53.9%	35.9%
Female	74.2%	61.3%

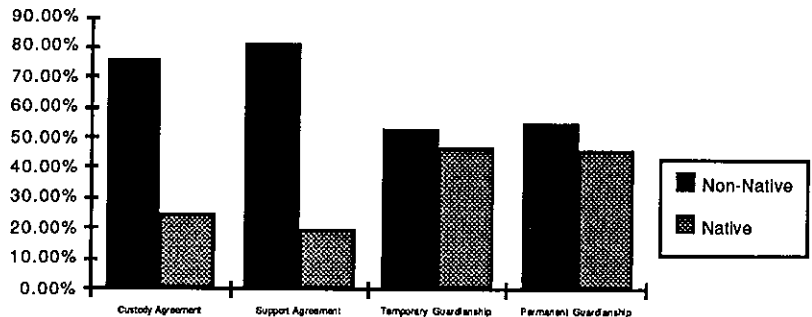
Social problems

In all societies, a combination of relative poverty and exclusion from mainstream society results in low self-esteem, which in turn manifests itself in self-destructive actions.

Native peoples are grossly overrepresented in the federal and provincial correctional systems within Alberta. Despite programs designed to ensure adequate counselling for Native people involved in the court system, Natives accounted for 31% of those admitted to Provincial correctional institutions, a proportion seven times greater than their share of the Alberta population. The "Edmonton Inner City Violent Crime Taskforce" report states that "over a fifteen year period from 1974 to 1989 in Edmonton, Native people were victims in 26.8% of the total homicides and suspects in 31.9% of the cases."

Child welfare statistics show a similar trend. Of eight thousand files open in Alberta on January 31, 1989, 31.5% involved Native families. This statistic is repeated for the Edmonton area, where Native families account for about one-third of ethnic origin coded open child welfare files. Further, there are some clear racial correlations in the type of open files. Native cases make up only 2.5% of Handicapped Children's Services files, but as the type of intervention becomes more intrusive, so does the percentage of Native files increase. Over 45% of all Permanent Guardianship files involve Native families:

**Edmonton Region Child Welfare Cases
By Selected Type of Case, January 1989**



Given extensive documentation of the negative impacts of apprehension and resultant loss of identity and self-esteem, it's more than unfortunate that greater strides have not been made in recent years to reduce such traumatic incidents. This is further exacerbated by reports that fewer than half of Native children apprehended are placed with Native foster parents.

There are many other social issues facing the Native community in Edmonton. Studies in America and Canada conclude that alcohol abuse is a problem among both urban and rural Native communities, and there is no rea-

son to believe this is not also the case in Edmonton. Housing conditions for Native people are often appalling: high needs housing areas correspond closely with those containing large Native populations. Nationally, rates of death by suicide, violence, and accidents are much higher than for the population as a whole. While accurate local figures are not available, a cursory glance at reports in the newspapers seems to confirm that these trends are repeated in Edmonton.

Conclusion

Edmonton's Native people face enormous challenges. Half live on incomes below the poverty line. They endure exceptionally high rates of unemployment. Their children are apprehended and their parents incarcerated seven times more frequently than the rest of the population. Most live in the poorest parts of town, where overcrowding and violence are commonplace.

There's nothing special about Edmonton. The same pattern of poverty and its attendant social ills follows Native people wherever they live: on reserves and in settlements, in regional towns and villages, in other cities across the country. It's been this way for generations.

It is hardly surprising that many Native people feel alienated. Forced to leave their rural communities because of hopeless economic circumstances, they live in the poorest parts of the big cities, cut off from home and yet never truly part of the urban economy and society. For a long time they have stayed quiet while their needs and rights are ignored. The 'hot summer of 1990' was a sign that things are going to change.

In many ways, Native people's status in Canada is comparable with that of blacks in the United States prior to the civil rights movement. Our society has a choice. We can either ignore the situation and suffer increasingly divisive conflict, or we can work together to ensure the full citizenship of Native people.◊

Editor's Note: Much of the statistical information contained in this document is from the 1986 Canadian Census. While the data is several years old, circumstances are unlikely to have greatly changed. This type of detailed information is only available from Census material; it will not be available from the 1991 census for several years. The terms aboriginal and Native are used synonymously: these are taken to include Métis, Indian and Inuit people, as well as those who declare themselves partly of Métis, Indian or Inuit origin.

Sources:

Statistics Canada 1986-1990
Alberta Native Affairs, Demographic Characteristics of Natives in Edmonton, July, 1985.
Statistics Canada, A profile of the Aboriginal Population Residing in Selected Off Reserve Areas, February, 1990.

Questions for Discussion:

- The City of Edmonton has recently carried out a "multiculturalizing" process. Do you think a similar initiative should be undertaken to improve service to the aboriginal community, given that all available statistics indicate they are the most needy of all groups?
- How can social service agencies (both Native and non-Native) work together to meet the needs of Native people living in low-income neighbourhoods?
- Should significant resources be devoted to an urban integration program which can assist Native people making the transition to urban life?
- Do you think school boards adequately serve the needs of the Native population? How can school boards effectively liaise with Native political organizations and with parents to combat excessive drop-out rates?

Recommended Reading:

Campbell, M., Halfbreed.

(Toronto: McClennan Stewart, 1973)

Krotz, L., Urban Indians (Edmonton: Hurtig, 1980)

Dobbin, M., The One and One-Half Men

(Regina: Gabriel Dumont Institute, 1981)

Maracle, L., Bobbie Lee, Indian Rebel

(Toronto: Women's Press, 1990)

York, G., The Dispossessed

(London: London Vintage U.K., 1990)

The Windspeaker, bi-weekly newspaper published by the Aboriginal Multi-Media Society of Alberta

Native Network News, monthly paper of the Métis Nation of Alberta



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United Way
OF EDMONTON AND AREA

A United Way Member Agency

Social Justice / Human Rights Coalition Group Calendar of Events

Editor's Note: First Reading has reserved space for announcements of upcoming social justice/human rights activities. If your organization has an event that you would like to promote please contact the Council's office. Space is limited and, unfortunately, we cannot guarantee the inclusion of any particular announcement.

September

"Walking Together - A Cross Cultural and Spiritual Workshop"

Dates: September 6, 7 and 8th

Sponsored by: The Edmonton Interchurch Committee on the North (plus 6 other organizations)

Location: Strathcona Wilderness Centre

Registration Fees: \$65 before July 31st
\$85 after July 31st

Contact person: Lorraine Land

Telephone: 429-3540

Workshop Information: Native and non-Native participants will explore aboriginal political, social and spiritual issues. The facilitators for the workshop are Sam Bull, Linda Bull and Norbert Jebeaux.

October

"Ways and Means"

Dates: October 24 - October 26, 1991

Sponsored by: Canadian Mental Health Association

Location: Coast Terrace Inn
4440 Calgary Trail
Northbound

Contact person: Tony Hudson

Telephone: 482-6576

Further information: A conference designed to increase knowledge of how governments work, to improve change agent skills and to generate enthusiasm for creating social change.

November

"Take Back the Night" - Annual March /Rally

Dates: Friday, September 13, 1991

Sponsored by: Alberta Status of Women Action Committee

Location: 105 Street/Jasper Avenue to Canada Place

Contact person: Moyra Lang

Telephone: 421-0306

Further information: Planning for the annual march is currently underway. If you are interested in participating or would like additional information please call Moyra Lang at the number listed above.

"National Addictions Awareness Week"

Dates: November 17-23, 1991

Sponsored by: National Native Alcohol and Drug Abuse Program (NNADAP) and the Nechi Institute on Alcohol and Drug Education

Location: Events will take place throughout Edmonton at various locations.

Contact person: Leeann Herechuk

Telephone: 458-1884

Further Information: The Nechi Institute on Alcohol and Drug Education is the national campaign headquarters for this year's National Addictions Awareness Week. Planned activities include a Walk Sober/Join the Circle Rally. If you wish to receive further details call Leeann at the Nechi Institute.

Advanced Notice!

The National Native Association of Treatment Directors and Nechi Institute on Alcohol and Drug Education and Research will present a *World Indigenous Conference on Addictions-Free Lifestyles* titled "Healing our Spirits." The conference will be held July 7-11, 1992 at the Edmonton Convention Centre. For more information call Rod Jeffries 253-6232 or Wendy Fagin 458-1884.

Political Self-Sufficiency

The issue of aboriginal political rights and especially the right to self-government holds a central place on the political agenda of aboriginal leaders at all levels. It certainly provided the focus for discussion at all of the First Ministers' Constitutional Conferences on aboriginal rights and disagreements on it played the major role in the failure of these conferences. This failure can be traced particularly to the differing views held by governments and aboriginal leaders regarding what is meant by "aboriginal self-government." It is through describing some of these differences that the issue of political self-sufficiency can be clarified.

The federal government, the territorial governments and most provincial governments now agree with the aboriginal leadership that "aboriginal self-government" is an essential and legitimate expression of recognized aboriginal rights. However, governments define aboriginal self-government quite differently from aboriginal leaders.

Aboriginal leaders define "aboriginal self-government" as an "inherent" right which flows from the fact that they are still members of the original nations of what is now called Canada. And, like the "right to self-determination" held by colonized peoples anywhere in the world, it is a right that, as stated by the United Nations, cannot be extinguished by unilateral claims to sovereignty

"It is, bluntly, a modern expression of a paternalistic colonialism which puts aboriginal peoples under the ultimate care and control of non-aboriginal peoples."

over the same territory made by the successor, colonial regime. It is a right that is fundamental in that it pre-exists the creation of Canada and continues to exist notwithstanding the fact that Canada is a recognized nation-state. As such, the expression "recognized and affirmed" with regard to aboriginal rights that is found in Section 35(1) of the Constitution Act of 1982 includes recognition of this inherent right to self-government. Furthermore, it follows that their self-governments cannot be amended or altered without the consent of the aboriginal nations.

Most commonly, aboriginal leaders from the lo-

cal to the national level have clearly asserted that they are prepared to approach the actual expression of their rights to self-government within Canada. However, they are not prepared to accept the view that their governments existence and levels of authority are "contingent" upon the expressed will of Parliament. Rather, they urge the recognition of "aboriginal self-government" in our constitution through the creation, through the negotiation, of a "third order of government" which has sovereignty and autonomy in its sphere of activity that is constitutionally equal to that held by the provinces and the federal governments in theirs.

Governments generally see aboriginal self-government as "contingent" in the sense that its powers derive ultimately out of the pre-existing constitutional division of power between the federal and provincial levels. They are in favour of a form of aboriginal self-government which is based either on the delegation of authority from pre-existing levels of government or on an authority to make laws which derives from Acts of Parliament. They argue that, as these rights are "contingent," anything more than such a basis for authority would require a specific constitutional amendment.

The key ingredient in the governmental approach is that aboriginal self-government is, at this point, limited to being a creature of existing provincial and federal governments and thus can be changed or modified unilaterally by them. It is, bluntly, a modern expression of a paternalistic colonialism which puts aboriginal peoples under the ultimate care and control of non-aboriginal peoples. Furthermore, when governments talk about the issue of jurisdiction, by and large they advocate making aboriginal self-government parallel to the municipal level of government. For example an aboriginal self-government might have the power to run a school board on aboriginal land, but the right to set the curriculum would remain in the hands of the federal government and/or the provinces. On the financial side, governments seem to be advocating maintenance of the kind of relationship through which they have the final say on the amount to be funded to each aboriginal self-government and perhaps even the distribution of funds within these self-governing bodies.

For governments, this approach has certain attractions. In the first place, as it does not require constitutional amendment nor structural changes in

Political Self-Sufficiency

funding, it does not disturb their view that aboriginal self-government is a contingent right. Equally, as it provides a practical outlet for some expression of aboriginal self-government beyond what exists through the Indian Act, it enables government to state to the general public that "progress" is being made.

The goals and objectives on the aboriginal side are more complex. All Indian nations that have self-governing arrangements through the provisions of the Indian Act know how powerless they are for the Minister of Indian Affairs has supreme authority on everything from band government decisions to, as the recent creation of a new band in Northern Alberta attests, the composition of and indeed the very existence of bands (as recognized by the federal government.) In this situation, reforms are highly attractive and for some this has outweighed other matters. For others, this is not the case and they would not feel comfortable accepting the propositions proposed by governments.

Political self-sufficiency means at its most basic, the ability to set goals and to act on them without seeking permission from others. When looked at this way, it is clear that Canada, both in the past and today, has consistently acted to deny political self-sufficiency to aboriginal nations. Every policy Canada has developed, such as the explicit statement that the Minister of Indian Affairs has ultimate control over band government which is found in the Indian Act, has worked in favour of paternalism and dependency and against the principle of aboriginal self-sufficiency in the political arena.

Political self-sufficiency in the context of aboriginal peoples in Canada means not only the realization of certain political and economic resources through negotiations with the federal and provincial governments. It means the realization of these powers and resources in a manner that is free from the symbols and reality of dependency. The creation of such a reality, then, will necessitate a fundamental change in the ideological stance of governments away from attitudes that promote paternalism and towards those that foster self-sufficiency. The call by aboriginal leaders to entrench an inherent right to aboriginal self-government in the Canadian Constitution is, then, a call to Canada and to non-Native Canadians to commit themselves to such an undertaking.

I expect that most Canadians would find this colonial vision of Canada abhorrent. Furthermore, it

is certain that the continued suppression of legitimate rights can only lead to continued conflict with aboriginal nations. These are primary reasons why we need to consider the consequences of accepting the alternative proposition: that aboriginal nations have an "inherent" right to self-government.

I believe that accepting such a proposition is less fearful than rejecting it and thus we can begin to recognize that our fears exist primarily in the abstract. In particular, as I hear it, aboriginal nations are not arguing for non-Natives to leave Canada. Rather, I believe that by and large, they are calling upon us to accept the concept of "sharing" in our political relationship with them.

We are in a particularly good position. Not only do we have the beginnings of a tradition of sharing, but we are living in the midst of aborigi-

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nal peoples who themselves have a long history of constructing political arrangements based on sharing power and are prepared to resolve the political dilemma we now face within the context of that kind of thinking. ◊

Michael Asch is with the Department of Anthropology and teaches in Native Studies and Law at the University of Alberta. The preceding article is an excerpt from a book on Aboriginal issues published by the Citizens for Public Justice.

Editor's Note: The title for this issue of First Reading, "Home and Native Land . . ." was chosen during an informal editorial meeting. During discussions regarding this article we were surprised to learn that Michael Asch had published a book under the same title in 1984. Michael graciously supported our decision to use the title.

In the Circle of Knowledge

I seek the guidance of the Creator and of my Elders so that my heart will be kind and my mind clear; so that when I speak my voice will be strong and my words true; so that when I write I will honor the trust of my teachers. Through the guidance of the Elders I learn to understand the natural order and laws of nature and human relations, I learn to understand people and culture. I seek guidance so that what I do will not bring disrespect to my people, those that have passed before and left me this knowledge, those that will yet be born and to whom I give this knowledge. It is our grandmothers and grandfathers who learn from young and old and from Mother Earth to teach us what we will teach our grandchildren. Through this circle of knowledge we survive change.

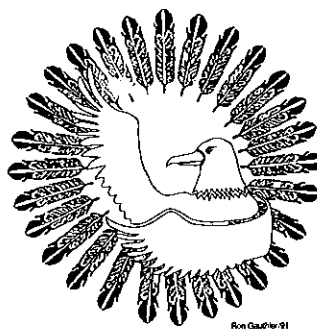
*Sherri Chisan
The Circle of Knowledge
1990*

In the circle of knowledge in the Aboriginal community there is no concept of ownership of information. Spiritual lessons and historical accounts may be assigned to the guardianship of individuals, but the general knowledge and the responsibility for teaching values and life skills belongs to the members of the collective.

Aboriginal people and communities throughout North America are seeking the knowledge that will allow and support self-directed change and growth. Our Elders recognize this as "the journey back along the path of our ancestors picking up what they have left beside the trail: language and cultural teachings." ¹ The lessons of our Elders will help us to heal our selves and our communities. Our Elders teach us who we are, how we relate to all of creation, they teach us how to care for ourselves, how to care for others, how to be community; "I am a part of you, you are a part of me." ²

To confront and manage change and conflict we must first understand our history, not so that we can assign blame for our problems, but because it is a part of our identity. We have been programmed to believe that our spiritual ceremonies are pagan rituals and that our languages and cultures are dying. Although some of the worst legislative barriers to cultural expression have been removed we are still confronted by much deeper prejudices held in the hearts of individuals. This is evident in paternalistic "sympathy" and an apparent discomfort we see in

Euro-Americans when they are among us. Our mental and emotional processes are constantly pressured by the direct or residual "noise" of another culture; we cannot totally escape the presence of the Euro-American culture. Even if we were to retreat to a place where we were no longer in direct contact with Euro-Americans and the material goods of that society, the cultural influence would linger. This constant psychological presence and social pressure makes it difficult to escape the negative attitudes and begin building pride and confidence. What we need to do is recognize and separate that which is positive about the Euro-American culture from that which contradicts our values and creates havoc in our communities.



There are many things about our relationship with Euro-American society that we have not reconciled: economic justification for business ventures and our responsibility to the land; judicial process and our concept of social order and relations; political structure and our concepts of leadership and representation; religious affiliation and our spirituality; competition and our concept of sharing and a cohesive community; corporate hierarchy and our concept of consensus decision making.

Having introduced a foreign system of law, a populist partisan political process, a cash economy, and the concept of state intervention the Canadian government undermined the role of our leaders and broke the continuity of experience.

In the Circle of Knowledge

Our people became observers in our own communities. These new institutions and notions of social structure were superimposed in our communities rapidly and without thorough or adequate definition of the philosophy which supported them. This is evident in conflicts with social service agencies, business enterprises, law enforcement programs, and educational institutions.

The missionary and federal residential schools took our children away from the communities and broke the pattern of shared knowledge. Missionaries raised our children; taught them farming and domestic skills and Euro-American values. We were denied access to our children and could not teach them our language, our traditions, our values, and our ways of thinking.

We have different perspectives and reference points, different understandings of time and process, we have different ways of thinking. Our ideas of political structure, judicial process, economic principles, and social organization are a reflection of our identity and continue to be a basis of conflict with Euro-American society. The challenge of achieving balance and harmony between the two societies is perhaps greater now than ever before as we become more inter-dependent yet remain philosophically independent. This is a challenge that cannot be ignored as tensions continue to increase and the economic and social relationships between the cultures deteriorate.

Elders are encouraging us to gather the knowledge of both worlds so that we will have the strength to participate in this new world on our own terms. We must begin to share cultures and knowledge; draw the Euro-American into our circles of knowledge. Elders offer to educate us in the ways of our people as we seek an education in the ways of Euro-American society so that we may be aware of how university education relates to our identity. Certainly our people need an education but if we do not know who we are, who our people are and how they think, we will not know what to do with our learning. We must be cautious in embracing this new world for in the past our people have suffered for education. We must be fully aware of our purpose, secure in our identity, and determined to achieve our goals.

We can reverse the colonial assimilation campaign, but not with reverse discrimination. We must recognize that we have our own prejudices built of this colonial experience, but that we must,

as part of the healing process, dismantle these prejudices. Resentment only builds another barrier and distracts our attention. As long as we are angry and bitter we will not concentrate on what our Elders have to teach us. When we are secure in our identity we will not be threatened by the attitudes of others. When Euro-Americans are willing to learn then we will also teach them to understand our ways and erase the misconceptions that history has created.

"The next generation are still going to be Indian. Indians have a wonderful chance, but they don't all know it."

***Joe P. Cardinal, Elder
Saddle Lake First Nation, AB***

We will learn that humour and spirituality are critical elements of our collective health. When we laugh together our spirits feel good and when we pray together we share understanding. We will learn that respect and trust enhance our satisfaction in our activities. The people we respect live by the guidance of our hereditary spiritual knowledge. We respect the Elders who have wisdom, who care for the people and help those who are lost find their way back to our culture. We will learn to be proud of our culture. We will learn that communication binds the individuals of a community in common understanding and purpose. We will learn that we do not have to abandon our identity to find a job; that culture is not a part-time hobby. ◊

1 Vera Martin, Cape Croker, ONT /Nechi Institute, AB, 1989.

2 Joe P. Cardinal, Saddle Lake First Nation, AB, 1989

*Sherri Chisan is a Cree from Saddle Lake First Nation and a former student in the BESS (Business Enterprises and Self-Governing Systems of Indian Inuit and Métis People) program in the Faculty of Management, University of Lethbridge. These excerpts were taken from **The Circle of Knowledge** which will be published by the University of Lethbridge later this year. **First Reading** wishes to acknowledge CAMET, the Centre for Aboriginal Management at the University of Lethbridge for their permission to print this article.*

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Council Briefs

Tracking the Trends

The third edition of Tracking the Trends, which focuses on immigrants, highlights the actual experiences of youth and adult immigrants. Copies of the recently published 1991 edition of Tracking the Trends are available through the Council's office.

Working Low-Income Families Report

Family Service Association of Edmonton and the Income Security Action Committee has recently concluded a study which addresses the problems and situations experienced by working low-income families. The study, funded in part by the United Way of Edmonton and Area, is in response to a trend identified by human service professionals and policy makers. An increasing number of working families are living below the low-income cut-offs (poverty line) even though one or both parents are employed full-time. The report contains both qualitative and anecdotal information. For further information please contact Family Services Association at 423-2831.

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Associate*	\$20.00
Organization	\$45.00
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* Associate members don't have a vote or receive a discount on publications.

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