

**BIGSTONE CREE NATION: K-3 SCHOOL CURRICULUM AND
PROGRAM FRAMEWORK**

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abstract

Our First Nations communities have been forced to experience different educational settings and from these experiences there has been a public outcry to meet the educational needs of our children. Meeting the educational needs of our children is a great challenge. It is an honour to be involved in a process of developing programs and curricula with people who are open and have committed themselves to providing a different learning experience for our First Nations children and have a deeper understanding of what it means to plan an education and that is in line with an holistic, or organismic, educational philosophy.

As the process of developing culturally and linguistically appropriate curricula and programming gains acceptance, I hope our community people will come to see such a process as being necessary and realize that they have a prominent role to play in it and that they will offer their support in educating our children.

Different areas of knowledge need to be explored and included in order to enhance the learning/teaching experience of our children. This means inviting and involving Cree people, including parents in the teaching/learning process, one which until now, they have experienced and accepted strictly as an activity that happens to them within the walls of a place called a school. Helping our Bigstone Cree Band/Nation (BCB/N) community people and parents to realize that education is broader in scope than what they have come to accept will be the biggest challenge to be met by Aboriginal or First Nations' educators.

preface

A friend of mine had read this project paper and said, "Now I have some insight and understanding for the things you have been discussing and wanting to see implemented in the school."

A few years ago when I started teaching, a young girl who was a fluent Cree speaker had come to me and quietly asked to speak with me. The other children had left the classroom for their morning recess and she had stayed behind. I had been working with her in completing her math. I had explained the calculations to her using both Cree and english. She had caught on quickly! I asked her how I could help her and she said, "Can you teach me in Cree?"

acknowledgements

I wish to acknowledge all the people who have encouraged and helped me in achieving my goal. My goal was to complete my program and I have been able to do so.

The first person I would like to thank is my husband, Yvon. He has been supportive during many periods of craziness and impatience with myself. I would like to acknowledge our three daughters Sage, Aspen and Sekwan, who have been tolerant and patient with me despite myself. I wish to thank my mother for her encouragement and reminding me of the memory of my father's wish to have his children do well for themselves in life.

I acknowledge all the Elders, teachers and advisors who have become a part of the path that I have chosen.

There are various people with the faculty of education at university of lethbridge whom I would like to thank in offering so many words of encouragement to persevere, especially Phil, David and Cynthia.

I acknowledge my dear friends Barb, Trudy, Donna, Madge and Virginia.

I would like to thank my home Band, the Bigstone Cree Nation, the Administration and the Education Authority for the support they have given in completing my masters program in education and the assistance they have provided so that I may complete this research project.

I give thanks to the Higher Power for the inner and spiritual guidance that has been granted to me; for the strength that I have felt in placing my trust in his benevolence.

Hiy, hiy Winahkoma.

chapter one:
learned oppression through education

introduction

In the time before the arrival of the first people of the white race, the First Nations' people of Turtle Island, now known as the north american continent, lived in relative harmony with nature and with other tribal peoples. Knowledge was shared between generations and people learned from each other through modelling, through sharing of meaningful experiences, through explanation of activities, through storytelling and description of events. We learned skills from each other for our personal survival and the survival of our nations. The world of the Turtle Island First Nations turned upside down with the introduction of people searching for a New World; people from a foreign culture that was determined to control both humankind and nature.

Since the early 1900s, with the introduction of industrial and residential schools for the First Nations' communities in northern alberta as part of a federal government that had a political agenda to christianize, civilize, colonize and canadianize the First Nations people, little has changed in terms of providing educational experiences of the highest quality for our First Nations people.

What has happened for the last 100 years is the continued perpetuation of a process that has the eroded our First Nations' languages and cultures, our socio-economic sytems, our judicial systems and the corresponding erosion of our First Nations' self-identity and self-esteem or self-acceptance.

statement of the problem

Bureaucrats and policies of the Canadian federal government have managed to promote and maintain a state of learned helplessness or dependency and have continued and supported the process of disabling a whole segment of our Canadian multi-cultural and multi-lingual society. This has been a socio-educational reality for most of our First Nation students, even for those of us who successfully completed our mainstream educational programs. Those of us who have completed our studies, in our chosen fields, have encountered hardships and barriers, such as stereotyping - exemplified and amplified in historical textbooks; discrimination - for being the wrong colour; alienation - for speaking and bringing forth a different perspective; marginalization - for being the wrong sex; and for not knowing the acceptable social norms of mainstream society or those of larger urban centres.

There were social and economic barriers in our journey, in our metaphorical vision quest to prove to ourselves that we were capable of meeting the challenges and the changes we confronted within mainstream society. Overcoming the fear of making changes and facing the challenges formed the basis of our success and our survival.

My commitment to this research project is based on a belief that we, as Bigstone Cree Nation (BCN), are capable of developing culturally and linguistically appropriate educational programs based on the history of our survival and sustained by our enduring Cree educational philosophy.

I have chosen not to capitalize any words that represent the oppressors' language. Any words or language used in support of and acknowledgment of First Nations' contribution will be capitalized if needed.

The community of Wabasca-Desmarais is a culturally and linguistically mixed community. Historically, Wabasca and Desmarais were two separate settlements.

Recently our two communities have been working towards unifying health, social, justice and education so services would be implemented more uniformly and fairly for our people in wabasca-desmarais.

The region includes five indian reserves that make up approximately 60%* of the population. The First Nations people of wabasca-desmarais can be divided into the following groups: status, non-status and métis. Métis refers to the people of mixed ancestry and they live off the reserves in the hamlet of wabasca and in the areas between the reserves. As well we have people living in the community who are of french, scottish, norwegian, ukrainian, japanese, german, afro-canadian and ethnic mixing with people from the groups that have been mentioned.

The whole area is known as wabasca but it also includes desmarais. At one time there were two separate residential schools. One of the schools, known as st. martin's was administered by the catholic missionaries and it was located in desmarais. The other school known as st. john's was operated by anglican-protestant missionaries and was located in wabasca.

Since its inception in 1963, northland school division #61 has administered public schools in wabasca-desmarais, following the indian residential school system.

The purpose of this study is to collect and document BCN community thoughts or ideas about developing a curriculum and program framework for the kindergarten to grade three community school and to offer some possible solutions to the questions that have been presented as part of the statement of the problem. We administered a questionnaire to select segments of the Wabasca-Desmarais community: in-school children, parents and elders.

* This quote is based on our 1993 BCN membership list and information from our I. D. 17 Improvement District Office.

The focal question to be answered in this project is:

What processes ought the BCN use to develop a culturally and linguistically appropriate curriculum and program framework for grades K - 3?

summary

This project is organized into five chapters. Chapter two is an exploration of the educational experiences of First Nations people from a broad national perspective to a more personal perspective. Chapter three discusses the methodology of the study. Chapter four analyses the data as revealed in the questionnaire. Chapter five presents an interpretation of the results in relation to the Bigstone Cree Band/Nation *(BCB/N): K to Three Curriculum and Program Framework.

*BCB/N and BCN will be used interchangeably to represent Bigstone Cree Nation.

chapter two:
education of First Nations People

literature review

This paper was written in the collective first person and from an Aboriginal/First Nations' perspective. It was also written in a manner such that a person with little or no high school, college or university training would be able to read and understand what is being presented. The paper may appeal to you as the reader in an individual or personal sense and it may at times appeal to you in a more global sense as a human being. It is from this point of departure that this section will begin.

As part of our personal journey as human beings, as multilingual or bilingual people; as active or life-long learners, at some points within our journey, we have experienced periods of deep inner reflection and cultural rediscovery. Rediscovery, because most of us have experienced a feeling of wanting to return and reflect on our experiences as learners within formalized or institutionalized educational settings. We have wanted to examine where we came from, to determine where we were in our present growth as part of our learning journey so that we may use our past as a springboard into our future.

As in any formalized or institutionalized educational setting the central focus of our learning was culturally or linguistically based. There was a need to explore and to express this need in setting direction for a newly developed school. Ever since schools have been designed and developed for our First Nations people, starting with residential schools, First Nations children have been submersed in english speaking or anglo-conformity schools, by anglo-conformity I mean, an educational system set up by anglo people for anglo people. The initial purpose of the schools was to meet the socio-economic needs of white anglo society. Most of us, as First Nations people, who have completed post secondary, graduate and post graduate study have one thing

in common; we are all products of english speaking or anglo-conformity schools. Our commonality was most pronounced when we entered school at kindergarten or grade one, depending on the year we entered school. Most of us had entered school with the ability to speak our First Nation's Language or our Mother Tongue. Most, if not all, of us would have been candidates for english as a second language classes to facilitate our learning of the english language if such programs were available. But federal governmental policy dictated the guidelines of who would benefit from second language programs. Those who benefitted were not the First Nations People.

Another question that could be asked is, what types of programs and/or support systems need to be instituted in schools that have large numbers of, or a predominant population of, First Nations children within them so that our children receive quality education to help them survive and contribute within their own community as well as in mainstream society?

With the institution of schools, in general, there were particular pedagogical models, methodologies or techniques used in implementing the programs of study.

The following section will highlight the two pedagogical models mentioned above on english submersion and on anglo-conformity schooling.

educational or pedagogical models

Cummins (1988), in his article Empowering Indian Students: What Teachers and Parents Can Do , contrasts the two key pedagogical models that describe the education of minority children. The transmission model "entails the suppression of students' experiences and as a consequence does not allow the validation of First Nations' students' experiences in the classroom" (p. 312). This model has been described as a "disabling educational model" when used in teaching our First Nations' students because it functions from a transmission mode or from an anglo-conformity

orientation. The reason why it is presented as disabling is that the knowledge that is being transmitted is one-way, limited and very selective. The limited, one-way, select transmission of knowledge comes from the limited knowledge base of teachers who are focussed on transmitting pre-determined knowledge and skills as set out by department of alberta education in the program of studies. Most teachers working in the First Nations' students' schools are of white, middle-class european background. Furthermore, J. Cummins (1988) indicates that:

...power and status relations between minority and majority groups exert a major influence on school performance. Minority groups who tend to experience academic difficulty appear to have developed an insecurity and ambivalence on the value of their own cultural identity as a result of their interactions with the dominant group. A central proposition is that minority students are disempowered educationally in very much the same way that their communities are disempowered by interactions with societal institutions. In other words, minority students are empowered or disabled as a direct result of their interactions with educators in the schools (p. 307).

Cummins (1988) proposes a second pedagogical approach, the Interactionist or Reciprocal Model. Following are some characteristics of this model:

- genuine dialogue between teacher and student;
- guidance and facilitation of student learning by the teacher rather than control;
- collaborative learning through student-student conversation;
- meaningful language use by students rather than correctness of surface forms;
- a conscious integration of language use and development with all curricular content where teaching language and other content are not treated as isolated subjects;

- a focus on developing higher level cognitive skills rather than factual recall and task presentation generates intrinsic rather than extrinsic motivation.

Empowering pedagogical approaches encourage students to assume greater control over setting their own learning goals and to collaborate actively with each other in achieving them (Cummins, 1988).

These two pedagogical models clarify why we, as Bigstone Cree people, would be interested in developing our own school programming. One of these models supports the implementation and control of our own school program. The transmission model is presented as comparison so that we may understand what processes European teachers bring with them when they come into our communities to teach our children and to help us recognize that this model is predominantly used by teachers within public schools in the province of Alberta. As reflective practitioners, we realized that the learning/teaching process is either encouraged or discouraged through the quality of the student-teacher "interactions, as Cummins (1988) states are:

mediated by implicit or explicit role definitions that we as educators assume in relation to four institutional characteristics of schools. These characteristics reflect the extent to which:

1. minority students' language and culture are incorporated into the school program;
2. minority community participation is encouraged as an integral component of children's education;
3. the pedagogy promotes intrinsic motivation on the part of the students to use language actively in order to generate their own knowledge; and
4. professionals involved in assessment become advocates for minority students by focusing primarily on the ways which students' academic

difficulty is a function of interactions within the school context rather than legitimizing the location of the "problem" within students.

The following framework represents the differences between the Interactionist or Reciprocal model and the anglo-conformity model.

Empowerment of Minority Students: A Theoretical Framework

SOCIETAL CONTEXT

MAJORITY
GROUP

MINORITY
GROUP

ambivalent insecure
minority group identity

EDUCATIONAL CONTEXT

	Educator Role Definitions	
INSTITUTIONAL CHARACTERISTICS OF SCHOOLS	INTER- CULTURAL ORIENTATION	ANGLO- CONFORMITY ORIENTATION
1. CULTURAL/ LINGUISTIC INCORPORATION	Additive-----	Subtractive
2. COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION	Collaborative-----	Exclusionary
3. PEDAGOGY	Interactionist-----	Transmission
4. ASSESSMENT	Advocacy- Oriented-----	Legitimization Oriented
	EMPOWERED STUDENTS	DISABLED STUDENTS

(Cummins, 1988 p. 308)

Nunan (1992) echoes the need for "a paradigmatic shift from the transmission model of teaching to a process-oriented, participatory model and seeing learners as active agents in their learning and teachers as researchers of their work" (p. 11).

Maybe we could not ask for a better situation than one where teachers view themselves as facilitators of the learning process and as researchers who are involved in experiential learning. As Kolb states,

In experiential learning, immediate personal experience is seen as the focal point for learning and giving 'life, texture and subjective personal meaning to abstract concepts and at the same time providing a concrete publicly shared reference point for testing the implications and validity of ideas created during the learning process ((Kolb, 1984; cited in Nunan, 1992, p. 14).

This supports an educational principle that encourages the teacher/learner to engage in the teaching/learning process which starts from the familiar to the unfamiliar or from the known to the unknown.

From the time of residential schools until band-controlled schooling, the First Nations' children have been subjected to the transmission model where the information that was delivered came from a white mainstream-dominant, European perspective. Through this process, well intentioned educators may have "inadvertantly reinforced children's ambivalence about both their own culture and the majority culture. This bicultural ambivalence may be the result of generations of overt racism" (Cummins, 1988, p. 306). This overt racism existed within the educational institutions that were administered through Indian Affairs, operated by missionaries and later transferred to the provincial government to be administered through the provincial ministries of education. All of these forces resulted in educational experiences which were of marginal value to First Nations' children.

teaching our own

In coming to terms with our socio-educational reality, we as First Nations' people are moving in the direction of designing, developing and implementing programs to meet our community, family and children's needs. There are a number of schools across Canada that could be used as examples of how such programs were developed and implemented but for the purposes of this study I will focus mainly on the Band controlled schools found in Alberta. These schools would be more similar than different from the Bigstone Cree Band/Nation Community School. A brief overview of three Alberta First Nations' schools is provided in the following section, along with a brief historical view of Bigstone Cree Band/Nation (BCB/N) Community School.

It seems important to compare how, why, and when these three First Nations' school became Band controlled. Where are they now, where are they headed and who administers the schools/programs?

- The Driftpile Band School, now known as Driftpile First Nation Community School, has been in existence since 1968. Driftpile Band School began as an elementary school with kindergarten to grade six under the high prairie school division #48. Since 1988, it has provided educational services from Kindergarten to Grade Nine. This change was significant because it meant that students no longer had to ride the school bus to the nearest town to complete junior high.

In 1995, the Driftpile First Nation Community School implemented a complete program from Kindergarten to Grade Twelve.

The Driftpile First Nation Chief and Council and an education committee oversee the operation and the administration of the school. The school administration follows the Alberta education program of studies but their overall

program includes Cree as a second language program. They are moving towards integrating community programming in the near future. Community programming will include utilization of community resource people, community agencies and working partnerships with parents.

- The Saddle Lake Cree Nation School known as the Onchanimahos School has been in operation since 1980. It started as an elementary school with Kindergarten to Grade Six. Since 1993, the education complex has grown to include the Junior and Senior High School known as Kihiw Assiniy Education Centre. The school follows the program of studies as set out by Alberta education but their overall program includes Native Studies, Cree as a second language and an Elder in Residence. The Elder is responsible for teaching as well as accessing community resources.

The Saddle Lake Education Authority oversees the operation and the administration of the school. Saddle Lake Education Authority have implemented Cree Immersion at the Pre-School-Kindergarten level for the 1995-96 school year.

- The Alexander Cree Nation community school known as Kipohtakaw Education Centre has been in existence since 1980. It began with Kindergarten to Grade Six and has since expanded to include the Junior and Senior High School. The Alexander Band had worked with the Four Worlds Development Project when they began exploring the possibility of taking over their own education. This meant the people within this community adopted the Four Worlds community development perspective when they began investigating the possibility of setting up a school within their community. Kipohtakaw Education Centre began their operation by implementing an educational philosophy known as the ANISA Model. The ANISA Model is based on a holistic, organismic philosophy of education that calls for an identification of an entry point to initiate a community development process. The entry point that had been picked by the First Nation community of Alexander was education. Any chosen entry point within the community development process

would eventually impact the social, political, economic or cultural development of the people within this community.

The three preceding schools started by adhering to the provincial department of education's program of studies. They didn't differ much from provincial schools except that they had administrators of First Nations' descent, they were governed by locally elected boards and, maybe, these administrators or school authorities had a vision for offering something different and/or better for their children. But this had to be accomplished, in the early years, within the constraints of provincial education guidelines and under the governance of the federal government indian and northern affairs commission (inac).

With these three schools, it would seem that the transfer of administration from inac to Band-control appeared to have been no more than a case of changing drivers in a metaphoric sense. This observation was made on the basis that the shift in governance involved Bands taking over existing physical plants with no real redesigning of educational programming. The Bands were left with the task of designing or developing facilities to house culturally appropriate programming. One exception to this was the Alexander Band's approach to the takeover of their school. They conducted an initial needs assessment with the Four Worlds Development Project, a research and development project in collaboration with the university of lethbridge. In spite of the results of this study, programming was to a large extent limited and predetermined by how space had been defined within the existing building. Alexander Band took over a building that had been built as a federal day school when they took control of their school.

Bigstone Cree Band/Nation Kindergarten History

The Bigstone Cree Nation (BCN) Community School had an early childhood services (ecs) program for four and five year old children for the past 20 years. BCN viewed the K+5 program as an attempt by inac to placate their initial demands over the past decades. Band members recognized the ecs program was a good beginning but increasingly wanted to assume control over additional grade levels.

Since the 1985 Assembly of First Nations National Aboriginal/Native education study and the resultant Declaration of First Nations on Jurisdiction Over Education, there had been a strong thrust towards expanding the existing k4 and k5 program. [To have a better understanding of why these two documents are highlighted in this section, see page 35 of this project.]

In the past ten years BCN had been actively negotiating with inac to establish a band controlled school on the reserve. These negotiations became more urgent as the schools under provincial jurisdiction, within the community, with northland school division #61 became more overcrowded. This is supported by a letter dated October 27, 1986 (appendix #1) and further supported through the passage of a band council resolution (bcr) dated July 3, 1991(appendix #2). This political move made by the Bigstone Cree Nation, was timely. Along with their continuing call for expanded jurisdiction over their own children, the BCN sought to include traditional First Nations' cultural teachings as part of the provincial programs of study, with the intention of making the school experience more relevant and satisfying for the First Nations' children, families and communities. This is especially important as a response to the continuing high drop-out rate of Junior and Senior high school First Nations' students. It was this high drop-out rate which first called the Bigstone Cree Band/Nation to begin examining alternatives for providing more relevant

educational learning experiences for their First Nations' children and to encourage them to stay in school. This change was significant because it meant that the students had the choice of attending kindergarten on the reserve instead of riding a school bus to the nearest public school and having to embark on their primary and elementary schooling in a very foreign setting.

The BCB/N Kindergarten, now known as Bigstone Cree Nation Community School, began in 1974. Bigstone Cree Band Kindergarten began in 1976 as an early childhood services program with playschool and kindergarten under the Bigstone Education Authority (BEA) since 1976. BEA provided ecs programming for seventeen years.

In 1993, the Bigstone Cree Nation Community School implemented a partial elementary program from Playschool to Grade Two. The Bigstone Cree Nation Chief and Council and an education committee oversee the operation and the administration of the school. The BCB/N Community School is administered by the BCB/N Chief and Council since they are the designated board representatives for the BCB/N Education Authority. The school administration follows the Alberta education program of studies and the overall program includes Cree as a second language program. They have integrated community programming including utilization of community resource people, community agencies and working partnerships with the parents.

Within this context of a brief overview of Band Controlled schools, including a short historical view of BCB/N Community School, I have chosen, for purposes of comparison, to look briefly at two mainstream alternative educational models. [In this paper, the use of the word 'mainstream' will always be in reference to the dominant society.]

mainstream alternative educational models

Mainstream/dominant society offers two different educational models that could be used to assist in the development and design of a curriculum and program framework for our Bigstone Cree Band/Nation-Community School. Two examples follow:

a.) Montessori schools

The central characteristics that could be borrowed from the Montessori schools would be: the physical features of the school, the curriculum development, and the educational philosophy.

The physical plant of such schools are mindful of the students they house. The window levels accommodate the height, visibility of the learner. The furniture size and common areas reflect the size of the students who would be using them. These features that have been identified would be appropriate for the building design of the BCB/N community school. The K - 3 program framework could guide the design of the building to ensure that it reflects the needs of students. The building would be designed to fit the program, instead of the program being designed to fit the building.

The development of curriculum materials facilitates fine and gross motor skill development.

The spirit of the program directs the growth and development process of the students towards becoming self-disciplined, critical thinkers.

b.) Waldorf schools

A central characteristic of Waldorf Schools is the flexibility in daily scheduling which allows large blocks of time to be used in attending to a particular theme. The block of time could be as long as two hours during the morning portion of the schedule. Whatever is taught or presented in the two hour block sets the direction and tone of the teaching for the remaining part of the day.

Another characteristic is that the teacher stays with a group of students from the level or time they enter the program to the time when the students exit the program at grade six. At this time, the teacher would begin another six year cycle with a new group of students at grade one. This would promote a feeling of being in a family unit. Students would not have to go through the process of being socialized into a new classroom each year, since most of the students would be familiar with student-to-student and teacher-to-student relationships, as well teacher expectations for behavior.

The above characteristics of Waldorf Schools offer the administration of the BCN community school the flexibility in timetabling to meet recommended goals and objectives of both the Alberta program of studies and the culturally appropriate community based programming offered by elders or other community resource people.

To date in this paper I have attempted to present a brief perspective on how mainstream education is viewed by a person from a First Nations background; an overview of three locally/band controlled schools, including a brief historical view of BCB/N Community School; and a brief look at two alternative educational models from the dominant society. The following sections will examine Canadian Indian education from a broad perspective to a more narrowly focussed personal educational history.

canadian indian education

Residential/industrial schools for First Nations' children in the three prairie provinces and british columbia began in the early 1900s. Of the different industrial/residential school within the province of alberta, there was one in desmarais known as st. martin's residential school. It was operated by the oblates of mary immaculate (omi) and the sisters of providence.

My maternal grandmother was the first person from my extended family to enter st. martin's. She was ten winters old when she entered the residential school and began her formal schooling. She stayed at the school for a very short while.

My maternal grandfather never attended an industrial or residential or any type of formal school. He was raised and lived as a hunter and trapper. When the economy changed, coinciding with the beginning of a less nomadic lifestyle, he worked at hauling freight between slave lake and wabasca. He was always a good provider for his family right up to the time he died in 1979.

The next people from my family of origin who went to school were my parents. My mother entered school when she was four winters old to replace her eldest sister. Her eldest sister who was sixteen had to leave the residential school and return home to help my grandmother. My grandmother had temporarily lost her sight which she regained temporarily, but eventually lost permanently.

My mother left the st. martin's residential school at age sixteen after staying in grade six for three years. Since education was controlled by indian affairs and the residential schools were operated and administered by missionaries, the missionaries ensured that they maintained high student numbers for funding purposes. When a student reached age sixteen and left the residential school, the administrators made sure they filled the vacancy with another student who was often only four winters old.

My father entered the st. martin's residential school when he was seven winters old. He went through the same process of remaining at the grade six level until he turned sixteen. My father used to say that he had always longed to get higher education but the only way he could have done it was to enter a seminary. He would have had the opportunity to get higher education but he did not want to become a priest.

While my parents were in the st. martin's residential school, they learned how to do many different chores such as house cleaning, sewing, cooking, baking, taking care of animals and tending gardens. Along with these practical skills, they also learned how to read, write and do arithmetic. At the same time they were prohibited from speaking Cree, from speaking to their siblings and other extended family members. Except for the longer holidays celebrating christmas and easter, they stayed in residential school from september to june. The irony in this whole situation is that my parents did not go home, even though their homes were close enough they could have walked to and from the residential school. They could not go home in part because their families were still living off the land, away hunting and trapping. Certain aspects of this lifestyle were maintained until the late 1950s and early 1960s. The trust that had been given to the churches and the government in looking after First Nations' children resulted in the First Nations parents losing their voice in decision-making on school matters. This had occurred because of the relationship that had developed over the years between the First Nations parents and the residential schools which were controlled and operated by the churches and the

*I use 'winters old' because in Cree, the question is asked in terms of the number of winters you have survived.

government.

As noted in the introduction, the goal of government policy for education of First Nations' people was assimilation. It may not have been immediately apparent that the churches and the government were working in concert when it came to educating First Nations' children. However, one of the most powerful means for successfully assimilating First Nations' children was to "remove the children from the influence of their parents" (B. Burnaby, 1980, p. 39).

My father was a good provider. He hauled freight; did carpentry; was a Band Council Member; was a field worker for the Alberta Education Centre with Indian Association of Alberta in edmonton; and an assistant student counsellor for a number of years at mistassiniy school in desmarais. He was working for northland school division #61 at the time when he died in 1975.

From the early 1950s to the late 1960s three of my older brothers, my three younger sisters and one of my younger brothers, attended st. martin's residential school. We were the third generation to attend boarding school. The program of studies was much the same as what my mother and father had experienced. We also learned practical skills but there was greater emphasis on academics especially in the areas of reading, writing and arithmetic. We were still prohibited from speaking Cree, visiting with our siblings or interacting with other extended family members.

first nations education in canada

In 1961, indian affairs signed a series of tuition agreements with provincial school jurisdictions which provided provincial schools with a per pupil tuition for each treaty indian student attending that school; inac wanted out of the business of educating indian students. The funds for First Nations' students were used by the public and separate school systems as a means of acquiring new buildings;

improving or extending old ones; accessing increased funding and instituting new programs for mainstream schools for mainstream student populations. Inac signed such a tuition agreement with the new provincial school division in 1961 on behalf of the First Nations' people in northern alberta.

With the transfer of the federally operated indian residential schools to the provincial governments as public schools, in northern alberta, there was little change in the lack of recognition of the cultural and linguistic needs of the predominantly First Nations' language speaking communities in which they were located. Provincial and federal language policies, in fact, kept the door closed to the First Nations' people by failing to acknowledge that First Nation's children enter school with a First Nation's Language or failing to consider that the first language used in the home environment may have been a First Nation's Language. As First Nations' children, we needed to be taught within learning or teaching environments that were caring and nurturing, where second language teaching methods and techniques were used, or greater flexibility and extra time was allowed within the programs to accommodate the acquisition of a working facility or proficiency with the language of instruction.

Despite the institution of the native education project, within alberta education in the early 1980s, along with a corresponding focus and emphasis on developing second language programming with First Nations people in the language services branch, there was still minimal recognition of our First Nations' historical contribution to society presented from a First Nation's perspective to support our children within the schools under provincial jurisdiction. As First Nations' children we needed to feel appreciated, approved and recognized in our own right, by having our cultural and linguistic heritage included in the existing provincial program of studies. As First Nations' students we had not seen nor felt our cultural and linguistic heritage being given the time nor the attention that other areas of study were; nor

had the knowledge we brought with us to school which served as a vital link to our cultural roots been utilized, framed or presented in a positive manner.

Instead, what happened in the past is that many of our First Nations' children have been identified as having "special needs". In most cases, children who were identified as having "special needs" were stigmatized and further stereotyped as being mentally handicapped to some degree, in part because the high school curriculum was developed to meet the needs of potential college and university students.

Bigstone Cree Band/Nation Students

With the institution of the northland school division in 1961, a new school known as mistassiniy junior high school was opened in desmarais in 1963. Some children who lived in wabasca and desmarais had the option of attending the new school during the day. But there were still some of us who did not have this option for geographic reasons. Students who lived a long distance from mistassiniy school did not have the option of riding a bus to attend day school until 1969. We had to live in the residential school to attend mistassiniy junior high school to complete our junior high schooling until 1970.

Students who wanted to continue on had the option of attending senior high school out of the community. We attended either in grouard, high prairie, grande prairie, or edmonton. Most of us chose grouard to continue our senior high so we could live in a student residence and did not have to board out. Living in a student residence, at least meant that we would be living with students who were from our home community and who spoke Cree, whereas boarding out meant living in a larger community where we hardly knew anyone and lived with families we did not know and where Cree was not spoken.

From 1970 when St. Martin's school was officially closed as a residential school, the classroom portion of the residential school was taken over by Northland School Division #61 until the expansion of Mistassiniy school to include the elementary classes in 1972. Students continued leaving their home community to pursue their senior high school education until 1980 but it did not end there. In 1980 there was further expansion of the school program to include the high school program of studies. Students still leave their home community to continue their secondary and post-secondary schooling to this day. The most prevalent reason that has been stated is that the quality of education being provided at Mistassiniy school is lower quality than what is being offered in other public schools.

The BCN began assuming some control over education of their children beginning in 1976. At that time the BCB/N kindergarten program started. It was based on a belief that assisting the development of a strong, cultural identity along with the required mainstream academic program would further help the Bigstone Cree Band/Nation children achieve school success. While over the intervening seventeen years different Bigstone Cree Band/Nation administrations recognized the need to expand the early childhood education program into a full-fledged primary education program, no such expansion was begun until 1993.

The BCN Community School evolved from a kindergarten (early childhood education) program into a primary school in the 1993-1994 school year. The purpose of starting a primary school program was to bridge the gap between teacher expectations and child socialization; to improve communication between school/community and school/home; and to provide a responsive and congruent educational environment for the Bigstone Cree Band/Nation four and five year olds, who otherwise would have had to leave the BCN school at age six and enter the public school system. Up until that time, our Kindergarten children were bussed to the

BCB/N Kindergarten Program from most of the community and in some cases the travel involved great distances.

Personal Educational History

As a Nehiyaw Iskwew (Cree Woman) who came from humble beginnings; as a member of the community of wabasca-desmarais, and a full member of the Bigstone Cree Band/Nation, my mainstream academic educational experience began at age six in 1959 within a residential school setting. I remained at the st. martin's residential school until I was fifteen winters old. Since, at the time, grade nine was the highest grade level available at the residential school, anyone wanting to go farther than junior high had to relocate either to a larger community such as grouard; to a student residence; or to a boarding home setting.

The student residence in grouard was different from st. martin's in that the students lived in their own rooms with a roommate. This student residence was controlled by the northland school board and the people who operated it were people from the surrounding community. We were not forced to attend church service nor were we prohibited from speaking Cree. We were free to interact with our family members and with other male and female students.

Having experienced different situations of living away from home, my confidence had developed to the point where I felt that I could survive on my own while maintaining a strong link with my family and my home community. My Nehiyaw (Cree) Language and Cultural foundation that formed a core part of me prior to entering an indian residential school in 1959 provided a solid base. With this foundation, I was able to maintain my Cultural, Spiritual Identity and Language throughout my formative years.

There were mixed feelings in my community about the entire residential school experience. The mixed feelings came from the older people who were part of the second generation residential school students. Some people have indicated that they did not have anything negative to say about the experience except that they were unable to go home more often. Some romanticized the residential school experience. Others believe the experience to have been damaging.

The glaring injustices that came with this experience were the lack of exposure to or interaction with and learning from positive parent role models; the prohibition from speaking our own language and interacting with our siblings; a lack of caring and nurturing from our supervisors/caregivers; and other forms of physical, sexual and emotional abuse. In spite of these negatives, the most positive aspect of the experience was the opportunity to develop the self-discipline necessary to continue with our learning or educational journey. The strength that I needed to maintain and stay on the path I had chosen for myself had come partly from this experience.

My maternal and paternal grandmothers had said one thing to me that I will always remember. Their words did not have as profound an effect on me as they did much later. In moments of reflection, listening to different teachers, professors, and Elders in different situations, and hearing my father say the same thing to me when I began my journey away from home, I realized what they said back then has sustained me throughout my personal educational journey. My grandmothers had said to me in Cree, "Nosisim, kaya wihkac wan'kiskisih itiy ohtotiyin." This translates to mean, "Grandchild, never forget where you came from." What my father had said to me was, "Nitanis, kahkiy kiskisih tantiy iyohtohtiyin." The closest translation would be, "My daughter, always remember where you came from." They both said similar things to me but from different perspectives: my grandmothers realized that a people can consciously deny their heritage or try to forget where they came from,

whereas my father probably realized that I had deep cultural pride in who I was and that I would always remember where I came from.

My educational experience, personal growth and development has helped me arrive at the point where I have come to know and appreciate myself. It has brought me to a realization that my search for knowledge and positive affirmation of who I am has led me to people with great wisdom. All of these people have played a role in helping me arrive at the point in my life where I am committed to providing learning/teaching experiences that help young learners experience similar realizations and enjoyment. The people with great wisdom who have been part of my path, who have had a profound effect on my life have been Elders, spiritual leaders, teachers/parents and advisors. Now I want the same for our children and grandchildren of the Bigstone Cree Nation.

My journey between high school and my return to my home community covered a period of 22 years between 1970 to 1992. In december 1992, I had returned to my home community of wabasca -desmarais to work with BCN. Prior to 1993 I had been employed within different settings off reserve, outside BCN but always in the field of education.

In much the same way as we had to leave wabasca to continue with our secondary training, we had to leave again to acquire further training at the post secondary level. I left wabasca for the second time in 1970 to continue training at a different level. I attended a six week teacher-aide training program with northland school division #61 in grouard in order to obtain a position as a teacher assistant at the mistassiniy elementary school located in desmarais. In 1971, I left wabasca for the third time to begin a six month training program in grouard. The education technician program was for First Nations' adults who had a grade nine education or better and who were willing to train as adult instructors. This program had been sponsored through the alberta department of advanced education. In january 1972, I

began working as an education technician with alberta vocational centre in grouard. I remained there until june 1974. I began my university training at the university of alberta in september, 1974. I graduated from the university of alberta in 1980 with a B. Ed. I was employed with the edmonton public school system #7 in 1980 to 1984 and the high prairie school division #48 between 1984 to 1988. I began a diploma program with the university of lethbridge in 1989 and entered the masters program in the fall of 1990.

My role within the BCN Community School began in 1993 when I assumed a position as teacher/principal. I remained as teacher/principal for two years. This position provided me with the rewarding experience of being involved directly in a feasibility study for a new school. In 1995, I became a full-time principal and my responsibilities included involvement in the design phase for the BCN Community School; the development of the school program; and assisting the BCN Education Authority and the school committee of Elders with the identification of a curriculum development process for the new school. Being a survivor of the mainstream educational system has provided me with many insights, experiences and tools useful in designing a program to educate our children, to help them integrate whatever they may find useful in maintaining a healthier lifestyle and keeping an open mind towards life in general. I refer to myself as a survivor, and what I mean is I view myself as a person who has managed to live through harsh, uncaring, culturally insensitive and non-nurturing environments.

Returning to my family of origin has helped me continue with my learning/growing or healing* journey. There are great needs as indicated by the

*In this paper learning/growing or healing are synonymous. It is my view that as we grow, learn more about ourselves and accept ourselves, the more we move towards healing ourselves.

physically, emotionally and psychologically unhealthy state of the wabasca-desmarais community. This is evident in our young children who come from home settings where different forms of abuse still exist.

These abuses are symptomatic of the colonization process that has affected at least seven generations of Northern Cree people since the first contact with people of european stock. In other words, we are carrying in our individual and collective memories multi-generational layers of institutionalized abuse of which we are not aware. This multiple grief almost feels genetically encoded. Awareness and healing will come as we begin examining the deeper implications of what it means to be colonized and to be culturally and linguistically oppressed.

My own learning/growing or healing journey involves helping members of my family of origin and community out of denial; to acknowledge and begin moving towards understanding the problems associated with the way the cycle of oppression carries on among our people; to believe that our cultural heritage and language have a place in mainstream society; to begin acknowledging any abuses that we may have sustained within our family or within our community and to carry on with our lives from there.

rationale for the study

The purpose of this study is to collect and document BCN community recommendations towards developing a curriculum and program framework for the kindergarten to grade three community school. We administered a questionnaire to select segments of the wabasca-desmarais community: in-school children, parents and elders.

Theoretical assumptions underlying current curriculum practices were examined to gain insight into the nature of difficulties that our First Nations' children experience in the present educational system. Charleston (1988) cites these difficulties in the study Tradition and Education: Towards a Vision of Our Future A Declaration of First Nations Jurisdiction Over Education :

We know from experience that our students (children) did not become failures because of an inability to learn. The fact of the matter is that provincial schools were not designed to meet the needs of Indian (First Nations) students (children). Some reasons that can be identified are: conflict of cultural values; irrelevant curriculum; negative self-image; insecurity of teachers working in cross-cultural curriculum; and the lack of credibility of administrators to accommodate the needs of the Indian (First Nations) community. (p. 12).

We would like to present two possible systemic barriers to the BCB/N developing and implementing a culturally and linguistically appropriate educational program for our children. The examination of systemic barriers was done so as to help the community people who are involved in the development process experience minimal frustration and encounter fewer barriers towards integrating resources available through the federal and provincial governments.

One possible barrier is the lack of political mechanisms that would encourage positive working relationships among the different levels of government: federal, provincial, municipal and First Nation governments.

Another barrier is the requirement to work through a federal department that is maintaining itself as a bureaucracy and is maintaining control in setting the direction for Indian self-government. It is becoming apparent that we as First Nations' people can do as good or better in governing ourselves. As First Nations' people we have come of age to move towards determining our own destiny.

As defined in the Alberta School Act (1988, p. 14) in Part 2 Schools section 16(1) Bigstone Cree Band is setting up their own school as an alternative program whereby Bigstone Cree Nation Community School would be:

- (a) emphasizing a particular language, culture and subject matter and
- (b) using a particular teaching philosophy.

In forwarding the notion of developing our school as an alternative school, the following section will help identify the direction and process that had been proposed by our community Elders, visionaries and other members of the Bigstone Cree Band/Nation and what is involved when First Nations' people begin discussing "taking over their own education".

As defined in the Declaration of First Nations Jurisdiction Over Education (1988) which came out as the final document from the Aboriginal First Nations National Study in 1985, Bigstone Cree Band/Nation would be focussing on:

the well being of the students. First Nations education is a holistic approach that prepares First Nations students for total living. As with traditional education, contemporary or modern First Nations education incorporates a deep respect for the natural world with the physical, moral, spiritual, intellectual, and survival skills development of the individual. Education for First Nations children develops qualities and values such as respect for Elders and cultural tradition, modesty, leadership, generosity, resourcefulness, integrity, wisdom, courage, compassion for others, and living harmoniously with the environment. Education for today's First Nations children is based on five basic philosophical elements:

- **Preservation of Languages and Culture:** an integral part of the school curriculum to nurture students' cultural identity and language.
- **Values:** include instruction in the values held in esteem by First Nation communities and families so that education is clearly an extension of the culture and the instruction provided by the family. Help the children develop a strong sense of pride and respect for their community, culture and family.

- **Parental and Community Participation:** the education process actively involves the parents in determining goals for the education program, managing the education program, and being actively involved in classroom or school activities.
- **Preparation for Total Living:** to learn at all levels and stages of education including vocational, academic, professional and survival skills to function effectively in all societies. This includes special education, gifted and talented education, pre-school education, and undergraduate and graduate level university education.
- **Local Jurisdiction:** First Nation council or their delegated education authority have jurisdiction over education policies, management methods and approaches, curriculum standards and program quality, delivery of services and, above all, determining the total education resource requirements, including capital and operational requirements. (p. 6)

Different approaches/alternatives were explored in setting up a curriculum and program framework for the Bigstone Cree Nation but the preceding quote exemplifies the type of educational philosophical statements that were being shared by the BCB/N Elders when they began discussing a curriculum and program framework for the BCB/N Community School. A collaborative-cooperative approach was used in developing the framework and this was partly done through the administering of a community questionnaire to select segments of wabasca-desmarais.

wabasca-desmarais questionnaire sample

The questionnaire sample represents a cross-section of the community people. The different sample clusters are identified as follows:

- in-school children in grade 7 to 12. This group of young people were included because they would still have a fresh perspective on their in-school experience from playschool to grade six. They would have an easier task of recollecting their

educational experiences and providing opinions on what they would have liked to have had included as part of their earlier schooling;

- young adult community members and parents between the ages of 18 to 30. This group was included because they represent a good portion of the community that could be classified as parents with school age children. This group would have children who are eligible to attend school on the reserve; and
- community Elders and elder parents. The older adults of the community were included because of their wealth of information, their years of experience and their views on the maintenance of our First Nations' languages and cultural heritage. Their role, in general, in either First Nations or mainstream communities has had positive influence on social change, especially in changing attitudes.

It was expected this sampling would help determine community educational needs and what should make-up the Kindergarten to Grade Three reserve community school for the Bigstone Cree Band/Nation. This study was conducted in this fashion since the community people were perceived as necessary participants and as co-developers in developing a BCB/N Kindergarten - Grade Three Curriculum and Program Framework and in following a community development principle which says that "healing and development comes from within" (Four Worlds Development Project, 1982). This principle can be applied to different levels to mean development from within as an individual, a family, an organization, a cultural group, a community, or a nation.

It was hoped this project will further assist Bigstone Cree Band/Nation in assigning the necessary funding to begin the operation of a new Kindergarten to Grade Three School. These data were collected when the school was limited to Kindergarten to Grade Three. Since the time of this study, the school has advanced to the Grade Five level with plans to include Grade Six.

BCB/N was administering its own school-on-reserve and it wanted to develop an indigenous school program that:

- (a) was based on BCB/N members' previous educational experiences and corrected the previous educational injustices incurred in those experiences,
- (b) was developed according to Four Worlds Community Development principle (as quoted),
- (c) reflected at least two of five AFN principles: parental involvement and local jurisdictions.

The following chapter describes the Bigstone Cree Band community questionnaire.

chapter three:
Bigstone Cree Band Community Questionnaire

Bigstone Cree Band Community Questionnaire

A community questionnaire titled The Bigstone Cree Band: K - 3 School Community Questionnaire was administered to a group of 136 people. This represents approximately 3.0% of the population of the wabasca-desmarais Bigstone Cree Nation reserve communities based on the Reserve community census of 1993. This study was conducted during the 1992-1993 calendar year with three identifiable community groups. These groups represented different ages and roles within the community of wabasca-desmarais. The three groups are:

- in-school children in grade 7 to 12.
- young adult community members and parents between the ages of 18 to 30.
- community Elders and older parents.

The questions from Part B of the questionnaire provided personal information and presented a clearer picture of the questionnaire participants.

Of 132 respondents there were 70 females and 62 males who responded to the questionnaire. While there had been no conscious effort to try to balance female and male respondents, as it turned out the results indicate that we achieved close to such a balance.

A total of 130 out of 132 participants identified the age range to which they belonged. 95 of the 130 respondents or 73.1% were from the 11 - 17 age range. 17 of the 130 respondents or 13%, formed the next largest age range which is 18 - 25. The bulk of the respondents would be considered to be youth and young adults.

There was a total of 17 older adults between the age ranges of 26 to 65 who participated in the questionnaire. This makes up 13% of the 130 completed questionnaires.

The results indicate that 35 of our participants had grade seven education and 29 had grade nine level education at the time of the questionnaire. None of the respondents had grade twelve education. Three of our 125 respondents to the question had Gr. 12+ education.

There were no responses to the question asking if any of the respondents had ever been in a structured school setting. It would seem from the completed questionnaires that our respondents were fairly well educated. This may be because the bulk of our respondents were junior and senior high school students as indicated in question 3. a. of the personal information section.

The results indicate that 18 of the 132 participants knew of someone who was in university or college learning to teach either young or adult students.

After recording and examining the data that came from the BCB/N: K - 3 Community Questionnaire, it was refreshing to note the people who had responded to the community questionnaire in 1992 and 1993 had fairly strong views on traditional Cree heritage and language. The results from this questionnaire assisted greatly in the development and design of the BCB/N: K to Grade 3 curriculum and program framework which has now evolved into the BCB/N Community School Curriculum and Program Framework presented in chapter five.

People who have been identified as First Nations' community informants were involved so that first hand, accurate information and a brief history of the First Nations schools that have been under local control since the early 1980s could be included. e. g. My mother who was also identified as a community informant assisted with the relaying of our family and community history.

There were several reasons for wanting to know what the community ideas were for designing and developing an educational program that would complement the existing educational system within the community of wabasca-desmarais. However, the two main reasons for implementing the questionnaire were to find out:

the community feelings about the preservation of our Cree language and traditional values; and what the expected level of community or parental involvement would be in the design and development of a program for our First Nations children.

The questions originated from observations that have been made on how the First Nations children were faring within the present educational system. One of the observations was the high drop-out or push-out rate amongst First Nations children. One of the reasons for the high drop-out or push-out rate was that there was little or no positive recognition or acknowledgement of First Nations people in the historical content being taught in local mainstream public schools. At least two generations of First Nations people had not realized or recognized that the mainstream (cultural) education was inconsistent, with or unsuited, to the surroundings and associations of the First Nations community and culture. The first wave of cultural genocide came when the missionaries went about convincing the First Nations people that their spiritual ways were part of devil worship. The second wave came when the residential schools were implemented as part of a governmental policy of assimilation which further fragmented the family, the community and the kinship system which had been in place for generations.

Letters were written and phone calls made to three different organizations or institutions in wabasca. The mistassiniy school principal, the head instructor of the wabasca alberta vocational college and the chief of the Bigstone Cree Band/Nation were sent each a letter requesting permission to administer the questionnaire within their institution or organization. A followup phone call was made to each contact person to confirm their response. The responses were positive and encouraging.

The distribution and implementation of the questionnaire within the public school, under the direction of the school principal, was supervised by the teachers while the students filled out their responses for themselves. Copies of the questionnaire were hand delivered to mistassiniy and returned by mail after the

students had filled them in. The student president, now deceased, of the student union at the wabasca alberta vocational centre helped supervise and implement the questionnaire while the students filled them. The questionnaires had been hand delivered and picked up at the adult training centre. Whenever possible the questionnaires were personally distributed and supervised while people within the general public were completing them. The research activity was done with the cooperation of different individuals and each found it most fulfilling when participants asked for clarification of a question using Cree as the language for understanding.

The following chapter contains an analysis of the results from the BCB Community Questionnaire.

chapter four:
what answers?

analysis of the data

The responses to the questionnaire titled Bigstone Cree Band: K - 3 School are included in this section in their original form so that anyone who chooses to read this paper will see what the results were.

The questionnaire was written in two parts: Part A contained Cultural Education Questions requiring responses based on personal experiences and Part B requested Personal Information from the respondent without having the respondent identify him/herself by name.

Part A Cultural Education Questions.

I. Curriculum and Program Focus:

1. Remember your school experience. Pretend that you are starting school all over again. What would you like to learn?

Category A. Regular School Studies:

Art	89.5	English	47
Physical Education	76.1	Computer Sciences	43.2
Music	71.6	Chemistry	35
Outdoor Education	70.1	Foods & Nutrition	35
Mathematics	69.4	History	34.3
Drama	66.4	Religious Studies	34.3
Writing	62.6	Astronomy	31.3
Social Studies	58.9	Economics	31.3
Dance	58.2	Biology	29.8
Science	53.7	Life Skills	26.1
Reading	52.9	Multi-Media	25.3
Industrial Education	49.2	Physics	25.3
French	47	Geography	20.8
Health/Medicine	47		

Other:

Law 1,

Cree Culture and Traditional background 1

Health and Safe Sex 1,

The results from Part A tell us that out of the 132 respondents, approximately 66.3% would have liked much the same type of programming available at present in the public schools, but enhanced. Ever since First Nations people have begun discussing education for our children, emphasis has always been placed on the importance of learning about both the mainstream society and our own society. Traditionally more importance was placed on retaining our own identity and being able to contribute to both societies than on just being educated to become a contributing member of mainstream society.

It is interesting to note that english is not part of the preferred choices. The manner in which the results came out indicates that english could still be taught and presented as separate strands of reading and writing. The results also indicate that the respondents would have enjoyed having music, dance, drama and outdoor

education as part of the regular school studies if they were to go through their educational experience again.

Under the category "Other" at least three people have identified three areas of study that could be included as part of the regular studies program and one of the areas was Cree Culture and Traditional background. Adding Cree Culture and Traditional background to the regular studies program would enhance the teaching/learning process.

These results confirm the community's belief in the need to provide for and meet mainstream educational requirements as part of the preparation for total living as outlined in the five basic philosophical elements in education for today's First Nations children (Charleston, 1988).

I. Curriculum and Program Focus:

1. Remember your school experience. Pretend that you are starting school all over again. What would you like to learn?

Category B. Aboriginal/Cree Studies:

Aboriginal/Cree Art	84.3	Aboriginal/Cree History	50.7
Aboriginal/Cree Crafts	75.3	Aboriginal/ Cree Food	50
Aboriginal/Cree Language	71.6	Cree Writing	50
Cree Legends/Storytelling	71.6	Aboriginal/Cree Dress	47
Cree Hunting	67.1	Cree Syllabics	38.8
Aboriginal/ Cree Games	65.6	Cree Weather Forecasting	38.8
Cree Reading/Speaking	61.9	Cree Spirituality/Religion	36.5
Aboriginal/Cree Medicine	61.9	Human Growth & Dev.	33.5
Cree Trapping	58.9	Cree Herbology	24.6
Aboriginal Canadian Dances	56.7	Aboriginal/Cree Astronomy	18.6
Aboriginal/Cree Music	54.4		
Other:			
Cree Dance	1	Sex-The Indian Way	1
Ceremonies, Sweetgrass, pipe, sweatlodges	1		

The results indicate that the people who responded to this question would have taken courses in 14 of the 21 categories presented. If 50 percent was taken as the deciding point on whether an area of study would be included in the curriculum and program framework for the BCB K4 to Grade Three Community School then the results indicate that we would be able to pick from 14 different areas of Aboriginal/Cree studies. There are three other areas that were highlighted by at least three respondents but these could have been included in categories that were presented as part of the responses.

The results support and confirm the BCB/N people's desire to nurture and preserve the cultural identity and language of their Cree children.

The next section provides results as interesting as those in the previous question.

II. School Personnel and Resource People:

2. Who do you think could teach children in school? Place a check mark (✓) beside each of the people you think could teach the children in school.

Teachers	76.1	Older students	41
Elders	75.3	Professionals (doctors, lawyers, etc.)	39.5
Parents	55.9	Trades people (carpenter, mechanic)	31.3
Community people	51.4	people teaching kids about culture	2.2
Craftspeople	47		
Other:			
Minister or priest	1	students	1
anyone who has ability to do so	1	local school board members-gr. 9-12	1
to talk to elementary students as many as possible		1	

This set of results support the thoughts and ideas that have been discussed by different people such as parents, educators, Elders, and visionaries who have been involved in First Nations education and have advocated the inclusion and involvement of the community in the educational process. These results also support AFN's call for parental and community participation that was also emphasized in the five basic philosophical elements for the educating of First Nations children of today (Charleston, 1988). The one choice, "Community people" could include all the categories that followed it in preference.

III. Cree - Language of Instruction or Course of Study?:

3.a. Cree should be used as the language of instruction? Place a check mark (✓) beside your choice.

Yes	95/134 = 70.9%	No	39/134 = 29.1%
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If you answered 'No' to 3. a., please go on to question 4. a.

If you answered 'Yes' to 3. a., please go on to 3. b. and 3. c.

In this section, 70.9% of 132 respondents indicated that Cree should be used as the language of instruction. Again this supports one of the AFN document's five basic philosophical elements upon which First Nations education should be based: the preservation of Languages and Culture. The preservation of Languages and Culture is identified as an integral part of the school curriculum to nurture students' identity and language. This is further supported by Burnaby (1980) in Languages and Their Roles in Educating Native Children, where she notes an identifiable trend towards Native/Aboriginal languages loss. This is a concern that has also been expressed by our Elders. On the flip side there has been some concern expressed by other community members about having Cree as the language of instruction and even being taught as a course of study. These people believe Cree should be taught and used at home.

The following question indicates the grade or level that Cree should begin being used as the language of instruction.

b. Cree should be used as the language of instruction beginning at grade? (Circle the grade you think teachers should begin using Cree as the language of instruction.)

K4	K5	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	n =
47	08	18	05	08	04	05	04	03	01	--	--	01	01	= 104/134
45%		17.3%												= 77.6%

The number of participants who responded to the question has been recorded as 104 out of 132, which makes it a 77.6% return. 47 of the 104 or 45.1% of the respondents indicated that Cree should begin being used as the language of instruction at the k4 or playschool level. The next highest response for beginning to use Cree as the language of instruction is 18 out of 104, or 17.3%, for grade one.

The results from the following question gives some indication as to how much time could be devoted to teaching with Cree as the language of instruction.

c. What amount of daily instructional time should be used with Cree as the language of instruction? Place a check mark (✓) in the box(es) of your choice.

Gr.
level | Number of Hours for Cree to be used as the language of instruction

	.5 hr.	1 hr.	1.5 hr.	2 hr.	2.5 hr.	3 hr.	3.5 hr.	4 hr.	4.5hr	5 hr.	5.5 hr.	6 hr.	6.5 hr.	7 hr.
K4-5	20	35	08	04	01	04	05	03	0	0	0	02	04	04
Gr. 1	07	34	14	08	02	05	04	01	02	0	01	04	04	01
Gr. 2	05	19	26	12	01	06	04	02	01	01	04	02	02	01
Gr. 3	07	20	18	15	03	06	06	0	03	03	01	01	02	01
Gr. 4	10	13	12	17	07	06	03	06	02	05	0	0	02	01
Gr. 5	06	15	13	15	03	10	06	05	05	01	02	0	02	01
Gr. 6	04	13	13	15	05	11	07	05	0	04	02	02	02	01
Gr. 7	05	12	10	16	10	07	05	07	02	01	0	01	02	03
Gr. 8	05	08	09	13	11	13	05	06	03	03	0	0	03	02
Gr. 9	05	10	04	13	13	13	06	03	01	04	04	0	02	04
Gr. 10	06	14	02	11	10	09	07	05	03	01	02	04	02	04
Gr. 11	09	12	03	09	08	08	07	05	01	02	01	03	05	05
Gr. 12	10	13	01	08	05	12	03	04	03	04	02	0	05	09

As indicated by the results on the number of hours for Cree to be used as the language of instruction, the highest responses varied from a low of 12% to a high of 35% and the number of hours varied from one to three hours. Most respondents chose two hours for grades four to seven as their first choice for Cree to be used as the language of instruction. For grades k-5, one, three, and ten to twelve, one hour was the most frequent choice for the number of hours for Cree to be used as the language of instruction. For grade two, one and one half hours was the most frequently selected time block.

The most interesting point to note in these results is that the respondents seemed to favour having longer hours in the use of Cree as the language of instruction for grades eight and nine.

What this says is, if we are going to use Cree as the language of instruction then we should start at the playschool, kindergarten and grade with one hour intervals. In following the progression of increased hours, grade two and three could have one and one half hours; grades four to nine could be taught for two hours; and grades ten to twelve could be taught for one hour using Cree as the language of instruction.

The results indicate an inversion of what is expected in implementing a standard provincial immersion program.

The results from the following question gives some indication of the degree of importance the community respondents place on learning Cree as a course of study. The section also provides a response to the grade level in which teaching Cree as a course of study could begin.

4. a. Cree should be learned as a course of study.

Yes	113/132 = 85.6%	No	22/132 = 16.6%
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If you answered 'No' to 4. a, please go on to question 5.

If you answered 'Yes' to 4. a, please go on to 4. b, 4. c and 4. d.

In this section, 113 out of 132 respondents or 85.6% indicated that Cree should be learned as a course of study. The following question asks the participants to indicate the grade level that the students should begin learning Cree as a course of study.

4. b. Students should begin learning Cree as a course of study in grade (Circle the grade you think students should start learning Cree as a course of study.):

The number of responses for each of the grade levels was recorded in the following grid:

K4	K5	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12		%
29	07	36	05	07	05	10	04	05	--	02	02	--	01	113/132	85.6

The number of participants who responded to the question was recorded as 113 out of 132, which makes it an 85.6% return. 36 of the 113 respondents think that Cree should be learned as a course of study starting at the grade one level. The next highest response is that 29 of the 113 respondents think that Cree should be learned as a course of study starting at k4.

It is interesting to note that when the results from grade one and k4 or playschool are combined, the bulk of the responses are centered on the earliest

levels of the primary school. The combining of the results indicates that 65 of the 113 or 57.5% of the respondents think that it is important to begin learning Cree as a course of study at the early primary level.

This also means that if the school did not have a playschool or kindergarten program, Cree as a course of study could start at the grade one level.

The following table suggests the number of times per week Cree be taught as a course of study.

c. How many times, during the school week, should Cree Language be taught as a course of study? Place a check mark (✓) beside your choice.

1 x week = 05	2x week = 28	3 x week = 42	Every day = 35	110/134
4.5%	25.5%	38.2%	31.8%	82%

As indicated by the results, 42 of the 110 respondents or 38.2% chose three times a week as the number of times that Cree Language should be taught as a course of study. The next highest response indicates that 35 of the 110 respondents or 31.8% chose every day as the number of times that Cree should be taught as a course of study.

Certainly the minimum of three times per week for Cree to be taught as a course of study is standard for the present Cree as a second language programs within the provincial public schools and could be implemented in the BCB/N Community School.

- d. What do you think should be the minimum number of minutes per class period for the teaching of Cree Language as a course of study? Place a check mark (/) beside your choice.

minutes	30 = 18	35 = 02	40 = 23	45 = 21	50 = 07	55 = 01	60 = 42	114/134
%	15.8	1.8	20.2	18.4	6.1	0.9	36.8	85

Other: Elementary 30 minutes. & Jr. / Sr. 40 minutes

The responses to question d. show that the preferred minimum number of minutes per class period for the teaching of Cree Language as a course of study is sixty minutes. The second choice is forty minute periods.

There was a written suggestion for having 30 minute periods for elementary Cree classes and 40 minutes class periods for the junior and senior high Cree classes.

The questionnaire invited the participants to make suggestions beyond the grade three level. Their responses allowed us to see what the participants would have liked to have experienced as part of their own secondary education. These responses will greatly assist the development of a curriculum and program framework beyond division 1, if we were to have a full elementary and junior high school program.

A section identified as section IV with general questions was included in the questionnaire. This section was included so that the respondents would have the additional opportunity of sharing further thoughts or ideas about where or when Cree should be learned and who should teach it. Yet another question asked for further thoughts on support services, programs or staff that would provide a more 'fulfilling' educational experience, where fulfilling is defined in terms of positive growth in the learner's self-esteem (self-acceptance) and enhanced pride for Cree Culture and Language. According to my review of the questionnaires, it would seem that the respondents were unwilling to respond to the questions in section IV which

required written responses. There were two questions that made up section IV of the questionnaire but there were no responses to either question.

Questions requesting personal or demographic information were included so that we might have a picture of the respondents who participated in completing the questionnaire.

There were 136 returned questionnaires but the number of completed questionnaires was 132. Four of the questionnaires were incomplete. Some questions were overlooked or were left deliberately unanswered for unknown reasons. The actual number of completed questionnaires was set at 132 in calculating the results for some questions.

Some of the recorded results include all the questionnaires that had responses even from the ones that were incomplete.

chapter five:
results-recommendations and suggestions

federal jurisdiction

Since the Bigstone Cree Band/Nation Community School will be situated on an indian reserve, the building of the school and the funding will be governed by the federal department known as inac through their funding services department. No doubt that they will also make sure that all provisions of the indian act are followed and implemented where ever possible.

It is stated in the indian act (1985) under schools section 114. (2) that "the minister may in accordance with the act establish, operate and maintain schools for indian children." It is further stated that "the minister may provide for and make regulations with respect to standards for buildings, equipment, teaching, education, inspection and discipline in connection with schools" (indian act, 1985, p. 56).

The process of designing and developing the BCB/N: K - 3 Curriculum and Program Framework evolved from many discussions with people from different walks of life and the observations that I have made while working within different public school settings since my graduation from university of alberta with a bachelor of education in 1981.

What has greatly assisted the completion of this project paper was being involved in the development and design of the BCN Community School in the intervening years between 1992 and 1996. Information from program development and design meetings which included and involved BCB/N Education committee, inac, an independent consultant, BCB/N Administration, BCB/N Education Authority personnel, an architect, and other contractors all contributed to the design of the BCB/N: K - 3 Curriculum and Program Framework.

The whole process that evolved from the development and design activity for the BCB/N Community School was unique in that the design for the school came from the people who were involved and, in essence, they directed the process. This

process involved mutual respect between the client who made up the committee and the architect, together with openness in expressing wants, needs, desires and aspirations towards designing a school building that would reflect the identity of the community.

provincial jurisdiction

To ensure that it is an accredited institution and recognized by alberta education, the school will be registered with the provincial educational system as a school with a program of studies approved by alberta education. In addition, we will apply for a school code and education authority number necessary for the school to meet the requirements as outlined in the provincial guide to education.

Certificated teachers will be hired for all grade levels, while the early childhood services program will be implemented by instructors with early childhood diplomas. People from our community of wabasca-desmarais, who speak Cree and who hold ecs diplomas will be the preferred personnel to implement the program for our children at the BCN Community School.

Evaluation and inspection of the BCB/N community school personnel will include a yearly evaluation of all staff for a period of three years. After completing a three-year employment period, an employee attains permanent employee status. Either the nearby school board, the education department personnel within inac, the province of alberta's department of education or our own qualified personnel will be invited to conduct the evaluations or inspections.

In meeting local, provincial and federal health, safety codes and building standards, all necessary evaluations and inspections of the school building will also be conducted on a yearly basis.

In order to utilize the human resources that present themselves through the cultural background of the students, the teachers or educators of the BCB/N School will be provided an additive orientation to students' culture and language such that they can be shared in the classroom. The school staff will be expected to collaborate with community resource personnel so that they might better facilitate the learning/teaching for the students with different cultural, spiritual, and linguistic traditions. They will be expected to have a willingness to permit active use of written and oral language by students so that they can develop their literacy and other language skills in the process of sharing their experiences with peers and adults. Learning/teaching will be viewed as an active process that is enhanced through interaction (Cummins, 1988).

Including our community, families, parents and young people in the planning and developmental process; in implementing relevant educational programs and experiences; in providing assistance to setting up relevant training programs for teachers; and in acknowledging our First Nations' educational philosophy will be excellent points of departure in designing, developing and implementing culturally and linguistically appropriate programming.

Assurances will be given and suitable mechanisms will be put in place that will communicate to our community people that they are an important stakeholder group and an integral part of a developmental process which calls on them to become active participants in the development of a BCB/N: K4 to Grade Three school.

Our children's educational experience will be made relevant by having our community people:

- a) feel a sense of ownership towards our school and our program(s) that will be offered in the Bigstone Cree Band/Nation: K to Grade Three Community School;
- b) display a level of personal commitment in ensuring that our children are provided with a caring, nurturing teaching/learning environment;

- c) help implement culturally and linguistically appropriate school programming;
- d) help our children become confident, competent, contributing members of our home community and mainstream society; and
- e) help cultivate and maintain a strong cultural-linguistic identity as Bigstone Cree Band/Nations' people.

Having an empathetic sense for and knowing the history of education of First Nations people underscores the need to begin developing and maintaining our own schools for our people. The call for greater community involvement and the institution of community-controlled schools within the provincial public and separate school systems will further assist the process of setting up culturally appropriate curriculum and implementing site-based managed programs for our BCB/N-Community School in wabasca-desmarais.

curriculum and program framework: k - grade 3

The program framework is eclectic in nature in that there is no requirement to implement any program in particular or in totality. Rather we will pick and chose particular characteristics from different programs that promote a "friendly" type of program that will meet the educational needs of our First Nation's children in wabasca-desmarais.

As evidenced by the different Band controlled schools that have been in operation since the early 1980s, the First Nations people have operated and administered their school programs with limited success within the control of inac. But, as the political climate changes and as the relationship between the federal government and the First Nations grows in respect and recognition of the ability of our First Nations leadership's ability to direct change with our own people, the result will be that the Band controlled schools will change and evolve towards meeting the

community, family and children's needs of our First Nations' people by slowly taking control of programming and making it our own.

In developing a program for the Bigstone Cree Band/Nation Community School for Kindergarten to Grade Three, BCN is committed to following the provincial guide to education and program of studies to meet the provincial department of education requirements so that our school's program will be recognized as a certified and mandated one. However, the results from the BCB/N: K - Three questionnaire also suggest that culturally and linguistically appropriate information and knowledge needs to be integrated and accommodated in all subject areas of the provincial program of studies.

Allowing greater flexibility in facilitating the learning/teaching process that advocates the movement of teaching/learning from the familiar to the unfamiliar and by allowing greater movement in and out of the school and into the community should further enhance the core academic program making it more relevant.

Based in part on the results of this study, the BCN proposes that the core academic program for the Bigstone Cree Band/Nation Community School will consist of the following courses with their corresponding cultural and linguistic enhancement:

core academic and enhancement program

1. Language Arts

Language arts may be viewed as the basic foundation for any school program, wherein following a holistic approach all curricular areas that are identified as curricular areas could be integrated with language arts. When other core curricular areas are integrated with language arts, they can provide the necessary content to facilitate enhanced language learning and development. The holistic approach is an

empowering pedagogical approach that is part of the interactionist - reciprocal educational model.

The learning-teaching process for language arts involves reading for information from written text; listening for information from oral discourses; viewing for the purpose of generalizing, differentiating, recognizing, remembering, understanding and integrating visual cues; writing or imprinting information as part of the learning/teaching enterprise or for pleasure.

Language arts teaching will employ and utilize different methods for enriching the learning experience. For example, art-drawing, printmaking, painting, sculpting, music-singing, drama-movement, improvisation, role playing, and miming will be used in extending the teaching/learning process and using local examples in making the instruction more relevant.

These and many different methods will be utilized in day-to-day activities to meet the goals of education with a conscious inclusion of information and activities that will necessitate the move from inside the school and classrooms and out into the community, into the environment, into the homes of students and other resource people.

Within the proposed holistic model, language arts could include all the study areas that have been identified by our questionnaire respondents as their choices if they were to re-live their educational experience, such as Aboriginal/Cree Language, Cree Writing, Cree Legends, Storytelling including humour, Cree Reading, Speaking, and Aboriginal/Cree History are some of those areas of interest. The transferring and learning of traditional aboriginal knowledge will be done through the use of Cree, following an immersion approach.

In ensuring that the teaching/learning process is made more relevant, First Nations' values and examples have to be used in all instruction. Teachers have to

show our children how they apply such knowledge to whatever subject they are studying and in their daily lives.

2. Mathematics

Mathematics may be viewed as a curriculum area that is content specific in that one learns to define different types of numbers; to work with numbers; and to understand the different processes involved in calculating numbers written down as number stories or word problems. Even in mathematics there is a need to learn to read and comprehend specific information.

To make mathematics more culturally relevant, we propose that an historical view on the use of numbers by First Nations people before going into institutionalized or formalized school settings be presented; that traditional games involving the use of numbers be used; that Cree numbers be taught and learned; that number stories or word problems be translated into Cree; that the use of such things as non-standard units of measure in teepee-making and the ways in which degrees of change in daylight hours are measured, for example, are used and that numbers which are associated with special meanings are identified. Such culturally specific information will be included as a way of enhancing the regular study area of mathematics.

3. Science

Science may also be viewed as being content specific to a degree and again the main skills that are needed to learn and understand the content identified as science are reading for understanding; becoming discerning listeners and developing as critical thinkers.

We propose to enhance the core curricular area of science with such traditional knowledge such as: weather predicting or forecasting using

environmental indicators (e. g. turning of leaves, how high above the water-line the beavers have built their lodges; sundogs); knowledge of traditional plants (e.g. identifying, gathering and harvesting trees, berries, poisonous or non-poisonous plants, plants that grow in either dry or wet land or in and underwater). The reasons for studying, learning and being acquainted with our environment is to become aware of what we can use for everyday life such as medicinal remedies, cooking and personal survival within our physical environment. Cultural processes that impact gathering and harvesting of plants will be included as a vital part of interacting with our physical environment.

Outdoor education will be an offshoot from and support for all of the core curricular areas. For example, the study of trees and their uses will be an excellent starting point for study units on teepee making, hide tanning or snow shoe making. The students will be able to tell the trees from the forest.

The teacher/learner will facilitate the process of studying and naming trees, aided by a community resource person and beginning from a First Nations historical, linguistic and cultural perspective. The cooperative and collaborative teaching with the community resource person will achieve many objectives in meeting core curricular and program enhancement requirements.

4. Social Studies

Social studies may be content specific to the degree that it will meet the identified goals and objectives for specified topic areas in helping learners develop inquiry skills, become critical thinkers and make value judgements. Since Social Studies content draws from a broad knowledge or information base (e.g. history, geography, economics, other social sciences, the behavioural sciences and the humanities), the enhanced program will help the students in acquiring basic skills, knowledge and positive attitudes drawn from the Cree Language and Culture that

they need to be responsible citizens and contributing members of their home community first, before assuming the challenge of becoming a contributing member of the greater society and then a global citizen.

A responsible citizen utilizes the knowledge or information, skills and attitudes relayed through the family, community and the school. Further to being a responsible citizen, learners need to stay in touch with their past as well as the present to be well prepared for the future.

We propose to enhance this area of study by having children involved in direct experience within a particular learning/teaching context or by engaging them in simulated learning/teaching contexts which encourage physical, moral, spiritual, intellectual, and survival skill development within culturally specific contexts. The knowledge or information gained through the direct or simulated teaching/learning contexts will promote the ideal of the learner as a self-motivated, self-directed problem solver and decision maker, who is developing a sense of self-worth, self-acceptance, and confidence in his/her ability to participate in a changing world.

As indicated in the Declaration of First Nations Jurisdiction Over Education Charleston, 1988, learning/teaching contexts which encourage physical, moral, spiritual, intellectual, and survival skill development will be designed for each core academic study area and for the following study areas that have not been identified as part of core academic study subjects:

physical education:	Physical, Moral, Spiritual, Intellectual and Survival
health:	Physical, Moral, Spiritual, Intellectual and Survival
music:	Physical, Moral, Spiritual, Intellectual and Survival
art:	Physical, Moral, Spiritual, Intellectual and Survival
drama:	Physical, Moral, Spiritual, Intellectual and Survival

The previously mentioned study areas will be used to supplement and support the core academic study areas. In this way the subject areas required by Alberta education will be designed and implemented in a manner that the interests and experiences of the student/learner play a prominent role in the teaching/learning enterprise. Such a structure will also further the process of developing linguistic and culturally enhanced programming.

school staff

The following section provides a picture of the personnel that will be required in implementing the program that is suggested in the BCB/N: K-3 Curriculum and Program Framework. While the writing for this project began in 1992 the BCB/N Community School became a reality in September 1993 as a Play School to grade two program. The BCB/N Community School began growing very quickly after 1993 as it assumed two more grade levels in September 1994. The school had grown to include grades three and four. We expanded to include grade five in September 1995 and included a grade six classroom in September 1996.

The BCB/N-Community School had started with six staff members in September of 1993. Of the six staff members five were Cree speakers. There were twenty-three people on staff in September of 1995. Of the twenty-three people we had:

- six certified teachers with bachelor of education degrees - one of the six had a two year diploma in social work (Cree speaking), two others with one-year graduate diplomas (Cree speaking), and another almost completed their masters in education (Cree speaking) Three of the six certificated teachers were Cree speakers;
- one person with a one year diploma in social work (Cree speaking);
- one with three years towards a bachelor of arts (Cree speaking);

- one with a two-year certificate in business administration (Cree speaking);
- four with early childhood services diplomas (ecs) (Cree speaking);

The rest of the staff were non-certified but have various types of training and levels of experience (all Cree speakers).

On the issue of whether to develop a Cree Immersion Program or a Cree Bi-Lingual/Bi-Cultural Program, results from the questionnaire suggest that designing a Cree Bi-Lingual/Bi-Cultural Program may be the way to go. The results for using Cree as the language of instruction indicate the inverse of what a standard provincial immersion program would require in terms of time spent on using Cree as the language of instruction.

The one response to the question that asked where or when Cree should be learned and who should teach it, stated that Cree should be taught in a classroom and by someone who finished school. This seems to be a prevalent or common reaction from people who view education as a process that only takes place within a structure with four walls, namely a school.

What the results might be suggesting is that since the school personnel would consist mainly of First Nations people, the daily formal and informal use of Cree within the school setting would be enough to support its development, maintenance and retention, since the contrasting view of some community elders and people is that Cree should be taught at home. However, if the goal is to promote and develop pride within our First Nations children to speak Cree then the teaching of Cree as a course of study every day of the week would be preferable as indicated by 35 of the 110 or 31.8% of the respondents. Would having mainly Cree speaking personnel provide enough support on an informal basis in promoting and maintaining our children's first language?

support services

In-servicing, ongoing personal and professional development, and further training in the areas of interest have formed an essential part of the need for continued personal and professional growth and development. In maintaining program focus and addressing the issues of program continuity and consistency, the BCB/N-Community School staff were involved in planning and instructional meetings with a Cultural Program Coordinator and Cree Language Instructor. All the staff members of the BCB/N-Community School attended the meetings including the cooks, the school custodian and the maintenance person, whenever the need arose.

Orientation and ongoing inservicing of teachers occurred at least every three months with specific tasks and activities assigned for the inservice. All members of the school staff were encouraged to participate in regional conferences relevant to meeting our needs as a locally controlled band school, such as the Treaty Six Education Conferences. The BCN-Community School staff were encouraged to remain engaged in professional development activities. Examples of the type of professional development that had been taking place include Cree Language learning, community seminars and school visitations. Two of the certified teachers signed up for night classes to learn Cree at the local Alberta vocational college; one of the ECS instructors visited a kindergarten program at another band controlled school for comparison purposes; a teacher/program assistant attended summer school to do a Cree Language Course; both the school counsellor/home-school liaison worker and school secretary took a number of one-day seminars offered by other community and outside support agencies; and the total school staff attended regional education conferences organized by another locally controlled school district.

In the questionnaire there was one question that asked the respondents if they knew of people who had attended college or university and the purpose of this question was to begin an inventory of trained or certified resource people who could

be invited to work with the BCB/N: K to Grade Three Community School. The results indicated that we do not have that many people who have gone on for post-secondary training in education. It will be difficult to fill positions with people who are from the community if we have a very small percentage to choose from. Also, in using community people as helpers, it is difficult to decide if resource materials should be located within the classroom setting or at the community resource person's home setting. On the question of electronic technology, we see the need to have computers in the classroom to build student confidence in interacting with technology; in setting up an internal network for the school and the whole BCN organization and having the capability to tie in with SchoolNet and InterNet.

Following is a listing of all our support personnel and corresponding areas of responsibility as of June 1997:

1. Para-Professionals: There were four full time equivalent teacher/program aides who were assigned to work half time with the playschool, kindergarten and grade one to grade five instructors and teachers. Para-professional support staff are encouraged to play a greater role in the instructional process. They may be assigned to an individual student or a small group and they may be asked to lead a particular activity.
2. Maintenance and Custodial: There was a shared maintenance person between the Education Authority and the BCN-Community School. This person also worked in collaboration with the school custodian. One person worked as our custodian and took care of our school and our Education Authority office building.
3. Bus Drivers: We had four bus-drivers who covered most of our community.
4. Cooks: We had a hot lunch program which required three people who worked as cooks. They also served a small snack to the children early in the morning before commencing instructional activity. The cooking methods used by the

cooks were limited to roasting, broiling and boiling. They were discouraged from frying or deepfrying food. They were encouraged to cook homestyle meals.

5. **Volunteers:** There are a number of parental volunteers who helped with various tasks in the school. They had helped in the area of supervising fieldtrips or camp-outs; coming in and working on a "need" basis for other school activities; supervising a Book Fair; and as replacement or itinerant staff for the school or the classrooms.
6. **Resource Personnel:** The resource personnel consisted of people who were willing to come in and work with the children and the teachers in specified areas for program support and enhancement.

programs

Some of the more specific programs that have been instituted with great success, as of June 1997 are:

1. **Elder-in-Residence program:** This program involves a monthly to a six week rotation of Elders into the school. It acknowledges that most First Nations' students have not seen nor felt their cultural and linguistic heritage being given the time nor the attention as have other areas of study; nor has their personal knowledge or life experience they bring with them to school, which serves as a vital link to their cultural roots been utilized, framed or presented in a positive manner. Elder-in-residence is an attempt to halt and reverse the cultural or linguistic erosion that had begun with the boarding schools by including community Elders as a integral component of the whole school cultural program. It is our intent to show that the commitment to developing cultural and linguistic pride has grown beyond lip service. It is much more than an activity that involves only a cursory inclusion of

Elders in the curriculum development process to verify and validate resource materials. Local Elders identify the areas that they would be willing to address. The Elders are given recognition and respect in the role they play in developing and maintaining our First Nations Languages and Cultures; in assisting with setting program direction; and in providing the support and guidance necessary to sustain interest and commitment in activity that is under close scrutiny from certain interest groups or community factions.

2. Community Resource Personnel: Community resource personnel are invited, following traditional protocol, to either conduct an activity with the children in the school or to conduct their activity at their home, with the children being brought to them to observe. Some resource people are shy and, not being used to entering the school, prefer to have the children brought to them at their home. They are more comfortable at home and they do not have to do extra preparation to haul their materials to school to conduct their activity.

3. Community Field Excursions: Students are brought to different sites within the community such as, to the homes of the resource personnel who are willing to show a particular skill or activity fitting in with the community seasonal activity or curriculum area.

In a continuing way, the creativity and imagination of the learners, instructional leaders, community resource personnel, and other support staff are tapped, to identify culturally and linguistically appropriate areas that need to be included to enhance and support the whole school learning/teaching experience.

instructional and other equipment

The BCB/N Community School has the necessary equipment to support the learning/teaching process. Most of the instructional equipment that is in the school had been newly purchased, but there have been instances where we inherited equipment from an outside source.

Grades three to grade five have audio-tape and compact disc players and a 386 ibm compatible computer in their classroom. The 386 ibm compatibles were donated to the school by amoco and nova, companies that are involved with the gas and oil industry in our area.

A camcorder, two television sets with a video cassette recorder, film strip and 16mm projectors, a laminator, a photocopier, two pentium 586 computers and a fax machine make up the rest of our instructional and administrative equipment in our school.

Equipment needed for core curricular, content specific study areas has also been bought to support the instructional process.

Physical plant

In 1993, the BCB/N-Community School started with four classrooms with a shared administration area. By 1994, the school had six classrooms, a small administration area with a staff room, an activity room and a small kitchen. The administration area is no longer shared space since the Education Authority personnel moved into their own office unit to provide space for our increase in school personnel.

In meeting our need for self-determination, it was imperative that culturally relevant processes were in motion that would further support curriculum resource development; program development, even the designing of a new school. Basically, the process that we went through when Bigstone Cree Band/Nation began moving towards setting up a temporary school was to fit a program within an existing physical plant that had been designed without any real or prior consideration for the type of program that would be housed within it. We experienced crowding from startup and found that there was no space available for our Resident Elder, the Cree/Cultural program coordinator, and the Cree Language instructors, all important components of the school program.

We knew that when we began designing our future school the process would have to be reversed; we would design a physical plant that would fit our program.

When the School Committee began looking at the design of the physical plant, they found that there were some definite requirements that needed to be met and one of the more prominent was in the area of community use and ownership of the facility. Community use and access would involve the total use of the school so that community people could support their children in developing desirable learning attitudes, behaviours and pride in the area of reading and research.

We will work towards having a multimedia area within our library where it can act as the central area to assist in the teaching process, facilitate greater student learning and encourage research activity. In addition to this central area, be it a library or a multimedia room, a core area will be designed strictly for ceremonial purposes and be signified as a ceremonial area. The ceremonial area will be used by community Elders and students in conducting special activities.

Another area that has been designed and will be included as part of the school at a future date is a radio station. It will be located in the outer and second floor level of the gymnasium. Having a radio station in itself offers tremendous possibilities in

reaching great numbers of people at one time, having children design and conduct radio talk shows, broadcast school news, making announcements on births, weddings, birthdays and anniversaries, presenting plays and other activities.

A ground breaking ceremony for the new school was conducted in August 1996 but the actual construction began March 1997. The original target date for beginning construction was September 1996 but not having the necessary funding in place, prevented the construction phase from starting. Even when construction started, the spring weather slowed down the construction process.

The design of the school was mindful of the school program. As the Elders in the BCN Education Authority School Committee stated, the school is more than a school, it can be considered as being the program since it was designed to fulfill specific program needs. The school will be known as an healing and human development centre.

The target date for completion of the new school is February 1998 with the Grand Opening being slated for March 1998.

support for proposed k - 3 school

To continue with on-going personal, professional and cultural development activity or in setting up training programs for the K - 3 School, we will require evening, weekend or summer training packages where we will not be interrupting valuable class time during the school day. We would be looking at professional personnel of First Nations background for staffing our school. This will address the need for positive role models who share the cultural or linguistic background of our First Nations children. This idea may sound ethno-centric but we are in dire need to build up the self-image, and self-acceptance of our First Nations children, families, and communities. It seems only natural that people who are of the First Nation's

culture and language will be facilitating the learning and growth process in a healing journey towards becoming healthy human beings again; in re-integrating the fragmented First Nations' collective identity as the original peoples of this continent and re-instilling the pride for our vibrant living cultures and rich languages that existed before the arrival of people of European stock and still exist to this day.

On the question of accountability for the learning/teaching process, it will have to be a shared collaborative activity and the responsibility of all BCN Community School staff. This will include the para-professionals, custodial personnel, bus drivers, volunteers, community resource people, and resident Elder(s).

We have need for greater community involvement in the disciplinary process. We have developed and implemented a Discipline Committee "Omiskawasimiwiwak" which consisted of elders from the community. Elders who worked with our community justice committee were approached following traditional protocol and accepted the invitation to assume a counselling role for children and parents. In accepting this role they helped enhance the discipline process by reminding the parents of their responsibility; of child rearing practices; of discipline in the home and the necessity to transfer this support to the school when there is need for parental intervention and support.

In terms of instructional and other equipment, we identified the need for a regulation-size gymnasium that would be accessible and used by the community for sporting events; in developing and implementing extra-curricular activities for the BCN Community School children; in accommodating community events such as Round Dances, Weddings and other significant events.

There will continue to be a need for greater access to community resource people, who will assist in the teaching/learning process which calls for developing

locally based resource materials within the classroom setting or at the community resource person's home setting. We see the need to have computers in the classroom to build student confidence in interacting with technology.

questions guiding further research

There is a need to maintain an accurate and up-to-date picture of what is needed by the community in terms of socio-educational needs. This will probably mean conducting periodic checks and developing means of maintaining contact with the parents who have children enrolled in the present school, with the community resource personnel, resident Elders and the students. How often should this be done, and by whom?

What activities or mechanisms need to be developed and implemented that will encourage and promote the process of developing locally relevant materials to support culturally and linguistically enhanced programming other than what is currently in place?

This study has reinforced my outlook and helped me realize that there were many things that were required of us when we first entered an anglo-conformity mainstream schools. One of these requirements had been for us to leave behind anything of value that had sustained our traditional First Nations' identity (e, g. language, ceremonies, and spirituality). I have also arrived at the conclusion that many of our First Nations' people have come to accept the mainstream schools, such as they are, and would not like to see them change too much.

More from a personal note, this study has helped me realize that I can see the dream that I have always had since high school become reality. I had not expressed it to anyone except to a very close friend, who is also an educator.

My dream has been to be part of a school where all the things that are of cultural and spiritual significance, to me, are actively promoted and maintained. I would have loved to have been taught in Cree, very much like the little girl who had asked me to teach her in Cree in 1983 during my second year of teaching.

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appendices

- Appendix #1** Letters dated November 20, 1985 & January 23, 1991
- Appendix #2** **Bigstone Band Council Resolutions (BCRs) dated**
August 20, 1986; January 23, 1991; & October 07, 1991

community informants

**Loretta Burnstick,
Alexander Band, Education Board**

**Diane Steinhauer, Director of Education
Saddle Lake Cree Nation, Education Authority**

**Clifford Freeman, Councillor
Driftpile Band**

**Louise Yellowknee, Elder
Bigstone Cree Nation**

glossary of terms

Aboriginal	Aboriginal is used interchangeable between First Nations, Native and Indian or Metis.
Band	Band is used in this paper as defined in the Indian Act. In this paper Band and Nation are used interchangeably.
First Nations	Original inhabitants of the different land masses; used interchangeably between Native, Aboriginal, or Indian.
Indian	Indian is used in this paper as defined in the Indian Act.
Nehiyaw	Cree speaking person
Iskwew	Woman
Omiskawasimiwiwak	Advisory role - to help you remember and identify your own alternatives or options



DESMARAIS, ALBERTA, T0G 0T0, TELEPHONE: (403) 891-3836

November 20, 1985

Mr. Hugh Reid
Director of Education
Indian & Northern Affairs Canada
2nd Floor, 9942 - 108 Street
Edmonton, Alberta
T5K 2J5

Dear Mr. Reid:

Over the past few years we have attempted to negotiate a tuition agreement with Northland School Division. Some progress has been made with Northland. It seemed to us that Northland School Division was willing to help and was in favor of our plans.

Now your Department has delayed this process indefinitely because we can not be made your Agents. Northland have given us strong indication that unless we are made your Agent, they will not negotiate any longer.

We are unhappy with this situation. We want control over our own education. Since we can not negotiate with Northland, our only other option is to have schools constructed on Reserves; Wabasca/Desmarais, Calling Lake and the Isolated Communities.

This letter is your notice that a Band Council Resolution will be passed by Bigstone Band Council to construct schools on reserves for Bigstone Band Students. We understand that you may have to go to Treasury Board, construction could take another 12 - 18 months. This school will be band operated, and band controlled.

Please begin the necessary steps in this direction.

Yours truly,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Mike Beaver".

Chief Mike Beaver
Bigstone Cree Band

MB/pmy



DESMARAIS, ALBERTA, TOG OTO, TELEPHONE: (403) 891-3836

January 23, 1991

Fred Jobin
Director of Education
Indian and Inuit Affairs
Alberta Region
Canada Place - 9700 Jasper Avenue
Edmonton, Alberta
T5J 4G2

Mr. Jobin

Re: Attached BCR Regarding School Facilities
on Reserve

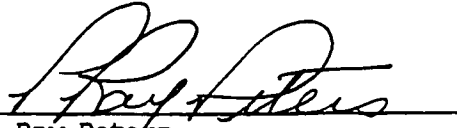
As you know there is beginning to be an overcrowding of students at the Mistassiniy and St. Theresa Schools in the Wabasca/Desmarais area. This is evidenced by the addition of portables to these schools; the proposal for more portables in the next year and the five year projection of children coming of school age.

As the Northland School Division can not do anything but add portables for at least the next 15 years we would like to propose the following:

A Complete School Facility be built on the Reserve to house students from Grade K4 & K5 to Grade 3.

This would solve a lot of problems including the ongoing dispute with Elementary and High School Students in the same building at Mistassiniy.

I should hope that this proposal gets your immediate attention as we are running out of time where our students are concerned


P. Ray Peters
Director of Education
Bigstone Cree Band
Desmarais, Alberta

FILE COPY

**BAND COUNCIL RESOLUTION
RÉSOLUTION DE CONSEIL DE BANDE**

NOTE: The words "from our Band Funds", "capital" or "revenue", whichever is the case, must appear in all resolutions requesting expenditures from Band Funds.
 NOTA: Les mots "des fonds de notre bande", "capital" ou "revenu" selon le cas doivent paraître dans toutes les résolutions portant sur des dépenses à même les fonds des bandes.

		Cash free balance - Solde disponible	
The council of the le conseil de		Capital account Compte capital	\$ _____
BIGSTONE CREE BAND			
Date of duty convened meeting Date de l'assemblée dument convoquée	D-J M Y-A	Province	Revenue account Compte revenu
	2 3 0 1 9 1	ALBERTA	\$ _____

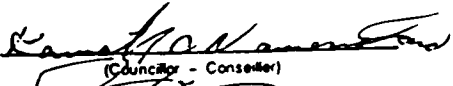

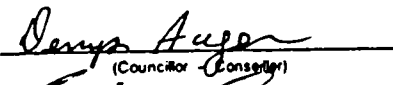
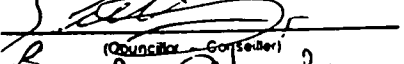

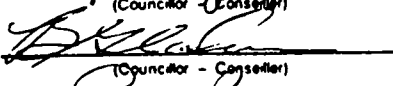
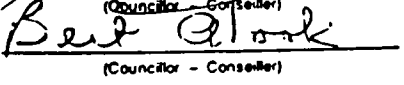
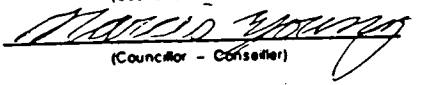
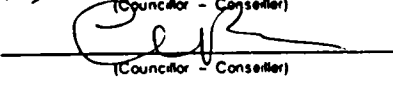
DO HEREBY RESOLVE:
 DÉCIDE, PAR LES PRÉSENTES:

That, the Bigstone Cree Band do hereby require School Facilities on Reserve for Grades K4 & K5 to Grade Three (3)

Therefore, we the Chief and Council of the Bigstone Cree Band recognize the overcrowding now occurring in the St. Theresa and Mistassiniy Schools as well as the five year projection of children coming of school age. We recognize the need for this facility to maintain the level of programming necessary for our children.

Further therefore, it is in the view of the Bigstone Cree Band Education Authority do hereby request financial assistance for this facility.

Quorum _____

 (Councilor - Conseiller)	 (Chief - Chef)	 (Councilor - Conseiller)
 (Councilor - Conseiller)	 (Councilor - Conseiller)	 (Councilor - Conseiller)
 (Councilor - Conseiller)	 (Councilor - Conseiller)	 (Councilor - Conseiller)

FOR DEPARTMENTAL USE ONLY - RÉSERVÉ AU MINISTÈRE					
Expenditure - Dépenses	Authority (Indian Act Section Autorité (Article de la Loi sur les Indiens)	Source of funds Source des fonds <input type="checkbox"/> Capital <input type="checkbox"/> Revenue Revenu	Expenditure - Dépenses	Authority (Indian Act Section Autorité (Article de la Loi sur les Indiens)	Source of funds Source des fonds <input type="checkbox"/> Capital <input type="checkbox"/> Revenue Revenu
Recommending officer - Recommandé par			Recommending officer - Recommandé par		
Signature _____ Date _____			Signature _____ Date _____		
Approving officer - Approuvé par			Approving officer - Approuvé par		
Signature _____ Date _____			Signature _____ Date _____		

**BAND COUNCIL RESOLUTION
RÉSOLUTION DE CONSEIL DE BANDE**

The words "from our Band Funds" "capital" or "revenue", whichever is the case, must appear in all resolutions requesting expenditures from Band Funds
Les mots "des fonds de notre bande" "capital" ou "revenu" selon le cas doivent paraître dans toutes les résolutions portant sur des dépenses à même les fonds des bandes

Council of the Band / Conseil de la bande		BIGSTONE CREE BAND		Cash free balance - Solde disponible	
of duly convened meeting / de l'assemblée dument convoquée		D-J	M	Y-A	Province
		1	0	0	7
				9	1
				ALBERTA	
		Capital account / Compte capital		\$ _____	
		Revenue account / Compte revenu		\$ _____	

HEREBY RESOLVE:
DE, PAR LES PRÉSENTES:

The Bigstone Cree Band, Chief and Council and the Bigstone Education Authority (a registered Society under the laws of the Province of Alberta) hereby request and notify Indian Affairs that all funding of Educational Programs and Sponsorship for Band Members that reside on or off the Reserve shall be funded through the Bigstone Cree Band, in accordance to the policies, guidelines and regulations of Indian Affairs.

jm SEVEN (7)

[Signature]
(Councillor - Conseiller)

[Signature]
(Councillor - Conseiller)

[Signature]
(Councillor - Conseiller)

[Signature]
(Chief - Chef)

[Signature]
(Councillor - Conseiller)

[Signature]
(Councillor - Conseiller)

[Signature]
(Councillor - Conseiller)

[Signature]
(Councillor - Conseiller)

[Signature]
(Councillor - Conseiller)

(Councillor - Conseiller)

FOR DEPARTMENTAL USE ONLY - RÉSERVÉ AU MINISTÈRE

- Dépenses	Authority (Indian Act Section / Autorité (Article de la Loi sur les Indiens))	Source of funds / Source des fonds <input type="checkbox"/> Capital <input type="checkbox"/> Revenue / Revenu	Expenditure - Dépenses	Authority (Indian Act Section / Autorité (Article de la Loi sur les Indiens))	Source of funds / Source des fonds <input type="checkbox"/> Capital <input type="checkbox"/> Revenue / Revenu
Recommending officer - Recommandé par			Recommending officer - Recommandé par		
Signature _____ Date _____			Signature _____ Date _____		
Approving officer - Approuvé par			Approving officer - Approuvé par		
Signature _____ Date _____			Signature _____ Date _____		



BAND COUNCIL RESOLUTION
RÉSOLUTION DE CONSEIL DE BANDE

Chronological No. - Numéro consécutif
26-86-87
File Reference - N° de réf. du dossier

NOTE: The words "From our Band Funds" "Capital" or "Revenue", which ever is the case, must appear in all resolutions requesting expenditures from Band Funds
 NOTA: Les mots "des fonds de notre bande" "Capital" ou "revenu" selon le cas doivent paraître dans toutes les résolutions portant sur des dépenses à même les fonds des bandes

NAME OF THE BAND	BIGSTONE CREE BAND	Current Capital Balance	\$ _____
GENUINITY DISTRICT	BIGSTONE CREE BAND	Committed - Engagé	\$ _____
PROVINCE	ALBERTA	Current Revenue balance	\$ _____
LOCALITY	DESMARAIS	Committed - Engagé	\$ _____
DATE	20th AUGUST AD 19 86		
	DAY - JOUR MONTH - MOIS YEAR - ANNÉE		

WE HEREBY RESOLVE:

DECIDE, PAR LES PRÉSENTES:

That the Bigstone Cree Band, Chief and Council and the Bigstone Education Authority (a registered Society under the laws of the Province of Alberta) hereby indicate to Indian Affairs their intention to the establishment of a Physical School Plant under the control and direction of the Bigstone Cree Band.

We hereby Present TWO (2) alternatives:

1. Negotiate with the Province and Northland School Division to takeover the ownership and operation of the existing Mistassiniy School which is presently under their control.

2. Construct a new school on the reserve in FOUR (4) Phases.

- Phase I - Preschool Readiness Cultural Program, Grades 1, 2 & 3
- Phase II - Grades 4, 5 & 6
- Phase III - Grades 7, 8 & 9
- Phase IV - Grades 10, 11 & 12

The above facility should also include science labs, auditorium, gym, shop-home economics, library, etc...

The Bigstone Cree Band, "Education Study" indicates and justifies the need for Band control over our education system.

A quorum for this Band
 Pour cette bande le quorum est

consists of SEVEN (7)
 fixé à

Council Members
 membres du Conseil

[Signature]
 (Councillor - conseiller)

[Signature]
 (Councillor - conseiller)

[Signature]
 (Councillor - conseiller)

[Signature]
 (Councillor - conseiller)

[Signature]
 (Chief - chef)

[Signature]
 (Councillor - conseiller)

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