

**THE RELEVANCE OF AUTHENTIC ABORIGINAL CURRICULA FOR ABORIGINAL
STUDENTS**

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Dedication

This work is dedicated to my mother, Venora Janet Eamer Shaw, whose spirit, wisdom and integrity have inspired and encouraged me to pursue the truth.....

Abstract

The opportunity for First Nations students to learn about their traditional history and culture within Canadian schools is limited. In spite of the relevance and need to have this type of inquiry, it seems that the Canadian educational system is reluctant to incorporate authentic curricula into the students' academic repertoire. However, there are those who are committed to the belief that all Canadian students would benefit from having the opportunity to learn about First Nations from both a precontact and postcontact context. Despite this educational thrust, authentic curricula, curricula which is developed in consultation with Elders and other knowledgeable community members, remains missing from Canadian institutions of education. The reader will be presented with a brief overview of the historical legacy of Aboriginal education which, in itself, substantiates the need to provide today's students with a more sensitive and responsible view of Aboriginal history and culture. The research questions for this study were: does authentic Aboriginal curricula have a positive impact on the self-esteem of Aboriginal students and does the Aboriginal community support teaching authentic Aboriginal curricula in public schools. For this research a class of grade 8 students were taught their social studies using authentic Aboriginal curriculum. Pretests and posttests, student interviews and student and community surveys were all used in this research. In addition, my teaching journal and personal reflections have been incorporated into the inquiry of whether or not Aboriginal students benefit from being taught authentic curricula. This study had four major findings: that the self-esteem of Aboriginal students was positively affected through the use of authentic Aboriginal curricula, that the students successfully met the British Columbia Ministry of Education's learning outcomes through the use of authentic curricula, that this Aboriginal community does support the use of authentic curricula within this school and that the Aboriginal students felt that courses using authentic curricula should be supported within public education.

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Chapter: One Introduction

The history of education is often thought to have its beginning point with Plato and Aristotle. This historical perspective of education is perpetuated within the walls of most educational institutions. Whether we are directly examining the roots of education in texts like Historical and Philosophical Foundations of Education, by Gerald Gutek (1997), which literally begins with Plato, or we are making inferences from the content being taught within public school, it is clearly more common to fit the paradigm of education into the domain of European ancestry. But what does that mean to those who are within the walls of education, whether they are in grade one or within a Master's program, where no reference is made to the history, the accomplishments or the social contribution of people who do not fit within the "Traditional" Eurocentric books on education? What effect does this paradigm of education have on the ever growing and expanding mind of youngsters within elementary schools? How does this Eurocentric "Traditional" approach to education affect children who do not have the opportunity to learn of their heritage because they are Black Canadians or they are of Chinese heritage or, as this study will address, they are Aboriginal?

Before we can determine the answers to the above questions, we must first consider the question--What is education and what does it mean to educate? If we accept the Oxford definition, education means to "train or instruct mentally and morally" (Swannell, 1986). But what is it that should and should not be taught? And who has the auspicious task of determining the curriculum that will shape the minds of children who are being trained both mentally and morally within the institutions of education? While these questions may seem to have a contemporary nature, their recorded history can be traced to the context of Plato and the Sophists. During this period there was disagreement as to what should be taught and who should be entitled an education. While the likes of Plato and Aristotle enshrined education for the elite, the Sophists believed that all people could learn through rhetoric. While some may adamantly argue that today's Canadian system of education ensures all children the right to be educated, I would like to bring forth the following questions. Does what we teach ensure that the needs of all children are served in their education? Does what we teach make a difference to the success of students? Do the embedded biases of

curriculum make a significant difference to students who are not of European ancestry? Does not having the opportunity to read and engage in learning about your ancestral history affect the scholastic and emotional well being of students? Does it make a significant difference to students if they are able to learn about how their ancestors have contributed, and continue to contribute, to the evolution of this country's economic, social and political systems? The impetus behind this study and the foundation for subsequent academic studies is to gather evidence that will provide a definitive "yes" to all of the above questions. What we teach and why we teach curriculum does make a significant difference to students--all students, regardless of ethnicity. Therefore, the paradigm of education must be reconsidered. Education must be appreciated for the impact it has and be reshaped to be more globally and locally responsible. No longer can the Eurocentric views of what is and is not important to teach be accepted with a blind and naive nod.

The Aboriginal community must come together and make known the importance of their inclusion into this country's social fabric. The Aboriginal community must come together to ensure that their children's history and culture are being taught within Canadian schools. In addition, we must make it known that we expect the governments of Canada to honour their commitment to have Aboriginal history and culture taught within educational institutions (Assembly of First Nations, 1994; Kirkness, 1998). Furthermore, it must be understood that what is to be taught regarding Aboriginal history and culture must be of an authentic nature. Perhaps as important than having the history and culture of Aboriginal people included in Canadian classrooms is the assurance that what is being taught is accurate. For too long the stereotypes and propaganda related to Aboriginal people has been perpetuated within the lessons taught in public education. Students within Canadian classrooms, whether they are in kindergarten or in a Master's program, whether they are Aboriginal or non-Aboriginal, are entitled to learn the history and culture of Aboriginal people through the teachings of those who know it--the Elders, and other knowledgeable community members. For this study the terms Aboriginal and First Nations are being used synonymously and are inclusive of the Métis and Inuit.

Historical Backdrop

Some readers may think of education as being a social vehicle that ensued after the

arrival of Europeans. This is simply not true. Education within First Nations communities, prior to European contact, was methodical and reflected that which was perceived as being fundamental to the continuation of the Nation itself. The traditional forms and content of First Nations education were and are directly linked to the cultural area of the particular Nation. What was regarded as significant information was passed on within the educational process to the youngsters of that community. This practice is as evident within First Nations communities as it is within today's Canadian public education. Therefore, it stands to reason that there would be variance of what the curricula would be between First Nations, even within British Columbia. What one Nation would perpetuate within education could be foreign and unnecessary to another Nation. In all probability the same could be said for the curricula being taught in Ancient Greece and Ancient China. Regardless, after looking at various forms of traditional education, the education of children within First Nations communities did happen. It happened with intent and it happened with the same conviction as other forms of education in other civilizations. Ashworth explains:

Education was the responsibility of all and it was a continuous process. Parents, grandparents and other relatives naturally played a major role, but other members of the tribe particularly the leaders, helped to shape the young people. They learned by observing their elders, by testing their knowledge in play, by working alongside adults, and by taking their place in society. (1979, p. 6)

The objective of Aboriginal pre-contact education was to perpetuate culture and history and to prepare youngsters to live competently in their environment. Within the courses I teach I convey to the students that long before the arrival of Europeans, Aboriginal people did have systems of education.

Traditional Aboriginal education was immediately challenged when Europeans settled in Canada. The newcomers brought with them ideologies that sanctioned one race above another; specifically Europeans were considered to be racially superior to Aboriginals (Richards, 1987). These beliefs gave license for European governments to develop various educational policies and institutions designed to eradicate the history,

culture and language of Aboriginal people from this land, now known as Canada. While this study will not detail the legacy left behind by residential schools and inaccurate material taught within public education, it will provide the reader with some information which should be deliberated when considering the necessity of implementing authentic curriculum.

The history of residential schools is not often included within the analysis of contemporary educational institutions, and yet, their history is essential if an in depth understanding of the intentions behind the schools is to be gained. Only by examining the historical embryonic phases of the residential school can an accurate understanding of its purpose and the means by which this purpose would be achieved be truly appreciated. While some Canadians may have the impression that residential schools are a relatively new system of education, one that took place in the last fifty years or so, this is not the case. Historian J. R. Miller (1997) substantiates: "Interestingly, the friars had decided to attempt residential schooling during an evaluation of their early missionary efforts held in 1616, less than a decade after the beginning of French settlement on the St. Lawrence" (p. 39). What is also revealed in this study of the early initiatives of residential schools were the priests' acknowledgements that unless First Nations children were separated from their families and culture, the success of these educational institutions would be significantly compromised (Miller, 1997). Throughout the volumes of texts written about residential schools and throughout the reflections of those who attended the schools, it is clear that the success of these schools was being measured in how well they served in ridding Canada of Aboriginal culture (Assembly of First Nations, 1994; Carlson, 1997; Haig-Brown, 1988; Fournier & Crey, 1997; Moran, 1988; Sterling, 1992). The systematic intentions of residential schools, compounded with their longevity in Canada, have served to rob Aboriginal communities of their cultural history--a cultural history that most Canadians claim as an inherent right.

In addition to the Aboriginal cultural decimation which took place in residential schools, Aboriginal people have been subjected to the various stereotypes created about them--stereotypes which have been manifested in the minds of non-Aboriginal people. Whether the stereotypes were based on the early paintings of those like Kane or Verner or

on the Hollywood Indian, the stereotypes portrayed about Aboriginal people were not accurate depictions but as Europeans wanted them to be (Berton, 1975; Francis, 1992). The image of Aboriginal people, as portrayed by non-Aboriginal people, suggested that First Nations were either heathens or noble savages, but in either case they were in need of the paternalistic arm of Europeans. This image was not confined to entertainment but it ebbed its way into public education, where it manages to exist today.

Consider for a moment the impact of having to do a research project on local history in the year 2000. After going to the library you find a book which contains the following description of the Sto:lo which was written by an Oblate priest in 1932, “Two thirds walked bare-foot; three fourths had no other hat than the vault of the heavens! Many tried to beautify their ugly faces by covering them with blood-red dye that made them more hideous and as much repulsive as they were ridiculous...” (Schroeder, 1991, p. 43). While the author of this particular book attempts to soften the degrading opinions of the priest, the words remain haunting for those who are confronted with them during a research project. Imagine, if you will, being a student of Sto:lo heritage, doing an assignment in the library and reading how your ancestors were regarded by those who came to convert them as being ugly and repulsive. Imagine the potential this experience could have on a young person’s perception of his or her own heritage. Now compound this with how it would feel if your classmates, your peers of other ancestries, perhaps European ancestries, came across this material. How would this student’s peers perceive this reference to “red dye?” While the reader is asked to imagine the above scenario, I am referring to an actual incident that occurred in my high school’s library in 1997. The author of this book, while she does attempt to soften the degradation of the insults, does not explain the purpose of the “red dye” as being a means of identifying high status families within the Sto:lo community (Carlson, 1997). Without such an explanation, does the reference to the “red dye” not serve to perpetuate the Hollywood characterization of Aboriginal people wearing the stereotypical war paint? Does this reference, and ones like them, serve to continue racial propaganda which ultimately has the potential to maintain the alienation felt by many Aboriginal students? As Pratt (1965) explains “...it is bad enough that any group be subjected to prejudicial treatment, but the fact that Indians are the native people of this country and that

their children are required to read these texts compounds the immorality of such treatment” (p. 88). The above event and the words of Pratt serve to remind Canadian educators that Aboriginal education is still riddled with concern. Stereotypes and inaccurate curricula still exist within Canadian textbooks and schools and as long as they do those of us who are committed to delivering authentic Aboriginal curricula must remain vigilant in our quest.

The legacy of Canada’s governmental policies have been far reaching for Aboriginal communities and for the psyche of the affected individual (Pratt, 1965; Berton, 1975). Nations that were once strong, independent and competent were rendered into positions of financial dependence and cultural decimation. Individuals who were once valued and perceived as contributing community members were reduced to valueless beings. For some, this assertion is too strong, too serious to entertain as having merit. However, for those who are willing to contemplate the effects of the institutions within Canada, let us do so by revisiting those volumes of Canadian history deemed to be so important to understanding this country’s social fabric. Within those texts there is a revealing sub text, a sub text with an agenda of its own. By examining those historical texts educators are able to unravel the truth about how Aboriginal people were, and continue to be, treated in this country. By uncovering the information once presented and accepted by Canadians as justifying, government policies, educators, politicians and all Canadian citizens will come to appreciate them for what they were and are, policies of racism.

One consequence of such an examination of Canadian history will be to provide insight into the various issues facing First Nations today. One will be confronted with such issues as land appropriations, poverty, and social injustice. However, while these issues are of the utmost importance, critically analyzing Canadian history will lead to an appreciation of how the current educational systems need to make restitution for the manner in which Aboriginal people have been treated, specifically, within education. By examining the educational legacy toward Aboriginal people, it should be understood that Canadian institutions set out, with intent, to extinguish the cultural and historical intellect of Aboriginal people. Therefore this study contends if teachers, students and the larger Canadian population are willing to examine the historical educational context, which includes the fabricated image of First Nations, residential schools and the use of inaccurate

curricula within public education, they will come to understand and appreciate the need to develop and implement authentic Aboriginal curricula.

Many Canadians may struggle with the question of why is it necessary to go to this length to ensure First Nations history, culture and social structures be taught in classrooms. Why do we need to spend this time, effort and money to teach about Aboriginal groups whose traditional lifestyles are long gone? This type of question, in and of itself, is revealing. For in spite of the governmental policies, in spite of the propaganda, in spite of racist legislations, and yes, in spite of the abusive institutions, the history and traditions are not gone. However, the consequences of those systems that acted against Aboriginal people cannot be underestimated. For instance, statistics regarding the success rate of Aboriginal students compared to non-Aboriginal students is just one of the criteria to be considered regarding the systems mentioned above. According to the British Columbia Ministry of Education (1999), only 32 percent of those Aboriginal students who started grade 8 in 1992 graduated from high school in 1998. It is time, for those who will, to really examine the statistics reporting the lack of success of Aboriginal students in Canadian education. The time has come to ask the question: Why are these statistics the way they are and, if there is even a hint that the past and present educational institutions are responsible, then is it not time to try and make restitution for the injustices endured by Aboriginals?

Development and Implementation of Authentic Curricula

Over the last four years as an Aboriginal teacher and counsellor in an urban public high school in British Columbia, I have been developing authentic curricula for First Nations Social Studies courses. The development and implementation of authentic curricula requires educators to consult with Elders and other knowledgeable Aboriginal community members to ensure that the material presented to students is accurate. This study has relied on the Coqualeetza Elders, Dakelh community resources, and other knowledgeable community members to direct and substantiate the information presented to the Aboriginal students who have been involved in courses that use authentic Aboriginal curricula. Those who have contributed to the development of my curricula are highly regarded within their Aboriginal communities and are considered to be knowledgeable about their ancestral history and culture. Once the material had been approved by the Elders, it was implemented

in accordance with the British Columbia Ministry of Education's Learning Outcomes (British Columbia Ministry, 1997). The purpose of developing and implementing the curriculum was to provide Aboriginal students with an opportunity to learn about the history and culture of Aboriginal people. Realizing that Aboriginal students in the 1990's were confronted with some of the same educational issues that were apparent when I attended school, primarily the virtual absence of Aboriginal history and culture from classroom instruction or an inaccurate depiction of that history, I was determined to develop an alternative course.

Not having authentic Aboriginal history and culture within Canadian classrooms is unacceptable and as a teacher of Aboriginal students it is a clear statement about those responsible for implementing and developing curricula that they disregard the relevance of Aboriginal history and culture. Furthermore, not having authentic Aboriginal curricula within our classroom practice is a blatant disregard for the presence of Aboriginal students. Through the absence of their history students of Aboriginal ancestry are reminded that within the educational institutions the legacy of First Peoples is not valued. Aboriginal students are both consciously and subconsciously subjected to this as part of their daily life in the classroom. In response to this supposedly subliminal message, I was determined to provide an alternative course for the Aboriginal students who attend the high school at which I work. Because the school had already initiated blocks of classroom time for Aboriginal students to study math, science and humanities, I decided to approach the Aboriginal Advisory Committee and the high school administration to request that those blocks be converted to Social Studies blocks. Once approval was given, I started the process of developing curricula for grades 8 and 10 Social Studies. The students were given the option of taking these First Nations Social Studies courses during their yearly course selection process and were in no way segregated because of their ancestry. Those coming from the elementary system were also given the option of choosing First Nations Social Studies 8 during their course selection. The process of having Aboriginal students select First Nations courses was personally very important because the individuality of our students must be respected and we can not presume that all Aboriginal students want to take courses with Aboriginal content.

Another important aspect to the development and implementation of authentic Aboriginal curricula are the sources from which this curricula emerged. Because of my own educational experiences, where and if First Nations information was presented, it was usually a stereotypical view of Aboriginal people. I wanted to ensure that what would be taught within the classroom would not be from a sociological, anthropological or Hollywood perspective but rather it would be based on authentic cultural information. In order to develop this type of curricula I was committed to the process of consulting with those who are considered culturally knowledgeable, the Elders. While I am not suggesting that all the material ever written about Aboriginal people is false, I am suggesting that significant portions of the information regarding First Nations which is commonly taught in classrooms is dependent on the perspective of those outside the culture. If we are committed to providing Aboriginal students, indeed all Canadian students, with authentic Aboriginal curricula then we must be willing to conduct our research with those who have lived and are a part of the cultural fabric. The practice of listening to those who have cultural knowledge and experience, engaging in lengthy discussions with Aboriginal community members, phoning First Nations bands to ensure the authenticity of classroom material and reading personal biographies are the essence of the curricula that I have developed for the students of my high school.

Purpose of this Study

Once this curricula was developed according to the above criteria, I wanted to develop a means of substantiating its importance for Aboriginal students, the Aboriginal community and for my own professional practice as an Aboriginal teacher/counsellor. I found myself wanting know whether or not authentic curricula has an impact on the self-esteem of Aboriginal students. In addition, I want to know whether or not the Aboriginal community, in which I work, supports the development and implementation of the authentic Aboriginal curricula in public education. As a teacher and counsellor I am excited and aware of the value that authentic curricula has for my students. For example, in previous years of teaching authentic curriculum, I am cognizant of the pride some students feel when they realize for the first time, that their ancestors developed technology that is used to this day, prior to European arrival. In the same vein, I am always honoured to

witness the manner in which students approach making their traditional hand drums and how they respond to the Elders who teach them the Spiritual significance of that hand drum. Nothing in text book teaching can duplicate the sense of accomplishment and cultural pride felt by a young person who has just learned a traditional prayer song from an Elder on a hand drum that they have made--a hand drum that they are expected to give away to someone they respect.

Having the opportunity to witness the above transformations has led me to this study's purpose, to determine whether or not using authentic curricula has a positive impact on the self-esteem of Aboriginal students. In addition I want to know whether or not the Aboriginal community supports the development and implementation of authentic curricula in public education.

Chapter II: Methodology

Research Questions

The intention of this study is twofold. Its first mandate is to determine whether using authentic and relevant First Nations curricula will make a difference to First Nations students. Secondly, the study will attempt to determine whether Aboriginal parents (guardians), Elders, and other community members support the use of this curricula.

Research question one: Does implementing authentic and relevant Aboriginal curricula have a positive effect on Aboriginal students?

Research question two: Does the Aboriginal community, the parents and Elders, support the development and implementation of Aboriginal courses which use authentic and relevant curricula?

Design

The information for this study will be gathered through various methods which reflect both the qualitative and quantitative nature of the study. This study will use the following methods as a means of ensuring that the many voices of this school's Aboriginal community will be represented in the data collected: pre-tests and post-tests in the First Nations Grade 8 Social Studies course; student and community surveys; and student interviews. In addition, my teaching journal and reflections will be used as a source of information. Each of these methods of are described in detail later in this chapter.

Subjects

The subjects for this study will come from various populations within the Aboriginal community of the high school in which study will take place. This high school is located in Sto:lo Nation, in the Fraser Valley of British Columbia. These populations are as follows:

- the 1999/2000 grade 8 social studies class
- students who have previously taken courses using authentic curricula
- the voices of this particular Aboriginal community: parents, Elders and others of Aboriginal ancestry who have students within the school

- the teacher who is responsible for teaching the authentic curricula.

The inclusion of each of the above populations is an attempt to synthesize the voices of those who have a vested interest in the development and implementation of authentic curricula. The following sections further describe the subjects taking part in the study and the contributions of each.

The 1999/2000 grade 8 First Nations social studies class.

Students who elect to take the First Nations Grade 8 Social Studies course must be of Aboriginal ancestry. It is important to note that the students enrolled in this course must select the course and are in no way segregated due to their Aboriginal ancestry. Of the 18 students who passed from grade seven into grade 8 in the 1998/1999 school year, only one student of Aboriginal ancestry did not enroll in the First Nations Social Studies course and opted to take the other Social Studies course provided in the school. When asked why, she indicated that she wanted to stay with a friend who was not eligible to take the First Nations Social Studies.

Following the code of research ethics of the Faculty of Education at the University of Lethbridge, students and parents will be advised that student confidentiality and anonymity will be respected and will be guaranteed throughout the study. To ensure that those taking part in the study understand the Human Rights Ethics, they will be verbally apprised at a grade 8 tea and at the annual "Welcome Back to School Dinner." In addition, parents and guardians will be asked to sign a letter of consent outlining the importance of confidentiality and anonymity. This letter will be sent home with students. A copy of this letter is provided in Appendix A.

Students who have previously taken First Nations courses that rely on authentic curricula.

Students ranging from grades 9 to 12, who have previously taken a First Nations Social Studies course, or First Nations Studies 12, will also be a part of this study. Like Social Studies 8, students elect to take courses using authentic Aboriginal content. Fifteen students will be interviewed in an attempt to determine if the students feel that the courses they have taken are of importance to them. Throughout the year students who have taken First Nations courses that have used authentic curricula will be

asked to participate in the interview process. Students who visit my counselling office will be randomly asked to participate. Students participating in the interview process will be asked to have their parents sign a letter of consent. In addition, the students will be advised prior to the commencement of the interview that what they say will be used for the purpose of this study and that confidentiality and their anonymity will be respected. A copy of this letter of consent is given in Appendix B.

Aboriginal community members.

This study is also based on the information gathered from the population of the Aboriginal community members. Following the guidelines of the National Indian Brotherhood in 1973, it is imperative that the voices of the parents (guardians), Elders, and other knowledgeable Aboriginal community members are threaded into the data collected for this study (National Indian Brotherhood, 1973). Therefore, this study will survey the community members who attend the annual school year opening dinner to be held in October, 1999. Their rights will be explained at the dinner and that their consent to participate in the study will be implied by their completing the survey.

Treatment: Authentic Curriculum

The treatment in this study is the authentic and relevant curriculum used in the First Nations courses. The First Nations Grade 8 Social Studies class is one example of this curriculum and was developed in consultation with the Coqualeetza Elders Society. These Elders are respected for their knowledge and represent the traditional teachings of Sto:lo Nation. In addition, the grade 8 curriculum was developed by using authenticated materials from the Dakelh Keyoh Nation, Shuswap and the Métis Nations. Once the authentic and relevant curriculum had been ascertained, it was then implemented according to the British Columbia Ministry of Education's Grade 8 Social Studies Individual Resource Package (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 1997). The I.R.P.s are the Ministry's documents which identify the Learning Outcomes expected to be taught within any given course in British Columbia.

Following the direction of the Elders and the mandates of the Ministry I.R.P. required me to synthesize the two into the curriculum for the grade 8 Social Studies course. For example, after meeting with the Coqualeetza Elders Society it was apparent

that they thought students had to appreciate the cultural area of the Sto:lo if they were going to understand their traditional lifestyle. The Elders suggested that unless the students were taught how the Sto:lo relied on the Fraser River for Salmon and how the Cedar Tree was used for traditional technology and housing, they would not understand how the Sto:lo developed the complex permanent lifestyle they did (Coqualeetza Elders Society presentation, personal communication, June 21, 1999). Congruently, the Ministry I.R.P. requires teachers of the grade 8 Social Studies program to teach students the factors that influence the development and decline of world civilizations and students are also expected to be able to compare daily life, family structures, and gender roles in a variety of civilizations (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 1997). Therefore, the units and lessons of this curriculum, like the ones contained in Appendix C, are in accordance to both the teachings of the Elders from the Aboriginal communities and to British Columbia's Ministry of Education.

Measurements

The measurements for this study have been developed from my own professional practice. Having a Métis heritage, being actively engaged with Aboriginal education throughout my post secondary education and being a First Nations counsellor teacher for the last four years has led me to pursue the question of whether or not the implementation of authentic Aboriginal curricula has a positive impact on Aboriginal students. While growing up I recognized within my own educational experiences that there was a lack of authentic curricula and consequently I wanted to develop and implement a more accurate view of Aboriginal people. Therefore, the measurements within this study have come from my professional and personal observations regarding Aboriginal education.

The pretest and posttest are a means of providing a quantitative measurement to the study, where the posttest would show, to some extent, the academic growth of students regarding Aboriginal history and culture. The student interviews, student and community survey questions are designed to provide a voice for those most affected by the curricula. The information from these sources will provide me with a way to illustrate findings regarding authentic curricula through both qualitative and quantitative analyses. Finally, my teaching journal and reflections will provide the reader with an intimate view of the learning

environment and the Aboriginal community where this study takes place.

Grade 8 First Nations pretest and posttest.

The pretest and posttest to be administered in this study are designed to sample each student's knowledge of Aboriginal content prior to enrolling in the Grade 8 course. The pretest is designed with the authentic curriculum in mind and consequently the posttest will give some indication of how the students retained the information regarding First Nations cultural areas, First Nations in British Columbia, and the Métis. The development of the pretest and posttest questions are directly related to my educational practice within Aboriginal education. I wanted to develop questions that would not only reflect what the Elders and the Ministry considered to be important within Aboriginal education, but what the students themselves seemed to think was important. I wanted to develop questions that would reflect and test some of my fundamental premises. For example, pretest and posttest question number three asks students to identify three First Nations (Nations) within what is now known as British Columbia. The purpose of this question is to establish that there are many Nations within B.C. who are culturally unique. Establishing that there were and are cultural differences between Aboriginal people is of the utmost importance to both my students and to myself. By having students critically consider the implications of cultural differences amongst Aboriginals is a step toward dismantling stereotypes.

Finally, the pretest and posttest are designed to reflect how students feel about being a First Nations person. Again, using my own experience within Aboriginal education, I wanted to determine whether students would be positively affected by being taught authentic Aboriginal curriculum. Students are asked in question 10 to rate "the pride they felt in being First Nations." While the above question is not equivalent to a psychometric test of self-esteem, it is designed to give some indication about how the students feel about their ancestry. The pretest and posttest being used to measure the impact of authentic curriculum on student's learning is given in Appendix D.

Student interviews.

Throughout the school year, random interviews will be conducted with students who have previously taken a First Nations Social Studies courses or First Nations Studies 12. The interview questions are intended to determine whether the students found value in

learning about First Nations history and culture. Being in the classroom in the role of the teacher researcher allows me some insight as to how students are responding to this particular curriculum. My experience in the classroom led me to believe that the students were, in fact, gaining both emotionally and intellectually from the experience of being taught authentic Aboriginal curriculum. Therefore, I wanted to ensure that how the students perceived these courses would be represented in this study. Conducting interviews is a means of allowing the students' voices to be heard and legitimized within this study. The questions that will be asked during the interview are a composite designed to demonstrate how the students regarded the course content intellectually, emotionally and pragmatically. For example, students are asked in question 10 whether or not these courses should be financially supported. In addition, students will be asked in question 6 if the courses are important to them as Aboriginal people? The interviews will be conducted with students in grades 9 to 12. The interview blueprint is given in Appendix E.

Community survey.

Those attending the annual 'welcome back to school dinner' will be asked to complete a survey. The community includes parents (guardians), Elders, and other adult Aboriginal community members. The questions asked on the survey are a direct reflection of my interaction with the Aboriginal community. After countless discussions with parents, Elders and guardians, I came to believe that the community supported the program that I developed at the high school. In addition, I have, on a yearly basis, asked the community for their input in developing this program. On one occasion, we hosted a working dinner where we asked parents and Elders to identify what was going well and where we needed to improve our practice. On another occasion we had a public speaking forum where community members were invited to speak to the educational practices being carried out in the school. Therefore, when I decided to undertake this research, it seemed to be a natural extension of the above collaborative practice to invite the community to complete a survey. The survey is designed to give the community members an opportunity to voice their support or concerns regarding the Aboriginal program at the high school. In addition, the survey specifically asks the community in question 7 to articulate how they feel about students participating in

courses using authentic curricula. One other consideration was important to me when developing the survey questions and that was to determine the Nations from which the parents' ancestry came. This demographic question is significant in that it illustrates the heterogeneous nature of this particular high school's Aboriginal population. The survey is anonymous. The survey is given in Appendix F.

Student survey.

Students attending the "Welcome back to school dinner" will be asked to complete an anonymous survey. Students are an important voice in the community since it is they who the courses serve. The information gathered from this survey will help determine whether students feel the courses using authentic Aboriginal curricula are meeting their needs and whether or not they are of value to them. Like the community survey, students will be provided with the opportunity to expand on their thoughts and feelings in a comment section. The student survey used in this study can be found in Appendix G.

Teacher's journal.

This study will also use my teaching journal to provide additional information on whether the students and community members support the courses which use authentic curricula. Adding the my voice to the study is a means of understanding more intimately the context in which this study took place (Atwell, 1990). It can describe what happens in the classroom and how students respond to it. The teaching journal will be referred to throughout the following discussion and is contained in its entirety in Appendix H.

Teacher's reflections.

Finally, this study will rely on my reflections about my classroom, the authentic curricula I use, and my interactions with the Aboriginal community. I believe that by including these reflections significant nuances within my educational practice will not be lost. The reflections to be included are based on personal memory and notes from my teacher's day planner. The inclusion of reflections enables me to describe the program at the high school in a meaningful way. Whereas Ministries may need to be concerned with statistics which show improved graduation rates, my interests also involve

observing human change--change that leads me to believe that Aboriginal students are feeling positive about their heritage and that the Aboriginal community members feel valued and welcomed within our high school environment.

Chapter III: Implementation and Results

Being a classroom teacher who has used authentic Aboriginal curricula for the past three years, I became aware that students of Aboriginal ancestry were not only eager to enroll in the courses being offered at this high school, but that they seemed to genuinely enjoy the process of learning about First Nations history. Furthermore, it was my inference from my classroom experience that the students were being affected in a positive manner. Students who were unsure of their ancestry prior to taking the course were often transformed into individuals who not only researched their personal heritage but took pride in being able to identify themselves as belonging to a particular Nation. Therefore, it seemed that students were gaining intellectually and emotionally from the courses using authentic Aboriginal content. Consequently, having made these informal observations in my professional practice, it became important to me to try and formalize my suspicions regarding the merit of authentic curricula. Through research, I wanted to find out whether or not authentic curricula affected the self-esteem of Aboriginal students.

All too often it seems that systems of education act on behalf of people without ever consulting with those it directly affects. Following decades where political and educational systems have been acting upon Aboriginal people without consultation, I was determined in this research to incorporate the voices of Elders, parents and other Aboriginal community members. It is my belief that not having the voices of the Aboriginal community would completely compromise this study and make it invalid. Results of community surveys will be presented in order to discuss whether or not the parents, Elders and other relatives of the students who attend this school and participate in classes which use authentic curriculum support the courses being taught.

The following results are based on information gathered from September 1999 until March 2000. First Nations Grade 8 Social Studies pretest and posttests, student interviews, community surveys, student surveys and the teacher's journal and reflections will be presented and analyzed. The discussion of the results will attempt to determine whether or not using authentic Aboriginal curriculum has a positive impact on Aboriginal student and whether the community supports the use of authentic curricula. This chapter will provide the reader with the manner in which the study was implemented, the results of each

segment of the study and follow it with an analytical discussion of the information gathered. In the subsequent chapter the implications of this study and its conclusions will be provided.

Grade 8 First Nations Social Studies Pretest Results and Discussion

Purpose of the pretest.

The pretest was used to determine what the First Nations Grade 8 Social Studies students knew about certain aspects of Aboriginal history and culture prior to being taught the authentic curriculum. The pretest is based on the learning outcomes of the authentic curriculum and on the learning outcomes of the British Columbia Ministry of Education's Integrated Resource Package (see Appendix C). For example, the Ministry I.R.P requires students to be able to construct and interpret various types of maps. There are various mapping lessons within the authentic curriculum that teach students the various Nations within British Columbia. After being engaged with the curriculum, students are cognizant of not only the number of Nations within British Columbia, they are sensitive to role the geography plays in the development of First Nations culture. This is also a Ministry prescribed learning outcome (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 1997). The pretest, in combination with the posttest, will provide an indication of the extent to which the students' understanding of First Nations history and culture was enhanced once they had been taught the authentic curriculum in this course.

Description of the sample and testing procedure.

Of the 18 students registered in the course at the beginning of the 1999 school year, only 8 of the pretests are being incorporated into the study because ten of the students who initially enrolled are no longer at the school. Of those ten students, seven of them were transferred to an alternate school in the district because of their chronic absenteeism. The other three students left because their families moved out of district. Those students who were transferred to the alternate school were truant from all classes, not only the First Nations Social Studies class.

However, while the pretest sample is small, it still fulfills its purpose. The pretest was designed to test what the students knew about certain Aboriginal content prior to the commencement of this course. Students were administered the pretest in a classroom

setting by the principal investigator of this study during a First Nations Social Studies class period. They were encouraged to do their best on the test and if they did not know an answer, they were not to worry about it. Instead they were instructed to leave the space blank or to provide their best guess. In addition, they were encouraged to use the knowledge that they had been taught in their home environment by parents, Elders or other community members. The latter was an attempt to have students realize the legitimacy of their familial and communal teachings so that they would incorporate their knowledge into the pretest.

Pretest demographic questions.

The initial questions establish gender and age. Of the eight students who took the pretest, four were male and four were female. The ages of the students were as follows:

Female student's ages - 15, 14, 13, 13.

Male student's ages - 15, 13, 13, 13.

The demographic information establishes that there was an equitable representation of female and male students in the study. In addition, the ages were all within three years and are comparable with respect to maturation.

Pretest question one.

“Explain who North American Aboriginals are.”

Of the eight students who participated in the pretest, four students gave answers that are considered to be in depth--answers which indicated that the students knew who First Nations are prior to the teaching of the authentic curriculum. Two students provided answers which gave questionable evidence about whether they knew who First Nations are. Their answers were as follows: “ They are Elders” and “are Native people they have half or full Native in them they live in Canada.” The remaining two students did not know the answer to the question.

In summary, of the eight students, four were able to give knowledgeable answers to the question asking who are First Nations? The rest were not able to provide answers indicating a good understanding of who First Nations are.

Pretest question two.

“Name three First Nations (Nations) outside of what is now known as British

Columbia.”

One female student was able to cite three Nations. Her response was Cree, Déné and Ojibway. Three students, two male and one female, were able to cite two out of three Nations. Two students were able to give the name of one Nation outside of British Columbia. The remaining two students, one female and one male, were unable to provide name any.

It seems that most of the students were unable to name three First Nations (Nations) names outside of British Columbia for this particular pretest question.

Pretest question three.

“How many First Nations (Nations) are within what is now known as British Columbia?”

Not one student answered this question correctly. The student responses are as follows: more than 20, 13, 5, 5, 3, 3. Two students did not answer this question.

From the answers the students gave, and because no student answered this question correctly, it seems fair to conclude they were not aware that there are 33 Nations traditionally located in British Columbia.

Pretest question four.

“Name three First Nations (Nations) within what is now known as British Columbia.”

One female student answered this question correctly. She cited the following Nations: Sto:lo, Tsmeshian and Lillouette. Four of the remaining students, two males and two females, got one of the Nations correct. Coincidentally, they all gave the same right answer, they cited “Sto:lo Nation”. The remaining three students, two males and one female, were unable to give one correct answer to this question.

The results indicate that only one student was able to identify three Nations within British Columbia correctly. The majority of students were able to give only one correct answer, that being the Sto:lo. The students in this First Nations Grade 8 Social Studies course were not generally able to name three Nations within British Columbia.

Pretest questions five and six.

“Who are the Sto:lo?” “In which Nation is the School?”

Four of the students, two males and two females, gave an answer that was sufficient enough to ascertain that they knew who the Sto:lo are. These students identified the Sto:lo as being the “Nation in which we live” or the “River People.” Two of the students, one male and one female, merely recognized the Sto:lo as being a Nation. The remaining two students, one male and one female, did not know the answer.

Considering the information provided by four of the eight students regarding “Who are the Sto:lo?”, it seems that half the students have some knowledge regarding the local Nation. Five of the eight students were able to identify Sto:lo Nation as the Nation in which their high school is located. Perhaps these students may have had prior teaching in elementary school regarding the Sto:lo. However, the data also suggests that the other half of the students were not familiar with the Sto:lo and were unable to provide a clear explanation of who they are. From this information, it seems fair to suggest that only half of the students had some level of knowledge about the Sto:lo.

Pretest question seven.

“Why is it important to study the traditional cultural areas of First Nations?”

All eight students answered this question, seven of whom, three females and four males, explained that it was important because they needed to learn about their cultural heritage. Elaborating upon these explanations, one male student articulated the need to learn their history so that they could pass it on to their children when they have them. The remaining student explained that it was important to study the culture areas so that “no matter where you live... you can present yourself respectfully.”

It is apparent that the students do not link the concept of “cultural areas” to “geographical location.” For the purpose of this study a cultural area is a geographical location in which a community of people have traditionally lived and out of which their culture develops. While seven of the eight students articulated that it was important to learn about cultural heritage and some extended this to understanding other First Nations cultures, not one student linked culture to the geographical location of a Nation.

However, it would be remiss to overlook the information that is apparent from the answers of the students and it is that they want to learn about their cultural heritage and be able to pass that knowledge on to others, including their children.

Pretest question eight.

“Name one Aboriginal person you think is a good role model, and explain why you admire them.”

Of the eight students who answered, two females and one male recognized their grandmothers as being their role models. All of the students who chose their grandmother cited that she shares her cultural knowledge and that is why she is a good role model. In addition, three students, two males and one female, recognized the classroom teacher as being a good role model. They explained their choice by referring to her teaching methods and what she teaches as providing good role modeling. Finally, one male student referred to his step father as a good Aboriginal role model because he speaks honestly with his son. The remaining female student referred to Elders in the community because they teach others in the community.

The information regarding role models suggests that the students are comfortable with naming local people as their role models.

Pretest question nine.

“In your own words explain why you selected the Grade 8 First Nations Social Studies class.”

All students answered this question giving a rationale of wanting to learn more about their culture, heritage and other First Nations’ cultures and heritages. In addition, two of the students, one male and one female, wanted to be able to pass that knowledge onto their future children. One female student stated that “she wanted to learn more about who I am because I don’t have much knowledge about 1st Nations in me.”

When students were given the opportunity to describe why they selected the First Nations Social Studies course, it seems their primary motive was their personal need to learn more about their heritage and culture. Some elaborated on this decision citing the need to pass on the information; however, it was clear from the data that all of the students selected the course because they felt learning about First Nations history and culture is important.

Pretest question ten.

“Who are the Métis?”

One student gave an answer which gave the impression she had an idea of who the Métis are by saying, “Métis are half white and half Native American.” Four students did not answer the question. The three remaining students gave the following responses: “They are the people who live in Northern B.C.,” “They are people with more than one background” and “They are a long line of First Nations, a big family.”

It seems only one student had some idea of who the Métis are; the rest of the students did not.

Pretest question eleven.

“I am proud to be a First Nations person (please circle one of the below responses)

Always

Most of the Time

Sometimes”

Seven students circled “Always” while one female student circled “Most of the Time.” Therefore it seems fair to conclude that the students are proud of their First Nations ancestry.

Grade 8 First Nations Social Studies Posttest Results and Discussion

Purpose of the posttest.

The posttest is to determine whether or not the students involved with the First Nations Social Studies class have increased their knowledge regarding Aboriginal people since being administered the pretest. In addition, the test was to give some indication whether or not the students value the opportunity to learn about Aboriginal culture and history through the use of authentic curriculum.

The original time line would have had the students write the posttest at a later date within the school year, but due to a labour dispute within the district, and without knowing how long the strike would last, it was decided to expedite the administration of the posttest. Therefore, after teaching the major themes of the authentic curriculum and having the Ministry of Education’s learning outcomes satisfied, the students were asked to write the posttest. Again the purpose of the posttest was to determine whether or not there was a notable change in what they knew about Aboriginal people since they wrote the pretest. Therefore the discussion of the results in this section is a synthesis of how the students answered the pretest and posttest questions.

Description of the sample and testing procedure.

Those students who participated in the posttest are the same students who participated in the pretest. The posttest was given to the students the same way the pretest was administered. Students were given the exact same test as the pretest and were encouraged to answer the questions to the best of their ability. In addition, the principle investigator of this study administered the posttest. The eight students who participated in the posttest have been taught the authentic curriculum and consequently the posttest should show if there is a change in what the students know about Aboriginal people both prior to the treatment of the authentic curriculum and afterward.

Posttest question one.

“Explain who North American Aboriginals are.”

Six students gave answers that were knowledgeable to this question. Those students identified that Aboriginal people are “those who originally inhabited North America,” “that they were here prior to Europeans” and “that they are the people who are Native to the land.” However, there were two students who did not answer the question at all.

Although only two additional students were able to answer the question, all six of these answers were more detailed than on the pretest. I do not know why two students chose not to answer the question.

Posttest question two.

“Name three First Nations (Nations) outside of what is now known as British Columbia”.

Five students, two females and three males, correctly identified three Nations outside of British Columbia. The remaining students, two females and one male, identified one Nation correctly. The students’ answers show that after being taught the authentic curriculum, the number of students who are able to identify three Nations outside British Columbia increased from one to five. Therefore, it seems reasonable to conclude some of the students increased their knowledge regarding the names of First Nations (Nation) outside of British Columbia. Where two students could name none on the pretest all students could now name at least one.

Posttest question three.

“How many First Nations (Nations) are within what is now known as British Columbia?”

All eight students gave the correct answer. In contrast, not one student answered this question correctly on the pretest. Therefore it seems reasonable to conclude all of the students retained the fact that there are thirty three First Nations (Nations) who traditionally lived within what is now known as British Columbia.

Posttest question four.

“Name three First Nations (Nations) within what is now known as British Columbia.”

Seven of the eight students, four females and three males, correctly identified three First Nations within British Columbia. The remaining male student was able to give one Nation’s name correctly, the Sto:lo. It seems most of the students who took the pretest had learned and retained the names of at least three Nations within British Columbia. Seven of the eight students were able to do so correctly. In contrast, only one female student was able to do so on the pretest. Furthermore, the information gathered seems to indicate that there is not a significant difference between the manner in which males and females retain this information. With four females and three males answering the above question correctly it seems both genders retained this information equally as well. Overall, the knowledge of the students regarding First Nations within British Columbia seems to have increased, since three students could name none on the pretest and all students could name at least one on the posttest.

Posttest questions five and six.

“Who are the Sto:lo? In which Nation is the School?”

Seven of the eight students who took the posttest, four females and three males, gave in depth explanations to this question. Five of the students, four females and one male gave the traditional territory of the Sto:lo within their answers. The other two students answered the question correctly by saying “they are the “River People.” Sto:lo means “River People.” The remaining male student did not answer the question.

It seems the students were better able to answer the question “Who are the Sto:lo?”

on the posttest then on the pretest. Four students, two males and two females answered it correctly on the pretest. Whereas, seven students, four females and three males, answered it correctly on the posttest. Again, the gender does not seem to be a factor in retaining the information. It does seem fair to conclude that, overall, the students are able to answer the question of “Who are the Sto:lo?” better on the posttest then on the pretest.

In addition, six students, three males and three females, answered the question “In which Nation is the school located?” correctly by responding Sto:lo Nation. Two students one male and one female did not answer the question. I do not know why the students did not respond to this question.

According to the posttest results there was one additional student who knew the answer to this question than on the pretest. Five students gave more detailed answers on the posttest which indicates there has been an increase in what the students know following their being taught the authentic curriculum.

Posttest question seven.

“Why is it important to study the traditional cultural areas of First Nations?”

Three students, two males and one female, responded with correct in depth answers. They explained that the cultural area is what constitutes the differences between First Nations cultures. The other five did not make the link between the geographical location and the development of culture. Two of the other students, one male and one female, said that it was important so “they can pass on the information to children.” The other two students said so “they can present themselves knowledgeably.”

The results to this posttest question suggest that there was a better understanding of what a cultural area is than on the pretest. Where none of the students connected geographical location to culture on the pretest, three students did on the posttest. However, being the classroom teacher it seems fair to suggest that some of the students who apparently did not make the link between geographical location and cultural development, in fact, did not understand this posttest question. From the time spent in class teaching this concept, classroom discussions and written student work I am confident that most, if not all, of the students who took this posttest understood the significance of First Nations cultural areas. Therefore it seems likely that when writing the posttest students

misunderstood or misread the question thinking it asked “Why is it important to study First Nations traditional cultures?”

Posttest question eight.

“Name one Aboriginal person you think is a good role model, and explain why you admire them.”

Two female students recognized their grandmothers as being their role models. Students who identified their grandmother explained that they chose her as a role model because she shares her cultural knowledge. One female student recognized her mom because she is taking traditional language class. One male student referred to his step father as a good Aboriginal role model because he is honest and he listens to him. One female student referred to a peer counsellor in the school. One male student referred to his classroom peer because he is a good friend. The remaining female student cited her grandfather because he has done so much for her. The remaining male student did not give an answer to this question. In choosing a role model it seems that, like the pretest, the students are inclined to choose a role model within their own community.

Posttest question nine.

“In your own words explain why you selected the Grade 8 First Nations Social Studies class.”

Seven students gave the rationale of wanting to learn more about their personal culture and heritage. They also indicated a desire to learn more about other First Nations’ cultures and heritage. One of the female students said that she was not given the opportunity in Elementary School to learn about First Nations’ culture and history and therefore wanted to take advantage of this opportunity. In addition, one female student wanted to be able to pass that knowledge onto her family. One male student said he did not know.

Consistent with the pretest, students on the posttest said that they took the First Nations Social Studies 8 course because they wanted to learn more about their heritage and culture. Only one male student responded by saying “I don’t know.” The students regard the material in the course as being important to them. In addition, the information indicates that the students regard the information as something they want to pass on to their children.

Posttest question ten.

“Who are the Métis?”

Three females and one male gave an answer which indicated they understood the Métis are mixture of Aboriginal ancestry and European ancestry. One student identified the Métis as being his/her ancestors. This answer does not allow for an interpretation of the student’s knowledge regarding the Métis. Three students did not answer the question and one student said the Métis are a Nation of First Nations. Although this answer is not wrong, it does not give a clear understanding of whether the student knows who the Métis are.

More students, three versus one, were able to identify who the Métis are on the posttest than on the pretest. Even though the students had not yet been taught the Métis unit, they were, from class discussions, able to describe them with some accuracy.

Posttest question eleven.

“I am proud to be a First Nations person (please circle one of the below responses)

Always

Most of the Time

Sometimes”

Seven students circled “Always”, while one female student circled “Most of the Time.” One male student indicated on his test paper, “It used to be Sometimes. And that is the truth.”

The posttest results show little change in how students feel about being First Nations. While seven of the students identified “Always” feeling proud of their heritage on the posttest, one student stipulated that “it used to be sometimes.” This same student indicated “Always” on the posttest and therefore his feelings regarding his heritage seems to have been enhanced since the course commenced. However, the one female student who indicated on the pretest that she feels proud “Most of the Time” remained consistent on her posttest. Therefore, the information gathered in the pretest and posttest suggests that the majority of students have the same sense of pride regarding their First Nations heritage and there is no change in this perception, except for one male student.

In summary, it seems fair to conclude from the pretest and posttest results that the students have a better understanding of Aboriginal content after they had been taught the authentic curriculum. In general both genders seem to retain the information equally as well

and each gender seemed to value the content being taught. However, after conducting the pre and posttest in the grade 8 Social Studies class, it was evident that these tests did not show what these students had learned since the tests were based on basic recall information. While the pre and posttests did show that the students remembered some facts regarding Aboriginal geography, the tests did not show the more significant learning and implications of teaching authentic Aboriginal curricula--how it positively affects the sense of pride and esteem of individual students. After conducting the pre and posttests, it was apparent that the more meaningful results might be found in the following student interviews.

Student Interview Results and Discussion

Purpose of the student interviews.

The purpose of the student interviews was to ascertain whether or not those students who have had the opportunity to attend classes using authentic First Nations curriculum valued those particular courses. One of the issues that Aboriginal students have had within public education is the lack of opportunity to learn about their history or to have that history presented in an accurate manner. Therefore, if we are to determine whether or not those courses which use authentic Aboriginal materials are valuable to the students themselves, it seemed necessary to ask those students who have participated in those courses.

All the students who were interviewed have participated in First Nations courses which use authentic curriculum: the First Nations Grade 9 Social Studies course; First Nations Grade 10 Social Studies; or the First Nations Studies 12 course. The interview was designed to determine the answers to two questions:

- a) Do First Nations students, who had previously taken First Nations courses, think they were important to them as students?
- b) Do students, who had previously taken First Nations courses, think that the public school system should support First Nations courses?

The interviews were an attempt to integrate the voices of those who are at the center of authentic curriculum, the students themselves.

Sampling procedures.

The interviews were conducted with students who have previously taken a First Nations Social Studies course, or the First Nations Studies 12 course, both of which use authentic curriculum. The students were from grades 9-12 and chosen by the teacher who conducted the interview, the principal investigator of this study, and therefore this is not a random sample. However, the process of selection was not based on student grades or the student's familiarity with the teacher. Those being interviewed were not necessarily the strongest academic students nor were they particularly familiar with the teacher. Students chosen for the interview were those who came into my counselling office for either academic or personal counselling. They were students who indicated they were available to do an interview and while I had hoped to interview 15 students, because of time constraints of the study became an issue, only 7 students were interviewed.

Description of the sample.

In total there are seven student interviews. Of the seven students, four are female and three are male. All students who participated in the interview process submitted parental consent letters (See consent letter in Appendix E). In addition to asking the students to which Nation they are affiliated, they were asked which First Nations course, or courses they had taken.

The above information is listed below:

- | | |
|-----------|---|
| Female A- | Woodland Cree
Courses: First Nations Studies 12, First Nations Artistic Traditions Junior and Senior |
| Female B- | Sto:lo
Courses: First Nations Social Studies 10, First Nations Studies 12
First Nations Artistic Traditions Junior and Senior |
| Female C- | Métis
Courses: First Nations Social Studies 10, First Nations Studies 12
First Nations Artistic Traditions Junior and Senior |
| Female D- | Plains Cree
Courses: First Nations Social Studies 8 & 10 |

	First Nations Artistic Traditions Junior
Male E-	Sqatine
	Courses: First Nations Social Studies 10, First Nations Studies 12
	First Nations Artistic Traditions Junior and Senior
Male F -	Sto:lo
	Courses: First Nations Social Studies 8 & 10, First Nations Studies 12
	First Nations Artistic Traditions Junior and Senior
Male G-	Stl'atl'imx
	Courses: First Nations Social Studies 10, First Nations Artistic Traditions Junior and Senior

When making direct reference to a student quote within the results or discussion of this section, the above information will be used to identify the particular student.

The actual interview blueprint is contained in Appendix E. If the interview was being conducted with a student not yet in Grade 12 First Nations Studies, those questions pertinent to the Grade 12 First Nations Studies course were tailored to suit that specific student. For example, students D and G were asked questions in reference to the Grade 8 and 9 Social Studies courses. Student responses to the interview questions were transcribed. Once this information was gathered, those quotes which relate directly to this study's inquiry were identified. The results and discussion of this interview process is an indication of what the students themselves think of courses which use authentic Aboriginal curricula. Once the preliminaries of the interview were given: for example, are you comfortable in my office?, assurances of confidentiality, and having the students recognize that they were being taped, the interview began.

Interview question one.

"What is the most important thing you learned in First Nations Studies 12?" For students D and G this question was "What is the most important thing you learned in First Nations Social Studies 9?"

All the students agreed that the most important thing they learned in the courses was the history and culture of Aboriginal people. Within the interviews, the students articulated that it was equally important to learn about the various cultures within First Nations as to

learn about their own. In addition, the students recognized that learning about other Nations fostered a respect toward those Nations.

It seems from this initial interview question that all of the students agreed that the most important aspect of taking First Nations courses which use authentic curricula was the opportunity to learn about Aboriginal history and culture. In addition, the students consistently suggested that it was equally important to learn of other Nations in addition to their own, as this fostered understanding among Nations.

Interview question two.

“Did the course you took influence how you feel about being a First Nations person and if so, how so?”

All the students said yes and explained that it made them feel more proud of their heritage. Student F summed up his feelings saying, “Yes it has. It’s hard to put into words. It makes me feel proud to know who my people are, what my people did and how long they have been here. I am proud of the respect it gives my culture.” According to this student, having courses that use authentic First Nations curricula is a means of showing respect towards his culture. Having Aboriginal history and culture taught within regular classroom settings apparently legitimizes the content for the students. Further, it seems that all the students agree that the First Nations courses which use authentic curricula have had a positive effect on their feelings about being Aboriginal. The students suggested that learning more about their history and culture gave them a better understanding of their heritage, which ultimately fostered pride.

Interview question three.

“Are First Nations courses important for non-Aboriginal students to take?”

This question was not applicable to one of the students because she had not yet had the experience of taking a First Nations course with non-Aboriginal students. Therefore, of the seven students who could answer this question, all said yes it was important. Student B suggested the following as an explanation, “Yes very! Well some people look at Natives and think they are just Natives. They are getting a chance to learn about the differences of First Nations.” This sentiment reoccurred among the students who answered this question. However, student F also indicated that it was up to the individual students by saying “in a

way, it is, in a way, it's not. I think if they want to learn about us, then it's their decision".

Those answering clearly suggested that it was important for non-Aboriginal students to take the course. The students maintained that through courses which use authentic curriculum, a better understanding of Aboriginal people will be gained. In addition, the students believe that stereotypes regarding Aboriginal people can be dismantled if non-Aboriginal students take courses using authentic curriculum. Student G said that "If people come into the course with a prejudiced heart about Natives, once they learn about Aboriginal people their hearts can be filled with understanding instead."

Interview question four.

"Was the information in the First Nations course you took useful in any other course(s) you have taken?"

The following is a summation of their responses:

Student A- Yes. Law 12, student uses knowledge to argue against those who are ignorant of land claims issues. Cited the "Proclamation of 1763."

Student B- Yes. Career and Personal Planning 11, student uses information learned in First Nations courses to make individual "presentations regarding what it means to be a First Nations person."

Student C- Yes. English 11, helps in "classroom debates about social issues."

Student D- Yes. Social Studies 10, no rational given.

Student E- Yes. Other Social Studies courses and Law 12, helps with respect to understanding and being able to discuss the treaties in Law 12."

Student F- Yes. Social Studies 10. No rational given.

Student G- Yes. Social Studies 10, knew how disease was introduced to Aboriginals through European contact.

It seems apparent from the above information that the material covered in the First Nations courses was of benefit to the students in various other courses they took within the school system. It is also apparent that the curriculum was not confined to being of benefit to other Social Studies courses, but to courses like Law 12, English 11 and Career and Personal Planning 11.

Interview question five.

“Should the public school system support First Nations courses?”

All the students affirmed the need to financially support the courses. Student C provided her rationale for financially supporting the courses with:

...it should be like any other social studies. This is a course everybody needs to know. They (the students) base themselves around one social studies class and learn about the wars between France and England and the U.S. But they don't learn about what happened with First Nations and treaties and it's just as important. It's just as important it happened here not over in Europe, it happened here and we should learn it!

In addition Student A's words capture the essence of this study when she said, “Well I mean, I mean I feel it's just as important as science or socials or something. Maybe other people don't think so, but it helped me find me, you know.” This type of response is often missed in studies which rely solely on statistical analyses.

According to the students it seems fair to conclude that they feel the First Nations courses using authentic curriculum should be supported financially. The students suggest that the First Nations courses provide another avenue to learn about Canadian history, perhaps from another perspective, and that the courses promote an understanding of Aboriginal people which is intrinsically important to Aboriginal students.

Interview question six.

“Is the school doing enough with respect to Aboriginal education and do you have any suggestions?”

The students answered in the following ways:

Student A- “Can do more...like you can always do more, we're doing ok for now, I think we will slowly get more classes. I think we need a language.”

Student B “Yes, they are doing enough.”

Student C “Yes. It's doing enough we keep adding on each year.”

Student D “Yes, it's enough.” No suggestions.

Student E “Enough right now, there could be more. Get more First Nations books on culture. Like in the library you see lots of books on other cultures but you don’t see much on First Nations cultures. The books in the library are okay but some of the stuff isn’t true. It’s written by non First Nations.”

Student F “Yes it’s enough.”

Student G “Yes I think it's doing enough we are adding on each year.”

Six students felt that enough was being done at the school regarding Aboriginal education. Students A and E, who provided suggestions, articulated that the school could do more. Student A said that a traditional language course would be good to offer, while student E said that there was a need for more authentic materials in the library.

The purpose of the student interviews was to ascertain whether or not Aboriginal students think the First Nations courses being offered at the school are important to them as learners. In addition, the interviews were to provide the students with an opportunity to say whether or not they think public education should support First Nations courses within schools. Finally, the interview allowed the students to articulate whether or not they had further suggestions as to what the school could be doing in response to Aboriginal education.

In summary, according to the information gathered during the interviews, it seems that students regard the courses as being both important to them as Aboriginal learners and important for those who are not Aboriginal. Moreover, the students all agreed that these courses should be supported within public education. Finally, two recommendations were made with respect to what could be done to further Aboriginal education: to have a traditional language course and have more authentic materials in the library. In the interviews it was apparent that self-esteem was positively affected by authentic Aboriginal curricula. Students cited how it gave them a sense of pride in their heritage and as one student said “it helped me find me”. In addition the interviews clearly indicate that the implementation of authentic Aboriginal education is a means of addressing the issue of stereotypes and racism. Perhaps student G said it best with, “if people come into the course with a prejudiced heart about Natives, once they learn about Aboriginal people their hearts can be filled with understanding instead.”

Community Survey Results and Discussion

Purpose of community survey.

The data collected through the community survey provides important insights as to how parents (guardians), Elders and other Aboriginal community members feel and think about the academic First Nations courses. While the community survey can be seen in its entirety in Appendix E, only those questions pertaining to this study's inquiry are discussed in this section. Those being surveyed had the opportunity at the First Nations Grade 8 tea, at extra curricular functions and at the welcome back to school dinner to preview the curriculum being taught at the school. Therefore, community members who filled out the survey are considered to be knowledgeable about the authentic curricula being used in the First Nations courses being offered at the school.

Description of sample.

Approximately 80 people attended the School opening dinner, 25 of whom were Aboriginal adults who completed the survey. Twenty identified themselves as being a parent, two were guardians, one is a grandparent and one is a brother-in-law. The remaining adult did not identify him/herself in any category. On the night of this particular dinner, the Stl'atl'imx Nation were continuing their treaty negotiations and those Elders, who regularly attend this annual event, were not present. Those attending the dinner who did not complete the survey are assumed to be younger siblings of the high school students, First Nations staff members or youth who do not attend this high school. Because of traditional familial practices held by many of the community members, it is also assumed that the aunties and uncles of high school students may have completed the survey as a parent would.

Additional demographic information was gathered regarding the relationship between the adults surveyed and the students in the school. For example, the community survey provided information on the number of children being accounted for in the community survey, the gender of the students, Nation affiliation and whether the students had taken a First Nations Social Studies course, or the First Nations Studies 12 course. Of the 85 children who attended the high school that year, 32 were accounted for in this community survey. The survey also indicated that there were at least 15 Nations being

represented within the student body. Because some adults have more than one child enrolled in the high school, there is a discrepancy between the number of Nations identified in the survey and the number of children accounted for.

Sto:lo - 4	Cree/Cayuga -2	Salish/Cree -1	Métis - 1
Sqatin - 3	First Nation - 1	Mt. Currie - 1	Salish Cree -1
Cree - 2	Tsmisian -1	Stl'atl'imx - 1	Dinah -1
Unidentified - 2	Carrier - 1	Haida/Inuit - 1	Déné -1

The Nations recorded in this study are as the adults have identified them. There is a duplication, specifically the Sqatin and Stl'atl'imx belong to the same Nation, the Stl'atl'imx Nation. Of the 32 students accounted for, 26 were female and 6 were male. Finally, it was determined that 22 of the 25 adults surveyed indicated that their child has taken at least one Aboriginal academic course at this high school.

The demographic information revealed that those adults who completed the survey were parents or guardians of children who had taken an academic Aboriginal course. Therefore, those community members who completed the survey had at least some knowledge of the Aboriginal courses being asked about.

In addition, of those adults surveyed, nine indicated that their child had taken more than one course based on authentic First Nations content. This information seems to suggest that the parents (guardians) and other community members support their children in selecting additional Aboriginal courses.

Community survey question nine.

“Overall I am happy with the First Nations academic courses offered at _____
 ___yes___no Comments_____.”

Of the 25 adults who were surveyed, 24 responded with a yes and 1 responded with “I am not fairly aware yet.” In addition to the yes/no question regarding community satisfaction, the adults were invited to add additional comments.

Ten of the twenty-five community members took this opportunity to express pertinent information regarding the courses being offered at the school. Eight of the comments were directly related to the First Nations academic courses. For example, two

parents indicated that the courses were of benefit to their child's self-esteem with the following comments, "It has helped my child establish who she is" and "My child comes home proud that she has learned something of Traditional Values." Two of the comments were requests to further review the curriculum being used in the classroom. Another comment suggests that the classes should examine the current Supreme Court decisions and how it will affect Aboriginal students in the long term. One community comment was, "I feel that the First Nations classes are pretty well put together." Another comment was, "My children do not attend First Nations academic courses." No explanation was given for this.

It seems that for those community members who completed the survey, the majority are happy with the academic Aboriginal courses being offered at the school. Furthermore, the comments also indicated that there are parents who feel that the courses being offered make a difference to their child's self-esteem.

Community survey question eleven.

"Overall I am happy with the services my child receives at the school___ yes/no___
Comment_____."

Twenty-three adults checked yes. The two remaining adults did not check either yes or no. To provide an opportunity to elaborate on their thoughts, they were, once again, given a comment section to complete. Eleven adults provided additional comments. Three adults said they were pleased with the care the staff provides for their children at the school. Two parents stated that they were pleased that the school board supports First Nations programs. The following statements are self-explanatory and further support the program being provided in the school:

"Yes I am happy with the progress."

"I am glad that _____ has First Nations Cultural Programs/class for my child:"

"Every year we have more of OUR People Graduating."

"I am happy. I would like to be more involved. We've come a long way."

"Glad I live in _____ because of the School Board support and staff dedicated to improving education + opportunities for 1st Nation Youth."

"Thank-you for the work that is done with my young people; results are beginning to show."

Many of the community members felt that the program being offered at the school was supportive and meaningful to the students. The community members are truly appreciative of the work done by staff and by the School Board of this particular high school. In retrospect the yes/no nature of this question limited the information because many declined to provide additional information.

Additional comments were made regarding graduation rates. Some of the phrases used in the adult survey were “The results are beginning to show.” and “We have come a long way.” The surveyed adults were privy to information regarding the number of students graduating from the high school this year. This information was given against the backdrop of previous years:

1996/1997 - 2 students graduated

1997/1998 - 4 students graduated

1998/1999 - 4 students graduated

1999/2000 - 12 are in the position to graduate

They were impressed with the number of students who were eligible to graduate in 2000.

The survey comment section revealed the concerns of two parents whose children had selected First Nations courses and had not been placed in them. One parent commented that his/her child selected First Nations Social Studies 8 and the other mentioned his/her child had selected a First Nations Artistic Traditions course. It seems that parents are concerned about whether their children will be registered in the First Nations courses when they select them. While the following reason for the students not being placed in the courses they selected is speculative, as a counselor at the high school I know that sometimes there are time-tabling conflicts and students lose a selected course in order to accommodate other chosen courses. For example, a band student may have to lose a selected course like First Nations Social Studies 8 so that he/she can continue with his/her band elective.

Finally, the comments section revealed that a number of parents believe that having a dedicated staff is important. They recognize that having people within Aboriginal education, who are personally committed to Aboriginal students, makes a difference to their children's welfare and success. For example, the following are direct quotes from the

comment section:

“ _____ has been a great asset in helping and counselling my children.”

“ I have been impressed with the level of care that both teachers and counsellors have shown.”

“Thank-you for the work that is done with my young people.”

“Very grateful for _____’s help and support during this transition.”

Overall, it seems that those community members who completed the survey are happy with the First Nations program at the school. In addition it seems that the community members are supportive of the classes their children attend. It also seems apparent that there is parental trust of the school staff. Therefore, from the information gathered, it seems fair to conclude that the community is supportive of the courses being taught which use authentic content.

Student Survey Results and Discussion

Purpose of the student survey.

The student survey was an additional means of giving the students a voice regarding their participation in the First Nations academic courses. Aboriginal Education describes how Canadian school systems have failed in the past to incorporate authentic and relevant Aboriginal curriculum into the classroom. The reader has had an opportunity to consider the overall impact of residential schools on the Aboriginal culture. Schools within Canada have done much to try and extinguish First Nations culture. While it may seem that the implementation of authentic Aboriginal content into the classrooms is the solution to making education more relevant and meaningful for Aboriginal students, until student voices confirm this, we cannot be certain. Therefore, the student survey was another means of trying to see if students think these courses are valuable to their education.

Students who have elected to take First Nations courses have all been made aware, in the classroom setting, that the material being used in the courses is of an authentic nature. Students have been informed that the teacher has consulted with the Elders in the community and, in addition, they have participated in classrooms where Elders and other knowledgeable community members have come to the classroom to make presentations on various subject matters. For example, Elders and other community members have been

invited to make presentations on their residential school experience and to teach the students traditional drumming and songs. Consequently, the survey information is considered to be a good representation of two integral parts of this study:

- a) what the students themselves think and feel about the academic Aboriginal courses, being offered at the school; and
- b) whether or not the students themselves think the First Nations academic courses are of value to them as Aboriginal people.

Description of the sample and sampling procedures.

Students attending the school opening dinner in October were asked to complete an anonymous survey. Like the adults who attended this same dinner, the students were informed that the survey was a means of trying to establish how the community, including the students, felt about the Aboriginal program being offered at the school. Approximately 80 people attended the dinner, 20 of whom were high school students who completed the survey (See Appendix G for student survey).

Student survey question one.

“Student gender- female/male (circle one).”

The demographic information gathered through this survey question indicates that of the 20 students who completed the survey, 8 were female 4 were male, leaving 8 students who did not identify their gender. However, when this question was considered with the subsequent question regarding the First Nations Girls Group, it seems that the number of females who completed this survey was 10, therefore, that would make the remaining 10, male. Therefore the genders are equally represented in this sample.

Student survey question two.

“Indicate your Grade level. ”

The 20 students grade levels were as follows: Grade 8, 5 students; Grade 9, 6 students; Grade 10, 3 students; Grade 11; 3 students; Grade 12, 3 students. The grade levels were all represented within this study. There were 11 students representing the junior grades and 9 representing the senior grades. One could infer that the maturation level of the learners is also varied and, therefore, provides a balanced perspective on how they appreciate the academic courses offered.

Student survey question three.

“I belong to _____ Nation.”

The following information was revealed through the above question:

Sto:lo - 5	Déné/Cree/Carrier -1	Non-status -1
Cree - 4	Cree/Métis - 1	? - 1
Déné - 1	Salish/Cree - 1	Lil’wat - 1
In-shuck-ch - 1	Iroquois - 1	
St’lateimx - 1	In-shuck-ch/Sto:lo -1	

While some students identified themselves as being Lil’wat, In-shuck-ch and St’lateimx, these are all part of the St’lateimx Nation. Therefore, the data could also be interpreted as three students belonging to St’lateimx Nation. However, there are individual characteristics within these Bands, and therefore should be considered as the students have given them. The question regarding Nation affiliation indicates that there is one student among the 25 who did not know the Nation to which he belongs. While another recorded he is Non-Status, Non-Status is a term used commonly on the West Coast to describe a person who no longer has status. Therefore, we can not assume that this person does or does not know his heritage.

The results of the demographic information indicates, like the community survey, that there is cultural variance among the students.

Student survey questions four, five, seven.

“I have, or am enrolled in, First Nations Social Studies at school __yes __no”

“I have taken, or am enrolled in First Nations Social Studies grade __8, __9, __10”

“I have taken or am enrolled in First Nations Studies 12 __yes __no”

These questions were designed to indicate whether or not students had enrolled in any of the First Nations Social Studies Courses or in the First Nations Studies 12 course. Question five indicates whether students have enrolled in more than one First Nations course. Eighteen students indicated that they were either enrolled in a First Nations Social Studies course, the Grade 12 First Nations Studies or had taken courses previous to this year. Two students indicated that they had not taken a First Nations Social Studies course or the Grade 12 First Nations Studies. However, one of those students indicated she is

enrolled in a First Nations Artistic Traditions course and the other indicated, in the comment section, that she would definitely be enrolled in a First Nations course next year.

Seven students indicated that they had taken more than one First Nations academic course. It must be noted that not all students would be in a position to take an additional academic First Nations course due to their grade level. Until last year, there was a multiple grade Social Studies course, which combined Grades 9 and 10. However, because the content of this course could not satisfy the B.C. Ministry Learning outcomes for the Grade 9 program, it was decided to discontinue the combined grades for Social Studies. In addition, there were not enough students to offer the grade 10 First Nations Social Studies course in 1999/2000.

It appears that Aboriginal students in this sample are electing to take academic First Nations courses. According to the data the number of students who have taken a First Nations Social Studies courses or the First Nations Studies 12 course is 18 of the 20. Moreover, 7 out of 12 students chose to enroll in more than one academic First Nations course, therefore students seem to take the opportunity to learn more about their history, culture and traditions through authentic curriculum.

Student survey question six.

“I thought the course I took, or am taking, was important? __yes __no?”

Nineteen of the twenty students thought the course was important. The remaining student did not select yes or no. However, the student who did not respond to this particular question is also the student who has not taken a First Nations Social Studies courses, therefore all 19 thought the courses with authentic curriculum were important.

Additional comments were provided by 9 students. Seven said the course(s) that they had either taken or were taking were important because they allowed them to learn about their personal heritage, culture and traditions. They also indicated that it allowed them to learn about other First Nation's heritage, culture and traditions. One student specifically mentioned the opportunity to learn about the local residential school. One student claimed the course was cool. Another said he/she was anxious to make his/her hand drum.

Given the information gathered, it seems that the students themselves regard the First Nations courses as being important, primarily because it provides them with an

opportunity to learn about Aboriginal history, culture and tradition.

Student survey question eleven.

“Overall I am happy with the First Nations Program ___yes ___no
comments_____.”

All 19 students who answered the question indicated that they are happy with the program. One student was not able to determine this yet as he/she was new to the school this year and needed more time to assess the program.

Students were then given the opportunity to provide additional comments on the programs at the school, and nine did so. Five of the nine students explained that they were happy with the programs being offered at the school because of the courses. Students said they thought the content is important and fun. One student indicated that she/he was not informed about the Strong Aboriginal Women's group, which runs on Mondays at the school during lunch. Another said the courses needed more variation from year to year. Two students indicated they would like to have Aboriginal language taught in the school.

From the comments it seems the students have a sense of satisfaction related to the academic First Nations courses being offered at the school. According to the survey, it seems that students are electing to take academic First Nations courses being offered at the school and they value the authentic content of those courses. In addition, the survey suggests that students are inclined to take more than one course using authentic curriculum, which suggests they have a desire to learn more about First Nations history and culture.

Teacher's Journal Results and Discussion

Purpose of teacher's journal.

The purpose of including my teaching journal was to provide the readers with some additional insight to the idiosyncrasies of this particular study. The journal is given in its entirety in Appendix H. Those entries which are of particular importance to this study have been reproduced verbatim as part of this study's data and are discussed in the following sections. The following journal entries are included to illuminate some of the patterns that emerged within the school year. The entries are organized according to the following themes: extra curricular activities, student readiness, traditional teachings and classroom interruptions.

Teacher's journal for extra curricular activities.

The following journal entries are in response to the extra curricular activities which have taken place throughout the school year. The order of events are the First Nations Grade 8 Social Studies tea and the annual welcome back to school dinner.

Sept. 13/99

Tonight is the night of the Grade 8 First Nations Social Studies tea. While, I have this tea every year, this year I will be discussing the study I am conducting in the classroom. I know that this can be a sensitive issue because of past history.

However, my community is supportive and I think it will be ok.

Sept. 14/99

Last night's tea went really well. We had twelve parents come out and the questions they asked, regarding the study, were excellent. They wanted to know if regular credit was given to the students in the course and how it followed the I.R.P. In addition, they wanted to know how I got the material to build the authentic curriculum. They wanted to know why I was covering Aboriginals in British Columbia and not Canada. One parent asked how they could get a course like this? By the end of the question period the parents seemed more then satisfied and were in support of the course being offered.

According to the teacher's perceptions, those who attended the tea were genuinely interested in the process of how the authentic curriculum was attained. Parents questioned whether or not the Elders, within the community, had been consulted and whether or not the curriculum being used would satisfy Ministry requirements. Once these questions had been satisfactorily answered and the parents were assured that their child's course would satisfy the Ministry requirements, the parents started to indicate that they wished there was a course like this when they attended school. In addition, more then one parent asked if they could take the course.

From this information it seems that the parents of those children who are enrolled in the First Nations Social Studies 8 course, not only support the authentic curriculum being used in the course, but they also support their own children taking the course.

After the grade 8 tea, the First Nations high school staff hosted their annual

welcome back to school dinner. The following entries pertain to that evening:

Oct. 25/99

Tonight is the community dinner. As usual it feels rushed and as usual I am sure it will turn out fine. I have prepared a survey for both students and adults attending the dinner. This information will be incorporated into the study, once it's analyzed.

Oct. 26/99

As usual the community came out to support the program at the school--we had over 80 people attend the dinner. However, the Elders and many of the In-shuck-ch community members needed to attend treaty negotiations and their absence was felt. The meeting for the treaty negotiations was an emergent one and could not be accommodated because the invitations had already been sent out for the dinner. Nevertheless, the evening went really well and the number of students who attended on their own was very impressive. What was also impressive was to witness the students themselves participating in the discussions that took place--it's great to witness them finding their voice with regards to issues like education. I am so proud of them.

According to my journal, the community once again came out to support the work being done at the school. It was estimated that five families didn't attend the dinner, who usually do, due to treaty negotiations. However, the dinner was still well attended. During the evening the staff made a presentation regarding the school's program. The community members were asked for their comments and they took the opportunity to ask the students themselves how they felt about the program. Students who had never before spoken publicly at such a large gathering found their voice that night and articulated the importance of the courses being offered at the school. This seems to suggest that those who attended the dinner, including the students, are willing to attest to the importance of teaching courses that use authentic Aboriginal curricula. The willingness to publicly support someone, or in this case academic courses which use authentic curriculum, is taken very seriously by those who follow the traditional ways of the Sto:lo and In-shuck-ch cultures.

My journal suggests that within public forums parents, community members and

students are supportive of the Academic First Nations courses which use authentic curriculum. In addition, the parents of the students who attend the First Nations Social Studies 8 class are aware that their child's courses need to satisfy the Ministry requirements. It seems that the Aboriginal community of this school is well informed about the First Nations courses that use authentic curricula and how those courses satisfy the Ministry's learning outcome requirements. The community surveys, my journal entries and the numbers attending both the tea and dinner suggest that the community is not only well informed about the courses being taught which use authentic curriculum, they also support them.

Teacher's journal for student readiness.

Within every classroom it is necessary for every teacher to make an assessment of classroom needs. The following entries provide some insight into this Grade 8's distinctiveness.

Feb. 9/00

Started reading the novel My Name is Seepeetza. The novel is about residential schools. The students are not responding as I had hoped to the oral reading. In addition the students are asked to start the Sto:lo traditional territory map.

Since my return there is a definite shift in the attitude of the students toward the work they are assigned. Whereas they were excited and willing to do work, they now are reluctant and seem more willing to do little work.

Feb. 11/00

Once again I am disappointed with how the students are responding to the novel My Name Is Seepeetza. When one of the children in the novel was referred to as a dirty bed wetter, the students in the class started to laugh. The laughter continued. It is clear to me that they may not be able to handle this novel. A decision will be made.

The above journal entries indicate the problematic manner in which the students responded to the novel My Name is Seepeetza by Shirley Sterling. The novel is about a young girl's experience at residential school and is written in diary style. My approach to this novel study is to read it aloud and then have students write about their thoughts and feelings

about what is happening to the characters in the novel in their reader's response journal. This novel has, in past years, been well received by students in the grade 8 course and students seemed to have learned much about residential schools through it. Believing that the residential school experience should be taught by those who attended them, this novel is a good means of introducing this sensitive subject matter. While it does not reveal all of the traumatic events which happened inside the schools, it does introduce the reader to some of the experiences Aboriginal children faced in those schools. The reading level of this novel is age appropriate, it is written at a grade 7 level, and as already mentioned, the novel is read aloud so as not to exclude students who may have reading difficulties. However, from the onset of this novel study it became apparent that these students were having difficulty taking it seriously. The novel makes reference to signs the residential school students had to wear if they wet the bed. The response of approximately five of the Grade 8 students to this excerpt was not very compassionate. Instead, they started laughing and taunting one another with bed wetter slurs. One student started writing bed wetter signs. The behaviour was disruptive and disturbing not only to myself but to other students in the class. This behaviour was not isolated and was repeated on various days of the novel being read. Because this book is of a sensitive subject matter and because the students in this particular Grade 8 Social Studies course seemed unable to attend to it, I decided not to continue with this particular novel.

Feb. 17/00

Today is a day of review--reviewed the the stories told last day and other information based on the Sto:lo. I informed the students, due to some people not taking the novel very seriously we would no longer be reading My Name is Seepeetza. Following this announcement _____ asked if she could continue the novel during the silent reading time in class. _____ is a mature student and she has a desire to learn about the history and culture. This request is encouraging in a discouraging situation.

While the novel was discontinued in the class it is important to note that not all of the students were unable or unwilling to engage with the novel in a meaningful way. As this journal entry indicates, one of the students in the classroom asked if she could continue the

story in the class's silent reading time. This student is one of the older students in the class and is more mature. Perhaps this is an indication of how important it is to know the class before starting a novel regarding this subject.

It seems from these journal entries that this particular First Nations Grade 8 Social Studies class was not ready to seriously study the experience of residential schools. The information provided by the journal entries suggests that the individual classroom must be assessed for their intellectual and emotional readiness to study such a subject. As this journal implies, I did not make this assessment prior to the novel study and therefore, was forced to decide to cancel this particular novel study. However, the journal also indicates that the interest of one student was evident when she requested to read the novel during the class's silent reading time. This request seems to remind us that students are individual and their readiness to engage with certain subject matter is dependent on their readiness to learn.

Teacher's journal for traditional teachings.

The following journal entries are in relationship to how the students respond to the traditional teachings provided in the classroom setting.

Nov. 11/99

Today I handed out the drum letter for parents. This letter gives parents an opportunity to withhold their child from making a drum. I explained that some cultures regard the drum as being too sacred to make in a classroom. Some of the students were genuinely intrigued with this concept. For many of the students they only know the drum as an instrument not as a spiritual gift. However one of the students who has been brought up quite traditionally did discuss the importance of the drum and how his grandfather taught him how the drum speaks to people.

Nov. 18/99

Today is the day--we're starting our drums. The kids are really excited. While they are usually pretty good staying quiet during silent reading--they really weren't today. I went over the journal they are expected to keep. In addition, I talked to them about keeping the person they are making the drum for in their minds while working. I reminded them that by giving the drum away to that person they are honouring and thanking that person for being important to them. Many

of the students shared that their drums are for their grandparents and parents. One of the girls said “it’s for my grandfather because he has taught me a lot about being Cree and I want to thank him.” Coincidentally, and this student does not know, but I have attended sweats that her grandfather holds and I too value the things he has taught me. One other student, probably one of the quietest male students in the class, articulated the same sentiment about his grandfather. It seems clear that these kids really do value the teachings of their grandparents and want to thank them. I am glad that we are following the tradition of the Sto:lo of giving the drum to a person we want to honour. Using the traditional teachings in the past years has been profound, I expect this year to be the same as past years--we’ll see. Today we glued our frames together and made the drum sticks. The journals are not the highlight of the activity. Sometimes I wonder about doing the journal but then the students really have used the information in the past when doing the essay for the drums.

Feb. 11/00

...On a brighter note, we started the Sto:lo oral tradition unit today with two stories of Creation--“The Salmon Story” and the “Cedar Tree” story. Both of these stories have been given to use in education by a hereditary chief in the community. I asked the students to discuss the story in groups and to determine what lesson were being taught in each of the stories. One of the girls, who has exhibited behaviour problems in the class since it began, did extremely well in this activity and was able to share with the rest of the class the importance of being generous with those who are in your community. All of the students seemed intrigued by the fact that these stories have existed for a very long time and yet they still teach valuable lessons. The students worked really well together, however_____ continues to be impatient with the younger students. She is mature for her age and being with some of these other younger students is a real challenge because in a lot of ways their behaviour issues are very immature.

The above journal entries provide some indication of how the students responded to traditional teachings regarding the drum and oral tradition. From the November 11th entry

it is clear that most of the students do not realize how important the drum is to Aboriginal tradition. As indicated, for some Nations the making of a drum in a classroom setting would be inappropriate and, therefore, the students and parents need to be given an optional activity if requested. The students' response to this explanation proved to be a good learning experience and set the tone for how the drum making should be approached.

The November 18th class was where the students were once again informed and taught the Sto:lo tradition of giving the drum away. While some of the students questioned whether they had to give it away, most of the students immediately started identifying who they were going to give their drum to and why they chose that person. It is interesting to note that every year there are students who initially say they don't want to give it away, but every year, by the time the drum is made, those same students proudly honour the person to receive the drum.

In addition to the drum journal entries, the journal on February 11th indicates that the students in this grade 8 class were genuinely impressed with the lessons taught them through the oral tradition. The teacher orally presented the Sto:lo stories of the "First Salmon" and "Cedar Tree"--both stories belong to the oral tradition. During this particular unit it was evident that the students were intrigued and thought the lessons taught through the stories were still applicable in today's world.

The journals suggest that this First Nations Grade 8 Social Studies class finds the traditional teachings both intriguing and meaningful. In addition, the results of these journal entries seem to imply that the students are able to generalize the lessons being taught to contemporary times. Therefore, it seems fair to conclude that the authentic curriculum which is a vehicle for these traditional teachings, is both interesting and important to these particular students.

Teacher's journal for classroom interruptions.

The following journal entries give some insight to the day to day activities that may impede not only the classroom environment, but may also have an overall effect on this particular study.

Nov. 26/99

Today was a half day for assessment and as I am sitting in my office doing report

cards my colleague, who leads the drum making sessions comes down finger wrapped in a large piece of cloth asking “Will you take me to the hospital I seem to have cut my finger?” Well to say the least he is lucky he did not lose the finger. The cut was very deep and could have been a lot more serious. However, we both know that this will delay the class. For how long I do not know. We will see.

Jan 25/00

Haven’t been journaling because on Jan. 20th on my way to work, I hit black ice and rolled my car. The doctor says I will be away for up to a month--I told him no I will not be. We will see. I am sending in my day plan but this is not a good situation--there are no teachers on call who specialize in First Nation’s content and therefore the students will be expected to learn from someone they are not necessarily comfortable with. In addition, I know one of the things the students like about me is I am passionate about the work I do and they pick up on that passion. I have witnessed how they get charged up when I get charged up and we tend to feed off one another. Perhaps their passion will see them through.

March 7/00

Interviewed a senior student today--he is graduating this year. He clearly indicated that the material used in his First Nations course was of benefit to him in other classes. Because he has been brought up very traditionally, I hope this helps to affirm in his mind and heart the legitimacy of his Elders’ teachings. The talk of C.U.P.E going on strike is becoming very serious. It also seems as though they are anticipating a long strike. This is a worry not only for the obvious disruption to the school and student learning but to the study I am conducting. We are nearly finished the Sto:lo unit and are preparing to begin the Dakelh Unit which is not included on the grade 8 pretest or posttest for the study. I will discuss this with Dale.

March 1/00

Back in the classroom reviewing Sto:lo material. There were problems with the teacher on call both from the perspective of the teacher and from the students. During the class discussion, and this was not linked to the T.O.C., the students

brought up how other teachers treat them as though they are not very intelligent. Some of the students told me that they are called lazy. When they hear this they attribute it to the fact that they are Aboriginal--this is not necessarily true, but this is how they filter those comments. This is a sad situation because I see the students struggling with comments like this and I also know that they internalize them. This leaves a strong impact on the students. That is why it's so important to have teachers raise the expectations of these students and show them that they are capable of doing good work. Using the authentic curriculum and seeing what and how they respond to it gives them a sense of what they, as students, can achieve. I keep telling them that I will not accept mediocre work, I only want their best.

March 10/00

We have finished the Sto:lo unit and are preparing for the quiz. Again, the strike that seems to be looming is becoming a real factor. Because the students have covered the major learning outcomes for the authentic curriculum, I have decided to give them the study's posttest this week following the Sto:lo quiz. I have discussed this with Dale and because of the pending strike, which is to take place immediately following the Spring Break, and because the material yet to be covered in the course is not going to affect the results of the study, we have decided to go ahead and conclude the study by giving the posttest this week.

Oct. 10/99

One of our students was referred to another school today. The student was asked to leave for behaviours outside the school. He was violent with another student and was charged with breaking and entering. I hope this young man gets the counselling he so desperately needs--too many things for this kid to handle.

Oct. 18/99

Another student from the class was referred to another school. This time for truancy. It seems that this year is worse with respect to grade 8's skipping all classes, not just First Nations. I have heard other teachers' talk about the attitude of this years grade 8's. While it is good to know this is not indicative of the Aboriginal grade 8's, it is still of great concern. It seems schools need to start

doing some more preventative programs at the elementary level. We can't wait until they get to grade 8 because they are already lost.

Jan. 17/00

Another two students are asked to leave because of truancy. They are both transferred to an alternative school in the district.

Among the journal entries there is a host of information that suggests that there are day to day occurrences which affect the learning environment. For example, the teacher who is leading the students in making their drums accidentally hurts himself. This accident prevented him from continuing this unit and the drum unit was postponed until later in the year. The students were obviously disappointed and resented having to turn their attention from the hands-on activity, to a more academic one.

Another example of how unpredictable events can affect the daily activities of the classroom was when I had a car accident which prevented me from being in the classroom for over ten days. During this time a teacher on call replaced me. However, during subsequent classroom discussions, the students indicated that the teacher on call was not knowledgeable of the subject matter and did not provide the same direction as I had. In addition, as the March 1 journal indicates, the students are sensitive to how other teachers treat them. According to the students, their sense is that not all teachers treat them as though they are capable of doing academic work. This perception, while it cannot be determined to be true within this study, has an effect on how the students approach their academic courses.

The journals of October 10, 18 and January 17 provide some evidence to the number of students who have been transferred from this school to an alternate school program. As was previously discussed in the Grade 8 pretest and posttest section, most of the students were asked to leave this school because of their truancy from all of their classes. While having students transferred from the school has an impact on the classroom setting, so does the behaviour of absenteeism. For example, in what is already considered to be a small class of eighteen, when students are missing from class, it has an impact on the other students and in some cases, can entice other students to miss school.

Finally, the journal entry on March 10th regarding the impending and subsequent

strike action, provides information regarding how the politics of the school system can be an issue within individual classrooms. Once again, the momentum of the classroom is interrupted by conditions outside the control of the students or the teacher in the classroom. The impact of the strike, which lasted a week, certainly did affect the First Nations Grade 8 Social Studies classroom. The students were engaged with the material being taught before the strike, but by the time school resumed, additional review was required. In addition, because it was unknown how long the strike would last, it was decided to expedite the posttest. While it was felt that the students had covered the material necessary to satisfy the Ministry Learning outcomes and those of the authentic curriculum and, therefore, could write the posttest without undermining the study, it may also be true that some of the students could have benefited from additional days of in class review before writing the posttest.

The information gathered through my teacher's journal suggests that the classroom environment had numerous interruptions during the course of this study. Most of these interruptions disturbed the learning momentum in the classroom and, in some cases, took time away from student study.

In summary, it seems that my journal provides additional information regarding the student's engagement with the authentic curriculum. The information gathered seems to suggest that in spite of numerous interruptions and loss of classroom time, the students remained interested and maintained their desire to learn about Aboriginal history and culture through the authentic curriculum. When coupled with the results of the pretest and posttest, it seems that in spite of these interruptions, the students were engaged with the authentic curriculum in a meaningful way. As the posttest results indicate, the students knowledge about Aboriginal cultural content was increased significantly after they had been taught the authentic curriculum.

Teacher's Reflections Results and Discussion

Purpose of teacher's reflections.

The purpose of including my reflections in this project is to provide the reader with an additional window on the particulars of what happened during this study. The particulars to be discussed in this section are those that would in all likelihood be lost if this

study relied exclusively on the results of tests or surveys. Within the parameters of teaching and engaging with students on a daily basis, there is information that comes to teachers that inspire them to continue in their quest to share knowledge with their students. I consider myself to be one of the most fortunate teachers because routinely I am privy to such inspiration. Students, Elders, and other community members are constantly encouraging me to continue on the path I have chosen to engage students with authentic Aboriginal curricula. It is hoped that by including some of my reflections that the reader will gain further insight into implementing authentic curricula and how important it is for Aboriginal students and the Aboriginal community. The reflections are based on my journal, excerpts from my teaching day book and personal memories and are grouped under three headings: classroom observations, community observations and research observations.

Teacher's reflections on classroom observations.

The start of every year brings new challenges and amongst the most important is to acquaint yourself with your students. While doing so, I have always tried to ascertain what my students know regarding Aboriginal history prior to teaching the course. I have found that there are years where I will have students in the class who are very knowledgeable and then there are years where the students are very unfamiliar with Aboriginal content. This year's class proved to be one of the latter. Apart from one student in the class, I was convinced that many had embarked on new educational territory coming into this course. For example, at the beginning of the year they were not sure of their own cultural heritage, they did not know very much about the Nation in which the school was located, the Sto:lo, and they did not understand the significance of cultural areas. However, by the end of this year's course all the students knew the above information and could dialogue about it in classroom discussions confidently. Whereas even the most gregarious students were initially quiet during classroom discussions, this classroom was transformed into periods of on-task discussions involving how rivers and trees affected the lifestyle of the Sto:lo and how the Dakelh were migratory because they traditionally followed the migration of caribou and moose. This class often buzzed with revelations regarding how Nations were different from one another--not better or less then, but different due to the cultural area in which they lived. This observation is what led me to believe that students misunderstood posttest

question seven.

Students who did not come into the course with traditional knowledge, once some fundamental premises were in place, started to ask questions often associated with higher level thinking patterns. For example, one student after being taught the units on the Sto:lo and the Dakelh started to question what cultural exchanges would have been made when Nations were trading with one another. This student went on to discuss whether or not traditional stories would have been exchanged by those who were involved in economic trade. Clearly, this student was conducting his own independent inquiry based on some of the information shared in the above units.

Another observation made regarding classroom behaviour is the manner in which students participated in the drumming unit. In spite of the interruptions to this unit, the students maintained their enthusiasm and respect for this activity. After the drums were made, I invited a community member to teach the students some traditional Squatin songs. During the first practice session students were initially reserved and played the drums tentatively. However, it was during this same practice that I observed some of the students coming to new life. One young man in the group, one of the quietest in the class, was obviously moved by the activity. I had not seen this student become so excited by anything as he did with this activity. He drummed with all his heart and his voice could be heard above all the other students. In subsequent sessions, I noticed this young man positioning himself close to the community leader teaching the students and taking pride when the leader acknowledged his efforts. Later I said to this student that it seems you were enjoying the drumming. He responded, “I love it Ms. Shaw.” When I asked why he loved it, he said, “it just feels so right when I am drumming.” Coincidentally, this student’s heritage was the same as the community leader who was teaching the traditional drumming, and ironically until this student took this course, he was unaware of what his culture was.

My reflections involving classroom behaviour provide the reader with a more intimate look at the practice within the classroom. Accordingly, it seems to me that the fact students who were unable to engage in discussions at the beginning of the year, and later become adept at not only discussing but leading the discussions with sound critical thinking, suggests to me that the students were interested and learned the content being

taught in this course. Through the inclusion of these reflections the reader is able to understand that on different occasions students were personally affected by the opportunities availed to them through this course. The students observed behaviour in classes clearly indicates they were actively engaged in learning.

Teacher's reflections on community observations.

Coming into this high school community four years ago, I was advised by various people within the school that this would be a difficult position. Relations between the Aboriginal community and the school had been strained for sundry reasons and there were racial tensions. After being at the school a short time, I learned that the community in which I worked had been the location of a residential school. The doors to this residential school had remained open until 1984 and members of this Aboriginal community were those who once attended this school. In fact, one of the students I taught during the first year of coming to this area had attended this residential school. This particular student came from what is referred to as "The top of the lake" and because this band had no school at the time, they sent their children to the residential school in this community. For those who are contemplating that residential schools closed long before this date, the fact is, students who live far distances from schools are still relocated in residential schools so that they can receive their education. Therefore, one of the reasons that bad relations existed between the school and the Aboriginal community seemed to be because of a deep seated mistrust often associated with residential schools. However, I followed my beliefs about Aboriginal education and consulted with parents and Elders. I found that the community, while wary of me at first, came to accept me and has supported me and the work that I do. It is when Elders, parents, and educational colleagues approach me and tell me they appreciate the changes authentic Aboriginal curricula has brought that I am convinced we have made inroads within this school's Aboriginal educational program.

Another reflective observation to be mentioned is the shift in how parents, Elders and community members relate to the school. When I arrived at this high school, there was a noticeable reluctance on the part of the Aboriginal community to come into the high school. This reluctance is not unique to this school and again it can often be associated with bad experiences First Nations have had within residential schools and public education. I

recall one particular Band Educational Coordinator inviting me to attend an educational meeting at the Native housing complex. It was explained to me when I got there, by the parents attending the meeting, that they preferred not to come to the school as they did not feel welcome. Now, some of those same parents are initiating educational meetings at the school. They are now coming confidently into the high school to advocate for their children, to celebrate their childrens' accomplishments and to be part of the planning for Aboriginal education. This is not to say that the issues within the community have all disappeared. There are parents and Elders who still feel uncomfortable in our schools--this is a sad and understandable reality. However, there is progress being made and that progress is due to influential Elders and community members taking the risk to trust again. The role modeling that the Elders and community members have provided to the students is invaluable in promoting student success. Students recognize that their Elders and family members want them to be successful in the educational system and this has a profound effect on how the students apply themselves at school.

Teacher's reflections on this research.

This study has been based on an analysis of data provided by those who are most affected by the implementation of authentic Aboriginal curricula: The First Nations students and the First Nations community of this particular high school. This study took place over a short period of time. It is recognized that had this been a longitudinal study, where student success was tracked over a few years, the analyses of using authentic Aboriginal curricula would be more meaningful.

In retrospect, a weakness of this study was the grade 8 pretest and posttest. While the instruments did provide a means of showing how the curriculum could be used in correlation to the Ministry I.R.P learning outcomes, the actual results of the pretest and posttest were not as significant as I hoped they would be. While the test results do suggest that the students did learn and were able to retain the information regarding Aboriginal history and culture, the stronger evidence for supporting the use of authentic curriculum is found in the other research instruments of this study, particularly in the interviews and my journal.

As I have argued at advisory meetings, counsellor & administrative meetings,

ministry meetings and professional development seminars, statistics do not reflect the context nor the learning that occurs within classrooms. The same is true for this study. The richness of my classroom, the experiences of my students and the sense of the community the school serves were lost in the pre and post tests and to a large extent in the surveys. As the study progressed, it became increasingly important to me to include my journal and reflections about my classroom and about my community. Tests and surveys did not show how an Elder came to a First Nations school dinner and discussed publicly the residential school experience he had and how it affected his parenting. Tests and surveys did not show how students have discussed with pride their ancestors technological expertise. Tests and surveys did not demonstrate how a group of students, under the leadership of a community member, who once attended residential school, basked in their ability to learn a traditional prayer song-- a prayer song that the residential school was intended to take from the leader's lips. The inclusion of my reflections is vital in this project. These reflections provide the reader with a more wholistic account of what occurred within this particular Aboriginal community with respect to education, and with respect to the effects of authentic Aboriginal curricula. I believe that if you want to understand curriculum and classrooms and students and communities, you must include qualitative descriptive information in the research. Without the richness of descriptive data the essence of all is lost.

Chapter IV: Conclusion

The purpose of this study was twofold: to determine whether using authentic Aboriginal curricula has a positive effect on First Nations students, and to determine whether the Aboriginal community supported those courses using authentic Aboriginal curricula. According to the results of this study, there are four major findings: students did learn the authentic curricula; the authentic curricula increased student self-esteem; the Aboriginal community does support the use of authentic Aboriginal curricula and Aboriginal students support the development and implementation of authentic curricula.

Within any course it is important to determine whether or not the students grasp the concepts being taught. The First Nations grade 8 Social Studies course is no exception to this premise. As a teacher in British Columbia it is fundamental that what I bring to the classroom is a reflection of the Ministry Learning Outcomes. It is also fundamental that the students I am responsible for are provided with the mandated Ministry skills. According to the results on the pre and posttests, my teaching journal and personal reflections, it seems that the authentic curriculum is a means of achieving the goals. For example, within classroom discussions and according to the pre and posttest most of the students were, after being taught the authentic curriculum, able to describe the importance of geography in relationship to the development of culture. Furthermore, from the interviews, it is apparent that students were able to use the concepts being taught in First Nations courses for other courses being taught at the high school. Students taking what they have learned in one course to another is evidence that they are able to contemplate and synthesize information so that it is applicable to other educational arenas--definitely an indication of critical thinking.

This study also suggests that implementing authentic Aboriginal curricula has a positive effect on First Nations students' self-esteem. According to the data collected during the student interviews, and student and community surveys, the courses using authentic Aboriginal curricula contributed to the students developing a healthy sense of self. By providing Aboriginal students with material that reflects their history and culture it seems that they gained an appreciation for their ancestral heritage. The implementation of authentic Aboriginal curricula is a means of validating and

legitimizing the history and culture of First Nations. This legitimization had a profound effect on the self-esteem of some Aboriginal students. According to Student F, who participated in the interviews, the First Nations courses have enabled him to “feel proud to know who my people are what my people did and how long they have been here. I am proud of the respect it gives my culture.” Student A also provided poignant evidence during the interview process when she said “...it’s just as important as science or socials or something. Maybe other people don’t think so, but, it helped me find me, you know.” Students who have taken First Nations courses which use authentic curricula articulate that the content of those courses has enhanced their self-esteem. It seems that providing students with an opportunity to learn about the history and contributions of their ancestors enables students to feel better about themselves.

In addition to increasing student learning and student self-esteem, this study also provides evidence that suggests that this high school’s Aboriginal community supports the development and implementation of authentic Aboriginal curricula. Through the community survey, the teacher’s journal and my reflections, it seems that this particular Aboriginal community does support curricula which are developed in consultation with Elders and other knowledgeable community members, and that they support their children taking those courses. For example, numerous parents acknowledged on the survey that the courses using authentic curricula have made a difference for their children. Comments like “My child comes home proud that she has learned something of Traditional Values,” or “It has helped my child establish who she is” indicate that the parents of children taking these courses support the implementation of authentic curricula.

Moreover the participation of the Aboriginal community within the school is another indication of their support. Parents, Elders and other community members coming out for the annual “Welcome back to school dinner” and the “First Nations grade 8 tea” are considered to be signs of support for the First Nations program and the implementation of authentic Aboriginal curricula.

Finally, this study shows through the teaching journal, my reflections and student interviews, that the students themselves support the implementation of authentic

curricula. The mere fact that the students are choosing to register in these courses is an indication that they want the opportunity to learn about their heritage. Student surveys indicate that many students are choosing to take First Nations courses as often as they can.

In addition, the student interviews provide the reader with numerous examples of how and why students support the courses using authentic curricula. One cannot lose sight of how Aboriginal students believe that having courses like these are important in breaking stereotypes and addressing racism. Student B suggested during her interview that “...some people look at Natives and think they are just Natives. They are getting a chance to learn about the differences of First Nations.” No one can argue that racism still exists in this country and that it affects children profoundly. If students are able to articulate that they support courses like the ones that use authentic curricula because they help break the cycle of racism, should we, the professionals within the systems of education, not be willing to listen?

Implications of this Study

Implications for Aboriginal students.

The results of this study suggest that there is a need to develop and implement authentic Aboriginal curricula for First Nations students. According to this study's findings, First Nations students benefit from engaging with authentic Aboriginal curricula because it satisfies both academic and emotional needs. Therefore, while this study did not find conclusive evidence relating how authentic curricula might prevent Aboriginal students from dropping out of school, it does show a relationship between authentic curricula and self-esteem. This study suggests that the implementation of authentic Aboriginal curricula is not going to resolve all of the issues related to why Aboriginal students drop out of high school, only that it might be one means of retaining some of the students who might otherwise drop out.

Implications for Aboriginal community.

From this study it seems that the Aboriginal community would be justified in wanting their children to have the opportunity to learn about the heritage and cultures of First Nations within Canada. Against the backdrop of Canadian history, it is clear that

the manner in which Aboriginal history and culture were omitted from courses or the way they were taught within public education has had a far reaching impact on Aboriginal students. Students in this study met the I.R.P. requirements of the B.C. Ministry through authentic Aboriginal curricula. Students clearly thought that the inclusion of Aboriginal content was important in their education. Therefore, these results provide parents, Elders and other community members with some evidence to support the position that by incorporating authentic and relevant Aboriginal curricula, Aboriginal students may have better academic success within the school system while still meeting academic ministry guidelines.

The development and implementation of authentic Aboriginal curricula is one means of restoring the history and culture that was severely challenged by residential schools. According to those who attended residential schools and to those who developed policy for these institutions, the goal of residential schools was to eradicate Aboriginal culture and history from Canada. The development and implementation of authentic Aboriginal curricula are, in a sense, a form of restitution that should be made to those who endured the experience of residential school. It is also a form of restitution that should be made to counter the significant cultural loss that was caused by residential schools.

Finally, the development and implementation of Aboriginal curricula challenges the stereotypes that have been perpetuated within Canadian society. Aboriginal communities have had to contend with the manifested images of First Nations. These manifestations have fed into and perpetuated the stereotypes of Aboriginal people for decades. This study suggests that by having authentic Aboriginal curricula, widely held stereotypes are challenged and, as a result, perhaps a more responsible view of Aboriginal people will emerge. Therefore it is critical to include authentic Aboriginal curriculum for non-Aboriginal students as well as Aboriginal students.

Implications for public education.

Finally, this study has implications for British Columbia's public education system. The results of this study suggest that students are more apt to engage in the educational process when what they are learning is perceived as relevant by them.

Therefore, this research suggests that school systems must be willing to adapt to the intellectual needs of the students. Perhaps the time has come to ensure that students within Canada have the opportunity to learn about its historical fabric--contexts which continue to have an impact on the contemporary circumstances of Aboriginal people.

Further, according to this research, by developing and implementing authentic Aboriginal curricula, students may gain insight into the contributing factors which have affected all Canadian citizens. By providing authentic Aboriginal curricula within the classroom, Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students alike will understand the cultural differences between Aboriginal people. All students will gain insight as to how residential schools were institutions pledged to ridding Canada of Aboriginal culture. Students will also have the opportunity to consider the implications of biased curricula. This study suggests that authentic Aboriginal curricula may empower students to become ambassadors for fairer representation of Aboriginal issues and may encourage the elimination of racism in our multicultural communities.

Suggestions for Future Research

This study has provided evidence to support the development and implementation of authentic Aboriginal curricula. The information gathered indicates that authentic curricula do have a positive impact on First Nations students. In addition, the study suggests that the Aboriginal community supports the development and implementation of authentic and relevant Aboriginal curricula. However, a future consideration for subsequent studies be include the methodology used by the researcher. From this study it seems apparent that researchers involved in this type of study are required to work within the Aboriginal community to be able to access pertinent information. After completing this study, I am convinced that more meaningful data was acquired through the student interviews, the teaching journal and my personal reflections rather than tests and surveys. Therefore, congruent with how authentic curricula is to be developed in consultation with community members, it seems that the very nature of this type of study requires the researcher to enter the field, experience the context personally and gather the information directly from the Aboriginal community.

Furthermore, future consideration should be given to conducting longitudinal studies with students who have had an opportunity to engage with authentic Aboriginal curricula. By tracking students who have taken courses using authentic curricula, analyses could be made as to whether the courses they took enabled them academically and emotionally. Longitudinal studies could follow Aboriginal students from the primary and intermediate levels to try and determine if early opportunities with authentic curricula would be meaningful to the academic progress of Aboriginal students.

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Appendix A

First Nations Social Studies Grade Eight Consent Letter

Oct. 4, 1999

Dear Parent (Guardian)

Your child has elected to take the First Nations Grade Eight Social Studies program. By being in this class the student will be expected to meet all the learning outcomes the British Columbia Ministry of Education requires, but they will do that through the use of First Nations material. To help us show the need to teach First Nations material in public high schools, I am going to conduct a study in this year's grade eight classroom. This study will require that I, the classroom teacher, collect information pertaining to the manner in which your child participates and appreciates the content being taught in the classroom. Within this study your child will be required to take a pre test, to determine how much information he or she already knows about First Nations within British Columbia. In addition, they will be asked to do a post test at the end of the year, asking again, what she or he knows about First Nations within British Columbia. In addition to learning about First Nations within British Columbia, it is hoped the study will show this type of curricula being taught in classrooms, will either maintain a sense of confidence in being of First Nations heritage, and/or their self esteem will be enhanced by learning about First Nations.

Please note that all information will be handled in a confidential and professional manner. When the responses are released, they will be reported in anonymous summary form only. Further, all names, locations and any other identifying information will not be included in any discussion of the results. In addition, if your child wants to withdraw from the study at anytime, they may do so without academic penalty.

If you have any questions please feel free to call me at 826-7191. In addition, if you have any questions you would like to ask my supervisor, Dr. Dale Burnett, at the University of Lethbridge, he can be reached at (403) 329-2416. (email: dale.burnett@uleth.ca), and/or you may speak to any member of the Faculty of Education Human Subject Research Committee if you wish additional information. The chairperson of the committee is Dr. Richard Butt and he may be reached at (403) 329-2456. (email: richard.butt@uleth.ca)

Sincerely,
Jody Shaw

First Nations Counsellor/Teacher (604) _____

Please detach and forward the signed portion to Ms. J. Shaw

~~~~~  
Authentic and Relevant Curriculum makes an academic and emotional difference to  
First Nations Students

I agree to allow my child, \_\_\_\_\_ to participate in this  
study. student's name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Parent's (Guardian's) Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Parent's (Guardian's) Signature

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Appendix B  
Student Interview Consent Letter

Nov. 21, 1999

Dear Parent ( Guardian)

In the past, your child has participated in the academic First Nations program at \_\_\_\_\_ Secondary. In order to show the necessity of such academic courses I am conducting a study within my Masters Graduate program, at the University of Lethbridge. This study will require that I collect information pertaining to the manner in which your child participated and appreciated the content being taught in the classroom. Therefore with your child's permission, and your consent, I would like to interview her or him, to gain their perspective on the course(s) they took pertaining to First Nations content. The interview will be based on two areas of interest, whether your child believes the course they took was of academic, social and emotional worth to them personally, and whether or not they believe the school system should continue to support First Nations academic programs. Please note that all information will be handled in a confidential and professional manner. When the responses are released, they will be reported in anonymous summary form only. Further, all names, locations and any other identifying information will not be included in any discussion of the results.

If you have any questions please feel free to call me at \_\_\_\_\_. In addition, if you have any questions you would like to ask my supervisor, Dr. Dale Burnett, at the University of Lethbridge, he can be reached at (403) 329-2416. (email: dale.burnett@uleth.ca), and/or you may speak to any member of the Faculty of Education Human Subject Research Committee if you wish additional information. The chairperson of the committee is Dr. Richard Butt and he may be reached at (403) 329-2456. (email: richard.butt@uleth.ca)

Sincerely,

Jody Shaw

First Nations Counsellor/Teacher \_\_\_\_\_

Please detach and forward the signed portion to Ms. J. Shaw

~~~~~  
Authentic and Relevant Curriculum makes an academic and emotional difference to First Nations Students

I agree to allow my child, _____ to participate in this study.
student's name

Parent's (Guardian's) Name

Parent's (Guardian's) Signature

Date _____

Appendix C

British Columbia Ministry of Education Prescribed Social Studies Eight Learning
Outcomes & Segments of the First Nations Social Studies Eight Course

Grade 8 Prescribed Learning Outcomes

It is expected that students will:

- identify factors that influence the development and decline of world civilizations
- compare daily life, family structures, and gender roles in a variety of civilizations
- describe a variety of diverse cultural traditions world religions
- demonstrate awareness of artistic expression as a reflection of the culture in which it is produced
- identify periods of significant cultural achievement, including the Renaissance
- describe how societies preserve identity, transmit culture and adapt to change.
- demonstrate understanding of the tension between individual rights and the responsibilities of citizens i a variety of civilizations
- assess the impact of contact, conflict, and conquest on civilizations
- describe various ways individuals and groups can influence legal systems and political structures
- explain the development and importance of government systems
- construct, interpret, and use graphs, tables, grids, scales, legends, and various types of maps
- locate and describe current and historical events on maps
- describe how physical geography influenced patterns of settlement, trade and exploration
- analyse how people interacted with an d altered their environments, in terms of
 - * population
 - * settlement patterns
 - * resource use
 - * cultural development
- identify and clarify a problem an issue, or an inquiry
- select and summarize information from primary and secondary print and non print sources including electronic sources

- assess the reliability, currency and objectivity of different interpretations of primary and secondary sources
- defend a position on a controversial issue after considering a variety of perspectives plan , revise, and deliver formal oral and written presentations
- co-operatively plan, implement and assess a course of action that addresses the problem, issue, or inquiry initially identified
- locate and describe current and historical events on maps
- gather and organize a body of information from primary an secondary print and non-print sources, including electronic sources
- interpret and evaluate a variety of primary and secondary sources
- assess a variety of positions on controversial issues
- plan, revise, and deliver written and oral presentations
- compare basic economic systems and different forms of exchange
- analyse the effect of commerce on trade routes, settlement patterns, and cultural exchanges
- compare the changing nature of labour in rural and urban environments
- describe the impact of technological innovation and science on political, social, and economic structures

Introductory Unit to First Nations

Concept Outline- There are many cultures under the title of First Nations. Within British Columbia alone there are over 30 traditional First Nations. Each of these Nations has its own cultural identity. These cultural identities develop according to the natural environment of which they are a part of.

Class Time- 2 blocks

Purpose- Students will become aware of the culture areas of B.C First Nations and recognize there were traditional boundaries before the arrival of Europeans.

Teaching Strategies- Explain there are many cultures under the label of First Nations. Brain storm as a class the Nations they can think of within Canada. Beside each name write down the province they believe that the Nation is in. Discuss how they have located these Nations using the boundaries invented by Europeans. Using the Canadian Atlas over head show how First Nations boundaries differed from the ones established by Europeans.

Do another brainstorm, only this time confine the Nations discussed to the area now known as British Columbia. Hand out the maps needed for the activity and have them complete the assignment:

Have students identify and clearly mark the territories of the Sto:lo, Carrier and Nisga.

Have students enter the vocabulary words into their dictionary.

Vocabulary Words

- Aboriginal
- Treaties
- Sto:lo
- Culture Area

Resources

Map of B.C

Map of Canada

Map of First Nations within Canada and B.C

Evaluation:

- students will participate in brain storming activities
- students will complete the mapping handouts
- students will identify and clearly mark the Sto:lo, Nisga, Shuswap and Carrier Nations
- students will enter vocabulary words into their dictionary

Prescribed Learning Outcomes

- explain the development and importance of government systems
- construct, interpret, and use graphs, tables, grids, scales, legends, and various types of maps
- locate and describe current and historical events on maps
- assess the reliability, currency and objectivity of different interpretations of primary and secondary sources

Introductory Unit to First Nations

Concept Outline- Students will explore the significance of given culture areas on the development of traditional First Nations cultures. Specifically this class will look at the following culture areas and their unique cultures-Sto:lo, Shuswap, Carrier, Nisga and the Metis. For example, by looking at the Sto:lo natural environment, students will gain an appreciation for the variance amongst First Nations cultures when they contrast it to the Carrier's natural environment their culture.

Purpose- The purpose of this study is to introduce students to the idea that the natural environment of First Nations was the overriding factor in the development of particular cultures. This explains why the Sto:lo Nation is dramatically different from the Shuswap or Nisga.

Class time- 4 blocks

Teaching Strategies-

Block 1

Explain to students that the natural environment of any First Nation is the determining factor of how that particular culture developed.

Give definitions for culture, cultural area.

Divide students into groups of four. Have students answer the following questions
1) What is a culture made up of? 2) What in the natural environment will determine the particulars of a culture. Give them an example- the Cedar Tree found in Sto:lo territory is part of their culture. It shows in their housing and basketry.

Block 2

Prior to going to the computer lab students will be given the assigned questions, these will be reviewed together. Go to Mac Lab and access internet site:

<http://www.bcarchives.gov.bc.ca/exhibits/timemach/>

Have students read the first two of the four essays, students should be taking notes to answer the given questions.

Block 3

Give students the remaining questions, which are based on the final two essays located at <http://www.bcarchives.gov.bc.ca/exhibits/timemach/>. Have students read and take notes on the essays.

Block 4

In class have students write out the answers for the given essay questions

Note, following this lesson there will be a quiz based on mapping, vocabulary, and the questions based on the internet essays.

Vocabulary Words

Culture

Resources

Inter net web cite- <http://www.bcarchives.gov.bc.ca/exhibits/timemach/>

Prepared questions

Evaluation

- students will access internet cite successfully
- students will take notes from internee essays
- students will answer given questions in proper sentences
- students will write quiz based on this particular unit

Prescribed Learning outcomes

- compare daily life, family structures, and gender roles in a variety of civilizations
- construct, interpret, and use graphs, tables, grids, scales, legends, and various types of maps
- locate and describe current and historical events on maps
- describe how physical geography influenced patterns of settlement, trade and exploration
- select and summarize information from primary and secondary print and non print sources including electronic sources

Appendix D

First Nations Grade Eight Social Studies Pretest and Posttest

First Nations Grade 8 Social Studies Pretest

Please indicate the following information:

Male or Female

Age- _____

1. Explain who First Nations are? _____

2. Name three First Nations (Nations) outside of what is now known as British Columbia?

a. _____

b. _____

c. _____

3. How many First Nations (Nations) are within what is now known as British Columbia? _____

4. Name three First Nations (Nations) within what is now known as British Columbia?

a. _____

b. _____

c. _____

4. Who are the Sto:lo?

5. In which Nation does Mission Secondary School lie in? _____

continued pg.2 First Nations Grade 8 Social Studies Pretest

6. Why is it important to study the traditional cultural areas of First Nations?

7. Name one First Nations person you think is a good role model, and explain why you admire them?

8. In your own words explain why you selected the Grade 8 First Nations Social Studies class? Use the other side of the sheet if more room is needed to explain.

9. Who are the

Métis? _____

10. I am proud to be a First Nations person (please circle one of the below responses)

Always

Most of the time

Sometimes

First Nations Grade 8 Social Studies Posttest

Please indicate the following information:

Male or Female

Age- _____

1. Explain who First Nations are? _____

2. Name three First Nations (Nations) outside of what is now known as British Columbia?

a. _____

b. _____

c. _____

3. How many First Nations (Nations) are within what is now known as British Columbia? _____

4. Name three First Nations (Nations) within what is now known as British Columbia?

a. _____

b. _____

c. _____

4. Who are the Sto:lo?

5. In which Nation does Mission Secondary School lie in? _____

continued pg.2 First Nations Grade 8 Social Studies Posttest

6. Why is it important to study the traditional cultural areas of First Nations?

7. Name one First Nations person you think is a good role model, and explain why you admire them?

8. In your own words explain why you selected the Grade 8 First Nations Social Studies class? Use the other side of the sheet if more room is needed to explain.

9. Who are the

Métis? _____

10. I am proud to be a First Nations person (please circle one of the below responses)

Always

Most of the time

Sometimes

Appendix E

Interview Blueprint

- Introduction of the topic
- Address issues of confidentiality; tape recorded; no right or wrong answers.
- Are you comfortable having the interview in my office?
- What Nation do you belong to?
- What First Nations courses have you taken at Mission Secondary?
- When did you take the First Nations Studies 12 course?

Two main issues to discuss:**a) The significance of First Nations Academic courses to First Nations students:**

1. With respect to the First Nations 12 course what was the most important thing you learned in that course?
2. Would you say the course you took influenced how you feel about being a First Nations person?
3. Would you say the course you took was of benefit to the non-First Nations people who were in the course?
4. Was the course you took of any benefit to you in any other course or courses you may be taking at ____ Secondary?

b) Should the public school system support First Nations Courses:

5. Do you think the school system should financially support the First Nations courses we offer at ____ Secondary?
6. Do you think the school system is doing enough with respect to First Nations education?
Do you have any suggestions?

Appendix F

First Nations Community Survey

Parent / Guardian / Grandparent/ Elder/ Other _____
Please Circle One

I have _____ children at _____ School.

My children belong to _____ Nation.

My child has taken First Nations Social Studies at _____ Secondary ____ / ____
yes no

My child has taken First Nations Social Studies grade ____ / ____ / ____
8 9 10

My child has taken First Nations Studies 12 ____ / ____
yes no

Overall I am happy with the First Nations academic courses offered at _____

Secondary ____ / ____
yes no

Comments-

My daughter takes part in the First Nations Girls Group ____ / ____
yes no

Overall I am happy with the services my child receives at _____
Secondary

____ / ____
yes no

Comments _____

As a parent/guardian I believe that the annual Fall Dinner is an important social function for our school community- yes no (please circle one)

Appendix G

First Nations Student Survey

Student Gender- Female/ Male (circle one)

Grade- _____

I belong to _____ Nation

I have, or am enrolled in First Nations Social Studies at _____ School.

_____/_____
yes no

I have taken, or am enrolled, in First Nations Social Studies grade _____
8 9 10

I thought the course I took, or am taking is important. yes / no

Comments- _____

I have taken, or am enrolled in First Nations Studies 12 _____/_____
yes no

I have taken, or am enrolled in First Nations Artistic Traditions
_____/_____
yes no

I take part in the First Nations Girls Group _____/_____
yes no

I make use of the First Nations Counselling Services _____/_____
yes no

Overall I am happy with the First Nations programs at Mission Secondary.
_____/_____
yes no

Comments _____

Appendix H

Teacher's Journal

Sept. 7

Have met the students and they are excited to be in a high school. However, they are also nervous about the new environment in which they are in. Little do they know that most of the teachers have butterflies too. The students at this point seem in awe of the fact that their counsellor is also their teacher for this Social Studies class. While they were told this is how it would be, they seem to like the idea I am in the classroom. There are 18 students, all of whom have chosen to be in the course. Today I gave them a little activity so that I can learn more about who they are as individuals. I also gave them invitations for a tea to give their parents. Students were told of my university study and they seemed intrigued with the fact that I still go to university while I work.

Sept. 9

Students are continuing to work on activities to let me know more about them as people. They are fun activities and they seem to be enjoying them. The activities do provide a different window on things.

Sept. 13

Tonight is the night of the Grade 8 First Nations Social Studies tea. While, I have this tea every year, this year I will be discussing the study I am conducting in the classroom. I know that this can be a sensitive issue because of past history. However, my community is supportive and I think it will be ok.

Sept. 14

Last night's tea went really well. We had twelve parents come out and the questions they asked regarding the study were excellent. They wanted to know if regular credit was given to the students in the course and how it followed the I.R.P. In addition, they wanted to know how I got the material to build the authentic curriculum. They wanted to know why I was covering Aboriginals in British Columbia and not Canada. One parent asked how they could get a course like this? By the end of the question period the parents seemed more than satisfied and were in support of the course being offered.

In class today we began our geography unit.

Sept. 16

Students worked on and completed the Atlas assignment. It is clear that the class is made up of students of various academic levels, nothing new here. A number of students have behaviour issues. Some of the behaviours involve some serious issues outside the class and in actuality the students who I am most concerned with are very pleasant in the class and work hard on their assignments. I am worried especially about three or four of the boys in the classroom.

Oct. 4

We are continuing to work on the mapping unit. It is clear to me that next year I would like to teach the mapping skills by using First Nations material. There is no reason why students can not learn longitude and latitude using Aboriginal content.

Oct. 6

The students are beginning to grumble about not doing First Nations stuff. They continue to ask when are we going to make our drums? This is such a highlight for the kids, as well as the community. It will be interesting to see if in fact, like every other year, they are concerned about having to give away their drum. Every year it seems that the students grumble about the traditional process only to be eager to honour the person by the time the drum is completed.

Oct. 8

Two new students started today. I am worried about them- they are coming to us from an in district high school with atrocious attendance. We will try our best to support them, they really are very nice kids.

Oct. 10

One of our students was referred to another school today. The student was asked to leave for behaviours outside the school. He was violent with another student and was charged with breaking and entering. I hope this young man get the counselling he so desperately needs, too many things for this kid to handle.

Oct. 18

Another student from the class was referred to another school. This time for truancy. It seems that this year is worse with respect to grade 8's skipping all classes, not just First Nations. I have heard other teachers talk about the attitude of this years grade 8's. While it is good to know this is not indicative of the Aboriginal Grade 8's it is still of great concern. It seems schools need to start doing some more preventative programs at the elementary level. We can't wait until they get to grade 8 because they are already lost.

Oct. 25

Tonight is the community dinner. As usual it feels rushed and as usual I am sure it will turn out fine. I have prepared a survey for both students and adults attending the dinner. This information will be incorporated into the study, once it's analysed.

Oct. 26

As usual the community came out to support the program at the school- we had over 80 people attend the dinner. However, the Elders and many of the In-shuck-ch community members needed to attend treaty negotiations and their absence was felt. The meeting for the treaty negotiations was an emergent one and could not be accommodated because the invitations had already been sent out. Nevertheless, the evening went really well and the number of students who attended was very impressive. What was also impressive was to witness the students themselves participating in the discussions that took place- its great to witness them finding their voice with regards to issues like education. I am so proud of them.

Nov. 1

Two more new students. One is grade 9 but will be in the First Nations Social Studies class. Because of the late start for him this might be the best solution. The classroom is smaller in size and friendly. As usual I ask the students to introduce themselves and identify the Nation they come from. It is interesting to hear students who initially did not know the exact Nation now know it. In addition, the pride they say their Nation is also evident.

Nov. 2

Conducted my first student interview. I used the blueprint and will transcribe the interview in a couple of days. But my immediate thoughts regarding the interview is that this will be a powerful research tool. I am struck with the honesty this student provided within the interview.

I know from my under grad work that the familiarity of the person conducting the interview may confound the results but I can honestly say I do not believe this student would have gone if she had been with a stranger. When she shared the authentic curriculum used in the course helped her find her as a person it was a very emotional moment for both of us. We both just looked at each other with disbelief that she had actually been so brutally honest about how she felt. In fact she said I can't believe I said that- its how I feel, but I actually said it. This is one of those moments in teaching when you know what you are doing makes a difference. What a gift.

Nov. 9

Today I handed out the drum letter for parents. This letter gives parents an opportunity to withdraw their child from making a drum. I explained that some cultures regard the drum as being too sacred to make in class. Some of the students were genuinely intrigued with this concept. For many of the students they only know the drum as an instrument not as a spiritual gift. However one of the students who has been brought up quite traditional did discuss the importance of the drum and how his grandfather taught him how the drum speaks to people.

Nov. 18

Today is the day we starting our drums. The kids are really excited. While they are usually pretty good staying quiet during silent reading- they really weren't today. I went over the journal they are expected to keep. In addition, I talked to them about keeping the person they are making the drum for in their minds while working. I reminded them that by giving the drum away to that person they are honouring and thanking that person for being important to them. Many of the students shared that their drums are for their grandparents and parents. One of the girls said it's for my grandfather because he has taught me a lot about being Cree and I want to thank him. Coincidentally, and this student does not know, I have attended sweats that her grandfather holds and I too value the things he has taught me. One other student, probably one of the quietest male students in the class articulated the the same sentiment about his grandfather. It seems clear that these kids really do value the teachings of their grandparents and want to thank them. I am glad that we are following the tradition of the Sto:lo of giving the drum to a person we want to honour. Using the traditional teachings in the past years has been profound, I expect this year to be the same as past years--we'll see.

Nov. 20

Today we glued our frames together and made the drum sticks. The journals are not the highlight of the activity. Sometimes I wonder about doing the journal but then the students really have used the information in the past when doing the essay for the drums.

Nov. 22

We finished the drum sticks. This is not an easy task and it is good to see some of the less academic kids succeed and help the other kids in this process. Everyone

needs a chance to shine.

Nov. 24

Explained where the hide comes from and the other teacher explained how we need to respect the animals that go into making the drums.

Nov. 26

Today was a half day for assessment and as I am sitting in my office doing report cards my colleague, who leads the drum making sessions comes down finger wrapped in a large piece of cloth asking "will you take me to the hospital I seem to have cut my finger?"

Well to say the least he is lucky he did not loose the finger. The cut was very deep and could have been a lot more serious. However, we both know that this will delay the class for how long I do not know. We will see.

Nov. 30

Now begins the fun of sanding the drums- this is a long process and the students often feel frustrated with the length of time it takes. However making drums can often teach patience too.

Dec. 1

I hope it teaches patience because Norm and I have just discussed how long it will be before he can continue working on drums-at least 2 weeks. I have decided to start the other units of the authentic curriculum. I will begin with the Cultural Area unit. While I think the students will be ok with this they will be disappointed.

Dec. 2

Yes they are disappointed with the delay but on we go. I have assured them that we will get back to the drums after the academic work is done. I think this is the best decision, I hope so. I also had the students do the pretest today.(see Appendix) Interesting the students were quite vocal about not knowing the answers. When I assured them that that was ok. one student said fine as long as you know I won't get any right. After collecting the tests we begin with the cultural area unit with a brain storming unit on what makes up culture.

The students answers include the following: Elders, Ancestry, Clothing, Symbols, Language, Art, Music, Dance, Geographical Location.

Then I ask the students to make a definition for culture.

Dec. 6

One of our students is withdrawn from school because he has been taken out of foster care and placed back with his mother. This is a situation that is not common but it does happen and when it does you can only hope that going back home is the best for the child. This world is not an easy one at times.

Dec. 9

The discussion of where culture comes from continues. Students are gasping the relationship between the geographical location and the development of culture. Read the story "Woman Who Fell From the Sky" a Huron Creation Story. (Our Bit Of Truth) The students are to give an artistic impression of the story. Again the range of skills is evident, we have some fine artists in the class and then some of them are as talented as I am in art- not very. So much for the artistic stereotype.

Dec. 14

Last day before Christmas vacation and we worked on and completed the Huron Creation picture. Kids are really looking forward to the holidays.

Jan. 4

Back at it today. The students are filled with stories and I am willing to listen to them. Funny how coming to high school doesn't really mature the students all that much- they really are kids at heart. We did settle down and review culture areas and what they are and how they relate to culture. In addition, I had the students look at an Atlas which show the different Nations in Canada. Then I asked the students to look at the large map showing the Nations of B.C-all 33.

The students were really surprised to see all of the Nations. One of the girls immediately looked for the Tsmishian Nation, saying thats where my Dad is from.

Jan. 6-10

Finished map of First Nations in B.C

Jan 12

Students are given the readings on the three geographical regions in B.C. and assigned questions. They are reluctant to read again after silent reading but eventually get down to work.

Jan. 14

I am amazed at how quickly the students have caught on to the regions of B.C. Most of them seem to like participating in classroom discussions. One of the girls really like to show off how much she has learned. In fact so the others are heard I need to ask her to wait a bit at times. Funny how some kids like to be the center and others are quite content to let this unfold.

Jan. 17

Another two students are asked to leave because of truancy. They are both transferred to alternative school in the district.

Jan 25

Haven't been journaling because on Jan. 20th on my way to work I hit black ice and rolled my car. The doctor says I will be away for up to a month- I told him no I will not be. We will see. I am sending in my day plan but this is not a good situation- there are no teachers on call who specialize in First Nation's content and therefore the students will be expected to learn from someone they are not necessarily comfortable with. In addition, I know on of the things the students like about me is I am passionate about the work I do and they pick up on that passion. I have witnessed how they get charged up when I get charged up and we tend to feed off one another. Perhaps their passion will see them through.

Feb. 1

Back at school. The students are glad to see me and offer me gifts to welcome me back. It is good being back and I am looking forward getting back into the grove of it all. However, my back is very sore and I am not at all sure I am not rushing it too much. We reviewed the cultural area material.

Feb. 3

Students made study cards based on the cultural area concepts and on the regions of B.C.

Feb. 7

Students wrote the cultural area quiz. The results of the quiz are quite good the class average is about 70%. Only one student failed the quiz with a 47%.

Feb. 9

Started reading the novel My Name is Seepeetza. The novel is about residential schools. The students are not responding as I had hoped to the oral read. We also started the Sto:lo unit with the students starting the Sto:lo traditional territory map. There is a definite shift in the attitude of the students toward the work they are assigned, since my return. Whereas they were excited and willing to do work, they now are reluctant and don't want to do very much.

Feb. 11

Once again I am disappointed with how the students are responding to the novel My Name Is Seepeetza. When one of the children in the novel was referred to as a "dirty wet bed", the students in this class started to laugh. The laughter continued. It is clear to me that they may not be able to handle this novel. A decision will be made. On a brighter note we started the Sto:lo oral tradition unit today with two stories of Creation--"The Salmon Story" and the "Cedar Tree" story. Both of these stories have been given to use in education by a hereditary chief in the community. I asked the students to discuss the story in groups and to determine what lesson were being taught in each of the stories. One of the girls, who has exhibited behaviour problems in the class since it began, did extremely well in this activity and was able to share with the rest of the class the importance of being generous with those who are in your community. All of the students seemed intrigued by the fact that these stories have existed for a very long time and yet they still teach valuable lessons. The students worked really well together, however the oldest student the 15 year old female continues to be impatient with the younger students. She is mature for her age and being with some of these younger students is a real challenge because, in a lot of ways, their behaviour issues are very immature.

Feb. 17

Today is a day of review -reviewed the the stories told last day and other information based on the Sto:lo. I informed the students, due to some people not taking the novel very seriously we would no longer be reading My Name is Seepeetza. Following this announcement _____ asked if she could continue the novel during the silent reading time in class. _____ is a mature student and she has a desire to learn about the history and culture. This request is encouraging in a discouraging situation.

Feb. 28-29

Today is the 1st day of the Leadership Conference and I am taking three students to the conf. for the next two days. The students who are going are from various classes. The students and I are excited and really looking forward to this positive event. We will be attending for tomorrow too. The students attending are to be trained on how to be leaders within their school community and set good examples for the other students. The students who are going are really neat kids who have life experiences that are challenging and yet they are so resilient. I really do admire

them with their ability to carry on as they do-if people only new the half of it they would soon realize that some of the youth today, far too many of the youth today, carry burdens that no person should have to carry.

The first day of the conference is exceptional and the students are so keen on what they are learning and what they are experiencing. The energy is so positive and yet realistic. There are approximately 300 students here and those facilitating are teaching them about self worth and the power that they have to make a difference for themselves and for others. The students are so pumped on the drive home. It was a good day.

Second day of the conf. was as good as the first the students are involved in the activities and they are starting to lead some of the activities. It is interesting to see how safe they feel in leading. I think the ground work laid yesterday about self worth and power was of great benefit. One of my students allowed herself to be very vulnerable in group discussion and was very emotional afterward. She was treated with respect and kindness by the other youth and I am sure this will have a long lasting effect for her.

March 1

Back in the classroom reviewing Sto:lo material. There were problems with the teacher on call both from the perspective of the teacher and from the students. During the class discussion, and this was not linked to the T.O.C, the students brought up how other teachers treat them as though they are not very intelligent. Some of the students told me that they are called lazy. When they hear this they attribute it to the fact that they are Aboriginal- this is not necessarily true, but this is how they filter those comments.

This is a sad situation because I see the students struggling with comments like this and I also know that they internalize them. This leaves a strong impact on the students. That is why its so important to have teachers raise the expectations on these students and show them that they are capable of doing good work. Using the authentic curriculum and seeing what and how they respond to it gives them a sense of what they as students can achieve. I keep telling them that I will not accept mediocre work I only want their best.

March 2

Interviewed two students today for the study. I am always amazed at what I hear students say. If I had given them a script I could not have conveyed what they did about the importance of the courses using authentic curriculum. For example when I asked about whether it was important for non-Aboriginal students to take the course the answer was yes because if their hearts are fill with dislike for Aboriginals then a course like this will fill their heart with a new knowledge. Students recognizing the power of education is so gratifying, so profound.

March 7

Interviewed a senior student today he is graduating this year. He clearly indicated that the material used in his First Nations course was of benefit to him in other classes. Because he has been brought up very traditional, I hope this helps to affirm in his mind and heart the legitimacy of his Elders' teachings. The talk of C.U.P.E going on strike is becoming very serious. It also seems as though they are anticipating a long strike. This is a worry not only for the obvious disruption to the

school and student learning but to the study I am conducting. We are nearly finished the Sto:lo unit and are preparing to begin the Dakleh Unit which is not included on the grade 8 Pretest or Post test for the study. I will discuss this with Dale.

March 10

We have finished the Sto:lo unit and are preparing for the quiz. Again the strike that seems to be looming is becoming a real factor. Because the students have covered the major learning outcomes for the authentic curriculum I have decided to give them the study's post test this week following the Sto:lo quiz. I have discussed this with Dale and because of the pending strike, which is to take place immediately following the Spring Break, and because the material yet to be covered in the course is not going to affect the results of the study, we have decided to go ahead and conclude the study by giving the Post test this week.

Interviewed two other senior students who have taken courses using authentic curriculum. Again the results of these interviews are so moving. I know that the First Nations Education Committee will be impressed with what the students themselves say about the course. However, I am also cognizant of how the strike will affect my ability to get the interviews completed. I have another student coming in tomorrow and one on Friday giving me a total of 7 interviews. I wanted more but I think this have to do. Too many things interfered, too many factors that one can not plan- car accidents, strikes, bomb scares in the school, people injuring themselves and just the day to day activities in a high school.

March 13

Students wrote Sto:lo test. The results look good

March 17

Students wrote the Posttest.