

**WABASEEMOONG COMMUNITY
CASE STUDY:
Appropriate education in a First Nations reserve school**

A Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the
degree of
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ABSTRACT

The Anishnabe community of Wabaseemoong in Northern Ontario has suffered, and been terribly splintered, because of the incursions of Euro-Canadian society and culture. The community school once was an agent of cultural invasion, and is still being seen and treated that way by some. But it is proposed here that an affirmation by the school of the Ojibway language and elements of traditional culture could result in greater ownership of the school by the people of the community. This in turn could produce improvements in the school's ability to assist in meeting all the developmental needs of the children, including the need for a positive sense of self, or identity.

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Finally, I wish to dedicate this thesis to my wife, Heather. She has been my partner in so many ways during the whole process that I can never fully express how much I owe to her.

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INTRODUCTION

Evolution of the research: A personal journey

When I began my post secondary studies at Memorial University of Newfoundland in September, 1974, I was interested in studying psychology and, although I had only a vague idea what counsellors do and how you become one, my desire was to be a counsellor. Unfortunately, the program I entered was very much a behaviourist-oriented one, and it exalted laboratory research, preferably with non-human subjects. Partially because of the strongly expressed beliefs of my professors, that educational psychology was a woolly sort of thing scarcely deserving the name science, and partially because of my youthful ignorance, I did not investigate what steps I would have to follow to continue my interest in counselling. Instead, by the time I completed my B.A. (1978), I found that I had become disillusioned with the whole field of psychology, seeing in it no concern with assisting individual people.

The next few years were a period of great uncertainty in my life. Because I did not know what else to do, I tried an Honours Psychology program at Carleton University but this only increased my feeling of disillusionment and I did not finish the program. I worked for the Newfoundland provincial government in a couple of capacities and became even more unhappy.

Then, in 1982, it was announced that the secondary program in Newfoundland high schools was to be radically revised. New courses, including guidance and sex education courses were going to be added. I felt certain that I could enjoy teaching courses like that and so entered the B.Ed. program at Memorial University in the fall of 1983.

It turned out to be one of the best decisions I ever made. In my first semester I enrolled in an introductory Guidance Counselling course and discovered that this was the career I had wanted. At the same time, because one could not get a B.Ed. in Guidance, I was studying to become an English teacher and discovering that I really

enjoyed that as well. This seemed to me just fine, since my Counselling professor had told me that students were seldom admitted to the M.Ed. program without a couple of years' teaching experience. So, I decided, I would be an English teacher for a few years, make some money and then return for my Master's degree.

But it was not that simple. Finding work as an English teacher in Newfoundland proved impossible and therefore, after a year of trying for a job, I took a friend's advice and entered a program in Teaching English as a Second Language at Carleton University. This program helped me to land my first full time teaching position, in Whitedog, an Ojibway reserve in Northwestern Ontario.

It is no exaggeration to say that that job changed my life. When I arrived in Whitedog I knew almost nothing about Native people. As a Newfoundland, I had had few opportunities even to see a Native person, much less talk to one. And on that first day in my grade 7 classroom I learned that all my courses and my student teaching and substitute teaching and short-term teaching experiences had not prepared me in the least to teach a class of Native adolescents.

It is fortunate that I am the kind of person that loves a challenge. Otherwise I would have quit. But quitting was never really an option I considered; although I was frequently disheartened by how little progress I was making in the classroom, I was also fascinated by what my students and the friends I was making in the community were teaching me. I asked many questions and slowly I began to acquire an understanding of why things were as they were in Whitedog.

It was not something too many of my colleagues were able to achieve. From the beginning, almost the only question I ever heard them express was, "What's wrong with these kids? I can't figure them out". I felt that I could "figure them out", that a question like what's wrong with them began with an invalid assumption, and that if you took the time to try to see it from their point of view, it wasn't too hard to understand why so many students failed, and dropped out. But in my time teaching at the school, I watched at least 10 teachers come and go, most of them having gained little understanding.

I also found out, after two years teaching there, that although I could understand the situation, with the skills I possessed I could do little to change it. Therefore, I decided to leave Whitedog and enter graduate school. (My

personal life had also gone through changes that made this decision necessary. I had met and become engaged to my future wife, Heather, a woman from the community. She, too, felt the need to continue her education, so the move was doubly necessary.)

I wanted to pursue somewhat of a generalist program for my Master's degree. Because I had come to believe there was a strong connection between affect for schoolwork, motivation (and perseverance) and self-concept of ability, I wanted to acquire counselling skills. I felt that good school counselling involved assistance to students in these areas, among others. But I also wanted to understand more about how to address the school skills of Native children on reserves like Whitedog. This, I was certain when I entered, involved understanding more about language and language learning as well as more about motivation and self-concept. I envisioned returning to Whitedog, or to a place like it (and there are many), and working as a school counsellor. However, I felt that no school counsellor in a small Native community could be effective without skills in addressing cognitive/academic issues in addition to skills in counselling.

My original plan for my Master's thesis was to conduct a phenomenological-type study with my former students, in an attempt to ascertain more about the bases of their self-concepts, or to use the Eriksonian term, their sense of identity. It was, and is, my contention that while psychologists have learned something about the role of the self-concept/sense of identity in numerous behaviours (cf. Harter, 1989a&b; Harter and Marold, 1988; Bandura, 1986, 1989), especially in adolescents, they have done so primarily with youth from mainstream cultures, and that when work is conducted with minority youth in these areas it has been done with untested assumptions about the nature of their sense of identity. In other words, I believed that the validity of certain constructs that are considered to be operating in the formation and maintenance of the sense of identity has been problematic in work with ethnic minority youth.

Let me describe, through a brief examination of related literature, some of the assumptions and questions I was considering when I proposed this research.

Literature Review: On the Nature of the Sense of Identity/Self-Concept

The self is a concept that has enjoyed a considerable popularity in recent years (Bock, 1988). Although its use as a psychological construct is probably almost coterminous with the existence of psychology (Harter, 1988) its recent popularity, at least in the North American setting, probably springs from the decline of radical behaviourism and a growing acknowledgement that cognitive constructs like 'mind' and 'self' may be necessary to our understanding of human psychological processes (Bandura, 1986).

Erikson (1963, 1968) viewed a term closely related to self, ego identity, as an essential component of any normally functioning adult. He claimed that a concern with one's identity, that is, with the fact and quality of one's own existence, develops in adolescence, and moreover, that this concern is the central preoccupation of the adolescent.

Harter (1989a&b) also argues that adolescence is a time of change with relation to the self-concept. She has found that, at adolescence the sense of one's self, or self-concept, becomes better defined and more broadly based. A qualitative change occurs too: adolescents characterize themselves in terms of traits as well as through the physical and behavioural descriptions younger children use (Harter, 1989a).

Harter theorized that the self-concept is based on two things: the quality of functioning in the areas that are personally important, and the perception of how one is viewed by the significant others in one's life (1988). The first basis is quite similar to a construct used by Bandura (1986). He postulated that one's efficacy in important areas of personal functioning is important to the self-concept. Erikson, too, noted that mastery is linked to self-esteem, which in turn is a component of identity (1963). Following Bandura, this dimension of the self-concept can be labelled the self-efficacy dimension.

The second basis, what Harter (1988) called the social support dimension, is also paralleled in the work of Bandura (1986) and Erikson (1963). Harter claimed that for adolescents, the significant others who play a role in the self-concept, or identity, are their parents, close friends, classmates and teachers. Bandura mentioned family and school as environmental settings where the self-concept can be influenced (1986).

Erikson (1963), in discussing significant others and their role in the identity, made a very important point: culture determines who the significant others in a person's life will be. Erikson, in fact, gave culture a prominent place in the development of the individual. For successful psychological adaptation to occur, he argued, the individual must perceive that his or her ego identity is a successful variant of the group or cultural identity, that is, that it is one of the identity types allowed for in the cultural repertoire (1963).

Psychological anthropologists have long been interested in studying the interaction of culture and personality (Bock, 1988). Geertz (1983), for example, asserted that culture always defines what the self is conceived to be (see also Doty, 1988). However, psychologists, particularly in North America, seem to have only become interested in this relationship relatively recently (cf Hollander, 1971; Kagitcibasi and Berry, 1989).

One area where considerable work has been done lately is ethnic identity: the sense of the self as a member of an ethnocultural group (Marchand, 1990; Spindler and Spindler, 1989; Spencer and Markstrom-Adams, 1990; Gibbs and Huang, 1989). While of course all people are members of an ethnocultural group, North American psychologists' interest in ethnic identity has principally focused on the members of ethnic minorities. This is understandable since the North Americans of Anglo-Saxon, or West European, background who make up the majority ethnocultural group on this continent tend to define themselves according to their present nationality or citizenship (i.e. as Canadians or Americans) rather than their ethnic ancestry, whereas Canadian Native people, for example, tend to describe themselves as Natives rather than as citizens of Canada (Wierzba, 1989; Kienetz, 1986). In other words, for ethnocultural minorities ethnicity may be more salient than it is for members of the majority ethnic group. And this may be most particularly the case for visible minorities.

It is interesting that, whereas considerable work on ethnic identity in minority groups has been undertaken, and considerable work on the self-concept of the Anglo-Saxon majority group also exists and continues to be produced, little work has been done that tries to examine the total identity of members of ethnocultural minorities. That is, few researchers have been concerned with discovering the validity, for members of ethnic minority groups, of constructs associated with the sense of identity in members of the mainstream.

It has been suggested that the ethnic identity informs all other aspects of the self-concept in ethnic (particularly visible) minority individuals, in other words, that it could be a conceptual framework within which the other

aspects are understood (Marchand, 1990; Gibbs and Huang, 1989; Spencer and Markstrom-Adams, 1990; Rotheram and Phinney, 1987). But it seems worthwhile to attempt to learn if the constructs named above, self-efficacy and social support, are useful in working with ethnic minority youth.

It is worthwhile for a number of reasons. Self-efficacy beliefs, one theorized component of the self-concept, have been found to impact on such things as academic performance (Bandura, 1986) and memory skills (Bandura, 1989). However, this work has all been undertaken with reference only to members of the Anglo-Saxon majority. Spindler and Spindler (1989) have postulated that self-efficacy is a valid construct for Native people, but it also appears to them that ethnocultural identity style can affect what areas of functioning are personally important.

Another reason to wish to know more about the self-concept, or sense of identity of members of ethnocultural minorities has to do with clinical or counselling psychology. In the majority culture, self-concept has been linked to psychological functioning (Harter and Marold, 1990). Assisting the client to a positive, or at least accepting, view of the self is an implicit aim of many, if not most, counsellors (Corey, 1990). Again, however, most counselling and clinical theory and practice uses a perspective based in Western (i.e West European in origin) cultural values and perceptions (Lee, 1984). The applicability of such theory and practice for members of other cultures is largely problematic. One indication that present counselling theory/practice may be inappropriate in cross-cultural settings is the higher termination rate after one counselling session for members of ethnocultural minorities than for majority culture individuals (Sue and Zane, 1987). Clinical psychology's neglect of the role of culture in individual behaviour and thought may be responsible for problems in diagnosis and treatment of members of minority cultures (McShane, 1987). Berlin (1986) for example, noted that some Native tribes consider hallucinations in adolescents as evidence of potential to be holy men or healers, rather than evidence of schizophrenia.

There is also evidence that emphasizing traditional Native values and beliefs, and attempting to inculcate a positive Native identity based in these traditions is effective in psychological work in a number of arenas: clinical settings (Westermeyer, 1979) school-based sex education (Ponzetti and Abrahamson, 1990) and substance abuse education and counselling (Parker, 1990) to name a few.

The increasing attention that psychologists have started to pay to questions of culture has resulted in the identification of a new, and growing, field: cross-cultural psychology. Within this new field two fundamental perspectives have been identified. One, the 'indigenous psychology' perspective, holds that the relevance of Western psychology, with its emphasis in a pure-science model and its belittlement of cultural differences and applied research, is at best questionable when working with members of ethnic minorities (Kagitcibasi and Berry, 1989). Instead, 'indigenous' psychologists argue, a non-Western psychology needs to be informed by the values of the culture in which it is being practiced, and oriented toward problems, not theories (1989).

Evolution of the research: The question of ecological validity

Although the original aim of my thesis research was to better understand the sense of identity of Native adolescents and post-adolescents, I also acknowledged the need to discover the cultural values operative in these individuals and to use this knowledge, if possible, in addressing some of the problems being widely experienced in Native societies: high dropout rates, substance abuse, alcoholism, suicide and antisocial behaviour (Dolan, 1992). In keeping with the problem focus of indigenous cross-cultural psychology, the intention was to do research 'with' Native people, rather than 'for' or 'about' them, to understand the nature of the world as Native people view it, in order to jointly construct appropriate psychological (and sociocultural) action.

My initial plan, then, for my thesis research was to conduct open-ended interviews with some of my former students in an attempt to learn if constructs such as social support and self-efficacy and even ethnic identity were identifiable in their descriptions of their life worlds. If so, the research could consider how knowledge of this sort could be applied toward beneficial responses to their situation. It was clear that I would need to consider carefully the setting in which this investigation was taking place (and by setting, I mean such things as history, culture, the community, family makeup, values etc.), but the idea was principally to use these things to help understand the self-concept/sense of identity.

However, by the time I was actually embarked on the research, the focus had changed. After two years in graduate school I lacked the financial means necessary to return to Whitedog and interview my former students. But I

felt that this was where the research had to be conducted. I was certain that in no other setting was there any chance of my establishing with young Native people the kind of rapport that I had built up through two years' teaching and an ongoing connection with the community, the kind of rapport that would be necessary to elicit open disclosure.

My search for financial assistance to perform my thesis research led me to the Royal Commission on Aboriginal People. While in graduate school, I had been volunteer teaching at the Micmac Learning Centre in Halifax. One day, two representatives of the Commission visited to explain their mandate and their needs to the youth in the centre. Thus I was able to discuss my own research ideas with the Coordinator for Youth Issues research. We found that there were sufficient similarities in aims for us to continue the dialogue and eventually I was contracted to carry out research for the Royal Commission in Whitedog.

But in negotiating this contract, the mandate of the Royal Commission and the needs of the community caused me to modify my original research questions. This situation provides an excellent illustration of the need to consider questions of ecological validity. It also demonstrates that, although I had described the indigenous psychology point of view in my review of the literature above, I had not fully taken its emphasis, on action not theory, into account. Because my relationship with the youth of the community had been a good one, and because I was related by marriage to members of the community, my proposal to conduct research with the youth of the community was received favourably by the band council and the education authority. However, there was little interest (because little value was seen in it, I believe) in the question of the nature or validity of the constructs in the self-system. Instead, it was seen as important to examine a more concrete question, one for which answers could lead to concrete, specific, action proposals.

As a result of the dialogue and my desire to be responsive to the community in an authentic fashion, my thesis research evolved into a consideration of the question: what constitutes an appropriate education for aboriginal youth in a reserve setting like Whitedog? The answer that was formulated reflects, and takes full account of, important historical and sociocultural issues as well as educational and psychological ones.

There is considerable disagreement in Whitedog over what the role of the school in providing an education should be. This disagreement, I believe, largely reflects different ideas about what an appropriate education is

and who should provide it. I found that the differences could be understood partially through an examination of local history and Ojibway culture and partially through a consideration of the question of identity.

For in the end, I found the construct of sense of identity, especially ethnic identity as conceived by Marchand (1990) and Spindler and Spindler (1989), to be extremely useful as an explanatory mechanism, one that reconciles some of the surface contradictions. The constructs of social support and self-efficacy were also found to be important, though the social support construct needs to be reformulated more broadly to truly describe the situation with respect to individuals in Whitedog, and self-efficacy also needs to be seen through the perspective of the adolescent's emerging sense of ethnic identity.

I am therefore very grateful that the needs and views of the community and the Royal Commission caused me to modify my original research plans. Although I had intended to consider the total ecology (history, culture, community, values systems etc.) of the participants in my original research plans, the needs of the community ensured that I give what I now see was the proper degree of emphasis to the question of ecology.

The original task of understanding the participants' self-system through a consideration of their ecology became instead one of understanding the participants themselves through a thorough examination of their ecology, and using psychological constructs only when and where they could assist in this understanding. I believe that all psychologists (especially, but not only, those working cross-culturally) need to consider what have heretofore usually been regarded as sociological or anthropological questions if they are to achieve an understanding of the true complexity of the individual. Unless one understands the history, the community, the family, and the culture, of an individual, and the ways in which these different things interact, an understanding of that individual cannot be achieved.

Evolution of the Research: The Research Questions

The Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples sponsored this research as one of their Youth research division's community case studies. My mandate from the Commission was to examine and analyze the community itself in the most authentic way possible while at the same time, because a detailed consideration of every aspect would have been too lengthy, choosing a particular area or areas to concentrate on.

My own concern had been with individuals, particularly my former students, who were moving into post-adolescence and therefore could be postulated to be at a stage where identity concerns were highly salient. In the discussion of ecological validity above I showed that the research became far more community focused, in keeping with the Commission's mandate and the community's interests. But I must stress here that this movement in focus was in no way dissonant with my own scholarly interests.

In one sense, ever since my first days as a teacher in the (as it was then called) Islington Day School, I had been concerned with finding an answer to the question of the most appropriate education for the children of the community. It was my belief that the high rates of grade failure and of school dropout, and the abysmally low rate of high school completion were strong evidence that the school was not meeting the educational needs of the majority of the children.

It was partially because, although successful in comparison to some teachers at the school, I felt myself to be ignorant of the best answer or answers to that question that I entered graduate studies in Educational Psychology. From the time I entered graduate school it was always my hope that I would be able to conduct my thesis research amongst my former students in Whitedog. But although, for my thesis, I had originally conceived the question of meeting the needs of the students in rather narrow psychological terms (i.e. in terms of what a counsellor could do to address individual needs), I had long seen that for maximum effectiveness the school system itself needed to be modified in a way that would answer the educative needs of all future students.

Until very recently the real, as opposed to the imagined, needs of Native communities have been ignored in the formulation of educational action plans. Clearly some form of education must take place in Whitedog. In all cultural settings, by some means or other, a large part of the process of growing up is preparing for the assump-

tion of the responsibilities, privileges and activities of adulthood - in other words, getting an education. How the learning process is to be conducted though, and what is to be learned, differs between cultures.

This research had to address several issues, and answer a number of questions in order to examine the basic question of appropriate education. It was essential to provide as complete a picture as possible of the setting in which the research was being conducted. This picture involved a description, first, of the history, geography and economy of the community. Following that, it was necessary to describe the situation with respect to language and culture, since mastering the language(s) spoken in your environment and learning about the culture of which you are a part are important aspects of functioning as an adult in any society. This description had to take account of the historical and present day situation with regard to two different languages and cultures. Then it was important to look at those aspects of living in the community that the residents themselves, especially the young, viewed as most salient. In other words, what did participants see when they looked at Whitedog? Only after all this was carefully described could the participants views on education be properly understood.

In examining education, the questions included the following: what do the members of this community, living as they do in the midst of the interaction of two different cultures, conceive an education to be? What is an education, in this community? How are children to be prepared for adult life? What do the youth see as the important developmental social and psychological needs in their environment? What are children to learn? What is the importance of cultural knowledge? How are the youth to learn the things they need to learn? Who provides this education and in what setting(s)?

Overview of the research

So the principal focus of this research was education. The major question, simply stated, was, what constitutes an appropriate education for the children of this community? However, it is clear from the foregoing discussion that an answer is far from simple. What an appropriate education is for any children in North America is by no means agreed upon, either by parents or by educators. For Canadian aboriginal children, the question is even more difficult. In Whitedog¹, the education system has to consider - in addition to the questions being asked elsewhere about curricula and teaching methods and course selection - questions of culture and language.

Whose culture and whose language are to be taught in the school? Traditionally, the extended family group was the only school. The Ojibway language and virtually all aspects of the Ojibway culture were learned in that context. Formal schooling, first introduced by missionaries in a residential system, was a Euro-Canadian institution and, in the Lake of the Woods area as elsewhere, it endeavoured to teach the English language and the English-Canadian culture. The Islington Day School, when it opened in Whitedog, was controlled by the Department of Indian Affairs, and had similar aims with regards to language and culture. Now the school in Whitedog is in the control of a local education authority. But the school still employs primarily a White teaching staff, and still uses English as the medium of instruction.

The administration's aim is that at the end of grade 12 the students will be able to leave the reserve and succeed in any post-secondary institution they wish to enter. To do this, the student must be fluent in English and have successfully completed a set of Ontario Ministry of Education-approved courses. However, though it has im-

¹ A note about names and spelling: Three years ago, the band council of the Islington Reserve #29 changed the reserve's name from Whitedog to the Wabaseemoong Independent First Nations of Swan Lake, One Man Lake and Whitedog. Only one of the three communities named in this new title still existed at the time of the change (for reasons that will be described shortly), and Whitedog today is also known as Wabaseemoong (Wab see moong), the Ojibway original for the English translation. Many of the residents of the reserve use the two names pretty much interchangeably, though some seem to prefer one and some the other. This thesis will use both.

The word Ojibway has a number of different spellings. This one is the most commonly used in the region. In fact, though. Ojibway people refer to themselves, in their own language, as Anishnabe [ah nish nah bay] (again, this is one of a number of possible spellings). This document will use both names. The word Indian, used as the name for certain of the aboriginal peoples of North America, is now widely considered to be inappropriate, to say the least. Nevertheless, some of the participants in this research used it to refer to themselves and people of their ancestral heritage. Given its present controversial stature however, it will only be used in this document within direct quotations or in titles (as in Status Indian). First Nations or Native will be the terms used here to describe non-Inuit, non-Metis aboriginal people of Canada.

proved considerably in recent years, the dropout rate is still so high that by far the majority of youth in Whitedog do not complete grade 12. And, of those that do, few will begin post-secondary courses with strong written language skills or more than a rudimentary acquaintance with science courses.

Yet within the lifetimes of Whitedog's elders, the Ojibway language and culture have lost their primacy. In some families in Wabaseemoong they have been replaced altogether. It is not uncommon for middle-aged parents to have children that speak Ojibway poorly and grandchildren who don't speak it at all. While some families are holding on very strongly to traditional cultural, religious and shamanistic practices, and/or attempting to relearn those that have been lost, many families know nothing of them so, obviously, they cannot teach them to their children. Should the school or the family be primarily responsible for Ojibway cultural and language education today? Or should anyone even try to provide one?

It will, perhaps, not be surprising to the reader that on many of the questions surrounding the issues named above, the people of Whitedog do not speak with one voice. Surely there are few communities in this country where one could find uniformity in the views expressed on the complex and vital issue of appropriate education. However, anyone who expected that the common Ojibway cultural heritage of all the participants in this research would make for at least a degree of homogeneity will, I believe, be forced to revise that expectation in the course of reading this research. "Diversity" characterizes the views expressed here far more than does "unanimity".

This is not to say that there is no agreement on some of the basic points. In several cases the views of the participants divide fairly neatly into two categories. For example, some people expressed to me that the Ojibway language must receive a great deal of attention in the school, that not enough was being done at the institutional level to ensure its preservation. Others believed that the sole language function of the school was to equip graduates with a high level of English skills. Essentially, then, there were two camps regarding language instruction in the school: one holding that the school's duty was to produce fluently bilingual graduates and the other holding that the school could, and should, only concern itself with the student's level of English fluency.

But the reader should not be tempted into thinking that this split simply reflects the degree of majority (i.e. White or Euro-Canadian) cultural assimilation of the different participants, with the most assimilated voicing the

most support for English instruction. Some of the people with the greatest knowledge of and participation in traditional Ojibway culture (and a very high level indeed can be found) were the most emphatic in seeing the school's role as the provision of English skills only. Others with great knowledge of, and participation in, the traditional culture were adamant about the necessity for bilingual education. Nor does knowing a person's level of Ojibway fluency allow one to predict anything with regard either to affinity for culture or for views on language education. For example, people with low levels of fluency sometimes expressed great affinity for culture and even reported high levels of participation in cultural activities. Others with low levels of fluency were less concerned with culture and participated little in cultural activities. High levels of fluency were similarly not consistently linked with participation or knowledge.

Accounting for all of these (and numerous other) differences in opinion may not be possible. However, I believe an attempt to describe the total life world of the residents of this community, can help make some sense of the apparent contradictions. After all, to the people expressing these views there are no inconsistencies in what they are saying.

In the next chapter of this thesis, the Methodology, my reasons for choosing the method of research are outlined and the method is explained in some detail. My intention, when I set out to do this research, was to allow the people of Whitedog, and especially the youth, to articulate their perceptions on the issues under investigation as freely as possible. To this end, the interviews I conducted with 31 residents were kept as open-ended as possible.

While the educational issues named above dominated the initial agenda for every interview, it was hoped that the participants would feel free to raise with me whatever concerns or questions were on their minds. This is, in fact, what happened in the majority of interviews. Personal histories, perceived problems, sources of pride, hopes for the future all came out, for one of the chief advantages of conducting research of this type between people who are not total strangers to each other is that the interview situation and format provide a relatively non-threatening opportunity to the participants to air their views and describe their feelings. Thus, in addition to airing 31 sets of opinions on the main areas of investigation, this thesis attempts to present a picture of what it is like to live in this community, a picture which can, I believe, greatly assist in understanding how education is viewed in Wabaseemoong.

In the next chapter, the Analysis, I have made every effort to let the participants speak to the reader, and to ensure that the full range of participants' opinions is presented. However, I have made some editorial decisions in an attempt to make this document as readable as possible. I have tried to create a text that can be read with ease and without interruption from beginning to end but that also satisfies scholarly requirements for documentation.

Because there are about 700 pages of transcript and because participants frequently (and necessarily, I think) addressed several issues at the same time (e.g. culture, language, and education) it was not possible to use quotations from each participant on each topic in the body of the text. For the most part, then, the Analysis sections contain summaries of what I was told and, for each subject area, selected and edited excerpts from one or two of the transcripts. I hope that in using these excerpts I have allowed the reader to hear the voices of the participants.

Occasionally, I have also resorted to footnotes. I do this principally in cases where I believe the reader would desire immediate confirmation of an assertion I have made but where I could not use a quotation. Sometimes, in some interviews, my questions elicited a set of yes/no answers. I believe that in these cases the interview text nevertheless provides important illustrations of my point.

In the Discussion chapter I try to construct a framework that allows the reader to understand the participants' life worlds, especially those aspects of them that impinge on education. This framework will, it is hoped, help to account for the differences in points of view. I refer to the works of psychologists, anthropologists, cultural historians and others (Native and non-Native) who have been concerned with understanding the present-day situation of First Nations people, especially with respect to cultural survival and revitalization, mores and values, and the ways in which a First Nations band-controlled education system can work to meet the various educational needs of First Nations youth. In this section, the concepts of ethnic identity, social support, self-efficacy, and self-esteem are considered as potentially useful tools to help in an understanding of what the goals of an education system should be. Brief mention is also made of recent research findings concerning the benefits which may accrue from more intensive instruction in the Native language, and from using culturally sensitive and culturally relevant material in the classroom.

This thesis was written with two different audiences in mind: the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (the sponsors of the research), and the people and school in Wabaseemoong. It is in the final chapter, the Recommendations that the two different audiences were most firmly kept in mind. As one elder, Josephine Mandamin, expressed to me, the community cannot rely on Royal Commissions or other research efforts. The people have been let down too many times by various researchers and fact-finding missions that have passed through. Therefore, I have been careful to present ideas concerning actions that can be taken at the local (i.e. community and school) level, as well as actions that should occur at a larger level of organization, with reference to the provision of an appropriate education. In the majority of cases, the ideas came about through dialogue with the participants.

It is acknowledged, and will become clear to the reader in the course of this thesis, that the proposals presented will not meet with unanimous favour throughout the community. Nevertheless, it is the belief of the majority of the participants in this research (as well as my own belief), that a dramatic increase in the concentration on Ojibway culture in the school through a variety of means is appropriate, and necessary. Hopefully, this research will provide the impetus for a community-wide discussion about how the school can be better integrated with the community.

METHODOLOGY

Phenomenology and naturalistic enquiry: Introduction and Overview

It was mentioned above that the ‘indigenous psychology’ point of view holds that, in working cross-culturally, ‘standard’ Western psychology is, at the least, irrelevant (Kagitcibasi and Berry, 1989). Cross-cultural psychology, it is argued, needs to be informed by the values of the culture in which it is being practiced. It needs to be oriented toward problems, not theories (1989).

A large part of the reason for why theory-driven psychology seems to be in poor repute with some cross-cultural psychologists and anthropologists, and with native people themselves, is the research methodology which has been traditionally associated with psychological theory (Jenson, 1990; Marchand, 1990). Traditional, “quantitative”, methods have emphasized the use of theory to make predictions about the relations between variables, and rigorous statistical testing of those predictions for confirmation/ disconfirmation.

These methods may have great value for examining fairly well understood and reliably and validly measurable phenomena, but they can be quite inappropriate where the nature of a complex construct is still poorly understood (Valle and King, 1978). Superficial understanding of a complex phenomenon is likely to cause research hypotheses to be formed that fail to even consider powerful influences. Even Boruch (1976), a staunch defender of quantitative methods in research, argued that failure to sufficiently well observe the phenomena of interest can result in very poor hypothesis construction. Theory, for Boruch, does not precede observation.

Thus, I do not claim that quantitative methods and instruments informed by quantitative methods are useless or worse, in working with people of a different culture; they are, however, not timely with respect to the kinds of questions that were asked in this research.

The methodology employed in this research is essentially phenomenology², a paradigm designed with observation in mind. According to Valle and King (1978) phenomenology concerns itself with the question of “what”, as

² I say essentially because, as Tesch (1988) points out, there is no canon of phenomenological procedure.

in “what is the thing we are looking at, anyway?” It does not concern itself with manipulation, with the question of “how”, as in “how does X variable affect the thing?” “How” is the question that experiments and other quantitative methods are designed to answer. According to Valle and King (1978), quantitative methods are not appropriate for answering “what” type questions. Clearly, this research was primarily interested in asking a “what” type question: What is an appropriate education?

Phenomenology is particularly well suited to research in cross-cultural psychology, where, as Kagitcibasi and Berry put it, “Researchers in the field examine the individual’s actual experience...attempting to understand the indigenous conceptualization of the phenomenon of interest...”(1989, pp494-495). Phenomenology is concerned with describing a phenomenon as it is experienced by an other (Valle and King, 1978; van Manen, 1984), not with testing whether one’s preconceived ideas about the other’s experience are correct (van Manen, 1984).

While there are variations in exact procedure, most phenomenological research consists of, first, using in-depth interviews around open-ended questions to obtain, from the participants in the research, a description of what the phenomenon of interest is like, or of what their experience of the phenomenon has been (Colaizzi, 1978; van Manen, 1984; Tesch, 1988; Marchand, 1990). After that, the description is analyzed for “themes” which constitute the essence of the phenomenon (van Manen, 1984). Finally, the themes themselves are reflected upon and an attempt to construct an explanatory framework, a way of understanding the phenomenon, may be made (Marchand, 1990).

The first step, the open-ended in-depth interview, can be characterized as a form of observation. If properly conducted, it allows the researcher (and, it is hoped, the reader of the research) to be a witness to the thinking of another person.

Observation may be a loaded word to use. But listening to what another person has to say about an issue is a form of observation. I do not claim to have been impartial in my observation. Like every human being, I entered each interview situation with certain beliefs. However, in this stage listening was my goal, and the freedom with which people were able to express views that were opposite to what I believed indicates that I succeeded in it (and also provides important evidence of reliability and validity in the research. See below).

When conducted with more than one person, open-ended interviews have an effect opposite from the one that often results from other research methods; instead of highlighting the role of one or two “variables” and thus simplifying the picture of a situation, the results of a series of open-ended interviews often show the contributions of many different elements to a situation, and thereby illustrate its complexity. Understanding this complexity can be an onerous task, but it is a necessary one if the aim is to present an accurate description and analysis. The second and third stages of the phenomenological process are designed to help deal with this complexity, and will be described in detail in the Thematization section of this chapter.

Consent, Recruitment and Ethical Concerns

1. Community Consent

It was, I believe, because of my connections to the community that, when I formally presented my research proposal to the chief and council, in June 1993, I received their unanimous consent and support. I indicated my willingness, even desire, to have the input of any member of the community who wished to address the issues under investigation. It was agreed in the council that my reports to the Royal Commission would be reviewed by them for comments, and revisions if necessary.

A secondary form of community support I obtained was less formal. In July I attended a one day Community Resource Sharing Workshop sponsored by the WCCI (Wabaseemoong Community Care Initiative) division of Weechi-it-te-win, the social services agency to a number of Northwestern Ontario reserves. The workshop was attended by representatives of the following committees in addition to employees of WCCI: Solvent Abuse Committee, Working Group on Social Development, Child Care Advisory Committee, Community Medical Services and the Wabaseemoong Women’s Group.

Committee representatives spoke to the assembly, stating the nature of their aims and also the kinds of difficulties they were experiencing. In my address to the workshop, I essentially repeated the things I had stated at the band council meeting, again soliciting input and asking permission of all those present to speak with them in greater depth at a future time. I received promises of cooperation from all who were in attendance and most of those present participated in the interviews.

Finally, on the group level, I also agreed to submit a copy of the draft report to the school administration for comments and revisions.

2. Individual Consent and Recruitment

With some assistance from three students who were working at the band office that summer, I compiled a list of people to seek out for recruitment as participants. The principal focus being education, it was deemed important to have the views of teachers and other school personnel, including administrators and aides, in addition to the input of students and former students.

However, the views of youth were the major concern in a community study focusing on a youth issue. Following guidelines laid out by the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, I endeavoured to make the list equal in terms of gender representation and kept equality of gender representation in mind as the interviews proceeded. I also tried to ensure sufficient representation by both students and non-students.

Certain other categories of representation were more difficult to fill, however, and some were not filled. In particular, there was a high level of seasonal employment on the reserve, so none of the participants in this research were unemployed, though several were only in summer jobs and were returning to school, several others had only recently secured employment, and others were facing layoff in September.

Other significant local categories were young parents (see Teen Parenthood section, in the Analysis chapter), and substance abusers (see Substance Abuse section). While four male youths and four female youth participants were parents and one girl was pregnant at the time of the interview, this quite possibly constitutes an under-representation of the young parents in the community, who are probably in the majority among the youth.

Potentially more serious a deficiency is the fact that, while substance abuse, especially solvent inhalation but also alcohol abuse, is regarded by a significant number of the participants as a major problem area on the reserve, no one who is presently a chronic substance abuser was interviewed. However, a number of people were

interviewed who had experience of the misuse of alcohol or solvents, and their opinions are probably not different from those who are still engaged in it. And while not by any means wishing to trivialize its relevance either for the community or for the educational endeavour in the community, substance abuse was not a major focus of this research. I believe that this research, given its purpose, deals with the issue of substance abuse adequately. It is acknowledged, however, that much more could be said.

Another significant category that was not filled was that of the Christian fundamentalist. In view of the importance of this group in the community at present, this is extremely unfortunate. However, the views of the fundamentalists as they were understood and experienced by other members of the community is discussed in detail, and because of the general agreement expressed by those participants as to the nature of the fundamentalist perspective (and because I have some personal experience of fundamentalism) I believe that their point of view has been honestly presented.

The initial list of potential youth participants had over 60 names. The 21 youth who were ultimately interviewed represent basically the first 21 whom I was able to contact and whose cooperation I was able to obtain. Only 2 of the youth I contacted did not wish to participate. Both of them, females, stated that it was because they were shy that they did not wish to participate.³

3. Ethical Guidelines and Anonymity

Following guidelines established by the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples each person who indicated willingness to participate was shown a consent form (see Appendix) and this form was discussed before the interview began. Each participant was assured anonymity if they wished it (all youth participants did, although Chief Eric Fisher allowed me to use his name in quoting some of his non-biographical statements). Their right to discontinue the interview at any time, to refuse to answer any question they did not wish to, and to withdraw from participation at any point, was explained to them.

³ Shyness eventually emerged as a rather significant issue in its own right, being mentioned by a number of participants. It was not possible to investigate it in any detail given the other items on the research agenda, but I believe that it may be partially a function of cross-cultural encounters (i.e. the youth are not as shy with others from the community) and partially a result of cultural dislocation and consequent lowering of self-esteem, particularly for the females, (i.e. shyness became widespread when valued roles for females in the culture were taken away).

Several participants can be easily identified by the brief descriptions I give below (for example, there is only one chief). I knew that this would be the case when I planned the interviews and explained in each interview that, while I could not ensure that the fact of their participation would remain anonymous, I could, and would ensure that no youth participant could be identified as having said any particular thing. To this end, I have assigned each participant a fictitious name.

Occasionally, it has been necessary to use a quotation that contains some biographical information and/or material that can be considered especially sensitive. In any instance where I believe it would have been possible to identify a particular individual from any quotation used, I have changed certain particulars of the biographical information, and/or changed, for certain quotations, the fictitious name assigned to the participant. But, for the most part, each fictitious name stands for one participant, and the comments attributed to a particular name are all from one participant.

Participants

Thirty-one people were interviewed for this research. Twenty-one of them fall within the RCAP definition of youth (i.e. are between the ages of 15 and 30).

Ten male youths were interviewed: five in their teens, two in their early 20's and three over 25. All five of the teenage males were high school students, though three of the five had dropped out for at least one year in the past. Both males in their early 20s had graduated from high school, one of them in June. None of the three males over 25 had completed grade 11. All of the males over 20 were employed. One was the chief of the Wabaseemoong reserve (elected in November of 1992), one was a reserve policeman, one worked for the band as a summer project supervisor, one worked for Ojibway Tribal Family Services as a crisis worker and one was a teacher's aide in the school. Two of these positions, the crisis worker and the project supervisor, were scheduled to terminate shortly after the interviews were conducted.

Four of the males (all over 20) were parents, and three of them were married, two living with their first wives and one with his third (with children from the three marriages). The other father had children by two different women as a result of brief common law relationships. The fifth male over 20 was married but had no children.

Eleven female youths were interviewed: four in their teens, two in their early 20's and 5 over 25. Three were high school students (though one did not return this year and one had dropped out for a year previously), 2 were university students and the remainder were employed, four by the education authority and two by Weechi-it-te-win social services. The two university students had both been admitted as mature students. Only one of the females had graduated from high school. She had also completed two years of university, but was employed by Weechi-it-te-win at the time of the interviews. Of the remaining employed, the highest grade completed was either the ninth or tenth grade, though 3 had completed some post-secondary courses, usually through employment sponsorship.

Four of the female youth participants were parents. All had had their first child before age 19. One of the teenage participants had a young baby and another was about three months pregnant at the time of the interview. The teenage mother was in a common-law relationship but was planning to leave it. Two of the remaining mothers were separated from their children's fathers (one of them was in another long term common-law relationship), and the other had recently re-united with her partner after a lengthy separation. All four of these mothers reported having experienced some form of abuse from their partners. One other female participant was married, but childless, and the remainder were single.

All of the male and female youth participants were status Indians, though three of the females and one male were of mixed descent.

Five teachers were interviewed for their perspectives on educational issues. Only one of the five, the Native Language teacher, was from the reserve, though the rest had all resided there for between 3 and 4 years.

Three other people with some relation to the education system in Wabaseemoong were interviewed: Ron MacDonald, the director of education, Valerie Henry, the principal of the school, and Elmer Fisher, the solvent abuse worker, whose office was in the school and whose clientele was of school age. Mr. MacDonald and Mr. Fisher were born in One Man Lake, and Whitedog, respectively and Mrs. Henry has lived in Whitedog for nearly 20 years and is married to a native of the community.

Finally, two elders, Roy MacDonald and Josephine Mandamin, were interviewed.

The majority of the participants in the interviews were acquainted with me in some way, either as former students, parents of former students, friends, co-workers, or in-laws. Those who were none of these were at least familiar with me from my time of residence in Wabaseemoong.

Interviews

All of the interviews were the same in some respects. All were tape-recorded. In every interview, a certain number of biographical questions were asked. It was important to determine the age, and residential, educational and relational history of the participants.

Other questions were about the person's views on education, the community, culture and language. The nature of the answers to these questions, which in general were open-ended and asked for the participants thoughts or feelings about the subject, determined what other questions would be asked.

An important aspect of all interview questioning was the use of the techniques of reflection and empathic responding. Statements by the participants were usually paraphrased and repeated to them. The paraphrase represented my understanding of what they had said and invited confirmation/disconfirmation. I also frequently reflected to the participant what I believed were his or her feelings about the subject under discussion, again with the aim of checking if my understanding of their point of view was accurate.

The Wabaseemoong community case study was not a survey. The results therefore cannot be stated meaningfully in numeric terms. To say, for example, that 50% of the people thought any particular thing is only valid when one is certain either that 100% of the people have expressed their thoughts or that the portion of all the people that have done so is exactly representative of the larger group. Neither is the case here.

In one sense, then, the 31 people interviewed here can be considered to be speaking only for themselves. It is not known to what extent their views are shared in the whole community. However, the aim of this work was not to

be able to say that such and such a view is the most widely held and so forth. It was to be able to share the perceptions of a group of people as fully as possible, to allow them to state their views in whatever way they chose, without the restrictions that survey research would have imposed on them.

In this research, the participants were encouraged to speak freely and to state what was on their minds. What this resulted in, among other things, is a set of statements that shows the linkages that people make between various issues. Such a result is difficult, if not impossible, to obtain using survey questionnaires.

As was anticipated before the research interviews began, and as was experienced in the interviews, one's beliefs about education could be influenced by a wide array of other beliefs and experiences surrounding questions of the family, the culture, relations with the opposite sex, language, schools and so on.

Thematization and Writing

After all the interviews were transcribed they were re-read. During the re-reading codes were constructed that represented the broad topic of the passage. Obviously, given the nature of the research aims, the most frequently occurring codes were those for culture, language, education and school experience, and the community. Because they were so widely discussed, these subjects were logical choices for the major headings of the Analysis section.

Another common group of codes revolved around aspects of gender relations in the community. By no means all, but a number of participants reported feelings and/or experiences of problems in their relations with members of the opposite sex, problems which included spousal assault, infidelity, distrust, and a lack of communication.

A second broad concern, related to gender, was the issue of teenage parenthood. Like the other gender-related matters mentioned above it is not a universal experience of all the participants but it was mentioned often enough to be considered significant, and its potential impact on questions related to education is obvious.

Two other issues of considerable importance to the community, solvent inhaling and alcoholism, were mentioned by numerous participants in this case study. These issues are indirectly relevant to the educational endeavour in Wabaseemoong (I believe that all community concerns can be linked in some fashion to education) but space considerations and their lower frequency in the transcripts limits the extent of their exploration in this paper.

The coded transcripts were combined into two master files, one for youth and one for school personnel⁴. The transcripts were all written using the Word Perfect 5.1 program. The Search and Select functions of this program were used to assemble files relating to each topic by using commands that directed the computer to retrieve all paragraphs coded in a certain way. Thus, for example, there is a culture file for youth, which represents all aspects of all the youth transcripts relating to culture, and another culture file for school personnel.

Most of the paragraphs of the transcripts received more than one code. A participant's statement that, in future, she would like to see the school in Wabaseemoong concentrate more heavily on culture and language education, for example, would be coded ED, CU, LA, GO, for Education, Culture, Language and Goals. This multiple coding means that there is considerable duplication of statements across files.

However, multiple codes provided an accurate reflection of the nature of most of the statements that were made in the interviews. Furthermore, multiple coding allowed for greater precision in data retrieval. A relatively short series of commands yielded statements that were relevant to quite precise aspects of a question.

Once they were assembled into groups in this way, the transcript excerpts were all re-read and, each time a different point of view was encountered, paraphrased. After going through this process several times for each file, I began to assemble the paraphrases into paragraphs.

⁴ The transcripts of the interviews with the elders were kept separate and did not receive the same kind of coding, because these interviews differed in several regards from the others, a principal one being that I was much less directive in my questions for the elders (i.e. both elders were given the opportunity to set the interview agenda and basically did so) and also, a major part of what I sought from the interviews with elders was a history of the community and culture.

Writing the Analysis section then involved organizing the material into sections. Because, as was mentioned above, the material for Culture, for example, also might contain references to education, the community, or a number of other points, this process was complex and difficult. As the writing (and re-reading) proceeded, ideas that needed to be discussed in depth began to emerge and rough notes on them were begun in the first draft of the Discussion.

Thus the writing of this thesis involved a lengthy process of repeated summarization, organization, and reflection. Each of these steps were not discrete, but blended into each other in what can be described as a series of successive approximations using feedback.

All the supporting quotations upon which the paraphrases were based were retained as endnotes until the writing of the thesis was complete. Then I reviewed the quotations and selected from them ones that I considered to be representative.

Validity and Reliability

The validity and reliability of research of this kind are not established in the same way as they are in quantitative research (Eisner, 1991; Wiersma, 1991). Both reliability and validity can be characterized as consisting of two parts, external and internal (Wiersma, 1991). Internal reliability concerns the extent to which two or more perspectives on the same data agree. External reliability refers to the question of whether data collected in the same way from the same or similar samples will yield consistent results.

Internal validity concerns the ability to interpret results, that is, the extent to which we can be confident that our interpretation of the results is correct, and external validity is concerned with the question of generalizability, that is, with how confident the researcher can be that the results represent a general truth that can be applied to similar situations (Wiersma, 1991). The two kinds of reliability and the two kinds of validity concerns have been addressed in this research.

The internal reliability (and internal validity) of this research was grounded in the procedure. By verifying with the respondents that my paraphrases/thematizations were acceptable, I attempted to ensure that I had captured their perspective and that my biases were not interfering with what I was hearing. It can always be claimed, of course, that I subtly (or not so subtly) pressured the participants into an agreement that they didn't feel, but I believe that the sections of the transcript to be found in this thesis provide a clear demonstration that this was not the case. My desire throughout the interviewing process was to understand what the position of the participant was vis a vis the research questions, not to make sure that the participant had the correct kind of opinion.

External reliability is mainly concerned with replicability. As Wiersma (1991) pointed out, in naturalistic studies researchers are frequently not overly concerned with this. They frequently do not feel that a study can ever be truly replicated. This research involved the presentation of the different ways a group of individuals structure their life-worlds. It is not to be expected that a replication study of this research conducted on another group would yield precisely the same findings. To some extent, this research used the procedure of Marchand's (1990) phenomenological study of Western Canadian Native adults' ethnic identity, but the emphases were different. It was not expected, therefore, that the results in this study would be the same. However, the fact that the ethnic identity styles that she found in a very different group of Native people can also be helpful to an understanding of the different perspectives that participants in this study had can be taken as some indication of the validity of the construct as well as evidence of a degree of external reliability.

Eisner, in The Enlightened Eye (1991) argues that validity in qualitative research is essentially a concern with how you know that you know. This is not greatly different from Wiersma's description of internal validity. The other part of validity, external, (i.e. generalizability) is the subject of another chapter in Eisner's book. No matter what it is called then, the two chief validity questions that have to be addressed in examining this research are, how can we evaluate that the conclusions were 'correct' (internal validity) and in what ways will the findings be applicable to other situations (external validity).

Wiersma argues that internal validity in naturalistic research is established partly by the "naturalness" with which the data is collected (1991, p241). Another way of improving internal validity is to examine possible competing explanations or causative factors (Wiersma, 1991, p241; Eisner, 1991, p 111). Finally, it is recommended that the naturalistic study will draw on multiple data sources as a method of increasing validity. The

more perspectives that can be found that concur with that of the researcher, the better (Eisner, 1991, pp111-113).

The data in this proposed study was collected as naturalistically as possible, given its historical and phenomenological nature. It would not have been possible to obtain it by observation, and closed interview techniques would have interfered with the chances of the respondents to provide their perspectives. The respondents provided different data sources and were certainly the most appropriate perspectives to check with (cf. Eisner).

Generalizability can be problematic for naturalistic studies. Certainly, when the emphasis is on the particulars of the experiences of only a few individuals, it would appear that only a limited amount of generalizability may be possible, and therefore, the external validity of this research may not be high. However, Marchand (1990) argued that the value of her phenomenological research could be found in the degree to which she highlighted the complexity of native identity development. Similarly, the value of this research, given that it has high internal reliability and validity, may be of a similar nature. It may illustrate how difficult generalizability actually is, for the purposes of therapy or theory concerning Native adolescents and education.

ANALYSIS

Community Profile

1. History⁵

At the beginning of the century the Islington Reserve had been in existence for less than 3 decades, having been created by Treaty number 3 in 1873. Like most of the Ojibway people of the lands North and Northwest of the Great Lakes, the people of Swan Lake, One Man Lake and Whitedog were at this time getting a living from trapping, and from traditional subsistence activities: wild rice and berry gathering in season, fishing, and hunting.

While, of course, contact with Europeans had introduced a number of quite drastic changes to the lifestyles of the Anishnabe (guns, manufactured goods, textiles, the fur trade economy, missionaries etc.) in the preceding centuries, the people had adapted to those changes by this point and, culturally and in other ways, were not, on a day to day basis, greatly influenced by the large and rapidly growing European-based society that was the young country of Canada⁶. The Wabaseemoong-area Anishnabe's traditional beliefs, while under attack from missionaries, had not yet been undermined. Their culture was still manifested in virtually all aspects of their lives. When the people of Whitedog refer today to traditional culture and traditional lifestyles, they essentially refer to what things were like pretty much throughout the first half, or at least the first quarter, of the 20th century. Thus, the elders see their parents, and to some extent themselves, as having lived traditionally.

Christianity is often cited as a major negative force in Canadian aboriginal people's pasts, and indeed with good reason (cf York, 1989). Many Christian missionaries, of all denominations, regarded traditional beliefs as pagan

⁵ I am indebted to two respected elders of the community, Roy MacDonald, a former chief of Whitedog, spiritual leader, and an historian of the community, and Josephine Mandamin, a band councillor and outspoken advocate for the rights of her people, and to Valerie Henry, the principal of the school and a long-term resident of the reserve, for much of the historical information presented in the following section. Other participants also contributed important information in this regard but have requested anonymity (see Methodology section).

⁶ Readers interested in knowing more about the traditional lifestyles of the Northwest Ontario Ojibway can consult Shkilnyk (1979), and Vecsey (1983). See References section for complete citation.

and therefore antithetical to salvation and eternal life. Wherever Christian missionaries had power, then, they used it to eradicate these beliefs. But in the traditional lands of the Wabaseemoong people, though missionaries were present (the original name of the reserve, the “Islington Reserve”, derives from the surname of a missionary who had worked there), they don’t appear to have had much power until after the turn of the century. The parents of today’s elders spoke little or no English, had little or no formal schooling, and were knowledgeable practitioners in the fields of traditional medicine and healing, religion and spirituality, and in every other aspect of the life that their parents and grandparents knew. The oldest residents of the community today also knew this life.

However, by the 1940s, drastic changes had begun and more were to follow. A great deal of damage can be done to a culture in a fairly short time if it is attacked on all fronts, and the recent history of the Wabaseemoong First Nations illustrates this. First, there were the residential schools that, by the 1940s, were removing the young Anishnabe from all that they knew for extended periods of time, and attempting to teach them that everything that their families had been telling them (and that, being young, they probably only imperfectly understood) was wrong, even evil.

The moral and psychological harm that was done to aboriginal children in residential schools is now well known (cf. York, 1989). The residential school near Kenora was probably not the worst one in the country. In fact, some people that I spoke with indicated that their experience of residential schooling had not really been all that bad. But it was bad enough:

Iris - Abuse... I seen a lot of it in there (residential school): kids being neglected, wanting to go home but they can't because the government has all these people keeping you there. So you kind of give up hope on a lot of things because you have no goals. I don't recall anyone trying to explain anything to me. I was locked there and I had to stay there...I ran away when I was 14 years old.

Tom - It was very... humiliating for me at times. I have bad memories and good memories of it. At those times there was corporal punishment and other humiliations like getting your head shaved. For disciplinary problems. Right in front of all your peers eh? Like you didn't want to have it, they forced it on you. So a lot of my peers used to run away. I tried it a couple of times.

Paula - ...My grade 5 teacher, I still remember her although I would rather not, she kind of pulled me by the arm and she told me not to speak my native tongue (in the schoolyard)...She told me to stay after school. And after school she started really calling me names. Like some

of the ones I'd rather not mention them but she even called me a savage. For others...I don't remember what class it was but the boys used to get a strapping right in front of us. They'd have to take their pants down, but we didn't look at them. We didn't want to look at them. We were told to, but...Otherwise it was okay.

But if some managed to escape the system physically unharmed and not having experienced overt abuse themselves, few or none could come out of it without having experienced an attack on their identity. This, after all, was part of the policy and purpose of the residential school system: to take the Indian out of the Indian. The attack occurred on two fronts: language and spirituality. If the system could not make Native children actually forget their language, it could at least make them feel that there was something wrong with it, that it wasn't a "good" language:

Iris - From the age of, until 5 all I did was speak Ojibway. That's all I knew, and then, when I was brought in to the residential school I was told I wasn't allowed to speak it: it was a bad language, it was a dirty language. So, anytime I wanted to communicate with somebody, all I knew was how to speak Ojibway, but I was punished every time I used it, so I became silent. I became really frightened; I was a frightened child.

Tom - They told us not to speak it (Ojibway). We were constantly reminded. I remember some of my friends being told that if they were speaking the language they would be punished. I think some were punished but I never got that, because when I was in school, most of my communication was in English. Very rarely did I speak the Ojibway language.

Yet, the negative effect of residential schooling on the Ojibway language was minor compared to the damage that was done to the belief system. The Ojibway saw the development of all forms of knowledge as a lifelong endeavour. It is partly for this reason that elders are held in special regard in Anishnabe society. Elders have been getting an education for their entire lives. They know so much more than a person with half or a quarter of their years can possibly know.

And in the traditional Ojibway timetable, the acquisition of cultural or religious knowledge was not rushed. Roy MacDonald explained:

"[I]n my younger days, [I would] ask, 'why this?', and sometimes I was told, 'you should not ask, you're too young to learn, you're too small yet to have this'. Or, 'you're not old enough to know this, all these things'."

Some kinds of knowledge and certain practices were very powerful and were therefore kept from the young.

The great milestone of the Anishnabe's spiritual life was the adolescent vision quest, (in which the youth would receive a visit from a manitou who would offer to be a personal guardian) and preparation for this event was an important part of the entire childhood period (Vecsey, 1983). Given the vast wealth of material that the elders had to impart, there can be no doubt that 6 or 7 or 8 year olds knew relatively little of their own culture and religion. They were just beginning to learn.

To be taken away from the home and the Ojibway system of education and taught instead that what they had been hearing to that point was foolish, or wicked, or, at best, quaint, and that the truth of life and of the spirit was something quite different, could hardly fail to create psychological dislocation and confusion. If Erikson's theories apply, and there is evidence that they do (Erikson, 1963; Marchand, 1989), by the time Ojibway youths were embarked on the task of establishing an identity (i.e. by adolescence), they had experienced about 10 years of competing, and nearly impossible to reconcile, claims about who they were and what was true and good, or false and bad (cf. Katz, 1979).

But despite the efforts of the missionaries and the residential schoolteachers, the Ojibway people who are today's elders retained their language and much of their culture. Although, by the 1950's, the vision quest appears to have been no longer practiced in this region, many, if not most, of the teenagers who returned to their homes at the end of their period of residential schooling were given crash courses in the ways of the Anishnabe and resumed their traditional patterns of subsistence, following a seasonal round of fishing, hunting, trapping and gathering. They spoke Ojibway again, and were usually able to learn or re-learn some of the traditional medical and spiritual practices (Shkilnyk, 1985)⁷.

Then, in the late 1950's, after minimal (or no) consultation, there came the news that the community of One Man Lake must cease to be:

⁷ A Poison Stronger than Love (Shkilnyk, 1985) describes in detail the forces that were responsible for the terrible social situation on the Grassy Narrows reserve in the 1970's. This community is located approximately 50 km upriver (i.e. East) of Wabaseemoong and is similar in numerous respects (not connected to white settlements by road until the early 1960's, residential schooling of children, relocated without consultation, etc.). Thus, the history that Shkilnyk obtained for the Grassy Narrows reserve served as a useful reference to me, although I generally only used it as further support for information I had already obtained in the interviews or during my years on the Wabaseemoong reserve.

Roy MacDonald - And then one day there was a tent across the river. And a few people were anxious, wanting to know who was out there, "Who's camping? What are they doing, not coming in to the community and going out every morning?" So one of my cousins, who was already very fluent in English, went up to this camp in the afternoon ...and these were surveyors. So they started to tell him that this land, this area, was going to be flooded... And it was there that we found out that there was a plan in place. What they were doing was they were surveying the shore and... then word got out that we were going to be flooded out... and it happened. There was no stopping it. And we reached that point where people had to move out of there, with all the difficulties and all the unnecessary move, that we had to move to another community, which was Whitedog. We were forced to relocate. There was never any choice at the time. The move was the only alternative for us. And that's how One Man Lake people vacated and moved into Whitedog.

Ontario Hydro built a dam and hydroelectric station at Whitedog Falls and raised the level of One Man Lake about 3 metres. This resulted in the flooding of almost 1600 hectares of their land (York, 1989).

Whether any thought at all was given by the officials of Ontario Hydro to the effects of their actions on the way of life is not known, but it seems doubtful. The flooding of One Man Lake meant the disruption of the people's means of subsistence. Trap lines and wild rice fields were totally or partially submerged, and fishing was made more difficult by the presence of large quantities of 'dead-heads' (partially submerged rotting trees). This, and the fact that the One Man Lake cemetery would be underwater, seemed to mean little to Ontario Hydro at the time; perhaps they thought they were offering the people a chance at a better life.

And so the people of One Man Lake moved into the shoddily-constructed new homes provided for them in Whitedog, and many of them moved onto welfare. What life was like immediately after that depends on who you talk to. Some have told me that up until the early 1970's people in Whitedog got along; there was little violence, little alcohol abuse and associated problems, and a lot of socializing, and community cohesiveness. Others have stated that the two communities (and eventually three⁸) never really merged at all, that jealousies and suspicions were there from the beginning as they are to this day.

⁸ The community of Swan Lake was quite small. Roy MacDonald believes that, in the 1950's, there were between 6 and 10 families living there, less than 80 people. Their move was more gradual it seems. The Islington Day School, serving the primary grades, was opened in Whitedog in the mid 1950's. The residential school was still teaching the upper elementary and secondary years.

Roy MacDonald: "And the Swan Lake community moved when they had the residential school system. There was talk that they were going to close down the residential school. And at this time, the reserve council had also organized a day school right in the community. So then, that was the reason for Swan Lake's move. Some families had school age children and they were told that they must go to school."

I believe that both kinds of reports are true. The people who had always lived in Whitedog and the newcomers were all Anishnabe, and had traditions of socializing in groups, storytelling, dancing and other activities, and traditions of hospitality still to draw on. In the first years after the flooding of One Man Lake, it seems, most of the traditions were still intact. Even though Hydro had done serious damage to the means of subsistence of the One Man Lake people, Anishnabe cultural values were still operating in Wabaseemoong.

However, I believe that the fact of being forced into a merger also made both sides feel to some extent like the One Man Lake people were uninvited and not-overly-welcome guests, especially since their ability to remain self-sufficient from the resources of the One Man Lake area had just been seriously undermined and their added population put extra pressure on the resources of the Whitedog area.

Adding to the potential for divisiveness was the fact that the extended family was by far the most important social system in the Ojibway's life. This was not problematic as long as the people were pursuing traditional means of subsistence. In traditional times, all the people of a community were at about the same level of wealth. Nobody had many material possessions, money was universally scarce, but each extended family group was pretty much able to provide for itself on a par with every other family group. However, as traditional methods of getting a living were taken away from the people of the Wabaseemoong reserve, and replaced by wage work or the welfare system, inequalities became inevitable⁹. Then, the extended family system made rivalry and feuding likely, since, whenever a person in the community could influence hiring, that person would almost invariably ensure that other family members got the jobs. The establishment of a money economy did not take place overnight, of course. In fact, employment for wages amongst the residents was still fairly uncommon throughout the 1960's.

But whatever the truth is about the situation in the 1960's, there is not much doubt about what things became like thereafter. In 1972 it was discovered that the English-Winnipeg river system contained very high levels of mercury and the people of Whitedog and of nearby Grassy Narrows were advised that they could not eat the fish from that system. In effect, this meant that they could not eat fish, period, for there is little water in the region that is not part of this system. Commercial fishing, which had been a major means of livelihood for many fami-

⁹ Roy MacDonald:"In my life years ago there was the clanship, and love was there right in the community. When money came in, and to me, (that is what I am referring to, there is something wrong) it's money that is breaking people, breaking the family unit, breaking community, it destroys."

lies in the area, was also suspended, so the people of Whitedog were simultaneously deprived of a very important source of food and of income (Kidd, 1993).

The source of pollution was found to be a pulp and paper mill upstream (although mercury contamination is also, apparently, a usual byproduct of hydroelectric flooding when trees are left in the water to rot (York, 1989)) and eventually the mill compensated the residents of both communities with a lump sum payment of about 6.5 million dollars each which, in the case of Wabaseemoong, has been placed in a trust, so that only the interest accruing is to be used.

However, financial compensation could not bring back the activities that were so much a part of the daily lives of the community's members. By this time trapping had become largely uneconomical, and although hunting continued to be a fairly widespread activity among community men, it brought no income and was seen as a supplement to a money-based economic system. Wild rice gathering, for personal use but also for sale, continued but there is a very short season for wild rice, and the proceeds one can obtain from gathering it by traditional means could not supply a year's needed cash. Tourist sport-fishing had always been an important minor industry but not everyone could work as a guide and, again, the high season was short and not enormously lucrative. And fears of mercury contamination damaged that industry too. Thus welfare became the major source of income for many in the community.

Present-day Whitedog is not different from many of the First Nations communities in Canada in its experience of social problems. There is widespread alcohol and solvent abuse, marital and family violence, and a high rate of suicide. At the community resource-sharing workshop I attended, a representative of Weechi-it-te-win Social Services recited a depressing list of statistics concerning family disruptions. These problems do not appear to have been common or widespread in the community prior to the events of the early 1970's¹⁰ and it is nearly certain that their rise had a great deal to do with the measures (of which the flooding of One Man Lake, and the poisoning of the river system are only the most obvious), that took away, from virtually all the residents of the community, their traditional means of subsistence.

¹⁰ Though it deals more specifically with nearby Grassy Narrows than with Whitedog, *A Poison Stronger Than Love* (Shkilnyk, 1985) demonstrates that both communities experienced a precipitous rise in all forms of social problems over the period from the mid 1960's to the late 1970's. The same forces that Shkilnyk identifies as having created the disastrous situation in Grassy can be found in Whitedog. In Grassy and in Whitedog, the destructive forces commenced their operation immediately after a relocation in the early 1960's, but it probably took a few years before all members of the community began to really feel the effects. This no doubt helps to account for the different perceptions of the participants in my research.

2. Geography

The Wabaseemoong reserve is located on the Winnipeg river system. It is about 60 km North of the Lake of the Woods. The river system is very extensive in this area. Without portaging it is possible to travel by boat about 30 km in most directions, South into Swan Lake, North into Tetu Lake, and East and West for a considerable distance along the Winnipeg River itself. With portaging, one can travel a vast area.

Fish are still abundant in the waters. Large numbers of walleye, pike, and bass can still be caught with relative ease by anyone with knowledge of the best sites. As a result, there is a considerable amount of tourism in the area. Nearby Minaki has been famous as a hunting and fishing resort since the 1920's. Several large tourist camps operate within a 20 km radius of Whitedog. People now eat the fish caught in these waters with few qualms about mercury contamination, but there is still no commercial fishery.

Moose and deer are also quite plentiful, as are geese, ducks and partridge at various times, and this, too, draws some tourists, though fewer than the summer fishing season. Many men in Whitedog hunt frequently, and game is commonly found at the tables of many homes.

There is some barren ground and considerable wetland (including wild rice fields), but most of the land is heavily forested. A large paper mill in Kenora, 80 km away by road, ensures a high demand for wood. Forests, then, provide another potential economic base. Compensation money from the mercury poisoning paid for the construction, in 1986, of a seedling nursery at Goshawk, which is about 12 km from the community but still on reserve land. Initially managed by an outsider, the greenhouse operation is now under the complete management and control of the band. It has been highly successful and was expanded two years ago.

Winnipeg is a 3 and a half hour drive from Whitedog but Kenora, the nearest town, is the major service centre for the reserve, as indeed it is for a number of reserves in the area. Every second Friday afternoon, all the people who receive a government paycheque on any of these reserves, (in Whitedog this includes band workers, social services workers and all employees of the education authority) converge on Kenora's banks, stores and restaurants and for a few hours the racial balance in this largely White town becomes nearly equal.

Despite the fact that Native people represent one of the major sources of revenue to Kenora, there seems to be a great deal of racism there. If the majority of the townspeople are not prejudiced against Indians, then there is certainly a substantial, and vocal, minority who are. Most of the residents of Whitedog, it seems, can report incidents of blatant bigotry directed against them, and as an understandable consequence, they consider the entire town of Kenora racist (cf Shkilnyk, 1985):

Josephine Mandamin - Kenora is on the world map as a very racist town. They (new teachers) get an earful even before they have a chance to get to know the people here (Wabaseemoong). So what they have to contend with here is fear that they're going to be stabbed or killed or beaten up. That's not fair. There are many good people here and you see that they (teachers) are not given the chance to come in and get to know the community, which is tragic and sad, 'cause they already got an earful from those people with very sick attitudes towards their fellow human beings.

3. Economy

Traditionally, the land met all the needs of the Anishnabe. Today, the natural resources of the area still have considerable economic potential, but in Whitedog, the wealth of the land is not being fully utilized.

There are a number of reasons for this. The fur industry is in a general decline, and is not seen as viable in Whitedog. Experienced trappers still go out on their traplines, but few are able to make a living from it. If prices were to rise, the experienced trappers would again be able to do so, but at the moment this does not appear likely. And amongst the youth, the kind of knowledge needed to operate a trapline is almost totally absent. It is very doubtful whether the fur industry can ever be revived in the Wabaseemoong area, if prices do not rise soon.

Wild rice is not being harvested on anywhere near the scale it was even 20 years ago. Then, the school would be nearly empty for about 2 weeks while families gathered a year's supply of wild rice for their own use. By the mid 1980's very few students were absent from school during the harvest. By then, most of the crop was being gathered only by the adults, and mostly for sale. Today, there is almost no wild rice being gathered by anyone from the community.

As mentioned above, there is no commercial fishing any more, and sport fishing guiding can provide only a few jobs and a modest income. Hunting has never been a cash activity, and together with fishing and berry-gathering, continues to be practiced in the community only as a supplement to other means of subsistence, whether that be employment or welfare.

A general store, an arcade and one or two convenience stores (operated quite informally and from people's houses so that it is difficult to be certain if both are still in operation) provide full time employment for perhaps 5 or 6 people and part time work for about as many again. The seedling nursery is proving to be highly successful and employs about 20 people full time and another 20 seasonally.

But the three levels of government (Wabaseemoong band, the province, and Ottawa) constitute the principal source of employment income in Whitedog. The major employers in terms of numbers of jobs are the school system, the band council, and the social services agency, Weechi-it-te-win, all of which receive their operating budgets from government transfer payments.

Language

1. Extent and Quality of Ojibway Language Use in the Community.

Estimates of the extent of Ojibway use in the community varied widely among the participants. However, the trends, with respect to its use, are more generally agreed upon.

The majority of the population of Wabaseemoong speaks Ojibway. Amongst the over-30 group the ability to speak it fluently would be found in nearly 100% of the native population. A greater proportion of those over 50 than under 50 would be unilingual in Ojibway, but speakers of Ojibway-only can even be found amongst the youth. Ojibway-English bilingualism, though, seems to be the most characteristic condition of the youth.

All but 4 of the 21 youth participants in this research claimed to have some ability in Ojibway. However, only 5 considered themselves to be as fluent as the elders, and only one of those 5 was under 25. Four youth participants rated their abilities with the language as primarily receptive (i.e. said that they were either unwilling or unable to speak the language, though they could understand some). This leaves 8 youth whose Ojibway vocabulary and/or fluency is limited in some degree, though sufficient for communication with most other Ojibway speakers.

As stated in the Methodology chapter, no claim for representativeness can be defended, but in this regard I believe my participants to be approximately equal to the Youth population of the community. In percentage terms, the Ojibway fluency of the youth participants breaks down like this:

Perfectly fluent = 23% (5)

Limited but fluent = 38% (8)

Mainly receptive = 19% (4)

No ability = 19% (4)

These categories do not have firm boundaries, of course. Among the youth there is a continuum of language abilities, not four discrete quantities. But the breakdown shows that the majority of the youth can still speak the language well, though of that group, most believe that their abilities are not as great as they could be.

It is important to note that, of the 21 youth participants, 11 had spent some part of their childhood away from the Wabaseemoong reserve. At least 4 had been in foster care in non-Native homes. There is some correspondence between language ability and rearing off-reserve. All but one of the 8 youth with either very limited or no abilities in Ojibway had lived off the reserve. Only one participant who had some experience of residing off-reserve considered herself to be at an expert level of fluency, and she was quite proud of this fact since her abilities with the language when she returned to the reserve were weak.

It is probably not insignificant either that 5 of the 8 more or less unilingual Anglophones I interviewed in Whitedog had at least one biological parent not from the reserve. This means that, at least up until 17 years ago, if you were born to two natives of this community and raised in Wabaseemoong there was a strong probability that you learned Ojibway. Limited abilities tend to arise either from lengthy residence off-reserve or from having one non-Ojibway-speaking parent.

But though the percentages cannot be fixed with any accuracy, few participants doubted that, among the youth and especially among the children, there are significant numbers of unilingual Anglophones and people who speak very poor Ojibway, and their number is growing. These young people experience a little difficulty living in the community in this condition - most of the unilingual youth I talked with desired, or had at one point desired, to speak Ojibway - but nearly all of the people they need or want to talk to are able to speak English. Furthermore, school success and most forms of vocational success, are widely perceived to be linked exclusively to the strength of one's English skills.

2. Attitude towards Ojibway Language and towards Ojibway in School

Most of the participants believed that the Ojibway language in Wabaseemoong is in decline, though the extent of the decline, its causes, and its consequences were not unanimously agreed upon. Nor, certainly, could the participants agree on what, if anything, ought to be done about it. For many, the language is extremely important. It is an aspect of their identity and a necessary part of a healthy community. But for others, and I believe that a growth in their numbers is inevitable without action, the decline is seen with nostalgic resignation: It's a shame, yes, but the language cannot survive.

There is little doubt that, in a school system where English is the language of instruction, beginning kindergarten with only the ability to speak Ojibway puts a child at a serious disadvantage in comparison with his or her English-speaking peers. It may be for this reason that some participants even seemed to view Ojibway proficiency as something of a liability.

It would not be surprising if people believed that speaking Ojibway with the fluency of the older generation reduced one's ability to speak English well. They might see evidence for this perception in the fact that some of the most obviously fluent Ojibway speakers in the school age population were also those students with quite limited English ability. It was reported to me by school personnel that all, or nearly all, of the students who were receiving remedial help in the Wabaseemoong school were fluent in Ojibway. Few of that group could also be considered fluent in English. The well-known negative stigma attached to receiving remedial help certainly exists in Wabaseemoong school. In addition, some of the students with the highest levels of English ability (and the highest academic success) spoke little or no Ojibway.

The relative prestige of the two languages varies greatly depending on who you talk with. It is apparent to all in the community that, amongst community members, strong English skills are generally associated with higher status jobs, and thus English itself would seem to be regarded at least somewhat positively by most, if only for its utility. In addition, of course, radio and television broadcasts are in English (or French) and most of the youth are avid television watchers and fans of popular music. The nearest White town may be over an hour's drive away, but Euro-Canadian pop culture is in nearly every living room in Wabaseemoong. One cannot hope to participate in it without a knowledge of English.

Nevertheless, some ambivalence, even resistance, toward English can be found as well. It was reported to me that some of the children receiving remedial help in the school had very little interest in working in English, but would expend considerable effort on materials or tasks in Ojibway.

Resource teacher: Some (students) are more fluent in Ojibway and don't speak any English at all. Those are the students that I get to see. And I don't blame them; they want to hold on to

their language and culture and it's not... they seem to come from certain families that for a long time have tried to hold on to their way of life: you know - the trapping and hunting is still done in season and taught in Ojibway. And students come to school with that background and all of a sudden they're confronted with a whole different thing and they don't want it. I've had a few and they're dropouts now. Like, the boy I was talking about (earlier), he refused to read in English. And when I showed him the book in Ojibway, he did try. And when I showed him a book on trapping, he was very interested. And a book on animals. But in terms of reading about Mr. Muggs, no.

I believe that in my own teaching experience I encountered students who had very little desire to improve their very weak English language skills. In the discussion section, I consider constructs such as self-efficacy, self-esteem, and especially self-concept and ethnic identity as potentially very helpful in explaining this kind of low motivation for, even resistance to, the learning of English.

It is perhaps of great importance to the future strength of the Ojibway language in this community that most of the participants in this study who expressed an affinity for either the community or the culture (and the two are by no means viewed with the identical levels of favour by each individual), expressed a positive attitude towards the Ojibway language and generally also a desire to see it maintained. This attitude had little to do with present level of personal ability in Ojibway. If a person expressed a high level of regard for Wabaseemoong and/or the Anishnabe culture, whether they spoke Ojibway or not, they were usually interested in seeing Ojibway spoken by the generations to come. And people expressing a high regard for the community and/or the culture were the majority of the participants.

Furthermore, it was reported to me by the Native Language teacher that, whereas 10 years ago a low level of ability in English was a thing that students got teased for, today, a low level of ability in Ojibway is considered a deficiency:

Irene Scott - And when I first came here (started work in the school, around 1985), they used to laugh at each other because they couldn't talk English. But now, it's the other way around. If you can't speak your native tongue, then you... you know, are in trouble.

On the other hand, the school principal reported that the language of the schoolyard over that same period has changed from Ojibway to English:

Valerie Henry - When I first came here, in 1974, I would say 90% of students, their first language was Ojibway. When you were out on the playground you never heard any English. Very seldom. Maybe 10%. You heard English here and there. In the classroom the same thing. The majority would understand Ojibway and speak Ojibway. You had a few, a minority that could understand and speak some English but most of them were second language learners. I've been here 20 years, now it's completely switched around. It's 90% English, 10% Ojibway. We have so many children coming in to junior K now that don't speak a word of Ojibway even though they have two Ojibway-speaking parents.

In conducting this research, what emerged most clearly with respect to language in Whitedog, is the fact that the relationship of the two languages is still fluid. The dynamic appears to be that English has recently started to become a more dominant language among the youth, but a cultural revival is also now starting to occur which is increasing the prestige of Ojibway. This cultural revival is not, however, universal in Wabaseemoong and is not likely to become so in the near future, for reasons that will be discussed. Also, there is reason to believe that only a very radical increase in the prestige of Ojibway will be sufficient in itself to counter the powerful forces (pop culture and English-only literacy teaching to name two) that have made English use amongst the youth so prevalent. That is, the young may express very positive feelings toward the Ojibway language but it will not be easy for them to learn it if it is not being taught to them anywhere.

Culture

1. Spirituality and Religion

When the youth speak about culture, two topics are predominant. One is the Ojibway language. For a number of the participants, culture and language are very closely allied. The strength or weakness of one is basically identical to the strength or weakness of the other. Nevertheless, there are numerous paragraphs in the transcript that deal with aspects of the culture other than language.

The other topic that is raised most frequently in discussions of culture is spiritual or religious practices. In the traditional Aboriginal conception, spirituality and culture were two parts of the same thing (Matthiessen, 1979). While it is to some extent possible to separate practices and beliefs having exclusively to do with the spirits from other traditional Ojibway practices and beliefs, the division is not easy to maintain. All aspects of health and medicine had a spiritual component. Hunting success was greatly influenced by one's relations with the spirits (Vecsey, 1983). Rules for behaviour and codes of ethics were believed to have a spiritual origin¹¹. In short, with the possible exceptions of a few elements of subsistence practices and of recreational/social activities, nearly everything in the traditional Ojibway's life related to spiritual matters in some fashion. Therefore, in discussing this, I will not attempt to create a firm division between "religious" and other cultural activities and beliefs.

However, it is useful to contrast the activities of various Christian sects with the efforts of people who are attempting to revitalize Native spiritual practices, so the discussion of culture and spirituality in Wabaseemoong will begin with religion, before proceeding to consider aspects that are less specifically spiritual.

Christianity can be a powerful force for good in an individual's life. Christian beliefs can give a person strength and a way of coping with stresses. But whatever individual benefits people are receiving from it in Whitedog, Christianity is not a force for community harmony at this time. This is because several fundamentalist protestant

¹¹ Roy MacDonald: "The elder went through with the dreaming task and was given messages through the dream that he had to use animals, (and this is bringing it into a short story) as clans, clanship. And out of their clanship the consensus was that each animal - whatever animal, whether it was a four-legged animal, or a bird or fish - any one of these major beings was gifted by the creator and if it happened to be one of those that you are, whatever the story or legend on that animal, bird or fish, then that's the way you were to represent, you were to try to live according to what that nature is, whatever your clan is. So they got their rules from there".

groups have gained followers, and all of these sects are, to some extent, inimical to the traditional spiritual beliefs and practices that some people in the community (who I hereinafter call traditionalists) are striving to rebuild and strengthen.

The appearance of Christian fundamentalism is very recent, and it is possible that it will not endure. When I was teaching in Whitedog (1987-89) Christianity had only a limited presence. Two Catholic nuns did mission work from a mobile home, and a priest came occasionally to hold mass at the social centre.¹² A small group of Mennonites came twice a month to hold services in the school. Neither of these events was attended by a large number of people. The only church on the reserve (an Anglican church) had been burned down several years before my arrival, and had not been rebuilt. (also, see Vecsey, 1983, for a discussion of the general failure of Christian evangelizing amongst the Anishnabe).

It is also possible, though very unlikely, that the various fundamentalist sects will seek an accommodation with the traditionalists, as some denominations have done elsewhere in Canada:

Angela - One time the people who organize the gospel thing came up to my dad (a traditionalist leader) and said, "we think it's about time that we joined together to help the people of Whitedog". That was the time when they had the 7 deaths here. Which is kind of weird because usually they think of us as devil worshippers [laughs].

However, whatever the future of these sects in Whitedog may be, right now there is very little evidence that they are interested in accommodating traditionalists and their beliefs. In the world of the Protestant fundamentalist there are no shades of gray - everything is clearly either black or white. And traditional religion is definitely not white.

Members of these sects tend to be convinced that their belief system is the one that Jesus Christ Himself ordained and therefore only their belief system can deliver a person from an eternity of punishment in the afterlife. Some of these sects will go so far as to proclaim that even some other Christian denominations cannot deliver their adherents from damnation, so it should not be surprising that the Ojibway religious system is viewed extremely negatively by them.

¹² One of the nuns, incidentally, became so interested in learning about Ojibway religious and cultural practices that she was removed from the reserve and sent to a convent in Quebec to be, she told me, "re-educated".

While tolerance and respect are key elements of the traditional Ojibway moral code as they are of Aboriginal moral codes in general(Brant, 1991), self-righteousness and intolerance are features of most fundamentalist systems:

Tom - What's happening is, with all these religions coming in, it's not helping at all. Like, for example, you pick any one of these groups that come in to Whitedog, one of the things they'll tell you to do is to drop your beliefs, your customs, even your language in some instances and they tell you that the Native way of life is wrong. You are a sinner. Your life is wrong. But that is totally false. Our culture respects all others. Really that's the downfall of our system too. Because our belief is that everybody is equal, no matter what colour they are. And it's the same with religion. We respect nature, the mother earth; we respect everything, we respect insects, respect animal life, water, air, everything, and that includes religion too. So the native custom is the only religion I know of that respects everybody. But you go to another denomination, you have to be brainwashed to accept it. They come in here with a band aid type solution. It's superficial. To me, they're out to get more souls, to buy people. The more people they get, they seem to be happy with that. But they're not really fixing the problems.

Traditional Ojibway beliefs are roundly condemned in the meeting places of these groups. To their thinking, the people who practice traditional religion are at best misguided. At worst, traditionalists are in league with Satan. And, because traditionally the Anishnabe did not compartmentalize their lives into religious and secular domains, virtually every traditional practice is viewed by the fundamentalists as anti-Christian and therefore is not to be tolerated.

The school is one place where this intolerance can easily be manifested. Although a traditional drumming group for young people in the community was formed about two years ago, drumming, singing, and dancing generally does not occur in school assemblies or in the classroom because it may be objected to by the converts to fundamentalism. Even story-telling by elders, the passing on of the legends and myths of the Anishnabe, is potentially a problem for the fundamentalists and is quite infrequent in the school.

The Education Authority and the school administration are very sensitive to this issue. Because they wish to provide an education for all the children in the community they are generally steering clear of introducing any elements into the classroom that anybody could object to, or use as a reason for establishing a separate school. Thus the fundamentalists, by their intolerance, are able to exert a greater effect than their numbers alone would

warrant. Not that their numbers are small: I could not determine how many converts to fundamentalism there were in Whitedog, but one participant guessed that there were about 150, not an insignificant number in a community of about 800 full-time residents¹³.

None of the youth that were interviewed, however, were fundamentalist Christians. One participant was exploring Christianity at the time of the interviews, but was not attending any of the meetings of the various sects in Whitedog. Her comments illustrate several important points with respect to religion and culture among the youth in Whitedog:

Beth - I've always been interested in religion and I've just been doing a lot of reading. I've been trying to find out which...what kind of a religion to pick. The first thing that got me into it is I was watching TV, those religious shows and just, the people seemed, like, they seemed so happy. I just wondered how they could be so happy. So I wanted to find out. I started praying and reading the Bible. Then I talked to two religious people who said they'd try to help me and I've gone to church once. But...well, I don't know if that's what I...if that's what I want to do. I just haven't really decided yet. Well, I guess I have. I don't know, just sometimes I doubt. I believe in Jesus. And God. But I also believe in a lot of other things. I believe that every other religion in the world, none of it is wrong. It's all one God. None of it is wrong. I know stuff about [Native religion] too. I believe that...I don't think it's wrong. I believe that it's good. I know they believe in the Great Spirit and about spirits and they have powers and... and I have an Indian name. And I have a color. I know what my color is. And I have an animal, that's my protector.(I got these things) from a medicine man. My dad knows him and took me to him. He (father) believes in both (forms of spirituality) I guess. He says - I asked him one time, and he just said - he believes in the Native religion but sometimes he also believes in the Catholic religion.

This participant's involvement with Christianity was limited to what she saw on fundamentalist television shows, and some reading of the Bible. She had attended services in Kenora once in the company of another family, but her views at the time of the interview were not anything that most Whitedog fundamentalists would agree with. She felt that all religions share a common truth, that none are wrong. Though she did not communicate much with her father (a situation that was widespread amongst female participants) she believed that he, too, looked on religions this way.

I am still in touch with many of the participants in this research. What has been happening in this girl's life is significant. In the time since the interviews, she seems to have moved away from Christianity and to be seeking

¹³ DIA figures for Dec. 31, 1991 indicate a band list of 1184, of which 700 were residing on the reserve. Local estimates place the number of residents as considerably higher. The youth participant who supplied the figure of 150 fundamentalists also stated that the reserve had a population of 1000.

to understand and to practice Ojibway religion more exclusively. Among other things, a visit in November of 1993 by Leonard Crow Dog, a Sioux traditionalist, was highly inspirational to her in this regard. This kind of exploration of belief systems is, I believe, evidence of a search for an identity, and the question of how Native youth form an identity will be considered in the Discussion section.

This participant's attitude toward both sets of religious beliefs was also expressed to me by several other participants. Few of those who expressed a belief in traditional religion were condemnatory of Christianity per se. The only negative remarks that were made concerned the lack of tolerance and the condescension that the fundamentalists expressed. To the Anishnabe, with their high regard for personal autonomy and respect for the choices of others (see Brant 1990), the behaviour of the fundamentalists was considered very rude.

Anishnabe tolerance and respect extend a long way. People who do not hold fundamentalist beliefs themselves try, in general, to get along with those who do. One boy who participated in the interviews had family who were fundamentalists. He reported that both his mother and his brother were committed Christians, though his father was not and neither was he. While he had never attended any traditional ceremonies, he denied that it was because of his family's views. He stated that he was simply uninterested.

Among his close friends was a boy who was very positive towards traditional religion and quite negative towards the Christians. This boy had participated in sweats and had attended shaking tent ceremonies both on the reserve and elsewhere. They told me in a joint interview that the subject of religion was never discussed between them. However, while we were discussing this matter the traditionalist volunteered that there was only one God and the boy from the Christian family agreed that God and the Great Spirit were the same.

A further example can be seen in the quote above from Angela, the girl whose father is a leader amongst the traditionalist movement. She was quite well aware that the fundamentalists had characterized her family's practices as "devil worship". She believed, nevertheless, that reconciliation or at least mutual tolerance could become a reality.

Among the youth who were interviewed, there was generally a positive feeling toward traditional Ojibway beliefs and practices. However, knowledge of, and participation in, Anishnabe religious practices ranged greatly.

Some young people have quite extensive traditional religious knowledge. For example, one participant described to me his visions, his spiritual journeys. He also told me that bad medicine is widely practiced in Whitedog, and that he and his family are frequently the targets of it, but that he is able to protect against this through his own practices¹⁴. And, though no one else mentioned this to me in the interviews, many of my friends and acquaintances when I was teaching on the reserve expressed the belief that certain families were practising bad medicine and also stated their belief in the power of all forms of traditional medicine.

For many youth, however, the acquisition of traditional religious knowledge is problematic. They know that elders have this knowledge and that it can be acquired from them, but only a few of them speak with elders on a regular basis. It may be partly because of this that misunderstandings about even the more common traditional practices seem to exist. For example, the sweat ceremony:

Angela - There's so much to learn (about traditional spirituality). I know enough, but there's a lot of things I don't know. And basically I think that not that much people know it really well. Okay they know about sweat lodges right? But...some are really afraid of it. They think of it as like black magic. Basically it's just to clear your head, your mind. You don't expect answers there right away. You say "Oh I don't know what to do about this person". You don't expect an answer. It's a cleansing; a cleansing of the body and spirit of a person. That's basically it but most people think it's some kind of a black magic witchcraft.

¹⁴ Hal - Bad medicine: quite a few years back, we almost got it, like, to where it went. But at that time, I guess when they got rid of it, the old guys said, this will be a challenge for the next generation. Because all the bad medicine will be coming back. The real bad stuff, black magic, whatever you want to call it, the worst of the worst. Even the devil will get involved.

Are there many people practising bad medicine here?

Hal - Oh shit yeah.

Is that right? So medicine is widely understood here and a lot of people are using it for the wrong reasons.

Hal - Yeah. Yeah. Exactly.

Is it a family-related thing again? Is it coming from certain families? Is there a family conflict here?

Hal - Yeah. Uh huh.

So certain families have bad medicine going against you, and you have to use your medicine to protect yourself?

Hal - Uh huh. If I wanted to, all these people that are doing the bad stuff, I'd get my bad stuff out too. I could use bad medicine. I'd finish everybody off. But I don't want to do that. I feel sorry for them. It's not their fault, they're jealous of me. I feel sorry for them.

All you want to do is be protected.

Hal - Uh huh.

You don't want to be the victim of their bad medicine.

Hal - But if they come to the point that they're trying to kill my children, that's when you'll see a lot of people start to fall.

Do you feel that they're attacking your children right now?

Hal - Yes!

But they're not trying to kill them.

Hal - They're attacking them, they're trying to kill them, but there's no power behind their medicine.

They don't know enough? Their medicine is not strong enough.

Hal - They're just being silly, trying that shit on me.

Not going to work.

Hal - No

David - I went for a sweat. At a sweat lodge. I was asking for help, like, from the spirits.

Edward - What I'm doing is, like, trying to get people to go to sweats, teaching lodges, I try to get all my friends to go to them. Some of them will go, but some of them are just scared. There's really nothing to be scared of. Maybe the idea of seeing spirits sort of scares them.

At least 8 of the youth participants had been in a sweat lodge. Most of them stated that there was nothing supernatural about it: the sweat ceremony was concerned with purification and with calming, not with the conjuring of spirits. However, one participant (quoted above) stated that he attended a sweat ceremony to ask advice of the spirits (though it is quite clear from the full transcript that the response he was expecting, and received, was akin to what Christians report as an answer to prayer: not a voice in one's head, but a growing conviction of what the right course is) and several participants told me that the reason why they, or people they knew, had not participated in sweats was fear, probably of the supernatural.

In addition to a lack of contact with the elders, who are the potential teachers, there are other barriers to the youth's acquisition of religious understanding. Though this area probably had a lower level of contact with White culture than many other Ojibway communities, probably all the elders who are less than 70 years old had some exposure to the residential school system. Community residents in their 50's would have had a considerable amount of exposure since, by the 1940s, mandatory attendance was quite easily enforced. As a result, and as was already mentioned, the adolescent vision quest ceased to be practiced.

In his detailed study of traditional Ojibway religion, Vecsey (1983) concluded that the vision quest played a central role. The aim of the quest was to obtain a guardian spirit or manitou. Preparation for this event was an important part of childhood. Parents and grandparents stressed the importance of the vision quest and encouraged the child to practice fasting. In the vision quest itself, a manitou came to the visionary and revealed certain things about what his or her life would be like. Thereafter, the individual could appeal to the guardian manitou for help in whatever capacity it was required, frequently in hunting, but also in curing ceremonies (Vecsey, 1983).

Some visions were more powerful than others. Especially powerful visions could lead a person away from the typical life of an Ojibway. Through powerful visions, males and females could become shamans (and would then continue to pursue visions throughout their lives) and females could become warriors or hunters (Vecsey, 1983).

The adolescent vision then, in one way or another, shaped the lives of all Anishnabe. Its discontinuance, forced upon the Anishnabe by the residential school system, can be likened to the removal of a keystone from an arch. The whole system of spiritual practices, which were integral to the lives of the Anishnabe, and that had formed an arch over their being, tumbled to the ground with the removal of the vision quest. All the other elements were still there, but they lay in disarray.

The residential school, simply by making the adolescent vision quest impossible, dealt a mortal blow to the system of Ojibway spiritual practices. The fact that the school also taught that the spiritual practices were at best errors, if not wicked, only added insult to the injury.

Another difficulty that young people have with acquiring traditional spiritual knowledge comes not from external forces, but from Ojibway tradition itself. As was already mentioned, learning of all sorts was traditionally viewed as a lifelong endeavour. And, as Roy MacDonald explained, the elders believed that there were certain things that youths could not understand or appreciate, that youths had to wait for until they were old enough. To this belief must be added the fact that in Ojibway traditional culture, one's visions were not to be talked about (Vecsey, 1983) and the fact that amongst many Native cultures elders seldom directly transmitted knowledge of any sort (Brant, 1982,1990).

It is known by the youth in Wabaseemoong that one cannot expect from an elder a direct answer to a question, or direct advice in response to a request for it:

Angela - They [elders]] don't have to necessarily tell it straight out. They can tell a story. You have to figure it out.

An element of secrecy is also understood by the youth with regard to religious knowledge. Only one youth participant and one other participant mentioned the Midewiwin, the secret Ojibway medicine society, but many seem to feel that some kinds of spiritual understanding are not for everybody. They know that some medicine is powerful and dangerous and they know that bad medicine exists. Therefore, youths can often be hesitant to explore deeply or, in some cases, at all.

To summarize it, the situation in Wabaseemoong with regard to spiritual or religious matters is that a very recent upsurge in fundamentalism has sharply increased the conflict between Christianity and traditionalism. The arrival of fundamentalism in Wabaseemoong actually quite closely followed a resurgence in traditional spiritual practices in this community, which until recently was essentially irreligious, with no significant number of active practitioners of either belief system.

Though many elements of traditional spiritual belief and practice existed among probably the majority of older members of the community, the belief system was probably nearly extinct at the point, about a decade ago, when a number of people, operating independently, began to make efforts to increase their knowledge in this regard.

Although the residential school system (and Christian instructors) played the most important role in the decline of traditional religious knowledge amongst the Anishnabe of the Wabaseemoong area, some difficulty in maintaining the traditional system arises from the traditional beliefs themselves, notably, the belief that learning in this regard was a lifelong and individual endeavour in which direct teaching plays a decidedly minor role.

Despite the fact that many youth are aware that they do not fully understand them, it seems that the majority of the youth feel positively toward Anishnabe spiritual beliefs and practices. In fact, they are expressing pride in all aspects of their culture. They want very much to know more and are doing what they can to learn it.

2. Cultural Survival and Revival

Activities such as traditional singing and drumming are increasing in popularity. Pow wows began to be held in Whitedog in the late 1970s or early 80s. Although they had not been occurring for some time prior to that, there were people in the community who still knew traditional songs and some young people (mainly young men) were anxious to learn them.

Today these young people, now in their late 20s and early 30s, are teaching a growing number of teenagers:

Edward - I like to teach. I have a drum group here. And what I do there is take people and... like, quit drinking, doing drugs, and I take them all over, to Powwows across Canada and it's to have something for them to do, rather than drinking and that.

And, in what is regarded by Chief Eric Fisher, among others, as a very positive sign of cultural health, young children are beginning to spontaneously form drumming groups:

Yesterday I was down in the east end and I saw 7 year olds, 8 year olds singing, and playing a drum made from a bucket. I told myself that it's surviving. The culture is surviving.

It must be emphasized that the culture in some senses has always been maintained in Wabaseemoong. Many aspects of the traditional ways could be found in this community until quite recently and some still may be found:

Valerie Henry - (The culture) was never totally killed. It had declined in a number of ways (by the time she arrived)... but there were people still doing bead work, there were people still... like they were having very private things: traditions for funerals and things like that were still very strong. But it was something that you never heard, that was never talked about, it was just there amongst the people who knew it.

Twenty years ago... there were traditional ways of life still, there was a lot of rice picking, trapping, hunting was still there.... When I first came here it was a big deal. I came here and there was rice bags all over, the canoes and the rice picking sticks. And the school was empty in September because nobody was here. All the families were out; you'd be lucky if you had two kids in your class in September until rice-picking was over. And the blueberry picking was still a strong thing. Like, every July and August families would be gone. They'd be all off blueberry picking, they'd camp out there.

The decline of the traditional subsistence pattern - family participation in everything, extended trips away from the community for seasonal activities, gathering, hunting and trapping as a system of living - had already begun when Mrs. Henry arrived here to start a teaching career, but she was a witness to its final years.

Accordingly, there are still youth in the community who had some experience of this way of living, and everything that went with it. Several youth participants told me that their parents had been trappers. (Only one youth

participant and the Native Language teacher mentioned that members of their family still trapped). But most of these youth had spent only their pre-school years on the winter trap-line and therefore they had only dim memories of it.

In their childhoods, a few of the youth had considerable contact with elders. In one case, a grandfather and his friends had been babysitters/teachers to two participants. The sisters remember this time with great fondness and count themselves privileged to have had this kind of traditional experience:

Phyllis - My grandfather took care of me. (He) lived with two other men, old guys. They'd take me for walks back here through the bush. They'd clear trails for me to play in. Me and my friends would play there. Yeah, it was real good, with those old men.(And they'd tell stories) Stuff like... legends and warnings about what to do. I remember just sitting around with them. They had this little clearing and all day they would sit there and watch the river, the birds. And I used to just sit there too.

Jane - Culture is really important. Cause it sort of made me the way I am today. I'd like to think that I'm a pretty ... fair, fair-thinker. That's why I like not to judge people. Because that's what I was taught by my grandfather and...and the neighbourhood I grew up in was actually a whole bunch of elders. They'd feed you, set you down and just listen, sit there and talk to them. Or they'd talk to you. You know, myths, why you shouldn't do this, what happened a long time ago, old time stories. Like that was excellent. I really value that part.

These kinds of experiences exemplify the fact that some of the youth received an education in aspects of the culture in the traditional manner.

The traditional importance of the family can be illustrated by the experiences of two other participants. Both were told while in junior high grades that they had received enough schooling and that there was now a pressing need for them to stay home either to look after aging family members or to simply assist with getting a subsistence:

Fred - My education went up to only 9. My grandparents were ill and...I still wanted to continue my education but they said I was needed and they told me,"You can go to school after we die."

Paula - I went to St. Luke's. I went as far as grade 8. I had to stop, because I had to help my parents. They were commercial fishing.

These two participants also told me that, as a result, they received a thorough education in the traditional culture.

But as Valerie Henry pointed out, the case in Wabaseemoong with regard to culture is not simply that of cultural survival. A very deliberate attempt is being made on many fronts to create a cultural revival:

Valerie Henry - When I first came, there were no pow-wows, no singing (but) in the years since, I've seen a real increase in the visible signs, like the pow-wows and the singing, and the traditional things being more open. Like sweats and things like that... using the pipe... those things are now out in the open, coming back in the open."

Activities that had ceased to be practised were brought back to the community. The first sweat lodge on the Wabaseemoong reserve in a very long time was constructed only a year or so before I arrived as a teacher in 1987. Dancing, singing and drumming, as mentioned above, were also revivals, with the first Pow wow, beginning in the late 1970's.

In many cases the knowledge of cultural practices had remained in the community. It was simply dormant until the spirit of revival aroused it. But in cases where the knowledge did not exist any more, or where it was felt to be insufficient amongst any living community members (or, perhaps in some cases, where community divisions and family enmities made cooperation difficult: see Community section below, and footnote 10 above), the knowledge was sought, and continues to be sought, elsewhere. Within the past three or four years, shaking tent ceremonies have started to be held again in Wabaseemoong. Traditionally, the ability to conduct such a ceremony was limited to only a very few people who had received a vision of the Turtle manitou (Vecsey, 1983) so it should not be too surprising that the traditionalists in Wabaseemoong had to look elsewhere to find someone who could conduct one. I believe that this willingness to look elsewhere for traditional knowledge and abilities indicates a very strong desire on the part of some people in the community to, in some senses, re-create Native culture in Whitedog.

Why do the Anishnabe people feel this need? There is considerable evidence in the transcripts that participation in cultural activities like singing, drumming, and sweat ceremonies has been good for some children and youth. Several mentioned that their abuse of alcohol or solvents declined as they became more involved with traditional cultural activities.

Culture is a source of great pride for a number of youth. Several families where cultural traditions are now important had periods where the parents were drinking heavily. Cultural interests have helped to heal these families.

Angela - They (cultural traditions) mean everything (to me)! I'm really traditional in the sense...like, I don't walk around with braids, none of the stereotypes, like some people do. Not that I'm ashamed of it: I'm proud of it in a spiritual way. Inside of me I'm so proud that I'm Indian that... ummm, my family is really traditional. I never really had that tradition, I never really had a strong feeling about the traditional way until about 10 years ago. Well, we were traditional but then didn't really get into it... Well, my grandfather told me, when you wake up in the morning you thank the sun for giving you light each day. When you go to bed you thank the stars, the moon, for helping you sleep at night. And I believe that. Like that kind of stuff. But back then my father was still drinking. My father stopped drinking and he really focused on the Indian culture. He knew about it, he knew what to do at rituals and stuff, ceremonies, but he wasn't really into it, until he stopped drinking. So tradition is really... I like it.

On the other hand, some, and not just fundamentalists, feel an ambivalence toward traditional culture. In some cases the reasons for this aren't clear. One person, though, avoided exploration of culture because of negative feelings towards the reserve and the experiences she had growing up there:

Cass - I had a completely fucked up childhood. Yeah, I'd say fucked up. You know a lot of, total alcoholism, around me. So there was no time for traditional shit. So I guess that's how come I sort of have a resentment, not against tradition, but, I guess that's how come I don't have the same appreciation they (traditionalist friends) do (for) traditional beliefs. It's not really crucial to me. I like going to powwows and listening to elders and learning more about traditional stuff. I really enjoy that and it makes me feel good. But as far as really getting into it, I'm not sure. Because I made a sort of pact with myself when I was younger that I was going to, I guess, practically turn against my own people. I had a big, big chip on my shoulder. I don't so much now but once in a while it comes out. I mean I know who I am, right, so I don't have to be a big shaman. I'm not out to prove anything like that.

But others had highly negative experiences in Whitedog and feel very positively toward the culture.

Because different people have responded differently to the two cultures to which they are exposed, the issues surrounding preservation and enhancement of traditional culture and religion, and the Ojibway language are very complex. This section has, it is hoped, served to demonstrate this fact for the reader. In the section on Education and the School, these issues will need to be raised again. The youth's thoughts regarding not just the

teaching of such matters but the proper place for teaching them will be described. The Discussion section will also devote considerable space to the understanding of the interrelationships of culture, language and education.

Youth Concerns

1. Substance Abuse

Most of the participants in this research considered solvent inhaling to be a problem among the youth of Wabaseemoong. Some felt it was the most serious problem by far, of all those faced by young people. Certainly, most of the participants' estimates of the extent of solvent abuse indicated that it is terribly widespread:

David - You see a lot of people, around midnight, sniffing lacquer, people selling it. At least 50. Everyday.

Adam - Most of the teenagers that you see on the road every night (are sniffing).

Hal - Yeah. It's been unbelievable. I'd say there's a 100 kids out there. All of them are sniffing. You know, 3/4, maybe even 85, 95% of the school is into sniffing.

The reasons most commonly cited for engaging in solvent sniffing were boredom and peer pressure:

Ian - you see everybody doing it when you walk around. I don't like to see all these people, my friends, and they're all on it. So I (ask) them, "why do you do that?" and they just say, "ahh, I'm just bored".

John - They don't have nothing to do I guess. Yeah, boredom. And some of them, they hang out with their friends and they see them high, like the way they're feeling, and they want to test it.

David - I used to do it last year. Why? Because I wanted to fit in, same thing as smoking eh?

Hal - When I started off, started going out, I was fucking bored. Holy fuck, there's nothing to do on this reserve!

But Ron MacDonald, the Director of Education suspects another reason is at least as powerful: low self-esteem:

Everybody knows that this community has a problem with low self-esteem. The children, everybody has the problem. A lot of the problems that we're having in the community are related to that: the suicides, the sniffing, drinking...

Again, this will be considered further in the Discussion section.

Alcohol, although widely abused and a factor in many of the other illnesses of this community, was not as frequently cited by youth participants as a problem on a community level. Several youths reported having had personal difficulties in which alcohol abuse played a role:

Edward - I quit (drinking) because I realized, each time I'd sober up, I was too embarrassed to go out of the house. People would tell me what I did, crazy things. Almost killed myself, like driving crazy with vehicles. I didn't like it, so I quit that for 2 years now. I drank beer once, last year, just a couple of beer, and it didn't feel good.

Ian - I don't drink. Too much trouble I'd get into. Too much fights. I was a whole different person when I was drinking.

At the same time, only a few characterized alcohol abuse as a social problem. Possibly this is because the belief expressed by one participant is widely held. Alcohol is too deeply entrenched in the community, has too long a history of use and misuse for it to ever be something the community can get rid of:

George - Maybe you (could) cut down on the sniffing to 30%, then eventually zero...The alcohol, you're never going to get rid of it. It's a legalized high. I don't think you'll ever stop it. The only way to make it stop is if you stop, and I stop.

Certainly there is quite a contrast between the amount of community action aimed against sniffing and the amount that alcohol receives. For sniffing, there is a Solvent Abuse Committee, formed by the band council, a Solvent Abuse worker for school children, sponsored by Ojibway Tribal Family Services (a child care agency that pre-dates Weechi-it-te-win and whose presence in Wabaseemoong appears to be in decline) and, at the time of the interviews, Crisis workers, also funded by OTFS, whose jobs consisted mainly of night patrol, to assist those who were debilitated and in danger of being harmed as a result of sniffing, and counselling those they picked up.

For alcohol, there is nothing comparable, although the Crisis workers are also concerned with assisting the victims of alcohol abuse. Once, alcohol was the target of community-level action. In the late 1960s, continuing until the late 1970s, alcohol possession in Whitedog was banned under a Band Council Resolution. A roadblock was operated at the entrance to the reserve: all vehicles were searched for liquor.

Whitedog is no longer officially dry. When I was teaching in the community I heard several explanations as to why this was so. Some cited a lack of judicial system support in the punishment of violators, some mentioned the difficulty in successfully blocking the importation of alcohol, and some told me that the death, by drowning, of two residents of the community who were attempting to smuggle alcohol in by canoe caused people to reconsider the benefit of maintaining a dry status when some were so clearly not going to desist from drinking.

Today, provincial laws against public consumption and against the unlicensed sale of alcoholic beverages still apply in Whitedog, but in the minds of many residents they are not being very rigorously enforced, particularly the latter prohibition. It is very widely known who the bootleggers in the community are, but it seems that none have been charged.

The attitude in the community now seems to be that, while it would be desirable if Wabaseemoong were to see an end to alcohol abuse, such an end can only be achieved through the decisions of individuals. If people in the community wish to drink to excess, then that is their decision and the non-drinkers and occasional drinkers cannot influence it.

Brant (1990) believes that, among Native people, an ethic of non-interference is widespread (it is an inevitable corollary of the strong Native belief in personal autonomy). It seems that this ethic operates in Wabaseemoong. I know of more than one case where some members of a family are greatly endangering their health through their continued excessive consumption. The other members of the family feel terrible that this is happening, but know that they cannot change the other's behaviour. (Of course, the belief that nobody but the individual can end that individual's drinking is quite well known to anyone who has attended an AA meeting.)

That this kind of belief is not operating with regard to young people's sniffing is evident from the amount of community action aimed against it. And there are some differences between the two kinds of substance abuse. For one thing, sniffing is engaged in by a much younger group, where personal autonomy is weaker and where an anti-sniffing peer consensus could have the effect of changing individual behaviour.

But there are, I think, many similarities between drinking and sniffing, especially in the realm of prevention. One kind of measure that is known by the youth of Wabaseemoong to be widely effective in ending both kinds of

substance abuse was mentioned above in the section on Culture. Active participation in traditional cultural practices seems to provide people with a viable alternative to substance abuse of all kinds. This matter will be returned to.

2. Gender Issues

While satisfying, healthy and stable relationships certainly exist in Whitedog, a number of the participants in this research reported that, in their relations with members of the opposite sex, they had experienced problems. Males and females both informed me that they were generally dissatisfied with the opposite gender, that, based on their experiences to date, they no longer believed a good relationship with anyone in the community was probable. In this regard, it is certainly the women who have the more horrific experiences to report:

Hillary - Lloyd stabbed me, he cut me really bad, because I tried helping him. Not helping him, I tried stopping him from committing suicide. I saved him, yeah, twice. There was only one time with a knife. The other time I swam out into the lake and saved him...

Freda - Anything, anything would set him off. Even if I'd go out of the house and just stood there and a car went by me on the road, he'd say things like "Okay, what's his name?" or "Is that him?" or things like that.

Joan - The whole time, like he hurt me so bad in so many ways that I really wanted to kill him. He beat me all the time. He'd come after me with a knife and...I fought back and I'd run like hell... It was like he was jealous. He didn't like any guy looking at me or smiling at me. If I looked at someone, he wouldn't say anything to me at the time but when we got home he'd bring it out. So at some point I just quit going anywhere. Like I isolated myself from the whole community... He really really brainwashed me and said that I'd never make it without him. And I believed him...

Men are rarely the victims of sexual or physical assault by their partners, but there are exceptions:

Joan - And a majority of the time when I watched my father and my mother fight, my mother was the one that was instigating the fight. I don't know if it was because she grew up like that or if it's something she learned from residential school.

But in the area of estrangement, of problems relating to trust in present or potential partners, the men and the women become more equal. Participants of both genders reported to me that their relationships to date had been unsatisfactory because of problems such as emotional reserve, a failure to communicate, a lack of trust in or from the other person, or a lack of shared interests:

Hillary - He's never talked about it (suicide attempt). He doesn't bring up anything like that.

Joan - All the time I wanted to talk about it. He'd make irritating noises and just...like it wasn't even worth talking to him. It was like talking to a brick wall.

Hillary - He loves her (the baby) very much but... I don't know, he's very insecure. He's jealous of his own brothers.

Harry - They (women) get mad and say they don't trust you. Say if you talk with another girl or something. That's why I got separated. She (common-law partner) didn't trust me.

There is another area in which the inequalities of males and females in this community are apparent. The young women of Wabaseemoong have virtually no healthy social activities available to them. The young men had a limited range of recreational pursuits available to them, and reported to me that boredom was ever-present, but the young women had not even the few options that the men enjoyed.

3. Teenage Parenthood

The other problem area, teenage pregnancy, is at least partially a consequence of this lack of leisure time options:

Carol - There's nothing else for them (girls) to do anyway. Go to a house and screw [laughs].

Adam - I think they (girls) get bored, they go out and get stoned or drunk and boys are there and the boys take advantage of them.

But many other factors contribute to teenage pregnancy in Wabaseemoong. Teenage girls in Whitedog get pregnant accidentally, semi-accidentally, and on purpose. Although condoms are available for the asking at the nursing station next to the school, many of the youth don't practice any form of birth control. There are a variety of reasons for this. Some young people know very little about birth control:

Freda - They (girls) don't know about birth control.

Joan - Paul, yeah, I wanted Paul (first child)...Not right away, no (but) I wasn't using any birth control. And like I do really like kids a lot, and I was planning to have kids but not that early! [laughs] I was 16 when I had Paul.

Both boys and girls are often too shy to go to the clinic and ask for condoms. In some cases they fear that their request will not be treated confidentially. Girls are uncomfortable with asking their sex partners to use condoms and fear that they will be talked about if they do, especially if they are carrying them. Boys too are uncomfortable with putting them on and won't bother, often because they don't think about disease and view pregnancy prevention as the girls' responsibility. Frank talk between sex partners appears to be rather a rarity:

Harry - They don't want to talk about stuff like that at all. People don't want to talk about sex. In couples or anything.

Some girls deliberately get pregnant or refuse to consider an abortion because they believe that having a baby will stabilize their relationship:

Freda - At the time I wanted him with me. I figured if I got pregnant it would make him stay home.

Hillary - A lot of things I learned since the child was born. You can't have a baby just to keep someone. It's not going to work.

Elaine - My little sister's friend recently got pregnant and everyone was all:"aaargh" . Her friends were all saying, "she just got pregnant to keep the guy". Cause she never had a boyfriend...

Carol - To be, I guess, to be loved, is what she wanted. Cause she certainly doesn't get it at home. She never has. So someone was out there, she found someone that loves her and you know obviously she doesn't want to let go of this relationship she's in.

There often appears to be a belief, even among young girls, that they are entering in to a stable, longterm partnership with their lover, and that a child is an inevitable and even desirable result of such a partnership:

Shirley - (age 18, speaking of her peers) This is their boyfriend and they think, this is the guy I'm going to spend the rest of my life with.

There is some reason for this belief. Many young people in their late teens and 20s began a common-law marriage in their mid-teens. Thus the younger teens have many role models. That a number of these older role models would not be if they could live their lives over again, is not an issue:

Shirley - (speaking of her male peers) there's this whole image of "kids! I'm going to be a father! I'm going to work. I'm going to get a good job... I'm an adult!" And really, they're just scared shitless [laughs]. Well, that's what I get from Lloyd (age 19). Like, he did like her (his common law wife). I know he liked her a lot at first. Well, he still does but it's just that he's so ...He's still young, you know. She's young (age 16, 15 when she had the baby), but it seems like she's, with him, she's older or something. Yeah, I've known Lloyd a couple of years already and he's still someone who ... wants to do what a teenager would do but now...now that he's a father...he turns around and says, I do want to go back to school. I want to do some more stuff for myself. It's just I've got this kid. This kid that I've got to think about. And a wife, young wife.

Partly owing to the numbers of teenage girls who get pregnant in the community, but for other reasons as well, there appears to be, in Whitedog, community standards, beliefs and expectations that, if not actually encouraging teen pregnancy, make it seem like it is not really considered problematic. Some participants suggest that early parenthood was an element of traditional life that still influences youth behaviour. Others point to prevailing standards that make it worse in many eyes to be seen as promiscuous than to be a young parent.¹⁵

¹⁵ Someone said to me earlier today, in an interview I did: "If a girl says, 'here's a condom, put it on', she's going to get a reputation..."

Carol - Yeah, well, stuff like that happens. As long as someone sits girls down and says "Okay", (like, they basically know what's going on in the community) "Yes there's going to be a lot of talk. But it's up to you what you want to happen to your life. You don't have to get pregnant. So what if someone calls you a goddam slut for asking all the guys that you sleep with to wear to wear condoms."

Cass - Or being on the pill.

Carol - Yeah. It's just getting that through to them..."You can enjoy sex but just as long as... [laughs]

Cass - They see their friends having kids and they think it's the norm. It's kind of cool, or whatever.

I want to find out what your opinion is on why these kids are having kids. Now you said a variety of...

Carol - They want to get away. There's a whole bunch of different factors. They want to get away from their home life.

Cass - Yeah.

Carol - It's the norm.

They want to get away from their home life, they want to get out on their own.

Carol - Exactly

There's ignorance of birth control. Is that correct?

Carol - Yeah.

There's fear of using it. Is that correct?

Cass - Yeah.

Carol - Fear of being called a slut. Whatever for?

What else?

Cass - The problem is that they're kids.

Is it? Like are we talking about some kind of a cultural norm here too? Is it... (continued on next page)

Community

1. Strengths of the Community

Though the preceding discussion of problems may have created the opposite impression, the fact is that Whitedog can be a wonderful place to live and grow up in. When a supportive family context creates the proper environment, it can compare very favourably with any other community.

It is a beautiful place to look at. Many homes have postcard-quality views from their living room windows, of the Winnipeg River, small islands, and rolling, forested hills.

Although a lack of leisure activities has been identified, especially for the girls, there are things to do, and members of both sexes could participate in many of them if the circumstances were right. Leisure pastimes that exist on an informal basis include pick-up games of football, baseball and volleyball. Some of the boys go into the bush frequently to hunt different kinds of game, and fishing is a common pursuit. The school gym is used very often for floor hockey after school.

People who like the community are very happy that the school is here (and recently added a grade 12 program) and that there is a big new arena in Whitedog. In addition, though much of it is temporary, there is at present considerable economic activity in the community and lots of employment opportunity:

Carol - Oh yeah! It is! Like a long time ago, you were married off by whenever you had your period:"All right, you can have my daughter for, you know, a couple of pelts" [laughs].

Cass - "Or get out of my teepee"[laughs]

Carol - That was the norm. Yeah.

But is it normal now? Cause it almost seems to be.

Elaine - No! [laughs]

Cause there's so many teenage parents in this community

Carol - Well the reason why we don't think it's normal now is because we've taken on so many white values.

So is it normal or what?

Cass - Indians always had babies! It's not so much because they've taken on white values!

Carol - But society looks down on young girls having babies. Or, you know...

Does this, does Whitedog look down on these girls having kids? I mean...

Carol - No.

Cass - No! It's completely just considered normal:"Oh yeah, she should have been pregnant a couple of years ago"

Carol - Well, yeah:"Big deal, you're pregnant".

Harry - What do I like about Whitedog? Well right now, stuff is starting to happen now. Like houses being built and the road getting fixed up, and the arena, and the school, the green house. There's a lot of jobs now.

The youth participants who had decided to make a permanent home in Wabaseemoong cited as their reasons such things as their familiarity with the community, its environment and its people, their friendships, the peace and quiet to be found in a small community, a feeling that this was the place they were connected to, where their roots and their families were.

Several youth mentioned their jobs as reasons for wanting to stay, because the wages are good, and/or their work gives them personal satisfaction by offering them a chance to do some good for the community and/or simply because the job is enjoyable.

Another job-related factor was mentioned to me, but not always by those who liked the community. Some youth participants mentioned that the treaty status which they maintained by remaining on the reserve to work created for them an economically superior situation, in the form of a tax-sheltered job that they would be unlikely to find anywhere else. Even some who felt positively toward the community saw this as sometimes having negative consequences, in that it made them or their peers reluctant to venture outside the reserve.¹⁶

¹⁶ You sound like you're not planning on leaving the reserve. You're planning on staying in Whitedog. How come?

John - Taxes

Taxes? Like it's just economically a lot better proposition for you. Is that the only reason? If you found yourself suddenly having to pay taxes would you leave?

John - Yeah, I would.

Is that right.

John - Yeah.

So you're basically here because it's just an economically better thing.

John - Uh huh.

Angela - They (people in Whitedog) think reserve life is so much easier than out there.

Is that accurate I wonder?

Angela - Hmmmm

Is reserve life easier than out there?

Angela - It is; financially it's way easier and... I don't know. I want to leave just to see if I can do it. I'm doing it for myself, kind of to show myself I can do it. And to show other kids they can do it too: "You know, you don't have to stay in Whitedog for the rest of your life and do something with the band or at the school or something like that. You can do something else."

2. Community problems

But while positive feelings toward the community were expressed by many participants, for some, dislike of the community is severe. Several participants had nearly nothing to say in response to a question like, "What do you like about Whitedog?"¹⁷ And even those who did have positive things to say about the community did not necessarily wish to stay. In fact, only 7 of the 21 youth participants indicated that they intended to remain in the community permanently, although a further four who intended to leave allowed for either a probability of returning or stated that they intended to return some day. One other participant stated that she was unsure of what she would do, feeling both an attraction and a repulsion for the community.

This leaves 9 of the youth I spoke with, nearly half, having stated a firm intention of leaving and never returning, or only returning to visit their families:

Ian - I'm not going to stay here for the rest of my life. I'd rot here.

Beth - There's nothing really to do...I don't like it in Whitedog. (I plan to) finish school, and just get out of here (and never come back).

In response to the question "why do you want to leave?", these youth mentioned the boredom that arises from a very restricted range of leisure activities, plus violence on the reserve, and drinking, several times pairing them, as in, 'people get drunk and get violent'. The extent of the sniffing problem was also cited as a reason to wish to leave.

Beth - I guess I still do (enjoy drinking) but I don't want to drink. Especially now that I'm in Whitedog. It's not fun going drinking in Whitedog. People go all crazy and stuff like that. They'll drink for 3 days with their friends (and go) crazy. Shoot guns and stuff.

Joan - When I'm out there living in a white community I don't have to worry about a drunk coming up to me and assaulting me or calling me names or whatever. I felt safer out there and when I was here I felt like I had to watch over my back all the time to make sure that I wasn't being attacked from behind. Like when I'm here I kind of have to keep my eyes open in all different directions.

¹⁷ Okay, so what do you dislike about Whitedog?

Gwen - Everything [laughs]

Joan (who intended to leave as soon as family circumstances allowed) also stated that this decision was partly motivated by concern for the welfare of her children, both right now and in the future. She believed that there was too strong a likelihood in the community that her children could become the victims of a physical or sexual assault:

Joan - Like I'm really worried about them being here right now, especially when they're at that age, (pre-teen) because there's so much sexual abuse going on, you know, on young kids and... I worry about that all the time. So even though they're playing outside I have to keep an eye on them. I have to make sure I know where they are. They have to tell me where they are. If they leave the area and go somewhere they have to call me where they are. If there's drinking or sniffing going on in that area I tell them to get out right away.

In addition, she was concerned about the kinds of attitudes her children might learn. Probably her own experiences in this regard (pregnant at age 16, long experience of abuse from partner) contributed to her feelings that teenage pregnancy is difficult to avoid here, and that the community attitude toward spousal assault is not condemnatory enough to prevent kids from getting the message that it's normal:

Joan - Once we leave here we're going on with our lives and we're going to do what I feel is best for my family, and that's the way I have my kids thinking right now. I tell them that, if we stay here, you're not going to have a life. Like the next thing you know I'm going to have a 16 year old standing at my door with a grandchild in their hands. That's not what I want. I tell my kids there's no way they're going to have kids at an early age.

There is a lot of child abuse and all this in the community and automatically kids think hey, this is the way life is supposed to be, so I notice kids are picking up that same attitude and there are times where...like my (son) hit his sister, punched her, and I got after him. I said never, ever, ever hit your sister again. If you want to hit a female, you come and see me first and we'll see how hard you can hit. And I always challenged them because I told them I don't want you growing up to have the same attitude as your father. I don't want you mentally abusing your girlfriends or your wives when you get older, that's not how I want you to be. I said, way back, Natives never treated their wives or their families like that. Back then, the men had a lot of respect for the women. And I said, I don't want you being the way people are around here.

It is important to note that this woman, like almost all of the youth whose dislike of the community makes them want to leave and never return, expresses a strong regard for, and pride in, Native culture¹⁸. She, and several others of the 9, had participated in traditional ritual practices, and claimed to have both some knowledge of, and strong belief in, Native religion. Though a few indicated that these things, which I consider to be elements of a Native identity, are not important, they were definitely not the majority, even of this group. And most of this group indicated that they either intended to live on another reserve, or expected to establish contacts with other Native people wherever they lived.

Some participants expressed a dislike for the community because they believed that there had been a general decline in parental standards for children, or at least a change in rearing patterns leaning toward excessive permissiveness. This is interesting in view of what some have said about traditional parenting styles. It has been claimed that amongst many Aboriginal people, respect for personal autonomy extended even to children, so that physical correction or punishment was never administered (Shkilnyk, 1985; Brant, 1982, 1990) Some felt that failures in child-rearing were linked to excessive materialism. Parents were so interested in making money that they no longer had time for their children.

There was another way in which concern for children was responsible for a dislike of the community. One participant expressed aspirations for her children that could not easily be met in any community as small as Whitedog. Whitedog per se is not the problem here; it is simply that for this participant no small community, no matter what its atmosphere, could provide all the services to children that are available in larger centres.

¹⁸ Ideally, this will be your last year here then.

Joan - Hopefully. Yeah. But I still believe in the cultural, you know, the traditional ways and that. So there are elements of your heritage and your culture that you're going to try to hang on to and pass on to your children, wherever they are.

Joan - Yes.

But you don't feel that they have a good life here.

Joan - No I don't think so.

Or that they could.

Joan - Yeah.

At the same time she also had come to have positive feelings toward what she considered to be "white" attitudes: Joan - I like to say hello to everybody, that's just the way I am, I like to be friendly. But I was stopped in the past because Nolan always thought I was trying to pick up some guy. He always said "what are you trying to do, pick him up?" and I'd say "no, I'm just being friendly". Because that was one thing that I learned in the White society, not to always think negative, but to always have a positive attitude and be friendly. If you're nice to someone they'll be nice to you. So after a while I became friendly, I don't know, I guess you could say...I began to think White, I guess you could say. And it didn't bother me.

A further negative aspect of Wabaseemoong's size was mentioned by another participant, and, again, this is a criticism that can be levelled against virtually all small communities: a limitation in the possibility of meeting new people and the limited range of thoughts and attitudes one can find in Wabaseemoong.

Amongst all the youth and non-youth participants, the divisions within the community were frequently mentioned as a major source of community problems. The mutual dislike of the fundamentalists and the traditionalist has already been discussed. The continuing identification of people by their community of origin is another problem, basically because of perceptions on all sides that inequalities in power, status or wealth exist along these lines.

Fortunately, in view of how difficult it would be to settle the matter, the factual basis of these perceptions of unfair treatment is less important to this research than the existence of the perception. Some in the community will say there is no bias for or against people from any of the three original communities. But one does not have to look far to find people who believe that they are less well off than others in some way because those others have gained control of one of the community institutions.

Possible reasons for the continued existence of these perceptions were briefly speculated on in the History section of this paper. Family membership continues to be extremely important in this community. Therefore, even if nepotism wasn't being practiced, the presence of several members of the same family in an institution like the school, or the social services agency, would be sufficient to make people say that it is. The belief that those with power will act in the interests of their family and their community of origin, causes many to interpret the actions of those in power in that way, regardless of what they do. Family feuds are the result:

Shirley - There's a lot of conflict with other families ... (on) this reserve. The way I've been brought up is like...my sister goes like, "you shouldn't do stuff like that, dad will get mad at you, or mom won't like it or..." stuff like that. And I'm always trying to please them and, I don't know, I've been doing it all my life. I listen to them and they say, "don't even think of talking to this person" because of their family. You know, stuff like that. And... see I'm friends with Lloyd now and those kind of people right? Before, I could never ever talk to them. Never. Because of my family. The conflict between his family and my family.

The causes of the rivalries and divisions in the community are complex. Much of the hard feeling can be traced to the disruptions in the way of life of the Wabaseemoong people that began in earnest with the relocation of

One Man Lake. This highly visible single event, though, was only the first of a whole series of more subtle and gradual developments (and a few other dramatic ones), that destroyed interfamily economic equality and the mechanisms that maintained it. The gradual elimination of nearly all traditional, resource-based subsistence practices and their replacement by government-based wages, or handouts in the form of social assistance, meant that the community became stratified shortly after the mergers with One Man Lake and Swan Lake took place. For the first time ever, people had to compete for the few lucrative, prestige jobs available. Those who obtained them (and their families) became visibly better off than their neighbours (and their families). Materialism grew quickly.

Another thing that grew quite quickly was dependence. Those who were unable to secure the good jobs could get welfare payments. But those who got welfare had to radically redefine themselves. No longer could they consider themselves independent and self-reliant. They had become the opposite.

The result of all this is a community that is not a community. People do not cooperate:

Edward - People don't work together around here. (They) like to be separate. And the fighting...they're not together. It would be a lot better if they did work together, this place.

Iris - There's a lot of things that go on around the reserve. Like there's jealousy, people trying to get ahead of each other. They put each other down. And I find that a lot of the time, no matter what you try to do in the community, people will talk about it but they'll never go ahead and do it, complete the task, what they should be doing. People put each other down and they end up not doing things.

Joan - I think that the first thing the reserve should work on is how to get along. And I think that's what screws up a kid's mind. I honestly think that if parents can work alongside other people, if they can work as a team, I think this place would be a whole lot better.

And, for whatever reason, a grudge, once established, can take a long time to overcome:

Joan - I guess you could say that people hold grudges against each other around here and they just don't know how to let go. They don't know how to let go of the past. Like they'll say "Oh this person did me wrong in 1980, '79, whatever", and they'll still hold on to it. People are so immature around here [laughs]. It's really pathetic. And that's why I want so much to get out of here, because if the reserve won't help itself the least I can do is get out of here and try to help my family.

Envy and rivalry are prominent features of Whitedog. There is also a widespread perception that many people with good jobs are doing little to earn their money:

Ian - And all the workers that work around here they have big boats and cars.

Charles - Even if there's a program that goes on, they just drive around. The homemakers, I guess, they just drive around all day.

Ian - Yeah they don't do anything. They should be fired, and hire new ones. Ones that will do something.

Bill - I'm going to be the chief in 3 years [laughs]. I'm campaigning already [laughs]. Well, first of all, I'm going to get rid of all the people, like excess baggage... (I'll) reorganize administration... And put in systems where you'll have accountability. I think that's the main thing to me. They (people in administration) are not really doing their jobs. That's the problem we have. Like Weechi-it-te-win, our organization, we have a personnel policy we follow and like, and I think our staff are really good but when they see the band staff acting the way they do, and other people here they say why should we do this if they're not doing their jobs. That's the problem we're having now.

This perception certainly has at least some basis in fact:

Karen - Yes, yes. I admit I was (a slacker). (But) like, I feel really strongly about a situation that some of my clients were in, like the wife battering and all that shit. Deep down I knew very well they had no chance without other help, like from within the community. And that's what really discouraged me. I said like, well fuck it then.

The family feuds and divisions based on original community, the grudges that people nurse, the envy (or, on the other side, the condescension) and the feelings of helplessness and hopelessness, all these things can make positive actions very difficult to achieve.

All three of the major institutions in the community (the band council, the social services agency, and the school) have their detractors, and all can experience difficulties from some faction or other in the community. One participant mentioned, for example, that often, after the band council passes a progressive motion, some group or other in the community will circulate petitions to have it overturned.

A number of participants expressed criticisms of the education authority and the school (see Education section). Others strongly dislike the social services agency. One person stated that Weechi-it-te-win is engaged in a power grab by virtue of a proposed restructuring of community institutions, that, if successful, would make it very difficult for people from One Man Lake to gain any kind of power in the community:

Hal - They (Weechi-it-te-win).... want power for themselves. Power hungry is the word.(I don't like) the actions they take, kind of steps they use. How they use their money. They've got a management board set up, a board of directors. You know. Yeah, they've got a big outfit here now. But I don't see what they're doing. They said they were here to help families with problems. You know, I had a drinking problem again, last year. They didn't fucking help me. I helped myself. They said they're there to help everybody... I went to a meeting, last week, and the structure that they're making... they're going to take over everything. That's why I'm going, I'm going to get the hell out of here. They're going to take over everything. Even the education part will be included in the structure. Weechi-it-te-win is going to be on top of all the band programs. They've got so much power. I don't think any of us are going to get any power, because they've got so many people under their wing. It's a long shot for anybody from One Man Lake to get into power.

3. Goals for the Community

Despite the conflicts, the opposition and the infighting, several people saw further increases in community jurisdiction over societal institutions as an important step in helping to build a better community, and people are working in that direction. The band council has identified a need for Wabaseemoong to expand its own police force. In addition to the enforcement arm, members of the community believe there is a need for a community-based judicial system: courts, jails, and perhaps most importantly, treatment centres:

Chief Eric Fisher - We want to have 8 special constables. That's one of our problems, we cannot enforce our bylaws.

Josephine Mandamin - I wish to see some kind of detoxification facility here. I don't want to use the Kenora one because it's in Kenora and why should I create more trauma for the kids, when the problem with sniffing is here. So sending them off elsewhere, Alberta or what have you, Minneapolis, it creates more trauma, more problems. (But) nobody is listening Brian, nobody, not even the judges or the courts. They could make recommendations on our behalf. Jesus Christ we've done them a service. We've created jobs by keeping that goddamned jail [in Kenora] full with Indians!

The social services system, already largely under community control, continues to attempt to establish certain services at a local level, e.g. a shelter for battered women and their children. But there are problems with doing so, not the least of which is the possibility that some men in the community would violently object to their partner leaving, and would violently attempt to do something about it. The problem of fear of violence is so great that a study commissioned by the Wabaseemoong Women's Group this past summer that attempted to determine the extent of spousal assault and to hear proposals for ways of dealing with it (including proposals for the location of a shelter so that Native women did not have to go to Kenora) could not be completed for lack of participation. Women simply would not complete the questionnaire and it was reported to me that the reason for this was fear that their having done so would become known to their partner.

This situation helps to illustrate an important point that was a subtext in many of the interviews: the traditional institutions (the extended family was the child care agency, and the educational institution combined and was also an important community political unit) have been severely damaged or destroyed and one result has been that many individuals have suffered psychological (and physical) damage. To be effective, the rebuilding process needs to operate at both an individual and an institutional level, and the individual part is every bit as important:

Carol - They think this [economic improvement] will cure their social problems: like, "give me a job, I'm on welfare. Give me a job and I'll start making money", and yet they still have this alcohol problem or this kind of social or emotional problem ...and I don't know... they just need, somehow, you just need to get through to these people to start healing themselves, inside, before they can be of any service to the rest of the community, as a whole, to make it come up to where it should be socially. 'Cause there's too much suffering right now.

It is for this reason that a number of participants believe that one of the goals of this community must be the psychological strengthening of the residents, especially the children:

Freda - When I first came back [to Whitedog] I was taught by the older people: leadership skills. Like my self-esteem was so low, really low. But there was like two sides of me, the dark side and the bright side. I was into all kinds of committees when I was 17 years old. And it was these older people that showed me how to organize events and stuff and then that's where I got into it. And what I've noticed around here is that there's really nobody showing the young teenagers how to do it. I've seen quite a few kids that show a lot of leadership skills but if only there was somebody there to take the time to show them.

Somehow, and from somewhere, people need to rebuild their self-esteem and self-confidence. Some believe this strengthening will, or should, come from where it traditionally always has, the family and the elders. Others see

it as a role for the education system.

Some did not state where the psychological healing will or should come from; they only said that it had to happen. Perhaps they believe (as I do) that it must occur everywhere. It is encouraging that some participants have reported that the healing is beginning on many fronts. Individuals are working to help themselves (with the support of the community and social institutions), families are reaching out to each other and rising above old grudges, and people are rediscovering their traditions of respect and cooperation:

Iris - I think coming back to the community and working [at Weech-it-te-win] for the community and families has given me a lot of strength. Knowing the people in the community have the same kind of problems I have and they're surviving, they're working things out. And it's given me strength, you know: my problems are not as big as I thought they were and things are looking up in that way and we're talking about it more.

Elaine - I was at a meeting a couple of months ago in Winnipeg and this person got up, like, in a big boardroom, and looked at my mom and dad and said, "I'm sorry, whatever I've done in the past" and so on, and they hugged and, well, like it was a family feud and it came together again and everybody was like shocked:"These people hugging!","Royal rumble"[laughs].

Edward - I like it here. It's nice. I like the school. I like being around a lot of native people, and nature, I like the environment. A lot of elders around here and that's what I like: lot of teaching on this reserve.

Freda - I've had people on the reserve helping me. And I'd like to do that back with their children. Their brothers and their sisters. I'd like to go and help them.

Several of the youth participants, even some of those who expressed negativity toward Whitedog want to work toward community betterment at home. They want to get more education and experience elsewhere and return to help rebuild the community through helping the youth:

Angela - Say in ten years time, I want to come back here. To work with the younger people. You know, most of the people I talk to now, they want to move, then they want to come back here to work... with the younger generation. And that's what I plan to do. Not right away though. I want to do stuff for myself: I want to travel, experience different things. (But) I don't know if I'll be settling down here. It's not Whitedog. Like I love Whitedog. If I... if people were much better in Whitedog I would stay. I would spend the rest of my life here, raise my kids here.

Education and the School

1. Community Perceptions of the School

Although it is under the control of an Education Authority made up of community members, it is highly probable that many in the community view the school as not really theirs. The older residents of the community experienced residential school (people as young as 29 had the majority of their formal education there). Understandably, many saw school as a foreign institution that was forced upon them. Even the Islington Day School, from the time of its establishment until 1985, was a place operated by White people (i.e. Dept. of Indian Affairs), with White teachers who taught "White" subjects in English. And even today, though locally controlled, most of the school's teaching staff is still White, and English is still the language of instruction for nearly everything. For many parents, and for these reasons, the schooling their children receive is seen as the responsibility of the teacher. They don't believe that they should have anything to do with it:

Irene Scott (Native language teacher) - The feeling I get is... the parents think that the teachers aren't doing enough. Even though they (teachers) have the kids most of the day, they think they (teachers) should do something after hours. But the parents should take more responsibility. They should do their part. Before, when my children were here, I never really did come (to the school), because it was English. And because I went to a residential school and never saw my parents come to a parent-teacher meeting.

Probably many of the teachers who arrive in Whitedog and face their classes for the first time experience a feeling of panic, a recognition that they are unprepared to meet the challenges of this situation:

Valerie Henry - For me it (first day teaching in Whitedog) was terrifying, yeah. I felt I wasn't prepared enough, I felt I didn't know enough. I thought, well you've got these 20 kids. You're supposed to take these kids that don't even know the letters of the alphabet and by June you're supposed to have them reading. Like that's pretty scary.

The new teacher is a stranger to Wabaseemoong, and is often seen as a foreigner who knows little about the community and its people and who isn't going to be around long enough to learn. This perception, which is also held by the students, can make it difficult for the teacher:

George - The kids (can) be against the teacher because they know that they're not from here and they're not going to be here for long.

On the other hand, it is true that the teachers' unfamiliarity reduces their effectiveness. It is nearly impossible for them to know in advance how the differences in cultural background between themselves and their students must be accommodated, and it can certainly be very difficult for them to find out if, as in the case of many past teachers, they do not make an effort. And it has been true until very recently that teachers come for a year or two then leave.

Most of the present staff has been at the school for about the past four years and some have been there even longer. This fact certainly has to be counted among the reasons why many of the students (and some in the administration) express positive feelings toward the teachers. By staying they have demonstrated a commitment to the school and the students, and they have had the opportunity to establish themselves in the community.

Of course, not every student likes every teacher, (and some dislike them all) and in the community, the perception that the teachers are too stand-offish, that they don't involve themselves with the community, still lingers. But, since five of the present teaching staff are involved in long term relationships with members of the community, in most cases starting families and/or adopting children, and since other teachers have been foster parents to community children for several years, I think this perception can to some extent be seen as a carryover from the many years when most teachers did, basically, keep to themselves, an illustration of the fact that old beliefs die hard.

But stand-offishness is not the only reason why people used to, and still do, criticize teachers. It was expressed to me that the present teachers have no commitment to the children, they are just going through the motions; they are really only in Wabaseemoong to gain experience that will improve their prospects on the job market, and to draw a pay cheque:

Ian - Cause all they want is money. All they want is to get paid. I don't think they do (care).

Josephine Mandamin - I don't like to see people come here and practice, as far as education is concerned. I want certified, experienced teachers who have a commitment to provide an education for the Native people. But look at what we get. First year students who come and practice. Once they get the experience they go elsewhere. They never come back to Whitedog. Never.

In the past this was certainly an accusation with some basis, and even today it may be true for a few teachers. But the majority of the present staff appear committed to providing an education to the children of this community.

Another criticism, more directed at the administration than at the teachers themselves, but pertaining to the teachers nevertheless, is that the administration's happiness with the current teaching staff is resulting in their losing their priorities. In their efforts to retain the staff, it is claimed, they are forgetting about the children, even allowing children to be abused by the staff:

Josephine Mandamin - They (the Education Authority) should be pulling up their socks, and be accommodating to the band members, and the kids of Whitedog, rather than focusing all their attention on the teachers. When something happens in the school, where a kid's future is at stake, they're all very protective of the teachers. What about the kid who has to live with the situation and who will be troubled by it? The teacher is just a visitor here, he'll go.

I was informed that an allegation of child abuse directed against a White teacher was investigated in the previous year and found to have no substance. I was also told that the bringer of this accusation was not satisfied with this and still intended to pursue the matter. But two natives of Whitedog told me that, in their work with children, they too had been groundlessly accused of child abuse, and had been persecuted by their accusers ever since. Without being much more closely familiar with the incidents and personalities involved, I can do no more than to add that all three situations were cited by participants as examples of the kind of vendetta that people sometimes pursue in this community.

Despite the amount of familiarity with the community that the present teachers have attained, there are still indications that there are elements of the culture that they have not learned:

Irene Scott - It would be good for the teachers to have a knowledge of the cultural differences so they'd know what to expect. I don't blame them (for sometimes misunderstanding), you can't really teach a person right away. It takes time to understand. (And) they're trying. They'll ask me, they're comfortable. I tell them what I know, and if I don't know I'll say ask somebody else... but they ask.

Still, there is no formal means for teachers to educate themselves in this regard and perhaps there ought to be. A couple of participants felt that the teachers would benefit from the creation of a cultural training course, an effort

by the education authority to help make new teachers (and even the present staff) more sensitive to the cultural differences they were likely to encounter:

Carol - Well the other thing I'd like to see is, by the Education Authority, have a person sort of....

Elaine - Cultural orientation

Carol - Orientate the white teachers

Elaine - Maybe two weeks before the start of the school year...

Carol - I think it should be more. Or throughout the year.

2. The Importance of a Formal Education

Research indicates that when children are encouraged and allowed to simply read to their parents on a regular basis, the children's reading abilities improve (Smith, 1990). Parental support is very important to a child's school success and many in the community know it:

Joan - Well I think that the school is doing their darnedest to help these kids but after hours it's up to the parents to try to teach their kids more. Like even to sit down and have them read a book.

Chief Eric Fisher - I think that parents and grandparents are very important to how that child is raised. If the parents and family are supporting the child going to school they'll make their best efforts.

Yet some participants perceived that there is far less involvement in children's education than there should be by people in the community:

Irene Scott - Before, everybody felt the school was the White society. They didn't have a feeling that they belonged there. Somehow we have to let them know that they belong to the circle too. But we may have to guide them I think, let them know how they can help.

One of the ways that this lack of participation manifests itself is in the setting of policy. Though the members of the Education Authority themselves sometimes question whether they are heading in the right direction, (that is, whether the policies they have in place that emphasize a conventional English language education are right) they have to assume that they are following the wishes of the majority because no one gives them any feedback:

Valerie Henry - I mean we always wonder, at Education Authority meetings, are we doing the right thing? We seem to be because nobody seems to be telling us any different, but it does bother you in the Education Authority at times too. The comments are made every now and again.

The students, too, are aware that there is a lower than optimal level of community support. Some student participants expressed the belief that the lack of community support was a reason why new school programs such as outreach programs for dropouts, were not financially supported. They felt that the community's priorities were misplaced:

Ian - Money doesn't grow on trees, but it could be found, if they wanted to do something about it [improving education].

Keith - Yeah, like the money they spent on the Zamboni for the arena, they could have put towards a school room.

The fact is that some in the community still place rather a low value on schooling. The low average level of formal education in the community together with a growth in local control of institutions has resulted in people filling positions that would, in other communities, require considerably more formal educational preparation than they have. Clearly, some of these people with low levels of formal training are performing their duties satisfactorily, and this fact, together with the view that school is a foreign institution, has made some of them express the opinion that education is not that important, at least, not compared to experience:

Ron MacDonald (Director of Education) - You have, in a community like this, you have a group of people who look on education as useless." You don't need education, all you need is experience". People say, "I learned by experience, I'm doing well. You don't need no education, to hell with the school," you know? Some people say, no matter how educated you are, you may come out in the end without a job. That's their philosophy. Yes, that's the thing that you have to realize, that's stopping us from really progressing, from improving the education system. Like you have people out there who have a total disrespect for the education system. They are out there. It's unfortunate that sometimes we have to stop when we get something started because (of lack of support).

This view is not shared by everyone, probably not by the majority. The introduction of grade 12 was something that the majority of the community saw the need for. It was hoped that a local grade 12 could help counter the extremely high dropout rate, and this has been the effect. Last year, 3 students graduated from grade 12, and this year there will almost certainly be more than that:

Ron MacDonald - I envisioned that we someday would have grade 12 and here we are. Through the help of the community, the power of the community. That's what it takes. They wanted to see that. We had obstacles in our way from getting it. For example, well, first of all, the community was somewhat divided, but in the end the majority won and the majority wanted grade 11 and 12. It wasn't seen as just for the sake of having it. We felt that there was a need for it. The community felt that there was a strong need for having grade 11 and 12. Because what was happening was the graduating rate was very, very low. As soon as we got 11 and 12 in the community, almost all of them began to graduate. A very high level.

High school completion no longer necessitates moving to a rather hostile outside community. The availability of a complete secondary school education right in Wabaseemoong provides the community with a greater opportunity to feel that they own the educational institution.

But the extended family is still seen, even by the director of education, as the ideal location for a cultural education. At the same time though, he recognized one very important reason that the extended family can no longer be expected to do this by itself: too much competition from outside influences:

Ron MacDonald - The extended family is very important. You have to have that extended family relationship, upbringing. You have to have that, because from there you pick up your language, your customs, your self-esteem. We try to (use this method of education in the community), we try to, but we're so overpowered with, overwhelmed with, other lifestyles, issues, that we get lost along the way.

This, to me, is a critical point. The traditional role of the extended family in cultural and language education is well-known in the community. It is also recognized that unfortunately, in many cases, probably the majority, the extended family is not able to fulfil this vital role because of incursions by the majority culture. The school, being under band control, could take over much of this role and help prevent further erosion of cultural and language knowledge in the face of outside influences. But if people in the community insist on seeing it that way, the school itself is an outside influence.

3. Students' Attitude toward Schooling

Given the existence of the attitude towards the school and formal education that was stated above, it is not surprising that some youth don't place a very high value on schooling.

Ian - They (kids) want to be free. I wanted to be free.

Charles - It's like you're in a prison (when you're in school).

Edward - I was having a hard time trying to finish my high school. I don't know, I guess I wasn't mature enough. But I really feel like finishing now.

Angela - I know that I've really messed up in the past. I could have been finished last year. It's just I'm so damn lazy [laughs]. (But) now that I'm older, I know a lot more than I did last year. (Before) I didn't give a[laughs]. I mean, I was younger too. Now that I'm older, I'm thinking, this is getting ridiculous, I should have been done a long time ago.

Hillary - Back then I skipped out a lot. I liked it (school), but I think I got too caught up with my friends, so I skipped with them.

A low value for school either personally or amongst peers (and a high value on peer relations) were the reasons given by several participants why they did not apply themselves to their studies, and/or dropped out. Several youth cited immaturity as a factor in their seeing, and treating, school as not important, and certainly, this must be considered. But all children are "immature", and not every community has a high dropout rate. The fact that children in this community drop out seems again to indicate a less than optimum community level of support for schooling.

Participants also felt that many students find school boring and that this causes them to lose interest. One reason some students find it boring is the pace of classroom learning. Students who grasp what the teacher is trying to say, can find themselves hearing it over and over anyway, because others in the class aren't understanding it. On the other hand, for those who are experiencing problems grasping the concepts, school is very frustrating:

Angela - Boredom, maybe (is the main cause of dropping out). Kids are at the same thing every day. Same people every day. And... I don't know, maybe they're just too fast. Yeah, some of the teachers are just way too fast for the kids. Trying to get everything done too quickly. For some kids. For me it's boring.

Ian - They (students) don't know what they're doing. Teachers should explain more... They should explain what the work is all about.

Another possible reason for boredom with school was indirectly suggested by the principal: generally speaking, there is very little recognition in the classroom of the Anishnabe culture. The teachers, the classroom walls, the texts, and the course curricula generally do not address the question of how the course is relevant to them. The use of culturally relevant material, or the linking of non-relevant curricula material with facts that are relevant, can make all the difference. History, as it is taught in standard textbooks, can be boring to the students in Whitedog, but their own history, (i.e. Aboriginal history on all levels: local, tribal, and international) is something they know little of and urgently wish to know:

Valerie Henry - It (Aboriginal history) is fascinating, and they're missing out on so much. You see that's the thing that I would like the kids to know about. They don't know all that. Half the kids here are not... they don't know. They don't know the history of their own area, the history of their people... and they're so interested in it. They'll ask question after question: what was it like then, what did they do and how did they do it?

Although it is probably found to some degree in all students who drop out, the belief that school is unimportant (and irrelevant) is not the only thing that causes students to leave. Problems with school that were linked to substance abuse were mentioned by several students as factors in their dropping out, or failing to complete a grade:

Beth - I've been stupid in the past sometimes. I've been bad. I've made mistakes and stuff. Like doing, you know, drugs, a bunch of drugs and that just kills your brain cells, makes you dumb. And, like dropping out of school and not getting anything done. Because I could've been finished high school by now if I'd kept going

David - It (school) was all right. It was pretty nice. But I was kind of... I was kind of drinking too much.

Pregnancy and the responsibilities of parenthood were also cited as a frequent cause of dropping out:

Hillary - I quit. Dropped out. I dropped out because I got pregnant

Keith - My brother dropped out because his girlfriend was going to have a baby. But when he thinks back now, he wants to go back to school.

Hal - I guess I did (make a mistake) on the education part [dropped out when his girlfriend became pregnant]. That really bothers me. I had an option to keep on going to school but I didn't want it. My dad told me he would take care of us. (And) I wouldn't have minded but it's just that even though it wasn't my idea, I did it myself and I had to be responsible for it.

Besides pregnancy and parenthood, relationships were associated with dropping out for several other reasons: falling in love and losing interest in school, being expected to care for and/or assist parents or grandparents (see Culture section), or having to assume responsibility for siblings:

Joan - I didn't finish (grade) nine. The reason I didn't finish school and I figured it was time for me to come home is my parents were neglecting my younger brothers and sisters and I felt that it was, I was needed at home to look after them.

Personal motivation for school comes from a conviction that school is important. A strong motivation for school can change the perception of the difficulty of school work and the level of affect for it:

Edward - I didn't realize how easy school was. I used to think it was hard but that was just because I hated school, that's all. I was bored with it... It's so easy when you really think about it. High school is really easy. And now I can't get enough of it. Yeah, I can't wait to go back.

Community-supported efforts aimed at making school seem more important are likely to pay off in terms of improved student performance, lower dropout rates, and even (at least potentially) lower levels of substance abuse and pregnancy among the young. The question of how community support for the school can be increased will be considered in the Discussion chapter.

4. Perceived Strengths of the School

At present, among the youth, criticisms of the school greatly outweigh favourable comments. Positive mention was made of only a few things, and only by some. The school's existence in the community was considered good, some liked the teachers, most liked the Native Language program, and a few were happy with the academic situation in comparison with what is found elsewhere.

The fact that high school can be completed in the community was already mentioned as offering the possibility for greater ownership of schooling amongst the residents. It also means that the youth will be at a lower risk of exposure to racism. Racism was experienced by all the youth participants who attended the high schools in Kenora, although how negative the experience of racism was varied from youth to youth. For several, the nega-

tivity of the experience could be ameliorated by maintaining friendships with other Native youth. In fact, no one who went to school off reserve indicated to me that they had made friends with any White students.

The participants' perceptions of the teachers have already been described, and the Native language program will be discussed in detail shortly. This leaves only a category of positive mention that I have labelled 'academic situation' to be considered. Many of the youth were quite aware that the school in Wabaseemoong was not like other schools in other communities. For some, this was a good thing. Some liked its small class size in the upper grades. Some felt that the education provided in a Wabaseemoong classroom compared reasonably well with that found elsewhere. The availability of some support services in Ojibway (through teacher aides and the Native Language teacher) was mentioned, as were the attempts by the school to recruit dropouts and provide them with remedial assistance. Some students liked the fact that school was easier in Wabaseemoong, and that the classroom atmosphere was more relaxed than elsewhere in their experience.

5. Perceived Weaknesses of the School.

However, some of these same facts were cited by other students as deficiencies. Although some felt that there wasn't that much difference between the Wabaseemoong school and others in terms of academics, most felt otherwise and had experiences to back up their beliefs:

Elaine - (The work the school is doing is) really shitty. They're just doing a bandage kind of operation, I think. Like they're not improving the curriculum. The kids that attend here, (and then) go to Kenora school get thrown back into an earlier grade or get thrown into special ed courses. Our grade 4 kids we pick up and take to town are put in grade 2 and - like they're the biggest kids in the class - they get called rubbers or jigs or stuff like that. It's not fair to the kids. I think the education authority should start looking at ways they could sort of...

Carol - make the standards better

Elaine - Yeah.

Iris - In the last few years my children have been going to school in Kenora. And since I've moved them in to a more...I don't know how you say it...academic setting, (I find) that they've lost very much from going to school in the community (Whitedog). They haven't learned, because Whitedog, I find, is so far behind that it's like they're never going to catch up to that same standard as they should be getting, as Kenora. When my children were in

school in Kenora, even though my daughter was in grade 3, my son was in grade 4...when they did an assessment on both my children they told me both my children had the learning...the achievement of junior kindergarten.

The school is seen, even by some working there, as not doing a good job in things like the development of literacy skills:

Jane - I find that the school is behind. I find that the kids don't seem to learn. That's what I think. Because I find that my kids (grades 4 and 6) are still having a hard time learning how to read. If I had it my way, and if I could just leave whenever I want, I'd take them out and put them in a White school, where they would be able to learn.

It is the knowledge that such a gap exists that is partially responsible for some people's advocating increasing the school's concentration on English skills¹⁹.

Both in terms of academic skills and in terms of giving the students a preparation to succeed off the reserve, the high school is seen as not doing the best possible job:

Angela - That's what the school has to build. They have to give us more stuff to make us prepared for the society outside of the community. They aren't doing a very good job.

Also, the small number of students in the upper grades means there is only a limited selection of courses available.

¹⁹So the kids are getting a good preparation, a good education?

John - Umm. I don't know. Like I think they have to teach more English.

Is that right? So when they graduate high school they're still not ready to take on college or university or something.

John - Uh huh

They still don't have enough English skills

John - Right

Okay, so if you were to make changes in the school you'd like to see changes that would emphasize more English.

John - Yes. Start earlier. Grade 3 or something.

Doing what?

John - Heavy duty English.

Is that right? Still not enough English getting done here?

John - Uh huh

What does that do to Ojibway though?

John - I really don't know. Well, like they speak Ojibway once they go home and with their friends.

There was considerable agreement that, in general, there was much less discussion, and poorer discipline in Whitedog than in, for example, Kenora high schools. The students in Whitedog are seen as being poorly motivated. Poor teaching and a lack of community support are considered responsible for this situation²⁰.

6. Language Education

As was mentioned in the Introduction, there are essentially two schools of thought with reference to language teaching in the school. One group argues that the school has to be almost completely concerned with teaching English and preparing the students to succeed in the context of the larger society. This groups' main argument would seem to be that because most students have to learn English as a second language in addition to all the school subjects that a regular school offers anywhere, the students in Whitedog are required to add a difficult task to a job that already takes most kids the better part of 12 years of their lives. Taking time away from that difficult task and that job to give the kids something that parents can or should give them, and that the school cannot or shouldn't (i.e. an education in Ojibway) is a mistake.

The other school of thought is that the language (and the culture, too, but I am not considering it for the moment) is an essential aspect of the Anishnabe identity. As such, it should not be ignored in the school, for that can send the wrong message about the value of the Anishnabe identity in modern society. This group believes that the language is in danger of dying out and all possible means should be employed to preserve and strengthen it. And if that means taking time away from English language instruction, so be it. It will not be time wasted:

²⁰Would you raise your kids here?

Angela - No.

Why not?

Angela - Well, if the education was better here.

What would it take for it to be better?

Angela - The whole school system here has to change, academically has to change. Should be more courses I think.
And more teachers, more motivation.

More motivation. Okay, where does motivation come from?

Angela - Mostly from...teachers I guess.

Teachers.

Angela - Well, yeah, the students, too. The students definitely have to get motivated.
And teachers can motivate students. Who else, where else does student motivation come from?
Angela - The community.

Carol - I don't think it (could be) totally Ojibway immersion (in the primary grades of Wabaseemoong school), because most of these kids are growing up speaking English now. Like my nephew is so lucky - well, not lucky - to grow up in Ojibway as a first language.

Elaine - And bad English [laughs].

Carol - Bad English. But he's getting there. Like I remember talking like that. Most of these kids, they couldn't...Like the Jones kids. They don't know how to speak Ojibway. At all. And there's tons like that. I think it should be half and half (English and Ojibway instruction). Because the biggest part of our culture is our language and these kids are losing it.

About certain things with reference to language and the school, there are no arguments. First, in Wabaseemoong, language is sometimes a barrier to understanding between teacher and students. Some students, even in the higher grades, don't understand English (especially written English) really well, and of course the teachers don't understand Ojibway at all.

Second, it was mentioned above that progress in class was too slow for some and too fast for others. Those for whom it is too fast are known to be those whose English language skills are weakest. The poorer one's English language skills then, the less likely one is to experience school success:

Valerie Henry - From what I've observed, yes (children who arrive in kindergarten speaking Ojibway as a first language are at a disadvantage). Because they don't have the background in English, because they haven't had English stories read to them since they were 2 or whatever. Yes it is, because you're trying to catch up with everybody, who may have had 2 or 3 years familiarity with that, with the words or the sounds.

There is definitely an advantage (to speaking English as a first or only language). Maybe this is one of the reasons. The parents would probably recognize that and that's what I mean, one of the reasons that they were apologizing, "I'm sorry but my child doesn't speak Ojibway". They realize that for themselves it was hard for them. So they had to make a very difficult choice: "Do I want my child to get an education and make it okay?" That means they have to give up their language. "Or do I let them keep their language and they'll never get an education?". So then they made that choice based on what was best for their children. But it was a horrible choice to have to make.

Third, the school is not universally successful in teaching English. Some children are learning to read, write and speak it quite well. Others are not learning it beyond a very rudimentary level, especially reading and writing skills. Many dropouts have poor English language skills²¹.

These points are not disputed. However, what is to be done about this situation is not agreed upon. For the English-only school side, remedies appear to include more parental support for English (more English in the home, and less concern about the child's abilities in Ojibway). In some homes this is achieved by deliberately refraining from teaching Ojibway to the children. In other homes parents are not so much not teaching Ojibway as they are simply not taking steps to counteract the growing influence of English via the electronic media:

Valerie Henry - I talked to a few parents when they were bringing their children in to be registered [last year] and they almost apologized to me, saying, "I'm sorry my child will not be able to speak Ojibway, they can only speak English". And you could tell the parent did not feel happy about it. And, some reasons that were given to me at that time were the influence of the television of course, because they have so much television in the community now and the kids are watching it so much. That was the major reason. And probably because... a lot of parents used to feel that if they didn't allow their children or teach their children to speak English or let them learn it, that they would be somehow failing their children. But it was sort of like giving up. The English was stressed so much that they've lost the Ojibway now. I don't know exactly what it was, if it was mostly TV or is it parents. It's a combination of TV and the parental attitudes. They felt that somehow it was wrong if they didn't speak English. There was always an apologetic way. I can't... I don't know... it's just something I perceived myself, but I see it as a very bad thing. I really wish the Ojibway language was still there.

There are homes where both languages are emphasized, supported and spoken equally, but those homes would have to be considered a minority. Even parents who speak Ojibway very well and who are proud of their language reported to me that their children don't speak it:

Iris - As for my children, I guess I look forward...I'm thankful that I know my language but my children don't speak it. But I always speak to them in Ojibway, and they understand me when I speak Ojibway. They don't speak it, but I've always encouraged them to learn. And I

²¹ Speaking of dropouts who returned to school:

John - And some of them, they just couldn't handle the work, even though it was basic stuff.
It was still too hard. Why was that?

John - They were just starting again. they'd been out for a long time. Like they'd been in grade 5 and dropped out and now they were starting again

And they were like 17 or something. Would they have done a lower grade. Should the work have been made easier?

John - Not really. Basic stuff is really easy. It's about grade 6 work.
Grade 6 work but it's called grade 9 basic. But it was still too hard though. Is that because they were speaking Ojibway better than English?

John - Yeah.

think it should be...it should be taught in school. Cause if you go outside the community, then you're going to... you know in non-Native communities they teach French, and I think they should teach...Ojibway.

Yet there were some among the youth who wanted to see the Ojibway language maintained, but lacked the ability in Ojibway to teach their children themselves, and nevertheless believed that it was not the school's job to assist in it.

For the proponents of English-only schooling though, the main thing was that the school had the teaching of English as a primary job, and it was failing to do its job. The solution, as they saw it, was for the school to work harder at English. If time could be spared, then it would be all right to give some Native Language instruction, or to expand what is already being done, but time, in their view, can not be spared. More and better teaching of English by the staff, or perhaps more and better staff seemed to be the thinking of this group.

But the proponents of Ojibway language instruction in the school are not recommending that the child should not be taught to speak, read and write English. They are not claiming that English skills are unimportant in today's world. What most of this group is saying is that Ojibway language skills are important too, just as important, and that the school is a necessary place for learning Ojibway.

The argument that maintaining Ojibway is important because it is an integral part of a cultural identity that is both extremely valuable and threatened has already been mentioned. Another reason some believe it needs to be strengthened in the school is that it would give those students with already strong Ojibway skills the support and assistance they need to succeed in their school work. One participant implied that this language support is needed because the first language is the language you think in:

Iris - I think...every (Ojibway) child should be able to speak their language and to be taught their language. And...the education should be translated in their own language because that's the language they speak. I think they have a better idea, understanding, in their own language, than they do in English.

There is a considerable body of research evidence now being assembled that shows the importance of literacy instruction in the child's first language and this matter will be raised again shortly.

Incidentally, it was also pointed out that, at least in the Lake of the Woods region, the ability to speak Ojibway can improve one's job prospects. It is a great asset to anyone who wishes to work with the Anishnabe in the Kenora area.

It seems clear that many of the proponents of Ojibway language teaching in the school have observed the present situation of decline in the use and quality of Ojibway and have decided that without action in the school, the decline will continue.

Angela - In my generation, like, it (Ojibway language) is weak now, but...it could get stronger, I guess, if there were more Native teachers and more elders coming in (to the school).

There are, then, many reasons underlying the fact that the majority of the participants would like to see an increase in the amount of Ojibway taught in the school. The amount of increase seen as desirable ranged a little, but most believed that ideally, at least half of the instruction children received, through at least their primary years, would be in Ojibway.

7. Literacy and the Ojibway Language

Most participants expressed very positive feelings toward the native language program, wanted to see it expanded, and wanted to have more Native teachers in the school. There are strong reasons for believing that an expansion of Ojibway language instruction in the school would be very beneficial on a psychological and (if the expansion is extended to Ojibway literacy instruction) an academic level, and this will be considered in detail in the Discussion.

The principal of the school is aware that an increased role for Ojibway as the language of instruction would be or could be a positive step, but she identified what I feel are the two major barriers: lack of print material in Ojibway, and a lack of trained (or even untrained for that matter) Ojibway-speaking teachers:

Valerie Henry - So many Native educators have (said) that the ideal situation would be to have all the learning done in the Ojibway, the native language. Have all the books in the native language, the writing and reading, everything would be taught in the native language. But that would be so darn hard. Because you don't have the materials in the native language. It would have to be all oral, which is the Ojibway tradition anyway. But then you're going to have to have the Native teachers.

Several youth participants and administrative personnel stated that there was a strong need for more native teachers. The Education Authority apparently supports this idea. I was told that the Education Authority would hire more Native, Ojibway-speaking teachers if it could, and that it does not insist at this time on a B.Ed. qualification. But, there are not very many people in the community at present with any level of qualifications or training for the job. The principal felt that a one year certificate-level teacher preparation program for Natives would be justified given the success of a past program of the type and the urgent need for more Native teachers.

But, although the fact that the majority of the teachers are White is, for some, evidence that the school is still a foreign institution, it is believed that some in the community might object to increasing the numbers of Native teachers:

Victor - Some people here, other Natives, don't have any faith in Natives. Others don't have any faith in White people. It goes both ways.

One resident told the principal last year that there are already too many Native support staff in the school. Despite evidence that it would not be unanimously supported however, it seems unlikely that opposition to the presence of bilingual Ojibway teachers would be very great, providing that their qualifications were seen as satisfactory by most of the community.

Some natives of Whitedog were hired in September 1993 for teaching positions: one for a primary class, and one to teach Native Language in the primary grades. This is an encouraging beginning, but there remains a grave shortage of Native personnel willing and able to take on teaching duties. It would be very difficult at this time to fill many additional teaching vacancies with people from Wabaseemoong.

The other potential barrier to an expansion in the role of Ojibway in the classroom is that at present, there is very little printed material available in the language. And, to the best of my knowledge and from what I could learn from the Native Language teacher, there is not at present a general agreement on the orthographic system that should be used if efforts to increase the availability of print material are to be made.

While a superficial consideration would make the Roman alphabet the first choice for print materials in Ojibway (after all, children will have to learn the alphabet in order to read English), there appears to be a major flaw in that idea. Because of the structure of the language, words in Ojibway are seldom very short. Ojibway uses a system of affixes to modify words, and sentences consist of a few root words and affixes, which are not easily separable from the root. Learning to read Ojibway in Roman characters is apparently an onerous task.

I have heard that it was for this reason that Cree, a language with structural similarities to Ojibway, was first rendered into print by missionaries using a syllabic system that was invented for it. Syllabically rendered, the word/sentence particles of Cree are short, and can be comprehended by an expert at a glance. The same word/sentence in alphabetic script would be half a line of print long and a struggle for anyone to decipher. According to the Native Language teacher, the syllabic system used for Cree is readily adaptable to Ojibway. Her experience with teaching Ojibway using the syllabic system has been positive. But not much material exists.

Incidentally, before I spoke with the Native Language teacher, some students that I interviewed provided me with what I didn't know at the time was an illustration of the importance of making your goals very clear to your students: these students believed that the Native Language teacher, because she was attempting to teach syllabics, was attempting to teach Cree. They were somewhat indignant about that, believing that it was essential to focus on Ojibway.

Ojibway, then, is still primarily a spoken, as opposed to a written, language. Schools are not adapted to an emphasis on oral teaching. The syllabic system used for Cree is adaptable to Ojibway and the Native Language teacher knows syllabics, but at this time, it is believed, the community will is not there (even at the Education Authority level) for a dramatic expansion into a syllabics-based Ojibway literacy program. Partly this is simply due to the fact that the community is not aware of syllabics, and partly it is due to the importance placed on giving the children an education like that of the Canadian majority. However, and again this will be treated at

length in the Discussion chapter, it is my belief that a literacy program in Ojibway is an essential component of the essential move into greater Native Language instruction in the school.

8. Cultural Education

Currently there is not much attention being given in the classroom to cultural education. Even Ojibway language education forms only a small part of the school day. But not everyone believes that there is a place for Ojibway cultural education in the school.

Different people give different reasons for this. First, as I mentioned earlier, it was reported to me that people who have embraced one of the fundamentalist sects currently operating in Wabaseemoong object to virtually any feature of traditional culture and do not want their children exposed to it.

Others seemed to feel that the traditional methods of cultural education were somehow not compatible with the classroom. For example, several stated that the elders were the ones who passed on cultural and spiritual knowledge and, as was pointed out earlier, the elders traditionally gauged what a young person could be told and what he or she was not ready for. This was an estimation probably based on the young person's current knowledge and maturity. Such an estimation is incompatible with a group setting. It is something that only parents and elders who are close to the child can make. Therefore, it is argued, parents must take the primary responsibility for cultural education.

And the most spiritual or mystic aspects of traditional culture are of a highly individualistic nature. Not everyone goes as far, to the same depth, in their exploration and understanding of traditional shamanistic practices. Again, as mentioned earlier, some medicines and rituals are very powerful and are not to be treated lightly.

Nevertheless, some people, while acknowledging these things, still believe that an important aspect of the school experience of young Anishnabe children is teaching them as much as possible about their language and their cultural traditions. They feel that the language and the culture together make up the basis of a sense of identity:

Iris - Culture. I think Culture is a very important part of their...their identity. And I think we're losing a lot of the language, we're losing a lot of the culture, and I think people should start having it in the school setting, having an elder coming in and talking about stories and just life itself, you know.

And, as was the situation with language teaching, no one of this group was arguing for an exclusive focus on traditional culture. People who desired to see a much greater representation of Anishnabe culture in the school wanted to see the children provided with a bicultural education:

Chief Eric Fisher - I think the school should be teaching kids to be proud of both cultures and to survive in both cultures.

The school principal and the director of education don't believe that teaching culture is a waste of precious teaching time. They see it as providing children with the kind of knowledge necessary to enable them to cope in the white world:

Valerie Henry - They (children in Whitedog) need it (knowledge of traditional culture). If they don't have it they have less ability to cope with White culture. You have to know who you are first before you can take on the world.

Ron MacDonald - I think the reason why we have this school is to prepare our children to become participants in the larger society. They get the education and they should be able to do any type of job as any person in Canada. Once they go through the educational system, it should prepare them to work anywhere or to continue on in education. But at the same time, when they're going through the system, they should be aware of who they are, their language, they have to keep their language, their customs. Just because they're going to school doesn't mean they have to drop their identity. They have to keep it because it's really important who they are.

Ideally, then, in the administration's eyes, there would be much, much more affirmation of Native culture in the classroom and the school: art, pow-wow singing, and story-telling. These things would enhance the child's self-esteem and give them pride in who they are and where they come from. In expressing these ideas they are in basic agreement with the majority of the participants in this research. But community divisions have been operating to prevent that:

Valerie Henry - But there's the problem: the community is so divided and so many people want so many different things, if you did that (focused more on traditional culture), you can be darn sure you're going to offend a whole bunch of people. But just the visible signs... it would be nice for people to be able to walk in here and know that this is a Native school. We went to a school in Wikwemikwon, Manitoulin Island and it was just a beautiful school, kindergarten to grade 4 and that's what they had. They had powwow dresses that the kids had made all over the walls and they had... kids would learn how to make dream catchers, things like that. I'm not saying exclusively that, but I do believe... that very simple thing that most people believe: you have to have both. You have to have the Native culture and you also have to have enough to get by in the outside world because you have to be able to give the kid that choice. They have to be able to choose for themselves, "this is what I want". They have to have enough background to choose, "this is what I'm going to do for the rest of my life. I'm going to go this way". But you can't deny them one or the other, and I really don't believe we're giving them enough of the native background.

Other ways were identified for the school to place greater emphasis on the Anishnabe identity. Students saw a strong need for a course in Native history. That the students are interested in learning more about who they are is clear to school personnel. For the higher grades, especially in courses like English and History, much more inclusion of content that refers to the world in which Native youth find themselves (i.e. that helps them to see how the material is relevant to their own experience) is seen as desirable. I must add that there is no real barrier to the construction of such curricula, at least in English courses. I had no problem, for summer school in 1993, getting approval from the Ontario Ministry of Education for a level 4G (grade 12 general) English course focusing exclusively on Native people, Native issues, and Native writers.

Many students would like to learn bush skills. At present, the school gives students in the upper grades one week in the bush in the winter. The youths greatly enjoy this experience, but as actual training in traditional skills it is, of course, inadequate.

For the school administration, the teaching of Native culture, if approached from the right perspective, could actually cure two major community problems. Placing the Ojibway culture within the context of teachings concerning all the aboriginal peoples of North and South America would help people to see that they are part of something very large and very important. This could both reduce the insular mentality of the people and help them to overcome family feuding:

Ron MacDonald - Not only should they (students) know that they are Native people, the first people here, in the Western hemisphere, they have to go even further, they have to be globally educated about who they are. That's really important. A lot of the people around here think just Whitedog. Whitedog is the only place in the world. We can't think like that. We've been

brainwashed by the Indian Act and the Dept. of Indian Affairs to think like that. You have to think globally, like all of North and South America, that belongs to us, to Native people. That's how we've got to think. We can't just think Whitedog and my piece of property and my extended family. You have to go beyond that. And that's what our children lack here. They've got to be told that not only are they the landlords of this part of the world, but you have to get back to your culture, to your language in order to know who you are.

9. Elders in the School

Several participants who were very proud of their culture and who wanted to see a greater affirmation of it on all levels saw an obstacle to teaching it in school: elders are the ones who have traditionally been responsible for the provision of a cultural education, and they believed there might be problems with getting elders in to the classroom. For one thing, it was pointed out, alcoholism is widespread in the older generation. It was believed that not all students would have sufficient respect for the elders:

John - When they bring in elders to the classroom there's the odd few that don't listen. They're not interested. They see the elder as a drunk who doesn't know what he's talking about.

It was also mentioned that some portion of the children in every classroom would not speak Ojibway sufficiently well to understand them.

Nevertheless, several participants wanted to see a much greater presence of elders in the school. They felt that elders can and should come into the school to teach language and mythology. Even more importantly for some, the elders could use the school to fulfil their traditional role of providing guidance and counselling:

Angela - There should be more elders coming in, you know, because a lot of things in the past tie up with things now. Things that can happen to a younger person, like suicide or...there should definitely be more elders coming in and talking to the kids. But they shouldn't be teaching stuff like... well, yeah stuff like how to make a drum, material things I guess you could call it, that kind of stuff. That's nice to know, but you don't necessarily need it now. (Elders can focus on) the person inside. What they are going through. More of a spiritual teaching. Not with saying "well this word means..." like that kind of stuff, you won't be needing that in the future, if you're going to go out in the real world. Something like, where you could come back to a home base and gather your feelings and your thoughts, something of that sense, you know.

Freda - There's lots in the school but about the only traditional thing I see in the school is just Native Language... There was a thing here where the boys were poking the girls bums and teasing the girls in the classrooms about their privates. And I was talking to Roy (Macdonald) one time about that and he was telling me that a long time ago this and that... and that's what I would like to hear, that's what I would like the students to hear. Like even have the ladies come in. Roy's wife, she's got a lot to offer kids. And even though most of the elders drink and that, still they have a lot to offer. And I wouldn't mind seeing the elders come in and talk to the students. The elders could offer some things that would be helpful. And talk about motherhood and all that...

The school principal believes that a return to certain cultural values and protocols is occurring and has gained momentum in the past 5 or 6 years, but some cultural elements were quite severely damaged. One of those is the traditional position of elders as teachers and providers of guidance. Referring to elders for this is beginning to reoccur, but it is an example of rebuilding a cultural element that was lost. She feels that the youth, some of whom have taken an avid interest in traditional culture, are perhaps in a position of leadership in this regard, since they are probably the most interested in this tradition and may even know more about it than many other people in the community:

Valerie Henry - You hear that all the time, especially the last 5 or 6 years: "talk to the elders". And that doesn't seem to happen here. It does happen sporadically. Like at a few board meetings they'll say, "our elder tonight is so and so". And at the school they'll say, "we'll call in the elders to have them do this", and they will have someone come in to do things like... it's almost like... almost like the token elder every now and again. Almost like people aren't quite.... to me it's almost like it's a part of the culture that was destroyed or taken away. The system was so totally destroyed that that is gone too. But that's something that has to be brought back. They know it's there. And the kids are more aware of it actually, because they hear more of the stuff coming from the outside, which is something that they had here a long time ago and it's almost up to the youth to bring it back themselves.

10. Youth Concerns to be Addressed in the School

This thesis has identified an historical process of cultural disintegration on all fronts, and has also shown that serious problems exist in the community with respect to gender relations, teenage pregnancy, and substance abuse. It is my belief, and the belief of many of the participants, that the problems stem from the cultural disintegration. The cultural disintegration has had negative psychological effects and, in fact, the community's problems are largely cumulative manifestations of the psychological harm to individuals that resulted from the destruction of the traditional culture and the imposition of another one.

Participants expressed a belief that the school had the ability, and the duty, to address some of the psychological needs of the youth. Decision-making skills, leadership, conflict-resolution skills, all can be taught to some extent in the classroom. By teaching such skills, the school has enormous potential to assist in the rebuilding of the community:

Valerie Henry - I think education is much much more than academics. It's putting forward all the cultural stuff - to the extent that the community wants it. But - not only in Whitedog but all over the place, Canada, everywhere - schools have become more of a social training ground too. Social skills, and how to get along in a society, and how do you express your feelings, and that sort of thing. My philosophy is the school can help in that way. It can try to teach the kids how to deal with the problems they're going to face. Not only how to read, or how to do math, but problems amongst each other. We've got an ideal training ground here; when kids get into fights on the school ground or in the class: conflict resolution. Teach them, how do you deal with each other, how do you deal with your feelings, your anger, your conflict. That to me is really important, because they're going to have to deal with all that, on the reserve and off. That's the only way you're going to survive here, and everywhere else. You have to learn all that first. It's sort of, how to face life I guess. How to accept the bad stuff with the good stuff. And teach them how to make decisions because nobody can make them for them, they have to make decisions for themselves and for their community. They have to take charge.

Self-esteem is another area that school personnel see a potential for the school to work on. The education system is believed to be able to provide self-esteem enhancement on two possible levels: directly, through educational success, or indirectly, through extracurricular activities.²²

²² It should be noted however, that although it can be a very important source of self-esteem, excelling in sports will not by itself create a perception of the importance of education:

So how long were you out?

Edward - Out of school? Well, at least 3 years, like I wasn't out but I would go to school and wouldn't get any credits. I skipped a lot. I went to school in Kenora, and Whitefish for hockey, but it was just for the hockey. In both places I didn't go to school.

Edward - Yeah.

The need for a community wide, multi-level effort both in terms of self-esteem enhancement and in terms of support for education was identified by school personnel:

Ron MacDonald - If you can build somebody's self-esteem up, then that person may continue on and go for more education. But the way it is right now, like, education alone, the education system alone cannot solve that problem. It has to be a parental responsibility, a local responsibility, like, of everybody, it has to be a government responsibility, which includes chief and council, it has to be regional and eventually national. But we cannot depend on education alone. I'm stressing that point. Education cannot do everything. It has to be an effort from everybody, parents, governments, institutions. They have to work together.

Some participants stated that the school did not offer enough recreational activities. They believed that a sports program was one way to help lower the drop out rate. However, they recognized that one reason why there was little in the way of intramural sports was that there had been problems with them in the past. Fighting amongst players was cited as the reason for their discontinuation in the past. But the participants saw the prevention of such events through education as another goal for the school.

At present, not many students in a class are willing to participate in classroom discussions or even to ask for help. Some will not even respond to a direct question. A number of reasons were suggested to explain the students' reluctance to speak, including being in awe of the teacher, and not wanting to appear stupid in front of the rest of the class by asking any dumb questions. Low self-esteem was seen as a major factor in this shyness:

Elaine - Little kids, like outside the classroom, they'd talk and yell and...

Carol - Yeah. they'd have their own personality. But in the classroom they're different
Cass - Because that white person, yeah...

Carol - And the rest of the class. They don't want to look, nobody wants to look stupid in a crowd [laughs] or sound stupid.

Cass - And also they, they, well worship is a little too strong but this person (teacher) is something...

Elaine - Yeah, like, like, "Can I come in and visit?"[laughs] (referring to a common practice of children in the community: visiting teachers in their apartments)

Carol - Teachers are people that...

Elaine - Used to arrive and you'd look at them in awe...

Cass - Unusual, special or something

Iris - I guess in my case, a lot of times when I spoke I always thought people would think bad of me, or I might say something I shouldn't be saying or they were going to look at me differently. I was... really, very low self-esteem. Because of some of the violence in my home

and the alcohol and all the problems...not having things...lack of employment, it can really bring someone down, and not have any respect for themselves. That's how it was for me. I was afraid someone was going to laugh at me. ...I was worried about what other people were going to think.

Students proposed that new courses be offered that they saw as yielding primarily psychological benefits. Instruction in art and theatre courses, for example, could help build self-confidence. Sex education classes could both help boost self-esteem and reduce teenage pregnancy.

There is strong support from some for the idea of developing a more native-oriented overall education program. There is a belief that if the school fosters pride in cultural background, and makes use of traditional practices, such as seeking the counsel of elders and holding healing circles, the students will benefit psychologically.

Several students felt that there were not enough counselling and guidance services in the school at this time. They felt there was a need for more counselling services as a way of making the importance of school clear. Again, as mentioned above, elders could play an important role in this regard.

Career guidance services are insufficient. Students are not being exposed to career alternatives, are not being encouraged to evaluate their interests and explore the possibilities for a personally satisfying working career.

The link between school success and a good career may be becoming more obvious. And, with the growth in high school completion there has come a growth in the numbers of students wishing to pursue post-secondary education. However, of the participants planning to attain post-secondary training, few expressed a desire to attend university. A couple of youth participants were interested in being police officers and therefore aspired to police training programs (either provincial or RCMP). Several expressed an interest in a career in social work or a related field. Two stated that they were interested in forest resource management careers. Among these youth there was considerable uncertainty about how to obtain training for these careers, where such courses were offered, what their requirements were, and so forth.

The frequency of mention of career choices relating to law enforcement, social work, and natural resource management probably reflects both the salience of these kinds of jobs on the reserve, and their perceived importance in the task of making this community better.

I raised the possibility of teaching as a career with several who expressed a desire for post-secondary education. None of the participants wanted to become teachers. Some saw the job as too difficult, and others simply did not feel that it was suited to their interests.

It was stated earlier that teenage parenthood and a readiness to assume adult roles at an early age are elements of traditional culture to some extent. Some expressed to me that the belief that school is not for "adults" (especially parents) may be changing:

Paula - Traditionally, in my family anyway...the husband stayed home and the wife. School was out if you were a parent. Some of the students come from this background. And then if you have a child you're not supposed to go to school, you can't. And somewhere along the way there's been a turn around. Some of the parents are realizing that education is the answer. And they're finding babysitters for their children so they can go. But the hard part on the reserve is finding reliable babysitters.

However, before any significant numbers of people who dropped out will return, a variety of different supports have to be created or strengthened. A daycare for young mothers is needed in the school.

An increase in the availability both of remedial education and counselling has to take place for people who dropped out for any reason. Without psychological and emotional support many will continue to feel they are unable to return.

As a recent experience with attempting to recruit dropouts showed, many who drop out have a very low level of academic skills at present and have a long way to go. Partially at least, this is due to weak English skills and strong abilities in Ojibway. On the other hand, sometimes retention of dropouts is difficult because they are experiencing ongoing social problems.²³

²³ Steve - For 9 basic we had about 18 kids to start with and by June we had two.
What happened?

Steve - Some of them got pregnant, some went to jail.

How many pregnant?

Steve - 9 basic: two pregnant.

How many in jail?

Steve - About 5

5 went to Jail?

Steve - And some of them, they just couldn't handle the work, even though it was basic stuff.

Some of the older youth express deep regret that, because they became parents in their teens, they did not go further in their education and they say that they have very high aspirations for their children's education. Interestingly, of the two who expressed these feelings to me most strongly, one was committed to remaining on the reserve and the other wanted to leave it as soon as family circumstances permitted. Yet, of these two, it was the former who believed that the school should concern itself exclusively with education in English. The latter felt that in Wabaseemoong, the school needed to devote more time to Ojibway cultural and language education.

To summarize the results dealing with education, the main points are as follows. There are numbers of people on the reserve who, for very different reasons, advocate that the school continue to operate as it has in the past, which is to say, provide as close as possible a copy of the kind of education a student could expect to receive in, say, Kenora. Therefore, these people are all somewhat opposed to the idea of increasing the amount of Ojibway language teaching, and to other measures aimed at increasing the presence of tradition-based Anishnabe culture.

Converts to fundamentalist protestant sects object because traditional beliefs and practices are wrong in their eyes. Some traditionalists object because they view the school and traditional teaching as incompatible. Others, regardless of religion, believe that the school has to concern itself first, and foremost (and therefore, in view of the difficulty of the task, nearly exclusively) with a high quality standard education.

However, the majority of youth I talked with, and the school personnel, were very clear in their desire to see a great deal more effort by the school in the direction of Anishnabe education. This means much more Ojibway language instruction, more teaching of Ojibway (and all Aboriginal) history, mythology, ethics, and spirituality, a greater presence of Ojibway people (especially elders) in the school, and more concentration on the material and physical manifestations of Ojibway culture such as sweats, drumming, fine art, and the learning of bush skills.

The proponents of this latter view were largely of the opinion that in providing an education that gave equal treatment to the two cultures that the children were a part of, the school could be more successful in a wide variety of roles, including preparing the young for a successful and happy adult life and healing the community's divisions.

DISCUSSION

Culture, education and cultural imperialism

The principal focus of this research was the education system in Wabaseemoong. However, it was considered necessary to describe at length many other aspects of the community. There are two reasons for this. First, without a thorough consideration of the issues, as was presented in the previous sections, the full understanding of the complexity of the situation that is necessary to an understanding of where this document is leading could not be achieved. Proposals for changes to the school in Wabaseemoong can only be understood, and responsibly made, if all the factors, all the points of view with respect to those changes, are acknowledged and described. It is the belief of this researcher that an appropriate education is one that is cognizant of the total sociocultural situation of the individual for whom the education is intended.

The second reason for describing the various aspects of the community that appeared in the results section is that the researcher, and evidently many youth and others in the community, believes that an appropriate (and school-based) education addresses the developmental needs of the whole individual: not just the cognitive/academic development - though that is important - but the individual's emotional, psychological, spiritual, ethical, social, and physical development and growth as well. Assessing and selecting from the different means available for addressing these needs requires a knowledge of what the present situation is in the community.

An education system does not exist in a vacuum; it exists in a community, which is made up of families and other institutions that also affect the various aspects of an individual just listed. Therefore, the educational endeavour must be sensitive to the input of the rest of the social environment in all the developmental areas.

Ideally, in a community, there is a shared effort, shared goals, and a shared view of how to achieve them, so that the school system contributes to the development of the children as only one part of a cohesive social system of creating new, happy, responsible members of a community. But, where this community cohesion is absent, where there is no unanimity of vision, where the forces of cultural imperialism have fragmented a formerly harmonic social system and destroyed traditional institutions while failing to replace them with viable alternatives, and where the result is conflict, hopelessness, anger, and hurt, the education system, if it is to address the develop-

mental needs of the whole individual, must take these things into account and do what it can both for the individual and for the community.

All institutions in a unified culture work not just for the health of the individuals in it, but for the health and growth of the culture itself. When a culture has been harmed, I believe, all the institutions in that culture (the family, the educational institution, the religious institutions, the justice system, social services systems etc.) need to work as hard as possible at mending the culture, for without a healthy culture, individuals cannot grow.

In the recent history of this community, however, a number of the institutions that would ordinarily contribute to its health were themselves part of the problem. In the traditional culture, several of the institutions listed above were invisible, in that the educational function, the judicial function, emergency child care, and social work, were all performed by the family, extended family, clan, or community at different times depending on the nature of the need. The education function was almost exclusively a family responsibility. Separation of these different functions into visible institutions with specialist practitioners was an aspect of the invasion of European culture.

The school, the judicial system (of courts, police, and jails) and the social services agency were all elements of a foreign culture. Whether it was a part of their mandate or not, each of these institutions, in their historical relationships with Native people, acted in ways that were harmful to the traditional culture.

The residential school system represented the most deliberate (though by no means the only) attempt by Whites to destroy Aboriginal culture, especially the religious/spiritual parts of it. Though it was in many ways a dismal, and shameful, failure, in this respect it was a shameful success. It tore the fabric of Native culture into shreds, destroying many lives in the process. But it failed to make Aboriginal people into copies of White people, and eventually the failure was recognized (in large measure due to the efforts of Aboriginal people) and the attempt abandoned.

But in Wabaseemoong, to continue the metaphor, some people held firm to the shreds of their culture. The destructive work of the residential schools was not as protracted in this region as in others. The residential school outside Kenora was closed at a time when many people with vivid memories of traditional culture were still only in their forties. Probably for a number of reasons - and, as I have said, the discontinuance of the adoles-

cent vision quest must be counted one of them - the memories were not complete. Things were lost. But much was also retained, if only (as in cases like the shaking tent) the memory that the practice had existed and been powerful.

Yet even as the residential schools (with their frontal assault on the spiritual side of culture) were being closed, modern Western material/economic culture was clashing with the Anishnabe's means of subsistence, with powerful effect. A largely cashless, egalitarian economic order was slowly, but eventually completely, overwhelmed by a money-based stratified one (cf Shkilnyk, 1979). Though Roy MacDonald, and other elders who knew the harmony of the other way of life, may decry its loss, I doubt if anyone in Wabaseemoong believes that a return to all the old ways is possible.

Today, as a result of an increasing demand for self-government, some of the formerly White-controlled institutions that were responsible for enormous harm to Aboriginal societies are now under the control of Native peoples. Wabaseemoong was only one of the Aboriginal communities that lost many of its children 20 years ago, because of the actions of the Children's Aid Society (see York, 1989, for a discussion of this). Today, Weechi-it-te-win, an autonomous and Anishnabe-controlled body is responsible for child protection and all other aspects of social work in Wabaseemoong. The Wabaseemoong Education Authority was created in the mid-1980's and the running of the school is completely in its hands. A Native constabulary exists on the reserve, and plans are underway to have a Native justice of the peace holding hearings in the community.

These developments are all positive steps towards the rebuilding of an integrated community. But they are early steps, and many changes are still needed. Many of the participants I interviewed believe that more changes, and radical changes, to the education system in Whitedog are a necessary and vitally important part of that process.

Taken as a whole, this community is still suffering terribly. In the summer of 1993 there were 7 deaths. All but one were suicides. One night, during the Christmas period just past, the air ambulance was called in on four separate occasions for emergency evacuation. Though it is certainly unusual to have this many in one night, emergency evacuations are by no means uncommon. Violence, suicide and substance abuse continue at or near the tragically high levels they reached in the 1970's.

These kinds of problems provide evidence (as well as a reason) that many people in Whitedog are not at all well-off psychologically. Though I perhaps gave the impression, in my description of the religious conflict, that Wabaseemoong is split into two camps, (the traditional and the fundamentalist) the largest portion of the population is still probably the irreligious one. The residential schools and the missionaries, especially the former, succeeded, in the case of many Ojibway, in invalidating traditional religious beliefs. But they did not at the same time succeed in replacing them with Christian ones, as evidenced by the very low participation rate in Christian churches in Whitedog in the '70s and '80s (also see Vecsey, 1983).

When traditional subsistence patterns were also destroyed, many people found themselves in a void as far as their identity was concerned. They knew they weren't White; there was plenty of evidence for that. But they no longer had very much that was Native of which they could be proud. As a culture and as individuals, many Anishnabe did not know who they were. This lack of a positive identity is, I believe, an important element in understanding what has been happening in many Native communities and to many Native people.

The Nature of an Identity and the Role of Culture in its Formation

It is highly doubtful that many of the traditional subsistence practices can be brought back, at least, as the principal means of survival. Therefore, the components of a distinctly Anishnabe identity in Wabaseemoong will primarily have to be found in the non-economic aspects of culture. Though it is an artificial distinction, it is useful for a moment to divide non-economic elements of culture into two categories: ethics and rules of behaviour on the one hand, and spiritual beliefs and cultural rituals on the other.

In preparing for this research, I examined a great deal of psychological, anthropological and other social scientific literature on the question of culture. Among other works I consulted, one by J. A. Mannette stands out for this point. In writing of White perceptions of Native culture she says:

“(in White people) conditioned by ethnocentrism and Hollywood images of Plains warriors, no tepees, language loss and alcohol addiction are understood to mean ‘no culture’. Thus, cultural sense is not made of extended families, humour and tribal thought”(Mannette, 1990, p510). Mannette argues that, difficult as it may be for some to see it, Native people still do have viable, living cultures. The cultures have evolved, and are evolving, to meet the present situation.

Dr. Clare Brant, a Mohawk, also makes this point: in their ethics, or rules of behaviour, the Aboriginal people of Canada everywhere still manifest a distinct point of view (Brant, 1982; 1990). There is nothing self-conscious about this. Native people began with a different world view than Europeans and no matter how much contact occurs will probably always differ in some ways because of it. In Whitedog, which has had far less contact than the Micmac communities of which Mannette wrote, and where the language is still alive, this fact is fairly obvious, though subtle enough that some short-term residents (e.g. teachers) have nevertheless failed to grasp it.

However, it is in the area of cultural and spiritual ritual practices, a far more self-conscious and overt set of behaviours, that one can speak of a cultural revival. I contend that it is this kind of practice that has the greatest power to give a person an ethnic, or cultural, identity, a sense of belonging to a group of people whose unique practices have value for that person. And I agree with Erikson (1963) (and numerous others: Baruth and Manning(1991); Gibbs and Huang(1989); Rotheram and Phinney, (1987); Spencer and Markstrom-Adams (1990); Westermeyer (1979)) that a cultural identity of which a person can be proud is an important part of the overall identity that a person constructs. In other words, one aspect of the self-definition that a person must formulate (though not necessarily consciously) in order to function successfully as an adult, is a statement about what group or groups he or she belongs to. Though all the different community-controlled institutions can help in restoring a strong sense of identity to the individuals in the community, clearly, the school (which, with the exception of the family, is the institution most concerned with the development of children into adults) is the place where the sense of identity can be most directly affected.

“The internalization of a particular version of [the status] ‘one who can walk’ is one of the many steps in child development which (through the coincident experience of physical mastery and of cultural meaning, of functional pleasure and social prestige) contribute on each step to a more realistic self-esteem. This self-esteem grows to be a conviction that one is learning effective steps toward a tangible future, and is developing into a defined self within a social reality. The growing child must, at every step, derive a vitalizing sense of actuality from the awareness that his individual way of mastering experience (his ego synthesis) is a successful variant of a group identity.” (Erikson, 1963, p.235)

In other words, throughout the long course of development into adulthood (and even afterwards, according to Erikson (1963)), physical, psychological and sociocultural factors will combine and be combined in such a way that the individual attains a functioning sense of identity. The functional sense of identity will require the adoption, and successful performance, of roles from within a culture’s large, but limited, pool (e.g. the role of father will be enacted in accordance with the cultural expectations for that role, along with the other roles expected of a male adult).

Erikson argues that the sense of identity arises from the coincident experience of physical mastery (in culturally prescribed roles and behaviors) and social prestige. In the introduction it was mentioned that other theorists have labelled a sense of physical mastery (i.e. the belief that one is performing well in a particular role) the sense of self-efficacy (Harter, 1988; Bandura, 1983) and give self-efficacy beliefs considerable importance both for feelings of self-esteem and for performance in a given role.

The social prestige (or social support) element is equally important. Recall from the introduction that Harter considered that the opinions about you of the significant others in your life were very important to your self-concept. If the significant others in your life value your performance in a given area then the quality of your performance will be important to your sense of who you are.

Culturally-valued roles and behaviours are the ones that really matter in the formation of an identity. And the belief that you are performing well in a culturally-valued role contributes not just to psychological well-being but also to how well you perform that role. To use school subjects as an example, believing that you are good at math can be both a source of pride (if the culture values math achievement) and an important factor in how good you actually are at math. The better you believe you are at a subject, the more you will like it, and the more likely you will be to work hard at it and therefore do well in it (Bandura, 1983).

But what of settings where there are two, largely competing, sets of cultural expectations and two different role/identity repertoires? Although they worked separately, anthropologists George and Louise Spindler, and Native psychologist Michele Marchand both identified, from their work with different Aboriginal groups, 5 possible identity styles that could arise from the need to reconcile the competing demands of two separate cultures.

Spindler and Spindler (1989) labelled the 5 main identity adaptations that Native people (or any members of an ethnic minority) could make: assimilation, reaffirmation, withdrawal, constructive marginality, and biculturalism. Marchand (1990), labelled the five different kinds of ethnic identity: conformity, resistance/immersion, dissonance, introspection, and synergistic articulation and awareness. To some extent, Marchand's description of the kinds of ethnic identity is couched in stage/developmental terms, that is, as phases in the development of the individual. However, she emphasized that, in characterizing the identity development of members of ethnic minorities, it is not really possible to specify a characteristic developmental pattern, that not all will go through all stages and that there is no terminal point in the development of ethnic identity (1990).

There is considerable overlap between these two different descriptions of ethnic identity. What Marchand calls the conformity stage is much like the Spindlers' assimilated identity. The individual in this case rejects the ethnic culture and is solely a member of the mainstream culture.

The Spindlers' reaffirmative identity is very similar to Marchand's resistance/immersion stage. Both describe a situation where the minority person has attempted to embrace his or her own culture and to reject anything that reflects majority culture.

Marchand's synergistic articulation and awareness stage is similar to the Spindler's bicultural identity. In both cases, the individual has made an effort to selectively endorse values and so forth from both cultures, the mainstream and the minority. The individual defines him or herself as belonging to both cultures.

Marchand's dissonance stage is similar to the Spindlers' withdrawal identity, where there is rejection of both cultures. Both Marchand and the Spindlers indicate that this state can be characterized by self-destructive behaviour.

Finally, Marchand's introspection stage is somewhat similar to the Spindlers' constructive marginality stage. In both descriptions the individual is neither firmly attached to either culture, nor totally withdrawn from them. Instead, he or she has adopted a critical attitude toward both, a sort of "wry view" of them, to use the Spindlers' term.

The School and Cultural Identity

The Spindlers (1989) speculate that the different adaptations, or cultural identities, can be at least partially affected by experiences in the school, though they are not determined solely by them. They point out that for ethnic minorities, as for the mainstream, situational self-efficacy (e.g. self-efficacy beliefs about school subjects) may be damaged without major harm to one's overall self concept (or self-esteem) if there is little importance attached to the situation. However, they claim that school is a situation that is at least initially important to most members of a minority culture, and that an experience of failure there will result in some damage to self-esteem, at least until some adaptation has been made to one's identity.

Other writers though, have argued that school success may not be as important, (and is certainly less likely) for members of certain ethnocultural minorities compared to members of the majority culture. Ogbu (1988, 1992) has argued that, in North America, Blacks and Native people tend to have a different kind of cultural identity than do most other minority groups. Ogbu believes that, because neither of these groups willingly entered in to a relationship with the majority culture (Blacks first encountered North American majority culture largely as slaves and the majority culture's interactions with Natives can largely be characterized as attempts at cultural genocide), both groups tend to have an oppositional identity towards the majority culture and its institutions. That is, many Natives partially define who they are by who they are not. To be Native is to be unlike Whites. Ogbu claims that with this frame of reference, some Natives regard success, or even willing participation, in majority institutions such as school as, by definition, a loss of their Native identity. The derogatory term "apple", for example, is applied by Native people to Native people who take on too many White values.(1988, 1992).

While this view is consistent with some of the identity statuses identified by both the Spindlers and Marchand (i.e. while Ogbu's views can help explain how Natives might dislike and reject either their own or the majority culture) it has not gone unchallenged. Trueba (1987) points out that this view does not provide insight into how some Native people are able to succeed in school and yet maintain a positive view towards being Native. In fact, Trueba argues, accepting Ogbu's views ultimately ties the hands of educators. If sociocultural history is destiny, there is really nothing to be done (1987). If the formation of a Native ethnic identity requires the rejection of school as a White institution then clearly many Native students will not even want to succeed in school.

That the school is still being seen by some in Whitedog as a White institution and an imposition was made clear in the Analysis chapter. There is an element in the community that views school success with at best considerable ambivalence because they identify the school as something foreign and inimical to who they are as Native people.

But this is not a universal view. Nearly all of the people I interviewed expressed what I believe to be sincere pride in the fact of being Anishnabe. But most of them had come to, or were overtly attempting to come to, a relationship with both cultures, both sets of expectations, that was individually satisfying. For each, that meant establishing what domains of their lives were Anishnabe, what ones Canadian mainstream, and what ones demanded a combination and reconciliation of the two.

The school is seen by them as capable of assisting children toward the adaptation of a positive attitude to both cultures, in other words, toward a bicultural identity. While this identity/attitude is not the only one that can give Native children psychological satisfaction, most of the participants in this research saw it as the best one.

But not all of the participants and certainly not everyone in the community believe that the school can and should assist in the development of positive attitudes toward both cultures. The different beliefs were presented in the preceding sections. Recast in terms of identity theory, it can be stated that opposition to the teaching of both cultures in the school comes from people with one of two identity styles and that furthermore support for the school as the venue for teaching both cultures only comes from those with a bicultural identity style or orientation. Those who hold assimilated identities (in Wabaseemoong this group would principally be made up of converts to Christian fundamentalism) want little or nothing to do with their traditional culture. Those who hold reaffirmative identities (many of the traditionalists) at best do not see the school as the correct venue for cultural education and sometimes even view it with hostility, as an agent of White cultural imperialism to be resisted.

No support for the school, no matter how constituted, can be expected of people who have withdrawal identities since people who can be characterized in this way view nothing very positively. Nor can people who are introspected (to use Marchand's label) or marginal (to use the Spindlers' label) with respect to a cultural identity be looked to as active advocates of any particular form of schooling.

Therefore, it is only those who are expressing a degree of biculturalism in their ethnic identities that are advocating a bicultural school system. Yet, as I stated above, this identity adaptation while potentially difficult to attain (cf Katz, 1979, who argues that the two cultures are so different as to make reconciliation between the two utterly impossible) seems to me the most tenable of all the ethnic identity styles that a school can work to foster.

Whitedog is still a nearly totally Ojibway community, where the language is still widely spoken and where the prevailing ethics and rules of behaviour originated in the ancestral culture. It is therefore difficult, though not impossible, to maintain an identity that says that many, if not all, of the elements of the ancestral culture are bad and wrong. Furthermore, even if parents believe that an assimilated identity is the right kind of identity for their children to develop, the children themselves are likely to question it in the adolescent period, as they try to

define their own identities. It is argued that most youth, in any culture, do not adopt their parents' values without first going through a period of values exploration (Harter, 1988; Erikson, 1963). It would seem to be a legitimate role of the school to set forth the values of the two cultures that the children of Wabaseemoong are exposed to.

Others did not want to see the school teaching the Native culture more because they had come to hold a reaffirmative identity. The participants who expressed this identity were not actually hostile to the school, but their emphasis on Native culture led them to feel that they should learn about the traditional culture by traditional means, that they should teach their children about the Anishnabe culture themselves, and that the family was where all children should learn about the culture, since the family had always been the source of knowledge about Anishnabe culture. That some are able to do this was clear from the results. Those who have other means of exploring the Anishnabe culture do not need (or want) the school to help them do so. In their view, the school can present the values of the other culture and the youth can choose between them.

However, while this point of view has some validity, it is functional as a means of learning about both cultures only for those youth who have access to traditional sources of knowledge outside the school. The results show that numerous participants have limited or no access to such sources, that they feel deficient in their knowledge of Anishnabe culture and strongly desire to learn more. For these participants, the school is the logical venue for such learning. And some participants even suggested methods whereby the school could be sensitive not just to the cultural knowledge, but to the traditional means of transmitting it.

Identity theory can also be used to help to some extent in the understanding of the different positions that were expressed with regard to Ojibway language instruction in the school. Again, those with assimilated and reaffirmative identities express negativity toward it, although for different reasons. Assimilated people would tend to regard the Ojibway language as unimportant in the modern world. Reaffirmative people see instruction in the traditional language as a traditional family responsibility.

But from the bicultural point of view a greater level of instruction in Ojibway is highly desirable. If more representation of Ojibway culture can be seen as important and beneficial and, as a number of participants maintain, language and culture are difficult to separate, it would seem that presentation of Ojibway culture in the school is best done through the Ojibway language.

Furthermore, if the children of reaffirmatively-oriented families (and withdrawal-oriented families) feel hostility toward white culture, this dislike, which must inevitably be directed toward the Wabaseemoong school (as presently constituted) and towards the activities taking place there, can be lessened through an increase in the presence of Ojibway culture through greater Ojibway language instruction.

Language and Education

However, another objection to Ojibway language instruction in the school can be mentioned that has less to do with identity style (although those participants I consider to have bicultural identities tended not to express it) and more to do with beliefs about education. That was the belief that time spent on teaching Ojibway was time taken away from the difficult tasks of learning to read, write, and even speak, English. [Since culture and language are always closely related, this argument is also applicable to the teaching of traditional culture and was expressed by participants in that connection as well].

On the face of it, this argument has merit, and a cursory examination of the experience of French immersion instruction in English Canadian schools would seem to support the notion that teaching school entirely in a language that the child does not arrive speaking can be done successfully. For some, the fact that some children in the upper grades in Whitedog School (and many of the ones who dropped out) still do not speak English well, and write and read it even worse, is taken as evidence either that the school is not doing a good job of teaching them English, or that the parents are not providing home support, or that the child is for some reason personally incapable of learning this task (i.e. "learning disabled").

Any or all of these explanations is potentially true for a given child. However, the apparently logical conclusion that some draw from the fact of children's low success in learning language skills, that English has to be given more emphasis (taught better, encouraged at home, remediated more fully), may not be the correct one.

The great success of French immersion programs in Canada initially clouded the issues, but a comparative examination of this effort to teach reading and writing in a second language and others elsewhere in the world and in Canada, now seems to yield some compelling evidence for a new way of looking at the requirements for successful literacy instruction in a second language.

Wood (1988) claims that the way language is used in the classroom is quite different from the way it is used anywhere else. Among other things, the classroom is the first, if not the only, place where children will be required to use language that is not highly context-embedded, in other words, where they will have to rely on language alone to convey and receive ideas.

Children whose spoken first language is not Standard English but is either another language or a different dialect of English, have, as Haring and McCormick (1986) point out, an additional dimension added to the problem of learning the special kind of language that is found in school: "they are faced with learning a second language while receiving academic instruction in that language" (p103). Learning the kind of language associated with academic instruction is difficult enough even when you speak the language that forms its basis (Wood, 1988), but when the academic language and the basis for comprehending it must be acquired at the same time, it is not surprising that many find the task insurmountable.

In the U.S., where English is the language of school instruction, children whose first language is not English comprise much larger proportions of classes for the "mentally retarded", "learning disabled" and "speech impaired" than their numbers in the population would warrant (Hardman et al, 1990). And, whereas an estimated 7-10% of the population has some kind of language learning problem, 20% of Spanish-first-language, bilingual children exhibited "inadequate language skills in their native language and in English" (Haring and McCormick, 1986, p103 emphasis added). A similar finding is reported for the children of Finnish immigrants in Sweden. While parents and teachers rated the children's spoken Swedish as fluent, the children performed very poorly on tests in Swedish and in fact were "proficient in neither Finnish (first language) nor Swedish (second language)" (CSTA report, 1989). It seems that, contrary to the generally positive Canadian experience with French immersion teaching for English-speaking children (CSTA report, 1989), bilingualism can be associated with actual performance deficits in school for some groups.

The difference, it is claimed between the positive French immersion experience in Canada, and the negative second language learning experience of minority first language school children, is largely owing to the literacy skills instruction in the first language that middle class English children are receiving at home while they learn French in school. When children, for any reason, are not taught to read their first language (the language they are best able to think in), they will experience far greater difficulty becoming literate in a second language than they would have if they had been taught literacy skills in their mother tongue (CSTA report, 1989).

Because of the difficulties that have been found to be associated with trying to teach children to be literate in a second language when they are not literate in their first, there is good reason to believe that strong academic benefits would result from providing Ojibway children in Wabaseemoong with literacy instruction in Ojibway. Teaching minority first language literacy skills either before or concurrently with the teaching of majority second language literacy, is now believed to be the most effective way of teaching minority first language children (CSTA report, 1989).

Although this argument (that the kind of language that is associated with school tasks, and literacy development, is different from everyday speech and therefore needs to be acquired in the native tongue before it can be transferred to a second one) has some solid evidence behind it, it may not be the whole story of why and how children learn, or fail to learn, to read a second language. As some critics have pointed out, this argument fails to take into account: "ethnic, cultural, social, political, community, teacher expectations, motivation, attitude and home factors" (Baker, 1988, p180).

Instead, writers such as Coles (1987), Bettelheim and Zelan (1982) and Smith (1985; 1992) have argued that a large part of the explanation for how children learn to read (and more importantly, do not learn) are precisely to be found in those factors. For both Bettelheim and Zelan, and Smith, motivation and attitude are critical and both of these factors are heavily influenced by the significant others in our lives. Smith states his law of learning as: "we learn from the company we keep" (1992, p432). To Smith, "Social interactions bring about the growth of learning... [U]nconscious, continual and effortless learning goes on throughout life. And it is all achieved without a method of instruction" (p434). Thus, "...children learn to read and write if they join the 'literacy club', literally identifying themselves with people who read and write" (p434), and they don't learn to read if they don't. So, clearly, if the children's company (with the exception of teachers) doesn't read and if the "literacy club" is seen as a foreign institution, there will be no motivation for the child to join it (and possibly resistance to joining).

Coles, in The Learning Mystique (1987), makes a radical argument concerning learning disabilities. He claims that there is virtually no solid evidence for the existence of neurological dysfunction in so-called learning disabled children. Instead social and cultural factors by themselves deserve serious consideration as sufficient explanations of learning difficulties:

“According to the interactivity theory [proposed by Coles], systemic economic, social, and cultural conditions are the principal influences contributing to learning failure. These conditions are not sociological abstractions that can be optionally added to or separated from psychological explanations or analyses of narrower, more limited interactions. Every aspect of learning failure, even an interaction between a student and a teacher in the most minute detail of literacy education, is related to these broader conditions.”(p209)

Summary

This document has taken Coles's argument very seriously. It has attempted to show that psychological considerations and educational psychological considerations cannot be examined in a vacuum. Instead, the question of addressing the individual needs of the student through the construction of an appropriate education can only be dealt with through careful analysis of the sociocultural environment and its historical development. This does not, however, take away from the importance of psychological considerations: a strictly sociological analysis of the education system in this community might have failed to recognize the source of the various disagreements regarding appropriate education and perhaps even have failed to see that some of the apparent agreements in this area actually have as their source two extremely different positions.

Formulating appropriate education requires understanding identity and understanding identity requires understanding culture. To address the developmental needs of students it is necessary to examine what the individual's psychological and educational needs are. But that will not be clearly understood without a clear idea of what the individual's ecology is. When both psychological and sociocultural considerations are addressed, then and only then can the question “what constitutes an appropriate education” be addressed.

PROPOSALS FOR CHANGE

While there is an element in the community that does not wish to see any change in the school, many participants believed that change is needed. Most of the changes that were proposed by participants can be seen as tending to have one overall effect: the greater integration of the school and the community.

Changes that participants desired to see included much greater participation in the educational effort by people from the community (Native teachers, Native support staff and elders), much greater representation of Anishnabe culture in the school (course content to improve the students' language ability, and their knowledge of Ojibway history, religion, and cultural ritual; opportunities to learn and use culturally relevant art forms, and traditional subsistence skills), and more efforts by the school to acknowledge and help confront the special problems of the community and the developmental needs of the youth in the community (academic remediation, psychological counselling, personality skills instruction, sexuality and gender issues education, substance abuse education, and career counselling).

It has been argued in this research that these changes would benefit the students and the community. What follows are some ideas and suggestions for ways in which the changes could be implemented. Some of them are my own ideas, but many were proposed by the participants. It is strongly hoped that the community will use them as the basis for a thorough discussion of the question: how can the school serve the needs of the children and the community.

More Native Teachers

School-level action: Teaching as a career can and should be one important focus of a career education program (see below for career education recommendations). In order to have more Native teachers in the classroom there must be more qualified Native teachers available. An increase in the number of Native teachers, then, begins with increasing the number of young people who want this career.

Community-level action: Every step the community takes towards making the school a true part of the community will help encourage children to see the school as being as much a part of their lives as Weechi-it-te-win has become. One method of achieving a greater integration of community and school that was proposed was the creation of a liaison committee that would have the responsibility of actively soliciting greater community input and participation in the school and actively communicating the school's concerns, aims and debates to the community.

Other actions:

Funding: Present post-secondary funding levels are having the effect of discouraging eligible students from pursuing lengthy post-secondary education. Four or five years of trying to live on the allowance that is presently available is seen by some as too difficult, and they are opting instead for one- or two-year programs, or on-the-job inservice courses. An increase in the student living allowance is necessary before more students will see the attainment of undergraduate or higher degrees as a worthwhile effort compared to the option presently available to them: being hired for a job for which they are underqualified, paid a full salary and being gradually given greater academic training through part-time courses and in-service education.

Training programs: If education is seen as a priority area for action by Aboriginal peoples on a National level, then one proposal for increasing the numbers of Native teachers in the school (and thus the numbers of role models/examples of the advantages of higher education) that could be implemented simultaneously with, or in lieu of, an increase in student allowances for Native students is the creation of more special short-term training programs for Native students who wish to become teachers (a two or three year program for those intending to become primary or middle school teachers, for example).

More Native Support Staff

School-level action: The school is limited in how much more it can do in this regard. There are already several community members working in the school in various support capacities (teacher's aides, tutors, administrative support etc.). Greater encouragement of present staff to take on more roles and responsibilities in the classroom

could help fill the need for more Native teachers, but this will involve both more training of present staff and revision of present classroom programs.

Training programs: Summer training programs for support staff are presently being utilized, so it is anticipated that there will be a continual increase in staff expertise. However, teacher training programs seldom address the question of negotiating roles for classroom support staff, and the special needs and roles for Native support staff is something the new teacher is almost certain to be unprepared for. Participants suggested that incoming teachers would benefit from a course that familiarized them with the community. It is arguable that non-Native teachers considering working with Native students in a reserve setting should receive at least a semester-length course in preparation.

Greater Presence of Elders

School-level action: At present, in Wabaseemoong school, space is severely limited. Classes are being held in windowless rooms originally intended for equipment storage, in the former office space of the administration, and in what was formerly the home economics class space. There is a clear need for a major expansion of the present building. If a space could be found, however, (and portable classrooms may be the only option at this time) a room for elders was seen by several participants as desirable. Elders could be hired as part-time counsellors or as support staff, depending on budgetary considerations. Participants envisaged them fulfilling both roles. If it were possible to hire elders (or to have them volunteer to come to the school for that matter), they could assist both in an expansion of Ojibway language instruction and in the realm of psychological and spiritual counselling. Participants believed that elders could make an important contribution in areas such as gender relations and substance abuse control.

Community-level action: Elders should not be expected to work 40 hour weeks. It is probable, however, that many would welcome the opportunity to contribute on a part-time basis to the education and development of the youth of the community. Community encouragement and support for a program whereby elders fulfilled a traditional role within the school setting would almost certainly be needed in order for this kind of a program to have success. The liaison committee suggested above could solicit input in this regard.

More Native Language Courses; Greater efforts to teach literacy skills in Ojibway

School-level action: A dramatic expansion in the amount of Ojibway language instruction in the school is very difficult at this time because of a lack of community will, a lack of trained Ojibway-speaking teachers, a lack of texts, and even a lack of agreement as to the kind of script to use in teaching Ojibway literacy. There is a decided limit to what the school can do in this regard without changes in these other areas. Measures to increase the number of Ojibway-speaking personnel in the school have been discussed. But changes in all the other areas just identified must occur in concert. It may be possible for the Education Authority to obtain funding for a curriculum development program in Ojibway language and literacy (for example, the trust fund could be utilized) but it is argued that the effort would be more efficient and more effective if it was launched at a greater-than-community level (see below).

Community-level action: A dialogue must be begun in Wabaseemoong that would educate the community members about the options, and the possible costs and benefits of each, before the community-wide support needed for a change in programming at the school can be obtained. It is the belief of this researcher that there is probably not a majority level of support among the older community members for a great increase in the amount of Ojibway language instruction in the school, although there is considerable support amongst the youth. The resistance to an increase is likely to arise owing to the three kinds of belief about Ojibway language instruction mentioned earlier (i.e. 1)it is not important or desirable, 2) it is a job for the family not the school, and/or 3) it would take time away from the difficult job of learning English). The counter-arguments need to be aired so that, it is to be hoped, people will change their minds and come to see Ojibway language and literacy instruction as very important parts of a school education.

Community support will increase the likelihood of other possible benefits from improvements in Ojibway language and literacy skills among the young. Ojibway speaking parents will be able to take an interest in their child's reading if that reading is done in Ojibway and is about culturally-relevant subjects. Since parental involvement in a child's education is among the most important factors in the child's educational success, this single step alone has great potential.

Other action:

Regional/Treaty/Tribal-Level action: While it appears that a syllabic system is the one most amenable to rendering Ojibway in print, the use of any script system will only really be worthwhile if it is adopted at a larger-than-community level. Attempts to foster the development of Ojibway literacy skills in Wabaseemoong will be hampered (and even rather meaningless) unless and until Ojibway-speaking communities can agree to use their language for print communication.

I believe that the Ojibway language may be faced with extinction if it does not become more of a written language. And a culture without its language is also headed for extinction. Thus, it seems important that, at the highest possible level, Anishnabe people, through deciding on a script system and taking steps to encourage it everywhere, set into motion a process whereby schoolbooks (history, literature etc.) are available in Ojibway. If such a move cannot be decided on for the Anishnabe Nation as a whole, then perhaps it can be agreed to amongst the signatories to Treaty 3. Or perhaps the Lake of the Woods-region bands can form a multi-band educational organization similar to Weechi-it-te-win, the social services agency.

Course changes - The addition of much more directly relevant material to the present curricula of the Wabaseemoong School

School-level action: While the development and implementation of courses that are much more cognizant of Anishnabe culture would be an important part of an expanded Native language program, it does not have to be dependant on that expansion. There is far more interesting, useful educational material available about the Lake of the Woods region Ojibway, and the Anishnabe nation, (and for that matter, about Algonkian-speaking peoples in general and all the other Aboriginal peoples of North and South America) than is being used today in Wabaseemoong School.

And, where the material is not available in a form or at a level where it can be used immediately in the classroom, there are no overwhelming impediments to creating it. Local historians and elders can provide a wealth of material (although to be used in English, much would have to be translated) and there are a considerable number

of scholarly texts available on Ojibway life, culture, history, myths, religion and so forth. If - in cooperation with the provincial library system - the Wabaseemoong community library and the Wabaseemoong school set out to build a collection of all printed material dealing with the Anishnabe, a considerable amount could be obtained quite quickly.

After that, a variety of measures are possible. In the higher grades, the students themselves could assume the responsibility for developing material dealing with different aspects of the culture, thus developing their own research and writing skills. Development of a unit or a whole course dealing with some aspect of culture could be part of a teacher's duties for the year. Within a few years a great deal could be assembled. Many school subjects could easily take on much more local relevance.

Community-level action: Under the proper initiatives from the school, a local curriculum development project could involve community members in many ways. While perhaps no single individual is expert in the community on every aspect of traditional culture, probably nearly every aspect of it is known by someone in the community. Not only, then, could historical and cultural information be contributed by community members, but the many skills that were developed over the years that are now in grave danger of disappearing could be actively promoted and taught in the school. All the skills associated with survival in the bush, skills associated with clothes-making, and traditional knowledge about plants and animals and their use in medicine, could be revived and passed on, if those who still retain this knowledge were asked to contribute to the school.

Other actions:

Regional/Treaty/Tribal-level action: While much can be done right in the community, much more could be achieved if these activities were coordinated at a higher level of organization. And, although much of this material would facilitate a Native language/Native studies program on reserve schools, there is no need to wait until the Native Language program is fully developed. This material can certainly be incorporated into most reserve school curricula in English. In fact, even if the Native Language program expanded greatly, it is argued that school materials in English would still benefit from a more overt effort at being relevant to the cultural situation of the students.

Addressing the non-academic needs of the youth and helping to rebuild the community

a) Career counselling

School-level action: Some provincial school programs have courses that focus overtly on all aspects of the psychological needs of the students. One such program, in place in Nova Scotia, has career development counselling as one of its units. Students are taught a number of skills, and exposed to a number of the different kinds of resources available to them, that will help them to choose satisfying careers. This kind of program needs to be developed in Wabaseemoong.

Some information and some support is available to students who want to explore their career and post-secondary education options but a far more active approach is needed in order for children to be aware of all the different kinds of opportunities that are available (for careers both on and off the reserve). A career counsellor in the school could organize career days and bring in various people (ideally Native people) who are currently in different careers to talk to students about them. A career counsellor could also, with budget support, create a career resource centre, where students could go on an individual basis to learn about different fields and the advantages of pursuing post-secondary education.

Because of the present shortage of trained Native personnel in this field any career counsellor the Education Authority could hire today would probably not be Aboriginal and would almost certainly not be a native of Wabaseemoong. But the Education Authority could contract outside personnel to set up career development programs and train Native staff to run them. Career counselling is usually performed by people with Master's degrees, but sufficient training to enable a person to administer and interpret such career interest surveys as the Holland Self-Directed Search, to operate and demonstrate software programs related to career search, and to run a self-serve career information centre could require not more than one year.

b) Psychological development and counselling

School-level action: Several participants indicated that they (or others they knew) lacked, or had lacked in their youth, self-esteem. In the discussion section self-esteem was shown to be influenced by the kind of cultural identity that one fashioned for oneself and by the beliefs that one constructed about one's ability to perform in culturally-valued fields. At this time the school teaches almost nothing except the usual school subjects found in any school and teaches them in English. At this time, then, the school can assist students only in the aspect of their identity that deals with their relationship to the Euro-Canadian culture. It can only influence whether the student selects an identity that includes positive or negative feelings with regard to it. Students who experience success in school can easily believe that they will be able to cope with the Euro-Canadian culture and are not too likely to regard it with a great deal of animosity. After all, part of their self-esteem can be based in their ability to perform in a field that is valued by that culture.

But, unfortunately, while it is improving, the school is not able to give all, or even most, of its students the chance to build self-esteem in this way. Many students, simply because they come from non-literate, Ojibway-speaking households, are unable to keep up with the rest of the class, and experience failure in school subjects. Failure in school, especially protracted failure and the stigmatization that results from being seen to fail, is very unpleasant and the student can be forgiven if he or she wishes to withdraw from the situation as soon as possible. If the only experiences a young Anishnabe has with Euro-Canadian culture are failure in school and derision in Kenora, it does not seem very probable that this person will adopt an identity style that features positive feelings toward it. If, in addition, he or she comes from a home where the parents are abusive or alcoholic, it will be difficult, in the absence of other influences, for this person to develop positive feelings towards the Native culture. The self-destructive withdrawal identity is the most likely adaptation for that young person.

Unless the school is able to provide positive role models, and positive roles, from the Anishnabe culture some students are going to find it difficult to come in contact with them. And, if the school cannot provide Ojibway-speaking students with a good chance to succeed in school, then school will not be a source of self-esteem (and the consequence will be a disvaluation of either the school or the self). Thus, what numerous participants saw as a need for the school to do something about the psychological adjustment of the youth in the community can be argued as a need for the school to provide opportunities for Anishnabe youth to value their language and their culture (and to learn about their culture).

But affirming Anishnabe culture and the Ojibway language does not mean that there is no need for, or role for, English language courses and material informed by Western psychology as well. What has been viewed as the misfortune of Ojibway youth, that they are almost inevitably going to be influenced by two quite different cultures (Katz, 1979), can also be viewed as their advantage. Modern schools often offer sex-education courses, substance abuse avoidance courses and other courses that specifically target some of the non-academic needs of students and offer methods of building self-confidence and assertiveness, leadership skills, and independence. Some of the techniques that have been developed for such training have been shown to be quite powerful and effective, and when they are tempered by cultural knowledge and sensitivity (cf Ponzetti and Abrahamson, 1990; Parker, 1990) they could prove highly beneficial in this setting too.

One participant I spoke with who was very proud of, and knowledgeable about, her Anishnabe heritage, culture and language, nevertheless told me that she had benefitted greatly from receiving counselling from a White counselling psychologist. Such bicultural identities as the one she, and others I interviewed, seemed to have developed appeared to me to offer the greatest possibility for a successful and happy life.

National-level action: I also believe what Josephine Mandamin and Valerie Henry expressed to me to be true: learning about, and learning to appreciate, another culture, is a task for children from all cultural backgrounds in Canadian society today. A very meaningful educational experience could be had for many if exchange programs were implemented. Children from Kenora would greatly benefit from learning about the positive side of life in Whitedog, about the different cultural values and practices of the Anishnabe, and from simply getting to know Native children their own age. Whitedog children too would benefit from seeing other places and learning about other ways.

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APPENDIX

Letter of Permission/Participant Consent Form

A community case study of First Nations youth, sponsored by the Royal Commission on Aboriginal People, is being conducted in Whitedog. The study calls for the participants to be involved in one or two interviews. The interviews will vary in length from between half an hour to 3 hours long.

I am interested in learning what young Native people think about themselves and their world, what interests them, what makes them happy, what they look forward to, what they see as problems, and what they think can be done to solve these problems. I am particularly interested in their views on education.

This information will be included in the report I will send to the Royal Commission in October. That report will then be used as one part of a report on the Aboriginal Youth of Canada, which will be submitted to the Government of Canada in 1994. In addition, I wish to use this information in my Master's thesis, which I will submit to my thesis committee at Mt. St. Vincent University in Halifax, Nova Scotia.

I believe that, if you decide to participate in this research, you will enjoy the interviews, but if you decide at any time during the interview that you do not wish to continue I will not try to force you to co-operate. The interviews will be tape recorded. You will be free to tell me to turn off the tape at any time.

The information I gather from the interview will be for research purposes only. Your name will not be released to anyone. If I quote any material that you give me, I will do so in a way that will prevent identification. In other words, you will remain anonymous.

The chief and council have given me their approval to conduct this study. I will file copies of all my reports (but not copies of the interviews. They are confidential.) with the chief and council and will take direction from them in the matter of modifications, deletions etc. The interim report is due to the Commission in late August and the chief and council will receive it for comments no later than the 25th of August. The final report is due in late October. I intend to submit it to the chief and council for comments no later than the 7th of October. If you have any questions in this matter you can contact me at the Wabaseemoong School, 927-2034 or 927-2286. You may also raise any concerns you have about this research with the chief (927-2068), or with the Royal Commission on Aboriginal People (613) 943-8784.

Yours truly

Consent Form

I, _____ am willing to participate in a study of Native Youth as described in the above letter. I also consent to the reporting of the results of the study, with the understanding that information will be anonymous so that no identification of any particular young person can be made.

(signed) _____

(date) _____