

Woods, A. & Harrison E. (2012). Kidnapped from the Embrace of Our World. *International Journal of Educational Policies*, 6(2),89-102.

ISSN: 1307-3842

Kidnapped from the Embrace of Our World

Audrey Woods*

North West Community College, Canada

Edward Harrison**

University of Northern British Columbia, Canada

Abstract

Three questions are explored within the paper: What is the relationship between culture and discourse? How important are people to the survival of culture and language? How important are youth to the survival of culture and discourse? Language and culture are understood to be inseparable concepts with respect to the continuance of First Nations languages. The colonial legacy of the two concepts within the context of First Nations education is briefly explored. Separating the two terms with an “and” is considered to be significant. It is identified as part of a colonial attitude of “divide and conquer” that pervades governmental beliefs about First Nations people in Canada. Using various policy and legislative documents, the British Columbia school system is taken as an example of how government has an interest in maintaining the division of language culture with respect to First Nations people. The method used is one of traditional Gitksan story telling where the reader is constantly reminded of the themes used in the story. The focus is to examine these policies in light of a governmental intent to continue the policies of cultural genocide.

Keywords: *First nations, educational policy, culture, language, genocide, colonialism.*

* Audrey Woods, Aboriginal Cultural Knowledge Development Advisor, Northwest Community College, Hazelton Campus, 4815 Swannell Drive, Box 338, Hazelton, B.C. V0J 1Y2 E-mail: awoods@nwcc.bc.ca

** Edward Harrison, Assistant Professor, School of Education, University of Northern British Columbia, Terrace Campus, 4837 Keith Avenue, Terrace, B.C.V8G1K7 E-mail: harrisoe@unbc.ca

Introduction

The purpose of the paper is to examine policies of the Federal and Provincial governments as they pertain to the on-going assimilation of First Peoples in Canada. Contextually this is a continuance of the colonial legacy that Canada has with its First Peoples. A focus on educational policy is used in order to reveal the ways in which assimilation continues. This assimilation carries on, despite, federal and provincial attempts to positively reconstruct their relationships with First Nations people.¹ The contents have been organized historically in order to reveal, overtly and covertly, the ways in which the two governments have continued their journey to assimilate First Nations into western society.

Differing Visions

Three simple questions: What is the relationship between culture and discourse? How important are people to the survival of culture and language? How important are youth to the survival of culture and discourse? While these questions are very broad they are located at the heart of the issue when the relationship between culture and discourse is considered. The context for asking these questions is in relation to First Nation language policies particularly with respect to the age at which learning a language should begin. Throughout this paper there is an assumption that First Nations languages are second languages for youth.² This assumption is critical since it often frames the approach to language learning. It is also important to understand that the three questions are very controversial since they may conflict with current government policies respecting First Nations languages. The visions many First Nations people have regarding culture and language differ from government policies. Indeed, it must be recognized that there is no unanimity here either: some Nations may agree while others may not. Before beginning that discussion it is important to briefly reflect upon the relation between culture, language and discourse.

Daxgyat: Capturing Identity

The link between culture and discourse has been long established. Humbolt, for example, indicated this relationship when he said: “Man is only man by virtue of language” (Werner, 1957, p.7). Language allows people to express, albeit imperfectly, what it is they are experiencing in the world. It carries with it the nuances that convey the way in which people live their lives. Translations are, however, never perfect. In

¹...even today,(Canada) is fixated on assimilating aboriginals into a culture that is not theirs, former Prime Minister Paul Martin charges. Dec 2, 2012. <http://www.vancouversun.com/news/Colonial+legacy+haunts+Martin+says/7638719/story.html#ixzz2ECSeTJqe>

² Residential schools were widely established in Canada after 1890. Over time, a hundred and fifty thousand First Nations students were removed from their families and communities and forced to stay in these schools. The intent of the schools was to assimilate them into western society and destroy First Nations language and culture.

Gitxsanimx³, for example, daxgyat would translate into power in English but a fluent speaker would look at it as strength. When a hereditary chief name is placed on an individual they are given daxgyat which is the strength of their House Group⁴, not power. It is important to recognize it is not a dictatorship through having the strength that is given. Discussion of this approach would begin to reveal the differences in the lived practice and the ways in which they are experienced. Frake (1964, p.133) expressed the link in the following manner: “Actually, I find it difficult to conceive of any object, or event, which can be described as a cultural artefact, a manifestation of a code, without some reference to the way people talk about it”. The way an event is talked about holds the uniqueness of the event since it will be different from the way in which other Nations or even Houses may talk about the event. In the Gitxsan feast hall, for example, the Chief of the hosting House group will describe their territorial boundaries when the work of the feast is completed. In the description the Chief will identify creeks, rivers, mountains and other significant landforms that define their boundaries. The witnesses will speak to whether the work is done correctly and to the ownership of territory. The public nature of business conducted in the Feast hall affirms the ownership of territory and establishes the uniqueness of the land held by the house group. Giving a name to the feature speaks to much more than the specific name. Like the example of the Skeena River, for instance, the name ‘Xsan’ means Skeena River in English. But, Europeans would understand that to mean the whole river from the source to the mouth. Gitxsan people would understand it to mean the river that passes through their territory and the histories that it carries with it: a name is not just a name.

Baker (2000) extends this relationship when discussing the work of Foucault: “For Foucault, discourse regulates not only what can be said under determinate social and cultural conditions but who can speak, when and where” (p.20). For example, does one argue with an elder in the feast hall? Does one interrupt a guest at the feast hall if they speak too long? The answer to that question is “no”. Others make similar points. Nowak (2000) states it this way: “Children learn the grammatical rules of their native language by hearing a small subset of correct sentences. Since the number of possible rule systems is unlimited, how could they deduce the correct rule system without any preformed expectation that restricts the number of possibilities?”(p.1403). Children/youth learn the practises of the language by listening and reproducing the sounds that they hear. Babies likely pick up the cadence of the language in the womb. Language, in other words, is heard by the baby long before they are able to formalize it into any spoken form. A nine month old, for example, begins to form an understanding of the word dog (os) in Gitxsanimx. They have no preconceived idea of the rules. What matters is that they can understand how to say it and what it means. The subtlety of understanding what is correct and what is not is a verbal process and permits the child to begin to understand how the world around them is described in specific ways. One way of describing an object, for example, will achieve a positive response while another will elicit a correction.

³This is the name of the language of the Gitxsan people who live in the northwest of British Columbia.

⁴ House group is defined as the Gitxsan lineage that is matrilineal.

For linguists, the age of language acquisition is extremely important. For a child to speak the language without role models a robust understanding of the language will never be attained.

There is a correlation between what linguists know as language acquisition phases and the degree to which elders and adults retain their language after the residential school experience. Those who were sent to school at a very young age (5 to 6 years old) had acquired their aboriginal language to a lesser degree than those who had been sent at ages 10 or 11, by which time a child's acquisition of grammar and the sound system is nearly complete. (Tsimshian language resource package, S.D. 52, p. 12)

Discourse, language and culture unify an individual to create identity. Treating any of these components separately fractures the whole being.

Shadows of Colonial Legacies

This question, "Who are people without their language?", was appreciated by the British colonizers as they established their economic and political control throughout the globe during the period of overt colonization. One means of control the British focussed upon was the language of the people. They sought to limit the use of indigenous languages and import English as the mode of discourse. In New Zealand, for example, the importance of their efforts to limit the use of the Maori language was that they would assimilate the people through schooling. In Gitxsanimx it is described as "Si'mastimhl majagalee". It is what we, the Gitxsan people, put into the child when they are born; they are like seeds but like seeds children grow and are nurtured by their family and community. Similar to a plant's roots the more nutrients that they are provided with, the more children are able to expand and build on their knowledge base. Schools should continue to build on this foundation. The importance of schools was recognized by Keesing (1924): "The native schools have always been the 'Cinderella of the education system' and at best tend to be mere replicas of the schools designed for white children. The difficulty lies in the fact that no encouragement is given to the recognition of native culture, especially Maori language, in the native schools... Schooling tends to be artificial polish, dependent on the acquisition of a foreign language, English, (which is) not consciously adapted to the Maori environment."(p.4). Keesing's (1924) reference to the Maori environment stresses the understanding of the language as reflecting their particular way of interpreting and relating to the world. Schooling, in particular, should reflect aspects of the culture, or otherwise what is learned is partly an illusion of what the world really means to the individual. How is sense to be made of the colonizer's particular way of describing the world if there is no relationship forged between the world of the child who is raised in Maori language and culture from birth and the English world as it is now described? There is a disconnection between the two worlds: "nohea, nohea"⁵. The child is never positive about what is a true and sure way of describing their world. Distortions in their view of the world can lead to a distorted life. Forcing children to learn English over a long period of time leads to a culture lost.

⁴ Maori online dictionary:

<http://www.maoridictionary.co.nz/index.cfm?dictionaryKeywords=nohea&n=1>.

Colonial language and cultural policies have been operational for centuries and continue to silently impact life today.

Government Policy: Dividing Life Into Compartments

Government needs to understand and accept the relationship between language and culture in order to support First Peoples' traditional ways of life. It is essential to understand this context with respect to government policy today. In order to do that the policies of the current British Columbia Government (2011) will be considered. The British Columbia government has overtly supported the importance of First Nations' languages. To do this they created the "The First Peoples' Heritage, Language and Culture Act". This act established three important areas:

- (a) preserve, restore and enhance First Nations heritage, language and culture,
 - (b) increase understanding and sharing of knowledge, within both the First Nations and non-First Nations communities, and
 - (c) heighten appreciation and acceptance of the wealth of cultural diversity among all British Columbians; ...
- (First Peoples' Heritage, Language And Culture Act [Rsbc 1996] Chapter147, p.1).

The goals of this legislation are supported by the First Peoples' Heritage, Language and Culture Council which has up to 13 members. It has the status of a Provincial Crown Corporation and as such, it is recognized in the legislation as an agent of the government.

(First Peoples' Heritage, Language and Culture Act. [RSBC 1996]ch.147).

Establishing it as a Crown Corporation allows it to function at a distance from government and thus less susceptible to its direct influence. This body has supported First Nations languages throughout the Province. Of particular note is the support for First Nations languages within the British Columbia Ministry of Education. This Ministry has elected to promote local language development through Local Enhancement Agreements (LEA). There are approximately 45 LEA's in place in the Province. Each LEA is entered into with individual school districts⁶.

These agreements provide permission for school boards to proceed with development of local First Nations language curriculum documents. It is important to reflect upon how the curriculum documents are eventually produced. Local language authorities may be contacted to provide guidance with respect to development of language curriculum. Elders, for instance, would be contacted to offer cultural expertise with respect to topics and resources. Language and cultural teachers work with the Elders to develop grade appropriate curriculum. This is formatted into an official

⁶ An explanation of the Local Education Agreements appears on the BC government website as follows: http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/departments/govern_accountability/abed.htm

curriculum document. These documents, known as Integrated Resource Packages (IRP), follow provincially established guidelines for curriculum. They include, among other items, learning outcomes, instructional methods and resources. While the Ministry of Education encourages the integration of First Nations' resources throughout the curriculum and emphasizes the perception that it is important to include, these resources all are in English. The Social Studies IRP, for example, states the importance this way: "The Ministry of Education is dedicated to ensuring that the cultures and contributions of Aboriginal peoples in BC are reflected in all provincial curricula. To address these topics in the classroom in a way that is accurate and that respectfully reflects Aboriginal concepts of teaching and learning, teachers are strongly encouraged to seek the advice and support of local Aboriginal communities." (Ministry of Education, 2006, p. 22) Statements similar to this appear in other IRP's as well⁷.

First Nations students experience the separation from their language and culture using the English descriptions: students are 'walled off' from their culture and language. There is a disconnection between the generations as a result of the differing layers of communication within their family; the wall becomes a prison cell. Under Local Education Agreements local First Nations language IRP's have been developed.

These local language IRP's typically begin at grade 5 and end with grade 12. It is important to recognize that K-4 is excluded since IRP's for those years are non-existent. Grades 5 – 12 follow the Ministry's formatting. But it must be recognized that teaching language as a course continues to support a colonial vision of how students learn: they learn course by course by course. First Nations' language learning is based on a student's physical and social environment. So if you are, for example, picking berries, the language that would be learned would be related to the preparation and planning. This is not a preplanned process. It is designed to teach and optimize the learning. "When' and 'where'" becomes the center of knowledge acquisition? These are not presented course by course but rather are an integral part of life. Separating language from a life that is lived disconnects learning from the individual, their identity and their sense of belonging. Berger and Luckmann (1967) describe it this way:

We now not only understand each other's definitions of shared situations, we define them reciprocally. ... Only when he has achieved this degree of internalization is an individual a member of society. (p. 130)

While the Local Education Agreements encourage the development of language courses, they don't provide the opportunity for the total development of the First Nation student: how can you teach just language? There needs to be a connection to lifestyles, dress and family: everything needs to be together.

Shared Learnings is a resource for all students in British Columbia and is published by the Ministry of Education. The writers were essentially First Nations teachers representing indigenous groups throughout the Province. They presented many

⁷ Note that the First Nations comment has now been removed from the IRP's in the 2010 versions. (<http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/irp>)

ways teachers could include First Nations materials and perspectives in their lessons. Of particular note is the following:

In recognition of the many cultural and experiential differences that exist among BC Aboriginal peoples, the Shared Learnings are intended to highlight issues, concerns, and realities that are common to most or all. Specifically, the Shared Learnings are statements of knowledge about BC Aboriginal people's cultures, values, beliefs, traditions, history, and languages ... (B.C. Ministry of Education, Shared Learnings, 2006, p. 6)

The document goes on to identify 6 areas into which cultural life may be divided. Two examples of these are as follows:

The endurance of Aboriginal traditions. Aboriginal languages and traditions are living expressions of dynamic cultures.

Aboriginal language and communication. Aboriginal people's spoken/written languages, communications protocols and other forms of communication reflect distinctive world views. (B.C. Ministry of Education, Shared Learnings, 2006, p.6)

But within these statements there is the division of First Nation life into categories that do not exist. In the post- industrial western world the division of labor became more predominate. During WWI, for example, Ford developed the assembly line where specific tasks were performed over and over. In schools, girls took home economics and boys took industrial education (Barman, 2003). First Nations people survive by interweaving whatever needs to be done. They relied on their interdependence: when food was required women would go out and shoot a moose. Uncles would take their nephews out to teach hunting skills but if a family had no sons then the girl would be trained. Dividing life into compartments fractures the understanding of Aboriginal cultural life: the educational experience can't be understood as separate components which may or may not be eventually fit together. For First Nations people life is interwoven together; separating it into pieces prevents students from understanding that. Students, for example, would align themselves with those who have opposite strengths. Older students would teach younger students. It is not enough for a classroom teacher to say 'life is a whole' but rather it needs to be experienced as such. The concept 'whole' for First Nations differs from the western understanding. Conflicts emerge through the power of government to impose policies and practices without meaningful consultation with First peoples. The application of educational language and cultural policy, in a way that is inconsistent with the life of First peoples, continues to destroy the cultural identity.

A Clashing of Cultures

Western language, for example, tends to creates division between First Peoples and their interpretation of their life in subtle ways (Alfred, 2009). Take, for example, the words "language and culture". Notice that there are two concepts joined together but consider, for a moment, the position of the word "and": it has become invisible. In practice, "and" permits the division of the two terms so that "language" "culture" may be

addressed as separate entities. The “and” permits curriculum developers to talk about language as if it were a separate entity from culture.⁸ Notice that in the themes described in the Shared Learnings document quoted above that “language ...” has been separated from culture. First Nations people do not separate or compartmentalize culture and language. In Gitksan culture the word “Gandidiltst” is used to describe the unity of language culture. “The life” everything is connected with everything else: the way Gitksan people interact with other resources, people, plants and animals. It is similar to the medicine wheel: nothing is separated out. There is inter-dependence, everything needs something else.

It is significant that the Shared Learnings document recognizes a First Nations world view⁹. Teachers, in general, are challenged with teaching differences in cultural perspectives beyond a cursory manner. How can they teach something they do not really understand: that language and culture are irrevocably bound together? While First Nations children and others may benefit from having the material presented in the classroom, it does nothing to connect First Nation students with their language culture beyond a superficial level. The Report on the Status of BC First Nations Languages ends with the following:

Language is at the core of our identity as people, members of a family and nations; it provides the underpinnings of our relationship to culture, the land, spirituality, and the intellectual life of a nation. (First Nations Heritage Language and Culture Council, The Report on the Status of BC First Nations Languages, 2010, p. 61)

One significant change in the Province with respect to language was the First Nation Education Act. This act gives control of education to First Nations people on First Nations land. Control includes the funding which First Nations bands receive from the Federal and Provincial Governments for K-12 First Nations students. This funding could potentially be used for the instruction of First Nations languages culture on local band lands. The Act states:

... the participating First Nation to enact laws respecting education ... Province recognizes that a participating First Nation may enact First Nation laws with respect to education ... education provided by the participating First Nation on First Nation land, to the extent authorized (First [Nations Education Act](#) , 2007 Ch. 40, p. 2).

⁸ Aoki discusses the importance of the “and” as an animator of two words language **and** culture. He views the words not as nouns but as verbs. He follows Deluize and Parnet as seeing the “between” as inseparable however the “and” may act as a filter changing the meaning of the two words. If the two words that are being animated are directly connected then their individual power taken together may be unleashed (Pinar,W & Irwin,R. 2005) (Bal, M., 2002). Hallet discusses the re-conceptualization of academic concepts, which would apply in this instance (Neumann, B & Nunning, A, 2012)

⁹ this document is not mandated by the Ministry of Education

In British Columbia First Nations band schools have the right, in law, to decide how education funding for their people is allocated. This means that if a Band believes that language culture instruction is important they may decide to have it taught in their schools beginning in kindergarten. If this money, for example, is given to a local public school board, the band has the right to insist that their language culture be taught. It is important to recognize that this is the first time in this Province that such a right has been passed to local First Nations groups.

Federally, the importance of language culture being linked to cultural survival has been recognized by the Canada Act 1867. The two “founding” languages were both recognized at the time the Act was written and certainly have continued to be a force in cultural survival for the French Canadians. The saying in Quebec in the 1960's "La survivance" captured this link in a powerful way. It suggested that unless the French language was protected within the Province there was no possibility that the culture itself would survive within Canada. Further evidence of this is provided when the Province of Quebec enacted Bill 101 which required all public signs to be written in French only. This position was reinforced in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms:

16. (1) English and French are the official languages of Canada and have equality of status and equal rights and privileges as to their use in all institutions of the Parliament and government of Canada. (Charter of Rights and Freedoms, 1982, sec. 16(1))

Recognizing the primacy of language instruction, students who wish to be immersed in French language have two options in the Province of British Columbia:

a) French Immersion programs as operated by the Province of British Columbia by the local school boards or

b) If you are a member of a French speaking family you may be enrolled in the Cadre program which is offered by a separate, but provincially controlled, School Board. This Board has jurisdiction over the entire Province.

What is important here is that this extensive offering of French language programs is funded by both the Federal Government and the Provincial governments. In other words, both governments recognize that financial support is crucial to ensuring that the French language and culture survive. Further, these programs recognize the importance of introducing the learning of a language, beginning in Kindergarten. With respect to education of First Nations children in British Columbia their mother tongue is referred to as a “second language”. The Integrated Resources Packages clearly make a statement about this when they label First Nations languages as second languages. (Sm’algyax IRP, n.d. page 7.) It is important to note that First Nations languages are only offered through the school system beginning in grade five. Beginning language instruction in grade five devalues the role of language culture in a First Nations community.

In our language it is embedded, our philosophy of life and our technologies. There is a reason why we want our languages preserved and taught to our children – it is our survival. (McKay, B. , 2003, p.1)

French language instruction in the school system of British Columbia is offered in three ways: first, in the regular classrooms beginning in grade 5 where it is decided by the school that this is appropriate for the community.¹⁰ Second is the Immersion program, offered through the public school system, beginning in kindergarten. This program is open to any member of a community. Third is the Cadre program which is open to members of the French speaking community.

In education, the approach to teaching French language is significantly different for French speakers than the approach taken for First Peoples speakers.

Educational Programming for Parity?

Both Immersion and Cadre programs involve students in learning language.¹¹ The Federal Government, however, through the Department of Heritage has supported the expansion of French language to include cultural components. A department document released in 2004 describes the future of language instruction as “making French real”. (Plan twenty thirteen (2013): Strategies for a National Approach for Second Language Education, 2004, p.20). “Making French real”: What does this really mean? It means that students learn to speak and communicate in French with a degree of comfort. The question arises: At whose expense is this statement made? The French are given the opportunity to have well funded immersion programs. Why is the same opportunities denied to First Nations children?¹² What does this say about Government’s view of First Nations language culture and its importance? The BC Ministry of Education, for instance, published a Report which found that First Nations students vastly under perform in the public school system¹³. But this data measures student performance in English, not in their mother language. Beginning First Nations language study in grade 5 raises the question: Is this simply another form of cultural genocide?¹⁴

¹⁰Other languages such Punjabi, Spanish and First Nations languages could be taught if it is appropriate. See <http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/irp/all.php?lang=en>. Note that First Nations language IRP’s are not listed.

¹¹ French immersion programs involve students who are generally from a non-French speaking background. They take their program of study in French and it is assumed that they are learning French as a second language over the course of study (k-12). Cadre programs involve students from a French speaking background who take their program of study in their first language.

¹² <http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/abed/performance.htm> page 16. An example of money spent on French Cadre in BC is that approximately \$66 million dollars was spent while \$27.6 million was funded for First Nations schools.

http://www.fnesc.ca/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2011/03/FNESC_09_10_ARv2compressed.pdf

¹³ All annual reports (2005 thru 2010) related to First Nation students are available on the British Columbia Government Ministry of Education website.

¹⁴ Other writers such as Hall and Fenleon have noted similar features in Australia. Hall, Thomas and Fenleon, James(2009). *Indigenous Peoples and Globalization: Resistance and Revitalization*. Boulder, Colorado. Scollo, M. (2011): *Cultural Approaches to Discourse*

First Nations language cultures are quickly being lost. In 2004, in British Columbia there were 60 First Nation languages and 32 are still spoken today (McIvor, O. 2009, p.1). Time is on the side of the colonizer. Assimilation is inevitable if one waits long enough. Waiting achieves what the Residential Schools did not. First Nations language culture will, over time, fade away.

The questions that emerge are: Why is so much funding concentrated on the French language and not on First Nations languages? Why, if First Nations languages are so important, are they not funded from the age of kindergarten? Why are First Nations language not afforded the same opportunity for immersion?

Xsiwis states:

I believe that language and culture are inseparable for one cannot understand the culture without the language. The elders state that there was a time only Sim'algax was spoken on the Gitksan territories and now the dominant language is English. There are many factors that have contributed to the decline of Sim'algax but they all relate to the practises of colonialism and particularly the systematic destruction of culture that was the agenda of the residential schools. (Xsiwis, Smith, J, 2010, p.1)

The questions are significant but too often they become part of the colonial attitude toward First Nations people. Dividing people and using documents and words as if they were nothing more than hollow caves does not work. Justifications for not increasing language instruction are often focussed around costs or funding. Without an honest commitment to fund immersion type programs, for example, the decline in First Nation languages will continue. The visioning process of where language instruction must move is crucial. One of the first places to begin is with the communities themselves. French language and culture survived the British conquest in 1763, in part, because French families were determined that their language and culture would not be lost.¹⁵ The commitment of their community to that language has successfully continued through to the present. First Nations communities need to take responsibility for teaching their language at home, in the school and in the community. In essence, schools need to support the usage of First Nations language culture.

“Many community members are mobilized and motivated, and they are creating a ripple effect in their communities by engaging families, friends and neighbours in their language revitalization efforts.” (First Nations Heritage Language and Culture Council 2010, p.24)

The role of the school, however, becomes significant for it is there that language becomes officially sanctioned. If the First Nations language culture were to become the officially sanctioned language then its place in the community is sanctioned or habitualized (Berger and Luckman, 1967, p. 54.). Using the First Nation language becomes ‘normal’ for students rather than an anomaly.

Analysis:A Theoretical and Methodological Conversation with Special Focus on Donald Carbaugh's Cultural Discourse Theory, *Journal of Multicultural Discourses*, 6:1, 1-32.

¹⁵ In addition British policy at the time was to permit the French language, culture and religion (Catholic) to continue after their conquest.

Communities must be supported to develop 'whole community' approaches. Indigenous languages must be established as living, working languages in families and communities. Hosting informal dinners, community events and ceremonies that ensure the language is used, thereby creating an arena for language practice in the community, are some potential methods. (McIvor N. 2009, p 7)

In turn this means that the physical nature of the school changes. Why, for example, are the rooms square? Why are classes held by grades? Where are the seasons? Older students have prior knowledge that they can share. The leadership role is taken by them as they help to groom the younger students. The role of the teacher becomes one of guide working together with the elders. Traditional values become important. Respect, for example, may become a corner stone of the school. Younger students could be taught about hunting protocols using wooden guns and wooden animals hidden in the bushes out on the territory. Students would be taught that guns are used for sustenance and that you will only shoot what you will eat. As well a revisioning of the school would involve the display of traditional First Nations art, regalia and other artifacts. But are there colonial barriers in the way?

Will the colonizers be willing to relinquish control of the education system to the point where the structures of schooling are significantly changed? Will the colonizers be willing to fund such changes? Will they support a school that in physical shape may be different from the traditional square classrooms? Are they willing to give up the measures of success that have recently swept through Canadian schools: the tests, the common report cards, and provincial curriculum? Will governments support that English and French are not the norm in schooling?

Final Thoughts

Language, like the words that make it up, are a powerful force: they have the power to create and destroy whether people like it or not. Similarly, the link between language and culture is equally powerful. It is not difficult to find evidence that First Nations language culture is on the cusp of extinction (Mallon, 2012). Those First Nations languages have not been, and are not now, at the forefront of agendas of Canadians nor other peoples of the world which is not a surprise. Is it not the time for colonizers to abandon their patronizing of First Nations people and come to grips with the issues that underlie the policies and laws that impede the recognition and support of language culture education in Canada? At the same time it behoves each Nation to provide the necessary support and social infrastructure to ensure that language culture instruction is provided within each of the communities. It is time to recognize that "First" means "First", not second in terms of support for language culture instruction.

References

- Alfred, T. (2009). *Wasase: Indigenous Pathways of Action and Freedom*. Toronto, Ontario: University of Toronto Press.
- Baker, C. (2000). *A Parents' And Teachers' Guide To Bilingualism*. (2nd ed.). Clevedon, UK: Multilingual Matters.

- Bal, M. (2002). *Travelling Concepts in the Humanities: A Rough Guide*. Toronto, Ontario: University of Toronto Press.
- Barman, J. (2003). Separate and Unequal: Indian and white girls at all Hallows school, 1884-1920. In J. Barman, M. Gleason (Ed.), *Children, teachers and schools in the history of British Columbia*. (p. 283-302) Calgary: Detselig Enterprises Ltd.
- Berger, P. and Luckmann, T. (1967). *The Social Construction Of Reality: A Treatise In The Sociology Of Knowledge*. New York: Doubleday.
- British Columbia Ministry of Education. (2006). *Shared learnings*. Victoria: Queen's Printer.
- Constitution Act, Part 1 (1982). Retrieved from http://lawslois.justice.gc.ca/eng/charter/CHART_E.PDF
- Department of Canadian Heritage. (2004). *Plan Twenty Thirteen (2013): Strategies for a National Approach For Second Language Education*. Retrieved from http://www.pch.gc.ca/pgm/lo-ol/pubs/plan_2013-eng.pdf.
- First Peoples' Heritage, Language and Culture Act [RSBC 1996] Chapter 147. <http://www.fphlcc.ca/downloads/fphlcc-act.pdf>
- http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/departments/govern_accountability/abed.htm
- First People's Heritage Language and Culture Council. (2010) *The Report on the Status of BC First Nations Languages*. Retrieved from <http://www.fphlcc.ca/downloads/2010-report-on-the-status-of-bc-first-nations-languages.pdf>
- First Nations Education Act, Statutes of British Columbia (p220 apa squiggle) 40 (2007). Retrieved from http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/legislation/schoollaw/firsnations_school_act.pdf
- ACT (BC Ministry of Education Governance and Legislation Branch L-1 October 15, 2009 STATUTES OF BRITISH COLUMBIA 2007 CHAPTER 40).
- Frake, C. Notes on queries in anthropology. *American Anthropologist*, 66, part 2:132-145. Source: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/669327> accessed 03, 03 2010.
- Keessing, F. (1924). *The Maoris of New Zealand: an experiment in radical adaptation*. *Pacific Affairs*. Vol.1, No. 5, 1928. p1- 5
- Mallon, F. (. (2012). *Decolonizing Native Histories: Collaboration, Knowledge and Language in the Americas*. Durham : Duke University Press.
- McIvor, O. (2009). *Strategies For Indigenous Language Revitalization And Maintenance*. Retrieved from <http://literacyencyclopedia.ca/index.php?fa=items.show&topicID=265>
- McKay, B. (2003). Retrieved from <http://www.fpcf.ca/lang-firstvoices.html>
- Middleton, Stuart. *Releasing the Native imagery*. Source: [www.education.auckland.ac.nz/.../ACE Paper 1 issue 10](http://www.education.auckland.ac.nz/.../ACE_Paper_1_issue_10). Doc. Ashton-Warner it is a paper and looks at the influence of the British on language and relevancy of learning through English materials supplied to schools

- <http://www.maoridictionary.co.nz/index.cfm?dictionaryKeywords=nohea&n=1>.
- Napoleon, V. (2009) Ayook: Gitksan legal order, law, and legal theory. Doctoral thesis, University of Victoria. Retrieved on December 6, 2011
- Nowak M. (2000) Evolutionary Biology of Language Source. Philosophical Transactions: Biological Sciences, 355, (1403). Source: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3198713>
- Promising Practices in First Nations, Metis and Inuit Education. (2008). Alberta Education.
- Smith, J. (Xsiwis) (2010). The Gitsanimx Teacher. Hazelton.
- Ts'msyen Sm'algyax Authority. (2000) Sm'algyax (algyagm Ts'msyen) 5-12 Integrated Resource Package.
- Tsimshian language Resource Package School District 52 Pg. 12
- Werner, B. (1957). Language As A Key To Mind And Heart. South Atlantic Bulletin, January 1957: 1. (Vol. 22 No 3 page 7-9) Source: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/306689003> 03 2010

About Authors

Audrey Woods is the Aboriginal Cultural Knowledge Advisor at Northwest Community College located in British Columbia, Canada. She has her Bachelor of Education degree from the University of Northern British Columbia, Canada and is currently enrolled in the Masters of Education program at Simon Fraser University.

Ed Harrison is an Assistant Professor in the University of Northern BC School of Education program. He taught in public education schools for many years. He has in addition taught in the Simon Fraser University teacher training program and taught geography courses for both UNBC and Northwest Community College.

International Journal of Educational Policies

ISSN: 1307-3842

<http://ijep.icpres.org>

<http://ojs.ijep.info>

©IJEP