

ABORIGINAL EDUCATION



BEYOND WORDS

CREATING RACISM-FREE SCHOOLS FOR ABORIGINAL LEARNERS

www.bctf.ca/social/FirstNations/BeyondWords.html



B.C. Teachers' Federation Aboriginal Education

604-871-1854 www.bctf.ca

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter 1—Racism and Aboriginal Teachers and Students	1
Racism and Aboriginal Schooling	3
A Young Person’s Perspective	7
Questions for Teachers to Consider about the Stories of Aboriginal Teachers	11
Chapter 2—What is Racism?	13
Racism and Human Rights	14
Glossary of Terms Related to Racism	16
Questions for Teachers to Consider	19
Strategies to Counter Racism	20
Chapter 3—An Inclusive Classroom	23
A Self-Assessment Guide for Teachers	25
Resources	28
Understanding The Rules of Culture to Improve Your Classroom Practice	28
Teaching Controversial Issues	32
Checklist for Identifying Stereotyping and Bias in Learning Resources	39
Chapter 4—An Inclusive School	43
School Review of Inclusiveness for Aboriginal Students	45
Resources for School Improvement	47
Chapter 5—Aboriginal Education Employment Equity	51
Aboriginal Education Employment Equity	53
Chapter 6—Case Studies for Discussion	55
Case Studies of Issues for Discussion	57
Chapter 7—BCTF Aboriginal Education Policy	73
B.C. Teachers’ Federation Aboriginal Education policy	75

CHAPTER 1



RACISM AND ABORIGINAL STUDENTS AND TEACHERS



RACISM AND ABORIGINAL SCHOOLING

by Nora Greenway

Aboriginal students and parents have experienced various degrees of racism in various education systems.

In the late 1800s, the federal government and Christian churches collaborated to determine the education of Aboriginal children. The government and the church would methodically use education as a tool to assimilate Aboriginal children (and eventually their families) by inculcating white middle-class Canadian values. It was believed that Christianity would “civilize” the natives.

The plan was to forcibly remove children from their homes, segregate them from their reserve communities, and place them in residential schools.

Children from the age of five were torn from their families and placed under the stewardship of missionary priests and nuns in foreign institutions devoid of caring and love. Foreign language (English and Latin), foreign religion (Catholicism, United, Anglican), and a foreign culture were forced upon them under constant threat of punishment. They were expected to develop the knowledge, skills, and attitudes of the European colonizers and forgo their “primitive” ways of life. Their newly acquired education was to be taken back to, and absorbed by, their communities.

The loss of children to residential schools devastated Aboriginal communities and led to the decline of Aboriginal families and family responsibilities. Households without children became households without happiness or purpose. Mothers, aunts, and grandmothers had only infants and toddlers to nurture and teach the culture. Fathers, uncles, and grandfathers were robbed of teaching survival skills to adolescent sons, nephews, and grandsons.

Through the establishment of residential schools and the development of reservations, the government attempted to destroy Aboriginal practices. The church and the government were directly responsible for the loss of Aboriginal languages, cultures, and spirituality. The dignity and basic human rights of Aboriginal people were violated.



Aboriginal leaders recognized the damage caused by the residential schools. They negotiated with the government to have children returned to their communities to attend public schools.

Residential schools began to close in the 1960s. Aboriginal children began to enrol in public schools, which were totally unprepared for them.

Aboriginal students in the public system experienced many social, emotional, and academic problems. Up to that time, Aboriginal parents had had no say in their children's education. The public school system was foreign to the students and their parents. Teachers had never had the training for, nor the experience of, working with Aboriginal students. It was a recipe for disaster, and that is what it was, a disaster.

Over the intervening years, the Aboriginal students, parents, and Aboriginal representatives have worked to make public education more meaningful for Aboriginal students. They have identified many of the problems Aboriginals experience in school, and they are attempting to address them with the various education stakeholder groups. The issues they have identified include, but are not limited to, lack of academic achievement, lack of culturally relevant curriculum and supporting resources, lack of district and staff respect for, and understanding of, Aboriginal issues and concerns, lack of parent involvement in education, and racism.

The Ministry of Education and school districts recognize the failure of the education system regarding Aboriginal academic achievement, but they have done little to improve academic performance. Schools seem unwilling to accept responsibility for the gross lack of academic achievement of Aboriginal students. They tend to blame the students, the parents, and the general social conditions of Aboriginal communities for student failure. Instead of asking "What can I do to ensure the success of Aboriginal students in my classroom?" many teachers and principals say "This is what I have to offer—shape up or ship out." Many students choose to ship out.

Aboriginal students and parents are concerned about the lack of culturally relevant curriculum in public education. Though the public school curriculum is an improvement over the religious residential-school curriculum, core subjects such as English, social studies, and science are biased and exclusive. The subject areas lack Aboriginal representation, the histories/cultures of Aboriginal people are trivialized or omitted, Aboriginal people are portrayed in subservient or passive roles, Aboriginal stereotypes are perpetuated and reinforced, or a European standard is implicit in points of view and representation. Until the curriculum reflects some Aboriginal content, Aboriginal students will continue to find school meaningless.



The provincial government is responsible for public school curriculum development within the social and historical contexts. They establish what is included (permitted) in or excluded (omitted) from curriculum. Unfortunately, the true histories of Aboriginal people have been excluded. It is little wonder that teachers and principals who have gone through the public and post-secondary systems have limited knowledge of Aboriginal people and their issues. The curriculum they experienced omitted important issues such as the realities of residential schools, the indignities of forced reservations, the legislation to ban the potlatch, being denied the vote, imprisonment for congregating (more than three Aboriginal people discussing politics), the Indian Act, which took away Aboriginal sovereignty, the fraudulent treaties, which resulted in illegal property arrangements, and the illegal adoption of Aboriginal children. These are only a few topics not represented in the curriculum.

It is no wonder that teachers and the general population are unaware of what has happened to Canada's first peoples. They did not have the opportunity to learn about it in the education system. Their knowledge about Aboriginal people has come either through personal interest and research or through the media, which has often misrepresented Aboriginal issues.

Many school districts and Aboriginal organizations have identified lack of Aboriginal parent involvement as a factor in Aboriginal student social and academic development.

In all fairness to this group of parents, it is important to understand their presumed lack of interest.

All Aboriginal parents, to some degree, are products of the residential and public schools, which failed them. Many lack the confidence to meet individually with school staff to address their child(ren)'s education or concerns. Many fear judgment by teachers because of their limited knowledge of education. Many are embarrassed because they are unable to assist their children with homework. Many believe that the teachers know more about, and are solely responsible for, the education of their children. Many fear reprisal if they inform the school about their child(ren)'s complaints. Many have a paranoia about any institution, the school being one. Though it appears that Aboriginal parents are apathetic about education, that is generally not the case. Most are concerned but need to develop skills and confidence to address their educational concerns.

The First Nations Education Steering Committee (FNESC), aware of the need for parent involvement, is promoting programs and services to support parents in this regard. Through locally developed programs,



parents will be able to enhance their skills and confidence, so that they can be involved in and supportive of their child(ren)'s education.

For years, Aboriginal students, parents, and Aboriginal representatives have complained about racism, but their complaints have been dismissed. In attempting to challenge racism, they hear, "You are far too sensitive about...", "Boys will be boys...they really didn't mean what they said...", "You read more into what is said about Aboriginal people/issues...", "That is common childhood behaviour; six-year-olds act that way and don't intend to hurt others intentionally...", "_____ is from a very good family, and I can't believe that he/she would say or do those awful things."

It should come as no surprise that Aboriginal students experiencing racism have had to take things into their own hands. Many end up arguing and sometimes fighting to defend themselves and their people from racial slurs and insults from fellow students. Labelled troublemakers, they often end up forced out of school.

Aboriginal teachers and support workers experience racism from colleagues, parents, and students. Often working in isolation, they frequently feel they have little opportunity to challenge the racism. In many cases, they fear reprisal, should they lodge a formal racism complaint. So they end up working in sometimes hostile environments, with little recourse for change.

The Ministry of Education and the BCTF acknowledge that racism directed at Aboriginal people, especially students, is a problem to be dealt with.

The BCTF is committed to supporting safe and caring learning environments for all students and all staff in the public school system. The BCTF recognizes that many Aboriginal students and staff have not felt safe or cared for in some schools because of racism directed at Aboriginal people by students, teachers, support workers, administrators, and the school curriculum.

To this end, the BCTF has been spearheading initiatives related to Aboriginal education. An administrative staff person was hired as Assistant Director for the Aboriginal Education Program for a six-month term initially, and then for an additional four-year term.

Nora Greenway was the BCTF Program against Racism co-ordinator from 1987 to 1990. She worked as multi-cultural co-ordinator at the Vancouver School Board. Nora was educated at a residential school.

A YOUNG PERSON'S PERSPECTIVE

by Jennifer Melting Tallow

My family faces racist attitudes every day. I believe that if we educate people of different races, they will gain a better understanding of our differences, as well as the many things that we have in common. I focus much of my schoolwork on my culture and on racism, and I have written many reports in every class about these topics. I wish that I did not have to link racism and culture, but the two seem to go hand in hand.

I used to have a hard time dealing with derogatory remarks aimed towards my race, my family and me. Sometimes I would go into a corner and hide. I wanted to dig a hole and bury myself in it. Other times I would reply with an equally hurtful put-down. Today I have a better understanding of why my peers or even strangers say racist things. They do not know what is truth and what is fiction. They only know what their parents, outdated books and society has taught them. This is why adults must join with children to learn how to separate the stereotypes, fabricated stories, and Hollywood images from the truth about Native people in this country. Only then will they understand.

We have all been hurt at one time or another, so we know the pain involved. I believe that I am not the only one who has gone home in tears and never wanted to go back to school. I find it hard to understand why so many adults hurt children with their words. I have been raised to respect my elders, but it is hard to respect someone who calls you names or makes biting comments just loud enough for you to hear. My generation is the future. If we can't stop the racism now, my children will face the same discrimination, as will theirs. We have to stop the cycle. This is why I write and speak about how cruel people—adults and children—can really be.

My father is a full blood Native, and he has taught me to be strong and proud of my people and to always walk with my head held high. My parents are very supportive and they stand behind me 100% when I am faced with a problem that is difficult for me to handle on my own. I also have good friends, people who do not care if I am black, white, yellow, or purple. People who are always there for me in my time of loneliness, and when I need them the most. Then there are those who stare and laugh and call me names like “dirty half breed”, “squaw”, and “f... Indian”.



I remember a specific incident in my Grade eight year. I was put down continuously. My sisters and I were new to the school and at first it seemed like everything was okay. It was a chance to make new friends in a new neighbourhood. My younger sister, who was thirteen at the time, started to be called “wagon burner”, “bush Indian”, and other racist names. I didn’t get the same treatment because I looked Caucasian. My sister, on the other hand, is full blood and looks it. She used to come to me in tears. She did not understand why everybody hated her so much. I began to defend her, and then my schoolmates began to call me the same names.

One day in health class, I got into a fight with a boy. He pushed me, so I pushed back. All hell broke loose. My teacher, who was a non-Native woman, told me to sit down or I was going to be a “black and blue bush Indian”. I was shocked and scared. I didn’t want to cry and let them believe that they had won, but I couldn’t stop it from happening. My emotions took control and the tears started to fall. In all my years I’ve never felt so alone. It started with my peers, but now it was coming from my teachers, also. People I thought I could trust and respect. My self-esteem had been trampled on—I felt like I was a nothing and a nobody.

It wasn’t just the fact that she had been racist to me, it was that she did it in front of the class. This woman, a “role model”, put down a student because of race. She showed the other students that it was all right to treat me that way. I don’t think that my teacher realized how many problems she created when she made that statement.

I called my dad, who works for the school board as a Native Liaison Officer. He came directly to the school and spoke to my teacher and the principal. The teacher apologized to me. It helped a little, I suppose, but she never regained my respect.

After this incident, I felt very uncomfortable and out of place in her class—it was difficult to even raise my hand. I knew how she felt about Native people, and I felt like I didn’t belong. I was no longer a part of that class. I was alone, yet there were 25 other people around me. I know that my classmates would tell their friends about what happened, and soon I would be the biggest outcast the school had ever seen.

It turned out that my prediction was correct. I was not only put down for being a Native, but also because I had called my dad. When I had to miss one of her classes, I was afraid the teacher would talk about me in my absence. It may sound paranoid, but I honestly felt that she would say that I was immature because I called my dad; that I was a big baby, and that I couldn’t fight my own battles. Why not? Other kids told me that



right to my face. After a while, you start to believe their words, and you wonder if they are right. Are you really just another stupid Indian wasting your time with all this pro-Indian talk? You begin to ask yourself if it is all really worth it. Is it worth not being invited to parties on girls' night out? I asked myself all these questions and decided that, yes, it is worth it, because in the end I'm going to be the one standing with my head held high, because I know that I tried to make a difference.

You spend so much of your time and energy trying to teach about Native culture, so that people understand. You do it so that this kind of thing doesn't have to happen, so there won't be a next time. I want my friends and teachers to learn about my culture so that they will understand and not pre-judge Native people. My culture is very beautiful, interesting, and full of history. Each time we do a report in class, mine deals with Native people or racism. It is a good feeling to stand in front of my peers, answering questions when they sincerely want to know about my culture. Being able to answer these questions honestly and with pride gives me the greatest feeling—a feeling that will always stay with me.

My people are not the drunks that you see on the street. Every population has drinkers. My people are not bums. Many of my people have good jobs in every part of society. My family has been an excellent model for me. I have learned that every culture and every race has many valuable things to teach. I have learned that, yes, we are all different, but that our differences should be respected and honoured. I have learned that you must be responsible for your own actions and the way that you treat people. You must always treat people the way you would wish to be treated. I have learned that education is an absolute necessity, but I do not have to sacrifice my culture—there should be no cost. I can have both things in my life, as long as I remember to respect myself and other people.

The experience that I write about is only one of the many that my family and I have gone through. Racist people don't know how to compromise their beliefs, or perhaps they choose not to. I don't know. I do know that these people are blind beyond their own beliefs. There is room for nothing new or different.

I have spoken about my experiences with adult racism. I trusted and respected the elders of our world. Now I'm wary of those I talk to. It's not right for anyone to be afraid because he or she happens to be of a different race. It's just not right.

Racism between teenagers and young children has an entirely different aspect. Being different often means being the center of attention, but this



isn't always a positive thing. When you're in the limelight for looking different, or for having a different colour skin, you could be facing the most difficult situation of your life. Feeling helpless and being ganged up on can be so terrifying, especially when you're left alone to deal with it. When you're surrounded by several kids standing around you, calling you names and making fun of you, you feel trapped, like you can't get away. If you move at all, they have won; they have succeeded. They have succeeded in making you feel bad about yourself, in feeling like you're nothing. They have succeeded by bringing your self-esteem down to a point where you are intimidated by them and anyone else who even takes a second look. I know that feeling. I have felt it many times. I'm sure that many of us have.

When I see a child cry because she doesn't like her colour or the language that she has been brought up to speak, my heart breaks. I want to tell her that it's all right, that it will never happen again. Her feelings will never be hurt again. But it's not all right, and it will happen again and again. All I can do is comfort her, and let her know that she is not alone. Racism is a part of life, and will continue to be so unless we do something about it now. I will never give up, and I will continue to write and speak out until there is a change. I want my kids to grow up knowing that they will be accepted wherever they go regardless of colour or culture. They will be accepted because of who they are, and how they treat themselves and other people. I want them to be proud of who they are and always walk with their heads held high.

Jennifer Melting Tallow was 16 years old when she wrote this piece in 1992. She was entering her first year of senior high school in Calgary, Alberta.

Reprinted with permission from *Racism and Education: Different Perspectives and Experiences*, Canadian Teachers' Federation.

QUESTIONS FOR TEACHERS TO CONSIDER ABOUT THE STORIES OF ABORIGINAL TEACHERS

Not many teachers have Aboriginal ancestry—in B.C. only about 325 teachers out of a total of 45,000. In the past, few Aboriginal students have graduated from secondary school, and even fewer from university and teacher training.

Those who have achieved all of those milestones often face other hurdles, as reflected in these stories of racism and marginalization.

School staff rooms have not always been welcoming and inclusive of Aboriginal teachers or other teachers from visible minorities.

Think about your staff room.

Do you think it has been a welcoming and inclusive environment? Why or why not?

If not, what actions can you and other staff take to change the situation? How will you start?

If you have a colleague who is Aboriginal, what do you know about his/her experience of racism as a student and as a teacher or an Aboriginal support worker?



CHAPTER 2



WHAT IS *RACISM*?





Racism

AND HUMAN RIGHTS

HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION

Province Of British Columbia

What is Racial Discrimination or Racism?

Racial discrimination (racism) is when someone is bothering, threatening or treating a person unfairly because of the colour of their skin, ethnic or cultural background, religion or country that they come from.

What are Some Forms of Racism?

- Verbal abuse or threats
- Unwelcome remarks, insulting jokes, name-calling
- Insulting pictures, drawings, signs or newspaper articles
- Leering, constant staring or other gestures
- Physical assault
- Denial of services
- Not hiring or promoting someone

What are Some Examples of Racism?

A Black man goes to see an apartment after calling the landlord to make sure that it was still available. After seeing the man in person, the landlord becomes uncomfortable and says that the apartment is rented.

A large employer hired many people of colour to work in lower paid jobs. While white employees are trained and promoted, employees of colour are never promoted although they are qualified and experienced.

A Sikh man is teased by his co-workers because of his accent and his turban. His co-workers also tell jokes that make fun of immigrants.

An Aboriginal woman is told that she can't buy rubbing alcohol at a grocery store because she'll "just go outside and drink it."

What does the BC Human Rights Code Say About Racial Discrimination or Racism?

The *BC Human Rights Code* says that a person cannot be denied opportunities or treated differently because of the colour of their skin, ethnic or cultural background, religion or country that they come from. The *Code* protects you from racial discrimination in:

- employment (includes hiring, firing, wages or other terms of employment)
- tenancy (renting a place)
- buying a house, condominium, mobile home or other property
- public services and facilities (such as restaurants, government offices, hospitals or schools)
- publications (such as newspapers, posters or signs)



Racism

AND HUMAN RIGHTS



Why Do We Need To Stop Racism?

Racism causes damage by isolating and hurting people and dividing communities. Victims of racism often feel powerless to do anything about it, but there are a lot of things that can be done. No one has the right to discriminate against a person because of the colour of their skin, ethnic or cultural background, religion or country that they come from.

If you are a victim of racism or see it happening, it's important you take action, either on your own or with help. It's important that people who racially attack or harass others are made aware of their actions and held responsible for their actions.

What Can You Do To Stop Racism?

- Recognize and take action against racism in yourself, your community, school, workplace or home.
- If you feel safe and comfortable, talk to the person whose actions are racist and tell them to stop.
- If you do not feel safe, talk to or get assistance from someone you trust about the discrimination you may be experiencing.
- Offer your support to people who are being discriminated against.
- Check to see if your workplace has human rights policies and programs that deal with racism. If they don't, ask your employer to develop a policy and programs.

What Should You Do If You Are Experiencing Racial Discrimination?

Actions don't always have to be done on purpose for them to be racial discrimination. "It was just a joke" or "you took it the wrong way" are not excuses. What matters is how the action affects you.

Write down what happened, including:

- The date, place, time and description of the incident;
- The name and address of person discriminating against you; and
- The names of any witnesses.
- If discrimination happens at work, tell the manager or the employer what happened and ask them to do something about it. You should file a complaint at your workplace or with your union if there is a policy.
- File a human rights complaint with the BC Human Rights Commission.

For more information about whether your situation is something that the BC Human Rights Commission can help you with, please call the Commission at the numbers listed on this page. Our *Complaint Process* explains how to make a human rights complaint. Please ask for a guide when you call.

To contact the Commission

VANCOUVER OFFICE
Suite 306
815 Hornby Street
Vancouver, BC
V6Z 2E6

Phone 604.660.6811

Fax 604.660.0195

TTY 604.660.2252

Toll Free
1.800.663.0876

VICTORIA OFFICE
2nd Floor
844 Courtney Street
Victoria, BC
V8W 9J1

Phone **250.387-3710**

Fax 250.387.3643

TTY 250.953.4911

For more information
visit our web site at:
www.bchumanrights.org



GLOSSARY OF TERMS RELATED TO RACISM

The following definitions come from three sources and provide a guideline to the meanings of words often used in multiculturalism/antiracism /antibias education. They are offered to provide common ground for discussion.

Acculturation

The process of selectively adopting traits from the host culture to blend with values from one's own culture.

Assimilation

A process, usually in reference to cultural minorities, of surrendering distinctive characteristics and identity in order to become part of and accepted by the majority group.

Antiracism Education

An approach to education that attempts to eliminate racism in all its forms. Antiracism education strives to identify and change systemic and educational practices, policies, and procedures that promote racism, as well as the racist attitudes and behaviour that underlie and reinforce such policies and practices. Antiracism education provides knowledge, skills and strategies to examine racism critically in order to understand its origins, and to recognize and challenge it.

Colonialism

The control or governing influence of a nation over a dependent country, territory, or people. The system or policy by which a nation maintains or advocates such control or influence, often resulting in the sublimation of indigenous peoples and cultures.

Culture

The totality of ideas, beliefs, values, knowledge, habits and the way of life of a group of individuals who share certain historical experiences.

Discrimination

The practice or act of making distinctions between people based on such characteristics as ethnicity, nationality, language, faith, gender, disability, or sexual orientation, which leads to the inequitable treatment of individuals or groups. There are two types of discrimination—direct and systemic.

Direct discrimination is an overt action, taken on the basis of an individual's or group's response to characteristics of culture, ethnicity,



nationality, language, faith, gender, disability, or sexual orientation that is meant to bring about the inequitable treatment of individuals or groups that have one or several of these characteristics.

Systemic discrimination is differential treatment through seemingly neutral policies or practices that are reinforced by institutional structures and power, and that result in the inequitable treatment of members of particular groups. Systemic discrimination practices are those that have an adverse impact on one group and are not clearly related to job performance or job requirements.

Dominant Culture

The group of people who have the most control and influence within a larger society.

Ethnic

An adjective used to describe groups that share a common language, culture, religion, or national origin. Everyone belongs to an ethnic group.

Ethnocentrism

A condition characterized by pre-occupation with one's cultural or national group and belief in its superiority over others.

Eurocentrism

Exclusive or almost exclusive attention to events and peoples originating in Europe, as well as consideration of information from the perspective of White people who came to North America from Europe.

Inclusiveness

Refers to an organizational system where decision making includes perspectives from diverse points of views, from within and without the organization. Also, a philosophical stance and an approach to practice that assumes all individuals have equal worth and rights. Additionally, the term refers to integrating multicultural/antiracism education in all aspects of the school curriculum.

Race

Historically, an arbitrary classification of modern humans based on any or a combination of various physical characteristics, such as skin colour, facial form, or eye shape. Also, a group of persons related by common descent or heredity, forming an ethnic stock. Often used interchangeably with nation, people or tribe. The current debate among biologists, anthropologists and sociologists argues that the concept of 'race' has no biological validity, unless when discussing a group of genetically and geographically isolated people.



Racism

A set of mistaken assumptions, opinions, and actions resulting from the belief that one group is inherently superior to another. Racism refers not only to social attitudes toward ethno-cultural minority groups, but also to social structures and actions that limit, exclude, discriminate against, and oppress such individuals and groups. Racism may be present in organizational and institutional structures and programs, as well as in the attitudes and behaviour of individuals.

Social Justice

Policy and practice designed to ensure that each individual and group within a given society has a right to equal opportunity, civil liberties, and full participation in the social, educational, economic, institutional, and moral freedoms and responsibilities of that society.

Stereotype

A false or generalized conception of a group of people that results in the unconscious or conscious categorization of each member of that group, without regard for individual differences. Stereotypes are sustained by the tendency to perceive selectively only those pieces of new information that correspond to the conception.

Extracted from *Celebrating the Mosaic*, which was funded by the Consortium on Diversity of Education (CODE) and the Ministry Responsible for Multiculturalism and Immigration. Permission was granted to reproduce the Checklists, Activity Ideas, and Guides to Resource materials at the time of publication.

Sources:

Honouring Diversity within Child Care and Early Education: An Instructor's Guide, volume II, by Gyda Chud and Ruth Fahlman, Westcoast Multicultural & Diversity Services, 1995.

Draft Planning Guide: Multicultural and Anti-Racism Education, Ministry of Education, 1994.

Draft Multicultural and Race Relations Education, Guidelines for School Districts, Ministry of Education, 1994.

QUESTIONS FOR TEACHERS TO CONSIDER

Questions for consideration related to the “Glossary of terms related to racism.” Terms from the glossary are identified in italics.

1. Do the policies and practices of your school and school district in relationship to Aboriginal students promote *acculturation* or *assimilation*?

Which of these approaches should be the school and district objective?

2. Is there a need for *antiracism education* as defined in the glossary?

If there is, how might *antiracism education* be initiated for your school?

3. Have Aboriginal peoples in B.C. been subject to *colonialism* that has had a negative impact on their *culture*?

4. Can you identify *direct discrimination* in your school that has been directed at Aboriginal students, Aboriginal teachers, or Aboriginal support workers?

5. Can you identify *systemic discrimination* in your school or district that has the effect of discriminating against Aboriginal students, Aboriginal teachers or Aboriginal support workers? If no Aboriginal teachers are teaching in your school, is that absence a result of *systemic discrimination*?

6. To what *ethnic* group do you belong? Is that ethnic group a part of the *dominant culture*? Do some ethnic groups assume they have a superiority over others and demonstrate forms of *ethnocentrism*?

7. Do the curriculum, learning resources, teaching practices, and school organization of your school demonstrate *eurocentrism*?

8. Is your classroom *inclusive* of all students, including Aboriginal students?

9. Does the concept of *race* have biological validity? Can *racism* exist if *race* is not a valid biological concept?

10. Is *social justice* an objective of your teaching and of the operation of your school?

11. Is there a *stereotype* of Aboriginal people that is having a negative impact on Aboriginal students in your school?



STRATEGIES TO COUNTER RACISM

A. Antiracism policy

1. The district and each school must have a policy to address racism.
2. Procedures must be developed to deal with racial incidents.
3. School staff and students must be aware of the policy.
4. The local bands and Aboriginal organizations must be made aware of the policy.
5. The policy must be reviewed on a regular basis to ensure relevance.

Guidelines for antiracism policy:

- Determine staff roles and responsibilities for dealing with racist incidents.
- Ensure practices for resolution to the satisfaction of the victim of racism.
- Ensure practices that deal with the perpetrator of racism in an effective manner.
- Include Aboriginal representatives in the development and evaluation of the guidelines.
- Include measures to inform parents about racial incidents at school.
- Include measures to report, respond to, and document racist incidents.
- Insist on zero tolerance for racism by staff and students

B. Staff in-service education

1. School staff and the Aboriginal community should partner in developing antiracism workshops.
2. All school staff should be encouraged to participate in antiracism workshops/presentations.
3. Workshops should be led by Aboriginal facilitators, as often as possible.
4. The BCTF should be contacted for antiracism staff-development assistance.

C. Aboriginal presenters

1. The school should not presume to have expertise in Aboriginal culture.
2. The school should validate Aboriginal elders and members with expertise in Aboriginal issues by inviting them to enhance the school's Aboriginal curriculum.

D. Curriculum

1. Teachers should partner with the Aboriginal community for the development of culturally appropriate curriculum.
2. The Aboriginal curriculum developers must be duly compensated for their work.
3. Aboriginal elders should be involved in assuring accuracy of locally developed Aboriginal curriculum content.



4. Teachers should assess curriculum resources for bias.
5. Teachers should implement programs that enhance the cultural needs of Aboriginal students and increase student understanding of cultural diversity.

E. Parent and community

1. Parents and community members should be made aware of the school's antiracism policy.
2. Parents and community members should be involved in initiatives to challenge racism.

F. Students

1. Students must be aware of the antiracism policy and guidelines.
2. Students should be provided opportunities to enhance their knowledge of racism and develop strategies for challenging racism.
3. Students must be encouraged to report all incidents of racism to the teacher or principal.

What we can do to challenge racism

Ensure that:

- all forms of racism are challenged, not ignored or passed over.
- all racial incidents are dealt with promptly to the satisfaction of the victim of racism.
- all racial incidents are reported, recorded, and followed up.
- all students know what racism is, and that it will not be tolerated under any circumstances.
- you are aware of your role and responsibility in relation to racial incidents.

Commit to:

- assessing your practices for greater awareness of cultural bias and the possible need for change.
- challenging stereotypes in all situations.
- encouraging Aboriginal students to express their cultural diversity.
- ensuring that all students in your classroom are fully aware of racism and its consequences.
- inclusiveness in classroom practice.
- increased knowledge of Aboriginal issues from various sources.
- requesting and participating in training for increased awareness of Aboriginal issues and concerns.
- requesting and participating in training for increased awareness of prejudice, discrimination, and racism.
- seeking out culturally appropriate learning resources that reflect Aboriginal perspectives.
- supporting colleagues who experience subtle forms of racism.



Provide support for:

- Aboriginal parents who register complaints of discrimination.
- dealing with current events in the media that impact on Aboriginal students in a manner that does not humiliate the students yet allows for open discussion to address media bias.
- including Aboriginal representatives in curriculum initiatives.
- student perpetrators in practising non-racist behaviour.
- students and colleagues who experience racism.
- the development and implementation of programs and services that deal with racism.

These are but a few of the things you can do to challenge racism without the need for specific training. You are not expected to become an expert overnight, but these ideas may assist you in becoming more comfortable in addressing racism. The more you practise challenging racism, the easier it becomes. Share with your colleagues your ideas of dealing with racism, and ask them how they deal with it. Together you will have a variety of tools to challenge racism.

Deep-rooted institutional/systemic racism and colonialism/colonization are more pervasive and complicated. The impact on the curriculum and Aboriginal students is significant and long lasting. To learn more about institutional racism, colonialism/colonization, and systemic racism (as these apply to Aboriginal people), please contact Merle Williams, Aboriginal Education co-ordinator at the B.C. Teachers' Federation, 604-871-1854, or mwilliams@bctf.ca. She has developed workshops to increase teacher awareness about the subtle forms of racism that perpetuate and reinforce Eurocentric elitism.

CHAPTER 3



AN INCLUSIVE CLASSROOM



A SELF-ASSESSMENT GUIDE FOR TEACHERS

Vision of the BCTF Task Force on First Nations Education

Each child has a gift. Look for that gift, and nurture it. Strengthen the spirit of the child and help him/her to find balance and ways of being that are rooted in land, community, and culture. Help the child to succeed in education and career, as well as choice of lifestyle, grounded in language and culture. Provide an opportunity for the child to have a choice of how and where to live and work.

What is success?

The mandate of the task force was to make recommendations that contribute to the success of Aboriginal students. “What is success?” was a question widely discussed in the many meetings held by task force members. Many of the ideas presented have been summarized by the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples in its report on education:

For more than 25 years Aboriginal people have been articulating their goals for Aboriginal education. They want education to prepare them to participate fully in the economic life of their communities and in Canadian society. But this is only part of their vision. Presenters told us that education must develop children and youth as Aboriginal citizens, linguistically and culturally competent to assume the responsibilities of their nations. Youth that emerge from school must be grounded in a strong, positive Aboriginal identity. Consistent with Aboriginal traditions, education must develop the whole child, intellectually, spiritually, emotionally and physically.

Current education policies fail to realize these goals. (*Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples* pp. 433–434)

Extracted from BCTF brochure *Improving education for Aboriginal students—An agenda for teachers, schools and unions—BCTF Task Force on First Nations Education*.



Teacher awareness and commitment

Is this what's happening in your classroom?

Yes **No**

The teacher expects that each Aboriginal student will succeed, seeks the strengths of each student, and builds success through nurturing those strengths. ☐ ☐

The teacher recognizes that there are many forms of success, and that they include, but are not limited to, academic success. ☐ ☐

The teacher recognizes that Aboriginal communities and families have the key role in defining what constitutes success for their children, and that success includes recognition of their identity and pride in their culture. ☐ ☐

The teacher creates a welcoming atmosphere in the classroom and school for Aboriginal parents. ☐ ☐

The teacher acknowledges and respects different worldviews and the implications for what is valued knowledge and what are ways of knowing. ☐ ☐

The teacher incorporates Aboriginal history and culture into the curriculum and teaching practice on an ongoing basis. ☐ ☐

The teacher is respectful of protocols about specific cultures and recognizes the situations in which it is appropriate or inappropriate for the sharing of stories, dances, and other forms of cultural representation. ☐ ☐

The teacher acknowledges the importance of First Nations languages to both individual development and maintaining cultures and recognizes the expertise of First Nations language teachers. ☐ ☐

The teacher recognizes the Métis and different First Nations have many different cultures and languages and avoids presenting curriculum on a pan-Indian basis. ☐ ☐

The teacher recognizes the positive contributions that elders and role models from Aboriginal communities can make to the content of education, to creating pride among Aboriginal students, and to building respect for Aboriginal culture among all students. ☐ ☐

The teacher recognizes the positive contributions that elders and role models from Aboriginal communities can make to the content of education, to creating pride among Aboriginal students, and to building respect for Aboriginal culture among all students. ☐ ☐

	Yes	No
The teacher contributes to a welcoming atmosphere in the school and classroom for Aboriginal teachers and Aboriginal support workers.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The teacher recognizes that treating all students just the same is not a form of social justice, but is a form of submerging the Aboriginal student in a culture that is based on European patterns.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The teacher is aware that any single particular Aboriginal student or adult should not be expected to be expert on all Aboriginal cultures or peoples.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The teacher recognizes that the development of the whole child includes physical, intellectual, social, emotional, and spiritual development.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The teacher recognizes the negative impact that the residential school experience had on many individuals and the ongoing impact on the relationship of many First Nations people to the schools.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The teacher uses culturally sensitive teaching strategies.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Extracted from BCTF brochure *Improving education for Aboriginal students—An agenda for teachers, schools and unions—*
BCTF Task Force on First Nations Education.



RESOURCES

UNDERSTANDING THE RULES OF CULTURE TO IMPROVE YOUR CLASSROOM PRACTICE

by Lexi Charlie

Every child, regardless of their ethnic origins, comes to school with a culture. Children are in the midst of evolving their own cultural identity with each experience in school and in the community. To write this article, I asked myself how I, as a Penelakut First Nations teacher, might help you as a teacher to better understand how culture influences the behaviour of your First Nations students. After a great deal of writing and rewriting, I have decided to focus on dispelling three myths that impact the education of First Nations students:

- First Nations parents don't care about their child's education,
- First Nations students are quiet and passive learners, and
- An oral culture is an illiterate culture.

At first glance these may seem like harsh statements. Set in context, they reflect the sincere concerns of teachers coping with, but not necessarily understanding, the impact of First Nations parents choosing to raise their children by cultural rules.

First Nations culture today still really does reflect the echoes of an earlier time when we were hunter-gatherers. We are still carrying the cultural traits and habits learned and refined to ensure survival in those times. In the classroom it is important to realize that the behaviours we see may not mean what we think they mean, as they are coming from a different cultural perspective.

Why Johnny won't come to school...

Have you ever had a First Nations child in your class who did not attend school? When you spoke with the parents, it didn't help. You found them to be unsupportive when they responded, "He knows he should go to school. We can't make him go." It's hard to understand the behaviour of the parents when your way, as a teacher, is to give advice to the child and then to take action. You are left wondering why the First Nations parents don't care about their child's education.

But that is just perception. The reality is that the parents are doing what they have learned from their culture. They are obeying a cultural rule. First Nations parents are strongly influenced by the principle of guidance

without interference. The belief is that children must make their own choices in everything: from homework to attending school, eating habits to choice of friends. Children are responsible for their own learning by watching and absorbing what they see.

I remember at the age of 15 wanting to learn how to drive a car. I asked my father to teach me. He handed me the keys and said the car was outside. My father thought I should have learned how to drive by observation. He had modelled for me many times how to drive a car. It was my responsibility to learn.

Knowing this, how can you as a teacher honour the cultural rule of non-interference? One strategy is not to ask parents direct questions like, “How can we help Johnny?” expecting them to contribute advice or recommendations. Instead, speak out loud about some of the factors which have to be considered in coming up with a strategy to meet the student’s needs, just as if you were reviewing for your own benefit. Pose the issues themselves, without offering a direct solution. Welcome the long silences. They give parents time to sort through their ideas. Train yourself to become a good listener instead of the talker. You will reach a solution, but perhaps not the one you expected. The solution that will enlist the support of the First Nations parents is a solution in which they are contributing to the decision of the child, not one where they are making the decision for the child.

I can’t teach someone who is passive....

First Nations students are often labelled “unresponsive”, “passive” or “quiet”. This behaviour stems from the survival technique of thinking things through before actually trying them. In a hunter-gatherer society, stress and danger were always present. A bad decision resulted in harm or death. The most appropriate strategy in almost every case was to consider all responses and walk through the situation mentally before taking action.

Today in schools the terrain is the classroom, not the forest. First Nations students unfamiliar with a subject feel stressed and in danger, and in keeping with their culture, retreat into positions of careful observation. The more unfamiliar the situation, the more you can expect the student to withdraw into physical immobility and silence.

By knowing this, you have an opportunity to allow students time to gather their thoughts. By understanding this cultural conflict you can support the student. Recently I was working with a student who, I sensed, wanted to tell me something. I realized that it was important to allow him to sit next to me and to be silent. After a time he was able to share



with me what was on his mind. First Nations peoples value silence as a skill, and being silent is not an empty activity.

To address this cultural difference teachers can try to extend the response time for students when asking a question, realizing that Native students in particular will feel more comfortable if they have some time for reflection. Another strategy is to make a situation more familiar, and elicit greater participation, by adapting the rituals and symbols of your local community. For example, some schools use the talking circle where a feather, talking stick or rock is passed as a symbol and held by the individual whose turn it is to speak.

Another aspect of the perceived passive behaviour of First Nations students has to do with eye contact. Teachers have complained to me that Native students are disrespectful because when you talk to them, they won't look you in the eye. The truth is the opposite of the perception. When Elders speak to us, we are taught not to make eye contact. This is a sign of respect.

An oral culture in a print-based world...

First Nations people have only recently started to write down their language, stories and songs. Traditionally we were an oral society, and we still are today. In Western society there has been an attitude that oral cultures are inferior and even illiterate. Schools have been reluctant to include First Nations studies classes because a written curriculum hasn't been available.

And yet, for generation after generation First Nations children have learned the history, rules of belief and behaviour of their people through oral legends, stories, songs and prayers. Stories were told over and over because each lesson became more meaningful with repetition. Children learned that the more one listened, the more there was revealed and learned. The oral culture, as it requires interaction, created a close, connected community which helped to strengthen tribal identity and continuity.

It is difficult to capture the essence of an oral culture. The best way to accomplish this in schools is by inviting Elders into the classroom to share their life stories, legends or songs. Ask a local First Nations community member about the protocol of inviting Elders to a school. Prepare your students by talking about the importance of Elders to the classroom. You are likely to find that because this is something First Nations students are familiar with, they will be more actively involved. Understand that for Elders to translate their stories into English means losing some subtlety in the meaning of a story.

It is important to be aware that legends or stories can be owned by individuals, families or by the community. Only a particular person or family can tell a story that belongs to them. There are many stories that are not restricted and that can be told for everyone to hear for entertainment or instruction. Check out the library for stories written by First Nations authors. In recent years there has been an outburst of Native pride in oral storytelling.

I encourage you to be involved and get to know your local First Nations community. And when a First Nations child or parent does something that puzzles you and causes you to stereotype, try to react differently. Remember, First Nations people are living in a world with different rules for behaviour from society at large. I hope that by explaining just a few of these rules, I may have shed some light on the cultural conflict you face from time to time in your classroom. Remember, First Nations people, like you, are living within their culture and sometimes we don't realize that the rules and attitudes we accept and live by are even there. Like you we assume that all people naturally think that way.

Lexi Charlie is the First Nations education co-ordinator with School District 79 (Cowichan Valley). She has been a teacher and administrator for nine years.

Reprinted with permission from Lexi Charlie.



TEACHING CONTROVERSIAL ISSUES

A four-step classroom strategy for clear thinking on controversial issues

by Pat Clarke

For the past decade, one of the most popular workshops offered by the B.C. Teachers' Federation has been *Teaching Controversial Issues—Without Becoming Part of the Controversy*. The popularity of the workshop reflects a growing awareness of the need to teach social issues. Yet the motivation for teaching about environmental sustainability, limits to growth, animal rights, or euthanasia is at the same time tempered by an understandable inclination to be wary of dealing with controversy. So while the workshop on teaching controversial issues is well subscribed, the pedagogical danger zone that social issues present is one that teachers avoid.

The reasons teachers avoid controversial issues as classroom topics are as complex as teaching itself. The issues are complicated. Teachers are often discouraged, perhaps not so much by complexity, but by their lack of familiarity with the topic: they are uncomfortable if they do not feel “expert” or at least well versed. Furthermore, teachers may be concerned that complicated issues take too long to cover and regular curriculum would be neglected. In this age of increasing standardization and calls for “accountability,” teachers are not inclined to venture down the side roads of learning, where social issues can so often lead. We also live in a time of general decline in the protocols of civil discourse. Television talk shows bristle with outrageous behaviour, which teachers are understandably reluctant to see reproduced in their classrooms. Also, we sense that we are living in particularly cantankerous times, when our actions as teachers are under close and often uninformed scrutiny. If we teach about an issue, we can easily find ourselves accused of bias or ulterior political motives. In other words, in teaching about a controversy, we become the controversy. Teachers in the Pacific Northwest have experienced this when they have addressed sustainability and found themselves accused of being antilogging.

But the fact remains that contemporary teaching presents certain challenges, not the least of which is relevance. The value of a formal education is increasingly measured according to the degree that it is future oriented. Further, there is a growing belief that a good contemporary education is a global education; that is, an education that concentrates on helping students understand connections and interdependence, develop an awareness of the planet's condition, and be well prepared to act as effective, responsible citizens in a complex world. In this context, the relationship between education and public issues is apparent: global education turns to contemporary issues for its content. What are our



chances of becoming global educators if we remain averse to taking on controversial public issues as part of our teaching practice?

We need an approach to teaching issues that overcomes these obstacles: concern for the influence of a teacher's own biases, fear of becoming a lightning rod for controversy oneself simply because a controversial issue is discussed in a class, and lack of confidence because of unfamiliarity with an issue.

The approach to teaching an issue put forward here tries to answer at least part of these concerns. It does not deal directly with the role of issues in prescribed curricula. The possibilities for teaching issues as permitted or encouraged by curricula vary from one jurisdiction to another. Any teacher who wants to, can find a way to integrate consideration of issues into regular course work.

I sometimes refer to this approach to teaching issues as a demystification strategy. It offers them a way of making sense of a complex issue, considering the merits of an argument and forming an opinion on the basis of critical analysis.

As an essentially inductive process, it is student centred, and the teacher's role is primarily that of a monitor or resource person. The teacher's bias is therefore less of a concern. The risk of public concern over teaching a controversial issue is addressed because the strategy is itself a demonstration of fair consideration. As an inquiry method, it provides teachers a framework for classroom activity that discourages one-sided argument or ill-informed opinion.

The demystification strategy

A framework for teaching controversial public issues

The teaching strategy for controversial public issues is based on four steps or elements. Each gives students a set of questions that gives them a number of ways of looking at an issue as well as a sound basis for making a judgment.

1. What is the issue about?

Where controversy is concerned, the question of what the issue is about is not as simple or obvious as it may appear. The point here is to identify the key question over which there is a controversy. Virtually every controversy turns around three types of questions: those relating to values—What should be? What is best? those relating to information—What is the truth? What is the case? and those relating to concepts—What does this mean? How should this be defined? In short, what is this controversy about: values, information, or concepts?



By responding to these questions, students begin an analysis of an issue that identifies the nature of the controversy. In doing this, students can quickly determine the heart of the issue. The primary value of this element of the strategy is that it helps students get past some of the frustration in trying to understand an issue. It also gives them a chance to analyze an issue dispassionately before consideration of the merits of a case.

2. What are the arguments?

Once students have determined what the issue is about or the nature of the controversy, the second element of analysis considers the arguments supporting the various positions on the issue. The key concern here is determining just what is being said and whether support is adequate for the claims being made. This step is largely analytical in that it calls for some determination of the content of an argument. It is also at this step, students can begin judging the validity of a position on a controversial issue.

If students have determined that the controversy surrounding an issue involves information, then they should ask questions about the information available or provided. Is information adequate? Are the claims in the information accurate? Is the information appropriate to the issue? Are the sources primary or secondary? In general, are the conclusions presented in the argument reasonable given the information?

Most controversial issues are about values, and there are critical questions students can ask about the values stated or employed in an argument. Specifically, what criteria are being used to make a judgment? In general there are two: moral and prudential. Moral criteria for judgment are based on a concern for how all people will be affected. Prudential criteria are concerned mainly with how I or my group will be affected.

Other questions students can use to test the acceptability of values claims are well known and universal in application. How would you like that done to you? What if everybody did that? Are there any situations where you would feel different or disagree with this value? These questions give students a set of criteria for making judgments that can take them beyond relativism and, because of their universal application, can help students to reflect on the validity of dogmatic positions.

If the controversy seems to involve definition, meaning, or concepts, students should try to determine if the arguments presented use clear meanings or definitions. Also they should test to see if meanings are used consistently or if they are appropriate and used in a proper context.

3. What is assumed?

Once students have considered the arguments in an issue, the critical question becomes, What are the assumptions? What is taken as self-evident in the presentation of arguments? At this stage, crucial matters of principle are employed to determine the validity of a position.

This framework or process has at its heart, that there is no values relativity. It is not true that any opinion, position, or point of view is acceptable or legitimate. If assumptions taken to justify an argument are based in prejudice, if attitudes behind arguments are ethnocentric, racist, or parochial, then those assumptions are grounds for criticism and reduce the legitimacy of an argument. The question for students to pose is, What are the assumptions behind the argument? Is it based on a prejudice or some other attitude contrary to universally held human values such as those set out in the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights?

A second element students can use to evaluate assumptions or what is “behind” an argument is the voice of the argument. Who is saying this? “Insiders” or “outsiders?” Insiders may have particular information and interests that could give an argument a certain shape or orientation. If the voice is that of outsiders, do they know the issue, or is being an outsider an advantage in this case since they have no special interest? Often the assumptions behind an argument can best be tested by hearing views of both insiders and outsiders.

Once the arguments have been analyzed and the assumptions scrutinized, the final step has to do with how the issue or the arguments pertaining to it, are presented or manipulated. The final question in the process then tries to help students judge the quality of the information they are receiving.

4. How are the arguments manipulated?

At this stage of the process, questions are asked on the politics of the issue. This step is particularly important for students, because it can help them understand how information can be used to influence opinion.

To determine how an argument is being manipulated, students must first determine who is involved and what their particular interests in the issue are. What is the rationalization for their position? What are their reasons for taking the position they advance?

By considering these questions, students begin to see how information can be selected, emphasized, or ignored according to its value to various positions on an issue. The degree to which the parties involved are acting in self-interest and use information only to support that interest could



affect the legitimacy of a position. On the other hand, a strongly supported position or one with strong moral reasons could add credibility to an argument.

A growing contemporary concern is the role of the media in controversial issues and how media can engage in argument manipulation. It is very important for students to have an appreciation of how media are involved in issues. Media literacy has become an essential survival skill as the influence of the media has increased. The question for students to address is, How can the media both reflect and create reality? To what extent on any given controversial issue is the media either creating the issue or manipulating the arguments?

Argument manipulation is usually accomplished through scapegoating, false analogies, extreme examples, and other strategies. The degree to which media or advocates of a position rely on such strategies is an indication to students of the validity of an argument. Detecting such tactics gives students a useful tool for assessing an argument and making a judgment on an issue.

An application: First Nations' land claims

If we take a controversial issue such as First Nations' land claims and apply this four-part strategy, we can highlight the teaching and learning opportunities.

First Nations' land claims, or the more general topic of indigenous peoples' rights, can be a hot issue. Classrooms could easily become verbal war zones if a discussion were simply an airing of views (or an exchange of ignorance). But when students start at the first step of the strategy—a consideration of the issue and a clarification of the type of issue—they engage in an analysis that gives them greater understanding and can move the discussion beyond an exchange of prejudice or misinformation. In the case of First Nations' land claims, students could learn much by defining the types of issues involved. The question, for example, of the reliability of information or the controversy over who is to be believed is as much a part of the controversy as the values questions, Who is right? or What ought to happen? This consideration alone could be a revelation, which would help students realize the complexity of the issue and could lead them to evaluate their prejudices.

Similarly, an analysis of the arguments presented by the various parties in the conflict would provide an opportunity to question firmly held conclusions. Students might, for example, find that many of the criteria used to justify certain actions are essentially prudential or based on self-interest. If this enhanced their perspective on the issue, how might their opinion be affected?



Certainly questions relating to assumptions behind the arguments presented by the two sides provide innumerable opportunities for analysis. Enquiries regarding ethnocentric perceptions, racism, or parochialism could give students considerable insight on the merits of the various arguments. At the same time, this aspect of a consideration of the conflict would provide the crucial element in teaching any issue, which is the determination of legitimacy on the basis of principles.

Like any controversial issue, land claims can be an object lesson in argument manipulation and the role of the media. Indeed, the role of the media in the manipulation of arguments in this issue could inspire a whole series of lessons on media literacy.

First Nations' land claims is, in certain respects, an easy issue to which to apply the "demystification strategy." Other issues may not as readily fit the strategy or have such clearly defined sides. Nevertheless the issue serves as a good example of how teachers can take a complex and controversial issue and have their students study it in a way that helps them clarify their views, critically analyze the information they receive, and form an opinion based on universally acceptable principles. At the same time, it is a legitimate process of inquiry and a straightforward and defensible teaching technique.

Common strategies for manipulating arguments

- Scapegoats: Assigning blame.
- Polarized thinking: (Us/them, weak/strong, rich/poor, good/bad) encourages distrust, suspicion; presents limited and false choices.
- Ad hominem strategy: Judgment based on who said something rather than on the merit of the statement.
- Straw person: Creates a caricature of a person or group.
- Irrelevant appeals: Appeals to emotion, patriotism, tradition.
- Either-or-tactic: Forces a choice by presenting only two possibilities when there may be others.
- Leading statements, slogans: Damages credibility, encourages hostility, creates a false impression.
- False analogies: Makes inappropriate connections or comparisons.
- Extreme examples: Used to prove a point, to slant an argument, to support a prejudice.

Pat Clarke is the director of the Professional Development Division at the B.C. Teachers' Federation. He has worked in various roles at the BCTF since 1983 including two terms as Federation president in 1984–86. From 1989 to 1995, he was co-ordinator of the B.C. Global Education Project, a joint initiative of the B.C. Teachers' Federation and the Canadian International Development Agency. His teaching background is in secondary social studies, and during the



2000–2001 school year, he taught Social Studies 11 and History 12 at Burnaby North Secondary School. He has written several learning resources on global and social issues, the most recent, *A culture of peace—A teaching unit on alternatives to war and violent conflict*.

Timeline history of Aboriginal peoples in British Columbia—Selected times and events important in the history of Aboriginal people in British Columbia Poster is available by request from the BCTF Professional Development Division, Aboriginal Education & Social Justice Department.

Timeline history of Aboriginal peoples in British Columbia—Selected times and events important in the history of Aboriginal people in British Columbia Lesson Aid (will be available soon to purchase from BCTF Lesson Aids Department)

Beyond words: Creating racism-free schools for Aboriginal learners Workshop can be booked through the BCTF Professional Development Division, Aboriginal Education & Social Justice Department (phone 604-871-1856)

Shared learnings: Integrating B.C. Aboriginal content K–10 a curriculum resource developed and published by the Ministry of Education. It provides teaching ideas for integrating Aboriginal education throughout the curriculum from K–10, linked to learning outcomes. Copies of the book were distributed to all schools in the province and may be available in the school library or some other place where resources are kept. It is also available on the ministry web site. You may download one copy for personal use: <http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/abed/shared.htm>

CHECKLIST FOR IDENTIFYING STEREOTYPING AND BIAS IN LEARNING RESOURCES

Terminology

Are people referred to as First Nations?

Does the use of terms support the diversity of First Nations by specifying national origins such as Nisga'a, Tsimshian, Secwepemc, Nuuchanulth, Haida?

Are the terms those that the various groups use to refer to themselves? Nisga'a vs. Nishga, Nootka vs. Nuuchanulth, Secwepemc vs. Shuswap (avoid pan-indianism).

Are the political and legal terms used when appropriate, such as Indian, Status Indian, Non-status Indian, and Métis?

Each First Nation can include several bands, urban and rural communities, differing dialects, and varying political organizations. Is the appropriate term used?

Terms such as linguistic groups or cultural groups are often inappropriate or not recognized by First Nations. Are such terms used?

Author/illustrator

Is the author First Nations?

Has the First Nations community been consulted on the publication?

What qualified the author or illustrator to deal with the subject?

Is the author giving an accurate, respectful portrayal of First Nations?

Illustrations/visuals

Do the illustrations contain any of the following stereotypes?

- Animals dressed as Indians
- Pocohontas or Indian Princess
- The naked savage
- Victim—alcoholic or drunken Indian

Are the illustrations a mishmash of generic "Indian" designs?

Are the illustrations presented culturally authentic?



Are the people depicted as stereotypically alike, or do they look just like whites with brown faces (Tokenism)?

Are the illustrations oversimplified, generalized, or caricatures?

Are the full range of human behaviours portrayed?

Do the illustrations depict people as passive or active?

Are the characters (humans or animals) shown “playing Indian”?

Cultural contexts in non-fiction literature

Are First Nations cultures oversimplified and generalized?

Do the views presented provide insight into the values, worldview, and living vision of First Nations?

Is the history accurately portrayed, providing multiple views of events and issues?

Are the First Nations cultures presented in a condescending manner? Are there paternalistic distinctions between them and us?

Are the First Nations discussed in past tense, supporting the vanishing-Indian myth?

Is the culture presented in a distorted or limited way (religion is superstition, p. 18, How to Tell)?

Is the diversity of First Nations cultures presented?

Are contributions of First Nations presented in unrelated lists or lack of proper context?

Do the contributions of First Nations presented include land and resources?

Are the First Nations omitted altogether? Information selected that reflects credit on only one group, frequently the writer’s group, is biased.

Are creative works of individuals in art, dance, music and drama viewed only as examples of cultural differences?

Are creative works presented as artistic accomplishments that embody universal aesthetic principles?

Perspectives in literature—fiction

Are First Nations people portrayed as childlike and helpless, with a white authority figure who has all the answers?

Do First Nations people contrast unfavourably with the norm?

Does it take white standards for First Nations people to get ahead?

Are the characters portrayed with positive physical and personal attributes, resourcefulness in solving problems, and the ability to assume leadership roles distributed across a range of cultural, age, and sex differences?

Do active and passive roles, loyalties, and ability to resolve conflict cross barriers of cultural, age, and sex differences?

Is the potential for happiness, dignity and commitment to one's environment depicted as being possible across a broad range of socio-economic conditions?

Is the tone overly sympathetic or romantic?

Are First Nations portrayed as environmentalists and ecological?

Do the people speak in the early jawbreaker style of language or in the oratorical style of the noble savage?

Do characters have ridiculous names like Indian Two-Two or Little Chief?

Are there biased words and phrases, which interfere with one's capacity to make clear judgments about First Nations people and their actions—catch phrases such as *Indian menace*, and words such as *brave*, *squaw*, *papoose*, which detract from the sense of normalcy of their everyday counterparts *man*, *woman*, and *baby*.

Does the overall appearance of books reflect negatively on the time and cost that went into the production?

Developed by Lynne Daniels and Deborah Cameron for the BCTF Program Against Racism.



CHAPTER 4



AN INCLUSIVE SCHOOL



SCHOOL REVIEW OF INCLUSIVENESS FOR ABORIGINAL STUDENTS

	Yes	No
Does the school's physical environment include visible representation of Aboriginal culture and people?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are there Aboriginal people working in the school as teachers, as support workers, or in other positions? Do they feel comfortable in the school?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Does an Aboriginal advisory committee exist?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
If so, is it consulted about the policies and practices of the school?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do students feel comfortable in coming to the school?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Does the school encourage and support teachers, including elements of Aboriginal culture and heritage in their teaching?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do Aboriginal students participate in extra-curricular activities?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are Aboriginal students achieving academic success?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are there appropriate supports to assist students who are not succeeding academically?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are Aboriginal students over-represented in special education?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are Aboriginal students included in gifted programs?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is targeted funding for Aboriginal students, for special needs, and for ESL getting to the school in ways that help the intended students?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Has the school offered cross-cultural training for teachers?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Does the school invite elders into the school to participate in programs?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Does it recognize their expertise and cultural knowledge with an honorarium?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are Aboriginal students graduating from secondary school with courses that allow them to go to post-secondary programs?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>



	Yes	No
Are language and culture programs offered in physical facilities that are central in the schoolrooms or portables that are on the margins of the school?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
If Aboriginal languages are offered, are students meeting the objectives?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
After secondary school, are Aboriginal students experiencing success in post-secondary education and careers?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are parents informed about programs that are available and about the implications of choosing particular programs?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

RESOURCES FOR SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

Classroom and school as safe and respectful spaces for Aboriginal students

Having safe and respectful classrooms and schools is always an objective for public education. However, those aims can be under great stress during times of social division outside the school.

The relationship of Aboriginal people to others in society sometimes becomes the subject of public debate. That may well be the case when the B.C. Liberal government holds a referendum on treaty negotiations with B.C. First Nations. Views expressed on the issues—both privately and publicly—are likely to include some that threaten the safety—psychological and perhaps physical well being—of Aboriginal students and staff in the public schools.

Educators and their organizations, as well as the Ministry of Education, must address the issues and be prepared to ensure that our classrooms and schools are safe. This preparation might include some or all of these suggestions:

1. Find out what Aboriginal communities would like the school to do.

The organizations that represent First Nations are opposed to the referendums being held. The referendum is a case of asking the majority of people to vote on the rights of a minority, in a situation where the Canadian Constitution and court rulings define that the group—Aboriginal people—have guaranteed rights.

Does the Aboriginal community whose children are in the school want to have the Aboriginal view presented in school? If so, how might that be done.

Or would the Aboriginal community prefer that the referendum not be raised as a specific issue in the classroom because it would bring social divisions into the school?

Even if teachers do not initiate discussion, the issues may come up through students' questions or from comments or confrontations among students. How does the Aboriginal community think the school should respond if the referendum creates a problem among students?



2. Find out what Aboriginal students would like the teacher to do.

Aboriginal students may be prepared to explain the issues of treaties to other students and want an opportunity to do that. On the other hand, they may want to avoid situations where discussions of treaties take place. This may be because they have the experience of hurtful comments being made in situations like this. Or it may be because they do not have personal knowledge of the issues and do not feel that they should be put in the situation of speaking on behalf of others.

Not all Aboriginal students are going to feel the same way about discussion of these issues in class, and that diversity of views and willingness to participate should be respected.

Most teachers know how they feel when the media or the minister makes comments that are not respectful of the work that teachers do. Aboriginal students may well have frequently heard comments about them that are not respectful of their heritage and culture and may want to avoid situations where it is likely they will hear more that is disrespectful.

3. Be supportive of Aboriginal teachers and support workers.

Many Aboriginal teachers and Aboriginal support workers report incidents of lack of respect for them and for their heritage by colleagues. Sometimes they are ignored and comments made as if there were no one there who might be hurt by the comments. Sometimes they hear racist comments directed at them specifically or about Aboriginal students and communities.

It is the responsibility of all teachers not only to ensure that they are not making racist comments but also to challenge racist comments from colleagues. Beyond that, we should all be working to ensure that our staffrooms, as well as classrooms and school grounds, are welcoming at all times to Aboriginal colleagues.

4. Become informed about the issues around treaty negotiations and the referendum.

The rights of all people are framed in the law. What is the relevance of the Royal Proclamation of 1763 by George III to First Nations treaties in British Columbia? What does the Canadian Constitution say about the rights of Aboriginal people? What has the Supreme Court of Canada said about Aboriginal rights and treaties?

What are the views of the First Nations Summit and the Union of B.C. Indian Chiefs on the referendum and its issues?

Even if you do not intend to take any action to raise the issues around treaties in teaching during the time of the referendum, it is important to be knowledgeable. Not only does active citizenship require this, but the issues may come up in work with students, even if it is not on your initiative.

5. Find resources to help students explore the issues.

Look for classroom resources and activities that could be used either for a whole class or for individual students.

Even if you do not raise the issues for discussion in class, they may come up. Well-thought-out and constructive activities, along with credible resources, are important if the issues are to be dealt with in class. The BCTF has some suggestions on teaching controversial issues that may be of use.

6. Have a system in place to deal with incidents.

- Have a policy in place that makes it clear that racist comments or actions are unacceptable.
- Intervene immediately in incidents or comments in classroom, hallway, or schoolyard.
- Use clear, unambiguous, and unself-conscious language.
- Distinguish between the person and the remark or behaviour.
- Allow for discussion: Explain, encourage questions, and build an atmosphere of trust.
- Respect cultural pride, as long as it does not put anyone else down or instill a feeling of superiority.
- Believe that people will change. Racist behaviour is often unconscious or unintentional.
- Treat people as people, not as cultural representatives.
- Deal in specifics.
- Keep a sense of humour—but not at the expense of other people.

(Adapted from “Helpful hints for challenging racism” from the BCTF Social Justice Department)

7. Have a space where students who have been subjected to racist incidents can get support from one another and from adults.

Talking through negative incidents with others who have had similar experiences can help to work through and get past the negative experience. This might involve bringing together Aboriginal students from the school or even outside assistance to help students deal with their feelings and to identify actions that might improve the situation.



CHAPTER 5



ABORIGINAL EDUCATION EMPLOYMENT EQUITY



ABORIGINAL EDUCATION EMPLOYMENT EQUITY

Aboriginal students are a significant and growing portion of the student population in British Columbia. In 1998, 38,144 students were self-identified as Aboriginal, more than 6% of the total student population.

If 6% of the teaching force were Aboriginal, more than 2,100 Aboriginal teachers would be working in our schools. The number is much lower than that.

Does it matter that Aboriginal students—indeed all students—see so few Aboriginal teachers in their schools? Many think that it does.

The schools need more teachers of Aboriginal origin to provide models of success for all students, and to offer particular support to students of Aboriginal origin.

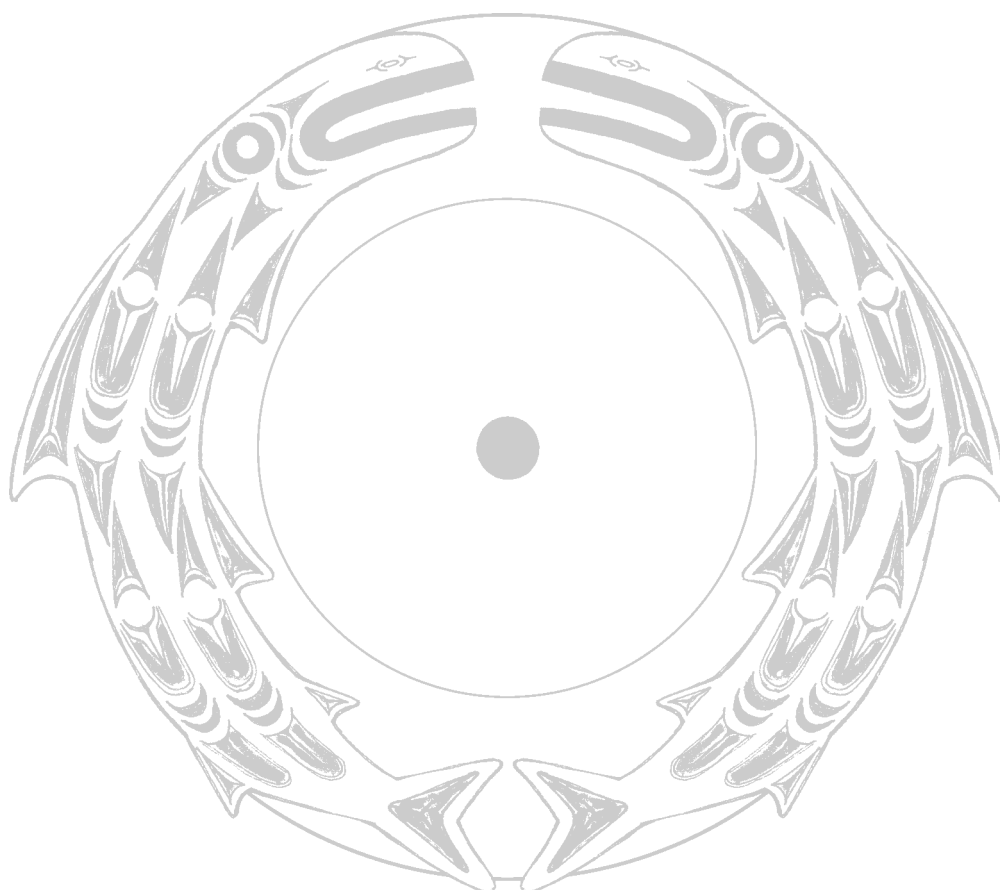
In Canada, employment-equity programs are in place in much of the public sector. To achieve equity through such programs, different treatment may be provided aimed at redressing imbalances. Identifying barriers and taking action to remove them is a key part of employment equity.

An employment equity program for the public schools might include several elements:

- setting goals and a timetable
- recruiting Aboriginal students to teacher training
- hiring Aboriginal teachers
- retaining of Aboriginal teachers
- monitoring the goals and timetable



CHAPTER 6



CASE STUDIES FOR DISCUSSION



CASE STUDIES OF ISSUES FOR DISCUSSION

These case studies are provided to stimulate discussion about real issues that arise.

You may want to read through them and consider the questions on your own.

You might choose one or more case studies that seem to have relevance to the situation in your school and district and use them to generate discussion among colleagues.

One approach might be:

1. Make copies of the case studies you think would be useful, and distribute to the groups.
2. Provide time for participants to read their case study.
3. Decide what are the key issues and concerns. Is enough information provided to decide what should be done in the situation? What additional information would be needed to know how best to respond?
4. Decide on a plan of action that might be useful in the situation.
5. Have each group present its plan to the full group for discussion.



Case study 1—Aboriginal student needs left to Aboriginal staff person

Sadie Huston was the Aboriginal support worker at the X Storefront School for four years. She was the Aboriginal student advocate who assisted the students with their academic and social/behavioural problems. With her help, the Aboriginal students were able to adjust to and cope with the rigours of the high school curriculum.

The two non-Native teachers and the district counsellor relied on Sadie to meet the educational needs of the Storefront students, Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal alike. The team benefitted from and respected the expertise of all individuals in the program. They were able to provide the best educational services for their students, so much so, that all the Aboriginal students were transferred either to regular high school classes or to work sites in the fall semester.

Sadie Huston had worked herself out of a job.

In August, the principal of X Elementary called Sadie to ask if she would be interested in working as the Aboriginal support worker at his school. He said she had been recommended by the district counsellor with whom she had worked at the Storefront School. Sadie jumped at the chance to work with the elementary Aboriginal students.

She started her new job and was eager to learn as much as she could in as short a time as possible about her students, their parents, and their teachers. With the principal's permission, she got in touch with the band's education counsellors, introduced herself, and requested a meeting to discuss the band's Aboriginal education priorities at the X Elementary School, so that she could support the students in the best way possible.

The school started with the usual team meetings to deal with specific children's social and academic issues. Sadie was included in the meetings when Aboriginal students were discussed.

As the months progressed, Sadie found that the team saw her as the resident "Native" expert who was expected to solve all Aboriginal academic, social, and behaviour problems. The teachers went to Sadie instead of the student's parents to make recommendations about Aboriginal student concerns. Sadie would stress the need for parent and band input into Aboriginal education decisions, but the staff would make comments like "parents aren't interested," "parents don't understand," "the band representative has no authority."

By December, Sadie was disillusioned with her job.

The principal reminded Sadie that her probationary evaluation was due and that he wanted to meet with her about it in the next few days. He asked her to jot down concerns she had so that they could discuss them at the probationary meeting. Sadie immediately set to making a list of things she felt needed to be addressed:

- clearly defined Aboriginal support workers job description
- greater Aboriginal parent involvement in school decisions about their children
- increased community involvement in the education of Aboriginal students, and
- teachers, not seeing Sadie as a “one issue” person but as multidimensional

Sadie met with the principal and received a glowing probationary evaluation. She gave the principal the list of her concerns. He said that he would see that they were acted upon.

As the term progressed, the teachers continued to rely on Sadie as the expert to deal with the Aboriginal students’ social and behaviour problems. This nearly turned into a full-time job. She had very little time to do anything positive to enhance the educational development of the Aboriginal students.

Sadie decided that the staff was not going to change. She prepared an application for the job of education co-ordinator for the Alexander Band and submitted her letter of resignation to the principal.

Is the Aboriginal support worker at your school expected to do what Sadie is doing at her school?

Why do you think Sadie is expected to be responsible for all Aboriginal students’ social and behaviour problems?

How might this be seen as discriminatory practice?

What might the teachers have done to support Sadie?



Case study 2—Whose knowledge?

Pine Secondary School had a 45% Aboriginal enrolment. Many of the Aboriginal students received learning assistance, or were in alternate school programs. However, quite a few were able to manage the regular curriculum leading to a Dogwood Certificate.

Mr. Jacob taught Aboriginal Studies 12. Though he was non-Native, he had taken a keen interest in Aboriginal education—had taken Aboriginal Education 460 at university and had done a lot of personal study on American indigenous peoples. He considered himself an expert on, and an advocate for, Aboriginal people.

Several Aboriginal students from the Pine Reserve had challenged Mr. Jacobs about his teachings in local cultural issues. Andrea became quite outspoken about the misinformation Mr. Jacobs was offering in class.

Mr. Jacobs was offended by Andrea's challenge. He called her to the office and scolded her for her defiance. She explained that her family could trace their history on the Pine Reserve for hundreds of years and what Mr. Jacobs was teaching about the local culture was wrong. She said that his teaching was based on prairie culture and traditions. Mr. Jacobs said that he had learned this from gatherings at the local friendship centre and assumed that the local Natives had similar practices. Though this might be true, or might not, he infused this into his Aboriginal Studies 12 teaching of local history. He refused to do things differently because he said that Andrea did not represent all Aboriginal students.

In the first semester, Mr. Jacobs lost five of the twelve local Aboriginal students in his Aboriginal Studies 12 class. They would rather have a failing mark than sit and listen to erroneous information about their people.

What might Mr. Jacobs have done differently to ensure accurate content in his Aboriginal Study class?

How is racism manifested in this case study?

What would you have done to address Andrea's concerns if you had been the Aboriginal Study teacher?

Case study 3—Identity

Mindy was a December baby. When she was four, her mother, Diane, struggled with deciding whether or not Mindy should begin Kindergarten in September. There was a small school in a new middle-class neighbourhood. Parents and children there got along well, so Mindy already had an established circle of friends. When September arrived, Diane delivered Mindy to Kindergarten because she was sure Mindy could handle it. And Mindy did. She thrived, and grew, and loved Kindergarten until the spring just shortly after the school's Multicultural-Week events.

During that week each classroom did some “multicultural project” to recognize the school's cultural diversity and because multiculturalism is promoted and supported by the Ministry of Education and the federal government.

At circle time, Ms. Smith, Mindy's Kindergarten teacher, asked the Kindergarten children to talk to their parents about who they were. Ms. Smith explained that it was a special time in the school and that students and teachers were all going to talk about what makes them special. Ms. Smith said “I am Irish. My great grandfather came to Canada from a place called Ireland—far away.” She said that the school secretary, Ms. Chan, is Chinese. Her mom, and dad came from China to Canada.

Some of the children were aware of their heritage. “I'm Ukrainian.” “My mom's Japanese.” Mindy wasn't sure what she was. She knew gramma and grampa lived in Vancouver and she lived up north. She knew her mom worked at a supermarket and her dad was a trucker.

That night, Mindy gave her mom the note about background. Mindy and mom talked about who gramma and mom were. They were Indian, so Mindy was Indian too. This was special.

The next day, Mindy went to school feeling so proud of who she was.

At circle time, Ms. Smith asked the children what they had learned about who they were. I'm Polish, English, Scottish, etc. Mindy said she was Indian. Ms. Smith said “what a different group of beautiful children I have in my class from all over the world. Isn't it nice to know how special we all are.”

The following day at Kindergarten, Mindy was looking very sad. Ms. Smith asked her what was wrong. Mindy said Joey would not hold her hand during “London Bridges” because she was a dirty Indian, and Angela wouldn't sit beside her at snack time, because she was a stinky Indian. Some of Mindy's friends didn't seem to be so friendly today either.



When Diane got home from work, she asked how Mindy's day had gone. Mindy said sadly, "Mom, are you sure I'm an Indian?" Mindy told her about her unhappy day at school just because she was an Indian.

Diane called her mother, in Vancouver. She said Mindy wanted to talk to grandma. After some niceties, Mindy said, "gramma, am I really an Indian?" Grandma said, "Yes you are, your mom is, I am, and so was my mom. Why do you ask?" Mindy said, "The kids at school say that Indians are silly, and I don't want to be silly."

Grandma said, "Sweetheart, I am Indian. Am I silly or dirty or smelly?" "No." "Your mom's an Indian. Is she silly?" "No." "Well, here we are, three Indians who know we are not silly or dirty or smelly. Should you believe other people, or should you believe what you know to be true?" Mindy felt assured that being Indian didn't mean what some kids at school had said. She and mom and grandma all knew that those kids were wrong.

The following day, Diane went to see Mindy's teacher, who was apologetic about Mindy's experience. She said, "You know how children can be. It's part of their growing up. They really didn't mean what they said to Mindy." Ms. Smith said she would keep an eye on things to make sure Mindy was included and accepted by all the children.

The remainder of Mindy's Kindergarten term wasn't nearly as much fun for her. She had learned what part of her was not accepted by her classmates. She was different, and that wasn't good.

If you were a Kindergarten teacher, how might you have dealt with the name calling when it was reported by Mindy?

What should have happened as a result of the meeting between Diane and Ms. Smith?

Where do you suppose the "little name callers'" attitudes came from?

Do you think these attitudes can be challenged? How?

Case study 4—Staffroom talk

When Matt James graduated from the UBC Native Indian Teacher Education Program (NITEP), he had three job offers. He chose a Grade 7 teaching position in one of the largest school districts in the province.

He liked the school and his students and his job. He was extra organized...always prepared very early for work, was overly outgoing...in efforts to dispel the stereotypes of Aboriginal people. He took on extra-curricular duties because he enjoyed the students. [He was happy in his work.]

His principal was impressed with his teaching, his added responsibilities, and his relationships with peers, parents, and students. Life was good.

Matt was happy and satisfied with work until he overheard two teachers talking about him in the staffroom after school. Ms. Green said, “If it weren’t for affirmative action, Matt would never have gotten the Grade 7 teaching position. This should have gone to Sally, who now has to be ‘on call’ again. It’s not fair, is it?” Mr. Andrew said, “My sister will be okay. She enjoys subbing, but I agree...Matt got the job because he’s Native. He went to the Mickey Mouse school, probably paid for by Indian Affairs, then is offered this great job. Oh well, so it goes.”

Ms. X piped in. “I like Matt. Give him a break.”

Matt went to his classroom and wondered if the rest of the staff thought he wasn’t qualified to teach. His confidence was at an all-time low.

What could Ms. X have done to challenge Ms. Green’s and Mr. Andrew’s comments?

Do you think it was up to Matt to defend his teaching position?

How did Ms. Green and Mr. Andrew perpetuate the stereotyping of Aboriginal people?



Case study 5—Whose responsibility?

Mary Anne teaches Grade 5 at Berry Heights School. The only Aboriginal teacher at the school, she finds that besides her regular classroom duties, she has the whole staff coming to her with all their problems with Aboriginal students.

She has been at the school for only two years, but she is already getting tired of her job. If she only had to deal with her classroom responsibilities, she would be happy with her work.

Today, Mary Anne was ready to explode when Ms. Bland asked Mary Anne to call Jim's mom at the reserve to ask her to make sure that she gave Jim a bath tonight. When Mary Anne objected to this, Ms. Bland said, "Your people will accept this from you. If I ask Jim's mom to bathe him, she'll think I'm terrible. I want to get along with my Native parents."

Are the Aboriginal workers in your school expected to deal with most of the school's Aboriginal "problems"?

Do you think it's appropriate for Mary Anne to deal with Ms. Bland's problem with her Aboriginal student?

If this were not an Aboriginal student, would the problem have been dealt with differently?

Case study 6—Impact of racist incidents

Joe and Martin were cousins who lived seven miles from Beacon High School. Both boys signed up for the same Grade 8 courses and helped each other with assignments. Joe's mother, Amy, worked as the homemaker at the reserve, and Martin's mother, Anne, worked at the motel close to the community centre.

Over the summer, both boys did very well with the all-Native basketball team. They kept in shape by jogging from the reserve into town, getting a ride home with Anne.

When school started in September, the boys rose extra early to jog to school. They did that for three weeks. When the weather turned rainy and cold, they resorted to taking the school bus to school.

The first few weeks on the bus were fine, but one day, one of the Grade 10 boys, Trevor, wanted Joe and Martin's seat, which Martin and Joe refused to give up. Trevor tried to force Joe out of his seat but was unsuccessful.

The next morning, Trevor again tried to get Joe's seat. This time there was some roughing up and verbal exchanges. A few days later, it happened again, but this time Trevor and a couple of his friends moved to racial name-calling. Joe and Martin tried to contain themselves while hearing "savage filth," "drunken slobs," "dumb Indian," and "welfare bums."

Joe and Martin attended classes as usual that day, but they could not get over their anger about the name-calling. Why hadn't some of the other students come to their defence? They wondered if all the students felt the same way about them. They decided that rather than take the bus, they would jog to school as they had done in the summer.

Martin and Joe rose early each school morning and jogged or hitchhiked to school. This became tiresome, and they were often late for classes and were sent for detention. School was not fun, and neither was jogging. The boys began skipping classes, their grades dropped, and they developed "an attitude."

The boys' mothers were concerned about the boys' falling grades and failing attitude. They called Roberta, the band education co-ordinator, to see what they might be able to do to improve the boys' academics and attitude toward school.

After several meetings with the boys, Roberta felt that the boys were withholding some information. She requested a meeting with three of the



boys' teachers, and learned that the boys' grades had been on the decline since mid-November. No one knew the cause, and it was chalked up to typical Grade 8 behaviour.

Roberta asked the Aboriginal teacher, Dale, to spend time with the boys to improve their grades.

Dale scheduled Martin and Joe from 3:30 to 4:30 Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday for homework and extra help, then drove the boys home. In the third week of this schedule, Dale was impressed with the boys' improvement and suggested a dinner celebration at Boston Pizza. The boys were ecstatic.

Over pizza, Martin opened up and told Dale about the bus incident.

Dale filed a formal complaint at the office, spoke to the bus driver about the incident, and convinced the boys to take the bus again.

Does the school district's antiracist policy apply off the school grounds? Why?

If you were the bus driver, what might you have done about the name-calling?

What could the students on the bus have done to assist Joe and Martin?

Case study 7—Special program on the margins —Or everyone responsible for Aboriginal students?

The Aboriginal Education Co-ordinator was on the hiring committee for the new director of instruction. Others on the team were elementary and secondary teacher representatives, the area counsellor, and senior administration representatives.

In preparation for the interviews, the team met to discuss the process and to identify the most significant questions to be addressed by those short-listed for the director of instruction position.

After some discussion, the Aboriginal education co-ordinator suggested that Aboriginal education be a topic to be probed. There was resistance from several of the team. “We should deal with more general education concerns and leave the Aboriginal problems for a later date.” “We really need to focus on what’s best for all students, and not get tangled up in special-interest group issues.” “This is the director of instruction we are hiring, not the special education co-ordinator, so let’s deal with the real curriculum matters.”

The Aboriginal education co-ordinator said their comments were stereotypical and out of line. She said that the director of instruction must take a stand on Aboriginal education, as must teachers, principals, and district staff.

In the end, Aboriginal education was NOT a topic dealt with in the interview.

Why might you agree with the Aboriginal education co-ordinator?

Why might you agree with the rest of the interview team?

If you were the Aboriginal education co-ordinator, what would you have done to change the team’s mind about Aboriginal education as a topic for consideration?



Case study 8—Response to racist incidents

Marie was a 15 year-old Aboriginal student at Cherrydale High. She was an average student who was seldom late or absent. She did not have many friends and tended to be a loner.

One afternoon, Marie was leaving her locker on her way to English class when she was approached by three boys from her class. She struggled as they pushed her against the lockers. They spat out racial slurs as they lifted her tee shirt and removed her bra. They taunted her, then as the bell rang for class, they threw her bra above the lockers and rushed to English.

Marie was shaken and mortified and couldn't bring herself to go to English class to face those boys who had humiliated her.

She shamefully left the school and walked three miles to her home on the reserve, crying all the way. She was determined never to return to Cherrydale High.

Ms. Abrams, Marie's mother, came to the school to pick Marie up for her 2:30 dental appointment. Ms. Abrams was told that Marie had skipped afternoon classes and no one knew where she had gone. Ms. Abrams was bewildered about that because Marie was generally very reliable about school attendance and dental appointments. She was worried that something drastic was going on.

Ms. Abrams drove around town and saw no trace of Marie, so she went home to see if Marie was there. When she arrived, she found Marie sobbing in her room.

Marie told her mother what had happened that afternoon and said she was never going back to that or any other school again.

Ms. Abrams was livid and called the band education co-ordinator, and explained the situation to her. Together they went to see the principal to lodge a formal racism complaint. The principal called in the English teacher to join him in the meeting with Ms. Abrams and the band representative. The teacher and principal were surprised to learn of the boys' behaviour. They were good boys from good families and generally well behaved.

The principal assured Ms. Abrams that the incident would be investigated and dealt with appropriately.

The teacher and the principal met with the boys, who admitted to harassing Marie. Together the teacher and the principal and the boys agreed that as punishment for their inappropriate behaviour, they would write a 500-word essay on women's equality as an English assignment to be handed in, in one week.

Do you think the punishment fit the crime in this case?

What might have been a more appropriate consequence for the boys?

Do you think the teacher and the principal were sensitive to Marie's traumatic experience?

What do you think should have happened as a result of the racist complaint?



Case study 9—Response to slanted media coverage

For the past week, the newspapers had given full coverage of the Aboriginal demonstration and takeover of a government office in the interior of B.C. Front-page photos of masked Aboriginal demonstrators holding placards made for hot discussion at the cafeteria of X high school. Many students made derogatory comments about “Indians” taking over the province. Racial slurs directed at the Aboriginal students were common during the week.

Many Aboriginal students decided to skip school because they were unable to deal with the verbal attacks. They were frustrated because no one came to their defence. The newspaper article had nothing to do with them, yet they had to take “crap” from their classmates.

What should the non-Aboriginal students have done when derogatory comments were made about Aboriginal people?

What should the Aboriginal students have done about the racial slurs?

If you were a teacher at this school, what might you have done as a result of the newspaper articles?

Case study 10—Response to exclusion “us/them”

Amy had taught at Y High School for three years and was a respected Aboriginal teacher in the district. It was no wonder that she was selected to be the Aboriginal representative on an accreditation team.

At the accreditation team’s first meeting, questions were raised about Amy’s role on the team. Two of the team members expressed concern that priority seemed to be given to Aboriginal issues at the school. Aboriginal students made up only 7% of the total school population. They made several negative comments about Aboriginal learners and Aboriginal parents. They could not understand why an Aboriginal person had to be on the team. It seemed to them that their integrity as principal and teacher were being undermined and possibly they were not to be trusted in dealing with the Aboriginal section of the accreditation.

The accreditation chair assured the team that Amy would be an asset to the team and that they were to lighten up and get on with the task at hand.

Amy never did feel that she was a team member that week. She did a fine job of interviewing Aboriginal students and parents regarding the accreditation process. She was able to gather a lot of information from the teachers of Aboriginal students. All in all, her contribution to the external team report was valuable and appreciated. However, there was an element of distrust throughout the accreditation process. An otherwise fruitful experience was overshadowed by doubt. Amy decided she’d made a poor decision in agreeing to be part of the external accreditation team. Would she do it again?

If you were the external chair, how would you have dealt with the Aboriginal-issues comments by the two team members?

Do you think that Amy was treated as an equal (she is a certified teacher) on the team?

How might this situation with Amy have been turned around as a positive experience?



Case study 11—Response to name calling

Lucy and Jane were inseparable Grade 4 students. They lived next door to each other at a nearby reserve within walking distance of school.

Their primary school experiences were wonderful. However, in Grade 4, they were being isolated by their friends. This caused them to be even closer. They swore they would be friends forever.

One day at recess, the duty teacher overheard a group of Grade 4 boys calling out to Lucy and Jane, “Your parents are drunks! We hate Indians!” Lucy and Jane huddled together and tried not to cry. The teacher went to the girls and asked if this had happened before. They said it happened all the time.

The name-calling boys, Lucy, and Jane met with the teacher. The teacher asked the boys what their remarks meant. The boys said they were only teasing the girls. The teacher said their remarks were hurtful and that such behaviour was not going to be tolerated in the school. She told the boys that a note was going home to their parents about the incident and that a report was going to the principal.

She asked Lucy and Jane if there were anything the boys could do to make up for their name-calling. The girls said all they wanted was not to be called names. The boys agreed that this was hurtful and it would not happen again.

What would you have done if you were the duty teacher?

CHAPTER 7



BCTf ABORIGINAL EDUCATION POLICY



B.C. TEACHERS' FEDERATION

ABORIGINAL EDUCATION POLICY

1. That the BCTF acknowledge the right and the ability of First Nations people:
 - (a) to define problems of First Nations students within the public school; and
 - (b) to take leadership initiatives in arriving at solutions to these problems;and that the BCTF pursue with the First Nations people strategies for co-operative efforts to improve educational opportunities in our public schools for First Nations students.

(Feb Ex, p. 19)
2. That the goals of the BCTF in Aboriginal education be to improve the success of Aboriginal students in the public schools and to build a new relationship with Aboriginal students and communities, and that these be pursued through:
 - (a) working with Aboriginal organizations and other groups in the public schools to define success and appropriate indicators of success;
 - (b) building awareness and commitment of teachers to practices that will improve the success of Aboriginal students;
 - (c) identifying and supporting practices that help achieve success for Aboriginal students;
 - (d) working to make schools inclusive of and for Aboriginal students, parents, teachers and support workers;
 - (e) building positive relationships of teachers and schools with Aboriginal communities.

(99 AGM, p. 28)
3. That the BCTF believes that an educational system that forces Aboriginal students to assimilate to majority cultural attitudes and patterns is a form of racism.

(99 AGM, p. 28)
4. That the BCTF recognizes that Aboriginal communities have the primary responsibility for defining what constitutes success for Aboriginal students in the public schools.

(99 AGM, p. 28)
5.
 - (a) That the First Nations language instructors not be designated as teaching assistants.
 - (b) That the BCTF seek legislative change that would remove School Act and Regulations language that designates First Nations language instructors as teaching assistants.

(Feb 92 Ex, p. 14)
6. That locals should ensure that local education agreements not involve dual systems of supervision and evaluation.

(Feb 92 Ex, p. 14)
7. That the BCTF support a practica for First Nations students in band schools.

(May 92 Ex, p. 3)



8. (a) That the BCTF recognizes the importance of teachers of Aboriginal ancestry working in the school system, both for programs that are targeted to Aboriginal students and programs that serve all students.
- (b) That the BCTF actively support an employment equity program for the public schools with the aim of achieving a teaching force that is reflective of the ethnic diversity of B.C. public schools.
- (c) That the employment equity program for Aboriginal teachers include the following elements:
- (i) goals for achieving employment equity, including goals for having Aboriginal teachers in programs throughout the system, as well as in programs supported by targeted Aboriginal education funding;
 - (ii) workshops for teachers and school districts to explain employment equity programs and how they work;
 - (iii) a baseline database of teachers in BC public schools who self-identify as Aboriginal;
 - (iv) a registry of Aboriginal teachers who hold BC College of Teachers certificates and who are seeking employment as teachers in BC;
 - (v) employment equity pilot projects in districts where the BCTF local and the school board agree to undertake a project;
 - (vi) a program with targets and actions to increase the number of Aboriginal people who seek and achieve teacher training and qualifications;
 - (vii) research to identify systemic impediments to employment equity, including hiring policies, employment practices and workplace climate;
 - (viii) support networks which include a mentoring program for beginning Aboriginal teachers;
 - (ix) an annual report on and monitoring of progress towards meeting the employment equity goals.

(Jan. 00 Ex, p. 16)

9. That the BCTF supports headstart-type programs and early intervention programs controlled by Aboriginal communities to give a successful start to the school experience for Aboriginal students.
10. That the school and community should recognize the successes of Aboriginal students.
11. That the BCTF urge the Ministry of Education to facilitate development of district plans and services to support Aboriginal students, particularly at the points of transition where students experience difficulties.
12. That counselling and Aboriginal support workers should be available in all schools with Aboriginal students to provide assistance to Aboriginal students experiencing difficulty.
13. That curriculum and learning resources that are relevant to and respectful of Aboriginal culture be available for use at all levels and that the ministry provide adequate funding for development, distribution and implementation.

14. That curriculum and learning resources that are relevant to and respectful of Aboriginal culture and its diversity are included as integral parts of the curriculum and Integrated Resource Packages, not as add-ons marginal to the regular program.
15. That learning resources related to the culture of the First Nations in the region where the school is located be used in classrooms, and that ministry funding should be available to support the development of these learning resources where they do not already exist.
16. That the BCTF, with other partners, develop, maintain and make accessible to teachers a database of existing learning resources and locally developed curriculum for all grade levels to support the inclusion of Aboriginal content throughout the curriculum.
17. That Aboriginal history and culture content be increased in all subjects, with special emphasis on social studies, and that the Ministry of Education fund workshops for teachers and be made available to support this additional content.
18. That the history and background to treaty processes should be incorporated into social studies at different levels, including the information from history, provisions of the Canadian Constitution relevant to Aboriginal inherent rights to self-government, the definition of Aboriginal rights through court decisions, and the B.C. Treaty Process.
19. That First Nations Studies 12 should be offered, in consultation with First Nations communities, in secondary schools through the province, and the BCTF and locals provide encouragement through the professional development and specialist association structures for this to happen.
20. That Aboriginal cultural awareness and enrichment programs and services, supported by targeted funding, be either exclusively for Aboriginal students, or open to all students, by choice of the local Aboriginal communities.

(Feb. 99 Ex, p. 18–22)

Reprint of Section 9.D.39 from the Members' Guide to the BCTF 2001–2002



